

**Civics Revisited? An Exploration of the Factors Affecting the  
Implementation of CSPE in Five Post-Primary Schools.**

**Deirdre A. Murphy**

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<b>Date:</b>	July 2003-07-19
<b>Head of Department</b>	Professor John Coolahan
<b>Supervisor:</b>	Mr. Gerry Jeffers

**Declaration**

I, Deirdre Murphy, declare that this dissertation is my own original work.

Signed: Deirdre Murphy Date: July 2003

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Go Raibh Maith Agat!

Deirdre Murphy

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## **Abstract**

Civic, Social and Political Education, or CSPE, was introduced into Irish post-primary schools in 1996. The nineteen nineties are looked upon as a period of great innovation in Irish education. One of the prime aims of CSPE is the promotion of active and participative citizenship. CSPE is a new curricular initiative, which requires the teacher, a key agent of change, to deliver this programme of civic education at classroom level.

Firstly, this study reviews the literature associated with educational change in order to get an overall picture of the challenges facing those who must implement change at classroom level. It then reviews the literature associated with a renewed interest in civic education in the final decade of the twentieth century and presents a history of civic education in Ireland.

This study explores the factors that affect the implementation of CSPE in five post-primary schools. Five research sites were chosen. The researcher explored the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of both teachers and students to identify and explore any factors which militate against the successful implementation of CSPE. The research instruments employed by the research included a CSPE Teacher questionnaire, a CSPE Teacher interview and a series of focus group interviews with both current and former students of CSPE. . The research findings are presented in chapters four, five and six and the analysis of the data collected occurs in chapter seven.

## **Introduction**

Since the 1991 OECD review of educational policy in Ireland, Irish education has developed exponentially. These developments have occurred against a backdrop of cultural, economic, technical, demographic and societal change. The nineteen nineties, in particular, saw a clearer articulation of educational policy than in previous years and this led to proposals for educational change. These proposals found expression in the Green paper, 1992, the National Education Convention in 1993 and its report in 1994 and the White Paper, 1995. The nineteen nineties therefore, marked a decade when 'ideas were on the move' (Coolahan, 1994, p.236).

Proposals for educational change called for structural, curricular and sometimes pedagogic reform. The introduction of the Junior Certificate programme, for example, led to structural reform. With this came the revision of syllabi for in various subjects and the introduction of new subjects on the curriculum at Junior Certificate level. Within this development Civic, Social and Political Education or CSPE was introduced at Junior Certificate level. It was to replace the old Civics course which had been introduced as far back as 1966. The aim of this new course in citizenship was to prepare students for active participatory citizenship (An Roinn Oideachas, 1996). The Department of Education stressed the importance of this new subject;

Civic, Social and Political Education is important for each individual. It enables pupils to use their minds well in a changing, complex society. It helps them to understand the rights and responsibilities of the individual in society and the workings and nature of democracy. Attention to concepts, attitudes and values central to citizenship develops the moral and critical faculties of the pupil.  
(ibid.)

CSPE as relatively new curricular initiative, presents mainly challenges to those who have to implement this new subject at classroom level. This study explores the factors affecting the implementation of CSPE in post-primary schools. Five research sites or schools were selected. The perceptions, attitudes and opinions of teachers, were elicited. This was due to the fact that teachers are key change agents who are responsible for implementing change at classroom level and whose

'teaching strategies provide the common denominator between external policy initiatives, between curriculum areas and between phases of schooling' (Hopkins, 2001). The opinions of students, vis-à-vis CSPE, were also elicited as their perceptions are crucial to the future development of the subject.

Chapter one reviews the literature pertaining to educational change and explores the phenomenology of the change process. It also examines global trends in civic education and focuses on the challenges faced by teachers and principals in implementing this subject in their schools. It draws from the empirical findings of numerous educational researchers.

Chapter two explores the Irish experience of civic education. It traces the history of civic education in the Irish post-primary system from the inception of the Civics course to the introduction of CSPE. This chapter also explores the challenges faced by CSPE teachers in the implementation and delivery of this subject at classroom level.

Chapter three outlines the rationale for, and the aims and objectives of this research study. It also describes, in some detail, the research instruments employed by the researcher in order to elicit from both teachers and pupils their attitudes and opinions about CSPE. The questionnaire method and the interview and focus group mode, utilised by the researcher in this study, are explored.

Chapter four presents the data obtained from a questionnaire administered to practising CSPE teachers. This questionnaire tried to formulate a profile of CSPE teachers in each of the five research sites. This research instrument also sought to gain an insight into the teaching strategies employed by teachers in their teaching of CSPE. The attitudes of teachers with reference to various aspects of CSPE were also elicited.

Chapter five presents the research findings obtained from one-to-one interviews with CSPE teachers. Three teachers were interviewed from each school. The interview mode was utilised in order to give the researcher a deeper insight into the issues affecting the implementation of CSPE in each of the five schools.

Chapter six presents the research findings elicited from a series of focus group interviews with former and current CSPE students. This mode was utilised in order to elicit from students, their perceptions of and attitudes and opinions about various aspects of CSPE.

Chapter seven analyses collectively, the findings obtained from the research instruments employed in this study. Issues will be highlighted and discussed.

Chapter eight presents the conclusions drawn and the recommendations of the researcher for the future development of this subject.



## **Chapter One- Literature Review**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Europe, in the last twenty years, has experienced a period of unprecedented change, change that has impacted greatly on European society. The pace and acceleration of change has led to the rapid and continual evolution of European society on an economic, technological, political and cultural level. Economically, the internationalisation of trade has fuelled greater economic integration between countries and has given rise to the creation of economic alliances between countries. These developments have led to the on-going erosion of barriers to trade, which in turn, has given rise to the freer movement of people, goods and services between countries. Technological advances and the impact of the 'information society' has resulted in significant transformations vis-à-vis the nature of employment, the organisation of production and greater levels of sophistication with regard to production methods and outputs. (European Commission, 1996). Dramatic changes have also been enacted on the political landscape of Europe. The fall of communism in former Eastern Europe and the emergence of new democratic states have left an indelible mark on the geo-political boundaries of Europe.

The collective effect of the internationalisation of trade, technological advances and geo-political change has impacted greatly on the cultural, racial and religious topography of Europe. The freer movement of peoples internationally has manifested itself in the emergence of a multi-cultural European society. The path towards globalisation has resulted in an increasing influx of economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers into European states. Such a trend has proved a bone of contention in many European states and has led to

increasing levels of racism, xenophobia and intolerance, symptoms of an increasingly pluralist society.

European society has become more complex and to respond to a changed and complex society, European citizens need to acquire a vast range of skills and access a wide range of experiences in order to participate fully in European society. There is also a need to combat the upsurge of racial cultural and religious intolerance in society. How will European citizens acquire these skills, experiences and tolerant dispositions? The education system is one agency through which this form of social transformation can occur. Consequently, no major institution has been more subject to change than the education system (Sarason, 1996).

### 1.2 International Trends in Civic Education

To adapt to and become more attuned to a changing society, educational decision makers all over Europe have had to put their own individual systems under review. 'A changing society, of necessity, challenges the established and accepted philosophy of education. Education if it is to be relevant to the needs of those it serves, must be responsive to societal change' (O'Farrell, 1998, p.67). Consequently, curricular reform has been a significant feature of educational reform in many countries. Curricular change has aimed to broaden the skill and experiences of European citizens. A notable feature of curricular change, in European states, has been the inclusion or improvement of civic educational programmes on school's curricula. This has proved to be not just a European trend but a worldwide phenomenon. This is reiterated by Quigley (2000, p.1);

*During the 1990's there appears to have been a rapidly growing interest throughout the world in the development and implementation of educational programs in schools that are designed to help young people become competent and responsible citizens in democratic political systems. This interest has been most directly focused on Civic education programs at pre-collegiate level...*

The creation of competent and responsible citizens has become an explicit aim on educational agendas especially since the 1990's. This validates Dahrendorf's (1990) prediction that the 1990's would be hailed as the 'decade of Citizenship'. Civic education has become vital to European society, particularly in light of increased economic, political and cultural integration and the upsurge of intolerance between different races, religions and cultures. The need for programmes of civic education was articulated as far back as 1948;

*Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace...*

*(Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 1948).*

This educational need was also echoed by the Council of Europe (1983), who affirmed that;

*Our education programmes should encourage all young Europeans to see themselves not only as citizens of their own regions and countries, but also as citizens of Europe and the wider world. All young Europeans should be helped to acquire a willingness and ability to preserve and promote democracy human rights and fundamental freedoms.*

The need for education for world citizenship, understanding and tolerance is articulated yet again in the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child;

*...the education of the child shall be directed to...the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms...the development of respect for...civilisations different from his or her own... the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes and the friendship among all peoples...the development of respect for the natural environment.*

*(Article 29, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, November 1989)*

The need for civic educational programmes has also expressed itself within the Irish educational arena. The 1990's experienced a clearer articulation of educational policy than ever before. The Green Paper, *Education for a Changing World* (1992), which outlined the proposals for educational change stressed the 'need to educate young people

for their role as citizens of Europe...’ (p.3). It also cites a number of educational aims concomitant with the development of well-rounded Irish citizens. These aims include;

- *The promotion of ‘self esteem and self worth combined with a respect for the rights and beliefs of others’.*
- *The creation of ‘tolerant caring and politically aware members of society’*
- *‘Ensuring that Ireland’s young people acquire a keen awareness of their national and European knowledge and identity. (Education for a Changing World, 1992. pp.33-44).*

The Green Paper also emphasises the importance of human rights education;

*‘The values that we share with other democracies stress the individuality of freedom of the person and impart a respect for the rights of others in society. The aim must be to prioritise in students an appropriate sense of balance between the rights and duties of the individual and those of society at large’ (ibid.p.35).*

This document also recognises the importance of the school as a vehicle, through which, the creation of active, responsible and politically aware members of society are nurtured.

*‘The school must seek to create an environment that fosters a sense of political and social awareness of civic and social responsibility within a caring society. In this regard the school should involve students in an active and responsible way in decision-making in the school, commensurate with their level of maturity’ (ibid.).*

The latter stresses the importance of a democratic school environment wherein students can engage in decision-making activities and rehearse their future roles as active, participative and responsible members of society. The Green Paper also articulates the necessity for preparing the students for not only Irish citizenship but European citizenship- ‘With developing integration within European community, the education system will need to foster a fuller understanding of our role as potential citizens of Europe...’ (p.39).

The need for civic education was also expressed in the report in the *Report on the National Education Convention, 1994*. The convention, which included all the educational partners, found that civic education was a neglected facet of the Irish educational system and that this situation needed to be addressed. The White Paper, *Charting Our Education Future* (1995), found that an ‘understanding and appreciation of the central concepts of citizenship’, was a fundamental aim of the Irish education system.

Given the changing context of European society and the need to create responsible, understanding citizens with a respect for the various mores of society, it is not surprising that the uptake of civic educational programmes in national curricula has been widespread. The international trend in the importance of civic education has given rise to the emergence of international networks of civic educators whose co-operation has helped established programmes of civic education all over the world.(Quigley,2000). Kerr (1999), proposed a three-pronged typology of Civic Education. These three strands of Civic education include

- Education about Citizenship
- Education through Citizenship
- Education for Citizenship

Education for Citizenship seems to be the most popular form of civic education. It stresses the preparation of the future citizen for active and participatory citizenship and focuses on the development of key skills necessary for this form of citizenship. Education for citizenship is an explicit curricular response to the needs of society and leads to the development of the capacity for ‘active and responsible participation in a range of activities that affect the welfare of communities’ (Learning and Teaching Scotland, Undated). CSPE, Ireland’s programme of civic education at Junior Certificate level, is an

example of a programme that focuses on education for citizenship, notably education for democratic citizenship.

John Patrick (1997) identified nine trends or nine areas of commonality that have influenced civic education in the democracies of the world.

**1. The Conceptualisation of Civic Education into three interrelated components.**

These components include

- Civic Knowledge- This relates to information and ideas citizens must have a grasp of if they are to operate effectively in democratic societies.
- Civic Skills- These refer to intellectual skills which enable the learner to understand the concept of citizenship and to understand the mechanics at work in democracies. It also includes participatory skills that enable the citizen to participate fully in society and afford them the ability to critically evaluate and influence public policy.
- Civic Virtues-This refers to the creation of a civic disposition which preserves and improves democratic governance and citizenship. Civic virtues include understanding, tolerance, self discipline and a dedication to human rights and equality.

**2. The Teaching of the Core Concepts of Citizenship.** Citizenship is a complex concept and to clarify it, the teaching of the core components of citizenship have become commonplace on civic programmes. These components help to clarify the citizenship concept and include core concepts such as justice, freedom, law, human rights and democracy.

**3. Analysis of Case Studies.** Civic teachers apply core concepts to specific case studies. Analysis of these case studies affords an element of everyday reality to the core concepts of citizenship.

4. **Development of Decision Making Skills.** Decision making skills are developed via the analysis of political and legal issues in the classroom. Students are taught to identify issues, examine and understand both sides of the story and defend one side as better than the other. This affords the student a great degree of autonomy.
5. **Comparative and international analysis of government and citizenship.** Teachers encourage students to compare institutions of democracy in their country with similar institutions elsewhere in the world. Consequently, students will gain a greater insight into institutions in their own countries and will expand their knowledge of institutions in other countries. Hall (1993), articulated that this form of comparative analysis would help to diminish ethnocentrism.
6. **Development of participatory skills and civic virtues through co-operative learning activities.** Co-operative learning involves the teacher facilitating learning in small groups. Each group of students work together to achieve a common objective. This type of teaching and learning affords the student the opportunity to develop their participatory skills and the civic virtues that accompany them. Skills such as team-work, leadership, negotiation, compromise, and conflict resolution are developed through co-operative learning methodologies.
7. **The use of literature to teach civic virtues.** Dramatic situations involving interaction between characters, evident in fictional or historical texts, have been identified as a useful way of identifying and exemplifying civic virtues.
8. **Active learning of civic knowledge, skills and virtues.** The creation of an active citizen with the ability to participate actively in society cannot be achieved using passive teaching and learning methodologies. This form of learning involves the development of skills and independent and critical thinking. Active learning methodologies include simulations, role-play, drama, discussion and debate, to name but a few.

**9. The conjoining of content and process in teaching and learning of civic knowledge, skills, and virtues.** There is a world-wide recognition that 'civic virtues and skills are inseparable from a body of civic knowledge or content. They assume that if learners would think critically and act effectively and virtuously in response to public issue, they must understand the terms of issue, its origins, the alternative responses to it, and the likely consequences of these responses' (Quigley, 2000, p.4).

We have learned that there has been an increased interest in programmes of civic education, especially in the 1990's. The nine threads of commonality vis-à-vis international trends in civic education have been identified and discussed. The next question is –How successful are these programmes in achieving the ultimate goal in moulding citizens with civic skills, virtues and the ability to participate effectively in society?

The Civic Education Study, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement was carried out in the late 1990's and tried and to ascertain and examine ways in which young people are prepared for their roles as citizens in democracies and societies aspiring to be democracies (Tourney-Purta, Schielle, and Amadeo, 1999). Their study reported the findings in 24 countries that included a mix of developed and developing democracies. Civic programmes in participating countries were measured in their effectiveness in adhering to the following characteristics;

- Based on important content that crosses disciplines
- Participative
- Interactive
- Related to life
- Conducted in an non-authoritarian environment
- Cognizant of the challenges of social diversity



- Conducted with the parents, community, non- governmental agencies and the school itself.

The study found that ‘despite extensive efforts, there has not been universal success in any country in ... achieving these goals for all students’. The question now arises- what is hampering the smooth implementation of civic education? The same study identified ten barriers to the successful implementation of Civic programmes in schools;

1. Resistance from the older generation, notably teachers, who utilise authoritarian and didactic teaching methodologies. Consequently active learning and co-operative learning methods are under-utilised or ignored.
2. The difficulty in effecting both curricular and institutional change especially in the case of civic education which requires both institutional and pedagogic change,
3. Decentralisation of educational decision-making and the design and implementation of programmes of civic education without the resources to carry out the necessary tasks. This leads to inefficiency and poorly developed programmes of civic education.
4. Resistance from teachers’ vis-à-vis democratic teaching styles. Such a teaching style transfers power from the teacher to the student and leads to the empowerment of the student. Many teachers are not willing to give up their power in this way.
5. The low status of civic education in comparison to other subject disciplines. Often viewed by many as lacking in rigour.
6. Civic education is not often identifiable in the curriculum, it becomes subsumed into other subjects and is taught implicitly in schools.
7. Civic education is often limited to one single course. This is much too short a time to develop any civic skills or virtues.
8. Many associate civic education as a vehicle of indoctrinisation, especially in countries that once had an authoritarian political regime.

9. Inadequate preparation of teachers. There exists a problem of not having enough teachers specifically trained in the field of civic education.
10. Difficulty in dealing with diversity in classrooms.

These are significant findings but it must be remembered that this is one study and there exists a dearth of research concerning the effectiveness of civic education in countries throughout the world (Quigley, 2000).

To effect the successful implementation of civic education programmes, schools and school personnel must be open to curricular change and the complexities that accompany it. The following section looks at the phenomenology of curricular change with particular emphasis on civic education.

### 1.3 The Phenomenology of Curricular Change

'Innovation' 'reform' and 'change' have all become catchwords in educational parlance. Despite this, there is a growing awareness that reform efforts fail more than they succeed (Eisner, 1998; Fullan, 1992, 2001; Sarason, 1990, 1996). Sarason (1990), referred to this phenomenon as 'the predictable failure of educational reform'. So why are so many attempts at educational reform unsuccessful? There are numerous factors at play. One of the reasons why reform efforts are not realised, stems from the fact that the most potent source of change comes from outside the school system (Sarason, 1996). These 'spearheaders' of change are not indigenous to school environments and as a result the failure of reform stems from 'ignorance about the distinctive tradition-based axioms, values and outlook of school personnel' (ibid.p.3). Fullan (1992), articulated that educational change failed more than it succeeded because of the complexity of implementing change, that is, putting a theory into practice. Fullan (2001, p.24), referred

to the implementation process as 'complex and dilemma ridden'. Reform efforts also tend to ignore the subjective realities of those who work and operate within the school system, the locus of change. It is not just an understanding of school personnel that is critical, but also a deep understanding of the culture of the school as a whole. A sensitivity and awareness of this culture is paramount to successful educational reform. This is articulated by Callan (2000, p.1),

*'The cultural context within which new proposals are to be introduced is a significant feature in determining whether new proposals will in fact be introduced, and if so, to what extent and with what effect'.*

The school culture therefore, can either facilitate or militate against the implementation of curricular innovations, such as civic educational programmes, for example. Reid (1975, p.252), observed that it was 'necessary for policy makers to devote at least as much attention to the context within which the curriculum is to be implemented, as to the design of the product itself'. Not paying attention to local context can result in a 'square-peg, round-hole' scenario and will ultimately lead to failure. Introducing a curricular initiative involves one in more than its development and delivery. Nor is curriculum change a mere question of installation, rather it requires a 'critical interplay between new proposals and existing structures and systems' (Callan, 1994, p.13). 'What matters most to policy outcomes are local capacity and will'(McLaughlin,1998. p.12). In other words, schools must develop the capacity to change and teachers, who deliver the curriculum at classroom level, must have the will to change.

#### 1.4 The Implications of Curricular Change

'Educational change is technically simple and socially complex' (Fullan, 2001, p.69). The change process is socially complex because it requires innovators and policy makers to have an awareness and sensitivity of the school as a distinct social system where 'a myriad of subjective worlds' exist' (Fullan, 1993, p.26). Change is a social

phenomenon that can have a profound effect on the members within the school environment. This is reiterated by Lighthall (1973), who described educational change as a process of coming to grips with the multiple realities of people, people who are the main agents of and participants within the change process.

Marris (1975, p.51), observed that

*‘The power of social systems over individuals become understandable, I think, only if we see that social systems provide... a framework of theory, values and related technology which enables individuals to make sense of their lives. Threats to the social system threaten this framework’.*

There is a responsibility therefore, on the part of policy makers, to understand the phenomenology of change’ or ‘how members of social systems experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended’ (Fullan, 2001, p.8). Neglect or ignorance of this phenomenological dimension is ‘at the heart of the spectacular lack of success in most social reforms’ (ibid.).

Change essentially is a process of ‘learning to do something new’ (Fullan, 2001, p.22). Effecting innovations at school level can require a change in behaviours and a change in beliefs. Real change, Fullan argues, ‘involves changes in conceptions and role behaviour, which is why it is so difficult to achieve’ (Fullan, 2001, p.40).

Putting a new idea, such as civic education, into practice has behavioural and ideological implications. Behavioural change requires teachers to acquire new skills, partake in new activities or adopt new pedagogies and practices. Introducing civic education into schools also has these requisites especially since these educational programmes focus on active learning methodologies, methodologies that can signal a new departure for many teachers, particularly those that rely on traditional methods of teaching and learning. The successful implementation of civic education requires behavioural change, particularly on the part of the teacher. However, effecting behavioural change is a complex and challenging undertaking and is often underestimated

by those seeking to effect change in school contexts. This complexity is highlighted by Callan (1994, pp.20-21)

*Every social situation experiencing change is a complex situation. To invite or expect people to change their ways of doing things, demands of an individual not only that he/she abandon or alter to some extent what it is that they have been doing.*

Altering behaviour therefore, requires individuals to abandon existing routines, norms and practices. Change requires teachers to 'break the habit', habits that provide their professional lives with certainty, security and stability. Change threatens this stability and can fuel resistance on the part of teachers. Plant (1987), identified a number of factors that fuelled such resistance to change in school environments. Plant found that a threat to core skills and competence and a fear of the unknown, proved major barriers to successful implementation of new curricular programmes. Initial resistance is part and parcel of the phenomenological aspect of change. Stallings (1989), affirmed that teachers are more likely to change their behaviours under the following conditions.

- ❑ Awareness of the need for improvement
- ❑ There is a commitment within the school staff to try out new ideas
- ❑ Workshop/In-service ideas are modified in the classroom
- ❑ New ideas are put into practice and evaluated
- ❑ Where teachers observe each other in the classroom
- ❑ Teachers report on successes and failures
- ❑ Problems and possible solutions to them are discussed
- ❑ Teachers continually set new goals

These conditions require teachers to become learners themselves. Change is a process of learning that requires cycles of trial an error, critical reflection, evaluation and

interaction with peers. Since change involves learning to do something new, it follows that 'teacher development is a sine qua non' (Fullan, 1992, p.25).

Fullan (1985), articulated that changes in behaviour precede rather than follow changes in belief. If, for example, a teacher adopts a new practice, comes to grips with it and can use that practice effectively in the classroom then he or she will be more open to a change in their belief system. This is reiterated by McLaughlin (1998, p.13), who articulated that 'individuals required to change routines or take up new practices can become believers'. An attempt to change the belief systems of individuals, is by far a more challenging undertaking than changing behaviour. Hamilton (1975, p.179), found that 'a complex web of beliefs and ideologies about the nature of education' pervades school settings. Many of these beliefs are so institutionally rooted, that an effort to introduce new ways of thinking is the greatest challenge in effecting change. Such change requires individuals, such as principals and teachers, to abandon belief systems that have shaped their professional lives and the climate of the school. Effecting a change in belief systems is a challenging undertaking. Fullan (2001, p.44), affirms the complexity of this process-

*Changes in beliefs are even more difficult : they challenge the core values held by individuals regarding the purposes of education; moreover, beliefs are often not explicit discussed, or understood, but rather are buried at the level of unstated assumptions.*

Change, therefore is not just a process of learning to do something new, it also requires those implementing the change at classroom level to think differently.

Fullan (ibid., p.84) found that innovations requiring a change in behaviours and beliefs depends on whether or not teachers are working as isolated individuals or are exchanging ideas, support and positive feelings about their work. A collegial and collaborative work environment is therefore vital to the successful implementation of innovations. Fullan (1992, p.23) found that 'strong collegiality coupled with

commitment to continuous improvement, backed up by policies and structures designed to support purposeful teacher interaction will greatly increase the likelihood of successful implementation'. Collaborative work climates are central to the successful implementation of new initiatives like civic educational programmes.

### 1.5 Schools and Change

Schools are, by and large, conservative institutions that are deeply rooted in traditions, traditions that define the values, roles and expectations the school espouses. Eisner (1998), referred to schools as 'robust institutions' and argued that this 'robustness' made these institutions difficult to change. Cuban (1990) argued that this very robustness provides a source of security to those who operate within the school setting. Any force which threatens this stability is viewed as a threat by those within it. Despite numerous reform efforts schools have remained virtually the same over the years. This inertia is evident in school structures, social organisation, expectations, roles values and beliefs. Collectively these elements compose the 'culture' of the school. Hargreaves (1991), defined culture as 'the way we do things around here'. The ways in which schools 'do things' becomes institutionalised and is a major determinant of role definition and school climate. School culture is not a uniform entity. It differs from school to school and this variability adds to the complexity of change process. Some school cultures possess a greater capacity to change than others. The capacity for change is determined by the culture of the school and its structural and organisational framework. It is also determined by the complexity of the innovation.

Hamilton (1975, p.179), found that a 'complex web of beliefs and ideologies about the nature of education', pervades school settings. Beliefs, pertaining to what should be taught and how it should be taught, become institutionally embedded within the culture of the school. The educational values enshrined by a particular school tend to

define roles, dictate the structure and social organisation of schools and determine the prevailing climate or ethos of the school. Traditionally, Irish schools have tended to value content knowledge (Callan, 1997). This ideology favours the transmission of facts and information from teacher to pupil. The 'empty jug' metaphor is one often cited to describe the kind of teaching and learning that prevails in Irish schools. The student is represented by the empty jug and the teacher 'pours' the knowledge into the empty jug, representative of the pupil. Hence the acquisition of a body of knowledge is viewed as tantamount to problem solving, discovery learning and critical inquiry, critical teaching and learning elements in civic education. The values schools enshrine, informs what teachers teach and how they teach within the classroom setting. The *OECD Review* 1991 described teaching in Ireland as

*...primarily didactic in nature, the teacher is the initiator; students work alone; lessons are structured around content with a focus on factual content; little or no small group problem-solving approaches; little use of computers/video technology*

This suggests that authoritarian and didactic teaching methods are favoured.

Introducing new teaching methods will ultimately challenge traditional ideologies regarding what knowledge should be learned and how it should be taught. Didactic methods of teaching and learning prevail and these define the teacher's role. Introducing active learning methodologies into the classroom, for example, challenges traditional methods of teaching and learning, and this can lead to resistance particularly from those teachers who find security and stability in didactic teaching methods. Introducing new teaching methodologies also requires the teacher to review their behaviour and redefine their roles within the classroom context.



## 1.6 Structural and Organisational Aspects of the School

The values enshrined in schools can also inform how schools are actually structured, socially organised and can determine how time is apportioned. Content knowledge is highly valued in Irish schools. Consequently, Irish schools are structured in ways that enable the teacher to 'cover' a course or indeed a textbook, because many teachers feel the textbook *is* the course. 'Forty minute subject class periods, eight classes a day, provides, it is believed, a reasonably effective way of covering a subject area' (Callan, 1997, p.24). Fullan (2001, p.53), observed that the outcome of implementation is susceptible to the influences of changes in the general organisation of schools. Such organisation can facilitate or militate against change. How a school organises its time is determined by ideologies regarding educational knowledge. 'Knowledge is something which is contained in textbooks and which is transmitted at short intervals to young people' (Callan, 1997, p.24). This form of school organisation can hinder the implementation of active learning methodologies, a crucial component of civic education. Active learning involves those activities that enable students to become active participants in the learning process. A forty minute class period is often not conducive to the execution of these activities, especially fieldwork, drama, simulations and meaningful discussion. In addition teachers are also under pressure to 'cover a course' and are not willing to 'take a risk' engaging in such activities. Active learning entails planning time and this prerequisite often prevents teachers from engaging in such practices. Sticking with the known and proven ways of doing things gives the teacher a greater degree of certainty. Teachers also see such methods in terms of 'games' and feel this methodology does not constitute 'real teaching'.

One of the most enduring features of schools is high levels of teacher isolation. Schools are structures and organised in ways that isolate teachers from their peers. Eisner (1998, p.161), observed that '...we have designed schools both physically and

organizationally to restrict the teachers access to other professionals'. This is reiterated by Lortie (1975), who found that teachers don't develop a common technical culture which enables teachers to share resources and problems and discuss the nature of change with their peers. Failure to engage in a common technical culture, Lortie warns, will lead to ambiguity vis-à-vis the nature of the change to be implemented. Goodlad (1984, p.186), found the 'autonomous isolation of teachers leads to the absence of rich professional dialogue'. Such dialogue is essential when teachers try to grapple with change.

Isolated teacher cultures are those in which teachers don't give help to peers and don't ask for help in their professional lives. Consequently, coping with educational change is often a private affair. Such isolation can have a debilitating effect on the change process. Rosenholtz (1989), distinguished between 'stuck' or learning impoverished schools and 'moving' or learning enriched schools. 'Stuck' schools are characterised by high degrees of teacher isolation, limited teacher learning on the job, high levels of teacher uncertainty and low levels of commitment to the job. Rosenholtz felt these schools had 'little attachment to anything or anybody. Teachers seemed more concerned with their own identity than a sense of community' (ibid., p.208). Fullan (2001) observed that the degree of change that occurs in schools is strongly related to the extent to which teachers interact with each other. He found that change can only be brought about by a process of 'personal development in a school context' (p.124).

There is a case therefore for the restructuring and re-culturing of schools so that teachers can have meaningful interaction with each other. There is an urgent need for schools to become 'learning enriched' environments. According to Rosenholtz, 'learning enriched' or 'moving' schools are those that engage in vision-building activities whereby all staff members have an input into goal setting. Moving schools are also those characterised by high levels of collaboration and this collaboration has

become internalised. This means collaboration has become an institutional norm and has become embedded into the culture of the school as a whole. Moving schools foster high levels of trust between teachers and provide comfortable forums where teachers can share their problems and experiences. Mc Laughlin and Talbert (2001, p.22), articulated that ‘a collaborative community of practice in which teachers share instructional resources and reflections in practice appears essential to their persistence and success in innovating classroom practice’. They also found that most schools possessed cultural features concomitant with ‘stuck’ schools, and these features stemmed from the way schools were organised. Hargreaves (1991), referred to the dominant organisation and culture of schools as ‘fragmented individualism’, a structural feature of school that compels teachers to work and grapple with the complexities of change on their own. This leads to professional isolation. Teachers have never observed another teacher teaching, nor have they been observed by another teacher. Reflective teaching is vital because self-evaluation has its limitations. The way in which schools are organised often act as insurmountable barriers not only to the change process, but also to professional teacher development, a sine qua non of educational change. There is a need therefore, to alter school structures such as timetables to facilitate meaningful teacher interaction. Extra time for engaging in new practices is also crucial because teachers have to experience cycles of trial and error and need latitude and scope for ‘risk-taking’ activities such as active learning practices. Re-culturing and re-structuring is the way forward if schools are to attain a greater institutional capacity for change.

### 1.7 Teacher Roles and Teacher Behaviour

Because most people in society have experienced the education system at some point in their life, a stereotypical image of what constitutes the teacher’s role has materialised. This image is formed through a process of acculturation that begins in

early childhood and defines what the teacher teaches and *how* they teach. This image has not changed much over the years despite the rapid evolution of society. A conservative image of the teacher has become internalised and any attempt to alter this image will ultimately lead to resistance (Eisner, 1998). This image is caught up in the ‘norms’ of teacher behaviour expected from educational clients and teacher expectations of what their role should be and how they should behave in their classrooms. Any change that challenges these norms can lead to resistance, not only from teachers, but from students and parents too.

Throughout their careers, teachers develop a teaching repertoire and engage in teaching practices that give them a sense of professional security in their classrooms. Most teachers in Irish post-primary schools, for example, are subject specialists and are familiarised with the syllabus and content of their subject. This familiarity affords the teacher a high degree of certainty and security in their interaction with students. Teachers easily become attached to pedagogies that work for them. Any change that attempts to sever this attachment will be resisted. Change can require a teacher to move from familiar territory and embrace new skills and practices. Such changes are often met by passive resistance (*ibid.*). There is an onus therefore, on the part of educational innovators, to make themselves aware of the ‘expected’ roles and behaviours of teachers and support the learning of new roles and behaviours. Otherwise, the likelihood of change succeeding will be diminished.

### 1.8 The Challenges of Civic Education

Effecting the successful implementation and delivery of programmes of civic education presents a series of challenges to schools.

‘Schools are complex organisations’ (Handy and Aitken, 1986,p.32). This complexity is furthered when curricular change enters the equation. It is the role of school management to lead the school in times of educational change. Fullan (1992, p.49) referred to the school principal as the ‘gatekeeper of change’. This is a powerful metaphor that conjures up an image of a principal who can either facilitate or hinder change. Fullan (2001) argued that effective implementation of any new curricular programme requires the principal to take an active role in initiating change. The pivotal role of the principal is also emphasised by Carmichael *et al.* (1985) who argued that teachers felt more secure trying out new ideas in the classroom when the principal gave active support to the innovation. The provision of quality, active leadership is therefore the first challenge for school principals when attempting to introduce a programme of civic education into the school. The principal must give active support to the innovation. This support can take many forms;

- Selecting the ‘right’ teachers. It is vital that the principal selects teachers who want to teach civic education and who have an interest in it. Unenthusiastic teachers and teachers who don’t want to teach the subject will do little for the profile of civic education in the school
- A commitment to teacher education. Principals should encourage teachers to acquire professional qualifications in civic education. Educated teachers become a resource in the school. Principals should also encourage teachers to attend in-service courses. These are vital because they provide greater insights into civic education and expose the teacher to appropriate learning methodologies. The also give the teacher opportunity to meet other teachers and share ideas.
- Raising the status of civic education in the school. Keddie (1971), found that lower status knowledge has been identified as containing

'practical' and 'human' dimensions, dimensions that are evident in civic education. Tourney-Purta *et al* (1999) found that programmes of civic education internationally, tend to have a low status attached to them. Status can be raised in many ways. Firstly a co-ordinator can be appointed to help with the smooth implementation of civic education. They can be a source of information and support to other teachers and the appointment would be an indicator that the subject is taken seriously. The inclusion of civic education in house exams and on the schedules of parent-teacher meetings would also raise its profile. The selection of the 'right' teachers and a commitment to teacher education and development would also raise its profile.

The second challenge for management is developing the institutional capacity for change. This often involves restructuring. The timetable, for example, could be restructured to allow time for teachers of civic education to meet, discuss and share ideas. It would also enable teachers to grapple with the innovation, not in isolation, but in concert with colleagues. It would also enable teachers to share resources and information.

The third challenge for management is the promotion of active learning methodologies in the school so that the active engagement of students in their own learning occurs. Active learning methodologies are central to civic education and help to develop active citizens. This is a difficult challenge because this form of pedagogy often requires teachers to abandon the teaching methodologies that have shaped much of their professional lives. Convincing teachers to adopt new pedagogies like active learning requires the principal to adopt the role of 'instructional leader'. This style of leadership empowers, encourages and supports teachers. The principal must lead by example. The principal, for example,

could teach civic education, employ active learning methodologies and invite other teachers to observe him. This would enable the teachers to master these methods teachers. Active learning methodologies often generate more noise than traditional teaching methods. Consequently, teachers often 'shy away' from them. There is partly because order and control are features that pervade school settings. To redress this, an active learning room could be provided so that teachers will have more confidence using and trying out these methodologies.

The greatest challenge for teachers, the author believes, is changing their beliefs and behaviours vis-à-vis civic education. Teachers have to believe in the value of civic education. The principal can bring this about by adopting a 'transformational' style of leadership. (Stoll and Fink, 1996). This style of leadership requires an approach that transforms the feelings, attitudes and beliefs of teachers. This is a tough challenge.

Civic education often requires teachers to transform their behaviours or teaching methods. This is a challenging endeavour and requires teachers to re-examine their classroom role and abandon teaching methods that provide security for many. However, a transformational style of leadership can bring this about.

The implementation and delivery of civic education in schools presents many challenges to both principals and management. These challenges can sometimes prove difficult to surmount, cause a high degree of teacher uncertainty and requires risk-taking. These however are part and parcel of the change process.

### 1.9 Conclusion

Society is changing on a number of levels and to become more attuned with an evolving context citizens need to acquire new skills and access a wide range of experiences to participate fully in society. Within this context a renewed interest has occurred on an international level and civic education is appearing for the first time on many curricula

and schools all around the world have to grapple with curricular change of this nature. Implementing programmes of civic education in schools, therefore, is challenging for both teachers and principals. The next section looks at the Irish experience of civic education.



## **Chapter Two – Civic Education: The Irish Experience**

### **2.1 Introduction**

T.H. Marshall (1950), defined citizenship in terms of belonging to a community. Individuals are exposed to many communities in their lifetime but perhaps the most intimate and influential community, apart from the family, is the school community. School, often referred to as a ‘microcosm of society’, is a social environment within which young adults can rehearse their adult and civic roles and serve their ‘apprenticeship’ in citizenship. One of the major tasks of the Irish educational system, therefore, is to prepare our future citizens to fulfil an active and participative role in society. Irish society is evolving on a cultural, economic and technical level and this evolution has created a multi-faceted society that is complex and diverse in form. To respond to such a society, tomorrow’s citizens will need to acquire a vast range of transferable skills that will enable them to play an active and participative role in contemporary society. The young person also needs to access a wide range of experiences to widen their knowledge of and enhance their understanding of the processes and mechanics at work in modern societies. Such is the rationale for the renewed interest in civic education in Ireland.

### **2.2 The Civics Course**

Civic education is a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland at post-primary level. However, a debate on its inclusion as a separate subject on the primary curriculum occurred as far back as 1922. The new free-state government had plans to introduce civic education into primary schools but these plans were strongly opposed by the Catholic Church. In a submission to the National Programme Conference in 1922, the Catholic Church articulated that ‘they would not favour the introduction of Civics as a separate subject on the school curriculum arguing that because of its close links with religion, civic issues should be incorporated with

the religious education programmes' (Hyland, A., 1993, p.1). Ironically, the Church of Ireland at the time, were strongly in favour of Civics as a separate subject in primary schools. Despite this the government decided not to include civic education on the primary curriculum. This action was reflective of the close bond between church and state and the influence of the church over public affairs, particularly education. Civics did not appear on the primary curriculum until 1971. It wasn't until 1966 that 'Civics', a course in civic education, was included on the post-primary curriculum.

In his speech to the 1965-1966 estimates, Mr. George Colley, the Minister of Education, announced that a new course in civic education would be introduced into post-primary schools at junior cycle level only. It was given just one period a week on the timetable. This new subject was obligatory but unlike other subjects on the curriculum would not be formally presented for examination for 'in this matter of Civics, it is the spirit rather than the lesson that counts' (Dail Report No.216). This comment was to set the tone for the future development of Civics.

1966 was a significant year in Irish history as it marked the fiftieth anniversary of the insurrection of 1916. This heightened patriotic fervour throughout Ireland and Civics was introduced into post-primary schools out of a spirit of national commemoration and patriotism. The subject was viewed by many as an instrument, through which, nationalistic values could be inculcated into the young. This was reflected in the syllabus, a discussion on which will occur shortly. It is also reflected in the aims of the course. The main aim of the Civics course according to *The Rules and Programme for Teachers 1967* was to

ensure that the pupils acquire a knowledge of and proper respect for local and national institutions and their own rights and responsibilities as citizens. It will of set purpose to inculcate the social and civic virtues generally: strive to awaken a social consciousness which will lead to the development of a sense of responsibility, a sense of necessity for co-operation in the working for the common good, an understanding of true patriotism and its demands, a sense of tolerance towards and sympathy with others in their needs and problems, and an awareness of a duty to assist in solving such problems and supplying such needs. (ibid., p.24)

One of the prime aims of the course therefore was to create a knowledgeable, respectable, virtuous, responsible, co-operative, patriotic and caring citizen. This was quite an undertaking for prospective Civics teachers, given that it was only afforded one class period per week. In addition,

the course will have, also as a prime object, the teaching of the young citizen to recognise and obey lawful authority, to help preserve law, order and discipline, to respect private and public right to property and to be ready to defend the national territory should the need arise. It will at the same time try to inculcate as fully as possible, an understanding and acceptance of the principles of personal liberty, of justice, of freedom and the brotherhood of mankind.(ibid.p.25)

The creation of a compliant and disciplined citizen who would obey lawful authority and be willing to defend Ireland proved a pivotal aim of the Civics course. In summary, the main aims of the Civics course were-

- The inculcation of virtues and right moral principles
- The inculcation of moral virtues and a sense of civic responsibilities
- The instillation of virtues of charity, honesty, self-sacrifice, purity and temperance
- The acquisition of an adequate knowledge of and respect for local and national institutions
- An awareness of civic rights and responsibilities
- To lead the citizen to recognise and obey authority

(Adapted from *The Rules and Programmes for Secondary and Vocational Schools, 1967*).

The strong moral content, evident in these aims suggest that the Church was consulted in the drawing up of the syllabus document.

The language employed in the syllabus is distinctive. According to the syllabus, the Civics course aimed to 'train', 'inculcate', 'instil' students of Civics. The course also had a high knowledge content which focused on the transference of facts from teacher to pupil. There is little emphasis on skills and the pragmatic dimensions of citizenship. This is reflective of a

didactic teaching approach and suggests that didactic teaching methods were employed in the teaching of Civics and promoted by the Department of Education at the time. A passive form of teaching and learning prevailed as opposed to an active form which is crucial to the development of active citizens. The central message, implicitly expressed by the syllabus, was that of a knowledgeable teacher imparting inert facts to compliant students, a situation that hints at indoctrination.

The syllabus consisted of twenty-one items of learning. Item one of the syllabus focused on the individual, the local community, the state and the nation of Ireland whereas item two focuses on the rights of the individual, the family and the state. Item three was concerned with local organisations. Items four to eleven, inclusively, enveloped the concept of government from an Irish perspective and addressed issues such as the functions of government, the Law, the judiciary, elections, local government, finance and taxation and the education system. Item twelve was concerned with the Irish language, its origins, methods and achievements. Item thirteen addressed the issue of patriotism. Item fourteen is quite interesting. It deals with the issue of personal hygiene and reads as follows-

care of the body (appropriate to age and sex). Environmental Hygiene : Potable water; clean air, waste disposal ; common communicable diseases ; infestations. Food Hygiene : causes of food poisoning; precautions in the manufacture, preparation, storage, transportation, display and service of foodstuffs for human consumption; economic aspects; food hygiene in the home (ibid. p.25)

This would probably look out of place on a Civics syllabus today but at that time the social conditions of many Irish citizens were a prime governmental concern. Infestations, such as lice, were common as were a range of illnesses and diseases related of poor hygiene or a lack of knowledge about it. This suggests that the Civics course was probably used by the government as a vehicle, through which, young people could be educated about hygiene. Items fifteen to nineteen deal with social welfare, land tenure, industrial relations, the co-operative movement and semi-state bodies. It is worthy to note that items one to nineteen focuses on aspects of citizenship from a purely Irish perspective. The final two items on the list, items

twenty and twenty-one are the only ones with an international flavour. Item twenty focuses on the work of Irish people abroad and twenty-one was concerned with international organisations such as the O.E.C.D. and the W.H.O. It is interesting to note that both these areas appear last on the list, suggesting that a lesser degree of importance was bestowed on international issues, or indeed international citizenship. The promotion of a purely 'Irish' form of citizenship also suggests that the syllabus was quite insular in outlook, reflecting the view that other cultural, racial or religious perspectives were not accounted for. Although Ireland was predominantly mono-cultural at the time, there was a sizable cohort of Irish citizens who were of different religious persuasions and from differing cultural and racial backgrounds than the Irish Citizen alluded to in the syllabus. It is also worthy to note that there is no mention of the travelling community, even though they are Irish citizens and constitute a large community in Ireland. The notion of empowerment of the citizen is also absent. This would suggest that Civics, and the education system at the time, did not promote social inclusion or empowerment of the citizen. Despite these apparent weaknesses, Civics tried to address the social agendas evident in Ireland at that time. The 1960's marked a time when the Church was defensive against the threat of secularism, hence the high moral content of the syllabus. Ireland had still not entered the E.E.C, so co-operation with other countries was minimal. Hence, the syllabus, at that time, would not have looked out of place.

Civics was received in schools with high levels of enthusiasm. Such enthusiasm was evident in the *Notes on the Teaching of Civics* (1966,p.1)- 'Civics, we believe will be a key subject in our schools and may well be very significant for the future of our country'. The outlook looked good. However, a major initiative was introduced around the same time which would outshine and divert attention away from this new programme- the introduction of free secondary education, an initiative that far outweighed Civics in terms of complexity of implementation. Schools found the logistics of implementing free secondary education very

problematic. This, coupled with the fact that Civics was not formally examined meant that Civics slipped down the ladder of education priorities in schools. Consequently the status of the subject was low.

Another contributing factor to the low status of the subject was the assumption that anybody could teach Civics. This is reflected in the fact that teachers were given no initial preparation or training prior to their delivery of the course in their classrooms. Reflecting on her experience as a Civics teacher Hyland (1993) articulated that 'the fact that I had no preparation for teaching such a course, nor indeed was I in anyway qualified or necessarily interested in the subject area, was not seen by the school as a barrier to my teaching Civics'. The author, reflecting on her experience as a Civics teacher, felt that this had a detrimental effect on students and their learning. The author can recall asking the teacher what Civics was and the teacher replied that she thought it was a mixture of history and geography. Neither the teacher of the students had any idea what the purpose of the content of the course was!

Initially, the only information available to teachers on the teaching of Civics appeared in a document entitled *Notes for Teachers*. It is interesting to note that the pedagogy promoted in this document is at variance with the tone, values and teaching methodologies espoused by the syllabus. The document in question recognised that-

citizenship is not simply a matter of knowing about social and political institutions. It is also the willingness to participate actively and creatively in community affairs. The function of the civics teacher, therefore, is not merely to teach facts but also to foster civic virtue. Virtue implies action : so the teaching method we must use must be essentially an active one (p.1)

The emphasis on action and active learning is in sharp contrast with the 'instillation' and 'inculcation' of facts stressed in the syllabus. It can only be assumed therefore that the syllabus and the teacher's notes were written by two different hands. Whilst the syllabus promotes a didactic teaching, the notes call for the employment of active learning methodologies in the teaching of civics and the development of an active citizen. It stresses the need for the development of skills and the school and its community are viewed as laboratories within

which skills can be developed and applied- ‘Civics was envisaged as having a central role in integrating the life of the school with the realities outside the school door...’. (Hyland, 1993, p.2). These notes inferred a radical departure from traditional teaching methods

‘The function of the Civics teacher, therefore, is not merely to teach facts, but also to foster civic virtue. Virtue implies action, so the teaching method we use must essentially be an active one (Dept. of Ed., 1966, p.1). The said notes were very progressive for that time.

To redress the lack of education vis-à-vis the teaching of civics, a number of courses were put on for teachers. In April 1966, in conjunction with the European Association of Teachers of Civics and Allied Subjects and the I.P.A., the department organised a seminar for teachers of Civics. This became an annual event from 1969-1973. A number of regional courses for teachers were also conducted. In 1975 the Association of Teachers of Civics and Allied subjects was established and boasted a strong membership. It organised lectures and produced a regular newsletter for teachers and one for students entitled *Young Citizen*. Despite this support it soon became clear that the ‘morale of Civics teachers could only be described as one of fading enthusiasm’ (Hyland, A, 1993). Hyland, A (1993) identified a number of reasons why this was so;

- There was not enough time for the subject
- Civics teachers had no proper training
- School principals were not very interested in the subject
- Examination competitiveness pushed it out
- No examination or other form of assessment existed

Consequently, Civics gradually came to be ignored in schools and the ‘department regulations about the requirement of one class of Civics per week began to be honoured in the breach rather than in the observance’(ibid., p.4).

Despite it’s apparent weaknesses and its lack of status, Civics remained in schools for almost thirty years. In many schools it wasn’t taught at all. Hammond and McCarthy (1996, p.1)

observed that 'in the vast majority of schools a civics programme [did] not exist and its time allocation [had] been given to [other] areas'. Civics had either been subsumed into other subjects or the time slot was being used to teach other subjects. Civics became a 'doss' class or a 'timetable filler'. Civic education was in crisis.

### 2.3 Rationale for CSPE

Two reports proved influential reference points for the future of Civic education, as did the accelerated change in Irish society. The first, an internal report, commissioned by the Department of Education in the eighties, enquired into the provision of Civics in schools. The report entitled <sup>1</sup>*Civics-What Went Wrong?* found that Civics was a failing subject. This unpublished report found that Civics was failing for a number of reasons.

- Ireland had undergone a context change vis-a-vis its membership of the E.E.C meant that the syllabus was no longer relevant
- There was an insufficient realisation in schools of the difficulty in teaching Civics
- There was poor subject definition
- The fact that the subject was not formally assessed and its absence on the senior cycle curriculum meant that it lacked status
- Civics was, in many cases, not being taught in schools.

The second influential study was conducted by Hannan and Shortall and entitled *The Quality of their Education* (1991). This study enquired into the effectiveness of the Irish education system in meeting educational aims. One of these aims centred round the provision of civic and political education. The results were alarming. Only six per cent of respondents felt that the school had helped them to understand political concepts and make political decisions. Only 19% felt that the school had enabled them to play a responsible role in society. Civic and

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<sup>1</sup> The author was not privy to this document. Details of document were given by Dr. Gary Granville, Lecture notes, H.Dip.Arts (CSPE), Oct'99.



political education was given the lowest satisfaction rating of all. Hannan and Shortall concluded that Civics was ineffective in helping students understand politics, make political decisions and play a responsible role in society and they highlighted the necessity to correct for the disturbing level of both pupil and school disinterest in civil-political education.

A rationale emerged for a new departure for civic education. Behind the scenes things were happening. An attempt to draft a new course in civic education began in the eighties. In 1984 the Curriculum and Examinations Board published *Issues and Structures in Education* and it proposed that a new course in social and political education should be included in the Junior Cycle curriculum. Under the direction of the Minister of Education, Gemma Hussey, a committee were appointed and a draft course in citizenship education was formulated entitled *Social and Political Studies*. The course was very progressive and had an interdisciplinary dimension with links to other subjects such as history, geography, business and home economics and it was envisaged that this course would be delivered in module form. The CEB presented the final draft and looked for endorsement. However the proposals were 'jettisoned before it was even discussed. Political opposition on the part of some and indifference on the part of many had contributed once again to the marginalisation of a huge area of learning in Irish schools' (Lynch, K, 2000, p.9).

In 1989 the Junior Certificate was introduced into Irish post-primary schools and aimed to contribute to the 'moral and spiritual development of students and encourages them to develop qualities of responsible citizenship in a national, European and global context' (Harrison, 1998, p.2). This provided the impetus for the whole area of civic education to be re-examined .

In 1993, under the auspices of the Fianna Fail/Labour coalition government, *A Programme for Government* was drawn up. Within a new direction in educational policy emerged that would aim 'to foster creativity, critical faculties and social awareness and analytical and problem solving in Irish school' (Gov. of Ire., 1993). With this aim in mind, the NCCA, under the

direction of the Minister for Education, at the time, Niamh Breathnach, formulated a new course in citizenship- Civic Social and Political Education or CSPE. CSPE is a junior cycle subject based on human rights and social responsibilities and it aims to produce active citizens who can participate fully in society. It was to become a mandatory, core subject and unlike its predecessor Civics, it would be formally assessed.

#### 2.4 The Pilot Study

Before it was incepted into Irish post-primary schools, CSPE was piloted. The pilot project ran from 1993-1996 and involved 138 schools. (Hammond and McCarthy, 1996). Harrison (1998, pp.3-4) articulated that the functions of the pilot project included;

- The development of a course in CSPE, appropriate to the needs of students, teachers and schools
- The testing of modes and techniques of student assessment and certification appropriate to CSPE
- The testing of models of teacher in service/in –career development appropriate to CSPE
- The identification of suitable resource materials for CSPE and the production of Exemplar materials

In addition a number of in-service days for both principals and teachers were provided. Shannon, M (2002, p.34), found that there was a mixed response to these in-service days ‘with an approximate attendance of 30-60%, depending on the day and the location of the venue. Often a second teacher attended rather than management personnel’.

When piloting was complete the subject was launched in 1997 and a support service was established to support teachers of CSPE. It was composed of seven seconded teachers.

## 2.5 The Aims of CSPE

CSPE was formulated in response to a broader aim of Irish education 'to create tolerant, caring and politically aware members of society' (Dept of Ed., 1995). Overall, the course aims to prepare students for active and participatory citizenship and the development of 'knowledgeable students who can explore, analyse, evaluate, who are skilled and practised in moral and critical appraisal and capable of making decisions and judgements...'  
(Harrison, C, 1998, p.4). The aims of CSPE are manifold.

- To develop qualities of empathy
- To develop in the student, critical and moral faculties
- To foster social literacy in students
- To develop an awareness of how human conflicts arise and how to resolve them
- To engender an appreciation of the achievement of all individuals and human groups and an ambition to build on them
- To foster an awareness of human economic interdependence and to develop an understanding of these interdependent relations which exist in all communities

(Adapted from the NCCA CSPE Discussion Paper, 1993, pp.11-12)

The aims cited above are relevant to contemporary Irish society in the light of globalisation and the accelerated influx of immigrants into Ireland.

## 2.6 Course Content

The CSPE course is structured around four units of study;

1. The Individual
2. The Community
3. The State
4. The wider World

These units have a developmental sequence and through these units of study students should come to understand the seven concepts of citizenship central to citizenship. These are

- Rights and Responsibilities
- Democracy
- Interdependence
- Human Dignity
- Stewardship
- The Law
- Development

These concepts serve collectively to clarify the concepts central to an understanding of citizenship. CSPE a course in 'Education for Citizenship', which focuses not only on the cognitive dimension, as Civics did, but on the practical and affective dimensions of citizenship.

CSPE has three domains;

1. The **Cognitive** Domain- this is concerned with the acquisition of a body of knowledge that will enable the student to understand political concepts and the mechanics of democratic societies.
2. The **Affective** Domain- This involves fostering in the student a 'sense of belonging' to the various communities he or she belongs to. This can contribute to the student's awareness of and respect for others
3. The **Pragmatic** Domain- This involves the development of skills that will enable the student to participate fully in society. These skills are of an intellectual and social character and students, ideally, would be placed into situations where these skills can be applied and further developed

In CSPE the focus is on action and the development of and active citizen. It is vital that the three dimensions, outlined above, don't work in isolation to each other because citizenship

education may be presented as theory without practice, as in the Civics course or being offered solely as an experience, as practice without theory.

## 2.7 Teaching Methodologies

*What I hear I forget.  
What I see, I remember.  
What I do, I understand.*  
(Confucius)

The prominence of the pragmatic dimension of CSPE manifests itself in the learning orientation of the course, an orientation that favours active learning methodologies, through which, the course is delivered. The NCCA (1993) defines active learning as;

Learning methods, where students are given the opportunity to actively engage with the subject, issue or material at hand, through discussions, activities, simulations, research activities, action projects etc., under the guidance of teachers (p.16).

Such a learning orientation is a challenge to teachers to discard traditional teaching methods and allow the student become an active participant in the learning process. It requires the teacher to adopt the role of guide or facilitator, a role that may prove problematic for teachers who are champions of traditional, didactic teaching methods, possibly because ‘active learning maximises the autonomous potential of students’ (ibid.).

Active learning methodologies are vital to the moulding of active citizens. Through active learning the student learns by doing and this affords a greater understanding of the issues in hand. There are three forms of active learning

1. **Participatory and experiential learning activities-** This includes activities such as discussion, debate, role play and simulations. ‘These are effective in bringing abstract concepts “alive” and making “far away” issues seem less remote and more personal’ (Dept of Ed., 1996, p.6).

2. **Co-operative learning techniques** – this involves the students working closely together to achieve a common goal.

3. **Cross-Curricular learning**- this enables students to get a clearer understanding of issues related to a wide range of subject areas

There is an onus on teachers therefore to ensure that students are active participants in the learning process. This is reiterated by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum;

Teachers manage the curriculum : they plan content, process, and context to maximise learning. Teachers organise and manage their time to allow learners to take responsibility for their own learning, and to give themselves quality time to teach

(Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum, 1998, p.36).

Unless teachers manage CSPE effectively, civic education will not develop active citizens. The Government of Australia define an active citizen as;

Someone who not only believes in the concept of a democratic society but who is willing and able to translate that belief into action. Active citizenship is a compound of knowledge, skills and attitudes: knowledge about how society works; the skills needed to participate effectively; and a conviction that active participation is the right of all citizens

(*Education for Active Citizenship*, 1989, p.7).

It is difficult to imagine students becoming active citizens if their learning in schools has been predominantly passive. The employment of active learning methodologies in classrooms is a sine qua non of the successful implementation of CSPE schools.

## 2.8 Timetable Provision

Like Civics, CSPE has a mandatory timetable provision of one class period a week. This amounts to 70 hours per year approximately. This seems a paltry time frame for such an important subject. To compensate for this, a cross-curricular and interdisciplinary dimension was built into the course. These dimensions can only be realised if the CSPE teacher teaches another subject to the same class. In this way cross-curricular links can be forged and the teacher could 'borrow time' from the other subject in order to complete action projects, have

guest speakers or to utilise various active learning methodologies such as drama, simulations and debate.

This timetable arrangement allows the teacher to use the time allocated on the timetable more effectively. For example, an active teaching methodology which may be difficult to undertake in one class period per week could be easily accommodated within this alternative timetable arrangement. Linking subjects in this way also creates potential for the transfer of skills. For example, the skills required to prepare and write a report on the action project can be taught in English and used in CSPE. It allows regular contact to occur between the teacher and the class which facilitates the development of a good working relationship. This is particularly important for underachieving students. Single period subjects may frequently experience disruption caused by other school events: the approach described here addresses this problem

(Dept of Education, *Guidelines for Schools*, 1996, p.10)

There is an onus on school management therefore to adhere to imaginative time-tabling in order to realise the cross-curricular dimension of CSPE.

## 2.9 Assessment

Unlike Civics, CSPE is formally assessed in the Junior Certificate examination Assessment occurs on two levels. Firstly a terminal written examination, accounts for 40% of the total mark. Secondly, the submission of either a Report on an Action Project or A Course Work Assessment Book, accounts for 60% of the total mark. The most popular has proved to be the action project, which an average of 97% of students submit. The weighting is in favour of the action component and this reflects the view that

Civic, social and political education, above all, seeks to impact upon, and affect, students at all levels of their real interactions with other people and society. The form of assessment/examination and certification which is most fruitful to this goal is one which is primarily focuses on the ongoing development of the civic, social and political student

(*NCCA Discussion Paper, CSPE*, 1993, P.23)

## 2.10 Best Practice in CSPE

In 1996, the Department of Education, issued a document entitled *Guidelines for Schools* (Civic, Social and Political), which outlined best practice for schools implementing CSPE.

It call for the following

- **Careful selection of CSPE teachers-** Since the active learning dimension is central to CSPE, the guidelines stressed that ‘it is important therefore that teachers involved with CSPE should express an interest and commitment to implementing and developing these types of methodologies in the classroom’ (p.7). Teacher selection is vital to the success of CSPE.
- **Innovative Time-tabling** – This calls for timetabling which allows cross-curricular links to be forged. In other words, to timetable the CSPE teacher in for another subject. Poor time slots like last class on Friday should also be avoided.
- **Support and Resourcing-** The Guidelines stress the importance of support from management. They suggest that management should enquire regularly about the progress of the subject and that they should provide forums for discussion, problem-sharing, and the sharing of resources for CSPE teachers
- **Encourage Active Learning Methodologies-** This can be achieved, the guidelines suggest, through the allocation of active learning rooms and planning time for teachers.
- **Whole School Involvement-** All members of staff should be aware of CSPE. Progress reports and information should be presented. The whole school staff also need to be aware of how the culture of the school can reinforce the aims of CSPE. The presence, for example of an active Student Council could help to reinforce the central messages explicit in CSPE.
- **Parent and Student Information-** The guidelines argue that both parents and students should be informed about CSPE, its aims and objectives and its content.



(Adapted from Guidelines for Schools, CSPE, 1996, pp. 7-10)

The above would have the concerted effect of raising the profile and status in the school. The author would also suggest a few other guidelines.

- **The appointment of a CSPE co-ordinator in schools.** A key person should be appointed. This person would be committed to the aims and objectives of CSPE and the active learning methodologies. He or she would be a valuable resource to other CSPE teachers and would be responsible for the sharing of information, ideas and resources.
- **The inclusion of CSPE in house exams.** This would indicate to students that CSPE is valued and taken seriously by the school.
- **The inclusion of CSPE on the schedules of Parent-Teacher Meetings-** This would heighten the parents' awareness of CSPE.
- **Making CSPE visible in the school-** This can be achieved on many levels and can involve guest speakers at assemblies, advertising designated days related to CSPE, mock elections, campaigns and posters. Making CSPE visible raises its profile.

The extent to which guidelines are observed and adhered to is central to the success of the implementation of CSPE.

## 2.11 Conclusion

The provision of civic education in the Irish educational system began in 1966. Civics was not a successful endeavour. This was replaced by CSPE, a new curricular initiative. The central aim of this course is to develop active and participatory citizenship. This development requires the employment of active learning methods by teachers of CSPE. This study looks at the implementation of CSPE in schools. It identifies and explores the factors affecting the implementation of CSPE in five post-primary schools. It enquires whether policy intention is being realised at classroom level and asks if CSPE is simply Civics revisited.

The next chapter discusses the methodology employed by the researcher in this study.

## **Chapter 3- Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter one discussed the social, economic, cultural and political backdrop against which a renewed interest in civic education has occurred, both in an international and Irish context. Chapter two explored civic Education as experienced in Irish education since 1966, with the introduction of the Civics course into Irish post-primary schools. This was replaced in 1996 by CSPE which was introduced into the core curriculum of the Junior Certificate Programme. Both chapters alluded to the challenges facing both schools and practitioners in the implementation of programmes of civic education. This study is primarily exploratory and is concerned with the factors that affect the implementation of Civic, Social and Political in Irish post-primary schools, from the perspectives of both teachers and students. The implementation of this programme has implications not only for teachers and students but also for management. Although management plays a crucial role in the implementation of any curricular change in schools, this study will focus on issues affecting implementation from a teacher and pupil perspective.

This chapter presents the rationale for undertaking this research and the aims and objectives of this study. It will allude to the research methodology employed by the researcher in meeting the aforementioned objectives. The validity and reliability of the study will also be discussed briefly.

### **3.2 Rationale for the Study**

The impetus for pursuing this body of research stems from the author's personal and professional experience of teaching CSPE since 1996. Like many other teachers at that time CSPE just 'appeared' on her timetable without any prior consultation, preparation or knowledge of the course. There was also a paucity of CSPE literature vis-à-vis the course content, the syllabus, teachers' guidelines and notes on the teaching of this new subject. This further exacerbated the consternation teachers had for this subject in the author's own school. As time went on the problems associated with the initial implementation lessened as in-service courses became more frequent literature became more widespread and many teachers felt that the merits of the new course far outweighed the problems associated with its classroom implementation.

The author, to gain a deeper insight into this subject completed a professional course in CSPE, an experience she found invaluable to her teaching and understanding of the course. Consequently, on completion, the author was appointed as CSPE co-ordinator in her school, an experience which has afforded her a first hand knowledge of the problems encountered by CSPE teachers, both new and experienced in her own school. In 2001, the author was appointed as a part-time Regional Development Officer with the CSPE Support Service, part of the Second Level Support Service. This post requires the author to facilitate in-service for CSPE teachers all around Ireland. This provided the author with the ideal opportunity to meet with and discuss issues of concern with CSPE teachers from a wide cross section of schools in Ireland. Through this work the author realised that similar problems were experienced by teachers all over the country. There is however, a dearth of research identifying and exploring the factors affecting the implementation of CSPE in Irish post-primary schools, from the perspectives of teachers. Nor is there an abundance of research documenting students' perceptions and attitudes towards CSPE. This study will attempt to fill that void. Having analysed the data, the Author hopes that

this study, in some small way, may contribute to the further development and improvement of this very worthwhile subject.

### **3.3 Aims and Objectives of the Present Study**

This is primarily an investigative and exploratory study of the factors affecting the implementation of CSPE in Irish post-primary schools, from the perspectives of CSPE teachers, current CSPE students (2<sup>nd</sup> Years) and former CSPE students (5<sup>th</sup>/Transition Year). Broadly speaking, the study aims to identify and explore the factors affecting the implementation of CSPE in five schools, representative of the wider population. The objectives of the research are as follows:

#### **3.3.1 Objectives relating to Teachers**

The objectives of the research in relation to teachers are as follows;

1. To formulate a 'social profile' of CSPE teachers and to enquire if certain profiles are more successful than others with regard to the implementation of CSPE in the classroom.
2. To ascertain how most teachers are being selected to teach CSPE and if the selection process has a bearing on the implementation of CSPE.
3. To explore the extent to which teachers are using active learning methodologies in their classrooms and its implications on the delivery of CSPE in classrooms.
4. To ascertain the status of CSPE in schools, as perceived by teachers.
5. To record and explore teachers views and attitudes towards CSPE explore if this has bearing on implementation.
6. To explore the extent to which 'best practice' in CSPE is being adhered to in schools.

### **3.3.2. Objectives relating to Students**

The objectives of this research in relation to both current and former CSPE students are as follows.

1. To ascertain the status of CSPE as perceived by both 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Students and 5<sup>th</sup>/Transition Year Students and to explore why the students confer a high/low status on CSPE.
2. To record and explore students' attitudes towards CSPE in terms of course content and assessment.
3. To explore the student's learning experiences of CSPE (Active or Passive).
4. To compare the experiences of current CSPE with former CSPE students to ascertain if attitudes are different towards the subject.
5. To explore the extent to which the CSPE teacher can shape a student's attitude towards CSPE.
6. To ascertain whether the above factors can affect the implementation of CSPE in schools.

### **3.4 The Research Methodology: An Overview**

In the planning stages of this study many research methods were studied and investigated in order to ascertain the most appropriate and relevant research instruments necessary for data collection. Bearing in mind the exploratory nature of the study and deciding what exactly the researcher wanted to find out, it was ultimately decided that the employment of both quantitative and qualitative research modes would ensure a thorough exploration of the factors affecting CSPE. In the pre-research stage the author also had to take cognisance of time constraints and the fact

that she is employed as a full-time post-primary teacher and therefore had to plan the research around these restrictions.

The author decided to employ three research instruments to obtain information and data central to this study. Firstly, a CSPE teachers' questionnaire<sup>2</sup> was formulated in order to get an insight into the profiles of CSPE teachers and to get an overall 'feel' of where CSPE 'was at' in their respective schools. Secondly an in-depth one-to-one interview of CSPE teachers would occur at the various research sites. Interview questions would be partly formulated on the basis of the information obtained from the completed questionnaires. It was decided that three teachers from each of the five research sites would be interviewed in order to give a reasonable representation of the overall population of CSPE teachers at each research site. Thirdly, the researcher would carry out a series of focus-group interviews with both current CSPE students and former CSPE students. Bearing in mind time restrictions in school vis-à-vis state examinations it was decided that second year students would represent the overall population of current CSPE students in each of the participating schools. It was thought that second year pupils would be more accessible than third year students and would have a wider knowledge and level of engagement of the subject than their first year counterparts. Due to a greater likelihood of accessibility it was decided that fifth year or transition year students would represent former CSPE students. Both current and former CSPE students, the author felt, would give her a greater insight into the development of CSPE in each of the respective schools over the past three years at least. It would also help to compare the attitudes of current CSPE students with former CSPE students. It was ultimately decided that a focus group composing of four second year and four fifth year students in each school would give a balanced representation of the total population.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B

### 3.4.1 Obtaining Access

'It is important at the planning stage to ensure that all data that is intended to collect, is indeed, collectable' (Birley and Moreland, 1998, p.14). Bearing this in mind, negotiating access into schools is a crucial aspect of educational research and basically involves obtaining the necessary permission to carry out the research at a particular site. The author wanted the research sites within a reasonable distance from her own school as she relies on public transport and had to take into account her commitment to her own students.

As the school was the research site, permission was sought from the school principal. Initial permission was sought via telephone whereby the author explained the nature of the research and what and who was involved. The author was aware that gaining access into schools could prove problematic because of the research would involve the completion of a questionnaire, three in-depth interviews with CSPE teachers, and two focus group interviews with current and former CSPE students and the fact that schools operate within time restrictions. Consequently, access did prove to be problematic a quite a number of principals declined and felt that due to restrictions of time they couldn't participate in the research. Those principals who didn't decline immediately were then sent a formal letter<sup>3</sup> outlining in some detail what the research entailed, for example length of questionnaire and approximate duration of interviews. The author tried to involve schools that were representative of the total population, but unfortunately didn't gain access to a mixed fee-paying school and had to settle instead for a single sex fee-paying school. Nor could the author gain access to a Comprehensive school. One of the main weaknesses of this study therefore is that the

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A

schools selected for this study are not wholly representative of the total population. However, the researcher feels the schools selected for this study will present a variety of viewpoints, issues and concerns vis-à-vis the implementation of CSPE, reflective of and concomitant with the wider population.

Once permission was granted the researcher then met with the CSPE co-ordinator (if there was one) in each of the five schools and all co-ordinators undertook the responsibility for the distribution and collection of questionnaires which were delivered personally by the researcher. There was no formal CSPE co-ordinators in two of the schools so the principal's in each of the schools very kindly agreed to distribute and collect questionnaires.

#### **3.4.2 Populations and Samples**

Bell (1993), articulated that the number of subjects in a sample is dependent on the amount of time the researcher has. Time, as mentioned earlier, time was a major constraint in this study. Bearing this in mind the researcher wished to survey a small scale yet reasonably representative sample of the total population. Consequently the researcher had to 'rely on getting evidence from a portion of the whole in the expectation and hope that what is found in that portion applies equally to the rest of the population' (Denscombe, 1998, p.11).

In this study, four populations were involved. The first population for consideration was that of the total number of post-primary schools. From this the author had to draw a sample that was reasonably representative of the wider population. For considerations of time the author was compelled to draw her sample from schools within the Greater Dublin Area where the author herself is employed as a teacher. The sampling technique utilised was much akin to 'stratified sampling', whereby the total number of post-primary schools in Ireland was divided into 'subpopulations' or



'strata'. In this case the stratum was represented by school type. A random sample was then drawn from each 'strata'.

In Ireland three distinct school types have emerged;

1. Voluntary Secondary Schools account for approximately 60% of all post primary schools. Of these 7% are fee-paying schools.
2. Vocational Schools and Community Colleges account for approximately 31% of all post-primary schools.
3. Community and Comprehensive Schools account for approximately 9% of all post-primary schools.

*(Source: Drudy & Lynch, 1993, pp 8-9).*

The author wished to involve five post-primary schools in the study which would be reasonably representative of the proportion of school types outlined above. The author also wished to represent schools from a broad range of social classes and so schools were selected with regard to their representations of the various social classes. Unfortunately, the researcher couldn't gain access to a community and comprehensive school. However the researcher feels the exclusion of this school type in the study will not render this study invalid because a wide variety of viewpoints with regard to the implementation of CSPE will be represented.

For considerations of gender balance a mixed fee-paying school was sought but the Principal would not give access citing time constraints and the heavy schedules of both teachers and pupils. Consequently the researcher had to look for alternatives that were located at a reasonable distance from her own school. The researcher did finally gain access to a fee-paying school, albeit an all-boys school. In terms of pupils this prompted the question of gender imbalance whereby boys would be disproportionately represented

in the sample. To address this the researcher requested that the student focus groups in the Community College would have a 75: 25 ratio, in favour of girls.

The author gained access to five schools the characteristics of each is outlined below.

**School A** – School A is an all-boys voluntary secondary school situated in the inner-city of Dublin and caters for 680 pupils. The school has designated disadvantaged status and most pupils hail from a predominantly ‘working class’ background.

**School B**- School B is an all-girls voluntary secondary school located in the west inner city of Dublin. It caters for 440 pupils and also has designated disadvantaged status. Again students hail from a predominantly ‘working class’ background.

**School C**- School C is a mixed Community College located in West Dublin. It caters for approximately 850 students and the social backgrounds of students are a mixture of working and middle class.

**School D**- School D is an all-boys’ Voluntary Secondary School located in Dublin’s south side. It caters for approximately 700 pupils, most of which originate from middle-upper middle class backgrounds

**School E**- School E is a fee-paying school located in Dublin. It is an all-boys school and caters for approximately 620 pupils. The social background of pupils is predominantly middle-upper class.

Once schools were selected and access obtained, the second population for consideration was CSPE teachers. Eight teachers were selected in each of the five schools in order to administer the CSPE teacher questionnaire. From these eight, five questionnaires were

randomly selected for analysis when the questionnaires were completed and returned. Three teachers were then randomly selected from the five for the purpose of one-to-one interview. Teachers were therefore selected on a random basis, in each of the five participating schools, for purpose of both the CSPE teacher questionnaire and the CSPE teacher interview. Random Sampling was chosen because 'random samples are most likely to yield a sample that truly represents the population' (Neuman, 2000, p.203).

The third population involved the current CSPE students in each of the five schools. The population of current CSPE students in each school would be represented by second year students, for reasons clarified earlier. Students were selected randomly, one from each second year class, for the purpose of the focus group interviews. This increased the likelihood of each student having a different CSPE teacher and consequently a different experience of CSPE.

The forth and final population involved the former CSPE students. The population of former CSPE students would be represented by students who had completed their Junior Certificate examination in 2002. Hence, subjects would be drawn from transition year. Two of the schools did not operate a transition year, so subjects were drawn from fifth year students. One of these schools also had in place the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme so the researcher ensured that one representative of the LCA was present in the focus group interviews.

### **3.5 The Questionnaire Method**

Bearing in mind what exactly the researcher wanted to find out, it was decided that the questionnaire would be a suitable research instrument which would most probably yield both relevant and usable data. Denscombe (1998), articulated that information retrieved from questionnaires tends to fall into two categories- facts or opinions. The researcher wished the respondents to provide facts and information regarding their teaching experience, qualifications, the teaching methodologies they employ and facts relating to how CSPE is managed in their school. The information supplied would help the research to construct a 'social profile' of CSPE in each of the five schools. Opinions were also sought from respondents vis-à-vis the status of CSPE as perceived by the respondent themselves, other teachers, school management and students. This would enable the researcher to build up a picture of where CSPE 'was at' in each of the respective schools. Therefore, the questionnaire was deemed a useful instrument in collecting the type of information required.

As a research methodology, the questionnaire possesses a number of intrinsic advantages;

- a questionnaire is economical in terms of time and money,
- questionnaires generally supply standardised answers,
- data is usually pre-coded and fits into a range of options offered by the researcher. This is helpful in the analytical phase of the research.

(Adapted from Denscombe, 1998).

The questionnaire, however also possesses a number of disadvantages. Firstly, there is little or no opportunity for the researcher to be present when the respondent is filling the questionnaire in. This would be helpful for clarification purposes. Secondly, pre-coded

answers do not allow for flexibility in responses, especially when closed questions are employed. Pre-coded answers may also bias findings towards the researcher. If it is a postal questionnaire there may be the problem of poor response rates.

Bearing the latter in mind, it was decided to deliver the questionnaires personally to each of the five research sites, as opposed to mailing them coldly. This, the researcher felt, would encourage a high response rate. The researcher made personal contact with the CSPE co-ordinator of each school (if there was one) and each co-ordinator kindly agreed to take responsibility for the distribution of and collection of completed questionnaires. Each co-ordinator was requested to distribute eight questionnaires to eight CSPE teachers. Each co-ordinator was provided with a pre-paid envelope which was mailed to the researcher on completion of the questionnaires. Consequently, due to the 'personalised' touch and the co-operation of the CSPE co-ordinators (and in some cases the principal), the responses rate for the questionnaire for each of the five participating schools was 100%. From the eight questionnaires from each school five were randomly selected from each batch for analysis.

### **3.5.1 Questionnaire Design**

In formulating the questionnaire, careful consideration was given to question type, question wording, questionnaire appearance and layout. The researcher took cognisance of the guidelines for questionnaire design as cited by Berdie *et al* ,

- for those completing the questionnaire it is an imposition;
- the appearance of the questionnaire often decides whether it is read or discarded;
- every question should be carefully worded so that all respondents will interpret it in the same way; and
- questions must be specific and directly related to the objectives of the survey

(Adapted from Berdie *et al.*, 1986, pp.22-24)

The length of the questionnaire and the time it took to complete it were of prime importance to the researcher. This is because the researcher was acutely aware that some of the questionnaire respondents could be called on again for the purpose of interview. Since all research is in some way an imposition, it was necessary to design a questionnaire that was brief, whilst still eliciting the required information. Since brevity was of the essence the researcher ensured that the questionnaire was 'user friendly'. Hence, all questions but one were of the 'closed question' variety. Closed questions 'structure the answers by allowing only answers which fit into the categories that have been established in advance by the researcher' (Denscombe, 1998, p101). Therefore the questions instruct 'the respondent to answer by selecting by a range of two or more options supplied on the questionnaire' (ibid.). Closed questions are advantageous in that they are easy to quantify and because data is pre-coded it is easily analysed. One of the disadvantages of employing closed questions is that the respondent isn't given any latitude to elaborate on an answer, or reflect feelings or opinions. To address this one open question was included which invited the respondent to comment on any aspect of the CSPE course.

The wording of the questions also received careful consideration from the researcher. The researcher was careful to avoid ambiguity, imprecision and assumption when wording the questions, factors which would have the concerted affect of confusing the respondent. Care was also taken to avoid leading, unethical or presumptive questions. The order of questions was also considered. Bearing in mind the words of Nueman, (2000, p.251) 'a good questionnaire forms an integrated whole. The researcher weaves questions together so that they flow smoothly', the author tried order questions in a

gradual and smooth flowing way, making sure to put the most basic, factual questions first and the most probing, personal questions last.

The appearance and layout of the questionnaire tried to be as 'user friendly' as possible. The questionnaire was printed on single-sided paper and the questions were spaced so that the questionnaire did not look overcrowded and uninviting. The researcher also tried to give clear instructions at the beginning of each question, for example whether the respondent had to tick the box or circle a number.

The ethical dimension of the research was also considered. The researcher composed a cover letter for each of the questionnaire respondents that outlined the nature of the research, the researchers address and phone number and a statement ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. The author then proceeded to the next stage of the research, that is, the piloting of the questionnaire.

### **3.5.2 Piloting the Questionnaire**

The main function of the pilot study was to determine the adequacy of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is assessed by others who, though representative of the population under scrutiny, are not participants in the research process. Bell (1993, p.84), argued that the main function of a pilot exercise is to;

Get the bugs out of the instrument so that subjects in the main study will experience no difficulties in completing it and so that you can carry out a preliminary analysis to see whether the wording and format of questions will present any difficulties when the main data are analysed.

In short, the pilot exercise is executed for the following reasons;

- To see how long, on average, a respondent takes to complete the questionnaire
- To ensure questions are unambiguous

- To remove any irrelevant questions

The researcher was in an ideal position to pilot the questionnaire by virtue of her involvement with the CSPE Support Service, a position which places her in direct contact with CSPE teachers from all over the country. Having obtained permission to carry out the pilot study on at an in-service venue, six teachers at one particular venue very kindly agreed to pilot the questionnaire at the end of the in-service. These teachers hailed from a wide cross-section of schools and were of mixed gender and ages. They were therefore representative of the population of CSPE teachers being researched. On completion of the questionnaire teachers were asked the following questions

1. How long approximately did it take you to complete the questionnaire?
2. Are the questions clear? If not which ones?
3. Are the instructions clear?
4. Is the layout and print size acceptable?
5. Should any questions be excluded? Which ones?
6. Should any questions be included? Which ones?
7. Any further comments?

The feedback from these questions proved extremely helpful. It took teachers, on average, less than ten minutes to complete the questionnaire. One of the questions on the provisional questionnaire was deemed ambiguous by four of the respondents. Another respondent felt that the layout looked a bit overcrowded and the print size a bit too small in places. This feedback enabled the researcher to refine the questionnaire and reword one of the questions in order to make the question clearer. None of the respondents filled in the 'further comments' column. When the questionnaire was re-drafted the researcher



felt confident that the questions and instructions, for respondents, were clear and unambiguous.

The questionnaire proved a vital research instrument. The study is however exploratory in nature and the questionnaire could only yield superficial data. There was a need for the researcher to probe deeper into the subjects attitudes, perceptions and feelings about the CSPE course. Hence, the interview mode was utilised when conducting this research.

### **3.6 The Interview Method**

Burgess (1984) defined the interview as a conversation with a purpose. The purpose in this case was to gather information vis-à-vis the opinions, attitudes, perceptions and feelings of CSPE teachers towards various aspects of the CSPE course. Oppenheim (1972, p.32), articulated that 'there remains the undisputed advantage that the richness and spontaneity of information collected at interviews is higher than that which a mailed questionnaire can hope to obtain'. The interview method was chosen therefore, to complement and expand on the information gathered through questionnaire analysis. Interviews 'can often put flesh on the bones of questionnaire responses' (Bell, 1993, p.91). Another facet of the interview method is that it 'allows one to check up on facts, seek clarification and exemplification' (Woods, 1986, p.111). The interview also allows for a certain degree of adaptability and flexibility on the part of the researcher. Despite its many advantages interviews can also be problematic. They are extremely time-consuming. They are also very subjective and are susceptible to bias creeping into the process. As Sellitz (1962, p.583), points out 'interviewers are human beings, not machines'.

Interviewing is also requires a skilful interplay between researcher and subject. Cohen (1976, p.82), likened interviewing to fishing and argued that 'like fishing, interviewing is

an activity requiring careful preparation, much patience, and considerable practice if the eventual reward is to be a worthwhile catch'. Planning and preparation were vital to the process.

Firstly the researcher had to devise an interview schedule<sup>4</sup> was devised and questions formulated, bearing in mind what exactly the researcher needed to know. The researcher opted for a semi-structures or semi-standardised interview. Berg (1998, p.61) defines this type of interview as one which involves;

the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and/or special topics. These questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardised questions.

Because of the semi-structured dimension to the interview, a number of probe questions were prepared by the researcher should a particular subject or issue need to be expanded on or probed. Some of these unscheduled probes included;

- How do you know?
- Tell me more about that
- How did/do you feel about that?
- How come?
- Why?
- When?
- Could you describe that in more detail?

Schedule development began with the questions essential to the central focus of the study. Probe questions like the ones outlined above were utilised to probe deeper in to a particular issue. Pilot interviews took place to test the schedule and to ensure questions

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix C.

were clear and unambiguous. Two of the researcher's colleagues agreed to be interviewed and advised the researcher on the wording of various questions. The researcher had to ensure that questions were neither leading nor assumptive and that no bias crept into questions. As Rossman and Rallis (1988, p.125), point out 'the participants perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participants views it and not how the researcher views it'.

Question order was also important and the researcher ensured that the most basic straight forward questions occurred at the beginning of the interview whilst the more personal, probing questions occurred well into the interview. Piloting the interview also gave the researcher an indication of the duration of the interview. Pilot interviews lasted on average for 25 minutes and interviewees were told well in advance how the approximate length of the interview.

All interviews were conducted in the interviewees own schools and the researcher tried to make the interviewee as relaxed as possible prior to the interview. Confidentiality and anonymity were yet again ensured and the reason for conducting the research was reiterated. Interviewees were informed that the interview was to be recorded and were given the opportunity to seek clarification on any aspect of the interview prior to commencement. Interviews with teachers ranged from twenty minutes in duration to forty minutes, depending on the openness of the interviewee and time constraints.

Field notes were also taken at these interviews in order to capture facial expressions and hand gestures, facets of the interview which could not be captured on the recorder.

When the interview was completed the interviewee was given the opportunity to listen to the recording and was given the opportunity to withdraw some of the comments if they wished. No interviewee took up the offer. When interviews were completed in the five sites the recordings were transcribed and field notes attached.

As well as seeking the opinions and attitudes of CSPE teachers, the author also wished to explore the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of current and former CSPE students. For that purpose the 'focus group interview' method was utilised.

### **3.7 The Focus Group Interview Method**

One-to-one interviews are very time consuming, so after much consideration, the research felt that the most appropriate instrument to collect data concerning the opinions, attitudes and perceptions of both current and former CSPE students was by using the focus group interview mode. The focus group is defined as an interview style designed for small groups (Berg, 1998). This type of interview method uses the interactions of participants to elaborate and expand on the focus of the interview, i.e. CSPE. Using this technique, the researcher assumes the role of facilitator or moderator, the purpose of which to elicit information from the participants regarding topics central to CSPE in schools. Krueger (1994), suggested that an optimum group size of 7-10 participants is the most effective, yet bearing in mind the age of the interviewees and the desire to have a degree of depth to the interview, the researcher decided that a focus group comprising of four students would suffice.

Focus group interviews have distinct advantages and they 'allow researchers to access the substantive content of verbally expressed views, opinions, experiences and attitudes' (Berg, 1998, p104). They also provide the means for 'assessing intentionally created conversations about research topics or problems...they also access fragments of a person's biography and life structure' (ibid.).

In each participating school two focus groups was formed, one representing current CSPE students, the second representing former CSPE students. A series of open-ended questions were devised as well as a series of prompt questions similar to those utilised in

the one-to-one CSPE teacher interviews. When formulating the questions<sup>5</sup> the researcher had to be careful about their wording and found it appropriate to use simple language, bearing in mind that respondents were in fact children, ranging in age from 13-16. The researcher also had to ensure that none of the questions were either leading or presumptive. It was decided to have a semi-structured focus group interview and an interview schedule was devised using the series of open ended and prompt questions alluded to above. Before the interview the researcher took cognisance of the focus group checklist as espoused by Berg.

- *A clearly defined Objective and/or Research Problem* : The researcher had to have a clear understanding of what exactly she wanted to find out
- *The Nature of the Group* : The researcher had to remember the participants were in fact children and had to word questions accordingly. Simple language would also be used in discussion.
- *Atmosphere/Environment and Rapport* : The researcher prior to the interview had to stress the fact that anything they said would be treated in the strictest confidence. The researcher was aware of the differential power aspect between teacher as researcher and pupil as respondent. However, to establish rapport with respondents the researcher tried to be light-hearted and reassuring before the interview began. This was done with a view to making group members comfortable so that they would speak more openly about different topics.
- *An Aware Listening Facilitator* : It was necessary for the researcher, as facilitator to listen carefully to the subjects so that she could tell when respondents were going off the point and bring them back into focus

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendices D & E.

- *Structure and Direction, but Restrained Contribution to the Discussion* : The researcher is in essence a facilitator who gives direction and structure to the interview. Consequently, it was necessary for the researcher to avoid offering comments, views and opinions to the group.

(Adapted from Berg, B, 1998, pp.110-111)

The researcher firstly had to pilot the interview schedule and a neighbouring school agreed to give the researcher access for this purpose. The school in question very kindly agreed to the focus group interviewing of four second year students and four fifth year students. The pilot interviews took place to remove any bugs out of the instrument, for example, inappropriate and ambiguous questions. It would also give the research an idea of the dynamics of groups. The duration of the focus group interview ranged from 25 minutes for second years and forty minutes for fifth years.

Prior to the focus group interviews central to this study, the researcher, as facilitator had to be acutely aware of the dominant members of the focus group as well as the passive members. Rapport with the group was essential because the researcher didn't want to shut down the dominating participants in an embarrassing way. When a question was asked the researcher let the floor open for anyone to answer or give their view. If a dominating participant was present the researcher then began to ask for comments individually from each of the participants and in doing that engaged all the participants in the discussion. The researcher also took field notes when appropriate, to record facial expressions and hand gestures.

All interviews took place in the respondents' schools and lasted for approximately thirty minutes. The researcher introduced herself and described the nature of the study. Participants were invited to ask further questions or seek clarification. Group

members were also told before hand that they would recorded using a tape-recorder and were invited to listen back over the recording and withdraw any comments should they wish. All of the respondents declined this invitation.

When all interviews were completed the researcher transcribed the recordings. To protect the authenticity of the interviews, the researcher transcribed comments exactly as they occurred. Consequently, the use of colloquialisms, slang and sometimes expletives may appear in the research findings.

### **3.8 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are necessary components to any study and are central to the accuracy of the research methods and techniques. 'Reliability is the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions' (Bell, J., 1993, p.64). Schwandt (1997), defines validity as research which is sound, cogent, well grounded, justifiable, or logically correct.

To ensure that the research was both reliable and valid each of the three research instruments were piloted. To ensure that the research was reliable the researcher had to ensure that the data collecting instruments were easy to administer so that the instrument would give consistent results if applied to the same people under standard conditions. To ensure validity the researcher had to make sure that the data collected was relevant to the research. The relevance of the data collected had to be scrutinised to ensure that the instrument was meant to be measuring what it was supposed to be measuring. Does the study, for example, get at the kinds of issues outlined in the aims and objectives of the study? In this study, the data generated by the questionnaire, the one-to-one interviews, and the focus group interviews have proved pertinent to the

aims and objectives of this study. There was consistency in the responses of both teachers and students which were recorded on tape and can be easily verified.

To ensure the validity of the study, the author used 'triangulation'. This involves the examination of the research topic from a number of different vantage points. Woods (1987, p.87), defines it as 'the use of three or more different methods to explore an issue'. Exploring an issue using a number of methods greatly increases the chances of accuracy (ibid.). In this study, questionnaires, one-to-one interviews and focus group interviews were used to compare and cross-check results and validate the data.

Despite the use of triangulation, the researcher feels the main weakness of this study lies in the selection of schools for this study. The author feels a greater cross-section of schools may have provided more quantitative indicators of factors affecting the implementation of CSPE in Irish post-primary schools. However, despite this apparent weakness the author is happy that the methodology employed will yield crucial and valuable insights concerning the implementation of CSPE in schools from the perspectives both teachers and pupils.

The next section presents the findings of the CSPE Teacher questionnaires.



## **Chapter 4      Research Findings – CSPE Teachers Questionnaires**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Questionnaires were employed in this study in order to collect data, from which, a profile of CSPE teachers could be formulated. They also inquired into the predominant teaching methodologies employed by teachers in their classrooms. The questionnaire also attempted to gain an insight into the level of priority given to CSPE in each of the research sites. It also sought to elicit, from teachers, opinions and attitudes vis-à-vis the status of CSPE as perceived by themselves, their students, other teachers and school management.

Information was elicited from twenty-five completed questionnaires, five from each school. The author wishes to present the research findings by school because she feels this will illuminate further any patterns or trends that emerge. It would also allow a comparable insight with regard to issues of implementation. The accumulated findings of the sample population will also be presented. Since the findings of each individual school will be alluded to, the author feels it necessary at this point to briefly revisit the five schools involved in this study.

**School A** – An all-boys voluntary school in Dublin. The school is designated ‘disadvantaged’ status and has an enrolment of 680 pupils.

**School B-** An all-girls voluntary secondary school located in Dublin’s inner city. It too is designated ‘disadvantaged’ status and caters for 440 pupils.

**School C-** A mixed community college, situated in west Dublin. It has an enrolment of 850 pupils who hail from a variety of social backgrounds.

**School D**-An all-boy's voluntary secondary school located in Dublin's south-side. It caters for approximately 700 pupils who hail from a predominantly middle class background.

**School E**-School D is an all-boys fee-paying school situated in Dublin which caters for 620 students.

Findings will be presented under three distinct headings

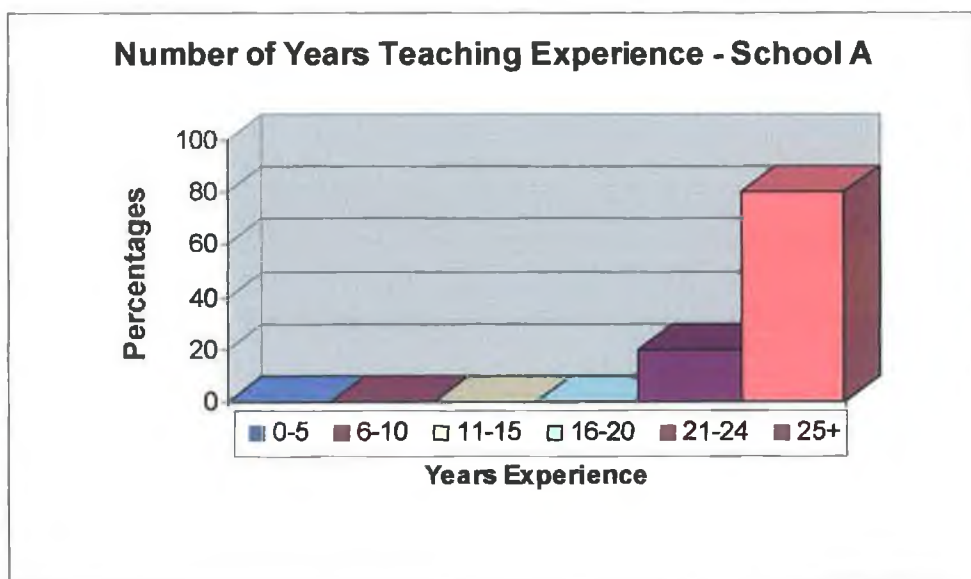
1. CSPE Teacher Profile
2. You and Your teaching of CSPE
3. CSPE and Your School.

#### 4.2 CSPE Teacher Profile

The main purpose of this section of the questionnaire was to elicit from respondents, information regarding teaching experience, number of years teaching CSPE, Primary qualification and their main teaching subjects. It also collected data vis-à-vis the number of respondents with a formal CSPE qualification and the number of respondents who have attended CSPE in-service.

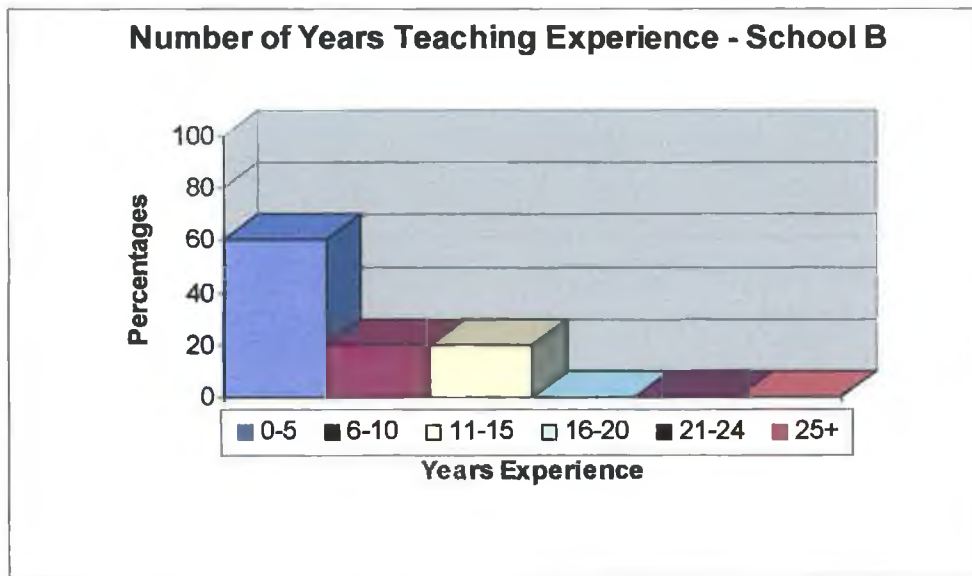
#### 4.2.1 Number of Years Teaching Experience

**Fig.1.1**



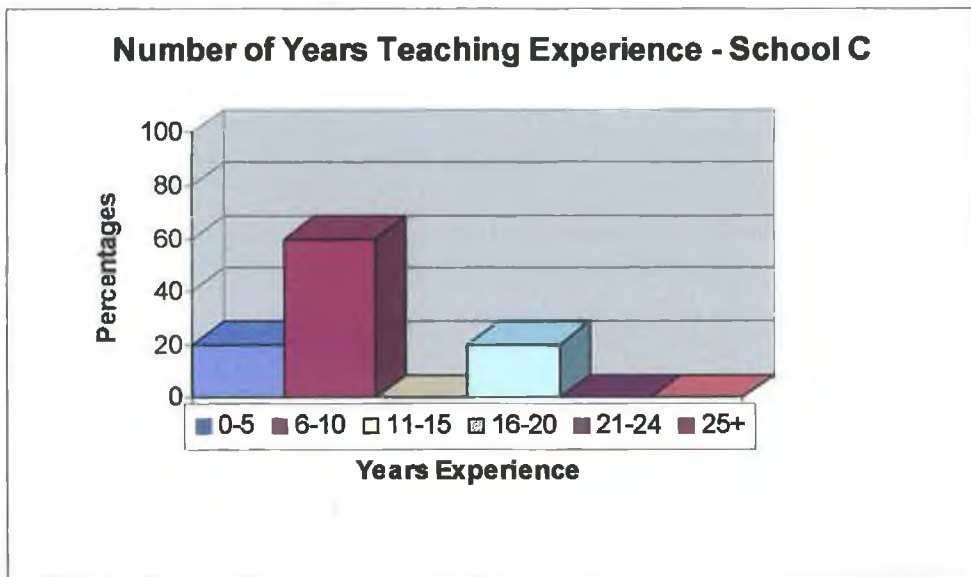
School A has a large cohort of experienced teachers, teaching CSPE 80% of teachers have been teaching for more than 25 years. Twenty per cent of teachers have been teaching for between 21 and 25 years. This suggests that the age profile of CSPE teachers is quite old. This would suggest that older, more experienced teachers are selected to teach CSPE in school A. This would suggest that younger, less experienced teachers are not selected to implement new curricular programmes at classroom level in this school.

**Fig 1.2**



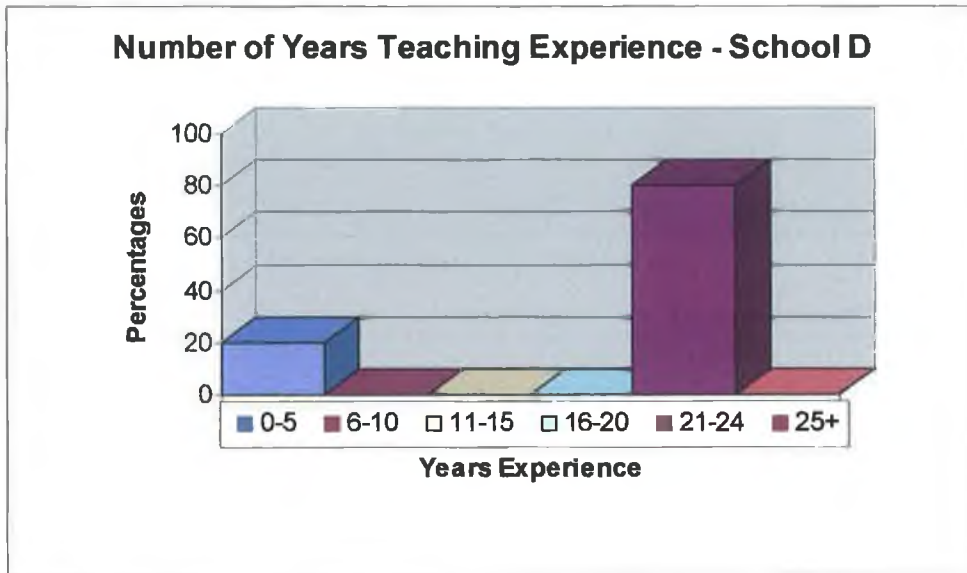
School B has quite a mixed profile of CSPE teachers in terms of teaching experience. Most CSPE teachers have little teaching experience with 60% of respondents have between 0-5 years teaching experience. Twenty per cent of the population have between six and ten years experience. The final twenty per cent have between eleven and fifteen years teaching experience. This would suggest that in sharp contrast to School A, the age profile of this population is quite young.

**Fig 1.3**



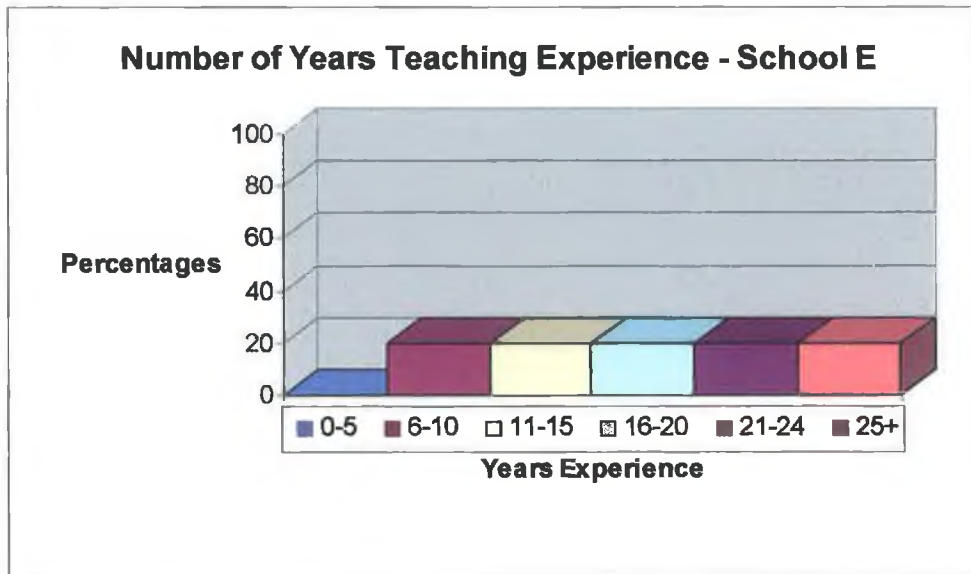
The majority of teachers, sixty per cent, have between 6-10 years teaching experience. Twenty per cent have between 0-5 years experience whilst a further twenty per cent have between 16-20 years experience. These findings suggest that the majority of CSPE teachers in school C have quite a young age profile. Overall there is a cohort of teachers with varying degrees of experience.

**Fig 1.4**



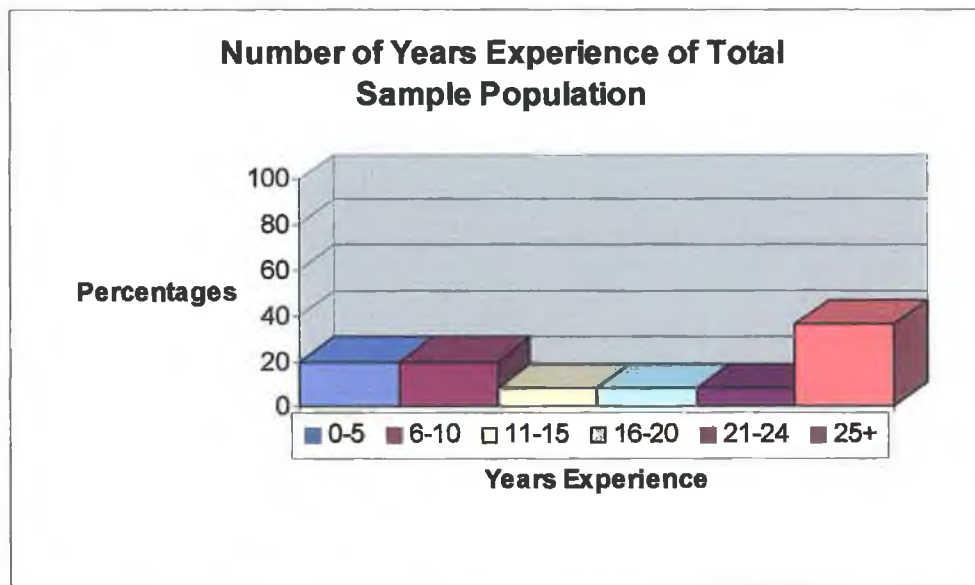
The majority of teachers, 80%, fall in the 21-24 year category. Twenty per cent fall in the 0-5 year category. This would suggest an older and more experienced profile of CSPE teachers. It is a profile of extremes with a number of inexperienced and presumably younger teachers and a number highly experienced and presumably older teachers composing the cohort of CSPE teachers in school D.

**Fig 1.5**



Findings from school E indicate a very balanced cohort of CSPE teachers, in terms of teaching experience. Every category, with the exception of the 0-5 year category is represented by 20% of teachers. This would suggest a wide cross section of ages. It can be inferred from these findings that inexperienced teachers, particularly those with less than five years experience have not been selected to teach CSPE in this school. No teachers have less than six years experience.

**Fig 1.6**



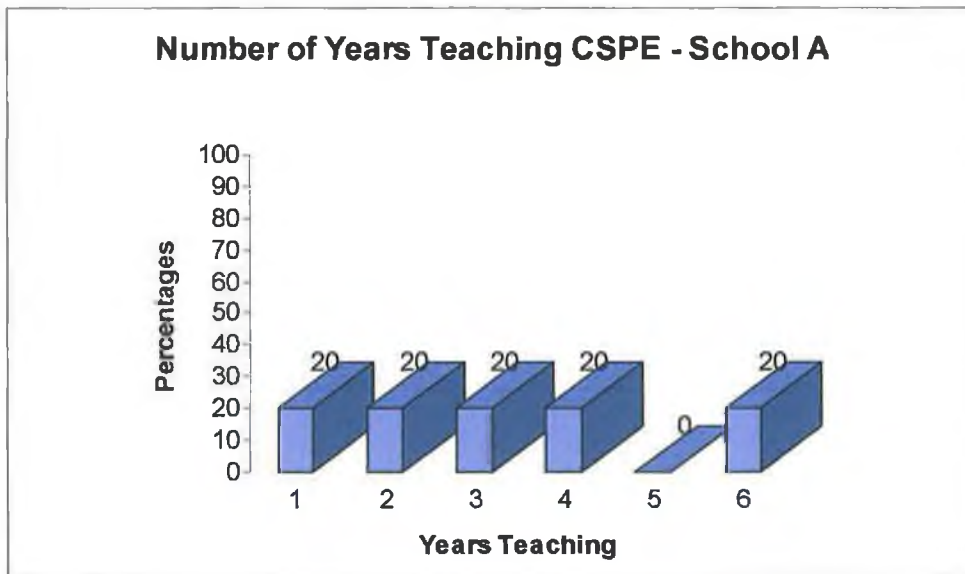
Overall, the majority of teachers, 36%, had more than twenty five years teaching experience. Twenty per cent had between 0-5 years experience and a further twenty per cent had between 6-10 years teaching experience. The 11-15, 16-20 and 21-25 year age groups accounted for eight per cent of CSPE teachers each respectively. These figures suggest that school management tend to favour the most experienced teachers to implement new programmes like CSPE at classroom level. However, a lot of inexperienced and presumably younger teachers are also selected to teach CSPE in schools.

The next section presents the findings vis-a-vis the number of years respondents are teaching CSPE in their schools.



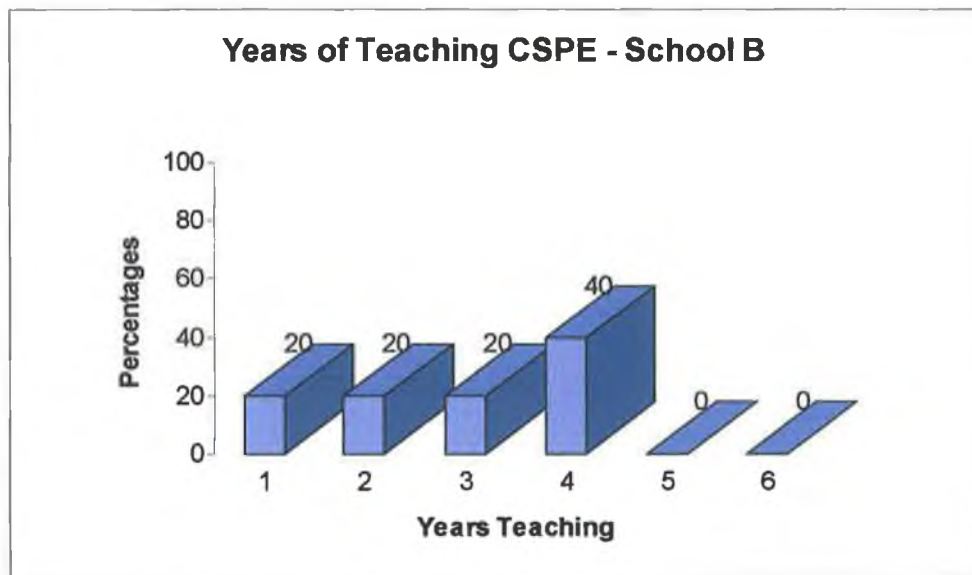
#### 4.2.2 Number of Years Teaching CSPE

**Fig 2.1**



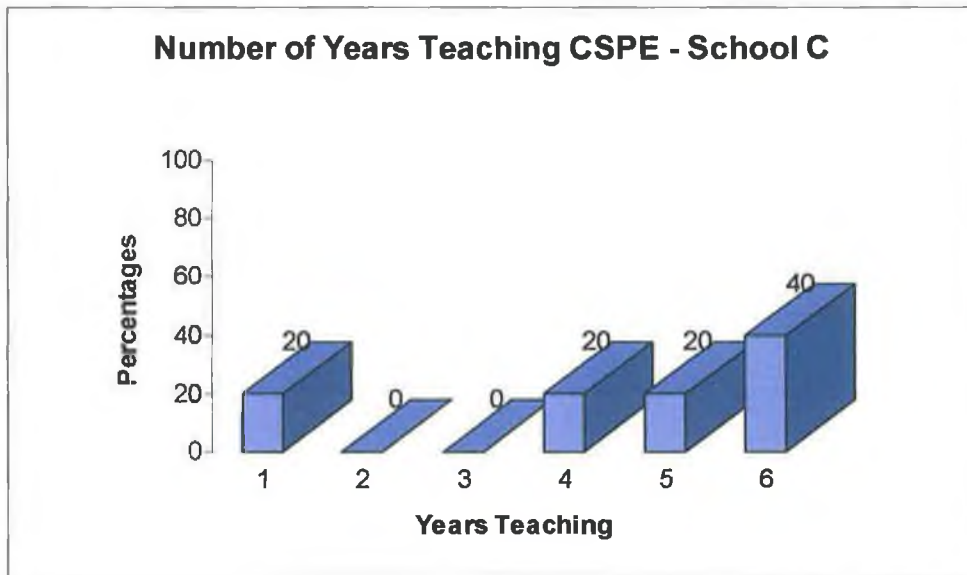
The number of years respondents' have been teaching CSPE in this school varies considerably. Sixty per cent of respondents have been teaching this subject for three years or less. Twenty per cent have been teaching CSPE for four years and a further 20% have been teaching this subject for the past six years. These findings suggest a small degree of continuity with respect to the selection of CSPE teachers on a yearly basis.

**Fig 2.2**



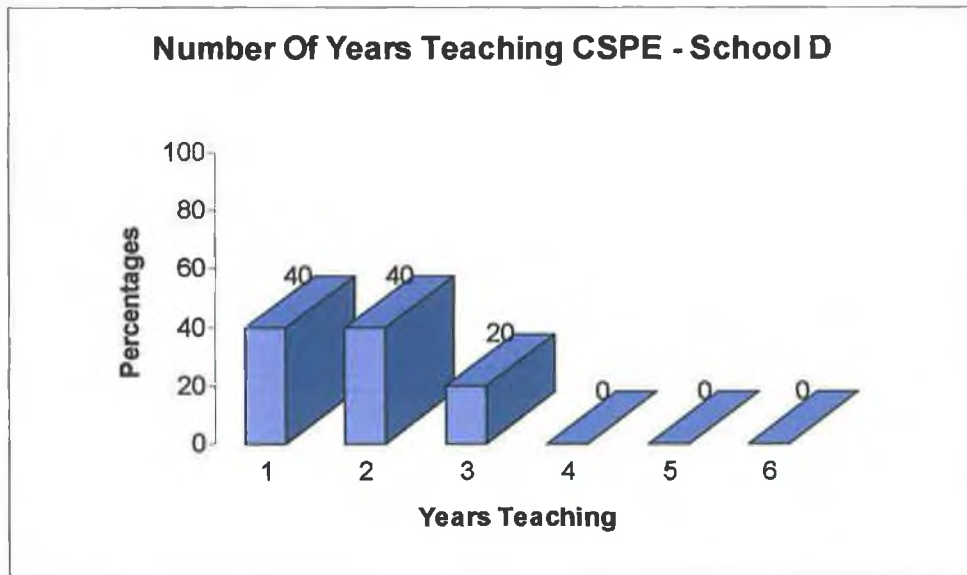
Again, findings vary considerably. Sixty per cent of respondents have been teaching CSPE for three years or less. Twenty per cent have been teaching it for just one year. Another 20% of respondents have been teaching it for two years and a further 20% have been teaching it for three years. The remaining forty per cent have been teaching CSPE for the past four years. This would suggest a small degree of continuity with regard to the selection of CSPE teachers on an annual basis.

**Fig 2.3**



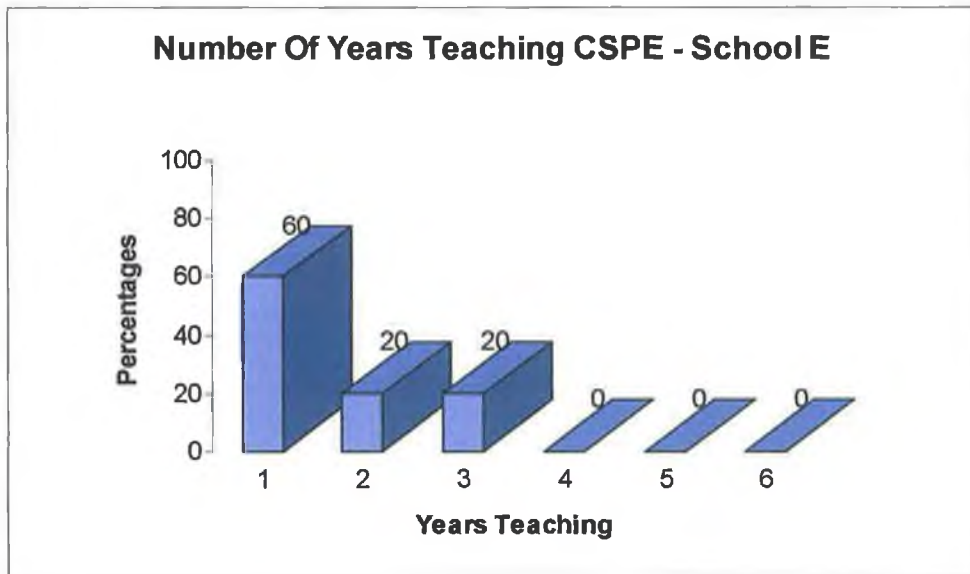
Findings from school C illustrate that the majority of teachers, 40%, have been teaching CSPE six years. These findings suggest that there is quite a high degree of continuity, with regard to the selection of CSPE teachers every year. Twenty per cent have been teaching CSPE for the past five years whilst another twenty per cent have been teaching for four years. CSPE teachers of one year standing account for 20% of respondents.

**Fig 2.4**



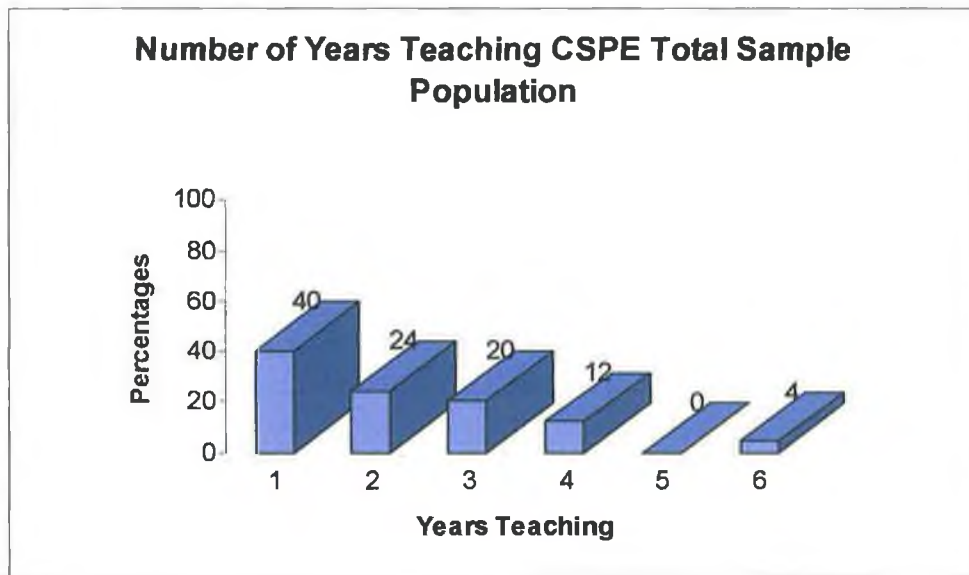
A 100% of respondents, as fig 2.4 clearly indicates, have been teaching CSPE for three years or less. This would suggest a lack of continuity with regard to the selection of CSPE on a yearly basis. Forty per cent of teachers have been teaching CSPE for one year only. A further 40% have been teaching the subject for just two years. Twenty per cent have been teaching CSPE for the past three years.

**Fig 2.5**



Yet again a 100% of respondents have been teaching CSPE for less than three years. The majority of teachers, 60%, have been teaching CSPE for just one year. Twenty per cent have been teaching CSPE for two years and a further twenty per cent for three years. It can be inferred from these findings that there is a lack of continuity with regard to the annual selection of CSPE teachers in this school.

**Fig 2.6**



Overall, the majority of teachers have been teaching CSPE for just one year. These account for 40% of the total sample. Twenty-four percent have been teaching CSPE just two years. Twenty per cent of respondents have been teaching the subject for three years whilst 12% have been teaching it for four years. A mere 4% have been teaching CSPE for six years. These findings suggest two phenomena. Firstly, there may be a high turnover of CSPE teachers. Secondly, findings suggest that there may be a lack of continuity with regard to the selection of CSPE teachers in schools from year to year.

### 3.1 Primary Qualifications of CSPE Teachers

<i>Qualification</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>B.A</b>	80%	80%	80%	80%	60%	76%
<b>B. Comm.</b>	20%	-	-	20%	20%	12%
<b>BSc.</b>	-	20%	-	-	20%	8%
<b>B Social Science</b>	-	-	20%	-	-	4%
						100%

Fig 3.1-primary Qualifications of CSPE Teachers (per school)

The majority of respondents, 76% of the total sample have Bachelor of Arts Degree. This breaks down per school as 80% for each of schools A, B, C and D. Sixty per cent of respondents, in School E, have a B.A. Degree.

Twelve per cent, of the total sample, have a Bachelor of Commerce Degree. This breaks down per school as 20% of respondents each in school's A, D and E.

Only eight per cent, of the total sample, have obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree. This breaks down per school as 20% of respondents each in schools B and E.

Four per cent, of the total population, have a Bachelor of Social Sciences Degree. The only school with a teacher with a Social Science degree is School C.

All of the respondents have a Higher Diploma in Education. Twelve per cent have an additional post-graduate qualification. (These findings are not illustrated).

#### 4.2.4 Main Teaching Subjects of CSPE Teachers

**Table 4.1- Main Teaching Subjects of CSPE Teachers**

<i>Subject</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>English</b>	20%	60%	60%	-	40%	36%
<b>Irish</b>	20%	-	20%	20%	-	12%
<b>History</b>	-	40%	-	-	-	8%
<b>Geography</b>	20%	-	20%	-	-	8%
<b>Business Studies</b>	20%	-	-	20%	20%	12%
<b>French</b>	20%	-	-	20%	20%	12%
<b>Music</b>	-	-	-	20%	-	4%
<b>Religion</b>	-	-	-	20%	-	4%
<b>Science</b>	-	-	-	-	20%	4%
						100%

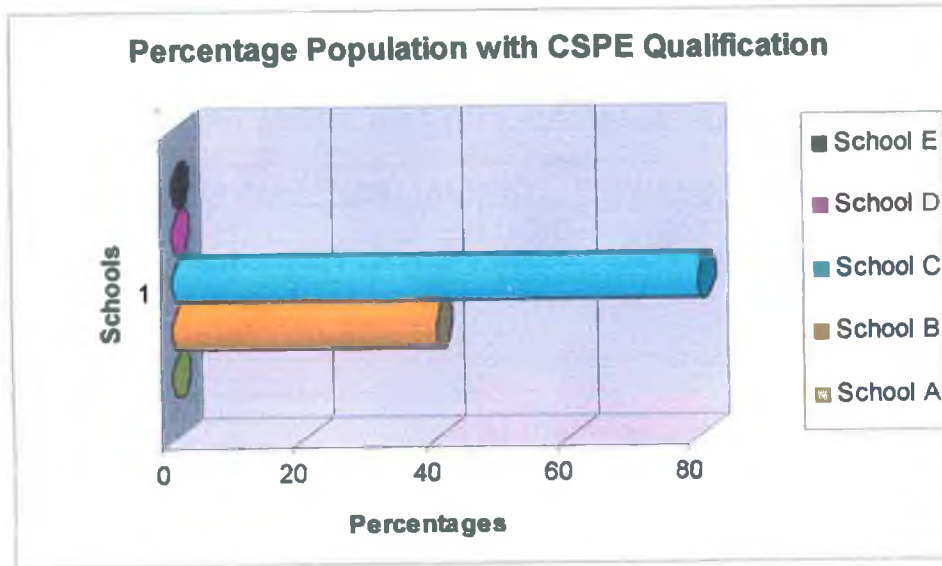
Overall, the majority of respondents, 36%, are teachers of English. In schools A and B the majority of CSPE teachers, 40%, are also teachers of English. Irish teachers account for twelve per cent of respondents. Both Business Studies Teachers and French teachers each account for 8% of respondents. History teachers account for eight per cent of the sample and School B, in comparison to the other schools, has by far the highest percentage of history teachers teaching CSPE-40%. Geography teachers account for 8% of the total. Music, Religion and Science teachers each account for four of the total.

This findings illustrate that cross-curricular links can be establish because each of the subjects listed above can be linked in some way to the seven concepts of CSPE.



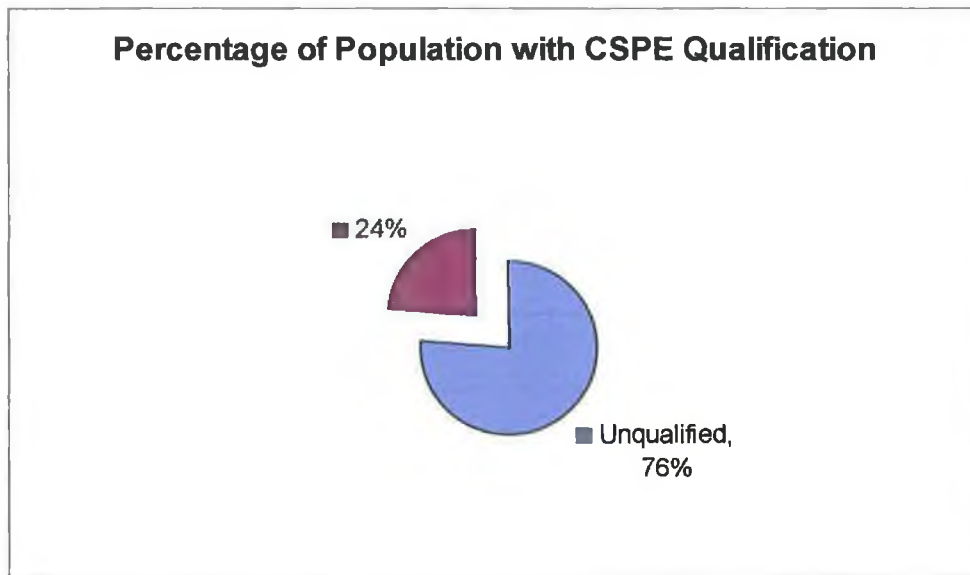
#### 4.2.5 Percentage of Teachers Qualified to Teach CSPE

**Table 5.1- Percentage of Respondents with a CSPE Qualification (per school)**



Schools A, D and E have a cohort of teachers who are not formally qualified to teach CSPE. School C has the highest number of respondents, 80%, qualified to teach CSPE. Forty per cent of respondents in School B are qualified CSPE teachers.

**Fig 5.2 Percentage of Total Sample with A CSPE Qualification (total sample)**

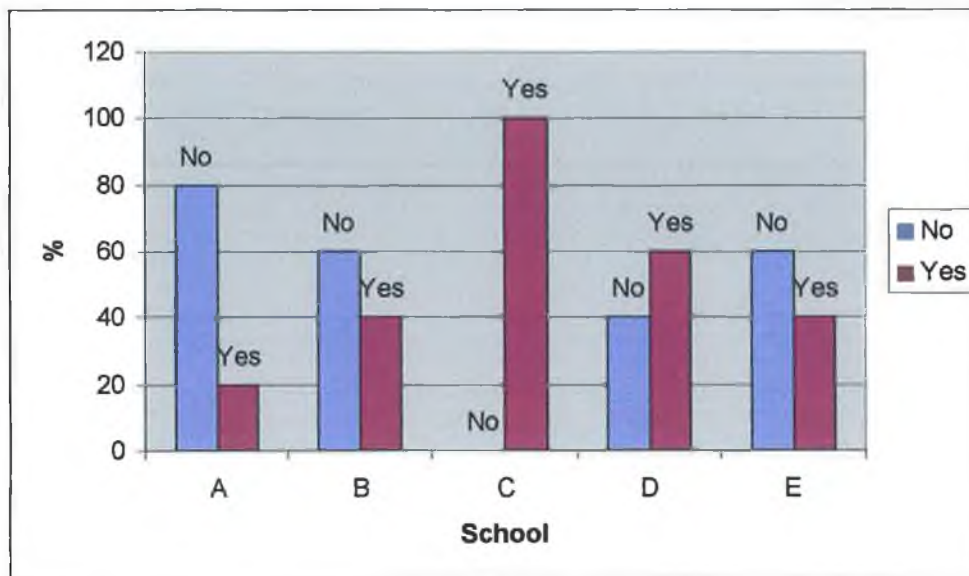


The pie chart above illustrates that out of the five schools just twenty four per cent are formally qualified to teach CSPE. This compares with 76% who have no formal CSPE qualification. This suggests that the majority of teachers who teach CSPE in Irish post-primary schools are not formally qualified to teach it. This reinforces the concept that ‘anybody’ can teach CSPE.

Despite the low numbers of teachers with a formal CSPE qualification numerous in-service programmes were put in place to redress this problem. The next set of findings illustrates the percentage of respondents who have attended in-service courses in CSPE.

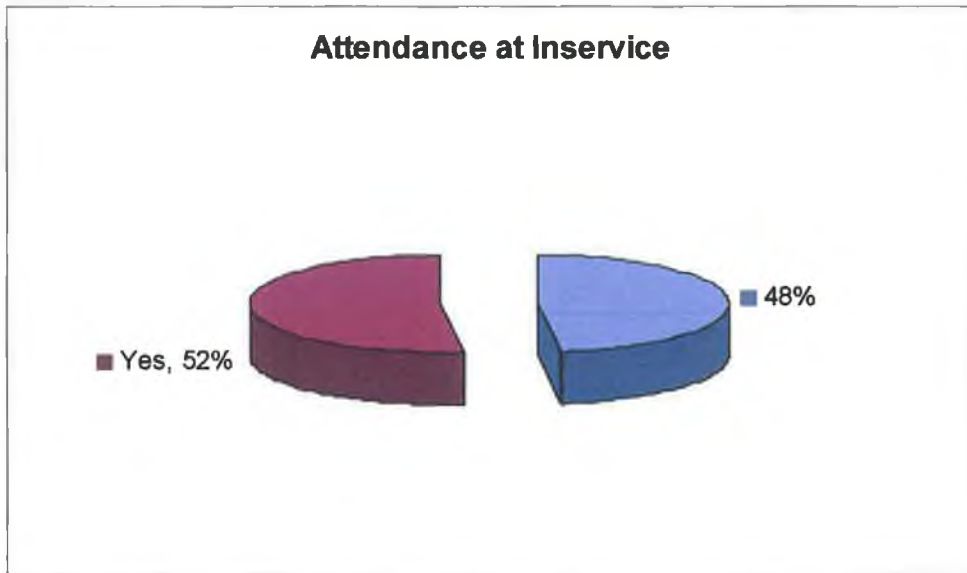
#### 4.2.6 Attendance at CSPE In-Service Courses

**Fig 6.1 Attendance at In-service Courses (per school)**



Findings from respondents in School A show that a mere 20% of teachers have attended some form of in-service course. Forty per cent of teachers each in schools B and E have attended these courses. In-service courses have been attended by 60% of teachers in school D. The most overwhelming result comes from School C where 100% of respondents have attended a CSPE in-service. This would suggest a strong commitment from management to in-service courses in School C.

**Fig 6.2 Attendance at In-Service (total sample)**



Overall, 52% of respondents have attended some form of in-service course for CSPE. This would suggest a lack of commitment with regard to in-services in the schools researched.

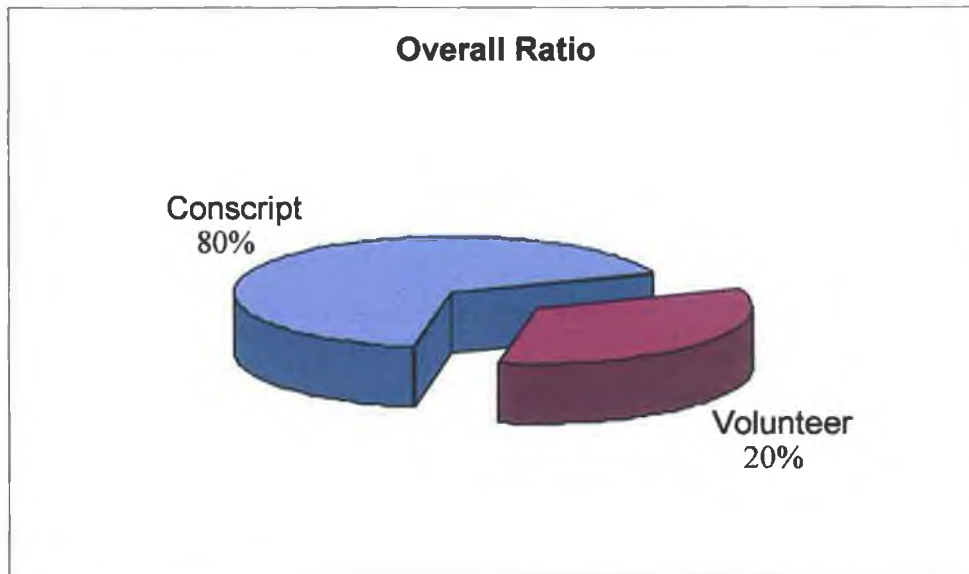
#### 4.2.7 Manner in Which Teachers Came to Teach CSPE

**Table 7.1- Manner in Which Teachers Came to Teach CSPE (per school)**

<i>Manner</i>	<i>School A</i>	<i>School B</i>	<i>School C</i>	<i>School D</i>	<i>School E</i>
<b>Asked by management Respondent asked to teach it</b>	-	20%	20%	60%	20%
<b>Appearance on time table</b>	-	-	80%	20%	-
<b>Other</b>	100%	80%	-	20%	80%
	-	-	-	-	-

In School A, 100% of respondents were not consulted about the fact that they would be teaching CSPE, it just 'appeared on their time-tables. This was almost the same case for School B where 80% of respondents were not consulted and the remaining 20% were asked by management to teach it. Neither school seemed to have any willing volunteers to teach it. School C, on the other hand, has a scenario whereby 80% of teachers asked to teach CSPE and the remaining twenty per cent were asked by management to teach it. In School D, 60% of respondents were asked by management to teach it, 20% asked to teach it and for the remaining 20%, the subject appeared on their time-tables. In School E 80% of respondents were not consulted of the fact that they would be teaching CSPE.

**Fig 7.2 Manner by which Teachers Came to teach CSPE (total population)**



As fig 7.2 illustrates, the majority of CSPE teachers were not consulted about the fact that they would be teaching CSPE. These teachers account for 56% of the total sample. Twenty per cent asked or volunteered to teach CSPE. A further 24% were asked by management to teach the subject. Respondents, therefore, can be divided into two categories. 'Volunteer' CSPE teachers, who account for 20% of the total population and 'Conscripts', who account for the remaining 80% of the total population. This is a significant finding as it highlights the fact that most teachers are conscripted to teach CSPE, the majority with no prior consultation from management.

#### 4.2.8 Number of CSPE Classes Taught by Teachers

In School A, the overwhelming majority of respondents, 80%, teach just one CSPE class. The remaining 20% teach two CSPE classes.

In School B, 60%, teach just one class, whilst 20% teach two classes. The remaining 20% teach three classes of CSPE. This is also the case for School C.

Forty per cent of respondents in School D, teach one class and another 40% teach two classes. Twenty per cent teach three classes.

Findings from School E indicate that the majority of respondents, 80%, teach just one class of CSPE, whilst the remaining 20% teach two classes.

Overall, the majority of respondents, 64%, teach just one class of CSPE. Findings indicate that a further 24% teach two classes CSPE. Three classes of CSPE are taught by the remaining 12% of respondents.

#### 4.2.9 Timetabling Arrangements for Teachers

In School A, 20% of teachers teach another subject to their CSPE class. Only 20% of respondents teach CSPE class another subject in School B. In School C, a very large cohort of teachers, 80% teach their CSPE class another subject. In School D 40% have their CSPE class for another subject. In School E just 20% are timetabled to teach their CSPE class another subject. These finding suggests that a lot of teachers are unable to forge links between CSPE and other subjects. These findings also reflect the extent to which CSPE is not being accommodated on school timetables.

#### 4.3 You and Your Teaching of CSPE

The next series of questions on the questionnaire tried to elicit information and facts concerning the teaching of CSPE, in particular, the teaching methods used by teachers.

#### 4.3.2 Teacher Attitude to Active Learning

**Table 8.1- Respondents level of Agreement With the Statement ‘I like using active learning methodologies in my classroom’ (per school)**

<i>Level of Agreement</i>	<i>% Strongly Agree</i>	<i>% Agree</i>	<i>% Disagree</i>	<i>% Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>% Unsure</i>
<b>School A</b>	-	20%	40%	-	40%
<b>School B</b>	20%	40%	20%	-	20%
<b>School C</b>	20%	80%	-	-	-
<b>School D</b>	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
<b>School E</b>	-	40%	40%	20%	-

In School A, only 20% of respondents agreed with this statement. Forty per cent were unsure. A further 40% disagreed with the statement. These findings suggest that the majority of teachers, in this school, are either not favourable towards active learning or are unsure how they feel about it.

In School B, the majority of respondents, 60%, agreed to some extent with the statement. A further 20% disagreed and the remaining 20% were unsure. This suggests that that majority of teachers attitudes towards CSPE, in School B, are quite positive.

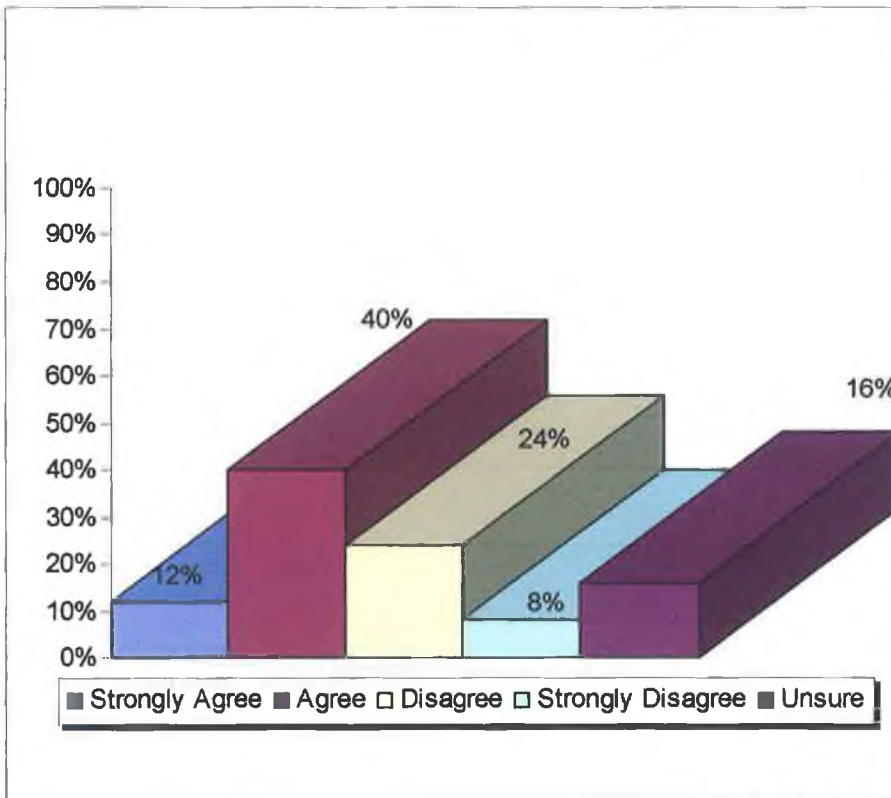
In School C, 100% agreed that they liked CSPE. Twenty per cent of respondents strongly agreed that they liked active learning methodologies. This suggests a very positive disposition towards active learning in this school.

The findings of School D illustrates a wide variety of attitudes towards active learning co-exist. Each level of agreement and the ‘unsure’ variable corresponded with 20% of respondents.



In School E, the majority of respondents, 60%, disagreed to some extent, with the statement. This suggests that although forty per cent of respondents agreed that they liked active learning, the majority, 60%, don't.

**Fig 8.2-Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement 'I like using active methodologies' (total sample)**



Overall, the majority of respondents, 52% agreed, to some extent, that they liked using active learning methodologies in their classroom. This compares with 32% who didn't like using these methods. Sixteen per cent were unsure. A little over half the respondents like using active learning methods. This is a very significant finding since the employment of active learning in classrooms is at the heart of the development of active citizens, a prime aim in CSPE.

#### 4.3.2 Active Learning and Encouragement

**Table 9.1-Respondents level of agreement with the statement ‘Active learning is encouraged in my school’. (per school)**

<i>Level of Agreement</i>	<i>% Strongly Agree</i>	<i>% Agree</i>	<i>% Disagree</i>	<i>% Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>% Unsure</i>
<b>School A</b>	-	40%	60%	-	-
<b>School B</b>	-	60%	20%	-	20%
<b>School C</b>	-	100%	-	-	-
<b>School D</b>	-	20%	40%	20%	20%
<b>School E</b>	-	-	60%	20%	20%

In School A, the majority of respondents, 60% disagreed with this statement. The remaining 40% agreed with the statement.

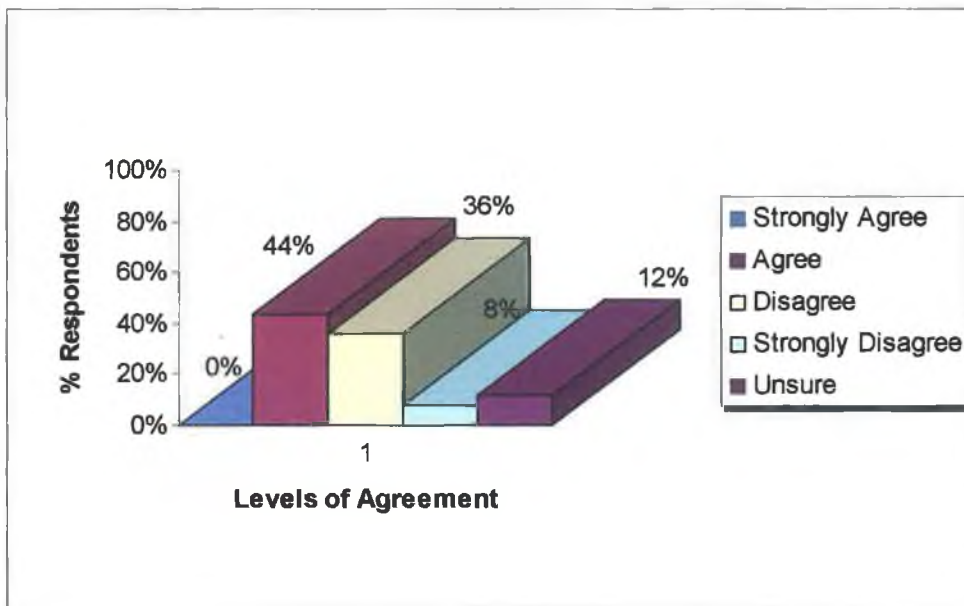
In School B, the majority of teachers, 60%, agreed that active learning is encouraged in their school. A further 20% agreed and the remaining 20% were unsure.

A hundred per cent of respondents agreed with the statement in School C indicating that active learning is clearly encouraged.

Findings for School D indicate that the majority of respondents, 60%, feel that active learning is not encouraged in their school, although 20% think it is. A further 20% are unsure.

In School E, the vast majority of teachers, 80%, feel that active learning is not encouraged in their school. A further 20% are unsure.

**Fig 9.2 Respondents level of Agreement With the Statement ‘Active learning is encouraged in my school’ (total sample)**



Overall, 44% of respondents feel active learning is encouraged in their school. A further 44% disagree, with 8% strongly disagreeing. Twelve per cent of respondents were unsure.

#### 4.3.3. Use of the Textbook in CSPE

**Table 10.1- Respondents Level of Agreement with the Statement ‘I use the textbook a lot when I teach CSPE’ (per school)**

School	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
School A	60%	40%	-	-	-
School B	20%	20%	60%	-	-
School C	-	20%	40%	20%	20%
School D	-	60%	-	20%	20%
School E	40%	40%	20%	-	-

Findings from School A clearly indicate that the textbook is used a lot in the teaching of CSPE, with a 100% of respondents agreeing with the statement. Of these, 60% strongly agreed.

In School B the majority of respondents, 60%, disagreed with the statement. However, 40% of respondents agreed to some extent that they used the textbook a lot.

In School C, the majority of teachers, 60%, indicated that they didn't use the textbook a lot in their teaching of CSPE. The remaining 40% indicated that they did.

In School D, the majority of teachers, 60%, agreed with the statement. Twenty per cent indicated that they didn't use the textbook a lot, whilst the remaining 20% were unsure.

Finally, in School E, a vast majority of respondents, 80%, felt that their teaching was guided a lot by the text book. The remaining 20% disagreed.

**Fig 10.2-Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement 'I use the textbook a lot when I teach CSPE' (total population)**

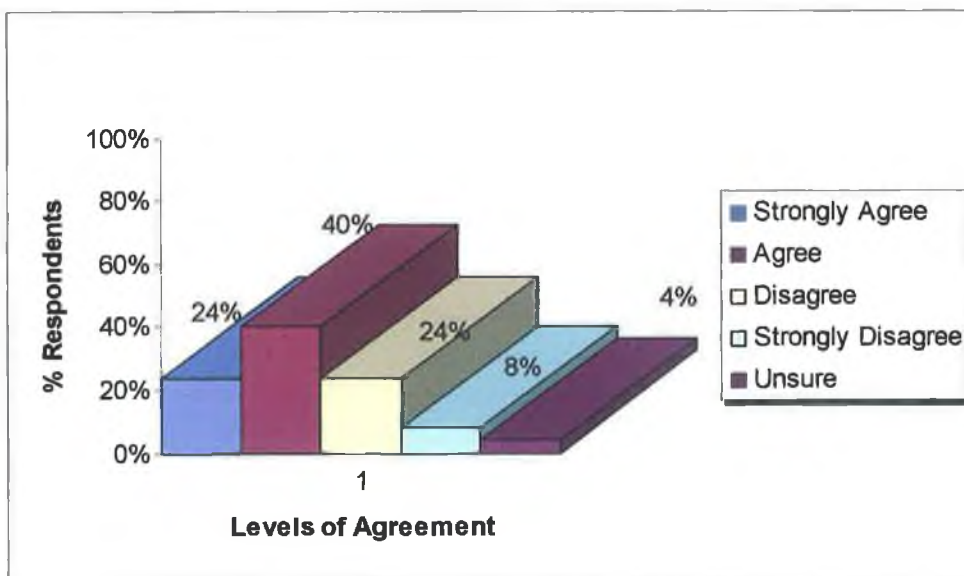


Fig 12.2 indicates that the vast majority of respondents, 64%, agree that they use the textbook when they teach CSPE. Thirty two per cent of respondents, however, disagree. A further 4%

are unsure. Findings therefore suggest that the majority of teachers in the total sample tend to use the textbook a lot in their teaching of CSPE.

#### 4.3.3. Students and Active Learning

**Table 11.1- Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement ‘My students enjoy active learning’. (per school)**

<i>School</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>
<b>School A</b>	20%	20%	20%	-	40%
<b>School B</b>	20%	80%	-	-	-
<b>School C</b>	20%	60%	-	-	20%
<b>School D</b>	40%	40%	-	-	20%
<b>School E</b>	20%	60%	-	-	20%

In School A, 40% of respondents agreed that their students enjoyed active learning. Another 20% disagreed. Quite a high percentage of respondents, 40%, were unsure.

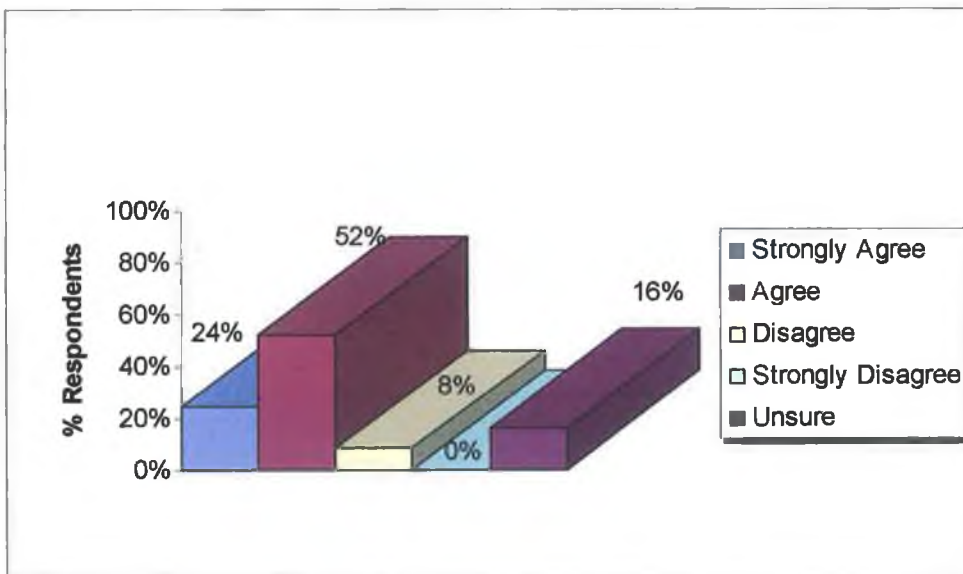
Findings from School B indicate that 100% of respondents feel their students enjoy it.

Eighty per cent of respondents in School C agree with the statement as opposed to 20% who feel unsure.

In School D the majority of teachers, 80%, agree to some extent, with the statement. The remaining 20% are unsure.

In School E, 80% of respondents agree that their students enjoy active learning while the remainder are unsure.

**Fig 11.2- Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement ‘My students enjoy active learning’ (total sample)**



Overall, the vast majority of teachers, 76%, feel that their students enjoy engaging with active learning techniques. Only 8% of teachers disagree. A significant percentage of teachers, 16% are unsure if their students enjoy active learning.

#### 4.3.4. Attitudes to Action Projects

**Table 12.1- Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement ‘Action Projects are very worthwhile’ (per school)**

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>
<b>School A</b>	20%	20%	-	20%	40%
<b>School B</b>	20%	40%	20%	-	20%
<b>School C</b>	40%	40%	-	-	20%
<b>School D</b>	40%	-	20%	20%	20%
<b>School E</b>	-	40%	40%	-	20%

In School A, 40% of respondents agreed that Action Projects were very worthwhile. Twenty per cent disagreed and a further 40% were unsure.

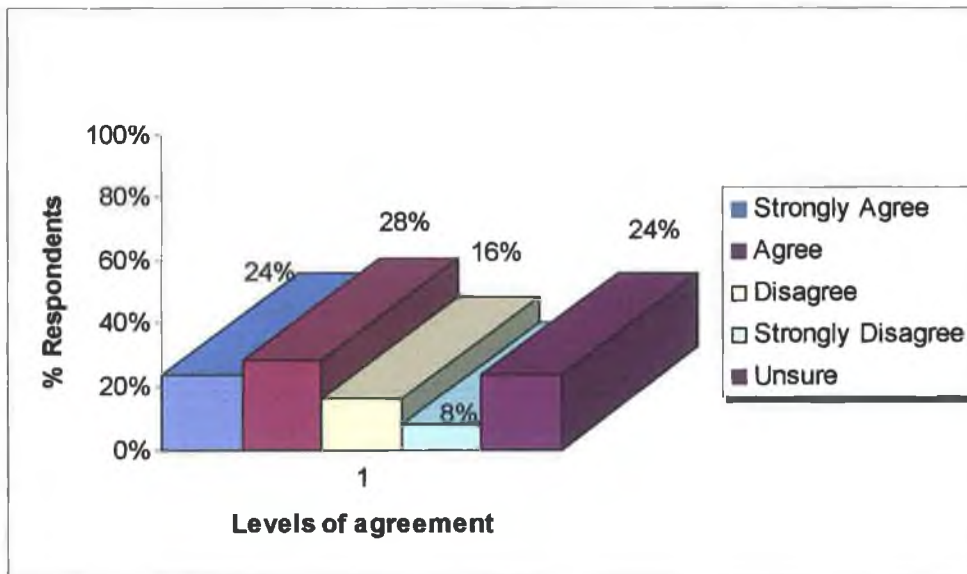
In School B, the majority of teachers, 60%, agreed with the statement. Twenty per cent disagreed and the remaining 20% were unsure.

Findings from School C indicate that the vast majority, 80%, agreed with the statement. The remaining 20% were unsure.

Forty per cent of teachers, in School D, strongly agreed with the statement. Forty per cent disagreed to some extent and a further 20% were unsure.

In School E, 40% of respondents found Action Projects very worthwhile, whilst a further 40% disagreed. The remaining 20% were unsure.

**Fig 12.2- Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement ‘Action Projects are very worthwhile’ (total sample)**



Overall, the majority of respondents, 52%, agree that Action Projects are worthwhile. Twenty four per cent however, disagree. The remaining 24% are unsure. Findings indicate therefore that over half the teachers in the total sample felt Action Projects are worthwhile.

#### 4.3 CSPE and Your School

The next series of questions on the questionnaire looked into the teachers' perception of the status of CSPE in their school and whether they themselves felt the subject was worthwhile.

The researcher also tried to find out how CSPE was being treated in each of the five schools.



#### 4.4.1 Status of CSPE among School Managers

**Table 13.1- Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement ‘CSPE has a high status among School Managers’ (per school)**

<i>School</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>
<b>School A</b>	-	40%	20%	20%	20%
<b>School B</b>	20%	20%	60%	-	-
<b>School C</b>	20%	40%	-	-	40%
<b>School D</b>	-	-	20%	-	80%
<b>School E</b>	-	20%	60%	-	20%

In School A, 40% agreed with the statement. A further 40% disagreed. The remaining 20% were unsure.

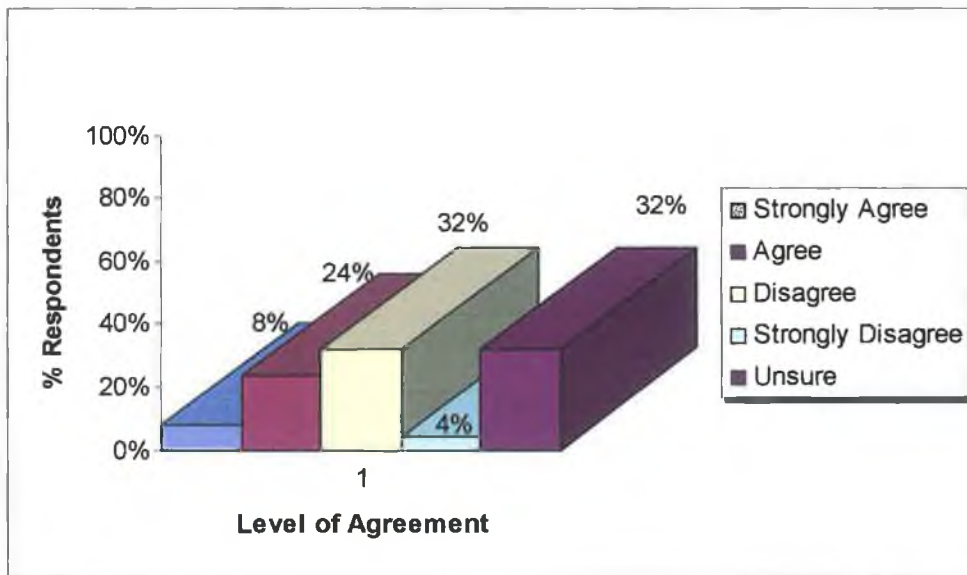
Findings for School B indicate that the majority of respondents, 60%, disagree that the status of CSPE high with school managers. The remainder agree to some extent.

The majority of respondents in School C, 60%, feel that with school managers, the status of CSPE is high. The rest remain unsure.

In School D, the vast majority, 80%, were unsure. The remaining 20% disagreed that school managers assign a high status in CSPE.

In School E, the majority, 60%, disagreed with the statement. A further 20% agreed while the remaining 20% indicated that they were unsure.

**Fig 13.2-Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement ‘CSPE has a high status among school managers’ (total sample)**



Overall, the majority, 36%, disagreed to some extent with the statement. A further 32% agreed. s, 32% disagreed and agreed, to some extent, with the statement. Another 32% were unsure.

#### 4.4.2 Status of CSPE Among Other Teachers

**Table 14.1-Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement ‘CSPE has a high status among other teachers’ (per school)**

School	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
School A	-	-	20%	40%	40%
School B	-	20%	-	40%	40%
School C	20%	60%	-	-	20%
School D	-	20%	40%	20%	20%
School E	-	-	20%	20%	60%

Findings for School A indicate that none of the respondents agree with this statement. The majority, 60%, disagreed and the remaining 40% were unsure.

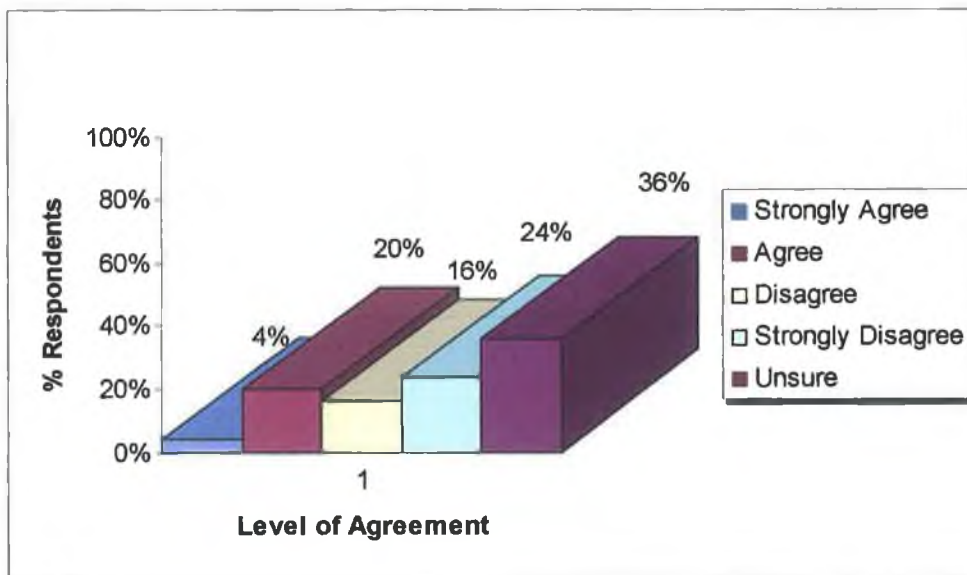
Forty per cent of respondents in School B disagreed that status was high amongst teachers. A further 40% were unsure. Only 20% agreed with the statement.

In School C 80% of teachers felt that the status of CSPE high among teachers. The rest were unsure.

The majority in School D, 60%, disagreed to some extent that the status of CSPE was high among teachers. A further 20% agreed with the statement. The remainder were unsure.

Findings for School E show that 60% were unsure of the status among teachers. The remaining 40% disagreed, to some extent, that the status of CSPE is high amongst teachers.

**Fig 14.2- Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement 'CSPE has a high status among other teachers' (total sample)**



The majority of the total sample, 40%, disagreed to some extent that the status of CSPE was high amongst other teachers in their school. Twenty four per cent however, agreed with that the status of CSPE was high amongst other teachers. A sizable percentage of teachers, 36%, were unsure.

#### 4.4.3 The Status of CSPE Amongst Students

**Table 15.1-Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement ‘CSPE has a high status amongst students in my school’ (per school)**

<i>School</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>
<b>School A</b>	-	-	20%	60%	20%
<b>School B</b>	-	20%	20%	40%	20%
<b>School C</b>	40%	20%	20%	-	20%
<b>School D</b>	-	20%	60%	20%	-
<b>School E</b>	-	20%	-	60%	20%

Findings in School A indicate that 80% of respondents disagree with the statement. The remaining 20% are unsure.

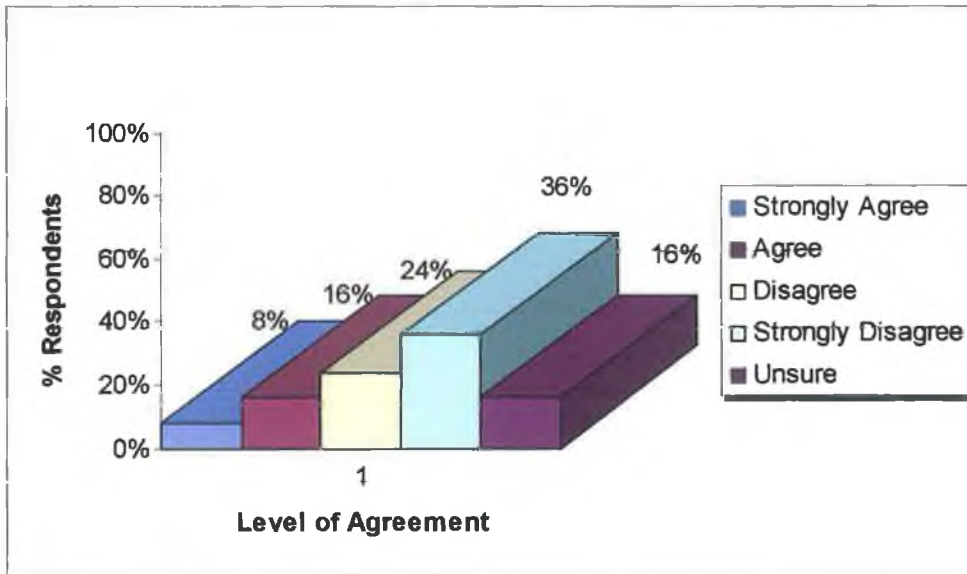
In School B, the majority, 60% disagree with 40% strongly disagreeing. Only 20% of respondents agree whilst 20% are unsure.

In contrast to both School A and B, 60% of teachers in School C agree that CSPE has a high status amongst students. Only 20% disagree with this and the remaining 20% are unsure.

In School D, 80% feel that CSPE has not got a high status amongst students. The remaining 20% thinks it has.

Findings, for School E, found that 60% of teachers strongly disagree and a further 20% agree. The rest are unsure.

**Fig 15.2-Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement ‘CSPE has a high status amongst students in my school’ (total sample)**



Findings for the total sample indicate that the majority of respondents in the five schools, 60%, disagree that CSPE has a high status amongst students. This compares with 24% who agree. A sizable number, 16%, of teachers are unsure.

#### 4.4.4 The Value of CSPE

**Table 16.1-Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement-‘CSPE is considered a worthwhile subject in my school’ (per school)**

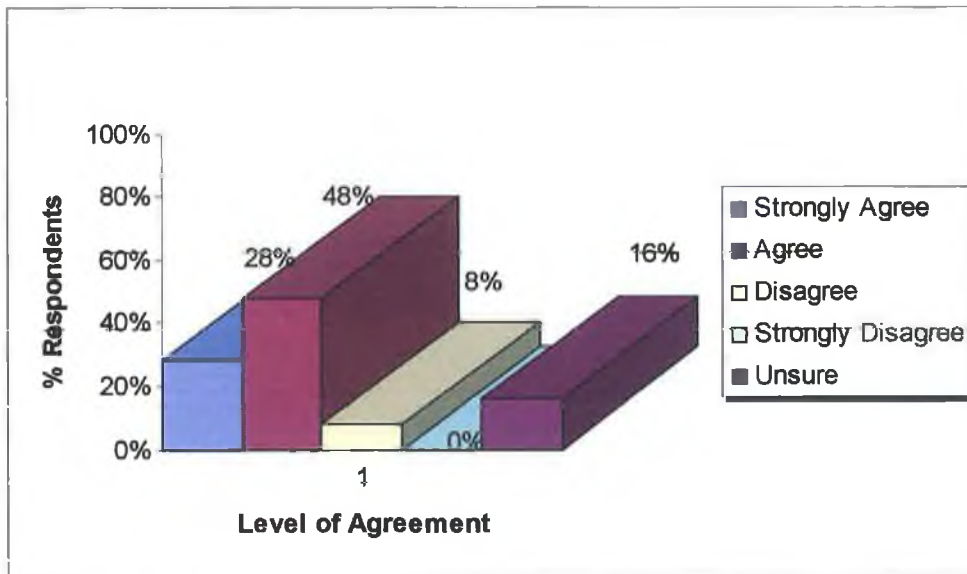
<i>School</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>
<b>School A</b>	20%	40%	20%	-	20%
<b>School B</b>	20%	60%	-	-	20%
<b>School C</b>	60%	40%	-	-	-
<b>School D</b>	20%	40%	20%	-	20%
<b>School E</b>	20%	60%	-	-	20%

There was a high level of quiescence between schools concerning the value of CSPE. In School A, 60% agreed that it is considered a worthwhile subject. Twenty per cent disagreed, while another 20% were unsure.

In School B, 80% of respondents agreed that CSPE is considered worthwhile. Twenty per cent, on the other hand were unsure.

In School C, 100% felt that CSPE was considered a worthwhile subject in their school, with 60% of that cohort strongly agreeing. Findings for School D indicate that 60% agree with the statement, 20% disagree and a further 20% are unsure. In School E, the majority, 80%, agree that CSPE is considered worthwhile in their school. The remaining 20% are unsure if this is the case.

**Fig 16.2-Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement ‘CSPE is considered a worthwhile subject in my school’ (total sample)**



Overall, 76% of respondents agreed that CSPE is considered a worthwhile subject in their schools. Of these 28% agreed strongly. Only 8% of respondents disagreed. The remaining 16% were unsure.

#### 4.4.5 The Assessment of CSPE

**Table 17.1-Respondents level of Agreement With the Statement ‘I am happy with the assessment of CPSE’ (per school)**

<i>School</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>
<b>School A</b>	40%	20%	-	20%	20%
<b>School B</b>	20%	20%	40%	20%	-
<b>School C</b>	80%	20%	-	-	-
<b>School D</b>	20%	40%	20%	-	20%
<b>School E</b>	-	20%	60%	20%	-

The majority in School A, 60%, agreed that they were happy with the assessment of CPSE.

Twenty per cent disagreed and a further 20% were unsure.

Forty per cent of respondents in School B agreed with the statement whilst another 60% disagreed.

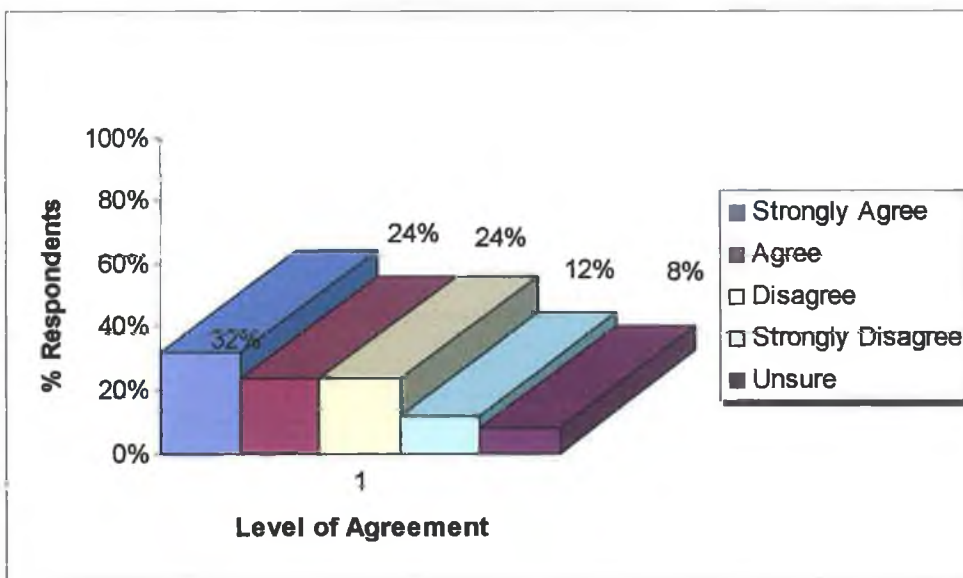
In School C, 100% of respondents agreed, with 80% of this cohort strongly agreeing with the statement.

In School D, 60% of respondents agreed while 20% disagreed. A further 20% stated that they were unsure.

In School E, the majority, 80% disagreed that they were happy with the assessment of CSPE. A further 20% agreed with the statement.



**Fig 17.2- Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement 'I am happy with the assessment of CSPE' (total sample)**



The majority of teachers in the total sample, 56%, felt that they were happy with the assessment of CSPE. Thirty six per cent disagreed. Eight per cent were unsure.

#### 4.4.5. Time Apportioned for CSPE

**Table 18.1-Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement 'In my school, one period a week is considered sufficient for the teaching of CSPE ' (per school)**

<i>School</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>
<b>School A</b>	-	20%	60%	20%	-
<b>School B</b>	-	-	20%	80%	-
<b>School C</b>	-	20%	20%	60%	-
<b>School D</b>	-	40%	40%	20%	-
<b>School E</b>	-	40%	20%	40%	-

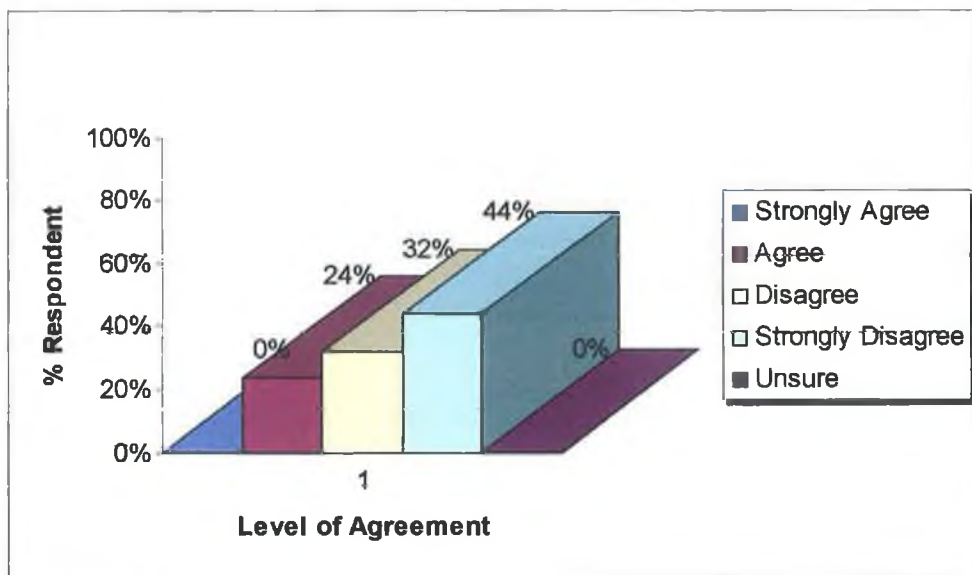
In School A, the majority, 80% disagreed with the statement. The remainder, 20% agreed.

Findings for School B indicate that 100% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

In School C, 80% of respondents disagreed with the statement as opposed to 20% that agreed.

In School D, 60% disagreed whilst a further 40% agree. This is also the case for School E.

**Fig 18.2-Respondents Level of Agreement With the Statement ‘In my school, one period a week is considered sufficient for the teaching of CSPE’ (total sample)**



Overall, the majority of respondents in the five schools disagreed that in their school, one period a week is considered sufficient for the teaching of CSPE. Forty four per cent of this cohort disagreed strongly. Only 24% agreed that one period a week was considered sufficient in their school. These findings suggest a high level of discontent with the amount of time apportioned for CSPE.

#### 4.4.6 CSPE In-house Examinations

House exams for CSPE, occur school's B and C. They do not occur in school's A, D and E.

#### 4.4.7 CSPE Co-ordinator

All schools have a CSPE co-ordinator, with the exceptions of A and E.

#### 4.4.8. Teachers Meetings

Only one school, School C, indicated that they have regular meetings for CSPE teachers.

#### 4.4.9 Student Council

Findings indicated that only two schools, C and B have an active student council. Schools D and E have a student council in place but they wouldn't be considered active. School A has no student council in place.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Data elicited from the questionnaires indicate that issues correlating with the implementation of CSPE are beginning to emerge. To explore these issues further the researcher employed the interview mode order to gain an deeper insight into teachers feelings, opinions, perceptions and attitudes pertaining to CSPE. The next chapter presents the research findings for these interviews.

## **Chapter Five- Research Findings: CSPE Teacher Interviews**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The interview method was employed in this research study to gather information on the opinions, attitudes, perceptions and feelings of teachers' on various aspects of CSPE. This method, the researcher hoped, would give her an insight into how the subject was being treated or implemented in the five schools studied. This method also enabled the researcher to put 'flesh on the bones of questionnaire responses' (Bell, 1993). This research instrument also enabled the researcher to check up on facts, seek clarification and exemplification.

The researcher employed a semi-structured or semi-standardised mode of interview. This mode afforded the interviewer freedom to digress and enabled her to probe when necessary. Three teachers from each of the five research sites were interviewed on a one-to-one basis. Findings will be presented by school.

### **5.2 Research Findings**

The researcher would firstly like to present brief profile of each interviewee in each school. Three teachers were interviewed from each school.

#### **5.2.1 Teacher Profiles**

##### **Teacher Profile- School A**

Teacher 1- Male, aged 59 years and not consulted about teaching CSPE

Teacher 2- Male, aged 61 years, and not consulted about teaching CSPE

Teacher 3- Male, aged 52 years and not consulted about teaching CSPE.

##### **Teacher Profile-School B**

Teacher 1-Female, aged 38 years, asked by management to teach CSPE

Teacher 2-Male, aged 36 years, not consulted about teaching CSPE

Teacher 3- Female, aged 25 years, not consulted about teaching CSPE

#### **Teacher Profile- School C**

Teacher 1-Female, aged 30 years, volunteered to teach CSPE

Teacher 2-Female, aged 45 years, volunteered to teach CSPE

Teacher 3-Female, aged 26 years, asked by management to teach CSPE

#### **Teacher Profile-School D**

Teacher 1- Male, aged 52, asked by management to teach CSPE

Teacher 2, Male, aged 59, not consulted about teaching CSPE

Teacher 3 –Male, aged 50 years, asked by management to teach CSPE

#### **Teacher Profile-School E**

Teacher 1-Male, aged 42, not consulted about teaching CSPE

Teacher 2-Male, aged 33, not consulted about teaching CSPE

Teacher 3-Male, aged 28, asked by management to teach CSPE

#### **5.2.2 Manner in which Teachers had Come to Teach CSPE**

The opening question of the interview asked the interviewees to state how they had come to teach CSPE and to comment on their feelings about that.

#### **School A:**

Data collected from the questionnaire, indicated that all the teachers surveyed in School A were not consulted about the fact that they would be teaching CSPE. They were asked how they felt about that.

*Em not too happy because I knew little about the subject (Teacher 1)*

*Well, I cant say I was over the moon about it. It was the lack of consultation that got up my nose. It's just typical of this school*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 also expressed his unhappiness at the lack of consultation. Overall, the teachers in this school were not at all happy about their conscription to teach CSPE.

### **School B:**

Only one teacher, Teacher 1, had been consulted about the fact that she would be teaching CSPE. She commented that she was happy to be asked as she had had a background in sociology. Teacher's 2 and 3 however, received no such consultation. They were not very happy about this lack of consultation.

*I wasn't happy at all. There was no consultation and I didn't know anything about the subject, so, I felt a bit lost really*  
(Teacher 2)

*I was disappointed about the lack of consultation. I thought some form of consultation should have come my way*  
(Teacher 3)

The lack of consultation is clearly a bone of contention with teachers in School B whereby CSPE 'appeared' on their timetables.

### **School C:**

In School C, both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, volunteered to teach CSPE. Both these teachers have obtained a qualification in CSPE stated that they were willing volunteers who were more than happy to teach the subject.

*Yeah I was more than happy to teach it. I'm big into that subject and the CPSE qualification gave me the confidence to teach it*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher 3, however, was asked by management to teach CSPE. She stated that she didn't mind teaching CSPE .

*I didn't mind being asked. I have a strong interest in politics. I'm actively involved with a political party, you see. The Principal knew this so I guess that's why he asked me*  
(Teacher 3)

Overall, teachers in School C appear to be contented about their selection as teachers of CSPE.

The principal of this school also seems to be 'in tune' with his teachers.

#### **School D:**

Two of the teachers, teachers 1 and 3 were asked by management to teach CSPE. Teacher 2 received no consultation. Teachers had mixed feelings about this.

*I didn't really mind*  
(Teacher 1)

*The thing that bugged me most is that I was selected to teach CSPE, though I knew nothing whatsoever about the subject. I thought it was religion or something*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher two cannot understand why he was chosen to teach CSPE and goes on to state that he is quite unhappy about his selection as CSPE teacher.

#### **School E:**

Both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 were not consulted about their selection as CSPE teachers. Both teachers expressed their discontent at this situation. Teacher 1 felt that management had let him down. He had been teaching solely Maths for a number of years and commented that he felt management were slowly, but surely, trying to take the Maths classes off him.

*Giving me classes like CSPE, as far as I can see is managements way of taking my Maths classes off me. I feel very let down!*  
(Teacher 1)



Teacher 3, on the other hand had been consulted. He stated that he was happy to teach the subject as he had an interest in current affairs and politics. He felt it was important that young people were exposed to politics.

### 5.2.2 Pre-service Support/Advice/Assistance

Teachers were then asked if they received any support advice, prior to their teaching of CSPE from their school.

#### **School A:**

None of the teachers in School A, it seems, received any significant support prior to their teaching of CSPE.

*I can't say I received much support. I think I say the syllabus at one stage but I've forgotten that now*  
(Teacher 3)

*Support? In this school? You must be joking! You're told what to teach here, no bones about it.*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher one also stated that he received no support prior to his teaching CSPE. He stated that he still has not seen the CSPE syllabus document and hasn't really got any idea what the course is all about. *'I just wing it'* (Teacher 1).

Overall, teachers in School A have received no support from their school prior to their teaching of CSPE. Comments from Teacher 2 indicate the teacher support vis-à-vis the implementation of curricular initiatives is not forthcoming.

#### **School B:**

Comments made by teachers suggest that there were low levels of support and assistance given to them from the school. Teacher 1 commented that there was no help or support initially but

that soon into her first year of teaching CSPE, she had been sent on CSPE in-service. She found this very helpful.

*No help was offered. I had to ask around*

(Teacher 2)

*No I cant say I got much help initially. I was very unsure*

(Teacher 3)

Clearly, Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 received no support. This made Teacher 3, in particular, very unsure about her teaching of CSPE.

### **School C:**

All of the teachers felt that they had received some form of support prior to their teaching of CSPE in School C. Both teachers 1 and 2 had attended a CSPE course of year's duration in a local university. This course had been partly paid out of school funds. Both teachers found that the course provided them with valuable insights into CSPE and gave them a greater knowledge of the course content. Teacher 2 in particular felt that the course had given her the 'know-how' and 'confidence' to use active learning methodologies in her classroom. Teacher 2 went on to tell the researcher that she was appointed CSPE Co-ordinator three years ago.

Teacher 3 has not got a professional qualification. She does however feel that she was given support from her school.

*I received a lot of support from my colleagues. We have a co-ordinator here who did a course in CSPE. She gave me a lot of materials like the syllabus, teachers' notes, videos and books when I first started, She was really helpful*

(Teacher 3)

These comments collectively indicate that there was a lot of support for new teachers of CSPE in this school.

### **School D:**

None of the teachers felt that they had received any significant support from the school as new teachers of CSPE.

*Support? None whatsoever!*

(Teacher 1)

*No I wasn't given any. Sure I don't even know who's running the show here!*

(Teacher 2)

*No..no I got none. I had to find out information myself.*

(Teacher 3)

Comments suggest that teachers felt very isolated when they initially began teaching CSPE. No help advice or support was offered to them from any source. Teacher one was very angry about the lack of support from the school. He explained that teachers were compelled to implement new curricular initiatives without help or assistance.

### **School E:**

In School E only one teacher felt that he had received any significant support from the school prior to his teaching of CSPE.

*Yes, I'd have to say I did. The principal gave me the notes for CSPE and some booklets that arrived in the school which proved very helpful to me*

(Teacher 3)

The other two teachers however, stated that they had not received any support from their school whatsoever. Teacher 1 in particular was particularly irate and vociferous about this lack of support.

*I mean it's just typical of this school. The subject isn't really that important but we still have to teach it, but how can you teach it if you know nothing about it? Teachers aren't exactly tripping over themselves to help you in this school!*

(Teacher 1)

The comments of Teacher 1 suggest the absence of a collaborative work culture in school E. Overall, the majority of teachers in School E feel that they didn't receive any initial support for their teaching of CSPE.

### 5.2.3 The Importance of CSPE in Relation to Other Subjects

Interviewees are next asked how important they felt CSPE was in relation to other subjects on the curriculum.

#### **School A:**

*I'd say not that important really. It's not on the Leaving Cert so I wouldn't say It's as important as subjects like Maths and English (Teacher 2)*

*It's quite an important subject but whether it's as important as, say, French or English is another matter... I wouldn't say it is though.  
(Teacher 3)*

Teacher 1 also stated that he didn't think CSPE was as important as other subjects on the curriculum. Asked why, he stated that it was because it wasn't on the Leaving Certificate course and there was no 'points' attached to it.

Overall, teachers didn't feel CSPE was as important as other subjects on the curriculum. Subjects that appeared on the Leaving Certificate course were assigned more importance by the teachers. It seems that Leaving Certificate subjects, or subjects where students can gain 'points' are deemed the most important in this school.

#### **School B:**

In School B, teachers had different views on the importance of CSPE. Teacher 1 felt it was as important as any subject on the curriculum.

*I think it's as important as the likes of Maths, English or Irish. Kids need to know more about the world their going out to.*  
(Teacher 1)

Teachers 2 and 3 however, did not share this view;

*Personally I don't think its as important as say English. Its my degree subject. Its what I wanted to teach. I'm not trained to teach CSPE, nor do I have a desire to teach it. I feel more comfortable teaching English, I know what I'm talking about*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 felt CSPE was quite a useful subject but it wasn't important as English, Maths or foreign languages. She pointed out that students needed these subjects to get into college. She also pointed to the absence of civic education on the Leaving Certificate course

### **School C:**

All the teachers interviewed in School C felt that CSPE was equally as important as other subjects on the Curriculum.

*I think CSPE is equally important. It's about becoming a good citizen and informing students of their rights and responsibilities. That's why it's important.*  
(Teacher2)

Teacher 2 felt it was important because she felt students needed to be informed about the world of politics and how they can be involved in decision-making. Teacher 3 felt it was as important as other subjects because it gave the student the confidence to participate in society.

### **School D:**

Overall in School D, teachers did not feel CSPE was as important as other subjects on the curriculum.

*No I wouldn't say it's as important. I don't think it's done to Leaving Cert. If you could get points for it people would be place more importance on it. In this school everything is points, points, points!*  
(Teacher 1)

Teachers 2 and 3 agreed that because CSPE was not a Leaving Certificate subject it wasn't considered important. They also pointed out that their school was very points orientated.

### **School E:**

Again teachers felt that CSPE wasn't as important as other subjects on the curriculum. Teacher 1 felt that Maths was probably the most important subject as students needed this subject for most careers. Teacher 2 felt that isn't wasn't as important because there was no points going for the subject. He pointed at that the boys in the school were very ambitious and career-orientated and that they didn't think it was as important as English, Irish or Maths. Teacher 3 also felt other subjects were more important.

#### **5.2.4 Methodologies Employed in the Teaching of CSPE**

The focus of the interview then turned to the teaching methodologies employed by teachers in their teaching of CSPE.

### **School A:**

*Well I tend to use the book a lot. It's a weak class and it's hard to control them. Other methodologies that are more active, like games and that, would be more difficult because three or four of them lads are very difficult*  
(Teacher 1)

Teacher one stresses the difficulty in using CSPE, especially in classes that are weak and hard to control. Teacher 2 however alludes to the noise factor involved in active learning methods;

*In this school we're over-gear'd to discipline. I know I am myself, so I don't tend to use active learning. I use the book mainly but I sometimes use discussion and debate although they can be a bit noisy. I think we expect a certain level of silence in this school*  
(Teacher 3)

*I use the book mainly. It's the safest bet* (Teacher 3)

Overall, teachers tend to favour passive learning methods when teaching CSPE. Respondents commented on the difficulty in using active learning methods. There is also a concern about

the noise factor associated with it. Teacher 3 also stresses the security of using the book. This suggests that in some way, teachers don't feel secure employing active learning in their classrooms.

Interviewees were then asked if they thought active learning methodologies benefited students.

*Ah yeah. They're more entertaining and I think role-play would be good. I did a lot of that in French and the kids liked it. So, I suppose you could do it in Civics too.*  
(Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 is quite aware of the benefits of active learning. It is interesting to note his use of the word 'Civics' as opposed to CSPE.

The other two teachers however, were quite cynical about the benefits of CSPE. They felt that it was an opportunity for children to misbehave and 'run amok' (Teacher 2).

#### **School B:**

Teacher 1 indicated that she employed active learning methodologies on a regular basis in her teaching of CSPE;

*I use a lot of action. A lot of 'doing'. I don't teach from the book so I would introduce a topic, using an action. I often have standing or walking debates, you know, something that will introduce a topic. Then we work backwards if you like... I also use drama a lot.*  
(Teacher 1)

The researcher then asked Teacher 1 if she thought active learning benefited students. She stated that CSPE had numerous benefits for students like increasing their confidence and developing social skills. She also felt that active learning methods gave the student a voice.

Teacher 2 indicated that he worked mainly from the book. He articulated that;

*I know you're meant to bring in drama and that but its impossible in forty minutes per week What the hell can you do in that time frame?*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 also indicated that she uses the book mainly. She explained that she tried using active learning on a number of occasions but the class went out of control. Consequently she uses the book a lot

#### **School C:**

All teachers in School C indicated that they use active learning techniques on a regular basis in their teaching of CSPE.

Teacher 1 explained that she uses discussion and drama a lot in the class. She believes students should participate in their own learning. She also believes that students enjoy active learning as opposed to passive learning. She also stated that she learned a lot about active learning techniques when she was studying for her Diploma in CSPE.

Teacher 2 indicated that she used debate and discussion a lot in class. She articulated that *'students love it'*.

Teacher 3 explained that she uses role play a lot as well as discussion and debate. She explained that active learning makes CSPE more true to life and leads to a grater understanding of difficult concepts.

#### **School D:**

Teacher 1 explains that he mainly uses the book in his teaching of CSPE. Asked why that was so he explained;

*It would be lovely to do it but it takes a lot of doing and organising...*

He explained that the weaker classes really loved it on the rare occasion that he used these methods. He blames the fact that he doesn't use these methods on the fact that he only has CSPE for forty minutes per week.



Teacher 2 also uses the text mainly. He finds the book very useful. He explained that he doesn't really use these methods because of the noise level. He feels noisy classrooms are unacceptable in the school.

Teacher 3 also stated that his teaching of CSPE is guided mainly from the text. He did indicate however that on a few occasions he had debates and discussions with the class. He felt these benefited the students and they were an enjoy experience for students.

### **School E:**

None of the teachers in School E indicated that they use active learning techniques to any great extent in their classrooms.

Teacher 1 explains that he tends to use the book a lot and that's what his students expect. He went on to explain that he tried to have a class debate on a number of occasions but just as they were getting interesting the class had finished. He felt that the fact that CSPE is only on for one class period a week prevents teachers from employing active methods in their classrooms.

Teacher Two explained that he does have class discussion from time to time but tends to use the book mainly. Asked why this was so, he explained that the book they were using was excellent and gave a good structure to the course. He also felt that sometimes discussions tend to '*go off the point*'.

Teacher 3 explains that he has used CSPE on a rare occasion. He indicated that anytime he tried to bring drama or role-play into the classroom the students '*made a mockery of it*'. As a result he tends to use the book a lot. He also explained that the noise factor attached to active learning was preventing him from using these methods. He went on to explain that he had a debate in the class. The students became very loud and difficult to control. At the end of the class his colleague next door came in to ask what all the noise was that he couldn't teach his Maths class. Since then, Teacher 3 explains, he has tended not to employ these methods.

### 5.2.5 Teacher Attitudes to CSPE

Interviewees were then invited to describe, in their own words, their attitude towards CSPE.

#### **School A:**

*It's not a bad subject but I'd prefer not to be doing it because I only get to see my class once a week. Sure I don't even know their names yet and I've been teaching them for a whole year!*

(Teacher 3)

Teacher three's negativity towards the subject seems to stem from the fact that he only has contact with his class once a week. This would suggest that the cross-curricular dimension is ignored in this school. The other two respondents also expressed negativity towards CSPE. Teacher one felt that the curriculum was overloaded and he didn't see the sense in the subject. Teacher two described CSPE as a '*convenient time table filler for management*'. Overall, teachers' attitudes towards CSPE appear to be quite negative.

#### **School B:**

In this school teachers were divided in their attitude towards CSPE. Teacher 1 was very positive about it;

*I think it's a brilliant subject. It gives the students an insight into the world they're going into-the real world, the world of community, the world of fair trades. Yes it's great it explores all aspects of the life they'll be leading in adulthood.*

(Teacher 1)

Teacher 2 however did not share this enthusiasm for CSPE.

*I think it's a very woolly subject. I don't think much of it... you know... it's not really taken that seriously.*

(Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 however, is quite enthusiastic about it. She feels the human rights and social responsibilities perspective is very important. She does however feel that the whole course

needs to be re-jigged, especially in terms of the time apportioned for it . She feels one forty minute period a week is just not enough

### **School C:**

All the teachers in School C display a very positive attitude towards the subject

Teacher 1 thinks it's a '*great subject*'. She explains that its one of the few subjects on the curriculum that gives the students a voice and that the students thoroughly enjoy the subject.

That, she feels, makes the teaching process much more enjoyable.

Teacher 2 explains;

*I feel really positive about this subject. It's one where the kids can do really well. The Action Projects are fantastic. You know, they give kids a certain degree of responsibility, they like that.*

(Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 also displays a positive attitude towards the subject. She feels that weaker students in particular can do as well as the 'brighter' students. She points out that children love discussion and debate and this allows them to understand issues more clearly.

### **School D:**

Teacher 1 displayed quite a negative disposition towards CSPE.

*I don't know what to think of it. It's... it's like religion I suppose. It's not taken seriously. It's religion without being 'Holy Mary'.*

Teacher 1 goes on to explain that because it's not in the Leaving Cert, people, like himself, have no time for it. He feels that too many of societies problems are transposed to schools to deal with.

Teacher 2 explains that he thinks it *could* be a good subject. He feels that the subject addresses important issues but it needs a better timetable provision. He feels you can get much done in forty minutes per week.

Teacher 3 is quite positive about the subject because;

*It's great! It gets the kids to question certain issues that are important to them, like human rights and the constitution. They have rights in school, for example. Those rights can be put into play*  
(Teacher 3)

#### **School E:**

None of the teachers were very positive about the subject.

*I cant see many differences between CSPE and the old Civics... well maybe its examined... but its still a waste of time as far as I can see*  
(Teacher 1)

Teacher 2 felt that it was just an 'add-on subject' which was 'handy for management when they're doing up the time-tables'

Teacher 3 was also negative. He stated that the students in his school were very career-orientated and as a result people have a negative attitude to it in the school.

#### **5.2.6 Perceptions of Other Teachers' Attitudes TO CSPE**

Respondents were than asked what their perception of other teachers' attitudes was towards CSPE.

#### **School A:**

*I don't know but I think a lot of them thoroughly dislike it*  
(Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 goes on to explain that he feels teachers don't like this subject because none of them know much about he course and are either unwilling or haven't the time to learn.

*I'd say teachers are fed up with it.*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher 2 explains that there is too much work involved for teachers, especially in the light that the subject is only on for forty minutes per week. He indicates that a lot of teachers are fed

up with the Action Projects and many don't know how to do them. He explains that he himself had to ask other teachers to swap classes with him when he was writing out the report in the Action Project. He explained that these teachers reluctantly agreed to swap classes.

*Teachers don't think much of it, I think.*  
(Teacher 3)

CSPE, as the comments above suggest is looked upon negatively by other teachers in this school.

### **School B:**

Teacher 1, in School B, feels that many teachers in the school wouldn't be as enthusiastic about CSPE, as she is. She stated that she had heard some negative comments in the staff-room about CSPE. Asked why she thought other teachers were negative about the subject, she replied;

*I suppose they don't want to change...you know... they remember the old Civics course and they feel that was a waste of time. It's all about attitude really.*  
(Teacher 1)

Teacher 2 articulated that CSPE was a 'headache' for most people. He also heard numerous negative comments from his peers about CSPE. He mentioned that those teachers' who were most negative about the subject, were teachers who were compelled to teach it without consultation.

Teacher 3 also feels that other teachers in the school have a negative attitude towards CSPE.

### **School C:**

Teacher 1 feels that other teachers of CSPE, in the school, are very positive about the subject. She does however comment that some non-CSPE teachers are quite negative about CSPE. She describes these teachers as ones who value didactic forms of teaching and learning.

Teacher 2 feels that teacher attitudes towards the subject could be better. She concurs with teacher 1.

Teacher 3 however, feels that to her knowledge, teacher attitudes towards CSPE are quite positive all round. She commented that attitudes are '*getting better*'.

#### **School D:**

Teacher 1 commented that teachers didn't have as positive an attitude to CSPE as they would for subjects like English and Maths.

*They wouldn't have the same interest as there would be for Maths and English. It's a time-table filler and the same emphasis isn't put on the subject. There wouldn't be a good feeling amongst teachers for Civics... no, definitely not.*  
(Teacher 1)

The interviewer asked him how he knew there wasn't a good feeling towards CSPE. He replied that he heard teachers in the staff-room saying '*It's only Civics*'. It is interesting to note how Teacher 1 refers to CSPE as Civics.

Teacher 3 felt that teachers were not positive towards CSPE. He felt that teachers did not want it on their timetables. He had also heard negative comments about the subject in the staff-room.

Teacher 3 admitted that most teachers were negative about CSPE but he did think that attitudes towards the subject were improving.

#### **School E:**

All teachers interviewed in School C felt that other teachers in their school had a negative attitude towards CSPE. The interviewer wanted to know why they thought this.

*Well I know teachers don't devote a lot of time to preparing for CSPE classes. I see them in the staff-room. They're usually preoccupied with their main teaching subjects*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 felt that teachers place a greater emphasis on other subjects on the curriculum. He stated that teachers just didn't like the subject. He said he suspected this was due to the fact that a lot of them knew little about CSPE.

### 5.2.7 Perceptions of Students Attitudes to CSPE

In addition respondents were asked what they thought were their students' attitudes towards CSPE.

#### **School A:**

*Well funny thing is, I think some of them really enjoy it.*  
(Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 is quite upbeat about his students' attitudes to CSPE. Teachers 2 and 3 however do not agree. Teacher 2 explains that the subject is not taken seriously by his students and on a number of occasions he had to remove a couple of boys from the class because they were laughing and '*making a skit of the whole thing*'. Teacher 3 agrees. He felt that students didn't engage with the subject very well and didn't bother doing CSPE homework for him. '*They have no interest in it whatsoever*' (Teacher 3).

#### **School B:**

Teacher 1 feels her students are quite positive to CSPE. She feels they are '*big into*' human right issues like bullying. She also added that she heard some of her pupils saying that CSPE '*is a deadly subject*'.

Teacher 2 in comparison feels students attitudes towards CSPE are quite negative;

*They don't take it serious, so they don't. They never do their homework for it. They couldn't care less for it, to be honest.*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher 2 feels the main reason for this negativity stems from the fact that CSPE is only on once a week.

Teacher 3 has feels that students' attitudes are mixed. She feels there are definitely some students who really like it and some who don't.

### **School C:**

All the teachers in this school felt that overall, students had a healthy and positive attitude towards CSPE.

*Oh, I'd have to say they absolutely love it! They are always bringing in press cuttings from newspapers about various issues central to CSPE... they love participating in discussion and debate. Yes I'd have to say they really love CSPE*  
(Teacher 2)

Overall, students' attitudes, as perceived by the interviewees, appear to be very positive in School C.

### **School D:**

*They just laugh at it. They couldn't care less. That's the attitude here. They wouldn't have the same healthy attitude for this as they would have for say, Maths or another subject they need points for. That's why!*  
(Teacher 1)

In School D, all interviewees felt that students were very negative about CSPE. Teacher 3 added;

*Some of these kids are very academic so CSPE isn't on their list of priorities.*

CSPE, it seems is not a priority for students in School D.



**School E:**

Again, in School E, all the teachers felt that students had a negative attitude towards CSPE. Teacher 2 puts this unhealthy attitude down to the fact that he only sees them once a week. He thinks that students get a feeling of which subjects are the most important from what teachers say and do and how subjects are managed in the school.

**5.2.8 Perceptions of Management's Attitude to CSPE**

Teachers were also asked to comment on how they perceived management's attitude to CSPE in each of their schools.

**School A:**

All teachers in this school felt that management don't prioritise CSPE. Teacher 1 felt that its not taken seriously by management because when it comes to the teaching of CSPE there is a feeling that not much thought goes into the selection of teachers. *'To be quite honest I think it's a subject that fills up timetables'*.

Teachers 2 and 3 also feel CSPE is not a priority for management. Teacher 3 noted that there is a poor resource allocation for CSPE in his school. He feels that more *'high profile subjects'* tend to receive the greatest amount of resources.

**School B:**

Teacher 1 feels that management is very committed to CSPE. She articulated that the principal, in particular, is very involved in human rights issues in the school and is very interested in social justice.

Teachers 1 and 2 disagree.

*Again I'd say it fills up the time-table, as far as the principal is concerned. It's a handy one if the teacher needs to top up hours*

(Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 feels its not being managed properly and as a result the wrong teachers are being selected to teach CSPE.

### **School C:**

Overall, the teachers in School C feel that CSPE is prioritised by management. Teacher 1 reminds the interviewer that it was the principal who encouraged herself and her colleague to obtain a professional qualification in the subject.

Teacher 2 feels management are '*very committed to CSPE*'. She explains that timetables are arranged so that most CSPE teachers teach their class another subject. She commented that she finds this invaluable especially when she is trying to carry out action projects.

Teacher 3 also agrees that management are positive towards CSPE.

### **School D:**

Teachers had mixed views. Teacher 1 stated that '*management couldn't care less*'. He went on to state that the school was quite academic in orientation and that the principal was more committed to the '*more academic subjects*'.

Teacher 2 felt that although management's attitude to CSPE was quite negative, he felt the situation was improving, especially in the light of the proposal to bring civic education into the senior cycle.

Teacher 3, on the other hand, felt that management were trying their best '*under difficult circumstances*'.

### School E:

All teachers felt that management were not treating the subject seriously enough, nor was it a priority for them. All teachers felt that 'more academic' subjects were given greater attention by management.

*No the attitude of Management isn't that great here. If it was Maths or French it would be a different story I can tell you*  
(Teacher 3)

### 5.2.9 Attitudes Towards Assessment

Respondents were next asked to share their views of the mode of assessment utilised in CSPE, particular the 60/40 divide with reference to the marking scheme.

### School A:

*No... I... I think there's something wrong there. The bad classes get the same assessment as the good classes. The fellas I have are just not able to read and when it comes to politics or democracy and proportional representation, sure they can't even get their tongues around these words, never mind, understand them*  
(Teacher 3)

This suggests that Teacher 3 feels the assessment is geared towards 'brighter' students.

Teacher 1 agrees. He feels that maybe the subject should be at both honours and pass level. On reflection, however he changes his mind because 'you can't have honours or pass citizens'. He goes on to explain that weaker students won't do as well in the written exam because their vocabulary wouldn't be as expansive as 'brighter' students. He feels the way CSPE is assessed makes it 'too easy for the bright fellas'.

Teacher 2, on the other hand, takes umbrage with the action project.

*The Action Project is a joke. I know for a fact that it tends to be teachers who do it and that's not right*  
(Teacher 2)

This is a startling finding. The action projects are not only meant to be student- initiated but the reports have to be the students own work. The comments from teacher 3 suggest that action projects are either not genuinely being carried out or that the teacher is writing the report for the students.

### **School B:**

Both Teacher 1 and 3 are happy with the assessment.

*I'm really happy with the assessment; it suits the weak kids as well*  
(Teacher 3)

Teacher 2, on the other hand, is not at all happy with the assessment of CSPE;

*I think the whole area of assessment needs a re-think. Sixty per cent is probably too much for the action project. The kids also get too much help from teachers-they practically write the reports for them*  
(Teacher 2)

Similar to School A, there is a suggestion that teachers are doing most of the work for the Action Project.

### **School C:**

All teachers in School C appear to be happy with the assessment.

*It's great to have a subject that doesn't depend on the completion of a terminal exam. The sixty per cent for Action Projects is good for all students, not just the clever ones.*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 agrees. She feels that If CSPE was assessed like other subjects than it would defeat the whole purpose of the course. Teacher 1 feels the mode of assessment recognises the various forms of intelligences. She stresses that students who wouldn't be very academic can excel in CSPE.

**School D:**

Teacher 1 feels the assessment has '*the right balance*' but '*it's a bit of a farce*'. Asked what he meant by that, he replied that many students in his school get the sixty per cent for the Action Project without even carrying out an action. His main problem is that there is no monitoring of Action Projects.

Teacher 2 also shares this view. He feels that teachers do most of the work in Action Projects. He would prefer the total marks going for a terminal exam.

Teacher 3 feels the mode of assessment is '*fair enough*'.

**School E:**

Teachers 1 and 2 are not at all happy with the assessment of CSPE. Both teachers felt that there were too many marks going for the action project. Teacher 1 '*knew for a fact*' that some classes did not in fact carry out an action. This is similar to the scenario in School. Teacher 2 stated that he would prefer if most of the marks went for the written exam because he feels his students do well in written, terminal exams.

Teacher 3, however, feels that the mode of assessment has '*the right balance*'.

**5.2.10 Place of CSPE on Knowledge Hierarchy**

Teachers were then asked to rate CSPE. The interviewee asked teachers to imagine a hierarchy of subjects in their school. They were asked to place CSPE somewhere on the hierarchy and to account for its assigned position.

All of the teachers interviewed in each school placed it at the bottom, with the exception of the three teachers in School C and one teacher in School B.

### **School A:**

*I'd say it's at the bottom because teachers think the exam is too easy for the good classes. There's no challenge for them really. A lot of the good lads here got an 'A'. There's definitely a hierarchy of subjects here. Like, people feel that a subject like geography isn't exactly rocket science and Civics certainly isn't. Civics is at the bottom of the pile.*

(Teacher 1, School A)

Teacher one feels it's at the bottom and lacks status because the exam is not challenging enough for brighter students. He feels an 'A' grade isn't elusive for 'brighter' CSPE students. Again, the word 'Civics' is used to describe the course. The other teachers also agree that this subject is at the bottom of the pile. Teacher two reckons this is so because teachers and students just aren't interested in the subject. Teacher three suggests it isn't rated very highly because it doesn't appear on the Leaving Certificate course. Teachers overall, in School A, feel that CSPE is at the bottom of the pile. This suggests that the status of CSPE is very low in this school.

### **School B:**

Teacher 1 feels that CSPE could be placed '*somewhere in the middle*'. She did admit that in the past it would have been near the bottom but she feels, in the last number of years, attitudes are getting more positive towards the subject.

Teacher's 2 and 3, however do not agree.

*I'd say CSPE is right at the bottom. It's not getting priority... English and Maths get top priority all the time*  
(Teacher 2)

*It's right at the bottom of the barrel, I'm afraid.*  
(Teacher 3)

For teachers 2 and 3, the status of CSPE is very low in their school.

### **School C:**

All teachers in School C indicate that the status of CSPE is quite high in their school.

*It's definitely given a good degree of priority*  
(Teacher 1)

Teacher 2 admits that although subjects like Maths English and Irish are looked on more favourably than CSPE, allocated more resources and given more priority, she feels that CSPE would come 'somewhere in the middle' on the knowledge hierarchy of her school.

Teacher 3 feels that CSPE would be allocated a place somewhere near the top of the knowledge hierarchy. She justified this by commenting that the students in the school are really positive about the subject.

Comments from teachers in School C suggest that the status of CSPE, in this school, is quite high.

### **School D:**

All the teachers interviewed in School D, place CSPE at the bottom of the knowledge hierarchy in their school. Teacher 1 sums up the attitudes of the interviewees.

*It would be placed at the bottom by everyone-teachers, pupils and management.*  
(Teacher 1)

Teacher 3 feels that other subjects in the school are given far more priority. Teacher 2 feels that the 'Status of CSPE isn't high in this school'

The comments made by teachers would definitely suggest the latter.

### **School E:**

All the teachers in School E indicated that the status of CSPE is not very high in their school.

*To be honest CSPE is the lowest of the low. No body gives it much credence really*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher 1 felt that because it wasn't examined in the Leaving Certificate and no-one '*pays much attention to it*'.

Teacher 3 stated that there was a lot of competition between subjects in his school and that CSPE '*just cant compete with Maths, English or French*'.

Comments made by teachers in School E, would also indicate that the status of CSPE is very low here.

#### 5.2.11 Disadvantages of CSPE

Teachers were then asked if they thought that CSPE, as it stands, has any disadvantages.

##### **School A:**

*Well it's just thrown to people, you know as timetable filler. Teachers Aren't happy about that*  
(Teacher 1)

*For teachers it's lack of consultation. That's the big disadvantage.*  
(Teacher 2)

*The big disadvantage as far as I can see is the one period a week. This is an unreal time-frame for teachers*  
(Teacher 3)

For Teachers 1 and 2 the main issues or disadvantages with CSPE was the lack of consultation with regard to teacher selection. Teacher 3 felt the main disadvantage was the time-table provision of just one forty minute period per week. The teachers clearly feel that CSPE, as it stands, has distinct disadvantages.

*Let teachers who really want to teach it, teach it*  
(Teacher 2)

*It needs to be on more than once a week*  
(Teacher 3)



For Teacher 2, the main issue involved the selection of teachers. He felt teachers should not be compelled to teach CSPE. He stresses that he had no interest in the subject and dislikes teaching it as a result. Teacher 3 feels the main concern lies in the time table provision for CSPE. He feels that very little gets done in forty minutes and since he doesn't have the class for another subject, he feels he does not have a rapport with the class. Consequently, he finds it hard to control the class. The key issues for teachers in school A are the selection of CSPE teachers and the time apportioned for the teaching of CSPE.

### **School B:**

All the teachers in this school agreed that the main disadvantage was the lack of time teachers had. They all thought one forty minute period a week was insufficient for the teaching of CSPE. Teacher 1 commented that although she was time-tabled to teach her CSPE class another subject, she still felt under a lot of pressure to cover the content, carry out the action and oversee the filling out the reports. Teacher 3 commented that the time-frame for CSPE was '*unrealistic*'.

Teacher 3 also felt that the subject was too broad.

Overall, key issues for teachers in School B is the lack of time and the 'broadness' of the content in CSPE.

### **School C:**

Time was also the key issue for teachers in School C. Teacher 1 felt that although she taught her CSPE another subject she found herself '*constantly under pressure*'.

Teacher 2 commented that CSPE should be time-tabled for at least three periods a week.

Teacher 3 stated that for the past number of years she has been under a lot of pressure to carry out the action and help the students fill out the reports. Her class carried out a mock election this year and she explained that the action alone took twelve weeks to prepare and execute. She

mentioned it took another five weeks to fill out the reports. She felt she hadn't enough time to cover the seven concepts of CSPE.

#### **School D:**

Teacher 1 felt that the main disadvantage with CSPE was the amount of 'external work' for teachers. Asked what was meant by this he replied that the action project requires a lot of extra work for teachers. He mentioned that teachers weren't prepared to do the extra work. '*they're lazy really*'.

For Teacher 2 the main issue is time. He feels one period a week '*just isn't good enough*'.

For Teacher 3 the issue of time was also his main concern.

#### **School E:**

The lack of time, once again proves to be the main issue in School E, although Teacher 1 stresses that his main problem is with the Action Project. He feels that there are too many marks going for the Action Project and that this could '*kill the subject*'. He goes on to explain that there is no-body to check if actions are actually being carried out. He feels the lack of monitoring does no favours for the subject.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The interview method, employed by the researcher, tried to elicit from teachers, their opinions, perceptions and attitudes towards CSPE. Similar issues concerning the implementation of CSPE have clearly emerged. Teacher attitudes and opinions about CSPE have also been explicated. Teacher's perceptions about the status of CSPE have been surfaced. The findings will be analysed in chapter seven.

The next chapter presents the findings for the students' focus-group interviews.

## Chapter Six- Research Findings: Focus Group Interviews

### 6.1 Introduction

The focus group interview mode was employed in this study to elicit from current and former students of CSPE, their attitudes, opinions and perceptions of various aspects of CSPE. Two focus groups were interviewed in these schools. One group was representative of current CSPE students whilst the other was representative of former CSPE students. There were four students in each focus group.

### 6.2 Research Findings

Research findings will be presented by school. Each school will be subdivided into current CSPE students and former CSPE students.

#### 6.2.1 Students Attitude to CSPE:

##### **School A:**

##### *Current Students*

Overall current students of CSPE felt that CSPE was not as important as other subjects on the curriculum. They associated 'important subjects', as those that would enable them to attend college or get 'a good job'. Maths, English and Irish were identified as 'important subjects'.

*Maths, English and Irish are the three most important subjects to get into college.*

(Student 1, Male).

Student 4 identified history as an important subject because he wanted to become an archaeologist.

The group were next asked how important they thought CSPE was.

*I don't think CSPE is important cause ...you know...you only do it once a week like and it's just boring and I for one don't like it. You only learn about parliament and stuff, that's not important.*

(Student 2 Male)

*Well its important for looking out for your rights and so you wont get shoved around but you know its not going to get you a job unless you want to become a politician*

(Student 4, Male)

Student 3 felt CSPE wasn't as important as English because English '*helped you to talk proper*'. Asked how he felt about CSPE he replied

*It's a load of crap, I mean what does it do for you?*

(Student 3, Male)

Overall, students do not think CSPE is as important as other subjects on the curriculum.

The attitude of current CSPE students in School A seems to be quite negative.

#### *Former CSPE Students*

The researcher asked this focus group to think back to their Junior Cycle years. They were asked to identify the exam subjects they felt, were the most important. The focus group agreed that Maths English and Irish were the most important subjects on the school curriculum. The group felt they were most important because they were not only compulsory but most colleges and jobs required them for entry

Students were next asked to think back to their Junior Cert exam and to think of any exam subjects they felt, were unimportant. Without any prompting the group identified CSPE.

*CSPE wasn't worth doing at all, it was an easy 'A'!*

(Student 1, Male)

Yes CSPE, definitely. It was a total waste of time. It was by far the easiest subject

(Student 4, Male)

The attitudes of former CSPE students in this school also appear to be quite negative.

#### **School B:**

##### *Current Students*

Students identified English and Maths as the most important subjects.

*I'd say Maths is the important cause you need to do courses and you need to have a high level of Maths in the Junior Cert so that you can get a nice programme in college. I want to do Computer Science so Maths is important to me*  
(Student 1, Female)

*I would say English because I want to write novels when I am older*  
(Student 3, Female)

Students clearly identified 'important subjects' as those that would advance their own particular career paths.

Students were next asked to identify subjects they are studying that they feel are unimportant.

Without prompt, religion and CSPE are mentioned.

The group were next asked why they felt CSPE wasn't an important subject.

*Well no employer asks if you have Civics in your leaving Cert, but they're definitely going to ask for Maths.*  
(Student 4, Female)

Students clearly agree that CSPE is not a prerequisite for entry to college or a good job.

Student 1 however, does make the point that if a student was interested in a political career than CSPE would be important. The status of CSPE amongst current CSPE students seems to be quite low.

#### *Former Students*

Former CSPE students also appear negative towards CSPE. They also identify more 'academic' subjects like English, Maths and French as the subjects they feel are the most important. All of the group agree that they were important for future careers.

When asked what subjects they felt were unimportant in the Junior Certificate exam, CSPE and Irish are mentioned. The interviewer asked the group to explain why they thought CSPE was unimportant.

*You just don't need it for anything*  
(Student 1, Female)

*Yeah, it's a waste of time. Like I mean I won't be going into politics. I'm not into all that*  
(Student 2, Female)

*Yeah you just don't need it*  
(Student 3, Female)

*It's unimportant. It's boring. It's not worth a shite.*  
(Student 4, Female)

Former students of CSPE clearly feel that CSPE, in comparison to other, more 'academic' subjects is not that important. Students feel that CSPE will not advance either their college or working careers

### **School C:**

#### *Current Students*

In sharp contrast to School A and School B, current students of CSPE are more positive towards the subject. Although they feel that subjects like English and Maths are very important they feel that CSPE is quite important.

*I like CSPE. It's important for when we get older and have to vote.*  
(Student 1, Female)

*It's important to know your rights*  
(Student 4, Male)

Student 2 and 4 both feel it's important to know what's going on in the world and they feel CSPE gives them a greater insight into current affairs. Student 2 also feels it's important to know how the country is run.

Current CSPE students in School C therefore are quite positive about CSPE.

### *Former Students*

Students in this focus group feel that the most important subjects are those which you need to get into college. Maths, French, English and Irish are mentioned as 'important' subjects.

All the students attach this importance to these subjects because '*these are the one's you need for college*' (Student 3, Male)

The group were asked to think of subjects that were unimportant in the Junior Certificate exam.

CSPE is not mentioned. The interviewer then asks the group to comment on the CSPE course.

*I thought it was really interesting. You need it because if someone asked you who the Minister of Finance was, you wouldn't have a clue only for CSPE. You should know about your country*

(Student 1, Female)

*Yeah I really liked it too. It got you involved with the rest of the class and helped you to work better together.*

(Student 2, Female)

*It was good practice for working in groups, like when we did the action project*

(Student 3, Male)

*It was different. You didn't have to learn by rote like other subjects. Your opinion was listened to.*

(Student 4, Female)

This focus group clearly feel that they got something out of the CSPE course. All appeared to like it and found it interesting. The status of CSPE is quite high amongst this group.

### **School D:**

#### *Current Students*

This focus group, like many of the others, thought that English and Maths were the most important subjects. They were also asked about which subjects they found unimportant.

'Civics' and Religion are mentioned straight away. The group was asked why they felt CSPE was unimportant.

*It's a doss subject. You don't really need it*

(Student 1, Male)

*It would be important if you can from a disadvantaged background but none of us are like that in this school so it wouldn't be important.*

(Student 3, Male)

Students in this group also mention that they don't need CSPE to get into college. Comments made in this focus group indicate that the status of CSPE is low amongst current CSPE students. Most of the students refer to CSPE as 'Civics'.

#### *Former Students*

Like their younger counterparts, this focus group feel the most important subjects are those from which they can earn points or gain entry into college. Again English and Maths are mentioned as important subjects.

With reference to unimportant subjects in the Junior Certificate exam, CSPE is mentioned straight away. They were asked to justify this.

*It's absolute crap. What do we need it for?*

(Student 1, Male)

*A waste of time! The teacher never taught it. He did Business Studies instead.*

(Student 2, Male)

*I really didn't learn anything in it. All we did was read the book ourselves. It was just page after page of useless drivel*

(Student 3, Male)

*It's a load of old waffle. The teacher we had was crap as well. He hadn't got a clue about it.*

(Student 4, Male)

Attitudes towards CSPE, as the comments above suggest are very negative in this group. Issues concerning the teaching of CSPE begin to surface. Comments suggest that teachers knew little about the subject or didn't teach the subject.



## **School E:**

### *Current Students*

Like the other focus groups in the different schools English and Maths were pinpointed as important subjects. CSPE was considered an unimportant subject by the group. All members of the group were male.

Student 1 felt CSPE was a waste of time. He commented that most of the class read the paper and all the information was in that. Therefore, he felt that a CSPE course wasn't needed.

All the other students agree that the subject is a waste of time. Student 4 comments that it's a good subject 'to go asleep in'.

The status of CSPE, as the above comments suggest, is very low amongst current CSPE students in this school.

### *Former Students*

This group, all male, felt that CSPE in comparison to Maths and English, was unimportant.

The group didn't understand why they had this subject. They felt that it was primarily 'a waste of time' (Student 4). Student 1 also comments that the subject was too easy and that it wasn't challenging enough for him.

## **6.2.2 Attitudes to CSPE Teacher**

The focus of the interview next turned to the students' perceptions of their CSPE teachers.

## **School A:**

### *Current Students*

Overall the students in this group didn't feel that their CSPE teachers were enthusiastic about the subject.

*I don't think he's into to it to tell you the truth. He can't come up with good things to learn. He keeps saying 'I'm not a CSPE teacher and I'm only doing this cause no-one else will'. He does the same thing over and over again'*  
(Student, 1)

*Our teacher said he doesn't like it.*  
(Student 4)

Overall the group feel the teachers make the subject boring. They all feel that the same content is repeated by the teacher. They feel the teachers don't like the subject as the comments of Student 1 and Student 4 illustrate.

#### *Former Students*

The group agreed that the teachers made the subject boring. Comments indicated that the CSPE course was delivered via the text, which the students found very boring. One student commented that his CSPE teacher in second year taught him English instead of CSPE. Another student commented;

*The teacher I had couldn't care less about CSPE... he even said he didn't like it!*  
(Student 4)

Was this the same teacher mentioned by student 4 in the latter group?

Overall this group felt that their teachers of CSPE made the subject boring.

#### **School B:**

##### *Current Students*

This focus group had different opinions about their CSPE teacher. One of the students was quite positive about her CSPE teacher. She explained that the teacher always made the subject interesting and the students were able to have debates, discussion in the class.

The rest of the group however did not agree.

*My teacher isn't very good at CSPE. He knows nothing about it*  
(Student 4)

The other students added that the teachers were boring and that they never checked up on CSPE homework.

#### *Former Students*

Overall, this group were extremely negative about their former CSPE teachers.

*I had Miss X. She was a muppet! She didn't even know half the stuff in the book*  
(Student 2)

Some of the words used to describe their CSPE teachers were 'boring', 'lazy' and 'stupid'.

#### **School C:**

#### *Current Students*

This group were quite positive about their CSPE teachers.

*I think Miss X is great. She's a good laugh. She makes us want to listen to her... She lets us do drama and have our say*  
(Student 3)

*She's a good teacher. Everyone says so. She respects us and lets us talk about things that interest us.*  
(Student 1)

All in the group agreed that their teachers were good. The interviewer asked the group what made a good CSPE teacher. They described a good CSPE as one who listened to them, let them have their say, was interesting, and did drama now and again

#### *Former Students*

Former students were extremely positive about their former CSPE teachers.

*Our teacher was really excited about it-even more excited than we were!*  
(Student 2)

*Our teacher absolutely loved it. It was CSPE this and CSPE that...*

(Student 3)

Comments from this group clearly indicate that the students felt that their teachers were very enthusiastic about CSPE.

#### **School D:**

##### *Current Students*

Overall, this group are quite negative towards their CSPE teachers.

*Mr X, you know, he just reads from the book and expects you to take it in first time and we just can't! He makes it boring, in fact, he is boring.*

(Student 3)

All the group agree that their teachers make the subject very boring. They put this down to the fact that they just read the book all the time

##### *Former Students*

Students were very negative about their CSPE teachers.

*It became obvious me that my teacher just didn't care, like he didn't. He did Business with us instead*

(Student 1)

The group also commented that they learned very little in their three years of CSPE. They felt that the teachers weren't very good. One student comments that the class was so boring that the class would either go asleep or start messing. Hence negativity is directed at teachers because they were perceived as boring or didn't teach the subject at all.

#### **School E:**

##### *Current Students*

Overall students were quite negative about their CSPE teachers.

*My teacher hasn't got a clue*

(Student 4)

The group feel that their teachers haven't got the interest in this subject as they have for other subjects. They also commented that the lessons weren't very interesting. One student explains that they have to read the book themselves whilst his teacher corrects homework from another subject.

#### *Former Students*

Former students also prove negative towards their former CSPE teachers. They explain that in most cases CSPE was particularly boring and very little got done in the class because students would start to mess out of boredom. They also felt the teacher didn't listen to their opinions about various issues.

*The teacher never listens to what we have to say  
(Student 3)*

#### 6.2.3 A Typical CSPE Class

Current CSPE students were asked to describe what they would do in a typical CSPE class. The researcher hoped this would give her a deeper insight into the learning methodologies employed by teachers in each of the schools surveyed.

#### **School A:**

##### *Current Students*

Comments from this group would indicate that a predominantly didactic form of teaching was employed to teach CSPE.

One student commented that the teacher would write on the blackboard all the time and get the class to copy it. Another student states that in his class they read from the book all the time. He mentioned that the class had a debate on Iraq once and this was good.

The researcher asked the students that if there more debates and drama in the class would they find it more interesting. All students felt that they would;

*I'd prefer to do discussion and debates cause it's more easier...the teacher speaks out and then you can agree if it's right or wrong... it's better*  
(Student 4)

*Yeah. I'd prefer to do debates cause you learn better*  
(Student 2)

Students in School A would clearly prefer to be engaging with active learning methodologies.

### **School B:**

#### *Current CSPE Students*

Comments from the majority of current students in School B suggest that a passive, didactic form of teaching is being employed in the teaching of CSPE.

*We read from the book mainly and answer questions*  
(Student 1)

All of the group agree that their learning of CSPE is guided primarily by the textbook. The group go on to explain that as a result classes are extremely boring.

The group are then asked if they would prefer more debate, discussion or drama in their CSPE class. All the group agree that these modes of learning would make the class less boring and more enjoyable. One of the students in the group however, indicates that her particular teacher has a lot of discussion in the class. She tells the interviewer that she finds this very enjoyable.

### **School C:**

#### *Current CSPE Students*

In sharp contrast to Schools A and B, current CSPE students in School C indicate that active learning methodologies are the norm in their learning of CSPE.

*We have discussion quite a lot and debates. We had a debate with another CSPE class on aid to the third world. It was great*  
(Student 3)

Another student goes on to explain that in his class they have a lot of drama. He explained that all the students really enjoy drama in CSPE. He described an anti-bullying play his class put on for the school.

Students in School C clearly enjoy the active learning mode.

#### **School D:**

Like the Students in Schools A and B, comments from students in this school, indicate that again, a passive form of teaching and learning is being employed. All the students interviewed commented that the teacher mainly used the book. One student comments that the class is so boring that he often falls asleep in the class. Another student explains that he never listens in the class.

The interviewer asks the students if they would prefer more active learning in the class. They all indicate that they would. They think it would make the subject more interesting.

#### **School E:**

##### *Current CSPE Students*

Students indicate that the teacher mainly uses the book but that sometimes they have discussions in the class. They were asked which mode they preferred. All the students comment that they prefer discussion. One student feels discussion makes various issues in CSPE easier to understand. Another student feels that discussion makes the subject more interesting.

#### 6.2.4 Attitudes to Assessment

Since the former CSPE students had completed their Junior Cert the researcher tried to elicit their attitude towards the mode of assessment. They were asked to comment on the Action Project and the written examination.

##### **School A:**

###### *Former CSPE Students*

This group found the CSPE exam very easy. They all felt that it was the easiest exam in the Junior Certificate. One student describes the examination as an 'easy A'. All the students also found the Action Project very easy but that they had found out new things by doing it. Overall students found the Action Project and examination very easy.

##### **School B:**

###### *Former CSPE Students*

Students in School B also found the exam easy. Two of the students interviewed got an 'A' in the exam whilst the other two got a 'B' grade. They also found the Action Project an easy endeavour.

*Everyone got an 'A' or a 'B' in it so it's no big deal  
(Student 3)*

The rest of the students agree with the above comments. This suggests that getting a high grade in CSPE is not really considered an achievement by students.

##### **School C:**

###### *Former CSPE Students*

Former students in School C, also indicate that they found both the exam and the action project very easy. All of the students interviewed got an 'A' grade in their Junior Certificate exam.



*Overall CSPE was very easy. We knew we had sixty marks before we went into the written exam*  
(Student 4)

The group agrees that the exam should be more challenging.

#### **School D:**

##### *Former CSPE Students*

The attitudes of former CSPE students to assessment can best be described as 'cynical'.

*The CSPE exam is a joke. It's the token exam in the Junior Cert, its just there to keep people happy. It doesn't measure anything. It's pretty much a load of drivel*  
(Student 2)

*Oh it was so difficult (sarcasm)*  
(Student 1)

Students also express cynicism for the Action Project.

*Our teacher told us we had to do an action project five days before it was due to be handed up. We were supposed to do it in second year but none of us had it done. I had to make one up from something I did in Religion class. I just made it up and exaggerated it loads and the gas thing was I got an 'A'.*  
(Student 2)

Overall, the students in this school feel the exam is 'a joke'.

#### **School E:**

##### *Former CSPE Students*

Again, students in this school did not find the exam or the Action Projects very challenging.

All of the students interviewed got an 'A' grade.

*Like everyone in the school got an 'A' in it. Oh I got an 'A' in CSPE-big thrill!*  
(Student 3)

Again students are quite cynical about the mode of assessment employed in CSPE. To these students 'it's just too easy'.

#### 6.2.5 The Student Voice

The students were asked if they felt their voices were heard in the school.

##### **School A:**

Both current and former students felt that their voices were not heard in the school.

*We're never listened to in here  
(Current Student)*

*We should have a student's council. They have them in other schools  
I think teachers think they run the school here. We should be able to  
fight for the things we want. The teachers just tell us to shut up really  
(Former Student)*

Both groups of students clearly feel that they have no voice in the school.

##### **School B:**

Current CSPE students feel that their voices are heard sometimes. They explain that they have a Student Council but that nothing much gets done in it.

Former students feel that their voices aren't heard. They explained that they had asked the principal loads of times to change the colour of the school jumper for senior students. The students commented that the principal doesn't listen to them.

##### **School C:**

Current students feel their voices are heard sometimes. They feel that teachers sometimes don't listen to their views on school issues because they are young. They explain they have a School Council and students opinions are heard there.

Former students definitely believe that their voices are heard in the school.

*I think our voices are definitely heard. The principal meets the School Council every month. He listens to what we have to say.*  
(Former CSPE student)

#### **School D:**

Comments from both current and former students, in School D, indicate that students don't think their voices are heard.

*There's a School Council but it's a waste of time if you ask me*  
(Current CSPE Student)

*In here? Are you mad? Our opinions are always being shot down. You're just told to shut up.*  
(Former CSPE Student)

Students clearly feel that their opinions are not listened to.

#### **School E:**

Again, students do not feel their voices are being heard. Both current and former students feel that the school is not interested in listening to them. They feel their opinions are not valued by the principal or teachers.

*Nobody listens to us*  
(Current CSPE Student)

#### **6.2.6 CSPE and the Leaving Certificate**

All interviewees, with the exception of one from School C, felt that if a subject like CSPE was on the Leaving Certificate they would not choose to do it. This suggests that overall the status of CSPE and the whole area of civic education is very low amongst students. It is not something they value, it seems.

### 6.3 Conclusion

The focus group interviews with both current and former students, the author feels, clearly explicate students' perceptions, attitudes and opinions about various issues concerning CSPE.

Overall students both former and current, appear to be quite negative about various aspects of CSPE.

The next chapter analyses the data presented in the last three chapters.

## **Chapter Seven- Analysis of Research Findings.**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the findings presented in the previous three chapters. Five post-primary schools were selected for survey and the data collected was elicited from twenty five completed questionnaires, a total of fifteen teacher interviews and eight focus group interviews with current and former CSPE students.

The researcher employed the questionnaire to establish a CSPE teacher profile in each school and to get a sense of where CSPE 'was at' in each school. Both the one-to- one interviews, and the focus group interviews were utilised to elicit the opinions, attitudes and perceptions of CSPE teachers and their students.

The findings from the questionnaires and interviews will be analysed collectively for each individual school. Emerging issues vis-à-vis the implementation of CSPE in each of the five schools will be highlighted and discussed.

### **7.2 Analysis-School A**

#### **7.2.1 Teacher Selection**

School A has a large cohort of experienced teachers teaching CSPE. Eight per cent of teachers have twenty five or more years' experience. (see fig 1.1), It can be inferred from these findings that the age profile of CSPE teachers is quite old. This suggests that older, more experienced teachers are selected to implement new curricular initiatives in this school. This trend may stem from the inherited traditions of the school and an embedded cultural belief that older and more experienced teachers can handle curricular reform better than their younger and less experienced counterparts.

None of the teachers selected have a formal qualification in CSPE, indicating the existence of an untrained cohort of CSPE teachers in this school.

Teachers selected, however, received no consultation from management that they would be teaching CSPE. A 100% of teachers indicated that CSPE just ‘appeared’ on their timetable. All the teachers interviewed did not appreciate this lack of consultation.

*It was the lack of consultation that got up my nose. It is just typical of this school*  
(Teacher 1)

*No Consultation at all. I not even interested in the subject for God's sake.*  
(Teacher 3)

Comments from Teacher 1 suggest that a lack of consultation between management and teachers is a bone of contention in the school. His comments also indicate that a lack of communication is a cultural norm embedded in the school because ‘it is just typical of this school’. The findings suggest a lack of communication and openness in the school, but this is a broader cultural issue that will be discussed later.

Comments made by Teacher 3, indicate that some teachers are selected to teach CSPE even though they have no interest in the area. This lack of enthusiasm can have ramifications for the learning process. This lack of enthusiasm can often be picked up by students;

*I don't think he's into it to tell you the truth...he keeps saying 'I'm not a CSPE teacher and I'm only doing CSPE cause no-one else will...'*  
(Current CSPE Student 1)

Students have evidently picked up on the lack of teacher enthusiasm for CSPE. Comments from teacher 1 indicate that some teachers, in this school, actually tell students that they are not CSPE teachers. This suggests that teachers do not identify with CSPE as readily as they identify with their degree subject. This is possibly because none of the teachers in this school are formally qualified to teach CSPE. They do not, as a result, consider themselves ‘CSPE teachers’.

Another student commented;

*My teacher hasn't a notion of CSPE. I don't think he likes teaching it. He's boring*  
(Current CSPE Student 1)

This student feels that his teacher has little knowledge of CSPE. He feels that this teacher doesn't like teaching CSPE and finds his lessons boring as a result.

It can be inferred from these findings that if a teacher doesn't have a degree of enthusiasm for the subject their teaching, students will pick up on this. This lack of enthusiasm can also have an effect on the learning experiences of students. The students here found the subject boring as a result.

A lot of teachers interviewed often referred to CSPE as 'Civics'. Teachers therefore, are not employing the 'language of change'. There is a connotation here that teachers in School A are resisting change and are unwilling to embrace new ideas. This may link in to the age profile of the teachers which in this school, is quite old. It can be inferred from this that older teachers are more resistant to curricular change. This is in line with the findings of *Touney-Purta et al.*(1999), who found that the older generation tended to resist change and continue beliefs and practices of authoritarian political cultures and sub-cultures. This is evident in the teachers' lack of enthusiasm for the subject.

A major factor affecting the implementation of CSPE, in this school is the haphazard way in which CSPE teachers are selected. Teachers selected are quite old and seem resistant to the change process. A low level of commitment and interest is shown by teachers towards the subject. The onus is on management to select teachers that are not only interested in the subject but are also willing to embrace change.

### 7.2.2 Teacher Support and Development

None of the teachers surveyed in School A, felt that they had received any significant support from management prior to their teaching of CSPE. Without support teachers must grapple with the change process alone.

*I had no help at all*  
(Teacher 3)

*I was just expected to teach it I suppose. Don't ask me what the syllabus looks like, I haven't got a clue!*  
(Teacher 2)

Comments from teachers indicate low levels of support from management despite the fact that CSPE requires teachers to adopt new teaching practices in its delivery. In this school it seems teachers must go it alone. As a result there appears to be high levels of teacher uncertainty. In the words of one of the teachers, he just '*wings it*'.

Only 20% of respondents received any in-service training. This compares with the average turn out for schools at 70% in the school year 2002-2003 (Interview with Conor Harrison, National Co-ordinator, CSPE Support Service). This low level of attendance at in-service suggests that management, in this school is not committed to teacher development. It also suggests that for management, CSPE is not priority as the onus is on management to inform teachers of and release them for in-service courses. However, the low levels of attendance may also stem from the on-going industrial action in schools, particularly the action concerning the supervision and substitution in schools. This may have acted as a deterrent to management in releasing teachers for in-service within school time.

Teachers in this school also indicated that teachers do not meet as a professional group in the school. This suggests that teachers must grapple with change and deal with its associated problems alone. This lack of collaboration with fellow teachers stunts teacher development and decreases the likelihood of the pooling of resources and the sharing of ideas. This scenario suggests the absence of a collaborative work culture. A discussion on the culture of the culture of the school occurs later.

Another factor affecting the successful implementation in this school is the lack of commitment shown by management to teacher support and teacher development. This lack of commitment means that there will be high levels of teacher uncertainty with regards to the teaching of CSPE. The lack of support and development is also encouraging teachers to stay



with the 'old ways of doing things'. This will make teachers reluctant to try out new pedagogies in the classroom.

### 7.2.3. Attitudes to CSPE

Teacher attitudes to CSPE, in this school, appear to be very negative. This could possibly stem from the fact that none of the teachers selected were consulted about their selection as CSPE teachers.

None of the teachers interviewed felt that CSPE was as important as other subjects on the curriculum. Many felt it lacked importance because of its absence on the Leaving Certificate Course and the fact that there are no 'points' attached to it. CSPE therefore is not a requisite for entry into third level education.

*I'd say it's not that important really. It's not on the Leaving Cert, so I wouldn't say it's as important as subjects like Maths and English*  
(Teacher 2)

Comments from Teacher 2 suggest that more emphasis is put on 'academic' subjects or Leaving Certificate subjects in this school. This reflects the slavish relationship between the Irish post-primary system and the points system. Within this relationship subjects connected with 'points' have more importance assigned to them. This relationship obviously pervades the setting of School A.

This was also evident when the teachers were asked to imagine a hierarchy of knowledge or subjects in their school. They were asked to place CSPE somewhere on that hierarchy. All of the teachers in School A, placed it at the bottom. Some of the teachers justified this placing arguing that the exam wasn't challenging enough for students and that 'Civics' or CSPE wasn't exactly '*rocket science*'. This suggests that the status of the subject isn't high among teachers. Academic knowledge is valued.

Teachers were also asked to describe their perceptions of other teachers' attitudes towards CSPE. All teachers indicated that other teachers didn't think very much of the subject;

*Teachers don't think much of it, I think*  
(Teacher 3)

A teacher was asked why he thought other teachers in the school were negative to CSPE;

*Look CSPE is looked on as a Mickey Mouse subject. Teachers don't want it. We have an overloaded curriculum as it is!*  
(Teacher 2)

Comments from Teacher 2 indicate that because of its absence on the Leaving Cert, CSPE is considered a 'mickey mouse' subject. Teachers also seem to be negative towards it because of the existence of an overloaded curriculum. One teacher commented that too much pressure was being put on teachers to implement new curricular initiatives. As a result, he added, teachers tend to resist new subjects.

Teachers were also asked of their perceptions of their students attitudes to CSPE. One of the teachers felt that students enjoyed it. His other two colleagues didn't agree. They indicated that students either had no interest in CSPE or did not take it seriously. The comments of the students confirm the latter.

Students, like their teachers, conferred a higher degree of status on subjects with a more 'academic' orientation or subjects that were on the Leaving Certificate Course. Subjects like English, Irish and Maths were mentioned as 'important' subjects. Students also conferred a high degree of importance on subjects from which 'points' could be obtained. For students, CSPE does little to help their job prospects or advance their academic careers;

*CSPE is a load of crap! I mean what do you need it for?*  
(Student 3, Current)

Former students are also quite negative about CSPE. This negativity seems to stem from the assessment of CSPE. Many students felt it was an 'easy A'. For many students the CSPE isn't challenging enough.

*What a farce. Like I got an 'A' and I didn't do nothing!*  
(Former CSPE Student 3)

The comments made by the above student suggest that students feel the exam isn't challenging enough. One student refers to the exam as a 'joke'. This perception of the exam is obviously taking its toll on the status of the subject.

A lot of students pinpointed the teacher as the main cause for not liking or being negative towards CSPE.

*I don't like CSPE. It's the teacher, he's crap*  
(Current CSPE Student 2)

For this student, the key to liking the subject is the teacher. The researcher asked the student above to describe a 'good' CSPE teacher.

*Well first he'd have to know something about it. The one we have now hasn't a bog's notion. A good teacher would do fun things in class like plays and have discussions, not just sit there doing nothing!*  
(Current CSPE Student 3)

A good CSPE teacher, to this student is a teacher who has a concrete knowledge of the subject and who employs a variety of active learning methods in the delivery of CSPE. Students clearly felt that their teachers did not have these characteristics. One way this scenario could be resolved is through teacher support and teacher development, which as the previous discussion has illustrated, is not forthcoming in this school.

Both teachers and students therefore, have clearly illustrated negative dispositions towards numerous facets of the CSPE course. Teachers' negativity and lack of enthusiasm is obviously rubbing off on the students and shaping their attitude to CSPE. Such negativity is severely affecting the status of CSPE in this school.

#### 7.2.4 Active Learning

The employment of the active learning mode in classrooms is crucial to the successful implementation of CSPE in schools.

In School A, only 20% of teachers indicated that they liked using active learning methodologies in their classrooms. A further 40% disagreed. Quite a large group of teachers, 40%, were 'unsure' whether or not they liked using active learning. The latter might suggest that these 'unsure' teachers may never have used active learning activities. These findings suggest that the majority of teachers, in this school, do not look favourably on, or do not employ active learning methodologies in their teaching.

In addition, 60% of teachers disagreed that active learning is encouraged in the school. A further 40% agreed that it was. It can be inferred from these findings that there is a lack of support from management in helping and developing the teachers' capacity to indulge in active learning. Consequently, 100% of teachers indicated that they use their textbook in their teaching of CSPE. This suggests that a passive, didactic form of teaching and learning prevails.

In the interviews teachers were asked why they didn't use active learning techniques. Many teachers argued that issues of 'control' and 'discipline' prevented them from using these methods;

*... I think we expect a certain level of silence in this school*  
(Teacher 3)

Hence the culture of the school, or valued beliefs about discipline and control are proving a barrier to the employment of these methods.

Another teacher argues that he uses the book because it is the '*safest bet*'. This comment suggests that teachers find security in teaching repertoires that have shaped their professional lives. Implementing curricular initiatives that require new pedagogies can lead to resistance. This resistance manifests itself in a teachers' refusal to abandon routine. The book is the routine for many teachers here. Adopting active learning requires risk-taking, but in this school that could prove an impossibility due to the low levels of teacher support and development.

The unwillingness of teachers to utilise active learning techniques can be correlated with the age profile of the teachers. The age profile is quite old. Therefore the selection of older teachers to teach CSPE may have been a bad idea. Older teachers have very established teaching repertoires. Asking these teachers to adopt new pedagogies is like 'trying to teach an old dog new tricks'. However, the under-utilisation of active learning, in this school, could be also due to the lack of teacher support and development evident in this school.

Students' comments also suggest that the predominant mode of teaching is passive. Students found classes primarily guided by the book both boring and disinteresting. Students' clearly indicated that they would prefer active learning;

*I'd prefer drama and discussion and that. It's good fun and you learn at the same time. It makes the class less boring.*  
(Current CSPE Student 1)

The above comment speaks for itself. The reluctance of teachers to engage in active learning is proving a major barrier to the implementation of CSPE in this school.

#### 7.2.5 The Management of CSPE

There is an onus on school management to manage new curricular initiatives when they are being delivered at classroom level.

Firstly, structures have to be adapted to accommodate CSPE. A crucial school structure is the timetable. The adaptation of the timetable to facilitate the successful implementation of CSPE does not seem to be happening in this school. Only 20% of teachers teach their CSPE class another subject. This means that 80% of teachers cannot establish cross-curricular links between CSPE and other subjects. Another problem with this is that most teachers in this school only get to see their class once a week. A lot of teachers interviewed took umbrage with this. Many felt that they could not establish meaningful relationships with their students. One teacher indicated that he didn't even know the names of the boys

in his class. Another teacher pointed out that the meagre amount of time apportioned for CSPE, forty minutes, prevented him from using active learning methodologies. For teachers having enough time to 'cover' the course and complete action projects proved a major concern.

All the teachers interviewed also indicated that they were not afforded planning time or meeting time on the timetable. All of respondents felt that they never meet as CSPE teachers. Hence, the non-adaptation of timetables prevents cross-curricular links being established, puts pressure on teachers, prevents teachers from adopting active learning methods and hinders teacher collaboration and development.

Secondly, the effective management of CSPE requires the appointment of a key person or Coordinator to support the smooth implementation of CSPE in the school. In School A, there is no such co-ordinator. This situation prevents the sharing of ideas, problem solving and the pooling of resources. The absence of a co-ordinator means teachers have no 'hands on' support. A co-ordinator is a support structure and support for teachers new to CSPE. The absence of a co-ordinator means that teachers have to struggle with change in isolation and without help. The absence of a co-ordinator, in this school, suggests that CSPE is not taken seriously or prioritised by management. This is verified by the research findings which indicate Forty per cent disagreed that CSPE has a high status amongst managers. A further 40% were unsure.

The lack of effective management and leadership is therefore affecting the implementation of CSPE in this school.

#### 7.2.6 School Culture

It is widely agreed that school culture can either facilitate or hinder change. The findings suggest that the culture of School B is severely hindering the smooth and effective implementation of CSPE. The culture of the school embodies the traditions, values,

attitudes and beliefs that define the school setting. Previous discussion hit on aspects of the school culture that are preventing change being effected.

The culture of the school, as the absence of an active Students Council indicates is not democratic. In order for students to become democratic citizen it is necessary that the school leads by example. None of the students interviewed felt that their voices were heard in this school. This suggests that the school is not a 'site of citizenship'.

The culture of the school seems to be one of 'fragmented individualism' (Hargreaves, 1991). This culture is described as one in which there are high levels of teacher isolation and conservatism. Consequently teachers either subconsciously or consciously resist change. School A is also akin to Stoll and Fink's (1996) idea of the 'sinking school'. These schools are failing to implement change successfully. It is characterised by teachers who are unwilling or unprepared to change. In these schools there is also high levels of teacher isolation, self reliance and a loss of faith. There is a need in this school for 're-culturing'. This requires effective and purposeful leadership.

### **7.3 Analysis: School B**

#### **7.3.1. Selection of Teachers**

The majority of teachers, 60%, have less than six years teaching experience. A further 20% have 6-10 years experience and the remaining 20% have between 11-15 years teaching experience. The age profile of teachers, as the findings suggest, suggests that CSPE teachers appear to be quite young and relatively new to the teaching profession. The assumption here is that newer, younger teachers are selected to teach CSPE. This may stem from a belief that younger teachers would be more adept to adopting new pedagogies than their older and more experienced counterparts.

No teacher, it seems, has been teaching CSPE for more than four years. This suggests a small degree of continuity in respect to the selection of CSPE teachers on an annual basis. It can also be inferred that there is a high turnover of teachers which prevents the establishment of an identifiable cohort of CSPE teachers.

The majority of teachers, 80%, received no consultation about their selection as CSPE teachers. Only 20% were asked by management to teach CSPE. Teachers, like those in School A were not at all happy about the lack of consultation. One teacher, incidentally the one who was consulted, was happy to teach it. This suggests that consulting teachers may develop a positive attitude to CSPE. However, the lack of communication between management and the majority of teachers suggests that this is a cultural norm;

*We're never told about anything*  
(Teacher 2)

The majority of teachers selected commented that they either know little about the subject or had no interest in it. One of the teachers describes CSPE as a '*convenient time-table filler*'. This suggests that teachers are being chosen to teach CSPE 'willy nilly'. This correlates with the age and experience profile of CSPE teachers in this school. Could it be that younger, less experienced teachers, are given CSPE to fill up their timetables? The lack of consultation suggests so, as does the comments of one teacher;

*You obviously don't need experience to teach this subject. All the new teachers get it*  
(Teacher 3)

In addition, 40% of teachers have a formal qualification in CSPE. This compares with 0% in School A. Therefore this is reasonable percentage of qualified teachers in this school.

There is a reasonable degree of expertise therefore.

### 7.3.2. Teacher Support and Teacher Development



Comments made by teachers indicate that there are low levels of support and development for CSPE teachers. All of the teachers interviewed stated that they had received no pre-service support. They felt that no help was offered to them and they had to look for it. One teacher indicated that the lack of support made him 'unsure' about his teaching of CSPE. This suggests that a lack of pre-service support for teachers new to CSPE, increases teacher uncertainty.

Only one of the teachers indicated that she had received any form of support. In her first year of teaching CSPE she was sent by management to an in-service. The teacher in question explained that she found this very helpful. Overall only 40% of teachers had received any in-service support. This compares with 70% attendance from schools in the whole country for the year 2002/2003. This suggests there is a low commitment from management to teacher development. However the recent spate of industrial action in schools could also account for this.

### 7.3.3 Attitudes to CSPE

Teacher attitudes to CSPE appear to be mixed. Only one teacher felt that CSPE is as important as other subjects on the curriculum because it prepares the students for the world they will be entering as adults. It is interesting to note that the teacher in question was asked by management to teach CSPE, attended numerous CSPE in-services and had a formal qualification in CSPE. This scenario suggests that consultation, in-service development and teacher education can foster positive attitudes to CSPE. This teacher feels CSPE is a '*brilliant subject*'. In addition this teacher felt that CSPE came 'somewhere in the middle' on the knowledge hierarchy.

Unfortunately the other teachers do not share her views. These teachers have received little support, development and were not consulted about their selection as CSPE

teachers. Consequently, these teachers appear quite negative towards CSPE. Firstly they feel CSPE is not as important as other subjects on the curriculum. They associated 'important' subjects as those that appeared on the Leaving Certificate Course. This suggests that content knowledge is valued in this school. These teachers also placed CSPE at the bottom of the knowledge hierarchy which suggest that the status of CSPE is very low in this school. All the teachers interviewed indicated that most teachers in the school disliked CSPE. One teacher felt that this dislike stems from their lack of knowledge about the course and the teachers unwillingness to change. This correlates with the findings indicating low levels of teacher support and development.

Another teacher feels that negativity towards the subject stems from the fact that CSPE is only timetabled for teachers just once a week

Teachers were also asked their perceptions of their students' attitude to CSPE. Teacher 1, the 'convert', feels that her 'students are *'big into'* CSPE. This probably stems from the fact that she herself is 'big into' CSPE and a spirit of enthusiasm is fostered in her classroom. Teacher 2 however, felt that some students didn't take the subject seriously and thought little of the subject. Teacher 3 felt that some students like it and some didn't. The comments from students, however, endorse the comments of teacher 2.

Current CSPE Students identify more 'academic' subjects as 'important subjects'.

Without prompt these students identify CSPE as an 'unimportant subject'. Some of the students commented that CSPE was boring and you didn't need it for anything. CSPE, in the words of one student is *'not worth a shite'*.

The negative attitudes, mirror the attitudes of the majority of teachers surveyed. Hence certain types of academic knowledge is valued by both teachers and students in this school.

Former CSPE students are also negative about the assessment of CSPE. These students, like those in School A, found the exam extremely easy and felt that it was no big deal getting an 'A' OR 'B' grade in the subject. A comment from teacher suggested that teachers do most of the work in the Action Projects, suggesting that actions are not being carried out or that teachers are writing the reports out for their students, This suggests that the examination lacks rigour.

Attitudes articulated by both teachers and students indicate that the status of CSPE is low in this school.

#### 7.3.4 Active Learning

The majority of teachers in this school, 69%, indicated that they like using active learning in their classrooms. The remaining 40% were unsure suggesting that they probably have never used active learning in their teaching. The majority of teachers, 60%, also felt that active learning is encouraged in the school. This suggests a commitment from management to active learning strategies. Sixty per cent disagreed that they used the textbook a lot in their teaching of CSPE. This suggests that active learning is taking place in quite a number of CSPE classes in the school. All the teachers surveyed agreed that students enjoy active learning. These findings suggest a greater commitment to active learning in School B than in School A.

Teacher 1, the qualified CSPE teacher, indicated that she uses active learning a lot in her class. This would suggest that teacher development enables the teachers to enact change in the classroom setting. The remainder of the teachers however received no training or development and this has prevented them from using active learning. Another factor preventing them from using active learning strategies is the time element. Teacher 2 indicates that he is reluctant to use these methods because he feels there is not enough

time for the likes of drama, discussion, or other methodologies. Teacher 3 indicates the noise factor prevents her from using these methodologies.

Students indicated that their learning experience of CSPE primarily through textbook teaching. As a result the students found the subject boring. Students felt that if there were more activities in the class they would find the class more interesting.

Hence, a lack of support and training, the lack of time, and the noise factor are affecting the implementation of the active learning dimension in CSPE.

### 7.3.5 Management of CSPE

With regards to the management of timetabling, only 20% of teachers teach their CSPE class another subject. This suggests low levels of restructuring, on the part of management, in order to facilitate the interdisciplinary dimension of CSPE. A lack of restructuring also places the teacher under pressure for time because they only see their class for one forty minute period a week. A 100% of teachers in this school indicated that one forty minute period a week was insufficient. Comments from teacher again stressed that a lack of time prevented them from employing the learning orientation of the course.

School B has appointed a CSPE co-ordinator, however this co-ordinator does not seem to be very effective. This may stem from the culture of the school. Findings indicate that a culture of collaboration and collegiality does not exist in this school. This is verified by the lack of CSPE teacher meetings in this school.

Forty per cent of teachers agreed that the status of CSPE was high amongst school managers. A further 40% disagreed and the remainder were unsure. These figures suggest that management needs to take a more active role in implementing CSPE. This could be achieved by the principal assuming the role of an instructional leader, restructuring the

school to facilitate CSPE school so that meaningful collaboration and collegiality can be fostered

### 7.3.6 The Culture of the School.

Like School A, the culture of this school is one of 'fragmented individualism, whereby teachers have to come to grips with change in isolation, The author however would disagree that like School A, this school is a 'sinking school'. The culture of the school seems to be more conducive to the implementation of CSPE than School A.. There seems to be teacher development and better leadership in this school. There is also a Student Council in this school so there is a whole school approach to CSPE. Students however feel that this is not active in the sense that their voices are rarely heard. This suggests that the School Council is a form of tokenism.

The author suggests that this school is a 'struggling school' (Stoll and Fink, 1996). These schools are ineffective but are moving towards school improvement. There is a willingness, on the part of some teachers, to make the change work. These changes can be brought about by effective leadership and the restructuring and re-culturing of the school.

## 7.4 **Analysis School C**

### 7.4.1 Teacher Selection

With regard to teacher selection, the management in School C seem to be getting it right. Sixty per cent have been teaching for between 6-10 years. A further 20% have 16-20 years experience and the remaining 20% have 0-5 years experience. These findings suggest quite a young age profile, with the right mix of experience and ages. There is clearly a degree of continuity with respect to the selection of CSPE on a yearly basis. Forty per cent have been teaching CSPE for the past six years, another 20% have been

teaching CSPE five years and a further 20% for four years. Only 20% have been teaching CSPE for a year. These findings suggest quite a low turnover of CSPE teachers. This practice enables the establishment of an identifiable cohort of CSPE teachers.

The fact that 80% of teachers have a formal qualification in CSPE, indicate that there is a very large cohort of trained CSPE teachers in this school. This would also suggest high levels of expertise in the teaching of CSPE. One teacher commented that obtaining a professional qualification in CSPE, to try out new ideas in the classroom.

In sharp contrast to School's A and B, the majority of teachers, 80%, volunteered to teach CSPE. This suggests that there is a willingness to teach the subject and interest in it. The remaining 20% were asked by management to teach CSPE One teacher commented that she was asked by management to teach CSPE. She stated that the principal knew that she had an interest in politics. This suggests that the principal is 'in tune' with the interests of his staff.

Teachers in School C, in contrast to Schools A and B, have been selected to teach CSPE on the basis of their interest in and willingness to teach CSPE. This is good practice. The fact that teachers were consulted also indicates that clear communication channels exist between management and staff. Clear channels of communication are crucial in times of change.

#### 7.4.2 Teacher Support and Development

In contrast to Schools A and B, all of the teachers surveyed felt that they had received good levels of support from management. Two of the teachers interviewed had obtained a professional qualification in CSPE which they felt gave them deeper insights into CSPE. This was funded by the school. This may have been a strategy used by management to 'convert' teachers into believing in the value of CSPE. It seems to have done the trick. If

teachers develop professionally they will gain a greater understanding of the meaning of the change.

There were also high levels of in-service support evident in this school. A 100% of teachers have attended at least one CSPE in-service. This suggests a commitment to on-going professional development by management.

One of the teachers interviewed, who had no formal qualification in CSPE, indicated that she had received a lot of help and support from her colleagues when she first started teaching CSPE. This suggests that a support system is in place for teachers new to CSPE. It also suggests the existence of a collaborative work climate where help is offered and there are high levels of collegiality between teachers. Within this climate problems become a natural phenomena and teachers are more willing to take risks and try out new ideas in the classroom.

It is clear that best practice is adhered to vis-à-vis teacher support and development.

#### 7.4.3 Attitudes to CSPE

Teachers' attitudes to CSPE can only be described as positive in this school. This positive outlook can probably be linked to the appropriate method by which teachers are selected, that is, on the teachers' level of interest in the subject. It may also stem from the high levels of teacher support and development evident in this school.

Many teachers felt that CSPE was as important as other subjects on the curriculum;

*I'd say it's as important as Maths. It's as important to be aware of your rights and responsibilities as it is to add and subtract.*  
(Teacher 1)

Overall, teachers felt that CSPE was a great subject that afforded the student a voice. Teachers surveyed also indicated that other teachers in the school rate CSPE very highly. They also felt that their students were very positive about CSPE and this manifests itself in the comments of current CSPE students. These students felt that CSPE was an important

subject. Former students felt that although CSPE is as important as other subjects, important they considered it not as important as those subjects on the Leaving Certificate. This finding suggests that student attitudes towards CSPE have improved over the past three years. All students however indicated that they liked CSPE. This may stem from the teachers positive regard for the subject. Students stated that their CSPE teachers were good and made the class interesting. They were also very enthusiastic about CSPE;

*Our teacher was really excited about it-even more excited than we were'*

(Current CSPE Student)

Teacher enthusiasm has obviously rubbed off on the students. This is vital to raising the status of CSPE in schools. Status of CSPE in this school is very high. The author feels that this stems from the careful selection of CSPE teachers.

#### 7.4.4. Active Learning

A 100% of respondents indicated that they liked using active learning methods. In addition, all teachers felt that active learning was encouraged in their school. Every teacher also felt that the students enjoy active learning. Overall teachers displayed a positive disposition to active learning techniques. There is also a belief that active learning is encouraged by management.

All of the teachers interviewed felt that they used these methods on a regular basis. This is validated by the comments of students. When describing a typical CSPE class most students indicated that their learning experiences have been mainly active;

*We're always doing things in class. It makes the class interesting.*

(Current CSPE student)

School C, in contrast to the previous two schools, is clearly implementing the active learning dimension of CSPE. Consequently CSPE is proving a rich learning experience for students.



#### 7.4.5 Management of CSPE

CSPE appears to be managed effectively. A good deal of restructuring has taken place in order to facilitate the successful implementation of CSPE. This manifests itself in the fact that 80% of teachers teach their CSPE class another subject. This enables the teacher to forge cross-curricular links between CSPE and their other teaching subject. This also allows teachers to use their time effectively;

*I also teach my class English. It's great because a lot of CSPE issues pop up in English class. It also means that when I'm under pressure for time I can use some of my English classes for CSPE*  
(Teacher 2).

Effective management is also evident in the selection of teachers, teacher continuity, teacher development and the encouragement of active learning methods. A CSPE coordinator has also been appointed and newer teachers have found this very useful resource. In addition teachers indicate that they meet on a regular basis. Teachers added that the principal is often present at these meetings. This suggests a commitment from management to the implementation of CSPE.

#### 7.4.6 The Culture of the School

The culture evident in School C is conducive to the successful implementation of CSPE. School C is very much a 'moving school' or a 'learning enriched environment' (Rosenholtz, 1989). Within this culture there are high levels of collegiality and collaboration which means teachers are working together to bring about change. The commitment to teacher support and development gives the teachers the 'will' and the 'skill' to effect change.

In comparison to Schools A and B, School C is a 'model' school that adheres closely to best practice in CSPE. Consequently the status of the subject is high in this school. There

also seems to be a high level of support and encouragement from management. This points to effective leadership. This leadership was instrumental in facilitating CSPE by restructuring and re-culturing the school to facilitate the successful implementation of CSPE.

In addition School C seems to be fostering a sense of 'democratic community' in the school. The presence of an active Student Council, where the student voice is genuinely listened to suggests that School C truly is a 'site of Citizenship'.

## **7.5 Analysis- School D**

### **7.5.1. Teacher Selection**

The majority of teachers, 80%, have between 21-24 years teaching experience. A further 20% have only 0-5 years teaching experience. This suggests quite a predominantly old age profile of CSPE teachers. A 100% of teachers have been teaching CSPE for three years or less, suggesting a lack of continuity with regard to the selection of CSPE teachers on an annual basis. It also suggests quite a high turnover of CSPE teachers. This lack of continuity prevents an established cohort of CSPE teachers being developed.

Sixty per cent of respondents were asked to teach CSPE, another 20% asked to teach it and the remaining 20% were not consulted about their selection as CSPE teachers. For most part there seems to be a degree of communication between management and staff.

There was mixed feelings from teachers about the way they were selected by management to teach CSPE. Those who received no consultation were not happy about their selection. Those who did were happy enough to teach it. This finding suggests consultation is a must. However a small number of teachers, 20%, volunteered to teach it, indicating that there are some willing and enthusiastic CSPE teachers in the school.

In addition none of the teachers surveyed had a professional qualification in CSPE. Hence an untrained cohort of CSPE teachers, exist in this school.

### 7.5.2 Teacher Support and Development

None of the teachers surveyed felt that they had received any significant support as new teachers of CSPE. One teacher also indicated that he didn't know who the co-ordinator of CSPE was. Teachers felt that this lack of support made them feel isolated. Some teachers were angry about this.

With regard to in-service support, things are looking better. Sixty per cent of teachers in this school have attended at least one CSPE in-service. Those who attended felt they were invaluable to their teaching of CSPE;

*The In-service gave me direction*  
(Teacher 3)

Overall, findings suggest a lack of pre-service support and a significant amount of in-service support for teachers.

Teachers also indicated that they do not have regular CSPE meetings. It can be inferred from this that there are no structures in place in this school to support and encourage teacher collaboration.

### 7.5.3. Attitudes to CSPE

Although 60% of teachers agree that CSPE is considered a worthwhile subject, the status of the subject appears to be quite low amongst both teachers and students.

All of the teachers interviewed commented that CSPE was not as important as other subjects on the curriculum. Important subjects were those that appeared on the Leaving Certificate Course. The acquisition of points is paramount in this school;

*In this school, it's all points, points, points!*  
(Teacher 1)

This comment suggests that academic subjects are more valued than others. It also suggests that the points system shapes teachers attitudes towards different subjects. The majority of

teachers, 60%, indicated that the status of CSPE was not high amongst other teachers in the school.

Teachers' attitudes to CSPE were mixed. Some positive and negative comments were made about the subject. None of the respondents agreed that CSPE had a high status amongst management. This suggests that the principal is not taking an active leadership role in the implementation of CSPE in this school. This lack of action on the part of the principal, will adversely affect the status of the subject. This is endorsed by the fact that all the teachers in this study placed CSPE at the bottom of the knowledge hierarchy, indicating that CSPE is considered a subject that is not at all important.

Students' attitudes towards CSPE can only be described as 'cynical'. All the students felt that CSPE was not as important as other subjects. Mirroring the views of teachers, students felt that more academic subjects had a greater degree of importance than CSPE. This suggests that the hidden curriculum espoused by the school espouses which subjects are important and which subjects are not.

Current CSPE students refer to CSPE as a 'doss' subject. Former CSPE students are even more cynical. CSPE to them is 'crap' and a 'waste of time'. Students were also aware of their teacher's level of enthusiasm for the subject. Many indicated that their teachers were not enthusiastic about the subject and that classes were boring as a result. This would suggest that the 'wrong' teachers are being selected to teach CSPE.

Former students were very cynical about the mode of assessment in CSPE. Like students in the other schools, the exam wasn't considered to be very challenging. It was described as 'a joke'. A number of students indicated that their class didn't actually carry out an action and that they made the action up. This suggests that the examination, particularly the action project is lacking in rigour. It also suggests a lack of monitoring.

Overall the status of CSPE in this school is low.

#### 7.5.4 Active Learning

Forty per cent of teachers agreed that they liked using active learning methods in their classroom. A further 40% disagreed and the remaining 20% were unsure. In addition, only 20% felt that active learning was encouraged in the school. The majority of teachers, 60% disagreed.

The majority of teachers, 60%, also agreed that their teaching of CSPE was mainly through the use of a textbook. This is despite the fact that 100% agreed that their students enjoy partaking in active learning activities. It is clear from these findings that not all teachers are employing these methods. The researcher wanted to know why that was.

One teacher felt that active learning requires a lot of planning time. Another teacher indicated that one class a week was not enough time to engage in active learning modes. Another teacher felt the noise generated by these methods prevents him from using them. He indicated that noisy classrooms in this school are 'unacceptable'. Discipline, order and control are features of this school setting.

#### 7.5.5 The Management of CSPE

There appears to be ineffective management of CSPE in School D. Only 20% of teachers are timetabled to teach another subject to their CSPE class. This prevents cross curricular links from being established and places the teacher under pressure for time. This lack of restructuring hinders the implementation of CSPE.

Although a member of staff has been appointed as a coordinator of CSPE, they do not seem to be very visible or supportive to teachers. One teacher didn't even know who the coordinator was. This lack of information stems from low levels of teacher collegiality evident in the fact that CSPE teacher meetings do not take place in this school.

There also seems to be a lack of effective leadership as teachers in this school feel that CSPE is not prioritised by management. This manifests itself in the lack of restructuring and re-culturing in this school.

#### 7.5.6 The Culture of the School

This school, like School B, is very much a struggling school. Staff seem to be unwilling to change but there are some who are trying. What they need most is effective leadership and direction. Teachers, because of a lack of a collaborative work culture, must deal with the implications of change alone. This prevents them from risk-taking and trying out new ideas. This can be facilitated through re-culturing, but to effect this, the principal must take an active role.

Order and control are also features of the culture, features that prevent teachers from employing active learning in their classrooms.

The culture of the school is clearly hindering the implementation of CSPE in this school.

The culture is also undemocratic as the lack of an active Student Council indicates.

### **7.6- Analysis-School E**

#### 7.6.1 Teacher Selection

School E has cohort of CSPE teachers with varying degrees of experience. None of the teachers' have less than six years teaching experience. There is an obvious lack of continuity in respect to teacher selection and a high turnover of teachers. Sixty per cent of teachers have been teaching CSPE less than one year and a further 40% have been teaching

it for three years or less. The selection of CSPE teachers appears to be on a haphazard basis as 80% of teachers were not consulted about the fact that they would be teaching CSPE. Only 20% of respondents were asked to teach it. These teachers were happy enough to teach the subject. Those who were not consulted were not happy. One teacher in particular felt that his appointment as CSPE was management's way of taking Maths classes off him. The teacher obviously assigns a low status on the subject and yet he was chosen to deliver it at classroom level.

In addition, none of the teachers surveyed had obtained a professional qualification on CSPE so the CSPE teachers here lack expertise.

#### 7.6.2 Teacher Support and Development

All teachers, bar one, felt that they had received no support or advice prior to their teaching of CSPE. One teacher however did receive literature vis-à-vis CSPE from the principal, which he found helpful. Overall, teachers were quite angry about the lack of support. One teacher commented that this was 'just typical' of the school, indicating that support from management isn't always forthcoming.

Some teachers however, are getting in-service support. Forty per cent of the teachers have attended at least one CSPE in-service. The majority however, have not.

The lack of CSPE teacher meetings in this school, suggests that management are not committed to teacher development. This is also evident in the fact that none of the teachers surveyed had a professional qualification in CSPE.

Teacher support and development is seriously lacking in this school. This is reflected in the attitudes of both teachers and students towards the subject.

### 7.6.3 Attitudes to CSPE

With reference to teachers, attitudes to CSPE appear to be quite negative. It is interesting to note that the majority of teachers surveyed were not consulted about their selection as CSPE teachers.

None of the teachers interviewed felt that CSPE was as important as other subjects. One teacher pointed out that the school is very career and college oriented and that CSPE is not considered important as a result. This correlates with the fact that this school is a fee-paying school. All teachers placed CSPE at the bottom of the knowledge hierarchy, indicating that other forms of knowledge, mainly those with an academic orientation, are given more priority. None of the teachers were very positive about the subject as a result. Many saw it as a 'time-table filler' and others 'a waste of time'.

Students were equally negative about the subject. Some students felt that the subject wasn't needed because a lot of students in the school read the newspaper. Another student commented that CSPE was a good class to go asleep in. Overall, students got the impression that their teachers weren't at all interested in the subject and that their teachers knowledge of CSPE was limited. Consequently students indicated that they often got bored in class and messed as a result. The author feels that the poor attitudes of students', towards CSPE, is directly linked to teacher selection. CSPE seems to be a time-table filler and as a result teachers with no enthusiasm for CSPE are selected to teach it. This will do little to raise the status of the subject.



#### 7.6.4. Active Learning

The majority of teachers, 80%, indicated that they did not enjoy using active learning in their teaching of CSPE. A further 80% agreed that active learning is not encouraged in the school. This would indicate that the 'points culture' in this school prevails. This correlates with 80% of teachers who admit that in their teaching of CSPE, they use the textbook a lot. Teachers explain that the time element prevent teachers from employing these active methods. Another teacher indicated that he tried to use these methods once but the students made a mockery of it. It perhaps is due to student expectation. Because it is a fee-paying school, students and parents expect a particular type of teaching to take place. A didactic form of teaching is probably expected. Another teacher is reluctant to employ these methods because of the noise factor. It can be inferred that the culture of the school does not facilitate active learning techniques.

#### 7.6.5. The Management of CSPE

Just 20% of teachers are timetabled to teach another subject to their CSPE class. Again this means that the majority of teachers cannot use their time effectively and the cross-curricular dimension CSPE cannot be realised.

It appears that CSPE is not a priority for management. Only 20% of respondents agree that the status of CSPE is high amongst managers. Could this be because the school is prestigious and fee-paying? Is the school consumed by the 'points' culture? It would appear so. However non fee-paying schools, in this study have displayed the same traits.

There is a lack of effective leadership as the poor selection of teachers, the lack of commitment to teacher development and the low levels of teacher collaboration suggest. There is also a failure to restructure the school to facilitate CSPE. Unless there is effective leadership in this school, CSPE will merely become another 'Civics'.

### 7.6.6 The Culture of the School

Like School A, School D displays the characteristics of a 'stuck school'. Within this culture teachers resist change and are unwilling participants in the change process. The lack of teacher development and support means that teachers must cope with change in isolation. This isolation prevents further teacher development and collaboration and support amongst teachers. The 'points culture' so evident in this school is also preventing change taking effect.

In addition, School E appears to be undemocratic. It is not successful in fostering a sense of a democratic community, as the absence of an active Student Council indicates. Hence, students are not active participants in the decision-making process.

### 7.7 Conclusion

The analysis of the five schools suggest that some schools have a greater institutional capacity to change than others. School C has by far emerged as the 'model' school for the implementation of CSPE. It is a prime example of how adherence to best practice can facilitate the successful implementation of CSPE.

In sharp contrast the other schools are struggling. An analysis of Schools A, B, D and E indicates that the following factors are affecting the implementation of CSPE. All are interrelated.

- Lack of effective leadership and an understanding of the benefits of CSPE to the whole school
- Allocation of unsuitable/untrained teachers to teach CSPE
- Reluctance of teachers to employ active learning methodologies
- Lack of continuity and turnover vis-à-vis staff
- Lack of Teacher support and development

- Lack of Restructuring to facilitate time-table requirements
- The need for more time-more than 40 minutes per week
- Low Status of CSPE
- The perceptions of Students that the exam is easy
- Lack of rigour in exams, particularly the monitoring of action projects
- The Culture of the School

Conclusions drawn from this research and recommendations are presented in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Eight- Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This study aimed to explore the factors affecting the implementation of CSPE in five post-primary schools. The attitudes, opinions and perceptions of both teachers and students about CPSE in their schools were presented in the previous four chapters. On analysis, significant issues have emerged, issues that determine whether the implementation of CSPE in schools, is successful. From this, certain conclusions may be drawn. Although this conclusions are specific for each school, similar issues have emerged which enable the reader to draw parallels with the wider context. The researcher hopes this study will, in some small way, contribute to the further development of citizenship education in Ireland.

The literature reviewed, explicated the challenges facing those who have to implement programmes of civic education in schools and deal with the phenomenological dimension of the change process. Surmounting the barriers erected by the change process and facing up to the challenges provided by civic education is crucial for the successful implementation of CSPE at school level.

What follows is a discussion of key issues arising form the analysis of the data collected in the five research sites. Recommendations arising from analysis will also be presented.

## 8.2 Factors Affecting the Implementation of CSPE in Schools and Recommendations to Counteract these Factors

This study has found that the following factors are affecting the successful implementation of CSPE in schools. All are inter-related. Recommendations to barriers to implementation are also discussed.

### **8.2.1 Haphazard Teacher Selection**

The selection of 'unenthusiastic' and disinterested teachers of CSPE is proving a major barrier to implementation in most of the schools surveyed. Only School C and to a lesser extent, School B, appear to be 'getting it right'. In Schools A, D and E teachers proved to be negative to CSPE and resistant to change. This resistance manifested itself in a reluctance and unwillingness to adopt active learning methodologies in their teaching of CSPE. The majority of teachers surveyed indicated that their teaching is guided primarily by the textbook. This suggests that many teachers selected to teach CSPE are conservative. Teachers are key agents in the change process because they must implement curricular reform at classroom level. It is crucial therefore that the right teachers are selected to teach CSPE. The onus is on the principal, the gatekeeper of change, to select teachers on the basis of their level of interest and commitment to the subject. Teachers should also be committed to trying out new pedagogies a willingness, on the part of the teacher, try out active learning techniques is vital. This is reiterated in the guidelines issued to schools;

Active learning methodologies a central to the successful development and implementation of Civic, Social and Political Education. It is important therefore that teachers involved with the CSPE programme should express an interest in and commitment to implementing and developing these types of methodologies in the classroom  
(Guidelines for Schools, CSPE, p.7)

Teachers selected therefore must be willing to try out new ideas. Huberman (1988) found that teachers can be predisposed to change. Some teachers are change orientated and some are not. It is necessary to Recruit CSPE teachers with a predisposition for change.

The selection of CSPE teachers should not occur in a haphazard basis, as the research has indicated, nor should it be allocated as a mere 'timetable filler' as Civics was. Otherwise CSPE will have a low status conferred on it by both teachers and students. Teacher selection should be on the basis of the teacher's level of interest and commitment to the subject. If teachers are both committed and enthusiastic this enthusiasm will be passed on to the students, as was the case in School C. Disinterested teachers, with no enthusiasm or interest in CSPE, will do little to raise the status of CSPE this lack of enthusiasm will be passed on to students, as was the case in Schools A, B D and E.

Teachers should also be consulted about their selection and given the option of teaching it or not. The majority of teachers in this study, 80%, were conscripted to teach CSPE. Only teachers in School C and one in School B volunteered to teach it. The principal must seek out willing volunteers as they seem to have a higher level of enthusiasm for the subject. This is reiterated by Lynch, (2000, p.10) who observed that enthusiasm, interest and engagement comes from teaching a subject that really interests you, 'this in itself becomes infectious, and it encourages engagement and interest in the students'.

The conscripts, in this study were primarily negative about CSPE. These 'conscripts' will do little to raise the status of the subject. There is also a need to recruit not only committed but experienced teachers who have an excellent professional reputation amongst staff and peers. This will raise the status of the subject. Allocating CSPE to very old or very young ideas may be a bad idea. In School A, for example the age profile was quite old. These teachers were reluctant to engage in new teaching pedagogies and were very negative about the subject. This suggests that CSPE would be better given to younger but experienced teachers. Principals must not give out the message therefore that 'anyone' can teach CSPE.

The majority of teachers are untrained. There appears to a lack of expertise. As Lynch (2000, p.10) points out ‘you need expertise to teach a subject’.

The right teachers therefore are crucial to the implementation of CSPE at classroom level. ‘A subject is only as good as the teachers who teach it’ (ibid.)

### **8.2.2 Lack of Teacher Support/Development**

Many teachers, in this study, indicated that they had received little or no pre-service support. Such support is crucial if particularly in the light of the active learning dimension in CSPE. For many teachers this is new territory. It is necessary for the principal and other school managers to support teachers as they grapple with the change process, a process that involves many cycles of trial and error and a high degree of risk-taking. To encourage classroom discussion and active learning methodologies, teachers should be allocated appropriate rooms and resources’ (Guidelines for Schools, CSPE, p.7). Support for CSPE takes numerous forms. Firstly the principal should ensure that relevant literature, for example syllabus documents is distributed to new teachers of CSPE. The principal must also promote the learning dimension of CSPE. Active learning challenges teachers to re-examine their classroom role.

The main challenge for principals is to convince teachers to adopt active learning techniques into their teaching. This requires ‘instructional leadership’ whereby the principal adopts the role of ‘instructional leader’. This style of leadership requires the principal to acquire a classroom role. It is however, a neglected aspect of a principal’s role in schools. (Coolahan, 1994). Curricular initiatives like CSPE that require the adoption of new pedagogies, need this style of leadership to empower, encourage and support teachers of CSPE. The principal must lead by example. The principal, for example, could teach a

CSPE class and encourage teachers to observe him. This would allow other teachers to master active learning methods. Active learning could also be promoted by the provision of an active learning room where teachers don't have to worry about the noise factor that goes hand in hand with methods like drama, discussion, debate and role-play

This study also found that teacher development was lacking in most schools surveyed. A little over half, 52%, had attended in-service courses in CSPE. Only 24% of the total sample had obtained a formal qualification in CSPE. Teacher development is a core concept in the implementation of new curricula. Teachers need to adapt to the innovation that is CSPE and refine their learning practices and reflections. Without development teachers will not understand the nature of the change, have 'ownership' of the innovation or have the ability to change their beliefs and behaviours. This was evident in a lot of the schools. A lack of teacher development, notably in Schools A, D and E meant that teachers became passive resisters to the change process. In School C the principal was active in the development of CSPE Teachers. The principal in question encouraged some of his teachers to obtain a professional qualification in CSPE. He supported teachers by subsidising their fees. Consequently teachers became 'believers' and this belief manifested itself in the teachers' positive attitudes towards CSPE. A lack of teacher development seriously affects the implementation of CSPE in their schools. This is reiterated by Stenhouse (1985) who observed that without teacher development, there is no curriculum development.

Teacher development can be nurtured by giving release time to teachers for planning, meetings, and problem solving. This requires innovative timetabling arrangements. There is also a need of a commitment, on the part of management, to in-service. The development of a collaborative work culture would encourage the sharing of ideas, the pooling of resources and problem-solving amongst teachers. Fullan, (1992, p.23) articulated that 'strong collegiality, coupled with commitment to continuous improvement, backed up by



policies and structures designed to support purposeful teacher interaction' is crucial to the successful implementation of curricular initiatives. Such a work climate will enable teachers to grapple with change, not in isolation, but in concert with other teachers in a non-threatening and supportive climate.

There is an onus on the principal therefore, to support teachers and enable them to develop. *Carmichael et al.* (1985), found that teachers felt more secure trying out new ideas here the principal gave active support. Huberman and Miles (1984), articulated that on-going development is vital in addressing problems encountered by teachers in the implementation of CSPE. It is also crucial for obtaining new skills, beliefs and understandings.

### 8.2.3 Timetabling Arrangements

School structures, like timetabling, can often militate against the implementation of curricular initiatives. Callan (1994), observed that 'realising new curriculum requires a critical interplay between new proposals and existing structures' (p.13). This study found that timetabling arrangements hindered the implementation of CSPE in the schools. Only 32% of the total sample taught CSPE and another subject to their class. This is preventing the implementation of CSPE on a number of levels,

Firstly, the cross curricular and interdisciplinary component of CSPE will not be realised.

The teacher will not be able to develop cross curricular theme across different subjects.

Secondly is the issue of time. Since most teachers, in the study, only had one forty minute period of CSPE a week, they felt very under pressure for time, especially when they were trying to complete actions. A number of teachers pointed out that the paucity of time prevented them employing active learning methodologies in their classrooms.

Thirdly the insufficient time apportioned for CSPE is having an affect on teacher-student relationships. A number of teachers point out that because they only have the class once a week they found it impossible to establish a relationship or rapport with the class. A

number of teachers commented that they didn't even know all the names of the boys in the class. The issue of time is a serious one.

To counteract these issues there is an onus on school managers to restructure to school in order to facilitate the successful implementation of CSPE. Failure to do so will mean that 'new curriculum proposals will either be adapted to fit what exists in schools or they will be abandoned, allowing the curriculum to remain essentially untouched' (ibid.). School managers, therefore must arrange timetables so that they facilitate the active learning and cross curricular dimension of CSPE. There is a need for policy makers to review the timetable provision of CSPE. Time was a serious issue for all teachers.

#### **8.2.4 Assessment Issues**

This study also found that the assessment of CSPE is having a negative effect on the status of the study. Most students found the assessment of CSPE most unchallenging. A lot of students found that CSPE was the easiest subject on the Junior Certificate course and consequently, many had obtained an 'easy A'. As a result students assigned a low status to the subject. Many felt that obtaining an 'A' grade in CSPE was no big deal. Perhaps this could be rectified by making the exam more challenging, but the author feels this would defeat the whole purpose of CSPE.

The most sinister discovery, in this study, was the revelation that some students were not actually carrying out an action. A lot of students admitted that they had made the data up for their action projects. This supports Jeffers (2003) suggestion that the CSPE examination may lack rigour. To counteract this careful monitoring of action projects is required.

### **8.2.5 Low Status of CSPE**

The low status of CSPE is evident in the opinions, perceptions and attitudes of both teachers and students. Raising the status of this subject is a key challenge for school leaders. Within the school a number of measures may help to raise the status;

- Appointment of a CSPE co-ordinator to help with the implementation of CSPE
- Selecting interested and enthusiastic CSPE teachers
- Making CSPE visible in the school
- Inclusion of CSPE in house exams
- Inclusion of CSPE teacher on parent-teacher schedules
- Provision of an active Student Council so that students can experience democracy in action.

On a broader level the status of CSPE could be raised if a course in civic education was introduced into the Leaving Certificate examination. Since so many students in the study equated important subjects with those that were on the Leaving Certificate course, the inclusion of civic education at senior cycle should raise the status of CSPE considerably.

### **8.2.6 School Cultures**

School Culture can facilitate or hinder change. To respond to the many challenges presented by CSPE, school leaders need to develop a collaborative work culture in their schools. Such a culture is a key factor in the development of ‘moving’ or ‘learning enriched’ schools. Such a culture was evident in School C. Grappling with curricular initiatives requires cycles of trial and error, risk-taking and problem solving. School leaders must provide latitude for these inevitable facets of change. The onus is on school management, therefore, to provide a forum where CSPE teachers can share problems, exchange ideas and information and pool resources in a non-threatening and open

environment. Establishing such a culture is vital because it is unwise to 'let the teacher go it alone' as has happened to varying extents in Schools A, B, D and E. Teachers need a climate of support. Principals can facilitate this by giving adequate release time for teachers to meet and the principal should be present, as 'instructional leader' at these meetings so that he can take cognisance of problems and respond accordingly.

With the exception of School C, schools in this study also lacked a democratic environment. This lack of democracy manifested itself in the non-existence of truly active Students Councils. School A had no council in place. In the case of School's B, D and E, the Student Councils in place appeared to be tokens. This was verified by students in each of the respective schools who felt that they were not afforded voice in the school. Since CSPE is based on the concept of democracy and promotes active and participatory citizenship, it is crucial that the school develops as a democratic community.

Democratic Communities help students to *be* as well as to *become*. They seek to help students meet their needs today as well as become tomorrow's caring and active citizens... Schools have an obligation to teach citizenship and to develop caring adults, and the best way to teach these values is by actually living them  
(Sergiovanni, 1994, pp.124 & 137-8)

By giving students a voice, the school will contribute to the development of active and participative citizens. By participating in Student Councils students will acquire the skills necessary for participation in democratic society. The absence of a democratic community in the school may greatly hinder the implementation of CSPE.

The work of even the most devoted civics teacher will be frustrated unless school life, in all its aspects, is permeated by the civic spirit he is trying to inculcate. In other words, the school must be a microcosm of the wider society outside its walls. Indeed, it must be better than that society, because its only function is not to imitate but to set standards. Civics teaching may produce cynics instead of citizens if the school does not practise what it preaches.  
(Department of Education, 1966, p.2)

### 8.2.7 Lack of Effective Leadership

All of the factors outlined stems from a lack of effective leadership. Principals must take an active leadership role if CSPE is to be successfully implemented in schools. The principal, after all, is the gate keeper of change. Assuming such a role requires developing the institutional capacity for change, a development which requires the re-structuring and re-culturing of schools. Only in School C has active and effective leadership been enacted. In this school, a great deal of restructuring and re-culturing has occurred and this has helped with the implementation process. In addition the 'right' teachers are been chosen to teach the subject which means that enthusiastic and interested teachers are implementing CSPE at classroom level. This enthusiasm is rubbing off on students. There is also a commitment to teacher support and development, which enables the teachers to understand the meaning of change. Consequently, the status of CSPE is high in this school.

The other schools in this study, however, lack this form of leadership. As a result there are high levels of teacher uncertainty and a sizable number of teachers who don't want to teach the subject. Consequently, the status of CSPE is low amongst both students and teachers and the implementation of CSPE is problematic. What is needed here is a 'transformational' style of leadership whereby the principal employs strategies to enable those within the school setting to 'believe' in CSPE.

### 8.3 Conclusion

*Citizenship, whatever it means, is a cultural achievement, a gift of history, which can be lost or destroyed*  
(Commission on Citizenship, 1990)

Citizenship is a gift which can be lost or destroyed. The onus is on schools to preserve this gift. Failure to do so means that the citizens of tomorrow will not be adequately equipped for the challenges posed by modern democratic societies.

This paper explored the implementation of CSPE in five post-primary schools from a teacher and student perspective. Is CSPE Civics in another guise? Is it Civics Revisited? For the majority of schools in this study, it would appear so. This is evident in the perceptions, attitudes and opinions elicited in this study about numerous dimensions of CSPE.

*One of the most problematic institutions for education for democratic citizenship may even be schools themselves, which depend on passive rather than active participation and reward compliance rather than constructive opposition*  
(Looney, 2001, p.6)

The comments of Looney would suggest that schools are probably not the best places to be teaching about active citizenship. However some schools have developed the institutional capacity to facilitate the successful implementation of CSPE. This capacity to change requires effective leadership with an emphasis on teacher development. This was especially true of School C, the only school in the study that exhibited characteristics of successful implementation. It is a 'model' or 'lighthouse' school where there is a commitment to change and a focus on teacher development. Out of all the schools in this study, it was the only school that adhered to the guidelines for the successful implementation of CSPE. Consequently, teachers believed in the subject as did students.

The remainder of the schools in the study, however have not observed best practice in CSPE. This manifests itself in haphazard teacher selection, lack of teacher support and development, poor leadership, ineffective timetabling arrangements, and a resistance, on the part of teachers to the employment of active learning methodologies. Failure to successfully implement CSPE the culture of the school which embodies the values, traditions, beliefs and attitudes of those who operate within the school setting. Consequently CSPE in these

schools lacks status and the implementation of the subject at classroom level is proving problematic.

In the course of this study the student voice was also elicited. This is a voice that is often neglected in the change process, even though they are participants in it. Perhaps it is time to listen to them and learn.

Implementing a programme of civic education in schools presents many challenges. Failure to rise to the challenges of Civic, Social and Political Education will result invariably lead to another 'Civics'. Based on the research findings, it is the view of the researcher that the implementation of CSPE for this population has, for the majority of schools, not been successful. For the majority of schools in this study CSPE is 'Civics Revisited'.

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# APPENDICES

**APPENDIX  
A**

St. John's College  
Le Fanu Road  
Ballyfermot  
Dublin 10.

Dear Principal,

Further to our recent telephone conversation, I am writing to formally request permission to obtain access to your school for research purposes. The research being undertaken looks at factors that affect the implementation of CSPE in schools.

The research will involve the employment of three research instruments.

1. A CSPE Teacher Questionnaire- Questions will relate to teacher details, attitudes to CSPE and opinions about how the school manages CSPE. This questionnaire takes less than 10 minutes to complete.
2. A CSPE teacher interview. I would like to interview four current CSPE teachers. They will be asked their views and opinions on various issues relating to CSPE. Interviews should last no longer than 30 minutes.
3. A Focus Group interview with both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> or Transition Year. Four students from each year will be required. Again, students will be asked to air their views opinions and perceptions of CSPE. Focus Group Interviews should last no longer than 30 minutes a piece.

I understand that you are very busy and have other priorities, but I would be most grateful if you grant me access to your school. I guarantee yourself, your colleagues and your students full confidentiality and anonymity should you grant me permission to carry out the research in your school. Should you require any further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me at 01-6264943.

I would appreciate if you could inform me of your decision within the next two weeks.

Many Thanks,  
Deirdre Murphy.

I

**APPENDIX  
B**

**Survey on Factors Affecting the Implementation of CSPE in Post-Primary Schools**

**Deirdre Murphy  
N.U.I Maynooth**

Dear CSPE Teacher,

This questionnaire is part of my research for a Masters in education.

I am extremely grateful for your assistance as I understand how busy things are for teachers this time of the year.

I guarantee complete confidentiality and anonymity to all respondents.

The questionnaire takes less than 10 minutes to complete and I would be most grateful if you could answer all questions. When the questionnaire is completed, please return them to the CSPE co-ordinator in your school, who will forward them to me.

Should you have any questions on any aspect of the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact me at 01-6264943.

Many Thanks,

Deirdre Murphy.

# CSPE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

*All Information supplied will be treated a strictly confidential*

## Section A

### CSPE Teacher Profile

1. How many years have you been teaching? (Tick  $\checkmark$  the box that applies)

0-5

16-20

6-10

20-24

11-15

25 +

2. How many years have you been teaching CSPE? Please circle the number of years below.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

3. Please state the following;

(i) Your Primary Degree \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Subjects Taken in Final Year \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Post-graduate Qualifications \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) CSPE Qualification (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Have you attended any CSPE In-Service Courses? (Tick  $\checkmark$  Yes or No)

Yes

No



If yes, please give the title/s of any in-services you have attended below

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5. How many CSPE classes do you teach? Please circle the number below.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Do you teach your CSPE class another subject? (Tick Yes or No)

Yes

No

If yes, please name that subject \_\_\_\_\_

7. How did you come to teach CSPE in your school? (Tick the box that Applies)

I was asked by Management to teach CSPE

I asked to teach CSPE

It appeared on my timetable

Other (Please specify below)

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

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**Section B**

**You and Your Teaching of CSPE**

8. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about you and your teaching of CSPE. (Tick the box that applies)

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
(a) I like using active learning methodologies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Active learning is encouraged in my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) I use the textbook a lot when I teach CSPE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) My students enjoy active learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Action Projects are very worthwhile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) One period a week is sufficient for the Teaching of CSPE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Section C**

**CSPE and Your School**

9. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about CSPE your school. (Tick the box that applies)

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
(a) CSPE has a high status amongst school Managers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) CSPE has a high status amongst other teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) CSPE has a high status amongst students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) CSPE is considered a worthwhile subject in my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) I am happy with the assessment of CSPE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Is CSPE included for examination for house exams in your school (Tick Yes or No)

Yes  No

11. Do you have a CSPE coordinator in your school? (Tick Yes or No)

Yes  No

12. Do teachers CSPE Teachers meet on a regular basis in your school?  
(Tick Yes or No)

Yes

No

13. Does your school have an active Student's Council?  
(Tick Yes or No)

Yes

No

14. Any additional comments on the teaching of CSPE that you would like to make :

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***Many thanks for your co-operation***

***Deirdre Murphy***

# APPENDIX C

## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE-CSPE TEACHER INTERVIEWS**

### **Questions**

- 1. How did you come to teach CSPE? Were you conscripted or did you volunteer?**
- 2. How did you feel about that?**
- 3. Were you given any help, advice or support before you began teaching CSPE?**
- 4. How important do you think CSPE is in relation to other subjects in the school? Why?**
- 5. How would you describe your attitude towards CSPE?**
- 6. Would you say your colleagues have the same view as you? How do you know?**
- 7. What teaching methodologies do you use in your teaching of CSPE? Why?**
- 8. What do you think about the mode of assessment in CSPE?**
- 9. Do you think the status of CSPE is high in your school? How do you know?**
- 10. Do you think the status of CSPE is high amongst students? How do you know?**
- 11. Would you say CSPE is treated seriously by management? How do you know?**
- 12. Have you attended any in-services. Have they been helpful?**
- 13. As it stands, so you think CSPE has any disadvantages? If Yes, what are they?**
- 14. Imagine a hierarchy of subjects in your school. Where on that hierarchy would CSPE be placed?**
- 15. Is there anything further you would like to add about CSPE?**

**APPENDIX  
D**

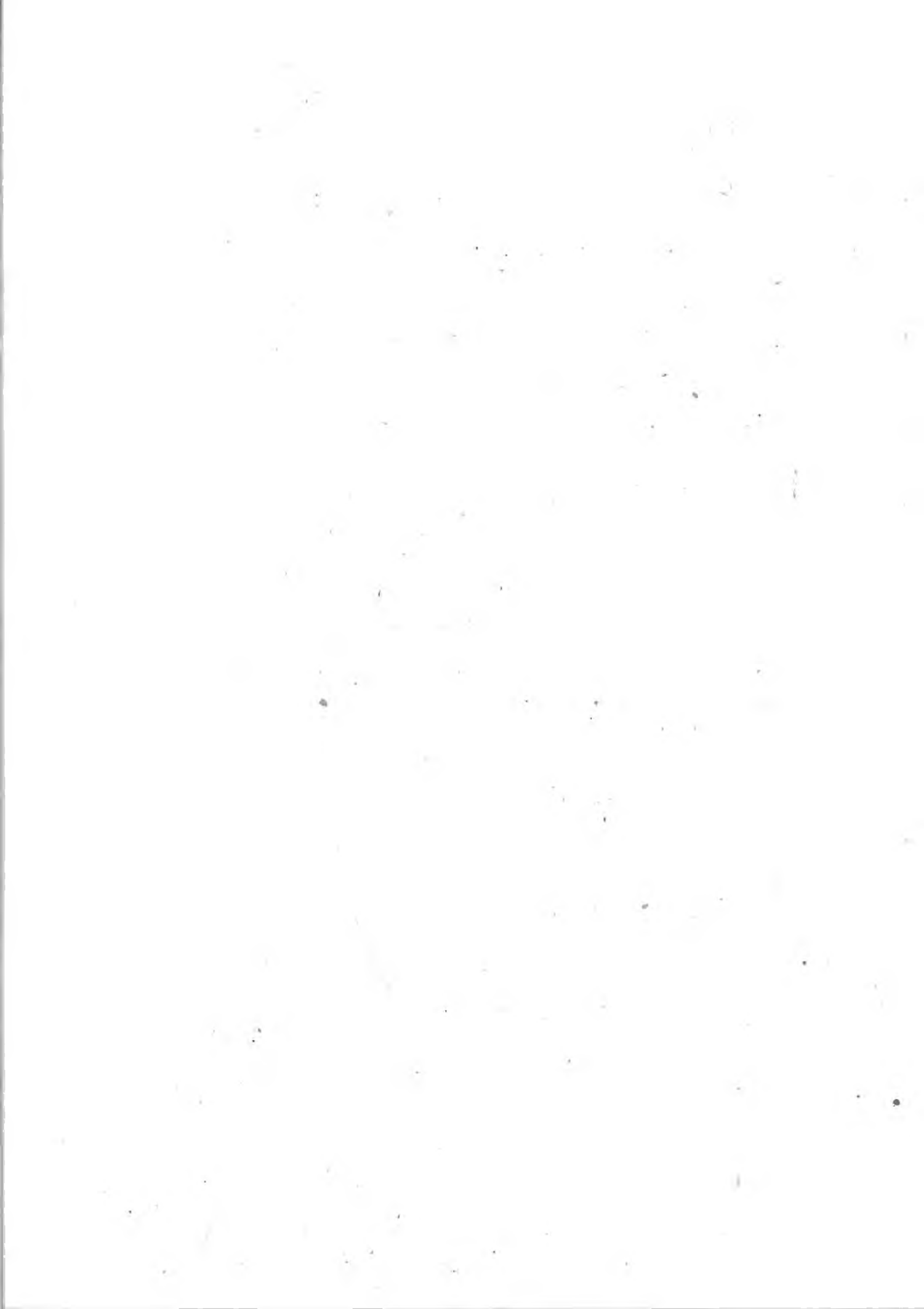
## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE-FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW (2<sup>ND</sup> Years)**

### **Questions for 2<sup>nd</sup> Years**

- 1. Which subjects do you think are the most important in school?**
- 2. Which subjects do you feel are not important in school?**
- 3. What are your views on CSPE? Is it important or not important.**
- 4. In relation to subjects like English and Maths, how important is CSPE?**
- 5. What do you normally do in CSPE class?**
- 6. What's your CSPE teacher like?**
- 7. Would you say your teacher is enthusiastic about CSPE? How do you know?**
- 8. Have you done an action project? Describe it? Did you enjoy it?**
- 9. Are you encouraged to form your own opinion in class? Do you think your voice is heard in class?**
- 10. Do you think your voice is heard in the school?**
- 11. How would you describe your attitude to CSPE? Why?**
- 12. Do you think other students in the school feel the same?**
- 13. If a course like CSPE was on the Leaving Cert would you do it?**
- 14. Any further comments you would like to make about CSPE?**

**APPENDIX  
E**





## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE-FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW (5<sup>TH</sup> Yr/Transition Yr)**

### **Questions For 5<sup>th</sup>/Transition Years**

- 1. Looking back to your Junior Certificate years, what subjects do you think were the most important? Why?**
- 2. What subjects do you think were the least important? Why?**
- 3. How important was CSPE?**
- 4. How important was CSPE in relation to subjects you found important?**
- 5. How would you describe your attitude towards CSPE? Do you think other students in your year would hold the same view?**
- 6. What did you normally do in class?**
- 7. What was your CSPE teacher like? Do you think he or she was enthusiastic about CSPE? How do you know?**
- 8. Tell me about your action project? Did you find them worthwhile?**
- 9. What are your views on the CSPE exam? What did you get in it?**
- 10. If a course like CSPE was in the Leaving Cert, would you do it?**
- 11. Any further comments about CSPE?**