

Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS)

**The Competences Approach to
Teacher Professional Development:
Current Practice and Future Prospects**

Editors: Rose Dolan and Jim Gleeson November 2007

The competences debate and teacher professional development

Introduction to Conference Proceedings

At the invitational SCoTENS conference of teacher educators, held in Belfast in May 2000, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) was identified as one of the areas for further cross-border co-operative ventures. To further this initiative, Professor Anne Moran of the University of Ulster and Dr Andy Burke of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin, undertook to organise two follow-up conferences on the three I's of teacher development North and South – initial education, induction and continuing professional development. The first of these follow-up conferences took place at Jordanstown, Belfast, in November 2000, hosted jointly by the University of Ulster and St Mary's College, Belfast. The first day was devoted to a description and analysis of the model of integrated teacher education then operating in Northern Ireland and the associated support arrangements and materials. Day Two involved visits to first- and second-level schools and an open discussion of the two-day experience.

The second conference in the series took place in November 2003 at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin, and most of the providers of initial teacher education in both jurisdictions were represented. The southern conference followed a pattern similar to the earlier Belfast conference. A series of short presentations, followed by question and answer sessions, took place on the first day while visits to schools and other institutions of particular interest to participants were arranged for the second day. The proceedings, *Teacher Education in the Republic of Ireland: Retrospect and Prospect*, edited by Dr Andy Burke, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, were published in November 2004.

The third Conference, held in St Patrick's College in June 2005, focused on the competences approach to the appraisal of initial and qualified teachers, now prevalent across the European Union and firmly rooted in the USA. Whereas the Department of Education in Northern Ireland has adopted this approach, educationalists in the Republic of Ireland are still proceeding along traditional lines and many would entertain some concerns about the competences model. The organisers¹ of this third SCoTENS conference invited papers from both sides of the border so as to present an overview of initial and continuing teacher education on the island of Ireland from the perspective of competences.

From a very early age, we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world. This apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price. We can no longer see the consequences of our actions; we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole.
Senge, P. (1990)

As the debate about the competence model continues, Senge's opening paragraph to *The Fifth Discipline* acquires a new significance. The idea that teaching can be described solely in terms of a number of key skills that can be taught and, more significantly, assessed independently of each other does not sit comfortably with the

¹ Mr Barry Burgess, Dr. Andy Burke, Ms Rose Dolan and Dr. Jim Gleeson.

notion of teaching as art, that complex task of planning and implementing learning activities with students in classrooms.

Oberski and McNally (2007) use a Goethean perspective to describe the inherent difficulty of the teaching/learning process, likening it to the growth of a plant as stem, root and shoot, each of which develops independently and are then integrated at the end, a notion that is opposite to the organic concept of the growth of each as integrally linked to the other, a symbiotic relationship that is fundamentally organic in process. This is in stark contrast with a notion of lists of competences to be achieved and ticked off.

But it need not be. As Professor John Coolahan remarks in his key-note paper in the current publication, 'depending on the mode devised, the competency approach can be professionally positive and benign, or it can, alternatively, be of a narrow, check-list character and be professionally malign'. In typical fashion, Coolahan gives a comprehensive description of the development of policy and thinking about the need for the competences of teachers to be described in general terms, looking at the learning outcomes of initial teacher education and flagging the importance of careful consideration of the model that would be adopted in terms of its outcomes.

Aspects of teacher appraisal in the Republic of Ireland are considered in three papers of the papers in the current publication. Jim Deegan, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, considers the approach to appraisal in initial teacher education at primary level in the Republic and highlights the need for deep conversation between the colleges in advance of any adoption of a competences model. The joint paper from Jim Gleeson and Janet Moody, University of Limerick, is based on data from all concurrent and consecutive teacher education providers in the Republic. The authors identify the similarities and differences in the various approaches and challenge the teacher education community to be "proactive in collaborating on the development of a coherent set of criteria for student teacher appraisal".

Emer Egan, Assistant Chief Inspector, Teacher Education Section, Department of Education and Science, Dublin, deals with the appraisal of initial and qualified teachers. She outlines the functions of the Inspectorate in relation to the inspection and evaluation of schools and centres for education, provides an overview of the circumstances in which the evaluation of teachers and teaching takes place, and presents frameworks and criteria for evaluation that have been designed for use in a number of contexts including probationary teachers and student teachers. In the final section of her paper she includes some remarks in relation to the teacher competences debate from an Irish perspective.

The next two papers in this publication deal with the use of the competences model in Northern Ireland and some of the issues arising. Dolores Loughrey, University of Ulster, reports on the review of initial teacher training in Northern Ireland and describes the development of a partnership model of ITE. This partnership, coupled with a holistic interpretation of competence, led to discussions about the standards required for the assessment of student teachers and furthered the development of professional relationships between university tutors and school colleagues. Sean Moran, Open University, offers an alternative view of teaching to one based on technical rationality. He describes the model of the 'teacher as Phronimos' and calls for a 'hearts and minds' approach to the appraisal of teachers.

Andy Burke, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, delivered an inspiring and wide ranging closing address at the conference. He begins by locating the debate in the broad context of the stages of human development and tracing the historical origins of the competences approach. This suggests that competences are more than a simple accountability mechanism aimed at achieving value for money and calls for balance between 'earning a living and living a life'. This leads him to raise fundamental questions about the nature of modern schooling, conducted in the name of education, and the appropriateness of current teacher education programmes.

This third SCoTENS conference afforded participants a very valuable opportunity to compare our two approaches to appraisal on the island of Ireland and to plot them against the developing European trend and the American experience. This all made for a very informative and rewarding conversation and we are delighted that most of the papers that provided the sparks for that conversation are contained in these proceedings.

The current publication is very timely. While the 'Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications' drawn up by the EU Member States are prefaced by the behaviourist 'teachers should be able to', the three main areas of competence identified are couched in non-behaviourist terms and highlight three broad areas of work with others, with knowledge, technology and information and with and in society (European Commission, undated, p. 5). The benchmark OECD (2005, p 115) study found that 'the general trend is towards changing requirements for teacher certification from input measures (such as number of courses taken or credit points) to output criteria, namely knowledge, skills and competences measured in multiple ways, including portfolios.

The Teaching Council in Northern Ireland has recently revisited and revised its original competences approach while its southern counterpart published its Codes of Professional Conduct in March 2007 in the context of its statutory obligation to 'establish and promote the maintenance of standards of programmes of teacher education and training [and] teaching knowledge, skill and competence of teachers in recognised primary and post-primary schools' (Teaching Council Act, Section 6b).

Meanwhile, the use of performance indicators has become an accepted part of education discourse in both jurisdictions in the context of strategic planning (see DES, 2002). This suggests that education accountability is increasingly seen in contractual, value-for-money terms, an environment where competences are most at home. However, there are alternatives as suggested for example by Rychen and Salganik (2003) and OECD (2002).

At the same time higher education institutions are now required to design their programmes in line with the NQAI framework and the Bologna Process. The emphasis at Bologna was on improving the efficiency, effectiveness and international competitiveness of higher education in Europe. In pursuit of greater transparency, transferability and mobility the Ministers for Education specified at their Berlin (2003) meeting that degree programmes (including teacher education) would be described in terms of learning outcomes rather than hours of study. While the ECTS Users' Guide (p. 47) defines learning outcomes in terms of what a student is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of

learning', the recommended approach in higher education in the Republic is to adopt a behaviourist approach based on Bloom (see for example, Kennedy, 2007). This means that learning outcomes are prefaced by the give-away behaviourist formula 'on successful completion of this module, students should/will be able to'.

While behavioural objectives are often the most appropriate for the achievement of what Stenhouse (1975) called training and instruction they are entirely inappropriate for the really important learning process of induction into the thought processes of a discipline as well as what Stenhouse called principles and procedures such as motivation, metacognition and equality of treatment (see McKernan, 2008). In this broader policy context, teacher education is indeed at a crossroads!

Rose Dolan / Jim Gleeson
Editors
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Biographies

Professor John Coolahan is Professor Emeritus and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He is the author of a number of books, has published over 120 articles in journals, and has edited several compilations of articles in education. He has had extensive involvement in a public service capacity in advising the Department of Education and Science on educational policy and development in Ireland since 1991. At international level, he has had extensive engagement with the OECD and the European Commission on educational policy issues. Professor Coolahan is past president of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland, past editor of *Irish Educational Studies* and former chairman of the Academic Committee of the Association of Teacher Education in Europe. He is co-chairperson of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS).

Ms. Rose Dolan is a lecturer in the Education Department of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. She is the course leader of the Post-Graduate Diploma in Education, and lectures on topics related to pedagogy, reflection on teaching and learning in the classroom, and quality in teaching and learning in the M.Ed and M.Ed (School Leadership). Prior to joining the department, she taught Science and Mathematics at second level and continues to be actively engaged in developing innovative approaches to teaching mathematical concepts. She is one of the founders of the Gluais programme, which engages in leadership development work with young people in post-primary schools in Dublin and Kildare.

Dr. Jim Deegan is Director of Postgraduate Studies in Education in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. He was formerly Associate Professor of Teacher Education in the University of Georgia in the US and Head of Education in Mary Immaculate Education. He is a founding member of the Colleges of Education Research Consortium (CERC) and Chair-elect of the International Relations Committee (Division H) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). His areas of expertise are children's peer cultures, renewal and reform in teaching and teacher education, and qualitative research methods and methodologies. His publications include *Children's Friendships in Culturally Diverse Classrooms*, Routledge, 1996 and *Primary Voices: Equality, Diversity and Childhood in Irish Primary Schools*, Institute of Public Administration, 2004 (with D. Devine and A. Lodge). He is currently working on an edited volume of collaborative teacher and teacher educator research in contemporary educational contexts.

Dr. Jim Gleeson worked as a post-primary teacher in Dublin and his native Tipperary before joining the Education Department, Thomond College of Education, Limerick. He is currently a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Education and Professional Studies at the University of Limerick (UL), Course Leader for the Graduate Diploma/Master's in Education Leadership and director of the Curriculum Evaluation and Policy Research Unit at UL. His other research interests include teacher education, vocational education and training and gender and education. He is currently one of the IUA nominees on the Teaching Council.

Janet Moody is a lecturer in the Department of Education and Professional Studies at the University of Limerick and is Course Leader of the Graduate Diploma in Education (Languages). She has worked in RTE as a researcher/reporter and has

experience of teaching French and English to young people and adults, as well as working with the National Distance Education Centre (Oscail) at Dublin City University. She recently undertook a professional development/research project with Teaching Practice tutors at the University of Limerick on issues relating to the tutoring and assessment of TP, using videotaped lessons as a focus.

Emer Egan is an Assistant Chief Inspector working in the Policy Support Subdivision of the Inspectorate at the Department of Education and Science. From 1994-2001, Emer worked as a Senior Inspector in the In-career Development Unit of the Department. Since September 2003, she has been assigned as manager of the Inspectorate Business Unit *Teacher Education* where she is responsible for the management of inspectorate involvement in policy advice and development in respect of first and second level initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development; the implementation of curriculum support programmes and initiatives; and teacher qualifications matters at first and second levels. Emer is also a Ministerial nominee on the Teaching Council.

Dolores Loughrey is the Director of Primary Education at the University of Ulster at Coleraine. She has been a University lecturer in Primary Education for twenty years. She is involved in the teaching of undergraduate students studying education as a subject, post-graduate teacher education students and also Masters level students. She previously worked as Vice -Principal in a Primary School.

After teaching physics at schools in London, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Manchester and Belfast, and leading the flexible PGCE at The Open University in Ireland, **Seán Moran** now lectures on the MA programmes in education at Waterford Institute of Technology, Ireland and is visiting professor in pedagogy at Zemaitija College, Lithuania. He is also carrying out doctoral research in the philosophy of education at Queen's University, Belfast.

Andy Burke is currently based at the Educational Research Centre, St. Patrick's College, Dublin 9. He combines his research work with some part-time lecturing in the College. For many years he has been involved in consultancy work for the World Bank, the European Commission and Irish Aid in several African and Asian countries.

The Operational Environment for Future Planning in Teacher Education: OECD and EU Initiatives

John Coolahan

Over recent years national governments as well as international agencies such as the OECD and the EU have been giving priority attention to educational policies and issues. The emergence of, what is sometimes termed, the knowledge society has highlighted the significance of good quality education if societies are to be in a position to meet many new challenges and changing socio-economic circumstances in the new era which is opening up. As teachers are the most significant resource in schools, the quality of teaching is crucial to quality improvement. The OECD remarks, "Teacher policy is high on national agendas. The far-reaching economical social changes underway have made high-quality schooling more important than ever before. The demands on schools and teachers are becoming more complex. OECD Education Ministers have committed their countries to the goal of raising the quality of learning for all. This ambitious goal will not be achieved unless all students receive high-quality teaching." (OECD, 2005, p. 7)

In establishing the context for new initiatives on teacher education policy it is desirable to outline some key factors which are affecting the teacher's role in fundamental ways. While change is endemic to human history, there are certain epochs when the interpenetrative and accumulative impact of change forces give rise to eras of major civilisational change such as the Neolithic Revolution, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution. It seems to be generally accepted that we are currently in the process of such an era of radical change. There are a multiplicity of factors giving rise to such change, some of which are outlined below.

Globalisation is recognised as having profound impacts on markets, labour, capital and sustainability. Great trading blocs and multi-national corporations have established what might be termed a global village as an arena for their activities. There has been an accelerated growth in the knowledge base of all disciplines, with science and technology receiving most public attention. Research and development are crucial to all major undertakings, pushing the frontiers of knowledge and innovation. Entrepreneurship is prized as a mechanism to utilise and apply new understandings and inventions. It is recognised that the impact of the information and communications technology revolution may be greater than that of the printing press. It has re-shaped the ways we live, learn and earn our livelihoods. In a short period of time, it has revolutionised how we create, access and disseminate information. The innovation in the technologies develops apace, with the shadows of obsolescence never far away, as new models press inexorably on existing products.

Demographic changes make the traditionally inexact science of manpower planning even more uncertain. Declining birth rates in many developed countries are accompanied with wide scale migratory patterns. Challenges are posed to interculturalism, with greater variety of languages, religion, culture and skin colour among populations and communities. The policy of integration of people with special needs also poses challenges for schools. In fast changing societies there are dangers to social cohesion, whereby those marginalized and suffering from multi-faceted forms of disadvantage find it difficult to be gainfully engaged in a high skills society.

The family as a social institution has been undergoing major change in developing societies, giving rise to greater challenges to school personnel in many instances. The role of media and advertising has been impinging greatly on young people, who are seen as valuable markets for all types of merchandise. Destructive sub-cultures which promote the abuse of drugs and undesirable sexual mores among the young create pressures on both the young people and the schools which they attend. Developing the potential of all citizens is a common policy concern among countries. It is realised that human resource development is crucial if citizens are to be enabled to participate effectively and efficiently in contemporary and evolving society. Education systems are central to states' concerns in seeking to prepare the young and not-so-young generations for the knowledge society. In this context, lifelong learning is now regarded as the paradigm for the future. Formal education is no longer just the preparatory phase for entry into adult society. Formal and informal learning are seen as coterminous with the lifecycle, whereby people are facilitated to keep learning and training throughout their lifetimes.

In the global world great efforts are being made to achieve mutual recognition of qualifications between countries to facilitate mobility of skill and expertise. With greater investment in education and training there is more pressure on transparency and accountability for the use of resources. Strategic planning has become a mantra for all organisations, including educational institutions. Public reportage, auditing of processes, adherence to new legal requirements, are the order of the day. In line with such developments, there is also greater internationalisation of educational thought and practice. Organisations such as the OECD and the EU have, in recent years, assumed a much more prominent role on educational research and policy than hitherto. While countries are jealous of their responsibilities on their national arenas, it is increasingly obvious that there is a great commonality in the policy discourse between countries. Ministers of Education engage a great deal on joint policy issues, and publications such as the OECD's annual *Education at a Glance* are exercising significant influence on national policy-makers. There is an increasing congruence of viewpoint between national and international bodies on key dimensions of education. The same holds true in relation to thinking on teacher education issues. Recognising that the school as a formal mass institution emerged in the context of industrial society, the OECD has also been engaged on extended reflection and "think-tanking" on the school of the future, setting out a set of scenarios of the possible framework into which school may be re-shaped by the knowledge society. It seems likely that schools, and the work of teachers in association with them, will greatly change in the years ahead. The question arises then, how best to prepare teachers for this new and demanding role?

In background documentation for the OECD study, *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Teachers*, launched in 2002, the OECD put the issue succinctly, but forcibly, when it remarked:

Teachers are central to schooling. They are even more critical as expectations grow for teaching and learning to become more student-centred and to emphasise active learning. They must be in a vanguard of innovation, including the informed, judicious use of ICT. Teachers must work in collaboration with colleagues and through networks as well as through active links with parents and the community. This calls for demanding concepts of professionalism: the teacher as facilitator; as knowledgeable, expert individual; as networked team participant, oriented to individual needs;

engaged both in teaching and in research and development. The role of the school principal in providing leadership is particularly critical.

The OECD report, *Teachers Matter* (2005) is the most comprehensive, interpretative, comparative study of the teaching career which is in existence. It examines all aspects of the teaching career, from entry to retirement, in twenty-five countries. Its objectives were to:

- Synthesise research on recruiting retaining and developing effective teachers;
- Identify innovative and successful policy initiatives and practices;
- Facilitate exchanges of lessons and experiences;
- Identify policy options

The report sets out a range of the new roles teachers are now expected to fulfil under four broad headings:

- At the individual student level;
- At the classroom level;
- At the school level;
- At the level of parents and the wider community. (ibid. pp. 97-99)

Having conducted a survey of teacher education in many countries, as a key priority for future policy development the report states:

The overarching priority is for countries to have in place a clear and concise statement or profile of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do. This is necessary to provide the framework to guide initial teacher education, teacher certification, teachers' on-going professional development and career advancement, and to assess the extent to which these different elements are being effective. (ibid. p. 131)

The report adopts a teacher competences approach linked to the concept of the profile of what is expected from teachers. It stresses that the profile should be evidence-based and be built on the active involvement of teachers:

A fundamental precondition for the preparation of a profile of teacher competences is a clear statement of objectives for student learning. Teachers' work and the knowledge and skills that they need to be effective must reflect the student learning objectives that schools are aiming to achieve. There needs to be profession-wide standards and a shared understanding of what counts as accomplished teaching. The profile should be evidence-based and built on active involvement by the teaching profession in identifying teacher competences and standards of performance. A clear, well structured and widely supported teacher profile can be a powerful mechanism for aligning the various elements involved in developing teachers' knowledge and skills. (ibid. p. 132)

The report goes on to indicate the type and range of competences which it considers are required:

The teacher profile must reflect the broad range of competences that teachers require to be effective practitioners in modern schools. It should encompass strong subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, the capacity to work effectively with a wide range of students and colleagues, contribution to the school and the wider profession and the teacher's capacity to continue developing. The profile could express different levels of performance appropriate to beginning teachers, experienced teachers, and those with higher responsibilities. The profile would emphasise demonstrated attainment of key knowledge, skills and competences for effective professional practice. (ibid. p. 132)

The report considers that an inhibitor to the full realisation of reforms in teacher education has been the lack of clarity about the competences that beginning teachers need to launch their careers. It also considers that clear profiles and competences for different stages of the teaching career will help to provide a purpose and a framework for continuing professional development. (ibid. p. 136)

In its final chapter on "Developing and Implementing Teacher Policy", the report makes the significant point, "Experience from a number of countries indicates that unless teachers and their representatives are actively involved in policy formulation, and feel a sense of "ownership" of reform it is unlikely that substantial changes will be successfully implemented. On the other hand, stakeholder groups should not be able to exercise a veto over education reforms that are mandated through democratic political processes." (ibid. p 213) The Report endorses the statement of OECD Ministers issued from their meeting in Dublin in March 2004, which gave a clear recognition to the importance of engagement and consultation with the teaching profession. Interestingly, the report recognised the value of Teaching Councils in providing "a mechanism for profession-led standards setting." It was also noteworthy that the report drew special attention to the planned role and function of the Teaching Council of Ireland, in this regard. (ibid. p 216) Thus it is clear that the key policy way forward for the OECD was the articulation of a teacher's profile and the competences he/she would be expected to exhibit at different stages of the career. Apart from general indications of elements that should be included, the report did not set out any specific framework of competences although it did include an outline of the performance standards in operation for teachers in England, Quebec in Canada, and Victoria in Australia. (ibid. pp. 115,116)

Education as a policy issue, has also become much more central to EU deliberations since the middle nineties, than it traditionally had been. The European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996, coupled with the issuing of the first EU *White Paper on Teaching and Learning*, also in 1996, symbolised the policy shift. While national governments retained sovereignty over their education systems, increasingly educational policy issues were promoted on the EU agenda. As was the case with the OECD, the EU analysed trends and challenges for education arising from the emergence of the knowledge society and sought to promote a more collaborative EU response. The teaching career was given new attention, as it was realised that the quality of the teaching force would be crucial if the challenges were to be met. This perspective is reflected, for example, in the following quotation from the EU "Memorandum on Lifelong Learning", issued in 2000:

Teaching as a professional role faces decisive change in the coming decades: teachers and trainers become guides, mentors and mediators. Their role – and it is a crucially important one – is to help and support learners who, as far as possible take charge of their own learning...

Active learning presupposes the motivation to learn, the capacity to exercise crucial judgement and the skill of knowing how to learn. The irreplaceable heart of the teaching role lies in nurturing, precisely these human capacities to create and use knowledge.

A landmark event was the European Council held at Lisbon in March 2000. This set the strategic goal for Europe of becoming by 2010, “The most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustaining economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.” Then, at the Barcelona European Council of March 2002, the following more precise goal for education and training was set, “The European Council sets the objective to make Europe’s educational training systems a world quality reference by 2010.” The three key objectives were:

- Increasing the quality of education and training;
- Facilitating the access of all to education;
- Opening up education and training systems.

There were thirteen associated objectives.

Among the issues set out were:

Providing the conditions which adequately support teachers and trainers as they respond to the challenges of the knowledge society, including through initial and in-service training (sic) in the perspective of lifelong learning and securing a sufficient level of entry to the teaching profession, across all subject and levels, as well as providing for the long-term needs of the profession by making teaching and training even more attractive. (*Educ. 27, 6365/02*)

This was the first time that the teaching career was highlighted across the member states as an appropriate issue to take action in support of the profession.

A set of eight working groups was established to promote elements of the general policy agenda. It is noteworthy that the first working group – A, was devoted to “Improving the Education of Teachers and Trainers”. The first two key issues identified by the Ministers at Barcelona for the working group were:

- Identifying the skills that teachers and trainers need given their changing roles in society;
Supporting teachers and trainers as they respond to challenges of the knowledge society. (Feerick, 2004, pp. 16-24, and p. 19).

Working Group A decided to focus on the question of the competences teachers need to respond successfully to their new role. They sought to identify generic competences of a teacher in (i) Learning process competences and (ii) Learning outcome competences. The aim was to develop a European framework for the qualifications and competences of teachers and trainers and to devise a single

framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences, which would be attested by a Europass.

The policy reference for the working group for this aspect of their work was as follows:

Teaching competences and qualification profiles, based on the socially expected role of teachers and on the European dimension of education, are defined as criteria for the development and external quality assurance of teacher education provision. (ibid.)

The Committee shifted emphasis from inputs and supply side indicators to learning outcomes.

The working group identified the following clusters of competences which teachers are expected to foster within the pupils. (ibid. and Bárbalo Campos, 2005).

Learning Outcome Competences

Contribution to citizenship education of pupils and trainees.

- (i) living in a multicultural, inclusive and tolerant society;
- (ii) living according to sustainable lifestyles regarding environment issues;
- (iii) dealing with gender equality issues in family, work and social life;
- (iv) living as a European citizen;
- (v) managing his/her own career development, in the framework of increasing labour market internationalisation for instance.

Another set of competences was grouped around “Competences for knowledge and lifelong learning society.” They were listed as follows:

- (i) motivation to learn beyond compulsory education;
- (ii) learning how to learn/learning in independent way;
- (iii) information processing (with a critical eye);
- (iv) digital literacy;
- (v) creativity and innovation;
- (vi) problem-solving;
- (vii) entrepreneurship;
- (viii) communication;
- (ix) visual culture

The third category related to the “Integration of competence-centred curriculum with school subject-centred curriculum.” This referred to “the integration of the development of these new competences in school curriculum with the development of the learning outcomes of traditional school subjects.” (ibid. p. 5)

The emphasis of the above is on the learning outcomes for pupils rather than a designation of teacher competences per se. However, the working group surveyed many features of the teacher’s role, which are now generally understood. It is recognised that “teaching should be seen less and less as a bureaucratic and technical and increasingly as a professional activity” (original emphasis). In most developed countries this would not be regarded as a new insight. However, the intent is quite

clear that in establishing teacher profiles and associated competences the concern is for outcome-based criteria of teachers' performance:

At policy level, a teaching competences and qualifications profile does not mean a national teacher education curriculum, indicating the subjects, scientific content, and the methodology to be employed that is, defining input or process curriculum criteria, regarding what and how to teach the prospective teachers. This profile should mostly be referred to outcome-based criteria, indicating what the teachers must be able to do; the European dimension of education, including the changing dimensions of the role of teachers, should be a relevant source for defining such a profile. The curriculum design would be left to the autonomous higher education institutions and can be submitted to ex-post quality assurance. (ibid. p. 9)

Thus, the institutions would design the programmes in the light of general guidelines and the teacher education curricula would be subject to external accreditation by a variety of stakeholders. In line with the Bologna process, teacher education institutions are expected to develop descriptors of the learning outcomes of teacher education programmes, and incorporate ECTS credits. It is pointed out that this approach

...challenges teacher education institutions and teacher educators to participate proactively in the policy definition of teaching competences and qualification profiles, paying attention to the social demand, and to develop and implement a coherent and appropriately co-ordinated teacher education curriculum focused on the role of teachers and learning outcomes rather than on a collection of individual academic subjects (even if they are on education and didactics) which are not consistently related to the goal of enabling teachers to deal with their role demands. (ibid. p.10)

Thus, as with the OECD viewpoint, a teacher competency approach to teacher education programmes is the policy perspective, but the teacher educators are seen to have a pro-active role in identifying and designing the precise competency framework.

It is not possible for the EU to impose by directive or regulation, with legal force, requirements on the education policies of national states. What has been done in the context of the Education and Training 2010 Process is recourse to a specific method of co-operation by member states, called the open method of co-ordination. As part of this method, member states have agreed to exchange policy practices related to the way they are implementing European Commission and Council of Ministers agreements, at national level. One of the agreements made regarding teacher education is that "Common European references and principles regarding competences and qualifications needed by teachers and trainers in order to fulfil their changing roles should be developed as a matter of priority and implemented at national level. (ibid. p 17) Thus, while there is no legal imposition by the EU, the Council of Ministers has agreed that a competency approach should be developed and implemented at national level. It has also been agreed that each Member State will give an account of progress made in implementation as part of the mutual accountability dimension of the co-ordination method.

This brief outline of recent policy approaches by the OECD and the EU towards teacher education which strongly stress that the design of teacher profiles and the designation of teacher competences, in a performance outcome mode, is the recommended way for the future, is of considerable importance to teacher education in Ireland, which has not hitherto adopted this approach. Different models of competence criteria are in existence, and some countries have considerable experience of them. Depending on the mode devised, the competency approach can be professionally positive and benign, or it can, alternatively, be of a narrow, check-list character and be professionally malign. Both the OECD and the EU emphasise the desirability of pro-active engagement by teacher educators in the design of competences. It would seem to be remiss if Irish teacher educators do not take the initiative in exploring aspects of the competency approach, with a view to ensuring if, as seems likely, this policy is politically favoured, that the best competency model possible is available for adoption in Ireland.

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Challenging, Confronting and Choosing “New Appraisal” in Initial Teacher Education in the Primary Sector in the Republic of Ireland

Jim Deegan

1975 was a good year for the quality and quantity of entrants to the five colleges of primary teacher education in Dublin and Limerick. I’m saying so somewhat immodestly of myself and what I reckon was approximately 1,000 other entrants to the colleges who were “called to teacher training” that year. This was a time when “the call” still had something of a divine ring to it. To paraphrase, Garrison Keeler of Lake Wobegone and National Public Radio (NPR) fame in the US—the girls were many, the boys were few, and all the entrants were above average intelligence. It was a time when “threshold competences” (those competences that you needed to get in) were rooted in heritage dimensions, with places on programme secured through a combination of Leaving Certificate examination results and interviews for general suitability, music, and oral Irish. What I would describe as “practice shock” hit hard and early within weeks of the first term and was referred to ironically as Christmas Teaching Practice. The ill fate of some was already sealed before the first frost. The modus operandi for appraisal on teaching practice was always clouded in mystery and surprise and a few truly memorable idiosyncratic moments.

—Reflections of the author as a student teacher “being appraised” in 1975

Introduction

The above reflection stems from my thinking about the kinds of appraisal—estimates of value, merit, amount, and quality—that are currently under consideration in initial teacher education in the primary sector (ITE/Primary) in the Republic of Ireland. The reader can decide how, and in what ways things have changed or remained as they were? One thing is certain—the future will not be as gradual or incremental as the past and the mysteries and surprises are more likely to come from Bologna, Prague or Berlin. This is why the title of the paper is predicated on action—*challenging* (the status quo), *confronting* (business-as-usual) and *choosing* (collaboratively with mutuality of purpose)—actions that have not generally featured as part of the discourse decorum on ITE/Primary.

In recent years there have been positive developments on teacher policies generally but comparatively little on teacher education policies in ITE/Primary. While Drudy (2004) states that “the initial impetus for this period of change and reform of the education system in the Republic of Ireland came from an external source—the 1991 OECD Review of Education—much of the subsequent reform proposals and changes have emanated from review bodies and policy documents generated within the system and the wider Irish society” (ibid, p 31), the author goes on to say that “we are only now beginning to realise the impact of educational change initiated at a European level” (ibid. p 31). The task of comparing national and international policy agendas and frameworks is, nevertheless, one of key importance given the “rippling out” of the Bologna Declaration of 1999 to all countries working towards the creation of a European Higher Education Act (EHEA) in 2010.

In this paper, I briefly describe the content and form of the cultures of ITE/Primary. Next I describe findings from a small-scale study of how student teachers are currently appraised on teaching practice. Then I describe the competences/learning outcomes outlined in The TUNING Project of 2000 (Gonzalez and Wagenaar, (2003). Finally I describe what I believe to be the conversation that needs to take place in advance of official decisions on “new appraisal”—competences/learning outcomes—in ITE/Primary. I focus this section of the paper through the particular lens of how we need to get ready for the everyday realities of diversity in schools, classrooms, and colleges/universities.

The Content and Form of Cultures in ITE/Primary

The content and form of cultures of ITE/Primary has historically been characterized by individualism and balkanization. We know little about unique and contingent features within particular teacher education programmes and less about systemic features across programmes, notwithstanding the discourse on policy and planning generated at meetings and publications of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS), the Colleges of Education Research Consortium (CERC), the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) and the review body and policy reports of the last decade. The cumulative discourse, however, privileges the structural over the ideological and moral dimensions of ITE/Primary. These are the dimensions that challenge and confront teacher educators’ own “substantive attitudes, values, beliefs, habits, assumptions, [and] ways of doing things” (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 219). These are the nodal points where I believe we need to start a fresh conversation on ITE/Primary. These are where choice lies. This absence of a substantive and relevant literature on the ideological and moral dimensions of ITE/Primary is compounded by paradigmatic, epistemological, political, cultural and economic variables.

The marking of turf boundaries and partisan agendas have until recently conspired to keep things the way they are in ITE/Primary and indeed the potential for synergies and collaborations across contexts and settings has yet to be fully realized. There have been no big bang theories about teacher education as a technical problem in the fifties, a problem-solving problem in the eighties or a policy problem in the present millennium like those that have existed in the relevant international discourse. There have been no paradigm wars about reflectivity or constructivism, notwithstanding their integration in the Primary Curriculum of 1999, publications of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and programme overviews and course syllabi in teacher education colleges. Yet this has occurred with little critical and inquiring discourse in official publications. Where ITE/Primary has been conceptualised as a “problematic,” it has been almost exclusively to redress capital funding on the physical side and teacher supply agendas. These foci have been necessary and few would argue that building state-of-the-art learning settings and focusing on attracting, developing and retaining quality teachers are not worthwhile and meaningful endeavours. The questions that arise however are: Who is setting the agenda for the moral and ideological bases in ITE/Primary? Who owns and holds the blueprint for reform, renewal and change in ITE/Primary? Who manages and who implements policy in ITE/Primary? Who challenges? Who confronts? Who chooses?

One notable exception in the pattern of inconsistencies and uncertainties in ITE/Primary was the short-lived impetus generated at the turn-of-the-century with the

publication of the report *Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century: Report of the Working Group on Primary Preservice Teacher Education* (Kelleghan, 2002). The seeds of this impetus on ITE/Primary have a long lineage going back as far, at least, a half-century to what Coolahan (2004) described as “the creditable work” from the mid-sixties to the mid-eighties, through “the slowdown” and “policy wobbles” of the late eighties, to the surge of statutory and policy frameworks in the nineties. This long overdue report raised some challenging issues and concerns regarding the role and relationship between education sciences and teacher education competences/learning outcomes and the relationship of Education to other subject areas. This is the stuff of contemporary international discourse in ITE all around the world. Five years later the report is yellowing with age, paradoxically suspended in a policy limbo. As Kelleghan (2004) noted, “the delay may in part be due to the extreme pressure to increase teacher supply in recent years, though that, while it might affect implication, should not necessarily have affected planning.” (p. 25).

Using Goffman’s (1959) “stage metaphor,” ITE/Primary has languished in the “back regions” as opposed to the “front regions” on the national higher educational stage, and has yet to achieve the profile and prominence of the humanities, business, engineering, and bio-medical sciences. Indeed, ITE/Primary remained virtually untouched by outside influences until the publication The Bologna Declaration of 1999 which is impelling unprecedented official interest and attention with its focus on coherence and consistency in all of higher education in the EU.

Appraisal Patterns and Variations in ITE/Primary

Using a ‘mix’ of informal and semi-structured interviews with faculty engaged in teaching practice, documentary data on teaching practice guidelines, and a form of speculative analysis, I identified a set of patterns and variations on how student teachers are currently being appraised on teaching practice. The following findings are indicative of the work that needs to be done within and across colleges in mapping appraisal in ITE/Primary and TUNING with its focus on competences/learning outcomes.

- Content, performance and professional competences on teaching practice were evident across settings, with variations regarding how professional competence is defined and measured.
- Grade descriptors are evident across settings and are used as an objective measure of the competency level of a student teacher during teaching practice, with variations in the role and status of grade descriptors, and the range of grading formats used.
- Openness, transparency and accountability are evident across settings, with variations in how, and in what ways a student teacher can appeal a teaching practice grade, and how a supervisor defends a grade and to whom and in what forum.
- Methods for calibrating grades received for teaching practice are evident across settings, with variations in the status of different teaching practice placements across the three years of programmes.
- Decisions regarding the calibration of teaching practice grades are systematically ordered and sequenced across settings, with variation in the

moderation process, and the roles and responsibilities of college supervisors and external examiners.

- The status of teaching practice grades is evident across settings, with variations regarding the weighting given to different teaching practice placements in the overall degree award.
- Teaching practice is an established feature in academic calendars and prospectuses across settings, with variations in the duration and the allocation of timetable slots to teaching practice.
- The eligible pool of teaching practice supervisors is drawn mainly from college faculty across settings, with variations in the role played generally and specifically with regard to particular teaching practice placements by contract supervisors.

What this survey indicates is that there are significant commonalities in teaching practice appraisal, and variations are more a matter of degree than kind in ITE/Primary. These commonalities represent useful starting points for intra- and inter-college conversation-building on competences/learning outcomes. What remains tacit and taken-for-granted is where programme ideologies, positive dispositions and critical knowledge fit into what is tantamount to a “working consensus” on appraisal in teaching practice. Apple (2005) cautions against this kind of “new common sense” where deep-seated problems are framed in such a way “that only certain answers seem to make sense” (p. x). A greater focus on the ideological and moral dimensions of appraisal in ITE/Primary could potentially yield not only useful differences of degree but also liberating differences of kind. Indicative of a liberating difference would be the development of formal structures for involving supervising teachers in supervising schools as advocated by Cannon (2004) in his review of teaching practice in the teacher education colleges and the Kelleghan Report (2002).

TUNING Educational Structures in Europe

The TUNING Project is a project by and for universities and is the Universities’ response to The Bologna Declaration. The name TUNING was chosen for the project to reflect the idea that universities are not looking for harmonization of their degree programmes or prescriptive or definitive European curricula but simply points of reference, convergences and common understanding. TUNING presents the following key operational definitions that are essential for a reading and understanding of how competences/learning outcomes will be conceptualized and developed in the future. Two of the animating definitions of the project follow.

1. Competences represent a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities. Fostering competences is the object of educational programmes. Competences will be formed in various course units and assessed at different stages.
2. Learning Outcomes are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of learning. They can refer to a single course unit or module or else to a period of studies, for example, first and second cycle programmes. Learning outcomes specify the requirements for award of credit.

TUNING with its goal of identifying points of reference for generic (or transferable skills) and subject-specific competences of first and second cycle graduates represents the most coherent and cogent expression of the Bologna action lines so far and potentially the strongest challenge to prevailing appraisal orthodoxies in ITE/Primary. Recent conceptual refinements include a shift in emphasis from a staff oriented approach to a student centred approach, less specialized academic education in the first and second cycles, and more flexibility in first and second cycle programmes. TUNING conceptually splits the kindred ideas of education sciences and teacher education competences. An overview of the twin and interrelated features of educational sciences and teacher education competences follows.

Educational Sciences

- Ability to analyse educational, concepts, theories and issues of policy in a systematic way
- Ability to identify potential connections between aspects of subject knowledge and their application in educational policies and contexts
- Ability to reflect on one's own value system
- Ability to question concepts and theories encountered in the Education Sciences
- Ability to recognize diversity of learners and the complexities of the learning process
- Awareness of the different contexts in which learning can take place
- Awareness of the different roles of participants in the learning process
- Understanding of the purposes and structures of the education systems
- Ability to conduct educational research in different contexts
- Counselling skills
- Ability to manage projects for school improvement/development
- Ability to manage educational programmes
- Ability to evaluate educational/program materials
- Ability to foresee educational needs and demands
- Ability to lead or co-ordinate multidisciplinary teams

Teacher Education Competences

- Commitment to learners' progress and achievement
- Competence in a number of teaching and learning strategies
- Competence in counselling learners and parents
- Knowledge of the subject to be taught
- Ability to communicate effectively with groups and individuals

It would be foolhardy to dismiss such aspirational and broad-based themes and the general principles underlying them. It is worth noting, however, the “red flags” that a number of leading teacher educators have raised about standards and competences and associated political agendas in the US and UK. Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting, and Whitty warned against how standards and competences have been used in the UK to “invent content”—where “the most important influence on the content of training was the ‘market’ to which students were increasingly exposed, that is, practice in schools” (2000, p.149). They also cautioned that issues and concerns related to values,

attitudes, and personal qualities are extremely vulnerable in official discourses on standards and competences. There is a tendency to avoid discussions of these issues in ITE/Primary and we need to be extra vigilant in ensuring that the onset of competences/learning outcomes systems do not exacerbate this situation but rather become opportunities for redressing this neglect and omission in the relevant discourse.

In the US, Sergiovanni cautioned against a “standards stampede” which squeezes the “lifeblood” out of education through “an excessive preoccupation on the technical world of standards” (2000, p.75). He also argues that the standards and accountability systems in the US have disenfranchised teachers, parents and students by failing to recognize local passions, needs, values and beliefs. With an eye on a similar concern, Eisner (1995) wrote about how standards can induce a focus on aggregate analyses of behaviour and fail to recognize differences. Here again the vulnerability of the ideological and moral dimensions of ITE/Primary is a serious concern. It is especially acute given the current positive momentum for intercultural and special educational needs teaching and learning and the pedagogical focus on curriculum differentiation in teacher education colleges.

Apple, (2005), also writing about experiences in the US cautioned against neoliberal and neoconservative reforms which attempt to institute marketisation, privatization, and managerialism in teacher education and also their close and unwelcome affinities with “strict accountability and constant and often punitive forms of assessment of students, teachers and teacher education institutions”. (p x). Apple makes the telling point that the debate and controversies surrounding standards are not always couched in empirical terms and that this results in an “artificially created consensus about how public problems are to be “solved” (p. xi) In similar vein, Drudy (2004) with reference to work conducted in University College Dublin as part of TUNING suggests that “as the higher education system moves towards a competences model . . . it will be important to avoid the administrative seductions of systems which are overly prescriptive and reductionist” (2004, p. 32).

Perhaps, Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, and Manning (2001) offered the most immediate concern regarding standards and competences when they stated that “one of the greatest difficulties with standards and the associated assessment of them is that although they make sense subject by subject, collectively they can become overwhelming and confusing.” (p. 21). The unpacking of education sciences and teacher education competences and generic and subject area competences/learning outcomes will be a messy business. With these cautions in mind, I now turn to an example of the kind of conversation-building that needs to take place in ITE/Primary in terms of programme ideology, positive dispositions and critical knowledge—what I believe are the vulnerable aspects of competences/learning outcomes systems. Mindful of these cautions, I suggest that there are a slew of issues and concerns that are anterior to a headlong rush into a laundry list of generic and subject area competences/learning outcomes in ITE/Primary. There is a conversation that needs to take place now before “the competences/learning outcomes stampede.”

The Conversation that Needs to Take Place in ITE/Primary

The choices that we make now and how, and in what ways we meet the future will be our legacy for rising generations of young children living in the Republic of Ireland.

And while there has been a recent outgrowth of statutory and policy discourses on diversity and education which is resonant throughout TUNING, we know little about the tacit and taken-for-granted everyday realities of diversity—the interactive outcomes of race, ethnicity, gender, class, ability, community, among a range of other social variables—in teacher educators’ lives across classrooms, schools, families and communities. The issues and concerns of diversity often lie concealed in the underbrush of the "hidden curriculum" in programmes and courses in teacher education colleges. This section of the paper sets out a context for the kind of conversation that needs to take place in ITE/Primary as a pre-requisite to decisions on competences/learning outcomes. Diversity is used here as a way of highlighting how conversation-building in ITE/Primary could be conceptualised and progressed. Put simply, competences/learning outcomes is the wrong starting place.

If we take the following four indices used internationally to establish the status of education and diversity—participation levels, programmatic provision, pedagogical processes, and human and material resources—we can readily see that we are only beginning to scratch the surface of the national educational landscape on this matter. Specifically, we need to systematically take stock of existing participation, provision, processes and resource levels, and consider new ways of responding to diversity in culturally relevant and meaningful ways. Quite simply, we need to prepare tomorrow’s teachers to meet the challenges of an increasingly culturally diverse society and help raise diversity to the top of the educational agenda. Herein lies the kernel of the challenge facing all those engaged in ITE/Primary—making connections between programme ideology, positive dispositions and critical knowledge in a deliberative and democratic context. The fundamental question is a pragmatic one: How, and in what ways can we respond to TUNING in ways that does not compromise the integrity of diversity in ITE/Primary?

Programme Ideology

A number of possible and potential resonances are sparked by a pragmatic analysis of TUNING. The first resonance is rooted in the conviction that teaching, learning, curriculum, and assessment for diversity are interrelated and irreducible aspects of any educational agenda. In order to accomplish this challenge, diversity needs to be interwoven throughout all components of teaching, learning curriculum, and teacher education in the educational enterprise. One of the potentially disastrous outcomes for diversity would be an approach that fails to link theories, principles and practices of teaching and learning. Such an approach would manifest itself as a “tack-on” or additive extra to an already over loaded and “choking” programme in ITE/Primary. This raises a caution regarding competences/learning outcomes: Will appraisal renewal and reform contribute to curriculum overload or help to judiciously redistribute priorities?

Diversity should not be treated as an isolated or fragmented phenomenon. One of the most insidious things that could befall diversity is that it would remain strewn in bits and pieces, lost as wishes/hopes in an aspirational curriculum. This approach has been described as the “inoculation approach.” It is tantamount to a situation where teachers and student teachers in initial, induction and in-career contexts receive a sharp jab of diversity at some juncture in their professional development which is intended to last them for all the seasons of their teaching lives. This raises another

caution with regard to competences/learning outcomes: How does one account for a developmental trajectory over the professional lifespan?

One of the ways of counteracting such practices is to conceptualise teaching and teacher education as an alternative way of "thinking and doing." This work will have to begin simultaneously on a number of fronts and with groups and agencies that heretofore have not experienced a strong sense of mutuality of purpose. Teacher educators should take the following steps:

- ◆ Operationally define their programmatic ideology and orientation to diversity in ITE/Primary—the themes and strands of the work for which they will attempt to prepare their students and the world in which their students will find themselves.
- ◆ Avoid the invidious trap of soft and safe themes and strands, for example, variants of the 4Fs curriculum (food, festivals, families, and friends), which invariably induce benign support but fall acutely short on programmatic ideologies and orientation.
- ◆ Simultaneously create programmes that realistically relate, on the one hand, to the backgrounds of all teacher education students in a programme, and the nature of the schools and communities into which they will be going, on the other.

Positive Dispositions

The second resonance in the relevant literature is rooted in the conviction that learning is a pre-requisite for teaching and that there can be no teaching without prior learning. There is significant agreement between teacher educators on the following grounds:

- ◆ At a minimum, teacher education students and college/university faculty need to understand and personally value the goals and philosophies of cultural pluralism as a basic tenet of diversity learning and teaching.
- ◆ Teacher education students and college/university faculty need to understand and reject the manifestations and consequences of prejudice, racism, sexism, classism, and all other sociocultural-debilitating forces (Gollinick, 1992).
- ◆ Teacher education students and college/university faculty need to develop a willingness to engage in dialogical encounters with each other about their own feelings, values, and attitudes to race, ethnicity, class, gender, and other difficult dimensions of diversity teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1991).
- ◆ Developing a meaningful and relevant disposition to competences/learning outcomes needs to be rooted in the concept of teacher education students, college/university faculty, and classroom teachers “struggling together” to make sense of the ideological, moral and applied issues in teacher education.

Critical Knowledge

The third resonance in the relevant literature is rooted in the conviction that “good teaching requires knowledge of both subject-matter and students (and the “contextual

fabric within which they meet” (Larkin and Sleeter, 1995, p. 7). Most teacher education theorists agree with the following general principles on critical knowledge.

- Knowledge of culture requires an anthropological “mind-set” that can potentially help students to “see” themselves and "others" recursively and avoid the pitfalls of what has been described as "othering" (Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford, 2001, p. 127).
- Teacher education programmes need to provide a range of experiences for helping students move beyond individual differences to a consideration of the power dynamics that exist between groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, and class, among other sociocultural variables (Deegan and Allexaht-Snider, 1999).
- The idea is not to retreat to essentialist or single-triggering explanations of diversity but to develop interrogative skills for separately and interactively “confronting the dilemmas of race, culture, and language diversity in teacher education” (Cochran-Smith, 1995).

Concluding Remarks

There needs to be many conversations like the one that I have sketched for diversity. The important point is that there needs to be a conversation. And this brings me to the next point that I would like to make in this paper—how, and in what ways we plan and prepare for competences/learning outcomes systems is a choice. To borrow Kelleghan’s (2004) comments on good practice in systemic reform and change—planning precedes implementation (and not vice versa). A central question underpinning the choice facing all of us is how, and in what ways we challenge and confront engrained approaches for doing things—what I have described as the comfortable and safe practices of “business-as-usual”—that typically lie deep in institutional structures. There is always the latent threat of the overweening influence of “the silent negative” in traditionally conservative and hidebound institutional contexts. In this regard, supporting and resourcing university/college teachers, classroom teachers, and student teachers working collaboratively on a mutually agreed agenda for competences/learning outcomes across, school and university settings is an imperative in an open, transparent and accountable system of ITE/Primary in the Republic of Ireland.

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The Appraisal of Post-Primary Student Teachers – Current Practice and Related Issues

Jim Gleeson and Janet Moody

Introduction

At the outset it is important to view this topic in the context of the very positive conclusions regarding teacher education in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) as reflected in Coolahan's (2003, p. 37) observation that 'the various stakeholders express confidence in the quality of teacher education and the opportunities for teacher development'. This paper describes the expectations of post-primary teacher education providers in relation to student teaching practice (TP), as reflected in the relevant report forms for lessons observed and associated documentation. It focuses on the stated criteria for arriving at final grades for TP placements and the relationship between final TP grades and overall degree/diploma awards. The main issues and implications arising are discussed within the broader context of teacher professionalism and teacher accountability. This preliminary analysis of an important and complex area is largely descriptive, though some analysis is also included.

The authors are not aware of any previous analysis of TP documentation across the main providers in the RoI. The current study is based on documentation kindly made available by the post-primary teacher education institutions and on some follow-up enquiries for clarification purposes. The Heads of relevant Education Departments were requested to furnish documentation in relation to TP visits and procedures for arriving at overall TP grades. The authors' letter clarified that

...our intention is to analyse the documentation with a view to identifying areas of agreement and differences of emphasis. The focus will be on the big picture. Individual colleges, departments will not be identified by name without the permission of the Department Head or her/his nominee.

Lesson appraisal forms were received from all participants in the study and summative assessment report forms were received from six institutions. Some providers made tutor guidelines and/or student handbooks available, which included overall grade descriptors and/or related checklists

Eleven post-primary initial teacher education (ITE) providers were asked to participate in the study. All responded positively, as outlined in the following table²:

Concurrent	Consecutive
Dublin City University	NUI Galway
Mater Dei Institute	NUI Maynooth
National College of Art & Design*	Trinity College Dublin
St Angela's College	University College Cork
St Catherine's College	University College Dublin
University of Limerick*	

* denotes both consecutive and concurrent programmes

² The authors wish to acknowledge the excellent co-operation of the department heads and/or their nominees in these institutions.

Two very different models of initial teacher are being considered together: the concurrent and the consecutive. The concurrent model allows for progression across four years with obvious development from year to year. Gleeson (2004) identifies other particular features of the concurrent model. Some providers have built in different requirements at different stages, as reflected in the lesson report forms provided in the context of the current study. For example, one institution has an “observation instrument” for first and second years and a “student teacher evaluation instrument” for third and fourth years; another institution identifies personal qualities, preparation, planning and implementation as the foci of the first practice and teaching and general competence as the foci of the second and final practice. Coolahan (2003, p. 40) notes that ‘block placements tend to be more characteristic of the concurrent model’.

While students on one-year consecutive programmes undertake school-based TP only, those on some concurrent programmes are also placed in non-formal education and training settings e.g. one provider has one placement in an industrial setting, another uses primary schools for the first placement, another uses non-formal settings such as Youthreach for the final placement. Five of the institutions included in the study, all long-established universities, provide a consecutive programme only, focusing on classroom-based subjects as well as the sciences. Four provide a concurrent programme only (of which three are Colleges of Education whose awards are validated by a university) and two provide both models. Most of the concurrent programmes are relatively recent in origin and prepare teachers of workshop and laboratory-based subjects where the practical nature of the discipline requires more intensive practice and resources e.g. Physical Education, Engineering, Construction Studies, Home Economics and Art, Craft and Design.

The paper has a number of limitations. The report depends on the validity of our interpretations of the documentation provided which cannot fully reflect the realities of student appraisal. The inevitable variations between the wide ranges of courses are difficult to capture in a document analysis. The report reflects the appraisal guides in use during the academic year 2004-05. In the case of one provider where tutors can choose from one of five options, the report is based on the guide most commonly used. Where criteria vary somewhat from year to year, as in some concurrent programmes, the documentation for the final year was used. It was assumed that the material received constituted the full complement of documentation for each of the providers, but this may not be the case. Some of the documentation may be dated, while other providers have recently revised their documents or are in the process of doing so.

The main findings of the analysis of the documents will now be presented under the following headings:

- Nomenclature
- Key expectations of providers in relation to student teaching
- Diversity of providers’ expectations
- Grading of Teaching Practice.

Nomenclature

Interesting similarities and differences emerge in relation to the language and nomenclature employed in the documentation. In the case of nine providers the classroom observer is referred to as the “supervisor” as against “tutor” in the case of the two remaining institutions. The titles of the report forms for classroom observations varied considerably, reflecting the ambiguity between the dual roles of the teacher educator as tutor and assessor. In some cases the focus during early observations of the student teacher is on support rather than assessment, for example:

The first two [of a minimum of five] visits are essentially pastoral in their orientation. The tutor will seek to develop an understanding of the student’s particular teaching situation and indicate the most advisable approaches and strategies to adopt.

Seven providers use assessment, evaluation, appraisal, marksheet in the title of the lesson appraisal form as against three that simply call it a report on the visit and two that call it a supervisory visit/conference. The full list of titles is as follows:

- TP Report
- TP Tutor Report
- Classroom Practice Visit Report
- TP Supervisory Visit
- TP Assessment Form
- B.Ed. Assessment Report/Lesson Guide
- Student Teacher Evaluation Instrument
- TP Lesson Evaluation Form
- TP marksheet/ Observation Record
- Student Teacher synthesis of key points of post-observation supervisory conference.

Key expectations of providers

All lesson report forms included criteria for the appraisal of the student teacher, ranging in number from three to thirteen. The extent to which the documentation provided explanations for these headings varied considerably across institutions.

Against this background, and faced with a diverse collection of documentation, the authors identified eleven broad appraisal criteria as a working framework for the analysis of the documentation. While a measure of interpretation was used in drawing up these broad criteria, the authors are satisfied that they represent the key expectations of the providers. These broad criteria are listed below along with the number of providers in each case:

1. Planning/preparation (11)
2. Classroom management (11)
3. Teaching strategies (11)
4. Pupil assessment/questioning (11)

5. Teacher-pupil interactions (10)
6. Content (10)
7. Personal qualities (10)
8. Self-evaluation (10)
9. Professional qualities (9)
10. Lesson development (7)
11. Pupil learning, including active learning (5)

There was virtual unanimity in the use of the first nine criteria, which appeared as main headings in some lesson report forms and as sub-headings in other cases.

The treatment of pupil learning is illuminating. While it might be argued that pupil learning is implicit in all lesson appraisal documentation, the term is used explicitly on two report forms only. One of these provides a detailed checklist for this category: “evidence of enthusiastic and purposeful learners; evidence of learners’ willingness to co-operate with peers and teachers; evidence of learners being active in their learning; evidence of learners showing commitment, responsibility and perseverance”. The second provider specifies “concepts, skills, attitudes” as important aspects of pupil learning. Three other providers include reference to the importance of active pupil participation in learning: “students kept actively involved with the work (in distinction to being kept occupied in repetitive tasks)”; “pupil engagement”; “when appropriate pupils should be encouraged to participate actively in the lesson”.

Even in the case of the ten criteria used by almost all providers interesting differences emerge. For example, the amount of detail provided varied considerably, as can be seen from the treatment of subject content. One provider included the term “content” with no details whatsoever, another institution dealt with subject knowledge under the following sub-headings: “appropriateness of content; relating to life-experiences (where possible); teacher’s conceptual understanding of content; understanding of learning difficulty posed by content; awareness of language and terms; accuracy of factual knowledge; enthusiasm for subject”.

Diversity of Expectations

Although the key expectations of all providers appear to be very similar, on closer examination significant differences of emphasis emerge. The following examples are considered for the purposes of this paper:

- Teaching strategies
- Teacher-pupil interactions
- Pupil assessment
- Classroom management
- Professional qualities
- Reflection/self-evaluation.

While most providers focused on the importance of using a variety of teaching strategies, different providers specified different strategies. These ranged from the broad criterion of “skill in using teaching methods”, to more specific aspects such as task setting for whole class, groups and individuals and/or clarity of presentation defined in terms of “explains, uses materials, illustrates”.

There was one specific reference to differentiation/mixed ability teaching: “effectiveness of teaching strategies, with particular reference to mixed ability teaching”. While four other providers made reference to the tailoring of teaching methods to meet pupil needs, they made no specific reference to differentiation.

Although ten of the eleven providers make explicit reference to teacher-pupil interactions, different aspects are emphasised. In seven instances this includes both skill in questioning, teacher-pupil rapport and/or development of a positive classroom climate e.g. ‘creation of positive classroom atmosphere’; ‘the personal relationship between pupils and teacher should be harmonious’; ‘uses positive reinforcement frequently in the classroom’. The focus is on questioning only in one further case while two providers don’t specify what is meant by teacher-pupil interactions. No references were found to multi-cultural classrooms.

Eight providers make explicit mention of pupil assessment and there is reference to questioning in the case of the other three institutions. Formative assessment was specified in two cases: “checks homework progress; gives feedback”; “feedback on pupil learning; consolidation of learning; evidence of achievement of stated objectives; use made of feedback for future planning; learners’ progress is monitored; appropriate modes of assessment; assessment integral part of learning”. Expectations regarding pupil assessment are expressed in different ways: “assessing using approaches appropriate to the range of abilities present in the class”; “appropriate balance between teacher input, questioning and general assessment of outcome”; “assessment procedures”; “assessing pupils’ progress”; “appropriate assessment of learning”. One institution provided a comprehensive list of assessment items: “diagnostic questions, checks homework progress, seatwork, gives feedback, seeks explanations, organises quizzes, gives homework, tests and records marks”.

All providers include classroom management in their lesson appraisal documentation, though different terminology is used, for example: “classroom management and safety”, “discipline and classroom management”, “management of learning environment”. While most include the term “discipline” as part of classroom management, some include references to positive classroom climate when dealing with classroom management e.g. “safe and caring environment”; “mutual respect”. Several providers include organisation of resources and classroom space under this heading, while five refer specifically to safety and three refer directly to the use of established classroom procedures. These include “efficient and controlled beginnings and endings; management of pupils entering and departing the classroom; tidy-up and rearranging of classroom lay-out as necessary; include establishment of simple routines for giving out books, handouts”.

The term “professional” is included in the documentation provided by nine institutions either as “professional behaviour”, “professional attitudes”, “professional qualities” or “commitment”. When these references are closely examined, considerable diversity emerges. Working relationships with teaching staff were included by a majority of providers e.g. “respectful and cooperative staff relationships”; “establish effective working relationships with all professional colleagues”; “relationship with colleagues and parents. Timekeeping/punctuality was also included by most providers e.g. “punctual for school and class and informs principal in good time if unable to attend”; “always on time for lessons; lessons

ended on time”. Dress and appearance were specified in three cases. Another provider focused on engagement with the overall teacher education programme including “evidence of incipient professional stance to teaching”.

Seven providers include reflection/self-evaluation as a main heading and it also features in most other programmes. Again there are differences in terms of emphasis on reflective practice. In one case “reflection on teaching” appears as a sub-set of professional qualities, in others reflection is one out of just five or six main headings. Insofar as the meaning of reflection is explained, the focus is on the student’s ability to evaluate his/her own lessons. In one case students are also asked for “insight into the complexity of the profession” and “bridging of theory and practice divide; engagement with professional knowledge”. Three providers include specific reference to the role of self-evaluation in informing future teaching; one highlights “honest and open dialogue with the supervisor/tutor” and evidence of “improvement based on reflection”. In several cases, tutors were specifically asked to identify strengths and weaknesses of the student teacher’s classroom practice e.g. one appraisal form is laid out in two parallel columns where comments may be included both in relation to areas where the student has displayed competence and areas where the student requires improvement. Willingness to respond to tutorial advice is included by two providers.

Grading of Teaching Practice

While all lesson report forms make some provision for tutor comment, this varies from one overall comment in some cases to comments on individual criteria in others to provision for general and specific comments. Tutors are required to enter an overall rating/mark for the lesson in six cases, for example “potential honours; pass; potential fail”. There is also provision for grading individual criteria on four forms e.g. “Is there an attempt to address pupils by name?” may be rated as “good; adequate; in need of attention”. In just one instance, a specific marking structure was included with percentages allocated for planning, teaching and learning, and professional development.

The student is invited to sign off on the tutor’s report in the case of six providers. In at least one institution the second supervisor is asked to indicate her/his agreement with the ‘ranking of the student’s progress’ by the first supervisor. One institution made provision for some element of electronic communication between tutors and students.

There was a wide spread in the number of final TP grades awarded:

Nine grades	(A1, A2 etc through to F)	1 provider
Six grades	(A-F)	2 providers
Five grades	(A-E)	5 providers
Three grades	(pass, honours, fail)	2 providers
Two grades	(pass, fail)	1 provider

There was a strong positive relationship between the reports on individual lessons and final grading in the case of seven providers while this relationship was weak in case of four providers.

The number of criteria used in arriving at final TP grades varied from two to ten but was generally in the range of four to seven. For the purposes of this paper, the authors have summarised these criteria as follows (number of providers in parentheses)

- Planning and preparation (9)
- Teaching strategies (8)
- Professional behaviour/attitude (7)
- Classroom management (6)
- T/P interaction (6)
- Subject content (6)
- Personal characteristics (5)
- Self-evaluation³ (5)
- Assessment of pupil learning (4)
- Teaching & learning (2)
- Discipline (2)
- ‘Use of resources’; ‘innovative teaching’ were each used by one provider.

The procedures for arriving at final grades were clearly delineated in some institutions. In one institution the overall grade is based on the accumulation of six possible ratings (excellent to unsatisfactory) on each of ten criteria. Another institution uses five Teaching Practice grade descriptors, each of which is defined in terms of six criteria. However the process of arriving at a final grade is less transparent in other cases. For example, one provider gave the following description of an A grade without reference to any specific criteria. “An outstanding or excellent teacher. Such people are scarce and it is usually easy to classify them. Naturally, one does not expect a trainee teacher to have reached the level of expertise that one can find in an outstanding experienced teacher but one can usually identify the potential”. On the other hand another institution provided the following detailed description of an A grade:

Understanding and presentation of lesson to an exceptionally high standard. Ideas developed and delivered to class in a highly organised way leading to highly motivated and exciting class. Visual aids and support studies used intelligently and with discrimination leading to thorough understanding of lesson concepts. Demonstration of skills and processes exceptional. Lesson notebooks and schemes of work show a totally professional approach to planning and evaluation of pupils’ work and teacher performance. Excellent presentation skills in evidence. Excellent classroom management.

One provider awards final TP grades on pass/fail basis. In seven of the remaining ten institutions, including all the National University of Ireland providers, an honours grade in TP is a requirement for a first or second class Honours award.

Conclusion and Issues Arising

As might be expected, there is broad general agreement in the approaches of the post-primary providers to the appraisal of student teachers. In contrast with the

³ In the case of at least one other provider academic credit is awarded separately for the student portfolio.

competences approach in other jurisdictions it was refreshing to find that all institutions seem to adopt a holistic rather than technical/numerical approach to grading. There is some evidence of external influences such as the Stanford model of Lesson Appraisal Guide and the growing popularity of portfolios. While the historical and institutional contexts and the associated beliefs and values have no doubt been very influential, a more in-depth study would be required to explain their significance. The particular traditions and practices within individual institutions come through in some cases e.g. the opportunities provided for out-of-school placements in the context of concurrent as against consecutive programmes; references to aspects peculiar to practical subjects such as “skill in demonstrating”; “safety”; “use of support studies” (Art). However the authors were surprised at the scarcity of such differences given the pervasiveness of the academic/ vocational dichotomy in Irish education generally and the related differences in ITE provision.

The study revealed considerable diversity in several areas, for example, in the language and emphases of the documentation (e.g. the prevalence of supervisor over tutor), the categorisation of the desired teaching qualities and the grading of student teachers’ classroom practice. These differences reflect the historical contexts in which the documentation was developed e.g. the paucity of explicit references to the learning process, active learning, mixed-ability teaching and ICT for teaching and learning reflects the neglect of constructivist pedagogy at post-primary level until recently. They also reflect the absence of inter-institutional debate and discussion in relation to teacher education issues as can be seen from the relatively small number of papers dealing with Teaching Practice at the annual conferences of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI).

Some of these differences reflect the degrees of institutional autonomy historically afforded post-primary initial teacher education, particularly Higher Diploma in Education providers. While the DES has carefully monitored primary teacher education since the foundation of the state, post-primary provision, mainly located in the relatively independent university sector, has been subject only to the 1926 regulations of the Registration Council for Secondary Teachers.

However, But post-primary teacher education is about to be opened up to external scrutiny. One of the briefs of the Teaching Council, which has replaced the Registration Council, is to “review and accredit programmes of teacher education and training for the purpose of registration” (Government of Ireland, 2001, Section 7, m). The Teaching Council Act also requires the establishment, publication, review and maintenance of codes of professional conduct for teachers which shall include standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and “*competence*” (our italics). Under the terms of the Bologna Declaration, which emphasises transparency and compatibility and aims to promote student and teacher mobility and employability, there will be increasing pressure to put common criteria in place for all aspects of ITE including Teaching Practice.

The newly established Teacher Education Section (TES) of the DES is currently expressing considerable interest in post-primary ITE in the context of the DES (1995, p. 121) White Paper policy that “the teaching career [is] a continuum involving initial teacher education, induction processes and in-career development opportunities periodically throughout a teacher’s career”. The effective implementation of this policy will demand collaboration between providers of three I’s: initial teacher

education, teacher induction and in-career professional development. Without such collaboration it is very difficult to see how the broad teacher education community can arrive at consensus around the expected outcomes of initial teacher education. This is essential in order to achieve a coherent continuum between the three I's. If we are to enable newly qualified teachers to progress seamlessly to induction it is important that they do so based on a broadly generic set of principles and expectations. As the OECD (2005, p.132) concluded:

High quality initial teacher education ... is not sufficient on its own to meet teacher and school needs. The stages of initial teacher education, induction and professional development need to be much better interconnected... to create a more coherent learning and development system for teachers.... A statement of teacher competences and performance standards at different stages of their career will provide a framework for the teacher development continuum.

In the context of this continuum, OECD (2005, p.121) challenged teacher education institutions to become involved in the "early stages of a teacher's career" and identified the Career Entry Profile from England, Scotland and Wales as a "mechanism used successfully [and] provided for each newly qualified teacher by their initial training institution [and] developed jointly by the institution and the graduating teacher". The development of life-long career portfolios will help overcome the current situation whereby (OECD, *ibid*, p.136),

...professional development can appear fragmented from the individual teacher's perspective. The development of clear teacher profiles and standards of performance at different stages of the teaching career will help to provide a purpose and a framework for professional development.

Such portfolios will naturally involve an increased emphasis on the teacher as reflective practitioner. OECD (*ibid*. p.134) highlighted the importance of encouraging "skills of reflective practice and research" at all stages of teacher development. Significantly, the current study found that reflective practice was identified as an important dimension of ITE in most of the institutions.

Gleeson and Kiely (2006) sought the views of post-primary teachers in the mid-west on teaching as a profession from a wide range of perspectives including reflective practice. While many respondents saw reflection as an important dimension of teacher professionalism, their interpretations varied. For some, it involved reflection on pupils' state examinations results; others saw it in terms of reflection on the day's classes, possibly while driving home from work or at home in the evenings; for others, it consisted of more systematic reflection on a lesson, involving observation, recording progress and learning from mistakes directly after a class either individually or through discussion with colleagues. While respondents felt that reflection did occur at the level of the school, especially during staff days and at the end-of-year staff meeting, the issues being "reflected on" were often very practical in nature, e.g. exam results, "troublesome students", discipline policies, uniform policies and organisational matters such as free days and open days rather than issues such as teaching styles and streaming.

The OECD (2005, p. 134) found that "many of the participating countries express concern about the limited co-operation between teacher education institutions and

schools”. If cultural dissonance between schools and ITE providers is to be addressed, this requires the establishment of strong partnerships as recommended by OECD (ibid) “in order to provide trainee teachers with a more integrated experience”. Such partnerships would facilitate the collaborative development of agreed criteria for student teacher appraisal and greater involvement of school-based mentors and tutors in the appraisal of Teaching Practice. It would also provide a platform for addressing the concerns expressed by the OECD (ibid) that ‘teacher trainees are faced with different, sometimes incompatible demands in their education and school experiences [with] too little sharing of expertise between teacher educators and practising teachers’.

As Elliott (1991), Hargreaves (1994) and others have shown, salient features of school culture such as teacher isolation, privacy, distribution of authority, lack of professional collaboration and collegiality inhibit teacher research and inquiry. The dominance in Ireland of the “transmission model” of teaching, as identified by OECD (1991), is a very powerful force for the reproduction of practices rather than for reflection upon their justification. For example, students on Teaching Practice are exposed to what the director of the Schools for Active Learning project identified as a “culture of containment” characterised by a “conservatism which has canonised the known” (Callan, 1997, p. 27). Such a culture curtails their scope for fresh approaches, as the cultural messages of school life run counter to those proposed in teacher education programmes. Most student teachers, themselves recent products of the school system, find it difficult to problematise school culture and practice. The following excerpt illustrates how one particularly reflective final year student saw the problem (Leonard and Gleeson, 1999):

The problem no longer lies in the fact that it is difficult to motivate the class, nor is it the fault of the co-operating teacher, but simply that I am unable to implement my own educational values and beliefs. I feel that this has hindered the progress of my class and my own individual progress.... it is not **my** teaching (that you are seeing) but rather a robotic form of teaching where I am acting as a substitute teacher which I do not need to be a professional to perform.

Returning to the themes of coherence and integration, ITE providers must work against the background of the prevailing approach to in-career development. Sugrue *et al* (2001, p.115) found that “apart from accredited elective courses and programmes, current professional learning provision predominantly [involves]... teachers sharing and re-casting craft knowledge”. Such knowledge is the hallmark of “practical professionalism” or “lay theories” (Sugrue, 1996). Craft knowledge enables the persistence of unexamined practical knowledge of what teaching is, often based on one’s own school experiences. It is one of the most serious barriers to improvement in teaching, resulting in the:

...over-zealous promotion of teachers’ everyday, practical craft knowledge (albeit for the best intended reasons) [and] may actually redirect teachers’ work away from broader moral and social projects and commitments. In this sort of scenario, right-of-centre governments can restructure teachers’ work and teacher education in ways that narrow such work to pedagogical skills and technical competences, remove from teachers any moral responsibility over or professional judgement concerning curricular matters and cut teachers off

from university knowledge with the access it can give to independent inquiry, intellectual critique and understanding of other teachers in other contexts [turning] practical knowledge into parochial knowledge (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996, p. 13).

Given the arrival of performance indicators in the DES 2003-2005 Strategy Statement and the likelihood of increasing surveillance of initial teacher education programmes, it is critically important for all ITE providers to be proactive in collaborating on the development of a coherent set of criteria for student teacher appraisal. Such criteria should reflect a professional/responsive rather than a bureaucratic/contractual (Glatter, 2003; Gleeson and Ó Donnabháin, 2006) model of accountability. Based on shared beliefs and values, this model is predicated on Goodson's concept of principled professionalism where "professionalisation and professionalism will unite around moral definitions of teaching and schooling" (2003, p. 132). This multifaceted model of teacher professionalism includes discretionary judgment, collaboration with colleagues and the wider community, commitment to active care, continuous professional development and high levels of task complexity. The DES has provided a ready-made starting point with the publication of *Looking at School: A Guide to self-evaluation in second-level schools* (DES, 2003). Significantly, the most recent partnership agreement *Towards 2016* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2006, p. 125) identifies the role of this guide in establishing "the effectiveness of the contribution made by each teacher". The criteria in relation to planning, preparation, teaching, learning, assessment and achievement provide a good basis from which teacher education providers can work towards shared criteria for student teachers' classroom practice, while respecting the importance of the lifelong teacher education continuum.

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The Evaluation of Teachers and Teaching in Primary and Post-primary Schools by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science

Emer Egan

Introduction

This paper outlines the functions of the Inspectorate in relation to the inspection and evaluation of schools and centres for education, provides an overview of the circumstances in which the evaluation of teachers and teaching takes place and presents frameworks and criteria for evaluation which have been designed for use in a number of evaluation contexts. The paper concludes with comments on the teacher competences debate as relevant to Ireland.

The Functions of the Inspectorate

The Education Act 1998, Section 7 (2) (b) outlines the responsibility of the Minister “to monitor and assess the quality ... and effectiveness of the education system provided in the State by recognised schools and centres for education”. Section 9 of the Act describes the functions of a recognised school and sets down a requirement for each school to “establish and maintain systems whereby the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations can be assessed”.

Within this general remit to support and advise recognised schools, centres for education and teachers on matters relating to the provision of education, the functions of the Inspectorate with regard to inspection and evaluation are defined in Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 1998, as follows:

An Inspector shall visit recognised schools and centres for education and

- Evaluate the organisation and operation of those schools and centres and the quality and effectiveness of the education provided...
- Evaluate the education standards in such schools or centres...
- Report to the Minister, or to the board, patron, parents of students and teachers, as appropriate ... on these matters.

It is generally acknowledged that the ultimate beneficiary of the evaluation process is the student. All evaluations carried out by the Inspectorate, therefore, aim to:

- Identify, acknowledge and affirm good practice in schools
- Promote continuing improvement in the quality of education
- Promote self-evaluation and development by schools and staffs
- Provide an assurance of quality in the education system as a whole, which is based on the collection of objective, dependable, high quality data.

In carrying out its functions, the Inspectorate operates according to its published professional code of practice. The *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting for the Inspectorate* (2002) was developed in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 (8) of the Education Act 1998, and sets out the principles and professional standards to which the Inspectorate is committed. Features of this code include a commitment to consistency, fairness, courtesy and respect; to basing judgements on first-hand evidence; and to applying evaluation criteria objectively and

reliably. A review procedure, developed in accordance with Section 13 (9) of the Education Act 1998, *Procedures for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers* (2002), provides for a teacher or board of management of a school to request the Chief Inspector to review any evaluation carried out by an inspector which affects the teacher or the school.

The Development of Inspection and Evaluation Frameworks

The Evaluation, Support and Research Unit (ESRU), managed by an Assistant Chief Inspector, has responsibility for the development of such frameworks. The functions of this Unit include:

- To co-ordinate the development of models of evaluation
- To draw up evaluation criteria for the range of evaluations
- To design templates to gather evidence
- To establish procedures for inspection and evaluation
- To consult with the education partners
- To organise professional development activities for the Inspectorate prior to evaluation
- To collect and process data on evaluations
- To manage the processing of reports
- To manage the Inspectorate's publications schedule.

In developing evaluation criteria for the range of inspection and evaluation activities, the Inspectorate takes cognisance of best practice at national, European and international levels, and engages on an ongoing basis with Inspectorates in other jurisdictions and with international projects. The Irish Inspectorate is an active contributor to the work of the Standing International Conference of Central and General Inspectorates of Europe (SICI) and played a prominent role in the Effective School Self-Evaluation project (ESSE) organised under its auspices. As a result, the Inspectorate is currently developing the model of the *audit trail* which emerged from ESSE to evaluate the impact of *input* and *process* on *educational outcomes*. Through the European Network of Policy Makers for the Evaluation of Education Systems, the Inspectorate is currently leading two major projects:

- (1) The Co-operative School Evaluation Project (CSEP) which, in conjunction with representatives from Finland and Norway, is seeking to develop indicators for the evaluation of non-curricular policies in the context of school development planning,
- (2) The Evaluation of Foreign Languages at Upper Secondary Level (EFLUSL) project, which aims to develop a common set of quality indicators for use in the evaluation of the teaching and learning of foreign languages at upper secondary level and involves evaluators in Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

The Range Of Evaluation Activities

The DES has developed frameworks for the inspection and evaluation of qualified teachers, probationary teachers (primary) and primary-level student teachers. While the Inspectorate is mainly concerned with the evaluation of teaching rather than teachers, Inspectors evaluate the work of individual teachers in the following contexts:

- At primary level, this includes the evaluation of teachers on probation; teachers being reported on through the Rule 161 (6) (a) process of the Rules for National Schools (where the work of a teacher has deteriorated to such an extent that the estimate “satisfactory” is no longer merited), and teachers whose work is evaluated as a result of a complaint.
- Teachers in the VEC sector in the context of Circular 43/85.

All other evaluations carried out by the Inspectorate involve evaluations of teaching and learning. At primary level these include the Tuairisc Scoile (School Report), Whole School Evaluation and thematic evaluations of particular aspects of the curriculum. In addition to Subject Inspections of individual teachers, Whole School Evaluation and thematic or programme evaluations are conducted at post-primary level.

In the case of teacher education courses that are recognised for the purpose of employment in primary schools, an additional activity carried out by the Inspectorate is an annual evaluation of 10% of final year students during their last period of teaching practice.

The processes used by the Inspectorate for the evaluation of individual teachers at various stages of their careers are outlined below.

Probationary Teachers: Primary

The probationary process involves both service and professional requirements. While the management of the probationary process comes within the remit of the Primary Administration Section of the Department of Education and Science, the Inspectorate carries responsibility for the professional aspects of the process.

There are two stages in the probationary process: an interim report (Beag Thuairisc) and a General Inspection report (Mór Thuairisc). The majority of teachers on probation are in their first year of teaching. Inspectors advise teachers on probation, evaluate their work and report on their progress. In 2004, 1,486 General Inspection reports issued. In the school year 2004/5, there were 1,614 teachers on probation. The elements of the teacher’s work which are evaluated for the Interim Report include:

- a) Planning, preparation and recording of progress
- b) Classroom management and organisation
- c) Quality of teaching across the curriculum
- d) Quality of pupils’ learning in curriculum areas.

As an example, the indicators for the section **Classroom Management and Organisation** include:

- The promotion of good discipline and behaviour
- Relationship with pupils
- Overall attractiveness of the learning environment
- Accessibility to and use of resources; management of Special Needs Assistants (SNA) support.

Teachers are rated on a quality continuum which includes four descriptors: optimal level of practice, competent practice, scope for development and experiencing significant difficulty. The report highlights areas of strength, identifies areas for development and records advice given to the teacher. The report is sent to the Primary Administration Section where it is filed.

Elements of work which are evaluated for the General Inspection (Mór Thuairisc) include

- Planning, preparation and recording of progress
- Classroom management and organisation
- Overall teaching and learning
- Curriculum implementation in each of the subjects within the six curriculum areas of the Primary School Curriculum.

The General Inspection Report provides detailed evaluative commentary on the teacher's work, identifies strengths and aspects for further development, and provides a rating of the teacher's work: satisfactory or not satisfactory. The report issues to the teacher and the school from the Primary Administration Section. The satisfactory completion of the probationary process, both service and professional, marks the stage at which the teacher is fully recognised within the system. Satisfactory completion of probation also confers mobility rights within the context of the EU Directive EC 89/48/EEC.

Beginning to Teach (2005)

In addition to its core evaluation activities, the Inspectorate regularly compiles composite reports on specific curriculum areas or themes in order to inform policy formulation at Department level or to highlight good practice, trends or areas of concern, which are then communicated to the system. An example of one such activity is the *Beginning to Teach* report, published by the Inspectorate in 2005.

During the school year 2003-2004, a survey was conducted among a sample of newly qualified teachers who were beginning their careers in primary schools. The purpose of the report was:

- To report on the general standards of work of a sample of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)
- To identify strengths and challenges in the NQTs' work practice
- To contribute to continuous improvement in the inspection of teachers on probation
- To assist teachers on probation by identifying areas where professional development support was required
- To provide feedback to Colleges, leaders of pilot projects on induction, principals and others who support teachers on induction.

The survey also sought to obtain the newly qualified teachers' views on their first year's teaching and to identify the extent to which various supports enabled them to develop as professionals. Additionally, the survey sought to gather evidence from inspectors' reports on the new teachers' work and to identify strengths and areas for development in their practices.

A questionnaire was sent to the selected sample of 354 new teachers and 192 (54%) were returned. Among other aspects, the questionnaire asked the teachers to rate the supports they received from their principal teacher, fellow teachers at school, their local Education Centre and Department of Education and Science inspectors. Their views on the way their initial teacher education course had prepared them to deal with issues such as planning and preparation, classroom management and discipline, implementation of the curriculum and assessment of achievement were also sought. Further details of the perspectives of the new teachers about the efficacy of their teacher education course in preparing them to teach each curriculum area were also gathered.

The report of this survey *Beginning to Teach: Newly Qualified Teachers in Irish Primary Schools* was published in 2005. It found that almost all the newly qualified teachers identified the supports provided by their principal and fellow teachers as beneficial and encouraging. They also rated highly the advice and guidance provided during their probationary period by their school's inspector. There was a less positive response to the availability of support from Education Centres or induction programmes (which were not available on a nationwide basis). Additionally, a majority of new teachers expressed a high level of satisfaction with the way their initial teacher education course had prepared them to teach English, social environmental and scientific education and physical education. They felt less well prepared to teach the arts and mathematics. Some of the new teachers also felt ill prepared to cope with issues such as teaching a multi-grade class, motivating pupils or completing roll books and monthly progress records. The report noted that the perceptions of the new teachers about the efficacy of their preparedness for teaching certain curriculum areas did not always accord with the evaluative judgements of the inspectors.

The report put forward recommendations about the way boards of management, principal teachers, the Inspectorate and Education Centres should support beginning teachers. It also identified a number of areas that should be addressed by teacher educators to better prepare new teachers for work in primary schools. In particular, an important priority identified was to ensure that new teachers have a comprehensive understanding of the teaching of literacy and numeracy and that they are thoroughly familiar with appropriate teaching methods in both areas. Important recommendations about the teaching of mathematics and Irish were also made. In addition, the report noted the need for further development in the way beginning teachers deploy a variety of teaching methods, set out clear teaching objectives and assess and monitor pupils' learning.

The report concluded that highly qualified and competent teachers are the most important resource in primary education and that beginning teachers bring energy, enthusiasm and vitality to the teaching profession. The report also noted the role that the Teaching Council will most likely have in the future in relation to the probation and induction of new teachers.

Evaluation Of Primary Student Teachers On Teaching Practice

In accordance with its quality assurance remit, the Inspectorate has worked closely with the colleges of education over many years to monitor the work of student teachers in classrooms. Each year inspectors evaluate the work of a 10% sample of

final-year student teachers when they are on their final period of teaching practice. Inspectors visit students in classrooms and evaluate their work in approximately two lessons. The aim is to provide assurance regarding the quality of teaching at a critical phase in the professional formation of teachers. Additionally, the evaluations seek to inform future policy decisions in respect of initial teacher education and to promote collaboration and communication between the Department of Education and Science and the colleges.

All inspectors who evaluate students on teaching practice complete an evaluation schedule. In 2003/4, a seven-point rating scale modelled on a rating scale used by one of the colleges was employed. More recently, the scale has been redrawn to bring it into line with the schedule that is used by inspectors when evaluating the work of probationary teachers. The headings under which student teachers are evaluated are:

- Quality of Preparation and Planning
- Quality of Teaching
- Quality of Learning
- Quality of Assessment

Examples of the indicators used are as follows:

In the area **Quality of planning and preparation:**

- Long-term plans outline aims and content in accordance with the curriculum
- Short-term plans include instructional objectives and specific learning experiences
- Planning informs the teaching observed.

More specifically, in relation to **planning**, that planning:

- Reflects the relevant curricular principles
- Provides for individual differences
- Provides for continuity and progression
- Includes planning for the provision of resources
- Provides for review and evaluation.

Under the aspect **Classroom Management and Organisation** in the area **Quality of Teaching**, indicators for evaluation include the following:

The student teacher

- Promotes a classroom atmosphere that facilitates interaction, response and purposeful learning
- Creates a stimulating learning environment
- Communicates effectively
- Conducts lessons which involve appropriate instructional pace
- Displays due familiarity and understanding of the concepts and skills being taught
- Promotes motivation, interest and good behaviour
- Promotes independent learning and collaborative work among pupils
- Incorporates pupils' contributions and builds on their experiences
- Sets high expectations in order to challenge pupils
- Is resourceful in dealing with issues that arise

In addition to the criteria outlined for each area, an open comment box is provided for the inspectors' remarks. Feedback on the work of their students is given to each college and a composite report on the evaluations in all of the colleges is planned.

Subject Inspection (Post-Primary)

A Guide to Subject Inspection at Second Level was published in 2004. In line with Section 13 (8) of the Education Act 1998, the education partners were consulted prior to publication and dissemination to schools. The Guide sets out the procedures for Subject Inspection in second-level schools and outlines the principles underpinning the Inspectorate's dealings with the school; how it will conduct its professional relationship with teachers; and how it will carry out its evaluative functions. The Guide provides information on the stages in the evaluation: advance planning and preparation; procedures for the inspection visit; classroom practice; recording evidence during a Subject Inspection and the Subject Inspection Report. Following the evaluation visit, a report is issued to the management of the school. Reports aim to identify and affirm good practice and to make recommendations for improvement where necessary. The report is presented under the following headings:

- Subject provision and whole school support
- Planning and preparation
- Teaching and learning
- Assessment and achievement

Using the framework presented in *Looking at our School*, the Guide outlines possible areas of enquiry. An example, under the **aspect** Teaching and Learning, the Learning **component** includes:

- Purposefulness
- Student engagement with classroom activities
- Student understanding of concepts and facts
- Student knowledge and competence
- Degree of student initiative/creativity in applying knowledge
- Collaborative/independent learning
- Effectiveness of student communication in subject.

The possible sources of evidence are also identified:

- Observation of practice: methodology, interaction, teacher skills, student skills, classroom management, discussion, questioning
- Discussion with class teacher
- Examination of students' work; schoolwork, homework, journals
- Interaction with students: individually and as a group to clarify students' knowledge, understanding and engagement.

Similar frameworks are also provided for the other report sections of subject provision and whole school support, planning and preparation, and assessment and achievement.

At the end of the subject inspection visit, the inspector meets with the subject teachers both individually and as a group in order to provide feedback on the lessons observed and to give general feedback regarding the overall learning and teaching in the subject. The aim of these meetings is to allow feedback and advice to be given in a

supportive and constructive manner, and to help to promote a collaborative approach to planning and improvement at subject level within a school.

Evaluation of Teachers in the Vocational Sector in the Context of Circular 43/85

This Department of Education and Science circular deals with the inspection of schools, colleges and courses conducted under vocational education committees (VECs). Appendix B of the circular deals with Departmental procedures relating to adverse reports on an individual teacher employed by vocational education committees. At present, these procedures constitute the only provision for dealing with underperforming teachers in the post-primary sector.

Thematic or programme evaluation

A small number of thematic evaluations are undertaken by the Inspectorate each year. The reports prepared on these projects include detailed findings and recommendations, and help to indicate significant trends in specific areas. Recent evaluations have taken place on the implementation of the primary school curriculum and on the Junior Certificate School Programme in thirty schools at post-primary level.

Focus On Schools

Two approaches are outlined here: whole school evaluation conducted by the Inspectorate and school self-evaluation.

Whole School Evaluation

Whole School Evaluation (WSE) is a process of external evaluation on the work of a school as a whole carried out by the Inspectorate in accordance with procedures which were developed in consultation with the education partners during and after a pilot phase. The WSE report seeks to affirm positive aspects of the school's work and to propose areas for development. The evaluation framework used by the Inspectorate derives from *Looking at our School* (2003), as described below, and covers the following areas:

- Quality of school management
- Quality of school planning
- Quality of curriculum provision
- Quality of learning and teaching in subjects
- Quality of support for students.

In the case of second-level schools, a range of subjects is chosen for evaluation within each WSE. Post-primary inspectors conduct the evaluations in curricular areas in which they have specialist knowledge and experience. This aspect of WSE is carried out in accordance with the procedures outlined in *A Guide to Subject Inspection at Second Level* (2004).

The WSE process involves three stages:

- The pre-evaluation phase during which information is collected and meetings are organised, as appropriate, with trustees, the board of management, the CEO of the VEC, staff, parents and students.

- The in-school evaluation phase involves a review of school-related documentation, meetings with in-school teams, observation of teaching and learning, interaction with students, review of students' work and feedback to individual teachers and the principal.
- The post-evaluation phase involves preparation of the draft report, meetings with the management authorities, meeting with the staff, and issue of the report.

The evaluation takes into consideration the school's own review and development work and information is gathered from a number of sources within the school in order to ensure that judgements made by the evaluation team are reliable and consistent.

School Self-Evaluation

To assist schools in engaging with this responsibility, the Department of Education and Science launched the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) in 1999 to encourage schools to use the processes of internal review and planning as tools for school improvement. The DES developed criteria for school self-evaluation following the Whole School Evaluation Pilot Project (1996-1999) conducted in partnership with the stakeholders in education. These evaluation criteria were further refined and published by the Inspectorate in two separate documents: *Looking at our School: An aid to self-evaluation in primary schools* and *Looking at our School: An aid to self-evaluation in second-level schools*. The framework, as set out in the *Looking at our School* publications, is now used widely throughout the education system for a number of purposes: for internal self-evaluation by schools, as the basis on which the SDPI and other support services develop support activities for schools and for external evaluation by the Inspectorate through its various evaluation activities. *Looking at our School* is structured around a set of five areas:

- School management
- School planning
- Curriculum provision
- Learning and teaching in curriculum areas
- Support for pupils

Each of the 5 **areas** is divided into **aspects**, which represent the activities that collectively constitute the area of the school's operation that is to be evaluated; at primary level, the 14 aspects are further broken down into 44 **components**. Under each component, a number of **themes** have been identified and descriptors of quality have been presented. In all, there are **215** themes. At post-primary level, the 50 components listed are subsequently broken down into 246 themes which may be used by a school as a guide in judging or measuring its own performance.

For example, taking one of the **areas**, **Quality of teaching and learning in curriculum areas**, the three **aspects** which collectively constitute the school's operation include:

- Aspect A: Planning and preparation
- Aspect B: Teaching and learning
- Aspect C: Assessment and achievement

The **components** under Aspect B Teaching and learning include:

- Methodology
- Classroom management
- Classroom atmosphere
- Learning

The **themes** identified under the component **Learning** include:

- How pupils work, and their levels of interest and commitment to the task in hand
- How actively and independently pupils engage in learning, and how the quality of their understanding is reflected in their questioning and in their responses to questions
- Pupils' readiness to participate, and their willingness to co-operate with their peers and with teachers in their learning
- The extent to which the learning in the curriculum area is at the level and pace appropriate to the class group
- The level of independence, responsibility and perseverance shown by pupils in the completion of their work.

Taking into consideration its own context factors, each school is invited to use the framework to benchmark the quality of its work. Schools are encouraged to gather information in relation to the themes, to analyse the evidence and to make statements about the school's performance. The quality continuum presented in *Looking at our School* consists of four levels:

- Significant strengths (uniformly strong)
- Strengths outweigh weaknesses (more strengths than weaknesses)
- Weaknesses outweigh strengths (more weaknesses than strengths)
- Significant/major weaknesses (uniformly weak).

The process of mapping the performance of a school on the quality continuum is designed to assist schools themselves in identifying strengths and areas for development. They are encouraged to tackle the process of self-review in small stages. The aim for each school is to position its own work at a point along the continuum and then to agree a whole-school plan to effect improvement.

The Competences Approach: Looking To The Future

The material presented in this paper provides examples of the criteria or indicators which Inspectors use when evaluating individual teachers or teaching in schools. As such, they highlight those aspects of a teacher's work, which in the opinion of the Inspectorate, are important for quality teaching and learning. In the context of a debate on teacher competences, not yet initiated to any great extent in Ireland, the various examples will be of value in coming to a position on the knowledge, skills and competences which teachers require to be effective practitioners. A number of other developments will also influence the process.

Under the terms of its remit to develop standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence, the Teaching Council is required to prepare a code of professional conduct⁴. These codes will represent an important milestone for the teaching

⁴ These codes were officially launched in March 2007.

profession in Ireland as it moves toward self-regulation and will assume particular relevance in the context of fitness to teach enquiries which the Council will, in time, conduct.

Trends in teaching that will be of assistance in defining the knowledge, skills and competences which will be required of teachers in Ireland in the future development can be gleaned from international and European studies. For example, the report *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (OECD, 2005) addresses the matter of teacher competences and provides guidance, arising from the policy analysis of trends across the 27 participating countries. This report stresses the need for a clear and concise statement of what teachers are expected to know and to be able to do while acknowledging the complexity of teachers' roles. It recognises that the key attributes of effective teachers are best described in the form of a profile rather than a checklist and acknowledges that such a profile should be directly related to objectives for student learning seen in terms of output rather than input criteria. It also identifies the importance of developing an overarching framework to guide all stages on the teacher education continuum.

Along similar lines the *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications*, developed at EU level, highlights the need to:

- Establish teaching as an all-graduate profession;
- Provide opportunities for progression throughout the teaching career;
- Develop subject and pedagogical knowledge throughout the career;
- Take a multidisciplinary approach to teacher education;
- Ensure that teachers have opportunities to continuously develop and reflect;
- Afford teachers opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and for mobility.
- This document further stresses the need for partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools so that research informs the development of best practice and highlights the importance of developing teacher education policy.

In approaching the competences debate, a number of core issues can be identified which, if addressed, will assist in creating a profile of the type of teacher who will ensure the realisation of the objectives for student learning embraced by the education system as a whole – policy makers, teacher educators, the teaching profession and the stakeholders. In the short term, there is a need to:

- Make more explicit the code of values and professional practice which already underpin teachers' work and the tradition of teaching in Ireland
- Recognise the complexity of teachers' roles in today's schools
- Develop a policy framework which will guide all stages on the teacher education continuum
- Recognise needs at different career stages
- Ensure development is informed by best practice in the promotion of teacher knowledge and learning
- Ensure involvement of stakeholders in development.

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Experience Of Competence-Based Initial Teacher Education In Northern Ireland Within A Partnership Approach

Dolores Loughrey

The Educational Challenge

In recent years initial teacher education has had to change and develop in response to the policy changes involved in the development of the school curriculum, school management and organization, and as a result of policy development focused on teacher education itself. In 1992, the Department of Education for Northern Ireland required developments in:

Partnership approaches to teacher education.

The development of a competence-based approach to teacher education.

An integrated approach to initial, induction and in-service teacher education.

Setting the scene

The pace of change within the teacher education scene in Northern Ireland was set in motion in 1990 when the Department of Education in Northern Ireland (DENI) established a review of initial teacher training.

In 1991 they produced their publication - Teachers for the 21st Century: a review of initial teacher training. (DENI 1991) DENI set about attempting to implement a series of reforms in their goal to achieve an integrated approach to professional development through initial teacher education, induction and early professional development. The first stage of the review began with the establishment of three working groups.

Group 1 was asked to design a competence framework that would underpin the new model of professional development in Northern Ireland. Group 2 were set the task of developing appropriate structures for initial teacher education courses in Northern Ireland and to establish the nature of the respective roles to be played by schools and the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Group 3 were given the remit to look at the possibility of a continuous professional development programme which would include Initial Teacher Education, Induction and Early In-service Education - what became known as 'the three i's' model.

The three groups reported in 1993 (Review of Initial Teacher Training in Northern Ireland. Reports of Three Working Groups. DENI) and consequently a fourth group, the 'Development Group' was formed to consider the implications of the recommendations of the 3 working groups. Of major significance was the endorsement by the Development Group of the proposals on competences and their application across "the three i's" model of teacher education. Also of importance, was the determining of the stage at which each competence should be introduced and the institutional partner best placed to promote that competence within the three i's' model.

The Partnership Model Of Teacher Education

The term “partnership” has become an overused concept within teacher education. A notion of what constitutes partnership is taken for granted and is not made explicit. Partnership is often used as an “umbrella” word giving no indication of the responsibilities or balance of influence between the relevant stakeholders. It is not surprising then that the nature of partnerships between HEIs and other stakeholders has become a dominant theme in current research, discussions and developments in initial teacher education. Smith et al (2006) documents models of partnership that currently feature within initial teacher education within the United Kingdom - the collaborative model, HEI based model, the complementary model, and the HEI-led model.

The Model Of Partnership Proposed For Northern Ireland

In relation to Initial Teacher Education in Northern Ireland the review of teacher education promoted a complementary if not collaborative model of partnership between schools and higher education institutions. The proposals included the introduction of “training school status” for schools, thus handing over significant responsibility for the development of student teacher competences to schools during Initial Teacher Education. However, the majority of schools rejected their proposed new status being concerned that additional expectations would be placed on them and they would be tied into contractual agreements with the HEIs. In addition to being tied to contractual agreements Mc Mahon (2000) also reported that the schools felt, “the major concerns were the perceived vagueness of the expectations to be placed upon schools, the inadequacy of the transferred resource and the nature of the legal obligations flowing from their transfer. The schools were worried about the sheer lack of time to do anything more than schools were doing already”.

Schools clearly expressed their reluctance to get involved in any kind of formalized partnerships with the HEIs or agree to more formal responsibilities in the development and assessment of student teachers. In the light of such forceful resistance the Minister for Education stepped back and declared that there would be no transfer of funds from the HEIs to schools nor would there be a requirement for schools to be involved in formal assessment. DENI published its report entitled “Arrangements for Initial Teacher Education in Northern Ireland from 1st September 1996” and in it they stated, “schools that wish to continue the role in ITE which they have played in the past will be able to do so, without being asked to assume additional responsibilities” and that “cooperation between HEIs and schools should continue to develop on an informal and voluntary basis to whatever extent both parties find acceptable, rather than being subject to the adoption of formal contracts”. (DENI 1996). The proposals were left on a purely voluntary basis for schools to determine whether or not they wished to become involved in teacher education.

Schools may have issued a resounding negative response in relation to their formal involvement in initial teacher education but it would seem that DENI had no intention of burying the idea of more collaborative partnerships between the school and the HEIs. In 1997 The Education and Training Inspectorate initiated a three-year survey of the “effectiveness of partnership arrangements between higher institutions (HEIs) providing teacher education courses, and a sample of schools which host student teachers on school experience”. (Education and Training Inspectorate 2000)

Within the 3'i's model of education, "lead" and "supporting" partners were identified for each of the three stages of education. The HEIs were to lead at the initial phase with schools and Education and Library Boards (ELBs) in support. ELBs were to lead during induction with schools and HEIs in support. Schools were to lead the Early Professional development phase with the ELBs and HEIs in support. The partnerships between all the professionals are still evolving, as is the relationship between all the three stages of teacher education. However, it is the responsibility of the HEIs to initiate competence-based teacher education and develop initial teaching competence in professional partnerships with schools.

The Competence Statements

In an attempt to disseminate information about the teacher competences the Northern Ireland Teacher Education Committee (NITEC a group set up in 1994 to advise DENI on teacher education) worked with the HEIs during 1996-97 to produce "The Partnership Handbook".

The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidance on the various roles and responsibilities at each stage and to consolidate the good co-ordination, liaison and communication which is necessary to ensure effective support, of a high calibre, for students and beginning teachers. (The Teacher Education Partnership Handbook).

The teacher competence model described in detail in the Handbook, underpins all three stages of teacher education and encompasses the competences relating to teaching which students and teachers develop throughout their career. The 92 competences were organized under five headings:

1. Understanding the curriculum and professional knowledge
2. Subject knowledge and subject application
3. Teaching strategies and techniques
4. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress
5. Foundation for further professional development

As mentioned, each competence is set into a phase of teacher education within the 3'i's model. The competence statements were categorized as 'A' 'B' or 'C' depending on the phase of the teacher education continuum at which it was felt each competence could be most appropriately introduced and developed. The use of a capital letter signifies the stage during which the competence will be given most attention. Capital A denotes the initial phase, B induction and C early professional development phase. A lower case letter 'a' 'b' or 'c' indicates that the stage will play a subsidiary, though still significant role in developing the competence. In the Partnership Handbook a number also follows each competence from a range of 1-5. A '1' denotes that the development of the competence requires little school contact, while a number '5' indicates that it should be entirely developed in the school context. A set of 'core criteria' or 'qualities of the teacher' were detailed within the handbook to underpin the whole competence framework.

The Debate About Competence-Based Teacher Education

The concept of competence is not easy to describe or even define. McAleavey and McAleer (1991) claimed that, “there is no agreed definition of the term competence”. Ashworth and Saxton (1990) in their examination of the concept of competence concluded that competences were of, “unclear status” and that the meaning of competence had, “not yet been clearly defined”. They claimed, “it is not clear whether a competence is a personal attribute, an act, or an outcome of behaviour”. Leat (1993) attempted to describe a conceptual view of competence when he argued that competence, “results from the dynamic interaction of behaviour, knowing and feeling” and that, “it cannot be adequately understood without reference to all three”. He claimed that his conceptualisation of competence consisted of three components that were inextricably linked. These three components were: cognition, what teachers know; the affective, what they feel; and behaviour, what they do.

Hyland (1993) warned that the uncritical acceptance of a competence-based approach needs to be challenged. “Competence-based approaches to education have a weak and confused conceptual base, are founded on dubious and largely discredited behaviourist principles, and display systematic ambiguity in their treatment of knowledge and understanding”. Competence is clearly a problematic concept.

Many interpretations of the concept exist in the educational literature from those regarded as behaviouristic interpretations (Gonczi 1994, Barnett 1994, Hyland 1995) to others that are of a more holistic character (Hodinson & Issitt 1995). Biemans et al (2003) suggested that nowadays the interpretations of competence represent a more holistic interpretation i.e. competences are seen as integrated capabilities. Parry (1996), distinguished soft and hard competence. Hard competence refers to job-specific abilities - job related knowledge and skills, whereas soft competence refers to personality traits, values and styles.

Considering the different interpretations of competencies and competence-based education, it is difficult to develop competence-based education that is appreciated and agreed by all stakeholders. Perhaps Hager (1993) put the whole argument into perspective when he claimed that, “what a good set of competency standards does do is to provide a clear statement of what is considered to be important in competent performance in that profession”. He claims that, “it would be rather strange if people who are in the business of registering or educating professionals insisted that it was too hard to specify what it is that distinguishes professional from non-professional performance”.

Working With A Competence-Based Framework

In Northern Ireland, HEIs have struggled to, first of all, take on board a competence-based teacher education framework themselves, and secondly, to induct their school-based partners into the partnership roles necessary to make competence-based teacher education a reality for students. At the University of Ulster it was felt that whilst the Partnership Handbook provided a useful source of reference it was unlikely that it would be of practical use for a teacher in the classroom. It was decided that if we were to have any success in enlisting the cooperation of our teaching colleagues in school, then we needed to simplify the competence framework into a ‘working’ version for use in school.

An observation schedule was developed which identified the 'Key Competences' to be addressed within the initial teacher education phase during school-based experience. It was intended that the schedule would be used by HEI tutors, as well as school colleagues to give feedback to students on their competence development during school-based work. On the observation schedule the Key competence statements were grouped into six areas, and under each key statement we recorded competences relevant to that key statement. The six key competence statements were:

- A. Planning and preparation
- B. Teaching strategies and techniques
- C. Classroom management
- D. Assessment
- E. Professional knowledge and the curriculum
- F. Professional development

Under each Key competence statement were grouped the teacher competences to be developed during school-based work.

For example Key competence statement: 'C'

- C. Classroom management

Teacher competences to be developed;

1. Develops effective working relationships with pupils
2. Establishes a positive classroom ethos: captures and maintains pupils' attention, interest and involvement.
3. Establishes clear rules and expectations for pupils' behaviour and deals effectively with inappropriate behaviour.
4. Manages time and space effectively.
5. Makes appropriate and safe use of physical and other resources.

The observation schedule then acts as the working document that provides the common forum for discussion about competence development between tutors, teachers and students. It is an attempt to make the feedback on teacher competence development transparent to the student on placement. Tutors and teachers record progress made on competences and set priorities for areas of development. At the conclusion of each formal observation by the teacher or tutor the student has an opportunity to record their response to their developing competence and all three parties retain a copy of the schedule.

The Partnership That Existed Between The HEIs and the Schools in Northern Ireland Prior to the 1990 Review of Teacher Education

The fact that authority and responsibility for initial teacher education was seen to reside with the university and with the university tutors, reinforced the hierarchical relations with schools prior to the review of initial teacher education. However, it is also true to say that prior to the review of initial teacher education in Northern Ireland HEIs and schools had worked amicably together in such a relationship. Traditionally HEIs negotiated arrangements for school placements annually with individual schools. Schools were at liberty to agree to host a student placement or not and in general there existed an understanding about the kinds of support students could benefit from in school. The HEIs provided tutors, class teachers and students with literature that suggested the roles and responsibilities expected of each during school

placements. The kinds of support given to students and the resulting expectations of students varied considerably sometimes even from the university tutors as well as host teachers. Assessment of teacher performance was largely down to “professional judgement” alone rather than based on any specified criteria concerning what teachers were expected to achieve. There did not appear to be any dissatisfaction from the schools about any inequity within their alliances with the HEIs. Schools consented to their involvement, and in any case they viewed their role in teacher education as peripheral to their main purpose as educators of children.

Partnership: Post Review

The desirability of some form of partnership between schools and HEIs in the provision of initial teacher education is hardly contentious today given the extended period of time students are expected to spend on practical placement. However, there is much less consensus on the precise relationship that should exist between the HEIs and school colleagues or indeed the nature of the relationship between the HEI taught part of the course and the school-based component. Something resembling the nature of a shotgun wedding occurred between the HEIs and schools post review since DENI through their inspection of “the partnership approach” clearly indicated the expectation of close partnership liaisons, and the onus fell to HEIs to make the marriage work.

A sensitive approach had to be adopted by HEIs in leading and managing the changes in initial teacher education in relation to partner schools. The competence model of teacher education required a much greater role to be played by schools and it was firmly laid at the feet of the HEIs to induct them into the new arrangements. The main concern of the HEIs was to ensure that student teachers would be professionally supported in the school context to develop the competences deemed to be best developed on school placement, as well as paying attention to necessary changes in the taught part of the course to accommodate the new competence framework.

Teachers in School as Teacher Educators

Teachers in school rarely see themselves as teacher educators. It is a role they need to play but one that they are rarely prepared for. Even though teachers in school had been working with students at the initial teacher education phase for a long time they did not consider themselves major players in teacher preparation. Most teachers see their role as providing the classroom context to enable the student to try out their teaching skills learned at university. Feiman -Nemser (1998, p. 64) suggests that “many teachers believe that teaching cannot be taught, that it is something one learns from experience” but she also claims that “Ironically, some of the very same teachers who believe you cannot teach someone to teach hold the contradictory view that it is the university’s job to teach teaching”. In Northern Ireland the lead responsibility for teacher education rests with the universities therefore it became the university’s job to persuade teachers to become school-based teacher educators and to help them develop the necessary dispositions and skills to fulfill such a role. Since schools in Northern Ireland refused to accept statutory partnership relationships for teacher education it proved very difficult to induct teachers into new arrangements to support students in the development of competences during school-based work. Despite a variety of efforts ranging from published literature, teacher conferences, teacher, tutor, student conferences and school partnership visits, it has proved very difficult to change the

existing culture within a great many “partner” schools. Caul and Mc Williams (2002 p. 194) spell out the problem, “ the outworking of the system has left the universities exposed to the challenges of living up to outcome measures without the full support of partners, irrespective of how well meaning their partners are in delivering a quality service to student teachers”. Universities have been placed in an unenviable position in that they are held accountable for the improvement and quality of teacher education by the education and training inspectorate, yet find themselves trying to hold together a shaky system based on an uneasy consensus with schools and over which they have little control.

The Report Of The Education And Training Inspectorate

The report by the Education and Training inspectorate on the survey of Teacher Education Partnerships (2000) found steady progress towards the implementation of changes to initial teacher education that came into effect at the start of 1996/97 academic year. Its findings indicated that over the period of the survey, students became progressively more aware of the competences expected of them and partnership arrangements between school and university had “improved significantly”. Weaknesses were highlighted in relation to the fluid nature of the partnerships. For instance when a school or teacher was involved for the first time in the competence model of teacher education, it was found that,

...the university’s induction and support arrangements often fail to provide enough time for appropriate staff development, and the dissemination of relevant information within the school. (ETI 2000 p8)

The Reality Of The Competence Model Of Teacher Education And The Partnership Approach

The reality of the partnership approach and the role played by schools in supporting the development of competences during school-based experience varies considerably from school to school. Some schools view initial teacher education as being totally the responsibility of the HEIs and do not wish to participate other than provide a school student placement. Others are keen to develop close working relations with the HEIs and get involved as school-based teacher educators. In the current climate it is difficult to guarantee or rely on schools to provide a structured programme of support for students on school-based work. As a result there are many issues about equity and fairness within school placements in relation to student experiences. Consequently, university tutors feel morally pressurized to provide a standard of support that in some respects may compensate for the lack of support experienced by some students in some schools. The amount of ongoing induction and training for schools in relation to the competence approach to initial teacher education is quite considerable since all schools in Northern Ireland are considered as partners with HEIs. A new school or even a new teacher within an existing partner school who accepts a student on placement means HEIs are starting again at the baseline to try to induct them into competence-based initial teacher education. All of the above factors have obvious resource implications in terms of staffing, time and costs in an already hard-pressed university budget.

There are also major positives in the introduction of the competence framework and the partnership approach. The competence framework provided the impetus to fire a discussion about what we are aiming to achieve in terms of qualified teacher status. It

provided a common language with which HEIs and partner schools could talk about teacher education and the respective roles to be played in it. The framework helped to illustrate the complexity and intricacies of the teachers' work and highlighted where in the student teachers' experiences certain competences were best developed. Teachers in school who were willing to get involved as school-based teacher educators had competence descriptors to focus discussions with students and university tutors around student teacher strengths and areas for development.

In many instances the relationship between university tutors and school colleagues were seen to flourish as each developed an understanding and appreciation of the others' work with student teachers. University tutors were seen to value and recognize the school-based supervision of students by teachers. Greater clarification of university and school expectations was evident with the more open channels of communication between both, and there was less confusion for the student who sometimes felt as if they were trying to meet a dual set of standards.

Bridges (1996 p369) purports that one claimed merit of competence-based education lies within the assessment process - the criteria used to form judgements is made transparent and public, "In the teaching practice context for example, it means that student, school mentor and university tutor all have a common and explicit point of reference in a statement of:

- (i) the kinds of competence that needs to be demonstrated:
- (ii) the variety or "range" of situations in which this demonstration is required and
- (iii) the kinds of things that will count as evidence . (Bridges 1996 p369).

Despite such optimism problems do exist with the process of accountability within the partnership approach.

Gaining Qualified Teacher Status

The issue of quality assurance for the overall provision of initial teacher education in Northern Ireland remains a source of tension. The responsibility for quality assurance remains the concern of HEIs being the lead partner and not that of the schools. However, there is a clear expectation within a partnership approach that both parties should be involved in the assessment process. HEI documentation makes it clear that supervising teachers are expected to have an ongoing role in formative assessment and that summative assessment should be based on the joint agreement of tutors and teachers based on evidence presented in the observation schedules. However, there is a great disparity in the way host teachers give students feedback about their developing competence and some choose to opt out of any kind of assessment altogether. Sometimes hard decisions have to be made about student teacher competence and whether or not they have demonstrated sufficient progress to pass or fail their course. Host teachers tend to find this very difficult, which is understandable since they may build up personal relationships with their students through having to work so closely together for long periods of time each day. If student teachers have not demonstrated the necessary level of competence some host teachers feel guilt, questioning their suitability as a host teacher or in some cases feel that the failings of their student teacher applies to them as well. On the other hand there appears to be zeal on the part of some host teachers to help prospective teachers succeed, even when the student has not demonstrated their skill as an effective teacher. Often then, the partnership in assessment is an unequal one in practice, with university tutors playing a dominant role relative to supervising teachers.

The Current Position On The Competence Framework And The Partnership Approach

Teacher education in Northern Ireland at the initial, induction and early professional development stages are integrated and competence-based. The competence framework is being revised by the General Teaching Council Northern Ireland (GTCNI) at the request of the Department of Education as part of the wider teacher education reform process. It was felt by the council that this was an important milestone for the profession in Northern Ireland, “for the first time the profession, through its professional body, was directly involved in the definition of the teacher competences and attributes which underpin professional excellence”. (GTCNI 2005)

The GTCNI after consultation has developed a ‘Code of Professional Values’ for teachers in Northern Ireland and have revised and restructured teacher competences. The original 92 competences have been reduced to 27 and according to GTCNI the framework has been ‘streamlined and simplified to make it more manageable for providers, schools, teachers and student teachers’. (GTCNI 2005)

GTCNI claim that they recognize, that the success of any initial teacher education programme depends a great deal on the quality of experiences students are exposed to on school placement. Consideration was given by them to “engaging teacher employers in a formal placement process” but they suggest that “given the fragmented nature of the Northern Ireland school system, this was considered an unwieldy approach”. (GTCNI 2005) However, they did agree “the need to encourage employing authorities, in promoting the assumption by schools of their responsibility, to provide placements for student teachers and to actively support such individuals”. (GTCNI 2005) To clarify their thinking on the notion of partnership they produced a set of common guidelines for school placements.

The GTCNI revised competence framework, or their set of common guidelines for school placement, have not as yet become operational within initial teacher education.

Conclusion

The teaching profession has experienced the trend towards accountability and relevancy and as a result there has been a movement towards the adoption of competence-based teacher education. In implementing competence-based teacher education vast assumptions are made that we know and can identify the specific competences necessary to produce effective teachers. In effect one can only speculate about these competences and because of the uncertainties we end up with a “shopping list” approach. Even though educationalists believe or may agree that certain competencies lead to effective teaching it doesn’t mean that it is so. We must exercise caution in declaring that we know the answers to such complex human interactions. More research and evaluation is required to substantiate our assumptions. However, in the meantime if the aim in adopting a competence-based approach to teacher education is to improve the quality of our schools by improving teachers then who can argue with such a goal.

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An Alternative View: The Teacher As *Phronimos*

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Introduction

Before suggesting a different way of looking at “the good teacher” than can be encoded conveniently in a tick-list of competences, I would like to pay tribute to the work of Eddie McArdle, and his colleagues in the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland, in attempting to have everyone sing from the same hymn-book (a minor miracle if this can be achieved in Northern Ireland). I refer of course to their new document *Reviews of Teacher Competences and Continuing Professional Development*. Perhaps all that they have accomplished, though, is a reduction of the earlier catechism of 92 competences (which were widely ignored) to a new set of 27 competences (which may similarly be ignored). One can imagine Eddie nailing this document to the door of the Department of Education, like Martin Luther nailing his 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church. His proselytising zeal is admirable, but I wonder if the ‘competences’ approach really captures what it is to be a teacher.

I want to argue this evening that the agenda of technical rationality, which seeks to train the student teacher in a *techne* of discrete pedagogical techniques and canonical values, is misconceived and that teacher education ought instead to aim at the cultivation of practical wisdom. I would also like to propose a 28th competence: knowing when to ignore the previous 27.

My starting point is to invite you to consider how some of the outstanding teachers in history would have measured up against a list of competences. Great teachers such as Jesus of Nazareth, Socrates of Athens ... and of course McArdle of Belfast.

I suspect that they would have failed to meet the criteria laid down for being competent teachers. Would Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount be criticized for Him not “analyzing and assessing the level of [his] pupils’ attainment against relevant benchmarking data” as competence number 26 requires? Would Socrates’ barefoot geometry lesson to Meno’s slave-boy be condemned for the wobbly squares and triangles he scraped in the sand with his stick, when even in ancient Greece he could have used more effective technology, as competence 12 requires? Would either of them be willing to fit in with the **demands** – and that is the word used – the demands of the Northern Ireland Curriculum in terms of skills acquisition and progression, as competence 14 requires? (Given that Jesus was crucified, and Socrates was executed by drinking hemlock, Eddie is looking remarkably sanguine here this evening).

I suggest that a better model of the good teacher is to be not the possessor of a discrete set of competences, but to have *phronesis*, an Aristotelian virtue usually translated as ‘practical wisdom’.

Phronesis

This virtue, which all good teachers possess, is defined by Aristotle as ‘a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for men’, (*Nicomachean Ethics* Book VI , 5, 1140b 4). (We should take ‘men’ of course to mean humankind). This is the only criterion we need: are we as teachers using our powers of reason and other human capacities to do good and avoid bad for our pupils? If we are doing this, as Jesus and Socrates once did, then we deserve the title *phronimos*.

The key points in the alternative model of the teacher as *phronimos* are as follows:

- *Phronimoi* act to promote the *eudaimonia* (flourishing) of pupils
- They have practical wisdom, rather than merely instrumental competence
- They are virtuous teachers, not just *virtuosi*

There are other pedagogical virtues which teachers need to function effectively, but I maintain that these should be subordinated to *phronesis*, for they do not carry the same moral charge. The “craft of the classroom” is one such virtue (*techne* in the Aristotelian scheme). It is morally neutral and aims at external goods, being concerned purely with production (*poiesis*). A parallel example of this is in the craft of shoemaking, whose good lies not in the act of making the shoes, but solely in the products of the process. However, as teachers, we would claim that the **process** of education - and not just the outcomes - is a good in itself, thereby rejecting any classification of teaching as merely a productive craft. Pedagogical knowledge (*episteme*) is another virtue which may promote the flourishing of pupils: we are often enjoined to implement research-based practice, for example. A difficulty with *episteme*, however, is that it is “necessary”⁵ – it cannot be otherwise – and there are few theories in education with which we would invest such a high level of certitude. Furthermore, both of these virtues (*techne* and *episteme*) – which between them define technical rationality - are morally neutral and ought not, it seems to me, be deployed in the classroom unless under the guidance of *phronesis*.

If I may take a rather extreme example in order to make my point: Some Nazi doctors in the concentration camps used *techne* and *episteme*, but not *phronesis*, for they were not concerned with the *eudaimonia* of the prisoners. I am absolutely not drawing any parallels here, but merely attempting to illustrate vividly the principle that wise judgement and a morally-grounded approach ought always to over-rule mere technical competence. Craft and knowledge can be used both for good or ill, but practical wisdom is always a force for good. *Techne* and *episteme* should therefore only be deployed **in the service of Phronesis**.

Phronesis is thus, I argue, the best match for the virtue which underlies teaching, for it is:

- Morally motivated (seeks pupils’ *eudaimonia*)
- Aims at goods internal to the *praxis* of education
- Contingent (could be otherwise)

⁵ In the philosophical sense; as opposed to contingent

The idea of contingency is a powerful one, and provides further support for the thesis of teacher as *phronimos*. Whatever we do in the classroom is a matter for judgement, for there is nothing logically **necessary** about any of our actions. Although they could in fact always be done otherwise (there's more than one way to skin a cat, or indeed to teach a pupil) a "competences" approach erroneously implies that there is a single "right way" of doing things.

Technical Rationality

The notion of competence has its roots in a type of reasoning known as technical rationality, which in turn is premised on the outmoded philosophical doctrine of logical positivism⁶. Observable behaviours and empirical evidence are given undue prominence in this paradigm, to the detriment of some of the valuable features of education which cannot be so easily captured. For example, the positivist tendency to judge a teacher purely on exam results is unfair, for although undoubtedly an important factor in exam performance, he or she is only one such influence (the pupils themselves have to take some of the credit). Furthermore, pupils may do well in the exam, but be so damaged by the lessons that they resolve never to study that particular subject ever again. From the perspective of means-ends reasoning, we could not fault the teacher's **competence** in deploying *techne* to deliver the goods, but we could question our colleague's *phronesis* in achieving this measurable end at such a cost. The inappropriateness of technicism as a model for good teaching is brought out clearly by considering - and rejecting - a functional construal of "the good teacher". McIntyre (1985) defines "farmer" as a functional concept, since we can draw inferences such as:

"His dairy herd wins all the first prizes at the agricultural shows"

Therefore ...

"He is a good farmer" (McIntyre, 1985)

Clearly this template cannot be applied to education, as my earlier dismissal of a crude correlation between high exam results and good teaching indicates. A lifelong-learning perspective is more appropriate for the noble project of *Bildung*⁷ than the short-termism involved in milk-yields, best-in-show prizes and indeed leaving-certificate scores.

Setting aside for the moment these moral objections and accusations of short-sightedness, the use of *techne* without *phronesis* still seems to be ineffective in fostering learning, even when evaluated on its own terms. As a consequence of over-estimating the power of technical rationality, the simplistic view arises in government that investment in the tools and *techne* of education will push all the right buttons and deliver more effective learning than that resulting from trusting teachers and encouraging them to develop their own - possibly quirky - *phronesis*. Even judged by the standards of technical rationality, this does not seem to be working. For example, a recent study of 100,000 15-year-olds in 32 countries found that frequent use of

⁶ Logical positivism was convincingly undermined by WVO Quine (1953) in his paper 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism' in *From a Logical Point of View* (Harvard: Harvard University Press)

⁷ German; translates approximately as 'cultivation', 'edification' or 'formation'.

computers makes “no discernible difference” to pupils’ academic performance. (Fuchs, 2005, p.7) Nevertheless, the deployment of ICT features prominently in lists of competences – including those of GB and Northern Ireland – so the student teacher has to demonstrate its use, whether or not it is efficacious in promoting learning.

Technicism is well-entrenched in governmental rhetoric however, and it will be hard to shift. We read this and weep:

Teaching is the core technology of what teachers do. It is more and more prescribed as politicians and others start to, **quite rightly**, intervene in the teaching methods that are used. (Reynolds, tta website)

Ignoring the particularly horrible split infinitive, we can see that the idea of education as a system to be controlled, rather than a diverse collection of individual practitioners interacting with an assortment of unique youngsters, has taken hold. This is dangerous for professional autonomy and neither is it likely to promote the *eudaimonia* of pupils. Schools are enjoined to become “high reliability” organisations where failure even in a small number of cases is to be regarded as catastrophic as, say, malfunctions in air traffic control systems: a ridiculous aspiration. Unfortunately, the competences approach can unwittingly aid and abet this misguided, risk-averse, technicist mission.

A further threat to the autonomy of teachers using *phronesis* in promoting the flourishing of pupils is the tendency for the aims of education to be seen as supervening upon their economic utility. These external aims are typically justified thus:

In today’s global economy, in which our national competitiveness increasingly depends on the skills of each and every person ...too many young people are unattractive to employers; deficient in the basics of English and maths, unprepared for further study; and unable to demonstrate their true potential. (Kelly, UK Education and Skills Secretary, introducing the White Paper *14-19 Education and Skills*, 23 Feb 2005)

Note how “attractiveness to employers” is at the top of the list and “demonstrating true potential” (whatever that means) is at the bottom. There is a danger of being taken in by this rhetoric posing as responsible and rational statements. Rationality itself is not impartial (I am grateful to Pádraig Hogan - who is here with us this evening - for unpacking the word ‘partial’ to mean ‘incomplete’ as well as the other construal of ‘biased’, 1997, in Carr, W (2005) [ed.] p .93). And even if this were not the case, we should heed Wilfred Carr’s warning.

‘... rational principles ...(are) corrupted by a combination of irrational influences such as political expediency, vested interests and established power.’ (2004, p 35 *op. cit*)

Competences

Turning next to competences, the GTC(NI) “takes the view that the notion of competences goes beyond the simple acquisition of skills ... teaching is both an intellectual and practical activity with important emotional and creative dimensions” and feels that we should not “reduce teaching to a series of atomistic skills.” (GTCNI 2005) The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland clearly has an enlightened view of teaching and learning. But problems arise when these principles are cashed out at the level of competences. For example, two of the GTCNI Professional milestones are as follows:

‘Teachers will :

assess the levels of pupils’ attainment against relevant bench-marking data ...’

[Core Teacher Competence]

demonstrate enhanced skills in the use of diagnostic testing ...’

[Chartered Teacher]

Note the use of the imperative: “teachers will”. How many great teachers, wise practitioners bursting with *phronesis*, do we know who would fail on these atomistic, managerialist competences, premised on technical rationality? As an antidote to these phrases, we return to the idea of the individual, virtuous *phronimos*, rather than the technically-adept cog in a machine.

Alternatives To Technicism

Schön (1983) points out that “among philosophers of science no one wants any longer to be called a Positivist, and there is a rebirth of interest in the ancient topics of craft, artistry and myth – topics whose fate Positivism once claimed to have sealed.” In a similar vein, Eisner (2002, pp 375-385) proposes that “teaching has more in common with artistry than *techne*”. This resurgence of the notion of artistry suggests that each teacher should strive to confer his or her own signature on the art of teaching. Wise teaching cannot be encoded in algorithms nor guaranteed by positivist methods: imagination and an attunement to unique particulars are needed.

These are attractive ideas, but in the absence of the measuring, monitoring and control systems of technical rationality, how are we to judge *phronimoi*? There is an incommensurability between the two systems of thought. One is based on attunement and *maieusis*⁸, and values personal autonomy, imagination, critical thinking, relationships and the pupils’ lifelong learning, The other is premised on observable technical skills, reverses economic relevance and is aimed at measurable short-term goals. We can admire the no-nonsense muscularity and apparent objectivity of the competences. As criteria for evaluating teachers, they may be over-simplistic, but at least they have the advantage of being easy to encode into tick-lists. This throws into stark relief the problem of assessing teachers against the alternative *phronimos* model. However, the entire notion of defining good teaching in terms of how closely it conforms to some preconceived standard is merely a prejudice of technical rationality, as are current, more general obsessions with “objective” measurement and control.

⁸ The notion of the teacher as a midwife to knowledge. (Rather than a wet-nurse, we might add)

Perhaps we need to challenge the technicist and managerialist prejudices of the prevailing paradigm and appraise teachers by a process similar to the well-established practice of peer review of academic papers. Teachers themselves ought to evaluate fellow practitioners, not by using a list of criteria but by looking for a “family resemblance” to a pedagogical *phronimos*. When appraising teachers, we should not be seeking conformity to a central essence of what is deemed to constitute good teaching, but ought instead to recognise distant cousins, rather than inbred, inward looking clones of ourselves. Somewhat surprisingly, there is hope for a desirable diversity of *phronimoi* from an unexpected quarter. The European Union does not seem to be as demanding of the “standard product” teacher as we might have expected:

[not] all teachers ... should be expected to possess all of the necessary competences ... the challenge for educational leaders is to ensure that such competences are present at a collective, institutional level. (European Commission, 2005)

Pluralism?

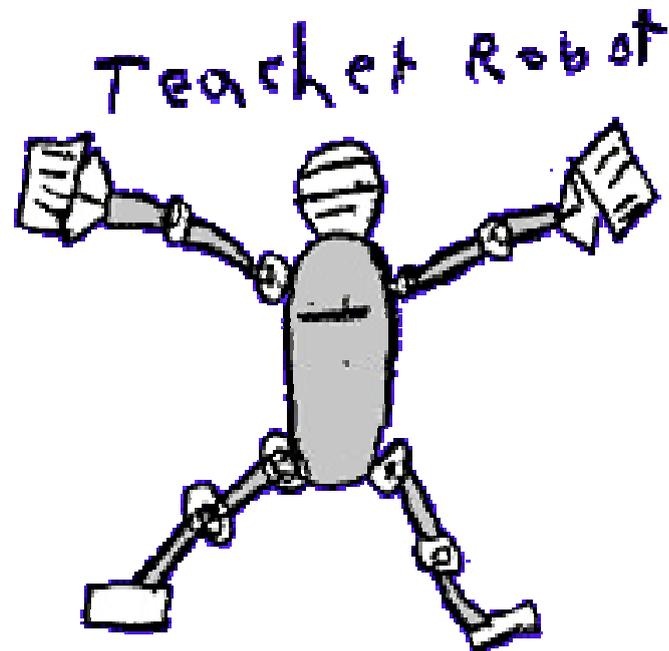
Taking heart from these European principles, perhaps we can agree on the compromise position of a mixed economy. I would like to make a plea for a light touch, which does not ossify practice and discourage experimentation by insisting on a one-size-fits-all definition of competence. The notion of competence is not a given, but depends largely on who is judging competence in another, and I for one would be quite insulted by being described as “competent” (although I suppose this is marginally better than being labelled ‘incompetent’). A hearts-and-minds approach is called for in both jurisdictions in Ireland, rather than the English pincer movement of ‘standards’ and OfSTED, which grabs a very different part of the anatomy. The genetically modified teacher, based on what we might label a “pedagogical genome project” will not survive when the ecosystem changes. Lack of genetic diversity is a dangerous thing, as the events here in Ireland of 1845-1847 sadly demonstrated. Encouraging a measure of teacherly diversity, rather than promoting the notion of a standard teacher whose pedagogical DNA can be unambiguously defined, is one key to a flourishing profession. Flexibility and attunement, rather than stiffness and conformity, should be the watchwords.

The structural stability of this pluralist education system (containing a suitable ratio of unreflective technicists, as well as *phronimoi* exercising *sophrosyne*⁹ needs to be such that small perturbations caused by particularly imaginative *phronimoi* do not lead to chaos. But these random elements are most definitely also required – as in natural selection – for without them the system would stagnate and be incapable of responding to changing circumstances and meeting pupils’ needs.

I finish here with two children’s drawings which seem to me to exemplify the differences between the competent teacher – defined in terms of a tick-list of competences - and the well-attuned *phronimos* whose mission is not to follow an algorithm predetermined elsewhere, but to act virtuously to promote the good of her

⁹ Prudence; seen as the opposite of *hubris*

pupils. Which one would you rather be, which one would you prefer to teach your children and which one should we be cultivating in our institutions?



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END

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Crosscurrents In The Competencies / Standards Debate In Teaching And Teacher Education

Andy Burke¹⁰

Introduction

The development and utilization of competencies-based standards¹¹ in education generally, but particularly in teaching and teacher education, is generating crosscurrents in the minds of educationalists. At first sight the approach may appear to be simply a pragmatic mechanism for ensuring value for money in terms of adequate achievement levels on the part of students, performance levels on the part of teachers, as well as providing a transparent mechanism for agreeing minimum requirements for the mutual recognition of qualifications across national boundaries (e.g. in the EU). On closer scrutiny, however, it will become evident that the identification of competencies-based standards, for whatever purpose, raises fundamental issues about the nature of “education”, the relevance (or otherwise) of what is being done in schools to “education”, and the appropriateness (or otherwise) of current teacher education programmes to the needs of schools and the requirements of education in the 21st century. This paper will attempt to analyze some of the issues at the heart of this debate.

Competencies-based standards reflect an approach to life and education that emanates from *positivistic* thinking in Western philosophy. Positivism demands that we confine ourselves to the “*sense world*” of empirically verifiable facts and quantifiable data and avoid being drawn into the “*non-sense*” realm where claims do not lend themselves to tangible scientific verification or proof (e.g. statements re the ultimate ends of education, the meaning of life, religious experience). In education arena, Positivism is reflected in the attitude that only what is measurable really matters, coupled with a belief that what can be measured can be managed and those responsible held accountable within fool-proof systems. This approach can result in a narrowing of the concept of what educating entails and an over-reliance on, and confidence in, measured achievement (e.g. examination results).

This trend has been aggravated (as history bears out) by an over-emphasis on the needs of national economies, the availability of jobs, the requirements of financial accountability for public expenditure on education and, today, by the demands of the *Knowledge Economy* where knowledge, not capital, is the basic resource and where productivity results from the application of knowledge to work. According to Hargreaves (2003 p xviii) “in the knowledge economy, wealth and prosperity depend on people’s capacity to out-invent and out-wit their competitors, to tune into the desires and demands of the consumer market, and to change jobs or develop new skills as economic fluctuations and downturns require” In an economically competitive world there are winners and losers and those countries and/or companies with the requisite *competencies* win. Such concentration on competencies has led to

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¹¹ As used herein, this phrase connotes standards or targets whose achievement can be measured quantitatively or verified through observed behaviours and evaluated against identified performance indicators or benchmarks.

the commodification of education where economic considerations tend to set its outer parameters and upper limits.

While strands of such positivistic and pragmatic thinking in education can be traced back to some Sophists and others who ran *Grind Schools* in classical Greek and Roman times to prepare students for the available jobs in the law courts and civil service, the origin of “Positivism” as a term and as a movement is attributed to Auguste Comte (d. 1831), the father figure of modern Sociology. Put simply, his argument was that the maturation of mankind evolved through the following three stages:

1. The *Theological Stage*, typified by some Greek tragedies, where life’s events are explained by reference to a deity or deities.
2. The *Metaphysical Stage*, where life’s meaning is explicated through generalized concepts abstracted from concrete human experience of individual things. This intellectual process generated concepts such as “Human Nature”, “Conservatism”, “Liberalism”, “Irishness” etc. all of which have some basis in reality but none of which has a concrete, verifiable existence outside the human mind. Human beings exist in reality, “human nature” is an abstract concept created by the human mind.
3. The *Positivistic Stage* of human maturation is reached when the shortcomings of stages one and two become apparent and the futility of attempting to reach reliable and verifiable conclusions on the basis of the intangible and non-quantifiable data that they rely on becomes clear. At this stage of mature development, according to Comte, only evidence that is verifiable / quantifiable is regarded as reliable. All else is seen as belonging to the *non-sense* world of speculative thinking and unverifiable data where conclusions can neither be proved nor disproved on the basis of tangible evidence and should, therefore, be ruled off the agenda of issues meriting serious human consideration. Science, for example, is completely positivistic in its investigations, as is empirical research. Philosophy and theology are open to a much broader spectrum of evidence, including scientific data.

What, it might be asked, are the shortcomings of positivistic thinking – a mode of deliberation and investigation that we all, to some extent, value, subscribe to, engage in, and benefit from? One only has to think of the impact of science on modern technology or the benefits of empirical research for education. As a working philosophy of life and education, the positivistic approach is pragmatic and attractive precisely because it limits itself to verifiable facts/data which human beings can analyze quantitatively, comprehend and control. Human life, however, is complex, ambiguous and paradoxical and its mystery will never be fully fathomed through simple or quantifiable explanations of science or any other empirically based discipline alone. What has been said of a love affair captures the complexity and mystery that lies at the heart of human existence: “From outside looking in, one cannot understand it. From the inside looking out, one cannot explain it”. And human beings, who would be taken aback if asked to *prove* their love for their parents or partners, tend to demand such “objective” proof or confirmation in the rest of human life, including education. In reality, our most critical beliefs, convictions and

experiences in life cannot be empirically quantified, verified or objectively proven e.g. love, hate, pain of loss, spiritual and/or religious experiences.

It would appear, then, that in spite of its attractiveness and pragmatic advantages, as a mechanism for probing life in its deepest sense or education in broadest sense, the positivistic approach is seriously limited and limiting. In education, an over-emphasis on measured results reflects this way of thinking and tends to pay insufficient attention to the integrated and rounded development of the whole, searching, and self-creating human being. Traditionally also it has tended to concentrate on those subjects and forms of intelligence (linguistic and mathematical) which are more easily measured by pencil and paper tests and neglect other forms which are more difficult to quantify or assess (e.g. cf. Gardner 1983, 1999; Eysenck, 1999).

The Competencies-Based Standards Debate

The challenging nature of the issues involved in this debate may be gleaned from a presentation of the arguments for and against this approach in education. In its favour it could be argued that:

- Ministries of Education bear responsibility for ensuring the delivery of good quality education and teacher education in their countries. The development and utilization of competencies-based standards is one very practical and transparent way of meeting their obligations in this regard.
- This approach also provides governments with an effective accountability mechanism whereby “value for money” can be ensured on an input-output basis for public expenditure on education.
- In addition, the approach facilitates the development of a transparent and equitable basis for the mutual recognition of teaching (and other) qualifications across national boundaries e.g. in the EU.

However, the effort to meet these reasonable requirements and national obligations has led to the development of a strong, and almost unstoppable, trend towards thinking largely in quantitative terms about teaching / learning and teacher preparation and, in more recent times, the utilization of business language and concepts in education debates and policy documents.

This approach entails:

- The specification of precise objectives.
- The identification of effective strategies for achieving them.
- The development of clear and measurable *performance indicators* to verify the attainment of objectives. This in turn provides a basis for the *auditing* of schools and teachers and often results in the drawing up of league tables to provide parents (“customers”) with information on which to base their educational “purchasing” decisions.
- The approach provides for a review of established objectives by the stakeholders / clients.

- The approach often involves the establishment of more general efficiency targets e.g., for grade promotion rates, increases in school completion, decreases in truancy.

In short, education is looked on as “service provision” to clients who, in turn, must be consulted and satisfied with the quantity and quality of the “product / commodity” being provided.

It is difficult to argue against this approach since it seems to be a reasonable, workable and responsible policy option on the part of those who bear ultimate responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of adequate national educational standards and the identification of quantifiable criteria (e.g. the mastery of identified competencies) to confirm the attainment of those standards. Furthermore, it could be argued that parents welcome clarity and concrete evidence of mastery of identified competencies. Finally, the present author has co-operated with the development and implementation of competencies-based standards approaches by Ministries of Education in several developing countries because, *at their current stage of under-development*, such a strategy seems necessary, workable and wise. In more developed systems of education, however one of the major dangers of a competencies-based standards approach, with its adoption of business-based language in the description of its operations and definition of its targets, is that it involves a re-definition of what education entails and a narrowing, even trivialization, of the role of the teacher which, in turn, has implications for teacher education.

Paulo Freire begins one of his books, *Cultural Action for Freedom* (1972) with the following truism, the truth of which educators often tend to forget or choose to ignore:

Experience teaches us not to assume that the obvious is clearly understood. So it is with the truism with which we begin: All educational practice implies a theoretical stance on the educator’s part. This stance in turn implies – sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly – an interpretation of man and the world. It could not be otherwise (p.21).

Every educational structure, practice and approach is grounded in an underlying philosophy which entails a view of the world, a theory of knowledge, a vision of what society should be, and a concept of what the human being could become through education. This understanding of the human situation determines, to a considerable degree, the overall aims of and approach to education. It strongly influences what is taught (the curriculum), how it is taught (methods of education), who should be taught, where they should be taught (in school or elsewhere) and for how long (equality of opportunity), and, finally, how the education system should be organized to achieve its goals and objectives.

Viewed in this light, it will become clear that there is no system of or approach to education that is not underpinned by philosophy or shored up by some constellation of accepted ideas. As Bruner (1996) puts it: “Pedagogy is never innocent. [It is] a medium that carries a message” (p.63). Just as there is no such thing as a road that is going nowhere, no school or school system exists in a philosophical vacuum. Very often, however, the existence of such an underlying rationale goes unnoticed and its acceptance is largely unconscious, unquestioned or simply taken on the authority of its proponents or of well-established tradition (Dewey, 1938).

What, then, we might ask is the philosophy underlying the competencies-based standards approach to education? Seldom, if ever, will one find its proponents engaging in an analysis of its underlying rationale beyond presenting its pragmatic benefits as a *modus operandi*. Some would argue that there is a deliberate attempt to avoid such analysis since it would reveal the limitations of the positivistic thinking that underpins approaches of this kind and the commercial considerations that inspire them¹². Richard Pring (2000) provides an informative critique of such approaches. In a paper entitled *School Culture and Ethos*, he argues that the current tendency to use business terminology in education parlance and policy documents is not *innocent* but, rather, entails a fundamental re-definition of education itself. Changing the language in effect changes the culture and ethos of schools and the nature of the education that is expected to take place in them. For Pring

Language does not reflect the world as it is in itself. It interprets it. ... The ideas we embrace transform that which we see. ... What I believe we are seeing is a concerted attempt to change the language of education – and thereby change our very conception of what constitutes an educational activity. By “thinking in business terms” ... we are being asked to think of education differently. ... Answers to what it is to be human are already implicit [in that way of thinking]. ... As we think in business terms, so the ethos of the school is transformed from a place of moral and professional deliberation to one in which the teachers are skilled in meeting other people’s targets. ... The spiritual and moral dimensions are virtually eliminated; exposure to what is inspiring and heroic becomes irrelevant; the openness to diversity and deliberation is seen as a threat to the rational planning of the political masters (pp.3-4, 8-9).

In their efforts to meet the needs of business, universities may be aiding and abetting this trend. The recent European University Association report (Crosier et al. May, 2007) calls for institutions “to respond strategically to the lifelong learning agenda”. The narrowness of the *agenda* becomes apparent, however, when it spells out, as follows, what response is needed: “Dialogue with employers is required if university courses, at all levels, are to meet the needs of a society and economy in which knowledge becomes rapidly out-of-date and in which, therefore, constant training and re-training is required” (p.12). This is a new and very constricted version of what would traditionally be regarded as “lifelong learning”.

The critical question is: does concern about meeting the needs of business, and business language itself, with its inbuilt positivistic concepts and guiding quantitative criteria, enrich or impoverish the educational experiences provided in schools / colleges? In agreement with Pring, I would argue that currently the latter seems to be the case and, as defined in the previous paragraph, lifelong learning simply means continuous updating in the competencies required for competing economies. By way of analogy, Soren Kierkegaard (1809-54), the founding father of the modern Existentialist movement, criticized the Christian churches for inventing legislated versions of Christianity with minimalist rules, regulations, benchmarks and standards by which members of these Christians *clubs* could *measure* and adjudicate on their own religiosity and that of others. By doing so, Kierkegaard claimed, the churches

¹² Interviews with Thomas Welsh, World Bank education consultant, May 2007.

had *knocked down the price of Christianity* and diluted its core ideal and challenge of 'being good to other people' – a benchmark that knows no bounds (Cupit, 1984). Likewise, it could be argued that undue concern with meeting the needs of business, and the application of business concepts (competencies-based benchmarks etc) in the education arena, knocks down the "price" or quality of education and re-defines it narrowly as "schooling / training / re-training". But the ideology underlying such approaches is usually hidden and seldom articulated for, if it were, it would become apparent that it is damaging the very soul of education, limiting its core challenge, and trivialising the critical role that the teacher / educator plays in the process (Buber, 1965).

Finally, as Hargreaves (2003) argues, in a world dominated by standards, test scores and achievement targets, benchmarks of this kind "are irrelevant to the highest achieving schools who feel they are already meeting them, [while for] schools with high numbers of special education or vocational pupils the standards are depressingly unattainable" (p. xx). They constitute blunt instruments that suit the pupils in the middle but are applied insensitively to the rest. Furthermore, he argues that the emerging knowledge economy needs much more flexibility in learning and teaching than current levels of standardization, micromanagement, inspection, and curriculum control allow.

It is not the first time that education has faced such challenges and difficulties. In fact History has several salutary lessons to teach us in this regard.

The Lessons Of History

The Arts Vs the Products of Knowledge

In classical Greek times a bitter debate raged between Socrates, Plato and Aristotle on one side and some of the Sophists on the other about the type of so-called "education" that the latter were providing. With their eye on the jobs market, the Sophists specialised in "grinding" students in the knowledge and skills needed to work in various areas of the civil service or to win their arguments in the Law Courts – a trend that was aggravated by the advent of the Roman Empire and significant expansion of career opportunities. The approach of these Sophists concentrated on what their protagonists called the "*Products Of Knowledge*" (the information and skills required for specified posts) whereas for Socrates, Plato and Aristotle the core concern of education should be the development of the "*Arts of Knowledge*" (ability to think, question, investigate, interrogate), so well portrayed in the Socratic Dialogues and exemplified in the "Allegory of the Cave" in Plato's *Republic* (p. 278-286).

For Socrates and Plato, going to the Sophists for an education was like an apprentice going to a Master Craftsman to learn the art of shoemaking but, instead of teaching him the art, the Master simply gave him a number of readymade pairs of shoes of different sizes. The apprentice came away with the *products* of the art but without having learned the *art*. Likewise the graduates of the Greek grind schools learned the required knowledge and specified skills needed for particular positions but had not been taught how to think, in other words, had not been *educated* in the *Arts of Knowledge*.

Unfortunately, it was this narrow approach to education which emphasized the *Products* rather than the *Arts of Knowledge*, that took hold in Western schooling. The *learning* trend at the heart of this tradition was aggravated by the fall of the Roman Empire, the disappearance of schools during the Dark Ages, and by an over-emphasis on literal imitation and the absorption and regurgitation of knowledge during the Renaissance period following the re-discovery of the Greek and Roman Classics¹³. It was taken to national scale in many countries with the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the development of mass education to meet its manpower needs. The approach has been aided and abetted in recent years – and, indeed, given some respectability - by the application of business language and concepts to education and by the pressures on education systems to reach stipulated learning targets, to meet the expanding needs of national economies, and/or to provide the points for entry to third-level institutions. The negative impact of this *schooling* tradition is still visible in second-level schools and also in third-level education.¹⁴

In his analysis of these trends, Dunne (1995) points out that in ancient Athens a small fraction of the adult population were citizens. Only this elite could avail of a liberal education because all the work of production and reproduction was done by the disenfranchised majority. As long as knowledge stood apart from production no society could afford to have more than a small minority devoted to the pursuit of knowledge through education. Nowadays, however, universal education is required because knowledge has become power and the productive person is now the educated person. Education has become the primary means whereby individuals can promote their self-interest and ensure their own and the state's economic prosperity. Furthermore, the relationship between education and the economy has become a reciprocal one with the economy depending on education to meet its manpower needs and education depending on the economy for funding. "This interlocking of education with the productive and economic sphere" says Dunne, "circumscribes the autonomy of education, rendering problematic the ideal of a humanistic education without utilitarian purpose" (p. 66). This huge shift in the nature of knowledge and its role in society occurred in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, but mostly in the last century. Its impact in Ireland has been felt only in recent decades and was most conspicuously flagged with the publication of the policy document *Investment in Education* in 1965 (Ireland, 1965). These developments present a major challenge to educationalists. Dunne concludes:

If we want to defend the integrity of education, we can do so only by first acknowledging how deeply and perplexingly it is challenged, not primarily by the economist ideology, ... but by the reality of the kind of society in which we live and must try to educate.

What are the effects on education of the fact that it is now the decisive agency in determining people's economic futures? ... These external awards ... can subvert the intrinsic good by becoming the end; and then education has in a sense gained the world, but in doing so, has lost its own soul (pp.62, 64, 68).

¹³ It is said of one Renaissance scholar that his ambition was to write two sentences a night worthy of Cicero.

¹⁴ John Dewey initiated a counter movement to this learning tradition. In this regard Lipman (1988) says: "The great paradigm shift in the history of education has been the re-design of education to have *thinking* rather than *learning* as its target. ... John Dewey is the major source of this shift".

Payment by Results

The *Payments by Results System* that operated in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in the latter half of the 19th century is another example of the identification and application of quantitative benchmarks in education with unwelcome results. The idea of making teachers salaries dependent on the achievement levels of their pupils was first mooted by Richard Lovell Edgeworth, the Irish landlord, magistrate and educationalist, in 1798 (cf. Lyons, 2003). Such a system was formally proposed by and implemented in the wake of the report of the Newcastle Commission (1862). The *Payment by Results* movement was fuelled by a felt need on the part of Government for accountability measures by which to monitor increasing public expenditure on education. *Payment by Results* was implemented at primary level on the English mainland from 1862-1895 and in Ireland from 1872-1899. The System did achieve some positive results (e.g. reduction in illiteracy levels, improvement in school attendance, higher efficiency levels with better grade to grade promotion rates within schools) but was abandoned because of its negative effects on education. It was also regarded as being out of keeping with developing modern concepts of holistic, child-focused and activity-oriented approaches at primary level (cf. Coolahan, 1981).

In 1911 Edmond Holmes, a recently retired Chief inspector of Schools in the UK, wrote a stinging critique of the ill effects on teachers and pupils of this version of standards-directed and competencies-based approach to teaching. Under the *Payment by Results* regime the reputation and financial prosperity of schools, he said, depended on the official annual examination reports of Her Majesty's Inspectorate. The pressures on teachers to deliver "results" were transferred to pupils and resulted in schools being both hives of industry and of misdirected energy. Holmes wrote:

What the Department did to the teacher, it compelled him to do to the child. The teacher who is the slave of another's will cannot carry out his instructions except by making his pupils the slaves of his own will. [He] who has been deprived by his superiors of freedom, initiative, and responsibility, cannot carry out his instructions except by depriving his pupils of the same vital qualities. (Holmes, 1928 p.104)

Holmes also warned against the dangers inherent in a policy of "common core" curricula, so often associated with competencies-based approaches. Where such curricula are laid down, he says, all the "thinking" is done for teachers/schools, innovation and initiative are dented, and the minimum standards prescribed tend to be treated as the maximum to be achieved. The framers of such syllabi, he said,

...find themselves compelled to take account of the lowest rather than the highest level of educational achievement. What is exceptional and experimental cannot possibly find a place in a syllabus which is to bind all schools and all teachers alike, and which must therefore be so framed that the least capable teacher, working under the least favourable conditions, may hope ... to achieve.

A uniform syllabus is, in the nature of things, a bad syllabus and ... the degree of its badness varies directly with the area of the sphere of educational activity that comes under its control. ... Under the control of a uniform syllabus, the schools which are now specializing and experimenting, and so giving a lead to

the rest, would have to abandon whatever was interesting in their respective curricula and fall into line with the average school; while, with the constant lowering of the current *ideal* of efficiency, the level of the average school would steadily fall (pp. 104-106).¹⁵

Holmes' most fundamental criticism of the *Payment by Results* approach was its over-reliance on test scores as the sole measure of school / teacher effectiveness and of the attitude that only what is measurable really matters. He wrote:

Whenever the outward standard of reality (examination results) has established itself at the expense of the inward, the ease with which worth (or what passes for such) can be measured is ever tending to become in itself the chief, if not sole, measure of worth. And in proportion, as we tend to value the results of education for their measurableness, so we tend to undervalue and at last ignore those results which are too intrinsically valuable to be measured (p.128)

Following a critique of its narrowness and out-datedness by the Belmore Commission in 1897, *Payment by Results* was terminated in Ireland in 1899 to make way for the attempted implementation of a broad, child-centred, and activity-oriented primary-school curriculum in 1900 – an innovation for which funding was inadequate, about which teachers had not been consulted, and for which they were ill-prepared (half having received no formal training). As a consequence, impact was limited and the Republic of Ireland had to wait a further seventy-one years for the full implementation of such a curriculum.

Primary School Certificate Examination

The *Primary School Certificate Examination* (PCE) in the Irish Republic is another example of a centrally dictated standards and measured competencies approach to education. The PCE operated on a voluntary basis from 1929-1942 with about 25% of pupils sitting tests on a broad range of subjects. From 1942 to 1967 the PCE became compulsory by Government dictat and the examinable subjects were reduced to Irish, English and Arithmetic. Eamonn DeValera, the Prime Minister (and a former secondary teacher), regarded the PCE as a benchmark test of teachers as much as it was an evaluation of pupil achievement levels and defended the narrowing of the examinable curriculum. In 1941 he said:

I am for cutting off every frill so as to make certain that the essentials are properly done. I do not care what teachers are offended by it. I am less interested in the teacher's method of teaching than I am in the results ... and the test I would apply is the ... examination.

The tendency would be to take things easy if we were not all kept up to concert pitch. The same is true of teachers. I wish there was some way by

¹⁵ A similar argument by Hargreaves (2003) has already been cited while Dewy (1938) argues the same case but for a different reason. He says: "A single course of studies for all progressive schools is out of the question; it would mean abandoning the fundamental principle of connection with life-experiences" (p.78). That is, it would prevent the flexibility needed on the part of teachers to cater for pupils from different backgrounds (e.g. urban / rural) and who differ because of their life experiences in different environments.

which there could be a reward for the test [Payment by Results?], but that is perhaps getting into a controversial matter (Dail Eireann, May 27th. 1941).¹⁶

In a move reminiscent of the abolition of *Payment by Results* in 1899, the *Primary Certificate Examination* was terminated by the Irish Department of Education in 1967 to make way for the implementation in 1971 of a more broadly-based, integrated, child-focused and activity-oriented curriculum along the lines proposed for the U.K. by the Plowden Report (Great Britain, 1967). A terminal, narrowly focused, examination was seen as incompatible with the new approach and as denying to teachers the autonomy and flexibility to cater adequately for individual differences and adapt curriculum to local circumstances and pupil experiences. The 1971 Curriculum was revised, updated and consolidated in 1999.

So, indeed, we have been down the competencies-based standards road before, though the assault on education this time - couched in popular and widely accepted business terminology and reinforced by the widespread utilitarian attitudes to education in society - seems more acceptable and plausible and, for that reason, is a good deal more difficult to counteract. It would be foolhardy of us, however, to ignore the lessons of History in this regard for, as Adlai Stephenson said: "We can alter our future clearly and wisely only when we know the path which brought us to the present" (in Seldes, 1969) and Richard Kearney (1984) adds: "To ignore the past is, ironically, to remain in corrosive collusion with it" - to which we might add - "and repeat its mistakes".

In Search of a Balance Between Earning a Living and Living a Life

It is important to provide an *educational* challenge to those who want to think in quantitative, business and managerial terms about the schooling enterprise, including the training of teachers to service it. What follows is an attempt to critique the approach without condemning it or denying the necessity for competencies-based standards and accountability measures. To do so would be to refuse to live in the real world, to recognize the needs of expanding economies and accept the inter-connectedness and inter-dependence of education and economic productivity. It would also signify a failure to acknowledge the responsibility of Ministries of Education for the maintenance of standards and for ensuring a satisfactory return for public expenditure on education. The knowledge society¹⁷, however, is a Trojan horse; it seems to bear gifts, but also brings trouble. For Robert Reich (2001), who acknowledges this fact, the critical question is: "How do we find a balance between earning a living and living a life" (p. 6).

Policy-making, according to Graham (1980), is concerned primarily with two questions: what is right? and what will work? It is critical that there be a direct link between the two and that the connection is properly judged if policy formulation is to be wise and implementation effective. In the case of the competencies-based standards debate what is required is a "best-fit" solution that takes full cognisance of all relevant factors - broader educational considerations as well as national needs and

¹⁶ Dáil Eireann, Parliamentary Debates, May 27th. 1941, par. 1097,1109.

¹⁷ The phrase *Knowledge Society* in current usage almost invariably connotes the *Knowledge Economy*. In this context *Lifelong Learning* does not mean *Lifelong Education* but rather the updating of the competencies (knowledge and skills) that are required to meet the needs of changing and competing economies.

economic circumstances. As might be expected, therefore, policies in this regard will differ in developed and developing countries. In this debate, as stated already, History is a very good informant of professional judgment though its voice is often ignored.

We already located the competencies-based standards approach to education within the parameters of positivistic thinking and critiqued it from that perspective. We also dealt with Richard Pring's (2000) claim that, in changing the language of *education* with the introduction of business terminology, one changes the very definition of *educating*, the role of teachers, and the Ethos and Culture of schools. Dunne's (1995) analysis of the interrelatedness and interdependence of education and economic success, and the inherent dangers for education in this relationship, were also cited. Others, coming from different backgrounds, have voiced similar misgivings.

Parker Palmer (1998) commented as follows on the business approach to education:

The marketing model of community is blitzing American education today under the flag of Total Quality Management. ... The norms of the marketing model are straightforward: educational institutions must improve their product by strengthening relations with customers and becoming more accountable to them. Bill-paying students and parents must be treated as the consumers that they are and given ample opportunity to criticize their purchases. These criticisms must be passed on to the people who produce the product to help them change the way we educate people and satisfy more customers (p.93)

While Palmer recognizes the extent to which educational institutions have stayed aloof from and have been insufficiently sensitive to the needs of their consumers, he sees clear threats to teaching and learning in the market model approach. First, it lacks "reliable mechanisms for evaluating teaching, unless one believes that all varieties of good teaching can be crammed into the scales of a survey questionnaire" (p 94). Second, good education is always more *process* than *product* and, to that extent, does not easily lend itself to evaluation that is guided by criteria appropriate to a market model. Finally, good education, if provided in such a context, may leave students dissatisfied, and even angry, when their prejudices are interrogated and their sense of self is challenged by a good teacher/educator. While such student reactions may constitute evidence that real education has, indeed, taken place, it may take them many years to recognize and appreciate this fact. For this reason Palmer concludes that "a marketing model ... serves the cause [of education] poorly when it assumes that the customer is always right" (p. 94).

John Goodlad, who has been involved in major reviews of teaching and teacher education in the USA, continues to press for a time "when educators will not be subject to constant pushes in different directions from politicians and business leaders" (In Goldberg, 2000, p. 82). He explains:

School improvement today has largely passed out of the hands of educators. Increasingly and with declining impact, the fate of our schools is in the hands of politicians, and politicians hate to hear that problems are complicated. Essentially [they] have embraced the behaviourist, linear model and attitudes of the corporate world (p 83).

In face of this reality, Goodlad suggests that efforts should be made to educate business leaders about “education”. While he recognises that “they would come with an incredible array of prejudices, they are bright people who are used to looking at issues and problems” (p. 84).

Beeby (1966, 1980) notes that countries evolve through different stages of development. In their early stages basic educational needs are acute, parents are frequently illiterate, and teachers are untrained or poorly trained (e.g. 19th century Ireland or developing countries today). In such situations he recognises the need for tight directives, monitoring, and control to ensure minimum levels of achievement by pupils (e.g. Payment by Results in Britain and Ireland in 19th. century). He argues, however, that the need for such tight controls decreases and becomes inappropriate as systems develop, parents are more highly educated, and teachers are better trained and more professionally competent. In light of this, the application of tight business-type monitoring and accountability mechanisms to education in well developed systems would seem to be turning the clock back to pre-professional days – in my view, a step in the wrong direction. Furthermore, it appears that we are copying this approach from Business when Businesses are moving away from such tight monitoring controls because they have been found to de-motivate staff (Pring, 2000).

It may be, of course, that the low calibre of intake to teacher education in many countries sets limits to what can be attempted by way of professional preparation with such candidates. While recognizing the limitations imposed by academically poor entrants to teacher education, what is equally (or even more) critical is the quality of training they receive and the extent to which it is tailored to meet their needs. They may require better mentoring and closer monitoring during and after training but I do not consider the “low entry” argument as sufficient reason to re-define education so narrowly and reduce teacher preparation to a purely technical level, even in developing countries. These latter are frequently the inheritors of very rich and complex cultures which should be reflected in and transmitted through their education programmes and systems.

The arguments against competencies-based approaches that follow will make more sense if readers factor in the memory of their good schools and best teachers and the impact for good that they had on them – an impact that does not lend itself to being easily “boxed” or measured because it is the result of warm, supportive human relationships or dialogue between teachers and pupils and entails the transfer of values through a kind of osmosis or “hidden curriculum” in schools and classrooms (Buber, 1965).

Education Vs Schooling

While those who think in terms of competencies-based standards and use business terminology in describing and prescribing what goes on in schools / colleges persist in referring to it as “education”, it is questionable whether it merits that label now any more than it did in the grind schools of Greek and Roman times. In a sharp critique of modern education Ivan Illich (1971) said:

For some generations education has been based on massive schooling. ... Why not, then, conceive of education as the product of schools? ... I feel sure that it

will soon be evident that the school is as marginal to education as the witch doctor is to public health. (pp.102, 122).

Likewise, Theodore Roszak (1981) is very critical of the narrow version of the “basic skills of life” that operates in many schools and education systems today. He asks:

Are we sure we know what the basic skills of life are? Bad enough that Johnny can't read or write. But why do we stop worrying there? Why are we not every bit as concerned that Johnny is such a stranger to his organism and emotions that he will spend the rest of his life struggling under the burden of his ignorance?

Why do we not worry that Johnny's body is gripped by thwarted anger and desire, that his metabolism is tormented by a diet of junk foods and nervous tension, that his dream life is barren, his imagination moribund, his social conscience darkened by competitive egotism?

Why not worry that Johnny can't dance, can't paint, can't breathe, can't meditate, can't relax, can't cope with anxiety, aggression, envy, can't express trust and tenderness?

Why do we not spare some concern that Johnny does not know who he is, or even that he has a self to find?

If the basic skills of life have nothing to do with all this, then let us admit that they have nothing to do with Johnny's health, happiness, sanity or survival, but only with his *employability*.

Whose interest, then, is Johnny's education serving? (p. 210).

Such a critique of much of current education must not be interpreted as a commendation of the more traditional style of schooling, the remnants of which can still be detected in the Leaving Certificate programme and examinations. Commenting on that approach to education, what Rabindranath Tagore, India's first Nobel laureate for literature, said in 1922 may, to some extent, still be relevant today:

The greater part of our learning in the schools has been wasted because, for most of our teachers, their subjects are like dead specimens of once living things with which they have a learned acquaintance, but no communication of life and love. (Cited in www.philip-sen.com/othermeans/2006/04/ accessed 17/05/07)

A much richer vision of education exists and provides a counterpoint to this narrow, positivistic and pragmatic view of schooling. It can be traced back to classical Greek times and, as we have seen, concentrated on the development of the *Arts of Knowledge* and not merely on the transmission of the *Products of Knowledge*. There were existentialist strains in Plato's man in the Cave searching for real things (rather than shadows) and for the ultimate source of all reality in the Good or God (*The Republic* pp.278-286). Modern *Existentialist* thinkers have developed and extended these themes. For them education is part and parcel of one's personal interrogation of life and search for meaning where, as a *wayfarer*, one ventures through life's mystery

from cradle to grave. Education from this perspective is viewed as a lifelong process the result of which is *self-creation* or the *moulding of one's freedom*. In this context *freedom* connotes the pure potential or lack of definition that characterises newborn babies who are just beginning to react to their surroundings and experiences thereby initiating the creative process that will issue in their own unique personalities. Jean-Paul Sartre (1970) explains this notion clearly. He says:

Man first of all exists, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards. To begin with, man is nothing. He will not be anything until later and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, the first effect of Existentialism is that it puts man in possession of himself as he is and places the entire responsibility for his existence [and education] squarely upon his own shoulders (pp. 28-29)

In similar vein, Martin Buber, the Jewish Existentialist philosopher, describes as follows the creative process that is “education” and the uniqueness of individuals that results:

In every hour the human race begins. In this, as in every hour, what has not been invades the structure of what is with ten thousand countenances of which not one has been seen before, with ten thousand souls still undeveloped but ready to develop, a creative event if ever there was one, newness rising up, primal potential might. This potentiality ... is the reality *child* ...this grace of beginning again and ever again (p. 83).

Education in this broad and deep sense involves a process of “self-creation” which the teacher can accommodate but only the individual person can accomplish. Consequently, for Buber, “there is not and never has been a norm and fixed maxim [i.e. definition] for education” (p. 102), for in truth it is unique to each individual and there are as many versions of it as there are people. “Schooling” we can decide to define, legislate for, and measure through the identification and imposition of competencies-based standards but “Education” cannot be so encapsulated. All we can do is describe the process entailed in education and educating and establish pointers for its facilitation.

Marcel, Buber and Emerson, as well as other Existentialist thinkers, would agree that no person can educate another i.e. do their self-creating for them. All teachers can do is facilitate the process through an interpersonal teacher-pupil dialogue but one cannot legislate for such a human relationship without damaging it, no more than one can legislate for a human love affair without diminishing it.

Theodore Roszak (1981) summarizes this thinking about education as follows and highlights the limitations and dangers of a competencies-based standards approach. He says:

We are all born mavericks gifted with strange vocations. ... This is what all of us bring into society: a wholly unexplored, radically unpredictable identity. To educate is to unfold that identity – to unfold it with the utmost delicacy, recognizing that it is the most precious resource of our species.

Now go back all the way to the beginning. Suppose back there in kindergarten,

we could have known, before *we* turned them into what they became, that it was in these unexplored and unformed young to become very different human beings. This one an Emily Dickinson, this one a Nijinsky, this one a St. Francis ... What would our *excellence* have gained us that was worth such a loss? What great favour would we say we had done these children to have snuffed out that high, fine promise? What would it mean, then, to boast that at our school we had the third-graders reading at fifth-grade level ... and the ninth-graders at college level? (p. 198)

The same rich concept of educational uniqueness is conveyed by Bryan Mac Mahon in *Silence, Intimacy and the Lamp* (1983). He said:

No two people are created alike. This is fundamental to my attitude to life. It is a privilege to meet and engage with a person who has never been created before and will never be created again. ... It is in this context that the good teacher, the good parent, the good friend, the good neighbour engages with all people, especially those in the impressionable years. This is what the writer celebrates and the teacher cultivates.

How does the competencies-based standards and business model of schooling fit with this vision of education? The foregoing helps to highlight the inherent narrowness and inadequacy of such conceptions of what education entails without, for a moment, denying the importance of basic knowledge and skills and the legitimacy of measuring these for policy and accountability purposes. What is needed is an in-depth and balanced view of what education in today's world requires while, at the same time, taking a realistic view of the practical demands of daily living and the needs of expanding economies. The major concern currently is that that balance does not exist and that the marketing of a different view of education with the use of attractive, deceptive and simplistic business-type terminology is serving to aggravate the imbalance and thereby seriously threaten the integrity of education¹⁸. The challenge to find a balance between earning a living and living a life has become even more acute.

¹⁸ Dunne (1995) notes that the Greek notion of *practice* (praxis) has been subverted from its original meaning and defined in a purely technicist way to connote the exercise of skills to ensure the achievement of specified outcomes. *Practice* was originally understood as involvement in a complex set of activities with the community of those who are considered its insiders e.g. the *practice of living*. Engagement in a practice entailed, not only the development of competencies specific to the practice but also moral qualities that transcend it e.g. honesty, humility, patience, courage, cooperativeness. He continues: "Such values often form part of the 'hidden curriculum' of a school. Practice in this sense is inclusive and provides no basis for distinguishing between *cognitive* and *practical* (manual) domains – let alone privileging one above the other. ... [What] I have said of 'practical' subjects should be true of also of 'academic' subjects ... In each case it is an ongoing *practice* that students need to be introduced to – a *practice* that embodies its own ways of conducting inquiry, asking fruitful questions, ... sifting and weighing evidence, making critical judgments The expectation would be that teachers are practitioners ... who find ways of introducing pupils to the *practices*. ... Students would *do* history or *do* physics and the teacher ... would provide significant modelling of what in each case it entails" (pp.76, 78-79). He claims that it is largely due to the modern, narrow, technicist approach to practice that "many successive waves of school reform have become unstuck. Without a willingness to enter the core reality of a *practice*, they have sought in 'top down' fashion, to specify 'outcomes' and have conceived the task of effective management as one of getting teachers to maximise these outcomes and making them accountable for doing so" (p.81)

Implications For Teaching And Teacher Education.

We can define schooling with all that it entails – competencies, benchmarks, inputs, outputs, performance indicators – using whatever positivistic, business-related terminology we wish. Within those narrow parameters we can legislate both for teaching and teacher training to meet identified and measurable. “Education” as portrayed earlier, however, is far richer, deeper, broader, more complex and more challenging than that “schooling” version of it implies. The negative and constricting impact of such a positivistic approach to teaching and teacher education is a source of serious concern to some educationalists.

Goodson (1995), Maguire (1995) and Reynolds (1999) argue that recent English policies have charged teacher educators with delivering competency-driven, heavily school-based, teacher training. They have served to de-professionalise teaching and re-construct the teacher as *the doer, not the thinker; the manager, not the scholar; the technician, not the intellectual*. The Universities Council for the Education of Teachers in the UK (UCET) is even more caustic in its comments on this approach. It states (Reid, 2001):

The teacher of the late 1990s will be remembered as a well-trained and competent technician, delivering a National Curriculum to a set of standards established elsewhere, regularly inspected to ensure compliance, policed through a system of pupil testing and through initiatives like Literacy and Numeracy Hours, increasingly required to teach in certain ways.

It is small wonder many people of initiative and creativity turn elsewhere in their search for a “proper” profession – one that will fully call on their talents and qualities...(p. 37)¹⁹.

While the concern of the OECD (2005) report *Teachers Matter* is, according to its sub-title, *‘Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers’*, adherence to a competences-based, approach may have the negative impact on potential recruits that UCET warns of. The OECD report, however, does acknowledge that there are broader dimensions to teaching and recognizes that

there are many important aspects of teacher quality that ... are harder to measure, [and] are not captured by the commonly used indicators such as qualifications, experience and tests of academic ability. ... but which can be vital to student learning, ... [They] include the ability to convey ideas in clear and convincing ways; to create effective learning environments for different types of students; to foster productive teacher-student relationships; to be enthusiastic and creative; and to work effectively with colleagues and parents (p. 27).

The report also acknowledges the “need to take into account the substantial variation in effectiveness that exists among teachers with similar, readily measured, characteristics” and admits that “alternative indicators of teacher quality are crucial”

¹⁹ The serious shortage of teachers in England and Wales over the past two decades, and the recognition of multiple suppliers and supply routes as emergency measures to counteract it, may well reflect this approach to the teaching profession.

(p. 27). In spite of its recognition of the complexity and inadequacy of such assessments and the shortcomings of commonly used indicators, the report, nevertheless, concludes that “the more measurable characteristics provide fundamental information on the quality of teaching workforces” (p. 27). Elsewhere in the report it spells out, as follows, what this means:

Countries need to have clear and concise statements of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do. ... The profile of teacher competencies needs to derive from objectives for student learning, and provide profession-wide standards and a shared understanding of what counts as accomplished teaching. ...The profile could express different levels of performance appropriate to beginning teachers, experienced teachers, and those with higher responsibilities (p. 13).

It would seem, then, that in spite of its welcome acknowledgement of the complexity of teaching and its recognition of the need for more adequate measures of teacher quality, the OECD report is reconciled to working a competencies-based approach.²⁰

Against this background of critical comments, it would seem that greater cognisance must be taken at all levels of the interpersonal or moral dimension of teaching - what Buber (1965) calls “the other half of education”. To this we now turn our attention.

The Moral Dimensions of Teaching

In teaching the personality of the teacher (i.e. beliefs, values, attitudes, integrity, flexibility, maturity etc.) is critical to the success or failure of the education enterprise in a manner and to a degree that is not found in most other professions. For this reason the Harvard sociologist, Robert Dreeben (1970), would view teacher personality as part of the “technology” of teaching, that is, part of the “means” towards achieving the “end” of education. This is so because teaching, like some other occupations (e.g. psychotherapy, social work) entails the provision of a service to people treated in their spiritual and psychological totality. This facet of teaching led Lortie (1969) to speak of “the relative indivisibility of the teacher’s tasks” (p. 9). It results, however, in what Cohen (1982) called an “ambiguity of competence” and leads, according to Schon (1983), to major challenges for those who prepare practitioners for people-related professions. In teacher education and in teaching it results in an apparent dichotomy between rigour and relevance, the former being based on the findings of research on teaching and learning, the latter being achieved in practice through the exercise of the mature intuition, commonsense, and interpersonal skills that the teacher as person brings to the classroom.

In addition to teaching knowledge and skills, teachers formally accept responsibility for the ‘education’ of their students, that is, their induction into a philosophical and / or religious view of life. Martin Buber (1965) puts it this way:

²⁰ The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (2005), in its review of teacher competencies, acknowledges the degree of controversy surrounding this approach to teaching / teacher education and accepts that “the development and assimilation of professional knowledge are complex and simply cannot be readily reduced to a series of statements” (p.10). It accepts “the centrality of personal values in the processes of schooling” and places “the issue of values at the core of its concept of professionalism” (p.11). Its review recommends the reduction of the number of competencies from 92 to 27 and, in an effort to ensure that a broader vision of education is maintained, it suggests that the Council’s ethical code be incorporated into the new statement of competencies (cf. Annex 1 & 4).

There was a master, a philosopher or a coppersmith whose journeymen and apprentices lived with him and learned, by being allowed to share in it, what he had to teach them of his handwork or brainwork. But they also learned, without their or his being aware of it, they learned without noticing that they did, the mystery of personal life (p. 89)

This personal encounter, according to Buber, is “the other half of education”. This is why the master craftsman “remains the model for the teacher ... [for] through him the effective world reaches the child (p. 90). The teacher, for the time being, is the “window” through which the child looks at and interprets the world. The quality and adequacy of the teacher’s vision of the world, therefore, and his/her level of spiritual, moral, social and psychological development, and the depth of his/her self knowledge are of paramount importance in fulfilling this aspect of his/her role for as Parker Palmer (1998) says, ultimately, “we teach who we are”. He continues:

Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach I project the conditions of my soul on to my students, my subject and our way of being together. ... Viewed in this light, teaching holds a mirror to the soul ... and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject. ...[Consequently] good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher (pp.2, 10).

Viewed in this light, teaching has to be seen as a moral endeavour, an ethical activity (cf. Goodlad, Soder & Sirotnik, 1990). Kerr (1987) argued that teachers are moral agents who initiate students into the *human conversation*, into a way of life and a culture. In similar vein, Goodlad (1988) claimed that “the craft of teaching must be honed within the context of moral intention. Otherwise, it is little more than mechanics and might be performed better by a machine” (p. 108). Likewise Shulman says that teachers must remain the key: “No microcomputer will replace them, no television system will clone and distribute them, no scripted lessons will direct and control them, no voucher system will bypass them” (in *National Commission*, 1996, p. 5).

For Buber (1965) the master craftsman was not aware of this moral, character-forming, dimension of his tutoring. For teachers as educators, however, it constitutes the very core of their enterprise and they have no choice but to take full and formal responsibility for it. This places a major burden on schools and teachers for, whether they like it or not, they have to take “stands” (or refuse to have views) on major religious, moral, cultural, and political issues. When some educators were attempting to ensure universal appeal for Progressive Education in 1920s USA by avoiding controversial issues and adopting a neutral stance, George Counts (1932) reminded them that neutrality is a myth and, in any case, is itself a definite (non-neutral) stance to adopt. Furthermore, the myth of neutrality can be used by educationalists as an escape route from the burden of responsibility they bear for the education, and not just for the teaching, of their students. Counts wrote:

I am prepared to defend the thesis that all education contains a large element of imposition, that in the very nature of the case this is inevitable, that the existence and evolution of society depend upon it, that it is consequently

eminently desirable, and that the frank acceptance of this fact is a major professional obligation. ...

Complete impartiality is utterly impossible. ... the school must shape attitudes, develop tastes, and even impose ideas. ... The real question [therefore] is not whether imposition will take place but rather from what source it will come.

If the schools are to be really effective, they must become centres for the building, and not merely for the contemplation, of our civilization. This does not mean that we should endeavour to promote particular reforms through the education system. We should, however, give to our children a vision of the possibilities which lie ahead and endeavour to enlist their loyalties and enthusiasms in the realization of the vision (pp. 180, 184, 192).

John Dewey, in *Experience and Education* (1938), was equally critical of progressive teachers who refused to assert their influence and authority as mature adults and provide direction for pupils. "To put it in moral terms", he said, "the mature person [teacher] has no right to withhold from the young on given occasions whatever capacity for sympathetic understanding his own experience has given him" (p38).

If the foregoing claims are accepted, then the argument that the religious, moral, social and political beliefs and views (public and/or private) of teachers have no bearing on or relevance to their performance of their professional duties seems unconvincing. Teachers cannot have it both ways. They cannot claim to be educators while, at the same time, disclaiming responsibility for the educational impact which they, as persons, have on their students²¹. One possible escape route for teachers is to define themselves as mere "teachers of subjects". By doing this, however, they seriously damage their claim to professional recognition. In this regard, Soder (1991) says:

By ignoring the moral dimension of teaching in favour of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical technique as rhetorical grounding for claims to be a 'profession', teachers in effect choose to present themselves as lackeys (p. 295).

As such, they deserve no more respect than the fee-for-service Sophists of classical Greece, Moliere's Philosophy Master (in *The Would-Be Gentleman*) who was prepared to accede to his student's wishes and teach him anything he fancied, the "grind" schoolmasters of the present day, or any of the paid trainers who meet society's needs but who would be regarded as "service providers" rather than professional educators.

²¹ It does not follow from this that teachers must share the 'official' beliefs (religious or otherwise) of their schools or that their private lives should be scrutinised. Since education is not the imposition of 'assigned identities' on students (Roszak, 1981), neither should educating involve such imposition on teachers. It is much easier to state this principle, however, than to solve the problems that arise when a teacher's beliefs or lifestyle are seriously at variance with the moral or religious ethos of a school. What a school can legitimately expect from all teachers is overt and genuine respect for its ethos be it Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish or other. In return, the school must respect and be seen to respect the beliefs of teachers. Indeed, if the differences in beliefs within a school community could be aired with understanding and mutual respect, it could have a very beneficial impact in preparing students for the diversity they encounter in life.

This issue of the teacher as technician / service provider, rather than as professional, educator is a critical issue today because of the modern obsession with technique and the tendency to look on teacher education as being largely a matter of mastering specified teaching skills and curriculum content. What Kellaghan (1971) said in this regard thirty-six years ago is even more relevant today. He wrote:

Whether a teacher is to be regarded as professional or not, will depend basically on his education. It can be argued that if effectiveness in teaching is based on essentially static knowledge, the various pedagogical skills required are best learned by apprenticeship under a master teacher ... If, on the other hand, preservice teacher education is intended to provide a foundation for career-long development as an inquiring scholar-teacher, initial training must emphasise ways of knowing. There must be less concern for job information already discovered and far more interest in the strategies for acquiring new knowledge.

The decision regarding the future role of the teacher as technician or professional is perhaps the most important to be made today. ... There is already the tradition of the teacher as technician. It may seem to some that the maintenance of that tradition makes it easier to control our schools and what goes on in them. ... If we opt for [it], then we probably commit ourselves to a continuation of the education system we have. If, on the other hand, we opt for the professional role, we would be reasonably assured of having teachers who will be capable of dealing with the enormous changes in knowledge and conditions that are going to happen in the next fifty years. Given professional teachers, we might reasonably expect that this knowledge will be understood and accepted by them and assimilated into educational practice (pp .24-25).

Technical Vs Professional Approach to Teacher Preparation

While becoming an effective teacher requires the development of relevant classroom competencies, knowledge of curriculum content, and mastery of specific teaching techniques, teaching is much more than a mere technical operation. Dewey (1904) issued a salutary warning in this regard when he wrote:

To place the emphasis on the securing of proficiency in teaching and discipline puts the attention of the student teacher in the wrong place and tends to fix it in the wrong direction. ... for immediate skill may be got at the cost of the power to go on growing. ... Such persons seem to know how to teach but they are not students of teaching. ... Unless a teacher is such a student, he may continue to improve in the mechanics of school management, but he cannot grow as a teacher, an inspirer and director of soul life (pp.13, 15).

For this reason teacher training that focuses largely or wholly on the development of competencies and/or is accomplished mostly through apprenticeship is seriously limited and limiting. In their review of research on teacher education, Lanier and Little (1986) expressed serious reservations about the shortcomings of experiential learning in the case of teachers. They wrote:

Although many would say that teachers learn best from experience, there is a growing body of research to show that the typical experience of teachers in schools is non-educative at best and miseducative at worst (p. 565).

The Holmes Group (1986) and Goodlad²² would agree. The latter cites research on the persistence of undesirable and ineffective practices in schools in support of his stance. He says:

The suggestion that mentoring stands virtually by itself as the way to make students knowledgeable about and expert in teaching defies comprehension. ...

Critics who would make mentoring under experienced teachers the whole of professional preparation have overlooked the research on prevailing school and classroom procedures and have ignored the tyrannical control that ingrained procedures exercise over teachers who lack both the intellectual tools for critiquing them and an adequate awareness of better alternatives.

Is it not reasonable to believe, then, that mentoring a neophyte to an experienced teacher, without any accompanying sustained reflection guided by a third party with authorized opinions on pedagogy and other matters, might merely perpetuate the status quo? (Goodlad 1988, p. 107; 1990a, p.190; 1990b, p. 26).

For Joyce (1975) “no better method has been devised for preventing change than to apprentice the novice to his elder” (Bennett & Carre, 1993, p.3).

There are several examples of apprenticeship-style approaches to teacher preparation operating on the basis of identified standards and concentrating on the attainment of specified competencies e.g. *Performance Based Teacher Education* (PBTE) and *Competency Based Teacher Education* (CBTE) in USA in 1960s and 1970s and attempts in more recent years to apply similar approaches in certification procedures. Currently, the *Training and Development Agency* (TDA) for England and Wales operates a mechanism of “flexible routes to inflexible competencies-based standards” laid down by the TDA itself. In this way the TDA oversees about 230 teacher-training providers, including employment-based programmes in schools. In addition, both the OECD and EU are advocating a competencies-based standards approach to facilitate the mutual recognition of professional qualifications across state boundaries.

While Gage and Winne (1975) recognized the benefits of performance-based approaches to teacher preparation, they were aware of their shortcomings and counseled caution in their regard. Broudy (1972) saw mastery of theory as an informant of action as incompatible with such approaches. He wrote:

If performance of specified tasks in a predetermined form is the criterion of success in teaching, then current programs in teacher preparation not only are unnecessarily abstract and theoretical, but perhaps otiose altogether. A program of apprenticeship training seems to be the only warranted investment

²² John Goodlad and his colleagues carried out a comprehensive evaluation of teacher education in the USA in the 1980s and 1990s.

of resources for the training of teachers. But once we arrive at this conclusion, it makes no sense to speak of "professional" teachers as distinct from craftsmen, if professional means theory-directed practice with the practitioner possessing both the how and the why of the practice (pp.11-12).

It is interesting to note that the logic of Broudy's statement has been widely applied in programmes that have adopted a competencies-based and/or apprenticeship approach to training of teachers and is evident in their curtailment or elimination of foundation disciplines from their courses. Where this is the case, the logic of Broudy's conclusion also applies: graduates of such programmes scarcely merit the title "professional".

The critical comments of Goodson (1995), Maguire (1995), Reynolds (1999) and UCET (Reid, 2001) on the approach currently operating in England and Wales have already been cited. In the USA efforts to define the basic competencies required for teaching have proved to be problematic because lists of competencies represent only part of what is involved in teaching and may defy description and/or measurement (cf. Ireland, 2002). Furthermore, the competencies that have been identified often involve trivial performances and there are no clear criteria as to when a candidate can be declared competent or to determine whether some competencies are more important than others. Finally, competencies for teaching can vary a lot from one context to another. For Shuman (1987) the competencies movement has resulted in a trivialisation of teaching while Sosniak (1999) argues that over-specification would appear to be "inconsistent with what is possible and desirable in teaching and teacher education" (p. 197).

The need for all professions to be grounded in a broad knowledge base and attached to knowledge-producing institutions has been stressed by many commentators since Flexner's seminal report in 1910 that steered medical education in the USA and Canada away from its traditional apprenticeship model (cf. Burke, 2002). In response to those who adopt such narrow approaches, who ignore teaching's knowledge base, and who bash initial teacher education programmes, Berliner (2000) has this to say:

There is more reason than ever before to defend preservice teacher education. That is because the research community has developed powerful findings, concepts, principles, technology, and theories of learning that need to be learned. Teaching is not a craft to be learned through apprenticeship. It has a scientific base as well, and thus, similar to other scientific fields, its fundamental findings, concepts, principles, technology, and theories need to be communicated. University coursework is the usual mechanism through which such important information is communicated. ...

It is both silly and degrading to take seriously the notion that teacher education is unnecessary, unless one is also willing to say that education in all professions is unnecessary (pp. 365, 366).

Viewed in this broader light, the complexity and challenge of preparing teachers is more apparent. Teacher educators are charged with educating adult students and, at the same time, inducting them into the complex professional world of teaching and learning where the personality of each trainee is a critical, though imponderable, determinant of what kind of teacher he or she will become. In effect, a teacher is an intermediary between the child and the complex world of culture, knowledge and

values and one cannot *legislate* for how an individual trainee will *construct* his / her version of that mediating role. In reality, we all create our own unique versions of “teacher” within the broad parameters of the current knowledge base of the profession.

Reflecting the complexity of what is involved in the education and training of teachers, Wideen et al (1998) say that “learning to teach is an inherently complex and messy business” and Kagan (1992) explains why: “It is rooted in personality and experience and requires a journey into the deepest recesses of one’s soul where failure, fear and hopes are hidden” (pp. 163-164). Furthermore, no professional training programme can be adequate in the sense of matching the personality needs of each and every trainee and/or preparing them for every possible eventuality that they will encounter in their professional lives. Initial training in all professions, including teaching, is simply the first phase of a lifelong professional learning process. It is for this reason that a narrow competencies - or apprenticeship-based approach in initial training is both inadequate and inappropriate and sets professional students off on the wrong track (Dewey, 1904).

Conclusion

We have seen Buber, Marcel, Emerson and others argue that “Education” in its broadest sense cannot be defined since it is unique to each individual. We have stressed the complexity of the process whereby each classroom practitioner constructs his/her own unique version of teacher. Consequently, neither education nor teacher education in their broadest sense lend themselves to the kind of analysis, dictation, constraints and control that lie at the heart of the competencies-based standards approach. Only “Schooling” and a constricted version of teacher training can be quantified and assessed in that positivistic fashion. We have cited both Ivan Illich and Theodore Roszak who view such schooling and training as being marginal to education.

Parker Palmer (1998) and Andy Hargreaves (2003) see such polarities as part of the paradoxical situation with which teachers have to constantly contend. They would, however, view them in a positive light. While both are aware of the dangers involved, they are positive in their responses to the challenge. “The poles of a paradox”, Palmer says. “are like the poles of a battery: hold them together and they generate energy; pull them apart and the current stops flowing” (p.65). It would appear, then, that the challenge for educators today is to manage the negative and positive energies in such a way that the identified requirements of schooling and the legitimate needs of economies are met and are measured while the demands of education and educating are also adequately catered for. In all of this it must be remembered that “schooling” and “education” are not necessarily incompatible and that our best teachers managed, often against the odds, to satisfy the needs of both at one and the same time. While Gallagher (2005) highlights the incompatibility of lofty educational ideals with the demands and constraints of mandated testing, he compliments teachers on how well they manage to counteract the ill effects of these conflicting factors in their day-to-day work. He says:

It is remarkable that teachers do as well as they do [and] manage to run classrooms filled with community, inquiry, wonder, and joy despite the

dampening effects of the testing / accountability axis. It seems they must develop their professionalism covertly (p.115).

The worry remains, however, that the reality of the society in which we live, where education and production are closely interrelated and interdependent, and where the implementation of competencies-based approaches and the application of business concepts and terminology in education are in vogue – all may combine to effectively marginalize *education* or exorcise it out of the schooling equation altogether. When we think of what our best teachers did for us, that end result would be truly regrettable in a world where there is a great need on the part of the young to develop worthwhile value systems and to establish anchor points of meaning through education²³. The shortcomings of such a narrow approach to education is well encapsulated in the following admonition of a school principal, and concentration camp survivor, to her teachers:

Dear Teacher,
I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness.
Gas chambers built by learned engineers; children poisoned by educated physicians; infants killed by trained nurses.
Women & babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates.
So, I am suspicious of education.
My request is: Help your students become human.
Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmans.
Reading, Writing, Arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human (in Pring 2000, p.14)

After parents, teachers play a critical role in the process of educating. Their effectiveness in doing so will be all the greater if they are facilitated by parents, planners and policy makers who have a broad vision of what education entails and what the overall well-being (and not just the economic prosperity) of society requires. In his book, *Teaching in the Knowledge Society* (2003), Hargreaves says:

Like other kinds of capitalism, the knowledge economy is a force for creative destruction. It stipulates growth and prosperity, but its relentless pursuit of profit and self-interest also strains and fragments the social order. ...

Our schools are preparing young people neither to work well in the knowledge economy nor to live well in a strong civil society. ... Instead of fostering creativity and ingenuity, more and more school systems have become obsessed with imposing and micromanaging curriculum uniformity. ... Schools and teachers have been squeezed into the tunnel vision of test scores, achievement targets and league tables of accountability...

State education and its teachers must preserve and strengthen the relationships and the sense of citizenship that the knowledge economy threatens. It must

²³ The lack of such anchor points may be contributing to the high incidence of suicide and attempted suicide among young males and females in Ireland (cf. Monaghan & Foster-Ryan, 2001).

deal with the human consequences of the knowledge economy – teaching beyond as well as for it, adding values to the agenda of reform that build community, develop social capital and forge cosmopolitan identity.

This means making teaching into a moral, visionary profession once more. ... It means teachers recapturing their status and dignity as some of society's leading intellectuals, and not being mere technicians, instruments and deliverers of other people's agendas (pp. xvi-xvii; 160-161).

In this context it would seem that the education of future educators (and not just their training) is of paramount importance. Raising their awareness of the need to defend the integrity of education is critical for “teachers should not just be catalysts of the knowledge economy, they should also be essential counterpoints to it...” (Hagreaves, 2003, p.40). Charles Silberman complained in the early 1970s that the “education of the educator” was the most neglected aspect of teacher training in the USA. The same could be said today of programmes that operate to narrowly prescribed standards, rely heavily on apprenticeship, and define success in terms of measured / demonstrated competences. Preparing to be a psychiatrist involves being psychoanalysed oneself. Likewise preparing to be a teacher should involve going through the demanding process of being educated oneself. So teacher preparation should involve training the teacher as well as educating the future educator. For this reason foundation studies (e.g. Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, History of Education) are as much for the teacher as person as they are for the person as future teacher²⁴.

Have we now reached an impasse between the competencies-based standards approach to teacher preparation and more broadly based traditional models, between college / university-based teacher education and apprenticeship-oriented approaches? On this issue the pendulum has swung from an 18th / 19th century situation where teachers were trained wholly or largely through apprenticeship in schools, to an 80% plus college / university-based training up to the late 20th century followed, in the past twenty years, by a return to more heavily school-based approaches in England, Wales and in some American programmes (cf. Great Britain, 1992; Alexander, 2000).

Teaching / learning and teacher education, as we have seen, are complex and do not operate to simple formulas or lend themselves to simplistic approaches. For Goodlad (1990b), “educating educators better and differently means that we must abandon the commonsense clichés for reform that inevitably prevail when we lack an understanding of what is wrong” (p. 25). Polarised and clichéd thinking of this nature has, in my view, prevented planners from seeing that, in truth, neither schools / teachers or colleges / universities can adequately train and educate teachers on their own because neither has access to the full range of knowledge, expertise, up-to-date experience, and practical wisdom that is necessary to do the job satisfactorily. In this regard TheodoreSizer (1984) said:

Teacher educators can ... only save their souls by joining with their colleague professionals in the schools in an effort to redesign the ways that students and teachers spend their time in order that effective teaching, and thus learning, can take place (p. 8).

²⁴ Curriculum theory and development, and the content areas one has to master in order teach them at either primary or secondary level, also contribute to the education of the educator.

Similar shortcomings obtain on the part of schools that are attempting to train teachers largely on their own resources and without the aid of knowledge-producing institutions²⁵. As I see it, the real issue for teacher education is not where it might or should take place but, rather, how it is to be accomplished without doing injustice to the notion of teaching as a profession and teacher preparation as a form of professional education and that will facilitate the involvement of the appropriate education partners (teacher educators, school teachers, inspectors) in the process. When this yardstick is applied to current teacher preparation programmes, their professional shortcomings will soon be evident. In particular, this yardstick casts considerable light on the limitations of the competencies-based standards approach being advocated in EU and OECD circles and provides a salutary warning against confining ourselves to this narrow, limited and limiting version of education and teacher preparation.

In the final analysis, the most effective antidote to a narrowly focused, utilitarian type of teaching is well-educated teachers, which in turn requires well-educated teacher educators. Between them they determine in large measure the quality of what goes on in schools. As Kierkegaard saw his life's work as "smuggling authentic Christianity back into the churches", so the future task of good teachers (and those who prepare them) may well be the smuggling of *education* back into schools.

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²⁵ The present author has suggested the extension of initial primary teacher education programmes in Ireland to facilitate a long period of school-based work well in advance of course completion (Burke, 2000). He envisaged the involvement of all relevant teacher education partners (trainers, teachers, inspectors) in this aspect of the work. More recently, the *Working Group on Primary Teacher Education* (DES, 2002) proposed the addition of one year to the three-year B.Ed. programme. This year would, however, be ring-fenced for school-based and school-focused work.

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