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THE TRANSITION YEAR:
A CASE STUDY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF CURRICULUM CHANGE

Vol. 1

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Alice and Robbie Deane, in honour of their love and support, their belief in the importance of education and their continuing zest for life.

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INTRODUCTION

> In the conventional view of implementation....policy emanates from the top and is carried out through successively lower organisational levels. This view conceptually imposes an artificial degree of order on an inherently disorderly process.[1]

One of the objectives of current educational policy is to encourage and facilitate as many students as possible to continue in full time education after the junior cycle to the extent that 90% of sixteen to eighteen year olds will be completing senior cycle education by the year 2000.[2] Curriculum development is occurring in order to facilitate the holistic development of all students progressing to the end of the senior cycle. The reintroduction of the Transition Year Programme is part of this curriculum development.

In common with Fullan and Promfret's study of twenty-seven American and British implementation studies, this study takes the view that "the implementation process is suggested as a more important research focus than the degree of implementation."[3]

Three strands are involved in a study of the process of implementing the Transition Year Programme in schools - educational change, the process of implementing a new programme and the Transition Year Programme itself.

Implementation

The introduction, implementation and management of a curricular initiative such as the Transition Year Programme have considerable implications for schools. Change in the curriculum requires alterations in both practice in the classroom and in the organisation and culture of the school.

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[1] Richard A. Weatherly, (1979), *Reforming Special Education: Policy Implementation from State Level to Street Level*, p.6.
[2] Department of Education, (1995), *Charting our Education Future*, p.44.
[3] Michael Fullan and Alan Promfret, (1975), *Review of Research on Curriculum Implementation*, abstract.

Curriculum design should entail clarity of thought regarding the relationship between the curriculum itself and factors such as the organisation of the school and the resources necessary to implement it. Hilda Taba maintains that:

> while the organisation of the school and it's institutional facilities should be shaped to implement the curriculum, the reverse is usually the case. The functioning curriculum is fitted into the existing arrangements and shaped by the limitations in these conditions.[4]

Where the conditions necessary to successfully implement a curriculum are not fulfilled a change occurs between what was intended and what actually results. For this reason alone, implementation processes in their context are worthy of much research.

Implementation has been defined as "how the programme looks in operation."[5] This narrow view of implementation is not that intended in the course of this dissertation.

Fullan and Promfret maintain that one of the ways in which implementation has been conceptualised in the literature is "the degree to which the innovation is a product of mutual adaptation between developers' and users' conceptions during planning, adoption and especially the implementation process."[6] Rather than these views of implementation as a product or a result of sorts, this study views implementation as a process. Shipman's definition of the term implementation: "to incorporate the innovation into a school"[7] comes closer to that intended. The focus is on implementation as a process rather than as an outcome of a process.

In the United States, social scientists have increasingly focused on the process of policy implementation partly in an effort to explain the apparent failure of many of the social welfare initiatives of the 1960s. A study by Richard A. Weatherly examines the implementation of Special Education Reform concentrating on relatively unexamined

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[4]Hilda Taba, (1962), *Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice*, p.425.
[5]Jean A. King, Lynn Lyons Morris and Carol Taylor Fitz-Gibbon, (1987), *How to Assess Programme Implementation*, p.7.
[6]Michael Fullan and Alan Promfret, (1975), *Review of Research on Curriculum Implementation*, p.5.
[7]Marten Shipman, David Bolam and David Jenkins, (1974), *Inside a Curriculum Project: A Case Study in the Process of Curriculum Change*, p.60.

limitations to implementation activities including the ways in which "street level bureaucrats", teachers in this instance, limit and alter the implementation of reform objectives.[8] Weatherly describes how those involved confront personal and organisational limitations by "routinising, modifying goals....controlling clients, asserting priorities and generally developing practices that permit them to process the work they are required to do in some way."[9] In a similar way, this study aims to explore the methods of dissemination and support from Department of Education level to local/school level, the process of implementation of the Transition Year Programme at school level and the factors affecting implementation. This study does not attempt to evaluate the outcomes of the Transition Year Programme itself. Outcomes of programmes such as the Transition Year Programme are difficult to evaluate as their aims are broad and virtually defy measurement. Egan and O'Reilly argue that:

> it will never be possible to fully assess what has gone on during the Transition Year. While there should be tangible results, the most important transition that will have taken place is that within the personality of the pupils themselves.[10]

The process of implementing the programme is slightly more accessible as regards evaluation. According to the classic model an educational innovation is to be evaluated by comparing its impact on some critical variables with the results obtained by a control group. This model reveals little about the innovation itself and the way in which it developed in a particular context at a particular site. While this study does employ statistical methods to complement the analysis of data, the aim is not to accurately measure perspectives of aspects of the implementation process. Rather, this study explores the meanings of aspects of the implementation process for those involved in the process of implementing curriculum change and how they relate to and are influenced by their particular setting and by internal and external factors.

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[8]Richard A. Weatherly, (1979), *Reforming Special Education: Policy Implementation from State Level to Street Level*, p.5.
[9]Ibid., p.6.
[10]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1977), *The Transition Year Project*, p.307.

Implementation strategies cannot be discussed or evaluated in total isolation from programme content or development and to this extent these factors are discussed, but only to the extent that they provide context and background information.

Focusing on the implementation process enables us to study the innovation as a dependent variable and allows examination of "strategies and other determinants of change as they affect the degree of implementation in various settings."[11]

There are enormous definitional and methodological problems involved in assessing degree of implementation. The central focus of this study is not whether the programme was implemented but how the programme was implemented. The core of the study is concerned with how the programme was formulated and disseminated at Department of Education level, how the programme was received and developed at school level and what patterns may be discerned that govern the ways educators as a group accept or reject the new responsibilities involved in an innovation such as the Transition Year Programme.

Educational Change

Change itself is a complex phenomenon. In his book *What's Worth Fighting for in Headship?* Michael Fullan describes educational reform as being "complex, non-linear, frequently arbitrary and always highly political"[12] and for many, change can be an experience which leaves them "frustrated and beleaguered."[13] The substantial impact of change on individuals and organisations makes the process of implementing change perplexing and arduous.

Back in the 1970s, when the research on change in schools began in earnest, change was viewed primarily as classroom change - one teacher, one classroom, one innovation. Change is now approached a bit differently. The research on change has

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[11]Michael Fullan and Alan Promfret, (1975), *Review of Research on Curriculum Implementation*, p.4.
[12]Michael Fullan, (1992), *What's Worth Fighting for in Headship?*, p.2.
[13]Olive Keogh, 1996, "Ill Winds Must Blow Somebody Good", *Education and Living*, October 22nd 1996, p.10.

generated an emphasis on process and its context. In new models for change, organisational capacity for continuous renewal and growth points toward the direction of the future and changing the culture of schools - what schools do and how they work is the real agenda. Planning for individual change is only part of changing the educational environment as a whole. Effective change no longer affects one teacher in one classroom, but the very culture of schools.

To give schools the best chance at successfully implementing change, such as a new curriculum, it is beneficial to look to past experience, to the experience of other countries and to academic research, perhaps not for answers, but for signposts. There is a rich and varied literature available on the subject of change in schools and school improvement. Reid and Walker, Fullan, Hargreaves, Sarason, Whitaker and Stoll and Fink are just some of those contributing to a growing body of research in this area.

There has been growing awareness for the need for educational improvement for well over three decades. The social stability that marked the early decades of this century, has been replaced by confusion, chaos and uncertainty. The extent of social and economic, occupational and cultural change has been so great that new responses are required within schools to help pupils acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed for citizenship within contemporary society.

Given their role in the preparation of the generations of the future, the implications of these turbulent changes in technologies, markets and in the organisation of work, careers and personal futures are particularly important to everyone involved in education. The White Paper, *Charting our Education Future* recognises the impact of this world change and "sets out a framework for the development of education into the next century, against a background of a rapidly changing and evolving society."[14]

The enormous task now facing educationists is the implementation of the proposed changes. Reaching the aspirations contained in the White Paper depends on the

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[14]Niamh Breathnach, (1995), *Charting our Education Future*, p.ix.

implementation strategies employed, including the availability of resources and support, and the commitment of all the partners in education to improving the education system.

The Transition Year Programme, along with its unconventional underlying ideology, alternative teaching methodology and variable content, is embedded in a traditional post-primary curriculum and as such it can be expected to cause some difficulties both in its initial implementation and in the long-term effect on the school curriculum, the staff and students. The similarities between the issues arising in the implementation of a single programme such as the Transition Year and in reaching such aspirations as are outlined in the White Paper are clear. Indeed, the lessons learned and the skills developed by staff members during the implementation of a programme such as the Transition Year will be instrumental in long-term staff development and will have use in other innovations in the school.

The Transition Year Programme

The Transition Year is to be distinguished from transition education programmes, the best known of which is perhaps the SPIRAL programme. Transition education programmes have been described as a response from the education system to challenges posed by a vast array of changes in society which have been occurring at an increasingly rapid pace in recent years. Transition education programmes "set out to provide students with opportunities to acquire relevant knowledge, skills and qualities for a successful adult and working life" and "attempt to prepare students for the needs of a putative future economy."[15] Similar initiatives to those in Ireland occurred in other European countries such as France, Germany, Denmark and Italy.

Such transition programmes were introduced in the 1970s shortly after the Transition Year Project was introduced for the first time in 1974. The Transition Year Project

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[15]Adapted from Thomas Kelleghan and Mary Lewis, (1991), *Transition Education in Irish Schools*, p.8.

was originally intended "both as a return to educational fundamentals and as a positive response to challenges posed by technological and cultural change."[16] The programme was designed as a year long programme after junior cycle which enabled students to develop socially, intellectually and emotionally and was used by schools both for students who would leave school at the end of the year and for those who would return to study for the Leaving Certificate. Programmes were, and are, developed locally within guidelines to suit the needs of the students in a particular area. The programme has evolved over twenty years, developing elements of work experience and incorporating material students would otherwise never experience, but the social and personal development aspects of the programme have remained its focus.

In the last twenty years, three discernible attempts to implement the Transition Year Programme nationally can be recognised. The first phase involves the introduction of the original programme by Minister Richard Burke in 1974. At this time it was known as the Transition Year Project. The second surge of activity occurred in 1986/87 when schools were permitted to offer the programme as part of a six year cycle and the programme was called the Transition Year Option. The most recent phase of implementation of the programme began in 1993/94 when the programme was reintroduced in its current form as part of the restructured senior cycle. It is now referred to as the Transition Year Programme. Forces both national and local were responsible for its initial success in the 1970s and its ultimate downfall in the early eighties. The need to reintroduce the Transition Year in 1993/94 would suggest that the implementation of the programme in the mid eighties was not entirely successful either.

The introduction of a new programme into the curriculum is a particularly delicate type of educational change. This is accentuated when the school has the responsibility

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[16]Richard Burke, T.D., Minister for Education, in an address to the Regional Meeting of the Dublin Education Council for Secondary Schools in Synge Street C.B.S. on December 2nd, 1974.

for developing the programme as is the case with the Transition Year. At national level, strategies for implementation must take into account issues such as finance, co-ordination, dissemination, inservice provision, short-term and long-term support strategies and evaluation. Local issues created by the introduction and implementation of the Transition Year Programme in schools include:

- Co-ordination of the programme,

- The development of a teamwork approach,

- Involvement in decision making,

- The necessity for training in curriculum development,

- The development of new resources,

- The development of ties with the local community and employers,

- Evaluation of the programme in the school

These in turn lead to staff development requirements.

This study uses the new Transition Year Programme as a case study in the process of curriculum implementation, suggesting reasons for the lack of sustained success in the 1970s and 1980s and exploring the implementation of the programme since its reintroduction in 1993.

This study aims:

- To analyse the implementation of the programme when it was first introduced in 1974 and reintroduced in 1986 with a view to suggesting why the implementation process was unsuccessful to the extent that the programme was recently reintroduced for the third time. A study of macro and micro factors affecting the programme during its life cycle may suggest successful strategies and pitfalls for the implementation process occurring in the 1990s.

- To examine the current process of implementation of the programme to date, the dissemination strategies and inservice methods, the support, development and evaluation of the programme at national level.

- To investigate the implementation of the programme at school level, how schools are coping with the freedom to introduce and develop a new course to suit the needs of their students, to find out who is involved in the decision making process, which factors are perceived as influential in successful implementation and to explore personal attitudes to the implementation of the programme at school level.

- To review the literature on the implementation of change in schools with a view to exploring similar studies carried out in other countries, highlighting the salient points from research which have bearing on the implementation of a new programme in schools.

Throughout the study, the phrase "Transition Year Project" refers to the programme in operation between 1974 and 1986, the phrase "Transition Year Option" refers to the courses offered between 1986 and 1993 and the phrase "Transition Year Programme" refers to the most recent incarnation of the programme, introduced in 1994. Where any or all three courses are referred to in general terms, the phrase "Transition Year programmes" is used.

Chapter one includes a review of the rich literature concerned with educational change and explores the complexities involved in some key issues arising during the introduction of a curricular initiative such as the Transition Year Programme and the outcomes of research in this area. The key issues covered are: the change process, curriculum development and change, and the successful implementation of curriculum change.

Fullan and Promfret find that:

> the implementation process evolves in response to the environmental
> context, the innovation's characteristics, the planning and adoption
> process, status and power networks within and among groups,

> individual characteristics of group members and strategies used to adopt and implement the innovation.[17]

The first of these factors, the environmental context, is explored in the first part of chapter two which studies the background to the implementation of the original Transition Year Project in 1974. This chapter continues with an examination of the implementation processes involved in the first phase of the introduction of the programme in 1974, the planning and adoption process and the strategies used to adopt and implement the innovation. This section concludes with a study of the reasons why the implementation process failed to the extent that there were only eleven schools offering the programme by 1983.

Chapter two proceeds with a similar review of the reintroduction of the programme in 1986 and concludes with a section analysing the factors affecting the implementation of the programme after 1986.

Chapter three focuses on the reintroduction of the programme nationally in 1993 as part of the restructured senior cycle. This chapter concentrates on issues arising in the first and second phases of implementation in the 1970s and 1980s and those issues emerging in the literature as important to programme implementation. These factors include the context of the reintroduction of the programme, the implementation strategies employed, such as inservice provision, the role of the Transition Year Support Team and the recent evaluation of the programme, undertaken by the Department of Education.

Chapter four details the methodology used in the study. Primary research includes historical research into the introduction of the programme in 1974 and its implementation nationally and at school level. A study of participation rates demonstrates the trends which show that while the project was initially successful in the early 1970s, success was relatively short lived. Similar research documents the implementation of the Transition Year Option in 1986.

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[17]Michael Fullan and Alan Promfret, (1975), *Review of Research on Curriculum Implementation*, pp.6-7.

Further research into the dissemination and implementation of the programme nationally in 1993/94, including interviews with some of those involved in the "train the trainers" inservice programme and in the Transition Year Support Team was carried out prior to the primary research phase of the study.

The primary, school-based research used questionnaires in order to study the implementation of the programme at school level. Six schools were randomly chosen from the area designated as the "Liffey Region" of the Transition Year Support Team. This region was chosen on the basis of geographical location in relation to ease of access during school hours on the part of the researcher. Personal contact was established with either the principal or the Transition Year co-ordinator in each school and three questionnaires were employed, one for the Transition Year co-ordinator, one for the principal and one for those teachers teaching Transition Year classes in the school year 1996/97. Principals, co-ordinators and teachers have different perceptions due to their different roles in the implementation process. The focus of the study is the perceptions of Transition Year teachers. Principals and co-ordinators were surveyed in order to supplement the information provided by teachers on their questionnaires and in order to give a broader view of the implementation process in each school.

Chapter five presents the findings of the study and analyses the results. Analysis is undertaken on a number of levels. Preliminary analysis is largely descriptive and presents the findings of the study in tabular and graphic form for clarity. Further cross-factor analysis shows the emerging patterns and issues arising form the responses of teachers. Where perceptions differ to the extent that an effect on the implementation process would be anticipated, the views of co-ordinators and principals are outlined. Analysis is divided into perceptions of the national implementation process and perceptions of the implementation process at school level. National implementation features such aspects as dissemination of the programme, inservice training and Department of Education support for the programme. Local, school level implementation concerns include the involvement of different groups in decision making, co-ordination of the programme, personal attitudes to teaching the Transition

Year Programme, perceptions of factors affecting implementation, difficulties encountered during implementation and extra help and resources required to continue implementation.

Chapter six outlines the issues emerging from the study in relation to the implementation process in general and specifically, to the implementation process involved in school based programmes such as the Transition Year. Conclusions are drawn on the basis of the primary research with reference to the literature review and to the preliminary research involved in the study of the implementation processes employed in the 1970s and 1980s. Reflection on the issues emerging facilitates the suggestion of scope for future work in this area at a time when the implementation of new programmes is at the forefront of educational reform.

CHAPTER ONE

The Successful Implementation of Curriculum Change:

A Review of the Literature

1.1 Introduction

The OECD report, *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Ireland*, includes the following statement which sums up much of the current thinking on the change process and school improvement:

> The Irish experience in the past three decades, when many innovations have been attempted, demonstrates that structural, organisational and pedagogical reform requires careful long-term planning, high level negotiating skills, resource outlays and a considerable measure of patience.[18]

That these elements are recognised as required for successful implementation is encouraging. If one gives the word "curriculum" its broadest definition, then it would be fair to say that most changes in schools will affect the curriculum either directly on indirectly. When an innovation affects the curriculum, the requirements necessary to forestall the rejection of the innovation are magnified. Externally, ideological forces within society are exercising considerable pressures on curricular issues. Internally, schools grapple with external concerns and strive to change practices and beliefs of those involved internally in order to meet the latest demands.

The implementation of the Transition Year Programme is a recent example of curriculum change in schools. Changing the curriculum is not simply a case of disseminating programmes to schools. The area of curriculum is itself, mired in complex issues and any change in an organisation involves not only resources but people. There is an abundance of literature available on the subject of change in schools and school improvement. Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan recognise the value of reviewing existing subject matter and maintain that "the development and implementation of any changes should be based upon and take account of existing theories and understandings of educational change."[19] This chapter explores some of

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[18]OECD, (1991), *Reviews of National Policies for Education, Ireland.*
[19]Andy Hargreaves, Lorna Earl and Jim Ryan, (1996), *Schooling for Change: reinventing education for early adolescents*, p.5.

the salient issues arising in the implementation of new curricula, drawing on the experience of those involved in curriculum innovation in Ireland and in other countries. The seminal work of authors such as Fullan, MacDonald and Walker, Stoll and Fink, Mortimore, Crooks and McKernan, Shipman and Skilbeck is studied. The work of those involved in implementing transition education projects and the junior certificate programme in Ireland, the Nuffield Integrated Science Project and the Humanities Curriculum Project in Britain and of those involved in similar American projects has also been studied.

This chapter is divided into three broad sections:

- The Change Process,

- Curriculum Development and Change,

- The Successful Implementation of Curriculum Change.

As the focus of this study is the implementation of the Transition Year Programme, particular attention is paid to issues such as school based curriculum development and the implications for teachers and schools as organisations of implementing new programmes with a high level of curricular freedom at school level. Other issues emerging from the literature are also discussed. The chapter ends with a section which draws together the findings from research and suggests issues for focus in primary research on the implementation of the Transition Year Programme.

1.2 The Change Process

1.2.1 A Changing Society:

As we approach the new millenium it appears to many observers that our society as a whole is in the midst of a massive and unprecedented reorganisation and restructuring. The manifestations of this change are obvious. Society is dealing with volatile levels of unemployment, inflation, health-care crises, pollution, environmental disasters, violence and crime. The social, economic and political transformations we are witnessing are accompanied by profound changes in the organisation and impact of

knowledge and information. The global acceleration of change is resulting in many citizens experiencing "future shock", a phrase coined by Alvin Toffler to describe "the dizzying orientation brought on by the premature arrival of the future."[20]

Many writers feel that the perplexity that twentieth century society is facing is due to a crisis of perception. The problem with our perception is that we have existed within the framework of an outdated world-view paradigm where the past has been the foundation and guide to the future. This has especially been true in how society and its various institutions view organisation structures, management, progress and change. This retrospective paradigm has as such aided the advocates of the status quo.

The advent of super-industrialisation and information technology has disrupted and destroyed the underlying assumptions that our society has existed under since the industrial revolution. Progressive and incremental change has proved useless in this shifting environment. Caught between eras, we are experiencing cultural turbulence in a transitional period of great turmoil.

It is vital that the capacity of individuals, groups, communities and societies to change continuously, to become more adaptable, is developed as it is crucial to the success of future societies.

1.2.2 Education in an Era of Social Change:

Major changes in society cannot be regarded as temporary in character. If we consider change in a historical context, we find little to support the view that conditions, economic, technological, social or personal are likely to revert to those experienced in the past. It is envisaged that the technological revolution may well have an effect on the human condition as profound as have the agricultural and industrial revolutions of the past. The implications of this change for everyone in education are far reaching. The role of education in managing societal change is not a new idea. Alvin Toffler, writing in 1970, maintains that: "minimising the human damage wrought by rapid

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[20]Alvin Toffler, (1970), *Future Shock*, p.11.

change can be tackled by expanding man's adaptive capacities - the central task of education during the super-industrial revolution."[21] Throughout *Future Shock*, Toffler suggests that the challenge we face might not be that of adapting to the expected changes, but rather might be that of adapting to the phenomenon of change itself.

Michael Fullan recognises that the main need for change is a result of the fact that it is much more difficult to be a citizen in the 1990s than ever before and "therefore, citizens have to be better educated and know more and be more effective and it is up to the school to play a major role in that."[22] The role of the school is rapidly and continuously changing. New demands on the education system are not solely concerned with preparation of the workforce. Schools of the nineties and of the future are also required to educate students socially and morally. Changes are occurring in what teachers teach and in how it is taught.

The recent White Paper, *Charting our Education Future*, is trying to address the numerous demands on the education system. Provision has been made to reinforce the "fundamental contribution to individual and social development"[23] and to enhance "the contribution of education and training to economic prosperity."[24] Lifelong education, equality and the involvement of parents and the community are also features of the White Paper. The task now facing educationists is the implementation of the proposed changes and it is in this context that focus on the importance of issues in implementation is warranted.

1.2.3 Change as a Complex Phenomenon:

Skilbeck has described curriculum change as "a change in a social system, involving persons, groups, roles, interrelationships, values, established institutional practices and customs, and a shift in the distribution of resources."[25] Fullan recently outlined four

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[21]Ibid., p.397.
[22]Michael Fullan, *The Open Mind*, R.T.E. Radio, October 1995.
[23]Department of Education, (1995), *Charting our Education Future*, p.5.
[24]Ibid.
[25]Malcolm Skilbeck, (Ed.), (1984), *Readings in School Based Curriculum*

main strands of research which we can use to help us understand the change process. The four interrelated areas are - the change process itself, the culture of schools, teacher development and school/outside relationships,[26] all of which hold particular importance in the implementation of a new programme. On the advice of Dalin, we can also add the need for an improved understanding of schools as organisations. He notes that "much of the lack of achievement can be traced back to inadequate understanding of schools as organisations, of the process of change and the management of educational change."[27] Development of teamwork strategies is also an important issue. The 1994/95 Transition Year Programme Guidelines outline as one of the aspirations of the programme, the development of a team approach in the school. In the development of team strategy, knowledge of the school as a social organisation is crucial. Tuohy and Coghlan maintain that:

> Viewing schools as social systems in which there is an integral link between how policy is formulated and implemented, how the work of the school is managed and co-ordinated, how people work together and how the individual teacher finds career satisfaction and contributes actively to the work of the school is essential for a co-ordinated renewal of the Irish education system."[28]

The importance of a team approach, the role of external bodies, staff development and school culture are discussed in part three of this chapter. The following section outlines some of the critical issues involved in the change process itself.

Development, p.5.

[26]Michael Fullan, (1995), "Strategies for Implementing Large Scale Change", Seamus O Suilleabhain Memorial Lecture, Bicentenary Conference, Maynooth College, (1995), quoted in *Issues and Strategies in the Implementation of Educational Policy*, p.19.

[27]P. Dalin, (1978), *Limits to Educational Change: Studies in Educational Change*, p.7, quoted by John Brian Parkin, (1983), *School Self-Evaluation and the Management of Change*, p.23.

[28]David Tuohy and David Coghlan, (1994), "Integrating Teacher Development and School Development Through Organisational Levels", *Oideas* 42, 1994, p.96.

1.2.4 The Process of Change:

The central paradigm for planned educational change through the early 1980s provided an innovation focused perspective on the implementation of single changes in curriculum and instruction. Thinking about change was linear and one found or developed an innovation that would meet the needs and outcomes one had already defined. Not surprisingly, many desired results did not occur.

The literature now recognises a number of reasons why many attempts at innovation fail - lack of match to the environment, lack of follow-through, lack of definition and lack of practice and training in the innovation. In many circumstances change was described as an event. If it was selected and announced, it was assumed that change would then simply happen. Emphasis was on designing and adopting good programmes, not on implementing them.

There is still little descriptive data on the ways in which change is conceived, formulated and executed within a school system but the increasing number of research studies in this area is encouraging, serving to illuminate pitfalls and highlight successful strategies. Reid and Walker, Fullan, Hargreaves, Sarason, Whitaker and Stoll and Fink are just some of those contributing to a growing body of research in this area. The research of the last three decades can be used to help develop an environment wherein change succeeds.

Change manifests itself either as incremental change or as planned change and can have internal or external sources. Central initiatives fail because they do not respond to the cultural complexity of the classroom and locally devised reforms fail for lack of local capacity to manage, resource and sustain the impetus for change. The type and source of change have implications for the implementation process. Both Whitaker, in *Managing Change in Schools* and Hargreaves and Fullan in *Understanding Teacher Development* cite an evolutionary model of change as the road to effective improvement.[29] Change in schools has not been treated in this manner. The political

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[29]Patrick Whitaker, (1993), *Managing Change in Schools* and Andy Hargreaves and

and media treatment of the curriculum debate tends to present the concept of change as an event rather than a process. Gary Granville uses the introduction of the Junior Certificate to illustrate this point. He reminds us that the Junior Certificate was "announced", start up dates were "set", syllabi "issued" and guidelines "published".[30] This is a malaise which, often by necessity, affects many centrally devised innovations including, to an extent, the Transition Year Programme. Frustration with the lack of outcomes foreshadowed by such an approach was a major factor in the initiation of research on the change event, or on what happened between adopting a programme and getting results.

A new model for change, one which reflects a different way of thinking about how change fits into today's educational systems has emerged from the literature in recent years. Fullan maintains that the reality of the new meaning of educational change involves "changes in materials, teaching practices and beliefs."[31] Many of the early efforts at change have been referred to as "first order changes." They are addressed to more superficial elements of the classroom and the school system and do not stress the importance of the organisation to any meaningful degree. However, many of the changes required by current societal and educational demands go deeper than any surface treatment can address, and require "second order changes" - changes that go deep into the structure of organisations and the ways in which people work together. This kind of change is multifaceted, slower, and means changing attitudes, perceptions, behaviours, relationships, and the way people collaborate.

Change is a learning process, a process of re-doing and re-thinking. The elements included in any innovation include new materials, which are tangible and new behaviour, practices, skills and pedagogical styles which are less palpable but more important and more difficult to change. New beliefs and understandings make the

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Michael Fullan, (1992), *Understanding Teacher Development.*

[30]Gary Granville, (1995), "Dissemination and Innovation: The Experience of the NCCA", *Irish Educational Studies*, Vol.14, 1995, p.145.

[31]Michael Fullan, (1991), *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, p.43.

innovation work and internalising and understanding the rationale behind the change is crucial.

From the literature we can draw a number of assumptions about the implementation of significant change:

- Change requires adaptations in content, methodology and beliefs.

- Change is a highly personal experience and means different things to different people.

- Change is highly fluid and as such requires flexibility on the part of those involved and built into the innovation.

- Innovations can change during the implementation process.

- Appropriate inservice education is required if change is to be implemented successfully.

- Change takes time and needs continuous support.

- Change depends largely on teachers' attitudes, concerns, enthusiasm and needs.

- Schools are social organisations and interactions in this context affect the innovation.

- Local conditions should dictate the strategies employed to a certain extent.

- Outside agencies and policy makers need to understand that change is not easy, can be irrational and unpredictable, can fail and "will happen if mandated but is more likely to succeed if the efforts and skills of those at the chalk-face are recognised and valued."[32]

- The characteristics of an innovation can affect the implementation process:
  Innovations should be better than what already exists, should address a need and have built in rewards for those involved. Successful innovations are more likely to be those that are regarded as practical by teachers, "complex enough to be worthwhile but not so complex as to discourage teachers."[33]

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[32]Peter Mortimore, (1993), "The Challenge for Education Systems", *Oideas* 41, 1993, pp.26-27.
[33]Michael O'Leary, (1995), "Curriculum Innovations in the Irish Primary School: an evaluation study of a development education project", *Oideas* 43, 1995, p.27.

The elements important in the actual change process are people, processes, practices, and policies and the secret of change still lies in the applied common sense of the people involved. Ross Douglass maintains that:

> if we become involved in the changes taking place around us, and especially if we can assume some control and ownership over them, change does not have to be as Fullan described: 'a planned journey into uncharted waters with a leaky boat and a mutinous crew.'[34]

1.3 Curriculum Development

1.3.1 Defining "Curriculum":

The literature provides many definitions of the term, ranging from the narrow view of curriculum as content: "a course of study"[35] to the broad: "not only the formal provision of sequenced, agreed portions of disciplines, but also pedagogical organisation, teaching style and evaluation."[36] Crooks and McKernan define curriculum as the "planned educational experiences provided by the school to assist pupils in achieving specified aims or objectives"[37] whereas others would include unplanned experiences of the student in the form of the "hidden curriculum": "those learnings that are largely the side effects of the nature, structure and operations of institutionalised schooling."[38]

Encouragingly, definitions of curriculum used in official documentation have evolved over time. The 1995 White Paper states that the curriculum encompasses

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[34]Ross Douglass, "Of Educational Change, Uncharted Waters, Leaky Boats and Mutinous Crews", Internet Source.

[35]W. Kenneth Richmond, (1971), *The School Curriculum*, p.11, quoted by Daniel Tanner and Laurel Tanner, (1975), *Curriculum Development: Theory into Practice*, p.40.

[36]Malcolm Skilbeck, (Ed.), (1984), *Readings in School Based Curriculum Development*, p.11.

[37]Tony Crooks and Jim McKernan, (1984), *The Challenge of Change - Curriculum Development in Irish Post Primary Schools 1970-1984*, p.2.

[38]D.G. Mulcahy, (1981), *Curriculum and Policy in Irish Post-Primary Education*, p.142.

the content, structure and processes of teaching and learning which the school provides in accordance with its educational objectives and values........it includes those factors that make up the ethos and general environment of the school.[39]

This is a much broader definition than that used in the 1980 White paper on Education: "Curriculum will be taken to mean simply the range of subjects, with their individual syllabi, that are approved for study at a particular level."[40]

Stenhouse cautions that definitions of curriculum do not solve curriculum problems but they do suggest perspectives from which to view them.[41] Our chosen definition of curriculum should reflect current societal trends in order to meet new demands on the system. Whether the changes in education reflect those of wider society or in some way act as a means of changing society, does not affect the simple fact that our schools and the curriculum in our schools are changing.[42] This in turn implies continual curriculum development.

Curriculum development is a multi-dimensional activity and refers not only to the production of new teaching materials but to the improvement of the content, teaching methods, assessment and organisation. McKernan describes curriculum development as "changes (deletions, adoptions, adaptations and modifications) which are deemed to improve the existing state of affairs in classrooms."[43]

The next section asks whether curriculum development should be centralised or decentralised and discusses in particular, school based curriculum development as this

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[39]Department of Education, (1995), *Charting Our Education Future*, p.18.
[40]Department of Education, (1980), *White Paper on Educational Development*, quoted by Tony Crooks and Jim McKernan, (1984), *The Challenge of Change - Curriculum Development in Irish Post Primary Schools 1970-1984*, p.1.
[41]Lawrence Stenhouse, (1975), *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*, p.1.
[42]Tony Crooks, (1981), "Supporting Curriculum Development in Schools", also read at the Education Studies of Ireland Symposium 1980, *Compass*, Vol.10, No.2, 1981, p.27.
[43]James McKernan, (1981), "Organising for Curriculum Development", *Compass*, Vol.10, No.2, 1981, p.37.

aspect of curriculum development is employed in planning and implementing a Transition Year Programme.

1.3.2 Curriculum Development - Centralisation or Decentralisation?

> Local initiatives take a lot of time, central initiatives often seem irrelevant at the local level. This is the catch 22 of curriculum development.[44]

There is a growing consensus among commentators that neither of the two main patterns of curriculum production, management and development - the highly centralised, national model or the localised school based model - is the panacea for the various problems encountered in dealing with school programmes. Hopkins et al note that there are "seemingly contradictory pressures for centralisation and decentralisation, yet neither approach works."[45] Gary Granville cites the work of Arieh Lewy and notes that in Lewy's survey of the international trends in curriculum development, there is a growing inclination towards a compromise between the two approaches and he points out the complementary nature of national and school based curriculum development.[46]

Most projects currently start with a centralised organisation as opposed to arising through the initiative of groups or individuals at local level. The combined context of contemporary teaching, of curriculum development and of school organisation have supported this approach. Many of the changes currently occurring in schools are part of a national change agenda, schools are somewhat powerless regarding educational reform due to centralisation. The key is to find a balance. The centralisation of the Department of Education has lead to its being described as "a classic, highly

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[44]Marten Shipman, David Bolam and David Jenkins, (1974), *Inside a Curriculum Project: A Case Study in the Process of Curriculum Change*, pp.65-66.

[45]David Hopkins, Mel Ainscow and Mel West, (1994), *School Improvement in an Era of Change*, p.4.

[46]Arieh Lewy, (1991), *National and School Based Curriculum Development*, quoted by Gary Granville, (1995), "Dissemination and Innovation: The Experience of the NCCA", *Irish Educational Studies*, Vol.14, 1995, p.153.

centralised bureaucracy."[47] It has been suggested that the establishment of Regional Education Boards would reduce the distance between the policy makers and schools and move the locus of decision making, and hopefully support, closer to the school and the community. The merits of decentralisation have been discussed in the literature on school improvement. Three conclusions emerge from the OECD report on decentralisation and school improvement:

> 1. The decentralisation of decision making as part of school
> improvement establishes new roles and responsibilities for education
> officials, school leaders, teachers and parents.
>
> 2. Central authorities need to ensure that those assuming new roles
> have developed, through inservice training, the capacities to meet their
> new responsibilities. External support for schools must be continued
> even if it is no longer carried out by the central authorities.
>
> 3. The management of change requires a strategy which considers
> change as a dynamic and evolutionary process. Following from a clear
> vision of the expected results of change, the strategy should anticipate
> tensions and difficulties but also allow for adaptations and adjustments
> as the change proceeds.[48]

This last point supports much of the literature on the change process in schools, including Fullan's "Ready, Fire, Aim" philosophy which augments introducing change in a manner which allows flexibility to alter the innovation as it is implemented rather than beginning with a set idea as to the final outcome.

The literature agrees that the role of the centralised body is changing. In his interview on *The Open Mind*, Fullan talked about these changes and envisaged centralised departments as having an overseeing role, "to provide data and be a positive pressure

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[47]OECD, (1991), *Review of National Policies for Education - Ireland*, p. 36.
[48]OECD, (1989), *Decentralisation and School Improvement*, p.2.
adapted from quote in David Hopkins, Mel Ainscow and Mel West, (1994), *School Improvement in an Era of Change*, p.15.

force."[49] One aspect of this change in the role of the centralised body is manifest in the production of guidelines for the Transition Year Programme rather than a prescribed syllabus. This allows for school based curriculum development.

1.3.3 School Based Curriculum Development:

Skilbeck defines School Based Curriculum Development (SBCD) as:

> a comprehensive change whereby the child's overall school learning programme and the situations and activities which sustain it are designed and implemented by the school community.[50]

He argues that "the greatest single inhibitor of School Based Curriculum Development in the English system of education is the hold of public examinations, not only on teachers but on parents and students."[51] The Transition Year Programme provides an exam free opportunity for school based curriculum development and provides an opportunity to examine how the two strands of central and local initiative can knit together to provide worthwhile programmes for students.[52] In this context the ideal situation would create the term "Community Based Curriculum Development" in which all stakeholders in the community are involved in developing a programme to suit the needs of the student group.

Skrtic makes the case that where schools are achieving excellence they are doing so because the teachers and administrators are acting in an "adhocratic" manner. That is,

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[49]Michael Fullan, *The Open Mind*, RTE Radio1, October 1995.

[50]Malcolm Skilbeck, (1980), *Core Curriculum and the Role of the School in Curriculum Development, Monash Public lectures: Education in the 1980s*, quoted in James McKernan, (1981), "Organising for Curriculum Development", *Compass*, Vol.10, No.2, 1981, p.39.

[51]Malcolm Skilbeck, (Ed.), (1984), *Readings in School Based Curriculum Development*, p.4.

[52]A number of models for school based curriculum development are available including those by Malcolm Skilbeck, (1976), *School Based Curriculum Development* in J. Walton, and J. Welton, (Eds.), (1976), *Rational Curriculum Planning: Four Case Studies*, and one by James McKernan, (1981), "Organising for Curriculum Development", *Compass*, Vol.10, No.2, 1981, pp.40-41.

they are thinking and acting like a group of problem solvers.[53] Traditional forms of school organisation, notably the professional bureaucracy, work against such an orientation by expecting schools to provide standardised services. The richness of increased teacher involvement means that non-standardised solutions, "those that develop at the individual school site using rules from outside as a frame work"[54] will be possible. Crooks and McKernan give a similar view maintaining that:

> schools are moving into a more open curriculum environment in which they are taking more responsibility for the provision of curriculum and thus creating a greater diversity of programmes.[55]

School based curriculum development requires changes in school culture. Whitaker advises that education managers should help to create a culture of change and help colleagues to develop "a psychological metabolism sturdy enough to cope with higher levels of anxiety and disorder."[56] Fullan gives practical advise when he talks about "finding our fifteen percent"[57]- taking a small piece of a new policy that we know is relevant to our local conditions and concentrating on it. This view is shared by Callan: "Developing 'local meanings' on national proposals through evaluating their relevance to the local context" is crucial.[58]

There has been a growing interest in individual schools or Vocational Education Committees reviewing the curriculum which they offer to their students. *The Extra*

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[53]T.M. Skrtic, (1991), "Behind Special Education: a critical analysis of professional culture and school organisation", in David MacKinnon and Margaret E. Brown, (1994), "Inclusion in Secondary Schools: an analysis of school structure based on teachers' images of change", *Education Administration Quarterly*, Vol.30, No.2, May, 1994, pp.147-148.

[54]Paul Goldman, Diane M. Dunlap and David T. Conley, (1993), "Facillitative Power and Non-standardised Solutions to School Site Restructuring", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol.29, No.1, Feb. 1993, p.72.

[55]Tony Crooks and Jim McKernan, (1984), *The Challenge of Change - Curriculum Development in Irish Post Primary Schools 1970-1984*, p.3.

[56]Patrick Whitaker, (1993), *Managing Change In Schools*, p.9.

[57]Michael Fullan, *The Open Mind*, R.T.E. Radio 1, October,1995.

[58]James Callan, (1994), *Schools For Active Learning: Final Report*, p.30.

Year: Enrichment in the School Curriculum[59], suggests a series of steps by which a school may review its curriculum, and establish its own priorities for development. *Undertaking School Review,*[60] also broaches the subject of school development and more recently, a book entitled *Whole School Development: Taking Ownership of the Process*[61], highlights the stages involved in the whole school development process.

Mulcahy maintains that:

> the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to meet the practical, vocational, recreational and philosophical demands of living are seen as the main values to be promoted through the curriculum. The curriculum in turn must be designed and implemented with due recognition of the practical and pedagogical realities of schooling.[62]

The following section discusses this vital issue, the process of implementing curriculum change.

1.4 The Implementation of Curriculum Change

1.4.1 Introduction:

Peter Mortimore maintains that there are two aspects of educational change: what changes to implement (Theories of education) and how to implement them (Theories of change).[63] This sections deals with the implementation of curriculum reform. The definition of implementation referred to here is similar to that of Shipman who defines implementation as "to incorporate the innovation into a school."[64]

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[59]IACD, (1983), *The Extra Year: Enrichment in the School Curriculum, Report of the working party established by the IACD.*
[60]Cynthia Fogarty and Tony Crooks, (1987), *Undertaking School Review.*
[61]Patrick Diggins, Eileen Doyle and Donald Herron, (1996), *Whole School Development: Taking Ownership of the Process.*
[62]D.G. Mulcahy, (1981), *Curriculum and Policy in Irish Post-primary Education,* p.98.
[63]Peter Mortimore, (1993), "The Challenge for Education Systems", *Oideas* 41, p.13.
[64]M.D. Shipman, (1974), *Inside a Curriculum Project: A Case Study in the Process of Curriculum Change,* p.60.

For every curriculum development initiative which is successfully implemented there are many that don't reach the school and many that, when they do, alter beyond recognition from the original design. Callan maintains that:

> research on significant curriculum change demonstrates that because of flawed implementation, new proposals were either adapted to fit what existed in schools or were abandoned allowing the system to remain essentially untouched.[65]

One of the reasons for this is the treatment of curriculum design and implementation. Curriculum design has been viewed as a more or less discrete activity and curriculum implementation has been treated by many writers as a sub-category of the more general question of how to introduce and establish initiatives.

Most of those who have been engaged in innovation as a field study have been looking for ways to ease the path of those wishing to implement innovations but Barrow concedes that research into implementation cannot claim to have succeeded in revealing any certain laws.[66] This is largely due to the complexity of curriculum change which has been recognised for decades. In the early 1970s Shipman wrote that "curriculum change does not proceed through a clear cycle from a statement of objectives to an evaluation of the learning strategies used. It is a process of bargaining, negotiation and horse-trading"[67] and Bridgham notes that:

> new curricula can be thought of as trajectories through space; they are properly defined not by single lines but rather by envelopes containing an infinite set of "allowed" solutions to the problems envisaged by curriculum designers.[68]

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[65]James Callan, (1993), *Senior Cycle: Planning for Change, ASTI Annual Conference 1993*, p.25, citing Cuban, (1988), and Sarason, (1991).

[66]Robin Barrow, (1984), *Giving Teaching Back to Teachers*, p.226.

[67]Marten Shipman, David Bolam and David Jenkins, (1974), *Inside a Curriculum Project: A Case Study in the Process of Curriculum Change*, p.43.

[68]R.D. Bridgham, in E. W. Eisner, (Ed.), (1971), *Confronting Curriculum Reform*, quoted by William Reid and Decker Walker, (1975), *Case Studies in Curriculum Change*, pp.249-250.

1.4.2 Innovation Theory:

Twenty years of research on change in schools has provided a wealth of information on processes that work and do not work. For many, however, the successful implementation of new programs and processes remains a dilemma.

Innovation theory has emerged through study of how new ideas spread from their point of origin and gain widespread adoption. This question is central to any system of planned change on a large scale. The problem with many initiatives is not the problem of creation but the failure to achieve the mass conversion to new aims, methods or content they aspire to. Rogers and Shoemaker's early theory of social change - "invention, diffusion, consequences", was criticised as an account of an innovation process in which additional stages of development, integration or reinterpretation feature prominently.[69] Havelock, Schon and House also individually developed models for the process of invention and diffusion of innovation.[70] Havelock offered a three model classification comprising a "Social Interaction" perspective, a "Research, Development, Diffusion" perspective and a "Problem Solving" perspective. In most centrally devised innovations, the Research, Development, Diffusion (R, D and D) model would be that most often employed. Writing in 1985, Dennis notes that:

> The traditional model for innovation in Ireland could be said to have been the research, development, diffusion model because educational and curricular decisions were highly centralised with little or no innovation at the local level.[71]

The popularity of this system has been reduced recently with the increased involvement of teachers in curricular control but elements of the model are still discernible. The model looks at the process of change from the point of view of the

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[69]Barry MacDonald and Rob Walker, (1976), *Changing the Curriculum*, p.7.
[70]Ronald Havelock, (1971), *Planning for Innovation Through the Dissemination and Utilisation of Knowledge*, Donald Schon, (1971), *Beyond the Stable State: Public and Private Learning in a Changing Society*, Ernest House, (1974), *The Politics of Educational Innovation*, detailed accounts of these models are given in Barry MacDonald and Rob Walker, (1976), *Changing the Curriculum*, pp.7-22.
[71]Eugene F. Dennis, (1985), "In-Service Education Provision and the Teacher - Some Findings and Implications", *Compass*, Vol.14, No.1, 1985, p.35.

originator of the innovation and depicts the process of change as an orderly sequence of events. In this model, the receiver of the innovation remains essentially passive. In the implementation of the Transition Year Programme there are elements of the "Problem Solving" model in that the receiver of the innovation has some input into "solving the problem". MacDonald and Walker write, that in the R, D and D model "the external change agent is concerned mainly with preparing and disseminating packaged solutions.....in the problem solving model he acts as a resource consultant, working in a non directive relationship with his clients."[72] House's focus involves a "personal contact" theory of innovation. He argues that the problem for innovation diffusion is "how to extend the contact network of teachers and break down the barriers that prevent the formation of personal contact networks that cut across levels of the educational hierarchy."[73] His theories are particularly useful in discussing how innovative ideas and programmes formed in schools can be diffused within and among schools.

By 1974, criticism of the R, D and D model had grown due to failures in the curriculum reform movement of the 1960s. This led to the addition of two more stages on to the basic three stage model of research, development and diffusion. These stages were adoption and implementation. Adoption referred to the receivers decision to "use" the innovation while implementation referred to its realisation.

Those involved in Shipman's study recommend that the alternative model suggested by Hoyle: "invention, development, diffusion and adoption" is more suitable rather than the "research, development, dissemination" model of change, arguing that it is more compatible with school based curriculum development.[74] In the light of the experience of curriculum innovation in the last three decades the five stage model of research, development, diffusion, adoption and implementation seems most credible.

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[72]Barry MacDonald and Rob Walker, (1976), *Changing the Curriculum*, p.11.
[73]Ibid., p.20.
[74]E. Hoyle, 1972, "Facing the Difficulties", *Unit 13 of Course E283 Open University*, quoted by Marten Shipman, David Bolam and David Jenkins, (1974), *Inside a Curriculum Project: A Case Study in the Process of Curriculum Change*, pp.118-119.

MacDonald and Walker note the political implications of curriculum development. The assumption that dissemination and implementation are technical problems giving rise to technical solutions is problematic.[75] These technical problems are embedded in debates in the arena of the control of education. This point is furthered by a CERI report entitled *Styles of Curriculum Development*, which maintains that "the way in which you set about curriculum development is determined by tacit assumptions about values - social, political, educational."[76] While discussion of this aspect of curriculum development is outside the scope of this piece, it is worth noting the possible ramifications of the use of particular styles of curriculum development.

Regardless of which model is employed, the stages involving dissemination to the school and implementation in the school are perhaps most important and it is on these stages that the primary research part of this dissertation will focus. The next section explores the process of dissemination and leads into a discussion of the process of implementation which is the focus of the rest of this chapter.

1.4.3 Dissemination:

Dissemination of an innovation is essential if projects are to have any viability outside the institutions in which they are formulated. The term "diffusion" which denotes a naturally occurring process, has gradually been replaced in the literature by the term "dissemination" which indicates planned pathways for the transmission of new ideas and practices from their point of origin to areas of potential implementation.

Shipman defines dissemination thus: "to inform potential adopters about the innovation"[77] and the OECD define dissemination as:

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[75]Barry MacDonald and Rob Walker, (1976), *Changing the Curriculum*, p.29.
[76]OECD: Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), (1972), *Styles of Curriculum Development*, p.7.
[77]Marten Shipman, David Bolam and David Jenkins, (1974), *Inside a Curriculum Project: A Case Study in the Process of Curriculum Change*, p.60.

the effective conveyance of a tested innovation as widely as possible within an education system in such a way that all concerned are encouraged to accept and implement the change.[78]

If we concede that most curriculum innovations have been centrally devised by either the Department of Education or a Curriculum Development centre, dissemination of the project to schools is the first hurdle in the implementation process. In the case of the Transition Year Programme "dissemination" has consisted of the circulation of guidelines to schools, rather than the distribution of strict instructions on curricular content.

Dissemination is far more than the simple distribution of paper or products. The effective dissemination process is dependent upon and influenced by an array of environmental and individual user characteristics. Effective dissemination requires an understanding of the change process. Effectiveness requires the disseminator to be aware of how the user, source, content, context, and medium are configured and how they will directly influence utilisation. School based curriculum development creates problems in the area of dissemination. Writing about the Integrated Humanities Project, Rudduck and Kelly claim that the dissemination of the Integrated Humanities Project was made difficult because its strength lay in its respect for the individuality of schools: "community oriented curriculum will find itself at odds with conformity."[79]

Schon outlines a number of models of dissemination which were employed in curriculum projects of the 1970s and 1980s. The three main models are:

- centre periphery models

- proliferation of centres models

- shifting centres or learning systems network model.[80]

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[78]OECD, (1971), *The Management of Innovation in Education.*

[79]City of Dublin CDU, (1973), *Report on Feasibility Year 1972-73,* p.3, quoted by Jean Rudduck and Peter Kelly, (1976), *The Dissemination of Curriculum Development,* p.42.

[80]Donald Schon, (1971), *Beyond the Stable State: Public and Private Learning in a Changing Society,* quoted by Robin Barrow, (1984), *Giving Teaching Back to Teachers,* p.222.

There are elements of the second and third of these models in the implementation of the Transition Year Programme. The proliferation of centres model makes of the primary centre a "trainer of trainers."[81] This model differentiates primary and secondary centres, where secondary centres engage in the diffusion of innovation while primary centres support and resource the secondary centres. The regional Transition Year Support Teams could be regarded as "secondary centres." The learning systems network model is testament to the success of networking. Crooks maintains that "the essence of a network is the communication between people and out of that communication and sharing of ideas, will come development."[82] This sharing of ideas is one of the implications for teachers of the implementation of new initiatives such as the Transition Year Programme in which much curriculum development occurs at school level.

The goal of dissemination is utilisation, or implementation of effective programme strategies. Dissemination itself is not implementation. The one-way flow of written information and mechanical, "traditional" dissemination approaches have not proven to be effective in encouraging the adoption and implementation of new programmes and strategies.

1.4.4 Implementation:

Information alone generally is not enough to assure that a new approach will be implemented successfully and in ways that meet the unique circumstances of those involved. Technical assistance - in the form of consultations, specially tailored materials and information and training are usually needed to help adapt strategies and to address the barriers involved in the implementation process. Miles remarks that

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[81]Barry MacDonald and Rob Walker, (1976), *Changing the Curriculum*, p.15.
[82]Tony Crooks, (1981), "Supporting Curriculum Development in Schools", also read at the Education Studies of Ireland Symposium 1980, *Compass*, Vol.10, No.2, 1981, p.34.

"innovations with built in implementation supports should diffuse more rapidly than those not so supported."[83] One of the most effective ways to increase utilisation - and to improve the quality and relevance of material - is to involve potential users in the planning and implementation of the material design itself.

The long-term commitment necessary for successful implementation and continuation is hard to maintain. Schools and teachers get involved in new things to make the educational process better and to improve themselves or their students' capacity to learn. Yet reaching outcomes requires keeping up the pressure, getting past initiation to the real work of change - work that progressively has taken on new dimensions and new possibilities. In the case of the Transition Year Programme there is the added dimension that the problems with introducing a new course are different to those of single subject curriculum projects and new departures in curriculum development are required.

Facilitating the utilisation of information once it is disseminated is a complex process; many barriers exist, both in the steps necessary for implementation and in the skills, attitudes, and awareness levels of people and organisations. Research demonstrates that the following factors are related to achieving the utilisation of disseminated information:

1. All parties involved in the utilisation or implementation process must be able to contribute to planning

2. The information provided must include details of content, context, and resources needed before implementation can be planned in sufficient detail

3. Participants will more effectively implement change if they, themselves, understand the process and the flow of activities that will be involved

4. Programmes and practices must be flexible enough to meet the particular needs of each individual school

5. The utilisation process requires time and support from beginning to end

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[83]Matthew Miles, (1964), *Innovation in Education*, p.637.

6. It also requires personal involvement. "Outside organisations must provide some level of in-person support including follow-up and ongoing feedback and exchange."[84] Barriers to implementation of innovation are described by Gross, Giaquinta and Bernstein who remark that the "resistance to change" explanation of the failure of innovation ignores the whole question of barriers that may be encountered in the process of implementation. They list some of the barriers they diagnosed as:

1. Lack of clarity about the new innovation to organisation members

2. Teachers lack of skills and knowledge to carry out the implementation

3. Unavailability of equipment and materials

4. The existence of a set of organisational arrangements existing prior to and during the innovation's introduction that were incompatible with the innovation.[85]

Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan identify the following as the main barriers to the implementation of new programmes:

- The co-existence of more conventional and specialised curriculum requirements at a
   higher level of the school or education system

- The persistence of traditional patterns of assessment and assessment requirements

- Parental pressure for traditional academic standards and subject based qualifications

- The presence of staff who have developed log-standing attachments to their
   disciplines

- The importance of personal identity and of maintaining subject boundaries

- Excessive speed of implementation

- The dangers of interdisciplinary courses or programmes balkanising staff into
   'insiders' and 'outsiders'

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[84]John D. Westbrook and Martha Boethel, "General Characteristics of Effective Dissemination and Utilisation", Internet Source.
[85]Nelson Gross, Joseph Giaquinta and Marilyn Bernstein, (1971), *Implementing Organisational Innovations: A Sociological Analysis of Planned Educational Change*, quoted by Lawrence Stenhouse, (1975), *An Introduction to Curriculum Development*, pp.210-211.

- Problems of bureaucracy and work overload

- The risk of burnout

- Threats to teacher careers

- A need for a clear sense of practicality

- The need to create a culture of school collaboration.[86]

Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan's study involves the American system, the transition from elementary to secondary school - grades 7-9, and the introduction of a new transition curriculum for students which encompasses interdisciplinary and cross-curricular work. Although in a different setting, it is apparent that many of the issues arising mirror those which arise in the implementation of the Transition Year Programme in Irish schools.

In the last thirty years research has moved from a concentration on how changes were implemented in schools to research on staff training, leadership and characteristics of schools which appear congenial to change. Some research has focused on the school as a centre for change focusing on the capacity of schools to improve themselves.

Research has produced many lists detailing the factors affecting change and advice on which components need to be developed in schools and several themes reoccur throughout research. Among these Hopkins, Ainscow and West's "Messages about Change"[87] and Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan's list referring to "The Difficulties of Educational Change"[88] encompass the thinking of many other authors. Particularly useful are Fullan's "Eight Lessons of Change":

- You can't mandate what matters

- Change is a journey, not a blueprint

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[86] Andy Hargreaves, Lorna Earl and Jim Ryan, (1996), *Schooling for Change: reinventing education for early adolescents*, pp.106-109.

[87] David Hopkins, Mel Ainscow, and Mel West, (1994), *School Improvement in an Era of Change*, p.40.

[88] Andy Hargreaves, Lorna Earl and Jim Ryan, (1996), *Schooling for Change: reinventing education for early adolescents*, p.162.

- Problems are a positive influence

- Vision and strategic planning come later

- Individualism and collectivism must have equal power

- Neither centralisation nor decentralisation works

- Connection with the wider environment is critical

- Every person can contribute to change.[89]

Stoll and Fink give a list of the characteristics amenable to successful change which encompasses the factors cited by many authors when they describe their findings from the Halton Project:

- Fundamental conditions of school culture pervade

  the planning process,

- The role of leadership is crucial to change,

- Principal and teacher mobility can negatively affect change,

- The role of the central office is important to school change,

- Staff development is the key change strategy,

- Change processes must integrate multiple innovations,

- Goal setting proceeds from a school-wide focus to a

  classroom focus,

And they conclude that "changing schools and changing cultures is a slow process requiring patience and persistence."[90]

Implementation requires more than the dissemination of the outline of new programmes and their suggested teaching materials and methods. The *Schools For Active Learning* project sought to facilitate the implementation of the Junior Certificate programme and helps explain some of the problems in the implementation of large scale changes. The Final Report finds that:

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[89]Adapted from Michael Fullan, (1993), *Change Forces*, p.35.
[90] Louise Stoll and Dean Fink, (1994), "Voices from the Field", *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, Vol.5, No.2, 1994, pp.158-160.

issues relating to classroom/school practices and their associated value systems, and issues of power and tradition are human issues. In essence, change is more a human process than a technical process and this has implications for the style and pacing of change.[91]

Many issues arise in an exploration of the implementation of change. The implications of the innovation for teachers, the news skills and competencies required, changes in school culture resulting from new programmes and staff development requirements raised by the changes are all salient points requiring discussion.

The following sections describe those issues arising in the literature which have implications for the implementation of the Transition Year Programme in schools.

1.4.5 Implications for Teachers:

Teachers are called upon to be integrated *and* specialised, standardised *and* variegated, local *and* global, autonomous *and* accountable, embracing change *and* continuity. [92]

The individual is perhaps the most effective agent of change and as such can operate to maintain the status quo. Reid and Walker see the case for regarding the teacher as one of the main sources of curriculum stability as the one which has most support from both research studies and from general consideration of the nature of educational systems. They maintain that "in any process where human, social and institutional complexities impose themselves, they need to be accommodated in the design stage as well as the implementation stage - in fact the attempt to distinguish the two may be a mistake."[93]

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[91]James Callan, (1994), *Schools For Active Learning: Final Report*, p.1.
[92]Andy Hargreaves, Lorna Earl and Jim Ryan, (1996), *Schooling for Change: reinventing education for early adolescents*, p.164.
[93]William Reid and Decker Walker, (1975), *Case Studies in Curriculum Change*, p.246.

The "people factor" outweighs the importance of structures and organisations when deciding on, implementing and evaluating change. Hopkins, Ainscow and West find that:

> if we are to take the subject of change seriously by considering whether it has a positive impact on teaching and the progress of students, then we must realise that educational change is ultimately an individual achievement.[94]

Fullan maintains that changes in behaviour precede changes in belief and this is supported in the final report of the *Schools For Active Learning* study which discovered that people do not learn new understandings until they have gained critical understandings of their work.[95] This results in the participants finding the meaning of the changes for themselves in their situation which can be extended to the organisation. Similarly, in Shipman's study of the Schools Council Integrated Studies Project he noted that many teachers realised the importance of the theoretical discussion of integration only after they had experienced the practical difficulties of implementing Integrated Studies in their schools.[96]

The implications for teachers are manifold and create feelings of fear of change often leading to resistance to innovation. Concerns about alterations in relationships with students, increased workload, threat to standards of work and the desire for freedom coupled with a need for guidelines have been expressed. The principal issues include the following: - timetabling implications, demands on teachers, teacher development and new roles for teachers. Hargreaves et al recognise that:

> just like students, teachers are influenced in their learning by their own approaches to thinking, their knowledge base, their pattern of

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[94]David Hopkins, Mel Ainscow and Mel West, (1994), *School Improvement in an Era of Change*, p.24.

[95]James Callan, (1994), *Schools For Active Learning: Final Report*, p.117.

[96]Marten Shipman, David Bolam and David Jenkins, (1974), *Inside a Curriculum Project: A Case Study in the Process of Curriculum Change.*

intelligences, their ways of learning, the social milieu and their willingness and opportunity to engage actively in any new learning.[97]

The request to experiment and the absence of a clear blue print should encourage innovations tailored to the conditions of individual schools. Yet Shipman found that the teachers simultaneously asked for a packaged deal that would relieve them of the need to work out strategies for themselves. The teachers seemed to demand both a detailed plan of action and freedom to adjust to local school contexts.[98] This finding has implications for the Transition Year Programme. Feelings of inadequacy regarding the personal skills involved in developing and delivering an alternative programme such as the Transition Year Programme or lack of time in which to develop new materials may lead to resistance to change and create barriers to implementation. Within a school one finds many different attitudes to change. Some are willing to experiment and devise their own programmes and others are reluctant to leave the comfort of prescribed curricula. Some feel that prescribed content with freedom to devise methods would be beneficial. Shipman also reports that at the start of the project when the results were not coming through, the workload was at its greatest and the extra work did not seem to be producing compensating rewards. It was this lack that made the question of the work load involved so important.[99] Reid and Walker agree that "the most pressing source of stress on teachers was found in the time and energy expended."[100] These findings are echoed by Egan and O'Reilly in their study of the Transition Year Programme in the late 1970s. Shipman concludes that "the main impact was on the innovating teachers as they felt the strain of doing something new amid a fixed routine" and yet "only the teachers in the classroom can implement changes in curriculum....every change is a threat to teacher-pupil relations

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[97]Andy Hargreaves, Lorna Earl and Jim Ryan, (1996), *Schooling for Change: reinventing education for early adolescents*, p.150.
[98]Marten Shipman, David Bolam and David Jenkins, (1974), *Inside a Curriculum Project: A Case Study in the Process of Curriculum Change*, p.12.
[99]Ibid., p.58.
[100]William Reid and Decker Walker, (1975), *Case Studies in Curriculum Change*, p.77.

and to standards of work."[101] One way of providing comfort during this uncertain time lies in the creation and successful operation of teams. The team is a way of taking collective responsibility for a situation in which teachers and pupils are threatened with dispersion and incoherence and acts as a protection against the isolation which is generally the lot of the teacher in the compartmentalised educational world. Much innovative work is done in teams and Leila Sussmann finds that teams "seem to increase the flow of professional communication among teachers."[102]

1.4.6 Teams, Groups and Human Interaction:

It is envisaged that teachers will engage in more group work in schools of the twenty first century, participating as active members on one or more decision-making teams, engaging in multiple professional development activities, working to change their curriculum and pedagogical repertoire, joining professional networks to talk about and work on new aspects of professional practice, working with colleagues to develop a sense of professional community and a school-wide set of effective teaching strategies and taking responsibility for student achievement. Writers who follow the perspectives of those who work on human relations theory, tend to regard "social relations and particularly the dynamics of formal groups, together with communications as the key issues in the acceptance of innovations."[103]

Another strand of theory is that offered by social psychologists interested in group processes. Teams vary from the formal - a work group, a project team, a committee, a board - to the informal - the ad hoc meeting or discussion, the luncheon group, the clique, the cabal.[104] Studies of group dynamics are still cited in the literature with the

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[101]Marten Shipman, David Bolam and David Jenkins, (1974), *Inside a Curriculum Project: A Case Study in the Process of Curriculum Change*, p.176.
[102]Leila Sussman, (1974), "The Role of the Teacher in Selected Innovative Schools in the U.S.", in OECD General Report, (1974), *The Teacher and Educational Change: A New Role Vol. 1.*, p.42.
[103]William Reid and Decker Walker, (1975), *Case Studies in Curriculum Change*, p.244.
[104]Charles Handy, "On the Working of Groups", in Tony Bush, Ron Glatter, Jane

view that problem solving teams will play an important role with regard to organisational performance in schools of the future. Restructured schools are more likely to demand teachers with high skill levels, positive attitudes to change, and the ability to work collaboratively. Collaboration is an essential element of team work. Hall and Wallace describe collaboration as "a way of working where two or more people combine their resources to achieve specific goals over a period of time" or "joint work for joint purposes."[105]

Deploying teachers in problem solving teams has the potential to not only develop innovative solutions to difficult problems but also to provide a strong sense of professional rejuvenation. Reasons for establishing groups or teams as structural or functional sets include increased productivity, enhanced product or service quality, improved employee morale, reduced alienation, more effective utilisation of labour, better public relations and reduced employee grievances.[106]

Often, regardless of the task set for a group, the collegiality felt by the group is an advantage in itself. Curriculum development initiatives have increased team work in schools. The cross curricular approach to the Transition Year Programme has the potential to reduce subject barriers and increase collaboration.

Henkin and Wanat contend that the selection of team members includes consideration of the skills required, the nature of the task, staff balance and learning.[107] Often, staff teams emerge through a system of nominations or voluntary participation and actual selection does not occur. These teams will struggle unless it transpires that the essential personalities happen to be present or are allowed to develop in team members. Maurice Holt supports this view, finding that:

Goodey, Colin Riches, (Eds.), (1980), *Approaches to School Management*, p.172.
[105]Valerie Hall and Mike Wallace, (1993), "Collaboration as a Subversive Activity: a professional response to externally imposed competition between schools?", *School Organisation*, Vol.13, No.2, 1993, p.103.
[106]Alan B. Henkin and Carolyn L. Wanat, (1994), "Problem Solving Teams and the Management of Organisational Performance in Schools", *School Organisation*, Vol.14, No.2, 1994, p.124.
[107]Ibid., p.122.

> while a committee can be a valuable device for subjecting an innovation
> to scrutiny in the light of different sets of values, it needs to be
> constituted with care if it is to make a success of the task.[108]

Properly executed team work makes the most of the talents of all group members. The complexity of schools as organisations and the pace of change mean that individuals need team work as a support structure in their new roles.

Crooks and McKernan remind us that it is the policy of the IACD that all effective curriculum development involves teachers and maintain that a significant implication of their study is the change in role for teachers. They maintain that teachers should be involved "at each stage of the curriculum process" and should "no longer work only as individuals, but function as a team."[109]

1.4.7 Staff Development and Inservice Training:

> We shall require a very much more effective system of inservice
> training if educational change is to be more than a series of ad hoc
> adjustments at the periphery of the system, or a series of pious plans at
> the centre which even if they do happen to be taken up on a sizeable
> scale, are often seriously garbled in the process.[110]

There is an emerging consensus that high quality professional development is essential to successful education reform. Professional development is the bridge between where educators are now and where they will need to be to meet the new challenges of guiding all students in achieving higher standards of learning. Curriculum development is increasingly accepted as part of the professional responsibility of teachers and is included in many teacher training courses.

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[108]Maurice Holt, (1990), "Managing Curriculum Change in a Comprehensive School: conflict, compromise and deliberation", *Journal of Curriculum Studies,* Vol.22, No.2, 1990, p.146.

[109]Tony Crooks and Jim McKernan, (1984), *The Challenge of Change - Curriculum Development in Irish Post Primary Schools 1970-1984,* pp.137-138.

[110]A. Becher, (1971), "The Dissemination and Implementation of Educational Innovation" Annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Section L, September 1971, (unpublished), quoted by Barry McDonald and Rob Walker, (1976), *Changing the Curriculum,* p.38.

Huberman and Miles outline the need for inservice support of specific innovations and describe this factor as "critical for success".[111] Clearly inservice and pre-service training are needed in the actual process and management of change if change is to be implemented successfully. The impact of change on the individual teacher can be alleviated through staff development. Professional development in the future will be likely to focus on issues such as developing new role definitions and organisational structures; establishing collaborative relationships and helping school staff consider new ways of utilising people, time, space, resources and of developing individual skills. Support must provide time for collaborative processes to be implemented effectively and it must provide professional development to ensure that teachers and administrators have the commitment and strategies to set up effective collaborative practices. If parents, teachers and members of the public who become more involved in school affairs do not receive adequate and ongoing inservice training, school management will be reduced to a "muddling through" decision making activity.[112] The 1980 White Paper stated that:

> Curricular initiatives whether they be by way of introducing new syllabi and courses, new technology or new approaches to teaching and learning, in the last analysis depend on the skills, the attitudes and the professionalism of the teachers.[113]

More recently the 1995 White Paper on Education states that:

> The major changes arising from increased devolution to schools, the critical role for boards of management in the operation of all schools and more structured links with parents and the community create important training needs for teachers, Boards of Management and parents.[114]

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[111]Michael Huberman and Matthew Miles, (1984), *Innovation up Close*, quoted by Michael Fullan, (1992), *Successful School Improvement: the implementation perspective and beyond*, p.23.

[112]Anne Holt and Peter James Murphy, (1993), "School Effectiveness in the Future: the empowerment factor", *School Organisation*, Vol.13, No.2, 1993, p.175.

[113]Department of Education, (1980), *White Paper on Educational Development*, p.52.

[114]Department of Education, (1995), *Charting our Education Future*, p.127.

Encouragingly, it is recognised that all the stakeholders in education need training and continued support in their new roles. With the changes occurring in society it is logical to expect that nothing can stay static and to this end changes are needed in the area of teacher education. New approaches to professional development are needed to implement new organisational structures that promote shared responsibility, collaboration and continual learning for both students and adults. Stenhouse, outlining the importance of self development, has written that "the outstanding characteristic of an extended professional is the capacity for autonomous self-development through systematic self study through the work of other teachers, and through the testing of ideas by classroom research procedures.[115]

1.4.8 Staff Development In Ireland:

> Regarding the restructuring of the senior cycle, the adoption of the laudable aims and features can be achieved relatively simply but their implementation is another matter entirely, demanding a major emphasis on professional development.[116]

It is widely accepted that the amount of inservice training available to Irish teachers has been insufficient. In 1984, the Committee on Inservice Education recognised the shortcomings in the area of inservice. It stated that provision of inservice in Ireland was low by international standards and that it had declined rather than grown in recent decades. The report continued:

> The appearance of official support for the principle of inservice training ....is totally at variance with the niggardly current provision...the quality of teaching in Irish schools will deteriorate if this major neglect is not speedily put right.[117]

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[115]L.A. Stenhouse, (1975), *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*, quoted by Tony Crooks, (1981), "Supporting Curriculum Development in Schools", The Education Studies of Ireland Symposium 1980, *Compass*, Vol.10, No.2, 1981, p.29.
[116]Jim Gleeson, (1990), "A Response to the NCCA Consultative Document on Senior Cycle: Issues and Structures", *Compass*, Vol. 19, No.21, 1990, p.44.
[117]Department of Education, (1984), *Report of the Committee on Inservice*

By the early 1990s matters had not improved. The 1991 OECD report considered the inservice provision as "grossly inadequate, consisting largely of very short term courses more often than not financed by the teachers themselves and dealing with topics chosen in a fairly arbitrary manner."[118] Writing in 1990 Doyle contends that "in general the inservice opportunities made available to teachers and Principals of TYO schools have been very limited."[119] The more recent provision and method of inservice for the Transition Year shows a distinct improvement and is a positive move towards decentralised inservice education.

The EC transition programmes all relied on inservice education and the National Development Plan (1993) agreed between the government and the European Union allocated significant funds to the implementation of a training programme for teachers to facilitate the introduction of more vocationally oriented programmes.[120] McNamara argues that the crucial importance allotted to methods in transition education theory is a function of the type of competencies which are deemed to be needed by young people and that "any curriculum reform implemented without regard to the central importance of methodology could not it is argued result in the acquisition of the required competencies and would be of little benefit."[121] These transition programmes involved teachers in curriculum development and the similar vocational slant to new programmes at senior cycle brings with it inservice requirements.

Education, quoted by Andrew Burke, (1992), "Teaching Retrospect and Prospect", *Oideas* 39, 1992, p.10.

[118]OECD, (1991), *Review of National Policies for Education: Ireland,* quoted by Andrew Burke, (1992), Teaching Retrospect and Prospect, *Oideas* 39, 1992, pp.165-166.

[119]Eileen Doyle, (1990), "The Transition Year Option", pp.19-32 in Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams and Donald Herron, (1990), *Achievement and Aspirations: Curricular Initiatives in Irish Post-Primary Education in the 1980s,* p.30.

[120]Gary Granville, (1995), "Dissemination and Innovation: The Experience of the NCCA", *Irish Educational Studies,* Vol.14, 1995, p.151.

[121]Gerry McNamara, (1991), "Curriculum Innovation and Teaching Skills: preservice and in-service teaching strategies from the first and second European action programmes on transition from school to adult working life 1979-1988", *Oideas* 37, 1991, pp.18-19.

This is recognised by Callan, who maintains that programmes which have a social-vocational life adjustment element, which "mix subject matter with an assortment of outward looking activities"[122] require teacher education programmes which address this "fundamental shift" in terms of skills, knowledge and values. One of the fundamental changes in EC transition programmes was "greater flexibility in the curriculum allowing for teacher involvement in curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation."[123] The influence of this thinking has already had an impact on programmes outside of the mainstream curriculum. Teachers involved in VPTP, Youthreach, and other training schemes have adapted their programmes and teaching methods accordingly with little inservice help. The experience of these programmes demonstrates that effective curriculum reform requires an adequate training response particularly in the area of methodology.

New types of programmes are being implemented in schools in order to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse clientele and a changing society. CERI maintain that "teachers need to be trained in the theoretical and practical matters involved in the deliberation and choice of curriculum programmes, packages and goals."[124] They also maintain that it is necessary to equip teachers with "training and practical support so that the professional confidence might survive the changes."[125] Training is required in other areas besides decision making. In the case of a course such as the Transition Year Programme new teaching methodologies and different relationships with pupils are introduced as well as curriculum development responsibilities. While it may be possible to teach different teaching methodologies and methods of curriculum development through regular inservice training, alterations in the relationships with

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[122]James Callan, (1993), "Teacher Education and Change", *Senior Cycle: Planning for Change, ASTI Annual Conference 1993*, pp.24-25.
[123]Gerry McNamara, (1991), "Curriculum Innovation and Teaching Skills: preservice and in-service teaching strategies from the first and second European action programmes on transition from school to adult working life 1979-1988", *Oideas 37*, 1991, p.17.
[124]OECD/CERI, (1972), *Styles of Curriculum Development*, p.40.
[125]Ibid., p.42.

pupils is more difficult to contend with. The programme also requires on the part of the teacher a different view of the purpose of education, albeit for only one year. The motivation of examinations is removed and the support of prescribed texts and teaching materials is lost. For these reasons, focus on dimensions such as skills and values through professional and personal development is required. Parallels can perhaps be made with the inservice training programme for the Relationships and Sexuality Education course which incorporated a large personal development element instead of focusing on teaching plans, materials and content.

In 1972 the first of twenty-one Teachers' Centres were established by the Department of Education. The centres play a major role inservice education and provision tends generally to consist of one day courses, workshops or lectures for which teachers pay a fee. The importance of the Teachers' Centres was recognised by then Minister for Education Niamh Breathnach, who in 1996 pledged £10 million to fund the building of teachers' centres, providing twenty-one full time and nine part time centres with a further £2 million for supporting projects in the centres.[126]

Apart from the availability of inservice training, the type of inservice is also an important consideration. Eraut asks:

> Is our prime concern with inservice training in which a teacher-*employee* is told what to do and how to do it? Or is it with inservice education in which a teacher *professional* is supported in his professional task of trying to answer the questions himself.[127]

The duality of the professional/employee role has implications for what Dennis refers to as "the most intractable problem in inservice education....that inservice education

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[126]"£10 million for Education Centre Network", *Education Matters*, 27th October, 1996, p.2.

[127]M. Eraut, (1972), "In-service Education for Innovation", Occasional Paper 4: N.C.E.T., quoted by Eugene F. Dennis, (1985), "Inservice Education Provision and the Teacher - Some Findings and Implications", *Compass*, Vol.14, No.1, 1985, p.53.

should aim at both training and professional development - a mutual subsisting of 'ologies' and practical matters."[128] Wildy, Wallace and Parker argue that:

> many change efforts fail because reformers underestimate the difficulty
> of achieving a close relationship between the innovation and the
> appropriate inservice for those involved.[129]

Models of inservice need to be extended to provide continuing support for teachers as they develop new skills and understanding in their classrooms. The crucial importance assigned to methodology, teaching skills and personal development as elements in curriculum reform must be stressed and one day inservice courses do not provide the necessary training.

Decentralised models:

Authorities are turning away from centralised inservice programmes. They are choosing models that promote local initiatives in line with increasingly decentralised educational structures. Such models are seen to be potentially powerful because they promote local rather than central ownership for implementation by using the expertise and dedication of teachers as catalysts for reform. Decentralised models also foster ongoing participation by teachers in their own professional development by building on existing local support networks. The Transition Year in-career development programme uses the "train the trainers" model of inservice education which exhibits many features of the decentralised models used in other countries.

Decentralisation of inservice education involves training a key group of individuals who will facilitate the inservice training. It is thought that these individuals should be those who have acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively organise adult group learning rather than subject specialists. A facilitator has to be grounded in

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[128]Eugene F. Dennis, (1985), "Inservice Education Provision and the Teacher - Some Findings and Implications", *Compass*, Vol.14, No.1, 1985, p.57.
[129]Helen Wildy, John Wallace and Lesley Parker, (1996), "Decentralising Curriculum Reform: The Link Teacher Model of In Service Training", *School Organisation*, Vol.16, No.1, 1996, pp.17-28.

an appreciation of how change takes place in an organisation and the implications of this change for individuals and groups within an organisation.[130]

Wildy et al, describe a system in which link teachers were prepared, a variant on the "train the trainers" model used in Australia to prepare teachers for the implementation of a new senior Physics syllabus.[131] Three day seminars were held in which the link teachers were introduced to the philosophy and rationale engaged in teacher assessment work and were given text books and resources. Teachers spent time preparing subsequent workshops with local colleagues in school districts. Each link teacher was responsible for helping a group of twenty teachers understand the rationale for the syllabus change, become familiar with teaching strategies and assessment procedures. Two day workshops were given by link teachers. It was found that teachers needed support to implement the changes at classroom level and they concluded that the model has the potential to combine "two important elements of successful change programmes: both the top down and bottom up strategies."[132] By combining centralised syllabus change with decentralised implementation strategies, the model shows some promise as a vehicle for curriculum reform.

Both support and pressure are needed for curriculum change. Interaction among teachers seems to be the best way to combine support and pressure and inservice should be designed with this in mind. Wildy et al agree that

> most powerful is the coaching that teachers can provide for each other: personal, practical on the job assistance in the form of technical feedback, guidance and adapting new practices to particular conditions, help in reflecting on their experimentation and encouragement in the face of minor setbacks.[133]

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[130]Seamus O Canainn, (1991), "In-service Education - New Directions?", *Compass,* Vol.20, No.1, 1991, p.34.

[131]Helen Wildy, John Wallace and Lesley Parker, (1996), "Decentralising Curriculum Reform: The Link Teacher Model of In Service Training", *School Organisation,* Vol.16, No.1, 1996, pp.17-28.

[132]Ibid., p.26.

[133]Ibid., pp.24-25.

The system used so far is the "getting the teacher to the message" system. Tutors are employed to teach the teachers. In the light of new technology O Canainn recommends the "getting the message to the teacher" method, using technology in the same way that the Open University uses it for curriculum and school management courses and includes the use of electronic mail.[134]

High quality professional development strategies must incorporate the following principles. Inadequately addressing any of the principles creates a weak link in the connections that must be made to fully realise the potential of individuals, school communities, and institutions to improve and excel.

Quality inservice education:

- Allows teacher participation in the planning stages of inservice provision
- Requires ample time and other resources that enable educators to develop
  expertise in content, pedagogy, and other essential skills to facilitate high
  quality teaching
- Is committed to continuous inquiry and improvement of schools
- Is driven by a coherent long-term plan that incorporates professional development
  as essential among a broad set of strategies to improve teaching and learning
- Is evaluated on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning

Staff development should not be confined to the teaching staff. Principals also need professional development. Schools principals and their management styles are widely acknowledged to be important in the change process. Their role is moving from one of instructional leadership to one in creating an environment congenial to change. Reynolds and Cuttance's view is shared by most authors. They foresaw the need for

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[134]Seamus O Canainn, (1991), "In-service Education - New Directions?", *Compass*, Vol.20, No.1, 1991, p.33.

new management skills in their 1992 work: *School Effectiveness: Research, Policy and Practice*. The new managerial skills they list are:

- a heightened public relations or marketing orientation

- the capacity to relate to parents

- the capacity to find sources of support in local
    communities

- the capacity to manage rapid change

- the capacity to motivate staff when instrumental
    rewards like promotion are rare

- the capacity to relate to pupils, since the wave of
    future consumerism will increasingly involve
    consumer opinion surveys with pupils.[135]

Hargreaves et al make an important point when they talk about "obsessions with inservice training." They maintain that it is assumed that teachers persist with traditional patterns of teaching because they lack knowledge of alternatives, do not know how to use them or are unwilling to try them and they argue that:

> traditional patterns of teaching are not just a matter of individual teacher preference. They are supported by other 'sacred' aspects of secondary schooling - in particular, its organisation around academic subjects and, its continuing use of traditional patterns of assessment.[136]

Unless these sacred aspects of teaching are also addressed, isolated efforts to improve teaching methodology through short-term inservice courses will be ineffective.

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[135] Adapted from David Reynolds and Peter Cuttance, (1992), *School Effectiveness: Research, Policy and Practice*, pp.177-178.

[136] Andy Hargreaves, Lorna Earl and Jim Ryan, (1996), *Schooling for Change: reinventing education for early adolescents*, p.156.

1.4.9 School Culture:

In his book, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, Fullan describes the change process in three broad phases:

> - Phase one starts at a point where there is a felt need to do something
>   new. He calls this the initiation phase.
>
> - Phase two involves the first experiences of attempting to put an idea
>   or reform into practice. He calls this the implementation phase.
>
> - Phase three may be thought of as the final phase of successful
>   innovation - the point at which the change has become part
>   of the life of the school, contributing to the culture. He calls this the
>   institutionalisation stage.[137]

Many initiatives don't reach stage three, or even stage two, for a number of reasons one being the neglect of an important factor - the context in which the change is occurring and its effect on the individual and on the process of implementation.

In struggling to understand the complex nature of change, the context in which the changes are occurring must be taken into account. The context includes such elements as demographic factors, community and societal factors and factors pertaining to the particular school as an organisation. Structural and organisational features of the school and individuals involved in change will be affected. In analysing the influence of organisational structure on patterns of behaviour the interaction between the individual and the structure should be the focus. Sarason maintains that the impact of such interaction over time results in a "subculture" he describes as being "a force not much different and no less powerful than the feelings of morality that bind our larger western culture."[138] If we are to implement significant curriculum change we must have an appreciation of the forces tending to preserve the status quo as well as those making

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[137] Adapted from Michael Fullan, (1995), *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, pp.47-48.
[138] Seymour Sarason, (1971), *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change*, p.231.

for change and must recognise that change requires abandonment of practices as well as adoption of new ones. The institutional context, the factors and forces, the structures and organisational features make up what is known as the "culture" of the school.

Schools have been recognised for many years as being "created by a society for the purpose of reproducing in the learner the knowledge, attitudes, values and techniques that have cultural relevance or currency."[139] Stenhouse describes culture as "an intellectual commodity; and it is the commodity in which schools deal, and out of which they quarry the content of education."[140] In this context the culture of the school itself and the dominant culture in which the school resides have an impact on the curriculum and as such, any change in the curriculum is not only influenced by but affects in turn, this culture.

Culture has been defined as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities acquired by a man as a member of society."[141] There are two aspects of school culture: the culture of the school itself and the societal culture in which the school is operating. The culture of a school can be defined as "the knowledge, beliefs, values, customs, morals, rituals, symbols and language" or the "way of life" of a group of people.[142] The term has been likened to "ethos", which includes the three interlocking aspects that make up school culture - organisational, teacher and student cultures in one word.

Little work has been done on the interaction of these elements but there is general agreement that school culture affects school improvement and change initiatives. Hargreaves maintains that "school culture may be a cause, an object or an effect of

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[139]Hilda Taba, (1962), *Curriculum Development: theory and practice*, p.17.
[140]Lawrence Stenhouse, (1975), *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*, p.9.
[141]E.B. Tylor, (1871), *Primitive Culture*, p.1, quoted by Lawrence Stenhouse, (1975), *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*, p.7.
[142]David Hargreaves, (1995), "School Culture, School Effectiveness and School Improvement", *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, Vol.6, No.1, 1995, p.25.

school improvement" and that it should be a target for school improvement on the grounds that "in due course it will exercise an improving causal influence on other variables and eventually on student outcomes."[143] School culture warrants particular focus in a study of the implementation of change as the culture of the school is one of the factors determining the successful implementation of curriculum change. The institutional context in which new programmes are being realised is an important factor in the success of the innovation. Creating an environmental culture in which change and adaptation are commonplace should be an essential element of school improvement strategies.

Because culture is created by its participants, it inevitably changes as the participants change and evolve. During any change there will inevitably be alterations in power structures and in the roles of individuals. The way in which control of such elements as financial resources, materials, timetabling and student grouping systems are currently organised in the traditional curriculum changes with the introduction of an alternative programme such as the Transition Year Programme. The alternative aims, objectives and values inherent in such programmes are based on different views of knowledge, teaching and learning and require different organisational systems, creating alterations in school culture.

Culture is affected by changes in the structure and organisation of the school. If structures change without changes in school culture the change is likely to be superficial, which is a danger with all externally generated reforms.[144] This is part of the complexity of curriculum change. Schools do not operate in a vacuum and co-operation and collaboration among the stake holders is essential if change is to be successful.

1.4.10 The Involvement of External Bodies:

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[143] Ibid.
[144] Louise Stoll and Dean Fink, (1996), *Changing Our Schools,* p.84.

Effecting significant changes in our curriculum will require:

> meaningful co-operation with responsible agencies; social and economic, outside the school.........The nature of relationships which exist between those who work within schools and those who work outside but in a related way to schools has to be altered.[145]

The school community is not an exclusive one. It must bring together the students, teachers, parents, other local interests and a range of resources, servicing agencies and structures external to the school.[146] The variability of the environment dictates that each situation will be different and must be accommodated as such. Schools as organisations make it difficult for teachers to implement change in the isolation of their own classrooms. A change in organisational behaviour is necessary. For this reason, both inside and outside participation is necessary.

One of the problems in the management of educational change is that the groups involved, those who decide on the implementations, those who implement the changes and those who actually have to change are different groups with different interests and roles. In order for change to be meaningful it must contend with personality differences, conflict of goals, insufficient resources and participants untrained in the process of change. The values and beliefs of the people involved have great impact on the change process. Fullan maintains that if everyone were to study the nature of change, then the large differences in thought about innovation and implementation would be eliminated. The new shared understanding would have a positive affect on school improvement. As discussed, a view held by many authors is that the most important factor in actually implementing change is probably the culture of the school. Sarason maintains that the external spearheaders of change are "massively insensitive to the culture of schools."[147] For this reason increased co-operation between internal

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[145]James Callan, (1994), *Schools for Active Learning: Final Report*, pp.124-125.
[146]Malcolm Skilbeck, (1980), *Core Curriculum and the Role of the School in Curriculum Development, Monash Public lectures: Education in the 1980s*, quoted in James McKernan, (1981), "Organising for Curriculum Development", *Compass*, Vol.10, No.2, 1981, p.39.
[147]Seymour Sarason, (1982), *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change*,

and external bodies in the change process is essential. What is needed is a combination of external support and external pressure, coupled with internal support and internal pressure.[148] This has been proven in case studies. The study by Reid and Walker of the Gary schools amply documents the part played by outside bodies in preserving an equilibrium of initiating successful or abortive attempts to change the curriculum.[149] Shipman maintains that the way to effective curriculum development may lie, not in more efficient projects, but in narrowing the distance between schools and the agencies in education that administer, advise and train, or generate new ideas."[150]

The local community is perhaps one of the most important agents of significant change and probably the most difficult to involve. The core manual of the *Skills For Life Programme* launched in 1996 recognises the integral ties between the school and the community:

> Schools are part of a broad and complex community. They reflect community values and respond to community pressures. To change schools is to understand that something else in the community is changing....parental involvement doesn't just happen, it has to be worked for.[151]

The Transition Year provides opportunities for school, community members, local employers and parents to co-operate to develop a programme suited to the needs of local students. The Transition Year Support Team seeks to foster ties between the school and outside agencies in providing resource materials for example in the study of Europe as a topic. Both community service and work experience modules enable students to create links with the local community and employers. Development of

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p.3.
[148]David Hopkins and David Hargreaves, (1991), *The Empowered School*, p.106.
[149]William Reid and Decker Walker, (1975), *Case Studies in Curriculum Change*, p.250.
[150]Marten Shipman, David Bolam and David Jenkins, (1974), *Inside a Curriculum Project: A Case Study in the Process of Curriculum Change*, p.177.
[151]R. Johnson, (1993), *Partnerships with Parents and Governors* in J. Learmouth, (1993), *Teaching and Learning in Cities*, quoted in Brian Dobson and John Swift, (1994), *The Skills for Life Core Manual*, p.85.

these skills in school will take time and must be promoted through the provision of support and training for those involved.

1.5 Conclusion - Towards The Successful Implementation of Significant Curriculum Change

In an era characterised by rapid societal change, education systems are striving to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse clientele. This involves adopting new programmes and adapting old ones. The needs of such a diverse clientele cannot be met with nationally mandated prescribed programmes. School based curriculum development, in which programmes are devised locally within national guidelines would appear to best serve the needs of students. The implications for those involved in formulating and delivering such alternative programmes warrant focus. Along with the trauma of the implementation process itself, changes in the nature of classroom teaching, relationships with colleagues and students, use of resources and responsibility for decision making create staff training and development needs in order that the challenges raised by such curriculum alterations are met.

Concern has been expressed regarding the implementation of curriculum change in Irish schools. Crooks cautions that "there have been a series of curriculum projects initiated, piloted and, in several cases, evaluated, but no dissemination policy throughout the country."[152] Gary Granville contends that "the failure to disseminate successful innovation....has been one of the most frustrating aspects of curriculum development in Ireland over the past twenty years."[153] At a conference on the changes at senior cycle it was suggested that on many occasions, the introduction of major changes in the education system over the past couple of decades have been undertaken

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[152]Tony Crooks, (1983), "Developments in Curriculum: The Irish Experience", *Compass*, Vol.12, No.2, 1983, p.67.
[153]Gary Granville, (1995), "Dissemination and Innovation: the Experience of the NCCA", *Irish Educational Studies*, Vol.14, 1995, p.144.

with retrospective attention to planning and organisation. If the same approach is adopted to introducing changes at senior cycle the net affect will be to undermine the quality of our present senior cycle programmes and to do irreparable damage to the status of our education system.[154]

Crooks outlines the lessons he feels can be learned from the experience of the last 15 years. They include:

1. The importance of the involvement of teachers in the process of curriculum development.

Crooks expresses concern about the "very restricted view of the role of the teacher in the classroom" and notes that:

> over the years teachers involved in these innovations have shown their ability to devise new courses to meet identified needs, to write materials for classroom use, to become involved more actively in the assessment and examination of their students. This widening of the view of the role of the teacher to include the whole of the curriculum process and not just one aspect of it is one of the most heartening conclusions to be drawn from the experience of the last fifteen years.

2. The need for support and inservice training.

Crooks describes the purpose of inservice training as "teacher development" and believes that in service takes on a new meaning when it takes place in a situation "where the teachers work together and share ideas in the devising of a new course, new materials, new teaching strategies and new assessment procedures to overcome the problems that they have identified within their own classrooms."

3. Reporting, Evaluation, Dissemination.

Crooks cautions that "curriculum projects and individual school initiatives should take place within the clear framework of a national curriculum policy, otherwise support is haphazard, reporting takes place in a vacuum and there is no means of dissemination."

4. Assessment and Examination.

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[154]Charlie Lennon, (1993), "ASTI Policy Changes at Senior Cycle", *Senior Cycle: Planning for Change, ASTI Annual Conference 1993*, p.11.

"Unless there is development in the examination system changes in the curriculum will be relegated to non-examination classes and the periphery of the school week."[155]

Neglect of these factors contributes to what Goodlad, writing in 1967, referred to as the "formidable gap between the intent of curriculum projects and what actually happens in classrooms."[156] While the level of implementation of the Transition Year Programme in schools is outside the scope of this dissertation, focus will be on the factors in the process of implementing innovation that contribute to this gap between rhetoric and reality.

The literature on change highlights a number of issues which warrant focus in the preliminary (1974-1993) and primary (1993-1997) research parts of this dissertation. These include the study of:

1. Methods of dissemination of the Transition Year Programme.

2. Department of Education Support for the programme in the form of inservice provision, curriculum development support, financial support and support in the form of other resources such as materials and time for planning.

3. Issues in the implementation of the programme at school level including study of teacher involvement in decision making, curriculum development and teamwork and the implications of school culture for the implementation process.

4. Teachers' perceptions of the internal and external factors affecting the implementation of new programmes at school level and their personal attitudes to teaching the Transition Year Programme.

5. The role of external bodies.

Other points of interest include issues such as evaluation of the programme and contact with other schools. House's focus on innovation theory involves a "personal

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[155]Tony Crooks, (1983), "Developments in Curriculum: The Irish Experience", *Compass*, Vol.12, No.2, 1983, pp.78-80.

[156]J. Goodlad, (1967), *Rational Planning in Curriculum and Instruction*, quoted by Barry MacDonald and Rob Walker, (1976), *Changing the Curriculum*, p.27.

contact" theory of innovation. He argues that the problem for innovation diffusion is "how to extend the contact network of teachers and break down the barriers that prevent the formation of personal contact networks that cut across levels of the educational hierarchy."[157] His theories are particularly useful in discussing how innovative ideas and programmes formed in schools can be diffused within and among schools. These issues are identified in the literature as salient points in the implementation of curriculum change.

Despite what we can learn from our experiences, there are no easy answers to the questions arising during the implementation of curriculum change. The strength of the literature lies in its ability to illustrate the factors necessary for successful implementation of change but schools are largely left to fend for themselves as regards the development of these factors within schools. Fullan himself admits that the literature seems daunting to educators and stresses that it is best used as "an inspiration rather than a blueprint" for successful change in any school.[158]

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[157]Barry MacDonald and Rob Walker, (1976), *Changing the Curriculum*, p.20.
[158]Michael Fullan, (1992), *Successful School Improvement: the implementation perspective and beyond*, p.18.

CHAPTER TWO

The Implementation of the Transition Year Programme
1974-1993

Implementation is the translation of rhetoric into reality.[159]

2.1 Introduction

Minister Richard Burke first introduced the Transition Year Programme in 1974 as an interdisciplinary programme between junior and senior cycle free from the constraints of public examination. The project was first proposed by Minister Burke in a speech at a T.U.I. function in Dun Laoghaire on April 17th, 1974. In his speech Minister Burke recognised the growing pressures on students for "high grades and competitive success", describing students as being on an "academic tread mill" and schools as "losing contact with life outside."[160]

It was stressed that the programme was not intended as a substitute for the first year of the senior cycle but as an extra year allowing time for intellectual, emotional and social maturation. Each school devised its own programme in co-operation with a Department of Education inspector. Three schools took part in the first year - with a total of sixty-six pupils:

- St. Joseph's College, Garbally, Ballinasloe

- The Model Technical Institute, Limerick

- Sallynoggin Comprehensive School, Dublin.[161]

The programme is referred to in the 1976 edition of *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools*, where it says that the content will include elements of the following:

Social education, Moral education, Education for living (including Homecrafts and Education for Parenthood, Employment and Leisure), Philosophy and Applied logic, Music and the Arts, Irish Studies,

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[159]Louise Stoll and Dean Fink, (1996), *Changing Our Schools*, p.65.

[160]Richard Burke, T.D., Minister for Education, in a speech at a T.U.I. function in Dun Laoghaire on April 17th, 1974.

[161]Department of Education, List of Participating Schools, 1974/75.

Civilisation, Courses for Students of Continental European Languages,
Visual Education, Media Education and Communication Skills.[162]

In 1976/77 sixteen schools offered Transition Year programmes, however, no further
schools were added to the list after 1978. In 1976/77 a report was prepared for the
Educational Research Centre at St. Patrick's College Drumcondra[163] and a full
evaluation incorporating this first report was undertaken for the Educational Research
Centre between 1978 and 1980.[164]

The project was deemed successful according to the criteria set by the evaluators and
it was recommended that the pilot stage of the Transition Year programme be
terminated without delay so that work could commence on the dissemination of the
programme in whole or part to other interested schools.[165] No action was taken by
the Department of Education and no additional schools were allowed to offer the
programme. The number of schools offering the programme dropped in subsequent
years with only eleven schools offering a Transition Year Programme in the school
year 1982/83. Financial aid for the project was withdrawn in 1983. The programme
was reintroduced in 1986/87 with guidelines produced by the Curriculum and
Examinations Board. The CEB was reconstituted as the NCCA in 1987 and new
guidelines were published by the Department of Education. The most recent burst of
interest in the programme has been as part of the restructured senior cycle. Further
guidelines were issued in 1994 and a country wide inservice programme has facilitated

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[162]Department of Education, (1976), *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools
1976/1977.*

[163]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1977), *The Transition Year - An Evaluation.* This
booklet contains the responses to a questionnaire given to the staff of seventeen
schools involved in the Transition Year project between 1974 and 1976. It investigates
topics such as the reasons for joining the project, the selection processes and the
numbers of students involved. It asks questions about the assistance needed by
schools, their programme content and their concerns about deterioration of the
project. By design, it contains no analysis by the researchers - this was to follow in the
report by Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1980), *The Transition Year Project 1974-
1979: An Evaluation Conducted by The Educational Research Centre.*

[164]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1980), *The Transition Year Project 1974-1979: An
Evaluation conducted by the Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra.*

[165]Ibid., p.15

development of the Transition Year Programme in schools. In the school year 1994/95 more than 20,000 pupils in 459 schools participated in the programme and by 1996 the programme was offered in over 600 of 780 schools.

This short chronology of events raises some questions. What were the reasons behind the introduction of the Transition Year project in the early 1970s? What was the context of its introduction? What type of curriculum development was taking place at the time and what form did its implementation take? Was the programme successfully implemented as planned and in its original form? and why did the implementation of the programme falter after 1978 and decline during the years following? Similar questions are raised regarding the reintroduction of the programme in 1986.

This chapter explores the first two phases of implementation with a view to suggesting answers to these questions. It examines the social context in which the programme was implemented with a view to understanding the educational climate at the time and how this affected the implementation of the programme. It goes on to investigate the implementation strategies employed both at national level and at school level during both phases and in light of the findings, suggests reasons why the implementation process faltered.

There are no definitive answers to questions regarding implementation processes in general. Understanding previous experiences in curriculum innovation can help facilitate successful implementation. Research can identify characteristics of school organisation and traits in teachers that affect the change process. The next step involves concentrating on nurturing these traits and characteristics and establishing long term support structures for schools in a time of continuous change.

Phase One - The Introduction of the Transition Year Programme
1974 - 1986

2.2 The Social Context in which the Transition Year Programme was first Implemented

During the 1960s and 1970s there were significant changes in the perception of the role of the school in society and the value of education. A fundamental change in educational ideology meant that investment in education came to be regarded as an investment in the economy of the country. This trend and the desire to provide equality of opportunity in education influenced other decisions in education including the introduction of free education, free transport and the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen. Demographic changes as a result of these features led to the diversification of the curriculum. The introduction of the Transition Year programme in the early seventies was partly in response to these changes. The context in which the Transition Year programme was implemented can be discussed under the following headings:

- The view of education as an economic investment.

- A heterogeneous clientele.

- Broadening the curriculum.

- The new wave of curriculum development groups.

- The emerging importance of social and personal development.

- The development of transition education.

Understanding the context in which the programme was implemented will help illustrate the attitudes and concerns of those involved in the implementation of the programme.

2.2.1 Education as an Economic Investment:

The *Investment in Education Report* was initiated by the government in 1962 in co-operation with the OECD. It was published in two volumes in 1965 and 1966 and has been described as a landmark report which "signposted the direction of educational reform."[166] The speech given by the Minister for Education, Dr. Hillery, at the first meeting of the steering committee in October 1962 contains one of the first statements of the government's acceptance that education was to be a factor in economic policy. In his speech he said: "Education is now accepted as an investment of national resources"[167] and the report of the survey team states that "education can be both a cause and a consequence of economic growth."[168] The Irish Association for Curriculum Development maintained that:

> The Investment in Education Commission of 1962.....was an exercise in manpower planning through the educational establishment. As such it brought about the most radical innovations in Irish Education in the past half century.[169]

The Second Programme for Economic Expansion in 1963 had a chapter devoted to education and the Third Programme for Economic and Social Development 1969-1972 again highlighted the important role of education in economic and social development.

The dual approach to curriculum was evident in a booklet entitled *All Our Children*, produced in 1969 which outlined proposed curriculum changes. The booklet made clear that pupils coming to the end of the junior cycle would have to choose between

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[166]Sean O'Connor, quoted by Aine Hyland and Kenneth Milne, (Eds.), (1992), *Irish Educational Documents, Vol.2*, p.29.

[167]Dr. Hillery, (1962), quoted in Aine Hyland and Kenneth Milne, (Eds.), 1992, *Irish Educational Documents, Vol.2*, p.31.

[168]OECD, (1966), *Report of the Survey Team: Ireland, Investment in Education*, par.15.22, p.376.

[169]Submission by the Irish Association for Curriculum Development to: The Minister for Education and the Members of the Interim Curriculum and Examinations Board on The Proposal to Institute a Statutory Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1984, *Compass*, Vol.13, No.2, 1984, Special Edition, p.30.

proceeding to the Leaving Certificate after a two year course and subsequently continuing in second level education for a further year to sit for the advanced certificate or proceeding after junior cycle to technician and trade courses with a view to attending the new RTCs which were in the process of being built.[170] Although second level education did not develop along the lines indicated by the booklet, it serves as an indicator of the plan for educational development as perceived by the government in 1969.

This concentration on education as economic investment was also taking place in the rest of Europe and world-wide and eventually contributed to the development of both transition education and the Transition Year Programme. Those programmes targeting transition to work students and those aimed at transition to senior cycle students both incorporated work preparation elements into their curricula.

2.2.2 An Increasingly Heterogeneous Clientele:

The desire for equality of opportunity and increased student participation in post primary education in recent decades has focused attention on the need for more diverse curricula to suit a more diverse clientele. Such concerns led to the widening of curriculum provision. The increase in participation rates resulted from a number of factors including Dr. Hillery's introduction of the comprehensive school concept in 1963, the first schools opening in 1966. The community school - a development of the comprehensive school idea was announced in 1970.

Also in 1966, Donogh O'Malley, then Minister for Education, announced that free post-primary education would be available nation-wide from the following year. The introduction of free transport and the raising of the school leaving age also contributed to a surge in numbers. The number of pupils in post-primary schools increased from

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[170]Department of Education, (1969), *All Our Children*, p.37.

about 149,000 in 1966 to 184,000 in 1968.[171] ten years later, by 1978 there were to be 278,071 pupils at post-primary level.[172]

In answer to the increased the rate of participation in post-primary school, and in order to facilitate students of diverse aptitude, background and ability greater diversity was introduced into the curriculum, providing pupils with a wider range of choice and catering for pupils of academic and practical ability. Pupils in Vocational Schools were allowed to sit the Intermediate Certificate and Leaving Certificate and the introduction of new subjects into junior cycle in 1960 and into the Leaving Certificate in 1969 followed. The desire to foster equality of education led to a massive increase in numbers and rich developments in curricula were to follow.

2.2.3 Broadening the Curriculum:

One of the factors which lead to the broadening of the curriculum was the idea that there should be a greater balance between academic and technical/vocational aspects of the curriculum. The call for greater variety in the curriculum, to cater for the needs of pupils in Irish society dates back to the 1870s. The uniformity imposed on schools by the introduction of the Intermediate Education Act in 1878, in the form of a grammar-school or academic type curriculum, was criticised for many years. Despite this criticism greater emphasis on academic education rather than applied or technical education courses continued and it wasn't until the late 1960s that the trend towards a broader curriculum gathered momentum.

The passing of the Vocational Education Act of 1930[173] suggests a measure of progress. The Vocational Education Act describes technical education as "education pertaining to trades, manufactures, commerce and other industrial pursuits."[174] D.G.

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[171]Aine Hyland and Kenneth Milne, (Eds.), (1992), *Irish Educational Documents, Vol.2*, p.42.
[172]Department of Education, *Statistical Report*, 1978/1979.
[173]Department of Education, (1930), *Vocational Education Act 1930*, No.29, Part 1, paragraph 3, Statutes of the Oireachtas 1930, p.601.
[174]Ibid.

Mulcahy describes the Act as providing for "the establishment of a system of post-primary education of a literary and practical nature to prepare pupils for employment in trades and occupations in industry, commerce agriculture and elsewhere."[175] Technical and vocational courses were the predecessors of transition education programmes and their emergence suggests a sensitivity to the need for such provision.

Changes in societal attitudes affect the curriculum provided in schools. Towards the end of the 1950s there was some concern about the condition of vocational education but Irish societal attitudes still disparaged manual, practical type education.

A notable landmark in significant changes in societal attitudes was the publication of the 1958 government White Paper on Economic Expansion which led to the first economic programme and changed attitudes to economic and industrial development. "Economists were now emphasising education as an economic investment rather than taking the traditional view of education as a consumer service."[176] The new approach towards economic growth and development, a new trend which most writers agree became apparent in the late 1950s, was itself a reflection of a pronounced change in Ireland at this time.

Although the 1960s saw new subject content and a wider range of subjects available, the traditional curricular pattern remained pervasive and durable.[177] To understand the policy changes and initiatives which altered the shape of the education system in the 1960s and 1970s, it is necessary to see them in the context of the wider social and attitudinal changes taking place in Irish society in this period. Ireland's expanding links with European and International organisations, participation in conferences and the establishment of teachers' groups such as Tuarim and the Irish branch of the European Association of Teachers, to name but a few, gave a wider perspective and reduced

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[175]D.G. Mulcahy, (1981), *Curriculum and Policy in Irish Post-primary Education*, p.15.
[176]John Coolahan, (1981), *Irish Education: History and Structure*, p.131.
[177]D.G. Mulcahy, (1981), *Curriculum and Policy in Irish Post-Primary Education*, pp.40-46.

insularity. Calls for equality of educational opportunity, the introduction of television and media interest in education also led to changes in social attitudes to education. It was felt that a society experiencing increased economic growth and modern technological advance needed an educated workforce and that the existing education system was not facilitating the realisation of the maximum potential of the population. Criticism of the academically oriented curriculum led to the introduction of an extra year in the form of the Transition Year Project as it was felt that exam pressures and general time constraints prevented students from experiencing areas outside the academic curriculum and hence maturing socially and emotionally. Kevin Williams argues that if the Transition Year is a necessary break from the conventional curriculum in order that students may mature and develop socially "we are conceding that education has little to do with the development of skills necessary for actual living and everything to do with narrowly conceived preparation for examinations."[178]

Criticism of the examination system is well documented. While ideally, the aims and objectives of the extra year would be best incorporated across the post-primary cycle, the introduction of the Transition Year Project aimed to alleviate continuous exam pressure and to make up the shortfall in areas of experience outside the formal academic curriculum.

2.2.4 The New Wave of Curriculum Development Groups:

The Transition Year was introduced in a decade which saw much attention directed towards curriculum reform. Several curriculum centres and associations were established during this period. The Irish Association for Curriculum Development (IACD) was founded in 1971 and other curricular initiatives in this period include the establishment, in 1972, of the Curriculum Development Unit in Trinity College by the CDVEC and the establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre at St. Patrick's

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[178]Kevin Williams, (1996), "Aspiration and Realism in Curriculum Policy: A Response to Recent Initiatives at Senior Cycle", in *Issues in Education*, March, 1996, p.73.

Comprehensive School in Shannon, which was funded directly by the Department of Education. The Social and Environmental Studies Project (SESP) was initiated by the Shannon CDC, the Integrated Science Curriculum Innovation Project (ISCIP) and the City Of Dublin Humanities project began in the CDU and other projects followed. The Department of Education's Curriculum Unit was established in 1977. This indicates the importance placed on curriculum development in the 1970s. Perhaps, as has been suggested in the literature, more importance was placed on curriculum development in the period than on curriculum implementation.

2.2.5 Social and Personal Development Programmes:

Programmes concentrating on introducing elements of pastoral care and social and personal development into the curriculum include social and health education programmes, the many programmes organised by the Vocational Education Committees and the Personal and Career Education Programme (PACE) initiated by the Psychological Service of the Department of Education. The purpose of this programme was "to assist students in career planning skills and knowledge, in self-knowledge of interpersonal skills and in knowledge of work and leisure worlds."[179] These aims have much in common with those of transition education in general and with those of the Transition Year.

2.2.6 The Development of Transition Education:

One of the main features of the broadening of the curriculum was the development of transition education in the mid seventies and early eighties. Although both transition education programmes and the Transition Year Project shared some aims and objectives, as described earlier, transition education is quite distinct from the Transition Year Project itself. Transition education programmes have as their main

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[179]Tony Crooks, (1983), "Developments in Curriculum: The Irish Experience", *Compass*, Vol.12, No.2, 1983, p.73.

concern "the needs of young people at the point at which they are moving from school to work and adult life at the end of the period of compulsory education."[180] Transition programmes are designed not only for the development of work preparation skills in the form of work experience but also for social and personal development.

At the same time, the Transition Year was designed to serve two types of pupil - those leaving school to find work following the Transition Year and those returning to study for the Leaving Certificate. The freedom for schools to adapt the programme to meet the needs of their students meant that a number of schools used the programme as a transition to work programme and others as a transition to senior cycle programme. Those Transition Year programmes designed for school leavers were very similar to transition education programmes of the time and for this reason it is useful to look at the context of their development and implementation.

Throughout the 1970s there was growing criticism of the gap between preparation for work and curricula. By the mid seventies the transition from school to adult and working life was an emerging focus of curricular attention.

In 1977 the Irish Association for Curriculum Development issued a policy statement, *Establishing Priorities in the Curriculum* which stated that the curriculum should be responsive to "the needs of a complex and changing society."[181] The economic crisis of the mid and late seventies focused attention on the unemployment of young people, particularly those without qualifications and in December 1976, the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council of the European Communities adopted a resolution concerning the improvement of programmes to facilitate transition to work. Concern about the preparation of young people for work led to the introduction of a pre-employment course in schools in 1977 and the establishment of a European network of pilot projects in the transition from school to adult working life in 1978.

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[180]Thomas Kelleghan and Mary Lewis, (1991), *Transition Education in Irish Schools*, p.vii.
[181]Tony Crooks and Jim McKernan, (1984), *The Challenge of Change - Curriculum Development in Irish Post Primary Schools 1970-1984*, p.24.

Between 1978 and 1983 Ireland took part in two phases of projects established by The Council of European Communities. These include SPIRAL, Education for Development, the Early School Leavers Project and later, PIPE.[182]

There are differences in content, focus, organisation and teaching style between transition type programmes, of which the Transition Year is one, and traditional programmes. For this reason the introduction of the Transition Year programme has implications for many areas of schooling. The contrast between traditional programmes and transition type programmes is set out in table 2.1, as in *A Guide for School Principals* which arose out of a conference on the theme "Co-operation and Partnership in Education."[183]

Transition programmes and traditional programmes differ in such fundamentals as organisation and focus. The introduction of transition programmes requires changes in student teacher relationships, changes in teaching methods and content, and partnerships with employers and the community. These differences in turn have implications for the implementation process.

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[182]For details of these and other transition education projects see Tony Crooks and Jim McKernan, (1984), *The Challenge of Change - Curriculum Development in Irish Post Primary Schools 1970-1984*, pp.14-24, the Final Reports of the individual projects in *Preparation of Young People for Work and Facilitation of Their Transition from Education to Working Life: National Dossier on European Community Pilot Projects 1979-1982* and the reports of the external evaluators: Eustas O Heideain and Jim Gleeson, (1982), *SPIRAL: External Evaluation Final Report*; James Callan and Elizabeth Hilliard, (1982), *Final Report from External Evaluation on The Early School Leavers' Project*; James Callan, (1983), *The North Mayo/Sligo Project: "Education for Development": The Final External Evaluation Report*.
[183]The schema is from Janet Smith, (Ed.), (1987), *A Guide for School Principals, Co-operation and Partnership in Education*, Shannon Curriculum Development Centre, quoted by Jim Gleeson, "SPIRAL II: The Shannon Initiatives", in Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams and Donald Herron, (1990), *Achievement and Aspirations: Curricular Initiatives in Irish Post-Primary Education in the 1980s*, pp.71-72.

Table 2.1

A Comparison of Traditional and Transition Approaches

to Teaching and Learning

	Traditional	Transition
Emphasis on	Cognitive skills	Skills related to future work environment and non-cognitive skills.
Organised	An educational model common to the whole age group in which ranking according to scholastic achievement is the major objective.	A wide diversity of courses tailored to a variety of needs of young people.
Learning Experiences	Based on established disciplines and subjects.	Subject matter is integrated and focused on practical uses of knowledge.
Student/ Teacher relationships	Tend to be formal and hierarchical.	More informal and democratic.
Teaching methods	Transmission of knowledge from teacher to student.	Student centred, activity based and experiential learning methods used.
Focus	Learning mainly confined to school and the classroom.	Extensive use of the out-of-school environment as a place of learning.
Co-operation and Partnership	Involvement of the community is limitted and dominated by the educational partners.	Developing methods of real co-operation and partnership, locally or regionally in which other schools, other institutions, community groups, parents and employers play an equal role in facilitating the transition of young people to adult life.

2.2.7 Summary

The introduction and implementation of a new programme do not occur in a vacuum. The context and climate surrounding the introduction of a new curricular initiative must be considered when establishing implementation strategies. The needs and attitudes of those involved are affected by the social and economic climate of the time and hence affect the support for and implementation of a new programme.

The drive for equality of educational opportunity and the notion of education as an economic investment were two very influential factors in the broadening of the curriculum and consequent interest in the establishment of curriculum development units. The Transition Year Project was just one initiative emerging as a result.

The following section explores the implementation of the Transition Year Project in 1974 and illustrates that the implications for the implementation of programmes arising from curriculum interest at this time include organisational issues, both national and in the school itself, programme development and co-ordination at local and national level, and staff development requirements.

2.3 The Implementation of the Transition Year Programme in 1974

2.3.1 Implementation at National Level:

Minister Burke describes the response to his original proposals as having three stages.

1. The immediate reaction - that while the Transition Year was desirable, it was "hopelessly impracticable."

2. Genuine interest resulting in requests for further information, culminating in a conference on July 22nd, 1974.

3. The initiation of a number of pilot projects in schools and "surprisingly widespread, positive interest" in the Transition Year.[184]

The Minister's description of the initial reactions of teachers was accurate. Then president of the ASTI, Mr Pierce Purcell, personally described the programme as seeming "unreal" and expressed the view that the extra year should be at the beginning of the junior cycle to enable students to acclimatise. Mr Purcell also suggested that the principles of the year be integrated into the whole secondary school curriculum.[185]

Other reactions were more favourable. Fr. Kevin Ryle, President of Garbally College shared Minister Burke's vision and committed his school to the project within days. This was a huge leap of faith. What the Minister was proposing has been recognised as a "a new philosophy of education, albeit for one year only, rather than an actual programme of action."[186]

Representatives from all types of schools attended the July conference and agreed that much of the work done in the initial stages of the project would of necessity be tentative and experimental. Minister Burke notes that it was agreed that the Transition Year curriculum would begin to emerge "not from a committee room in Marlborough Street or Hawkins House, but from the classrooms and common rooms of the participating schools" and that a central co-ordinating committee "might eventually be found useful."[187] It was decided that the programme should not be elitist and that certain linear subjects such as maths and modern languages would be kept "ticking over". Decisions were made regarding the various elements of the curriculum, the finer points of which were left to the individual school.

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[184]Adapted from Richard Burke, T.D., Minister for Education, in an address to the Regional Meeting of the Dublin Education Council for Secondary Schools in Synge Street C.B.S. on December 2nd, 1974.
[185]*Education Review*, April 1974, "What the Minister said...and What the Teachers Think".
[186]Margaret Mansfield, (1992), "Transitions", *Behind the Boundary Tree, Centenary Magazine, Garbally College,* 1992.
[187]Richard Burke, T.D., Minister for Education, in an address to the Regional Meeting of the Dublin Education Council for Secondary Schools in Synge Street C.B.S. on December 2nd, 1974.

Rather than establishing some kind of planning group Minister Burke describes how he had preferred immediate action. By the middle of September a number of schools were operating a Transition Year programme as a terminal project for early school leavers but only one school, Garbally College, had introduced the programme as an extra year between junior and senior cycle as the Minister had originally intended.

2.3.2 Implementation at School/Local Level:

The general procedure adopted at school level involved the principal and one or two key staff members liaising with the inspector appointed to organise the project. The needs, abilities and expectations of the students were explored as were the physical facilities and resources available. The next step involved a meeting of the inspector with all the teachers who would be involved in the programme which took the form of a brainstorming session. Each teacher was asked to put on paper the aims and objectives of his or her contribution to the curriculum and was asked to draft a syllabus. These initial drafts were discussed, adapted and then circulated by the Department of Education to all the other participating or interested schools, culminating in the first of a series of seminars on particular aspects of the Transition Year programme.

At Garbally College, parents were invited to apply to have their sons included in the programme following a meeting in May of 1974. A letter to parents outlined areas such as personal development, community involvement and cultural development for inclusion in the programme.[188] The focus of the year was on personality development. Commitment to the integrated approach to content is shown in that the content of the programme was timetabled "under the names of the individual teachers involved in the pilot scheme rather than under specific subject headings."[189] Twenty boys completed

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[188]Letter to parents of third year students, St. Joseph's College, Garbally Park, May 20th, 1974.
[189]Experimental Transitional Year's programme for Class 409, Garbally College, 1974-1975, p.1.

the year's trial run and pupils and parents expressed their satisfaction with the experiment. Indeed, the school received a letter from the parents of one of the boys requesting that another son of theirs be included in the programme the following year.[190]

Difficulties arising included personnel, physical resources, assessment and evaluation concerns. Participants were encouraged to reorganise and redeploy existing school resources as a means of operating "efficiently within budgetary constraints." Pedagogical problems arose mainly from the difficulty in teaching philosophy and logic to second level students, a particular concern considering that the minister viewed philosophy, logic and religion as "the indispensable core of the modular structure."

The approach to the implementation of the programme meant that schools were allowed to develop their own curricula for the Transition Year with the guidance of the inspector. Some schools chose to create a school to work programme while others developed a junior cycle-to-senior cycle programme. A number of school tailored the programme to suit those with learning difficulties while other used the year as a means of developing new skills and for social and personal development. While an excellent idea in theory, this freedom eventually lead to identity problems for the programme, a symptom of forces which perhaps led to a decline in its popularity and its standing in the curriculum.

2.4 The Transition Year Programme 1974-1983: The failure of an implementation process

Economic forces, particularly the withdrawal of funding, cannot solely be blamed for the eventual demise of the programme. When funding was withdrawn in 1983 there were only eleven schools offering the programme. Table 2.2 shows the numbers

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[190]*Evening Herald*, June 3rd, 1975, "No Pressure Put on Pupils", p.4.

participating in the Transition Year project between 1974 and 1983. Figure 2(a) shows these participation numbers in the form of a trend graph.

Table 2.2

The Transition Year Project - Participation Rates 1974-1983

Year	No. of students in TY	Total No. at 2nd level	% of total in TY
1974	66	186416*	0.035
1975	249	260268	0.096
1976	518	270033	0.192
1977	702	274109	0.256
1978	281	278071	0.101
1979	174	282254	0.062
1980	540	286924	0.188
1981	629	295418	0.213
1982	545	302219	0.18
1983	503	309245	0.163

* Data available for this particular year does not include students enrolled in Secondary Tops, Vocational Schools or Regional Technical Colleges. Data for subsequent years includes figures for these extra categories and this would account for the large difference between the number of students enrolled at second level in 1974 and in 1975 according to the statistics available.

Figure 2(a)   Transition Year Participation Rates 1974-1983
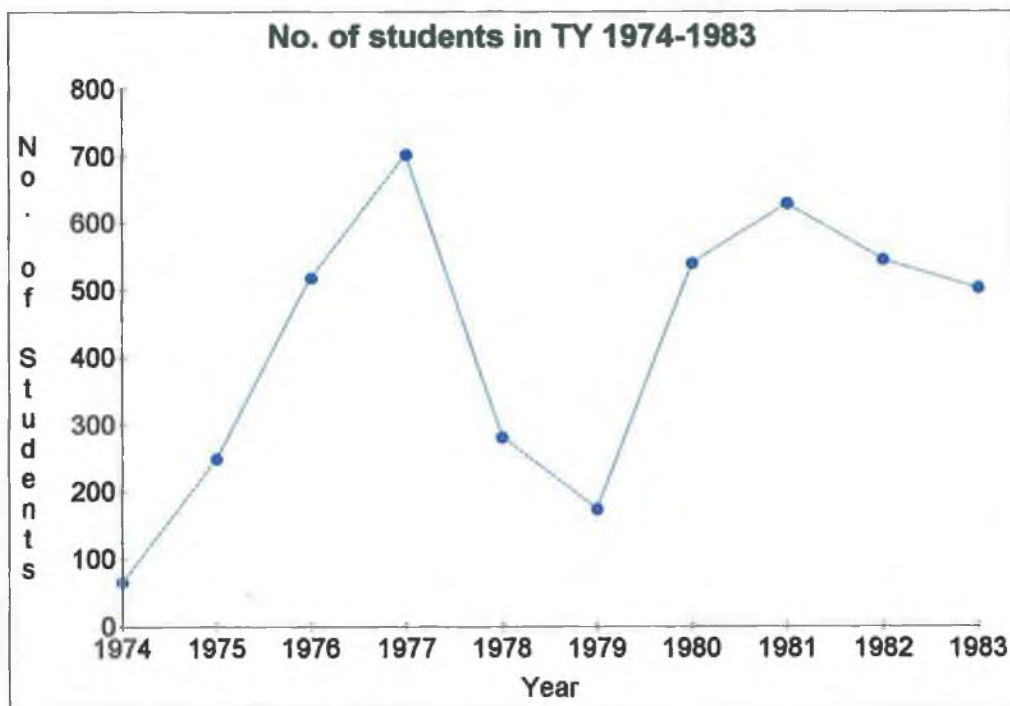
The factors influencing the decline in popularity of the programme in the early eighties are numerous and complex. Studies of the social context and the implementation processes between 1974 and 1983 indicate that the issues emerging can be grouped under the following headings:

- Factors affecting implementation at national level.

- Factors affecting implementation at school/local level.

- The identity crisis of the programme.

2.4.1 Factors Affecting Implementation at National Level:

Factors acting at national level include:

- Lack of central support for the project.

- Finance.

- Lack of assistance in the establishment of programmes and in teacher training.

- The operation of the programme in a crowded niche in the curriculum.

- Changes of Minister and Government.

1. Lack of central support for the project:

Support for the project was minimal even in its early years. Schools refused admission to the project in 1977 were informed that the project was a pilot scheme and that the Department had decided that "further expansion of it is not feasible at present."[191] Several schools surveyed by Egan and O'Reilly for the Educational Research Centre in 1976 suggested "support from the Department of Education" when asked what help they required to implement the programme successfully in their schools. Despite this apparent lack of support, praise for the inspector involved, Mr. Sean McCarthy, is evident. One school maintained that "Mr. McCarthy is the only civil servant who cares" and the Department of Education is described by a staff member in another

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[191]Department of Education letter informing a school that it had been refused admission to the project, February, 1977.

school as having a "half hearted approach."[192] Indicative of this was the Department's reluctance to include the Transition Year programme in *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools*. Minister Burke fought to have the programme included and it eventually appeared in the 1976 edition.

2. Finance:

Perhaps the most influential factor operating at National level was the state of the economy. Large sums of money required for the improvement of resources needed to finance a new programme were not available and the withdrawal of funds for the programme in 1983 was a symptom of this and of the attitude to the programme at this time. Of the teachers in the seventeen schools surveyed by Egan and O'Reilly, twelve gave a direct answer to the question regarding what type of assistance they would like from the Department of Education. Of these twelve responses eight gave "finance" as a principal concern, one school remarking that "lack of finance is crippling."[193]

3. Lack of assistance in the establishment of programmes and teacher training:

The frustration felt by schools in the late 1970s would suggest that the national implementation process was deficient in a number of respects. In the 1976 survey several of the schools involved cited "help in planning programmes", "training for teachers", "resources" and "guidelines on assessment procedures" as assistance they would like in developing the Transition Year programme.

The initial absence of a central co-ordination team and the urgency with which the introduction of the programme occurred lead to a sudden increased workload with little or no feed back and frustration at school level grew. This, coupled with the limited funding and resources, inhibited the chances of sustaining effort over a number of years.

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[192]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1977), *The Transition Year Project*.
[193]Ibid., p.119.

4. The operation of the programme in a crowded niche in the curriculum:

Several other programmes involving personal development of pupils and preparation for working life were in operation in the late seventies and early eighties, some of these funded by the EEC. In April 1977, the Department of Education invited applications from schools interested in running pre-employment courses. Guidelines were circulated stating that: "the general aim of these courses is that of bridging the gap between the values and experiences normally part of traditional education and those current in the adult world of work."[194] In the first year of the course, eighty Vocational Schools participated with enrolments of 1,800 students. The number of young people taking the course doubled between 1977 and 1983.[195] Comparing this to the trend in numbers of students taking the Transition Year in the same period - it is clear that having a well defined niche in the curriculum is essential to the long-term survival and success of the programme. A brief outline of some of these programmes illustrates how much they had in common with the Transition Year programme.

The Council of European Communities established a network of twenty-nine projects throughout the European Community three of which were located in Ireland. The Shannon Project of Interventions for Relevant Adolescent Learning (SPIRAL) was the best known of the pilot projects jointly funded by the European community and the Department of Education.[196] The second project based in Ireland was called "Education for Development" and was located in North Mayo.[197] The third project began in 1979 and was located in the CDVEC's Curriculum Development Unit. It was called "The Early School Leavers Project" the project aimed to "identify potential early

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[194]Aine Hyland and Kenneth Milne, (Eds.), (1992), *Irish Educational Documents, Vol.2*, p.287.
[195]Diarmuid Leonard, (1990), "The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme", in Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams and Donald Herron, (1990), *Achievement and Aspirations: Curricular Initiatives in Irish Post-Primary Education in the 1980s*, p.33.
[196]Tony Crooks and Jim McKernan, (1984), *The Challenge of Change - Curriculum Development in Irish Post Primary Schools 1970-1984*, p.17.
[197]Ibid., p.18.

school leavers and to design implement and evaluate a curriculum suitable to their needs"[198] Subsequent transition type programmes largely continued the work of these early programmes.

In 1983, Gemma Hussey, Minister for Education announced that Ireland would be participating in a second set of European Community transition projects, three of which would be located in Ireland. The Dublin Inner City Education Project was located in the CDVEC Curriculum Development Unit at Trinity College and concentrated on young people with poor prospects of employment, who had either just completed their education or were already unemployed.[199] The second project - The Project for Integrated Provision of Education (PIPE) was located in Galway and aimed to "change the attitudes of pupils, teachers, parents and the community through the utilisation of the out of school environment."[200] The third Irish project was located in Shannon and its aim was "the development of new two year post compulsory courses in second level schools, particularly for those students unlikely to succeed in the existing Leaving Certificate."[201] Such projects may have usurped the position of the Transition Year in the curriculum rendering it somewhat redundant in schools using the year for similar objectives. It is possible that because schools were given free rein to use the extra year as they wished that there was no clear definition of the niche the programme occupied and hence the programme was made vulnerable to cut backs in times of economic stress. Schools tired of having to promote the programme to parents, the community and employers. One school in Egan and O'Reilly's survey suggested that "removal of the pressure to prove that the Transition Year is a valid idea" might help and another was concerned that the programme had not been "sold at large to the public."[202]

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[198]Tony Crooks and Jim McKernan, (1984), *The Challenge of Change - Curriculum Development in Irish Post Primary Schools 1970-1984*, p.20.
[199]Ibid., p.22.
[200]Ibid.
[201]Ibid., p.23.
[202]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1977), *The Transition Year Project*, p.251.

5.Changes of Minister and Government:

Changes of government led to lack of continuity and consistency in policy and approach and may have led to relatively new projects such as the Transition Year becoming vulnerable. Minister Burke was Minister for Education until December 1st 1976, after which time, Peter Barry, also Fine Gael took over under the existing coalition government until July 1977. Then came a change of government. Fianna Fail came into power in July 1977 and John Wilson became Minister for Education and held the position until June 1981. Between June 1981 and December 1982, when Gemma Hussey took office, there were four more Ministers for Education: J. Boland (July 1981-March 1982), M. O'Donoghue (March 1982-October 1982), C.Haughey (October 6th-October 27th 1982) and G.Brady (October 27th - December 1982). Such instability may have contributed to the demise of vulnerable projects at this time.

2.4.2 Factors Affecting Implementation at School/Local Level:

Based on the survey by Egan and O'Reilly and on various other sources from the period it would seem that the principal concerns at the time can be described under the following headings:

- Insufficient funding,

- Lack of support from the Department of Education,

- Scarcity of planning time,

- The status and legitimacy of the programme,

- Lack of contact with other schools,

- Insufficient resources including extra teachers,

- Lack of whole school support,

- Financial pressure on parents and on the state,

- The success of transition education and social and personal development

   programmes.

1. Insufficient funding:

Lack of funding from the Department of Education in the first term of 1974/75 led to frustration on the part of those schools who had taken up the challenge and were already running the programme. An interim report sent from one school to the Inspector in October 1974 remarks that the principal is optimistic about everything except the cost and a further report from November 1974 cautions that the goodwill amongst parents, teachers and students will get "polluted by cynicism and frustration unless State money becomes readily available, and soon." In October 1976 the school was still requesting monetary aid for the programme, reminding the Inspector in the same letter that the Department of Education had also promised to provide certification for the course which was not forthcoming. At its peak the grant during this period was £1,000 per annum, per school. Other expenses were met by the school and by parents. Understandably, frustration and bitterness had begun to set in. Even those schools which had enthusiastically embraced the programme in 1974 were disillusioned by the early eighties, one school issuing a questionnaire to its staff on the subject and meeting to discuss the future of the programme.

2. Lack of support from the Department of Education:

A study of the implementation process at school level, involving the July conference and meetings within schools would suggest that the process at school level was satisfactory and should have worked - and for a while it did. Research on the implementation of change cites involvement of staff, vision and ownership as some of the most important elements in the change process. Although it is to be commended for its involvement of teachers at local level, the lack of ongoing support in the form of inservice training and the attitude that schools would muddle through, did not help. In order to facilitate long term success, sustaining effort and enthusiasm is crucial.

The approach to the change process in retrospect seems naive. It was expected that after a rudimentary introduction to the course, schools would maintain a high level of involvement with minimal moral support and little or no financial assistance. Contact with an inspector in the initial stages of planning gave guidance. As the project grew

the implementation process adopted by the Department of Education meant that schools were largely without guidelines or guidance and this most likely led to feelings of apprehension and resentment at the increased workload involved in initiating and maintaining the programme. The promised inservice training did not materialise and the first few years have been described as "fraught....frustrating....experimental and exhausting.[203] Other difficulties reported by principals include time constraints at the beginning of the school year accentuated by acting as co-ordinator for the programme.

3. Scarcity of planning time:

A large number of school involved in Egan and O'Reilly's survey suggested that more planning time was needed in order for teachers to meet and plan courses. The increased workload also meant that individual teachers needed more time to develop new materials and new teaching methods.

4. The status and legitimacy of the programme:

Those involved in Egan and O'Reilly's study were asked how they thought the programme would deteriorate if at all. The answers "a year for anything you like", "a year for nothing in particular", "a holiday" or "a doss year" were given by eight of the eleven schools answering this question.[204]

The pervading strength of the academic element of the traditional curriculum contributed to the image of the transition year as a wasted "doss year". This attitude is a legacy schools are dealing with to this day and the concerns of parents and teachers regarding the loss of study momentum are well documented. Partly in answer to such concerns, some schools still offered the extra year but used it with more and more academic content, some offering a repeat junior cycle year - an abuse which contributed to the downfall of the programme.

One school remarked at the time that parents did not see the course as legitimate. "Parents were responsible for keeping children at home on any excuse because there

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[203]Margaret Mansfield, (1992), "Transitions", *Behind the Boundary Tree, Centenary Magazine, Garbally College*, 1992.
[204]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1977), *The Transition Year Project.*

was no state examination at the end of the year."[205] Perhaps the value of the programme was not fully communicated to parents. Eileen Doyle remarks that:

> if the school's rationale for TYO is educationally sound and adequately communicated to pupils, their parents and to all teachers, and if parents are convinced the pupils will not lose the habit of an organised study routine, one might ask if it is likely that any parents would not demand a TYO for their children.[206]

A number of schools involved in the 1976 survey suggested that Department of Education Certification be provided for the course as was promised. This, schools felt, would lend legitimacy to the course in the eyes of parents and pupils.

5. Lack of contact with other schools:

Five schools in Egan and O'Reilly's report cited contact with other schools as a requirement. One school suggested a newsletter and another two both suggested a teacher support team.

One of the initial problems facing the team of teachers was "course content, the manner in which it was to be tackled and the degree of co-operation which could exist between the teachers involved."[207] This type of uncertainty requires support. In 1977, eleven schools sent representatives to a meeting of Transition Year schools at Holy Child Comprehensive School, Sallynoggin. It was decided to form an Association of Transition Year Schools for the purpose of communication and the exchange of ideas. This is indicative of the need for support among schools at this time.

6. Insufficient resources including extra teachers:

Several teachers in Egan and O'Reilly's report requested further resources from the Department of Education in order to run their programmes successfully. Resources in the form of teaching materials were suggested as were extra teachers. One teacher

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[205]Ibid., p.87.

[206]Eileen Doyle, (1990), "The Transition Year", in Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams and Donald Herron, (1990), *Achievement and Aspirations: Curricular Initiatives in Irish Post-Primary Education in the 1980s*, p.23.

[207]Diarmuid de Burca, (1975), "The Transitional Year: a Limerick prototype", *Education Times*, July 3rd, 1975.

remarked that "if the Department were serious, surely they would allow a teacher over the quota to schools involved in the scheme."[208] Another suggested that the Transition Year programme was being "carried by the enthusiasm of the participating staff, but is doomed to failure unless released from the restrictiveness of the 20:1 pupil-teacher ratio."[209]

7. Lack of whole school support:

The support of all the staff is highlighted by Egan and O'Reilly as a concern. They note that "in practice the TY has worked well only when all the teachers in a school support it, and it quickly goes wrong when it becomes isolated from the rest of school life."[210]

8. Financial pressure on parents and the state:

Other objections to the project were based on the fact that an extra year at second level meant a good deal of further expense for parents and for the State. Some critics have said that it would be better to have the extra year after the Leaving Certificate. What belies this argument is that even though an extra year was allowed at this time few schools availed of it as students generally wanted to leave school as soon as they had sat their Leaving Certificate.

9. The success of transition education and social and personal development programmes:

The development of Transition Education at this time created competition for the Transition Year. Although markedly different from the Transition Year itself, Transition Education projects shared many of the elements, aims and objectives of Transition Year programmes. The main similarities include the work experience element and the social and personal development element.

It is possible that the Transition Year fell victim to a force which had inspired its inception. The fact that there was such a call for transition education meant that

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[208]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1977), *The Transition Year Project*, p.10.
[209]Ibid., p.119.
[210]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1980), *The Evaluation of the Transition Year Project*, summary report to teachers, students and parents, p.3.

several programmes were running successfully by the early eighties and that the Transition Year was seen as an unnecessary luxury when cut backs were needed due to economic factors. It was not favoured by those with purely academic concerns and was not seen as a work preparation programme either.

Evidently, programmes with clearly defined parameters, meeting needs such as work preparation and social and personal development piloted during this period squeezed the Transition Year Project out of its niche.

It would not be accurate to suggest that all the feedback about the programme was negative. Egan and O'Reilly found that despite their apparent concerns, almost eighty-two percent of parents "indicated that they would like other children of theirs to do the Transition Year", eighty-nine percent of students found the year more enjoyable and ninety-two percent of students felt that they had better relationships with their teachers as a result of the year.[211] Nevertheless, the popularity of the programme decreased in the late seventies and early eighties. It is possible that the programme itself was recognised as being beneficial but that the implementation process, part of which involves "selling" the programme to those involved, was faulty. It would seem that the complexity of the implementation process was not taken into account. One of the symptoms of the failure of the implementation process and one of the factors leading to the decrease in popularity of the programme was the identity crisis experienced by the programme during this period - which became instrumental in its downfall. Two sets of forces - national and local - contributed to this identity crisis which was also, to some extent, the result of an appealing level of freedom and the loss of the programme's niche in the curriculum.

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[211]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1980), *The Transition Year Project 1974-1979: An Evaluation Conducted by The Educational Research Centre,* p.9.

2.4.3 The Problem of Identity:

From the beginning, the Transition Year was intended to serve two kinds of pupil - "those whose formal full-time schooling would finish at the end of the year and those pupils who would continue to senior cycle, mainly to the Leaving Certificate examination."[212]

In some cases the Transition Year has been seen as a transition between Junior and Senior cycle and in others as a transition between school and the world of work. These are two quite different transitions and the conflict between the two creates a problem for the identity of the programme. Of the nineteen schools offering the programme at some stage between 1974 and 1979, fourteen offered the programme as a transition to senior cycle, the other five offering a transition to work programme.[213]

An insight into the early interpretations of the programme can be gleaned from such case studies as those given in a 1976 volume of *Compass*. Holy Child Comprehensive School, Sallynoggin was one of the pilot schools. One of the aims of their programme was to provide a course suitable for non-academic pupils. The team of teachers at Sallynoggin embarked upon a Transition Year course because "there was in the school a group of pupils who had been low achievers....likely to fail their Intermediate Certificate in 1974." [214] Michael Ryan describes the difficulties at the beginning. The girls wanted a course which would "provide them with skills to get a job" and thought that subjects such as Irish and Art were a waste of time. Morale and discipline improved when, half way through the first term, it was decided that the girls should go out on work experience.[215]

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[212]Eileen Doyle, (1990), "The Transition Year", in Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams and Donald Herron, (1990), *Achievement and Aspirations: Curricular Initiatives in Irish Post-Primary Education in the 1980s*, p.21.
[213]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1980), *The Evaluation of the Transition Year Project*, summary report to teachers, students and parents, p.1.
[214]Michael Ryan, (1976), "The Transition Year 1974/1975 at Holy Child Comprehensive Sallynoggin", *Compass*, Vol.5, No.1, 1976, p.15.
[215]Ibid., p.17.

In a contrast of emphasis, the Transition Year at Newpark Comprehensive School, was seen as "a transition between the more enquiry based programme of the Junior Certificate and the more specific and rigorous demands of the Leaving Certificate."[216] The course was not tailored to suit academically weak students only. It was hoped that all pupils leaving junior cycle would take part in the Transition Year. Half the time was spent on special study activities and half on keeping in touch with subject matter on the junior cycle course.

Writing for *The Times Educational Supplement* in 1978, John Walshe compares the programmes offered by two schools - Holy Child Comprehensive School in Sallynoggin, Dublin and Garbally College in Ballinasloe, Galway.[217] In the Dublin school the project had been tailored to suit the needs of pupils who had found junior cycle difficult and did not feel able to compete successfully with others studying for the Leaving Certificate. The Galway school used the programme for pupils of mixed ability, most of whom planned to revert back to the normal curriculum and finish their Leaving Certificate.

Recognising such differences, D.G. Mulcahy wrote:

> A recent survey carried out on the transition-year programmes shows that aspects of these programmes vary from one to the other. Some have a work preparatory element and all have a rather strong cultural and personal development dimension.......As originally envisaged, however, these programmes were designed to serve as an aid either for the purpose of transition from the junior cycle to the senior cycle...or for transition from school to work.[218]

Egan and O'Reilly's report is in agreement that the priorities differ in schools whose Transition Year classes were exclusively transition to work classes and those with

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[216]Vere Wynn-Jones, (1976), "The Transition Year at Newpark Comprehensive School, Blackrock", *Compass*, Vol.5, No.1, 1976, p.20.

[217]John Walshe, (1978), "Stepping off the Academic Treadmill", *The Times Educational Supplement*, September 1st, 1978.

[218]D.G. Mulcahy, (1981), *Curriculum and Policy in Irish Post-primary Education*, pp.113-114.

transition to senior cycle classes.[219] They remark that "the most important finding concerning programme implementation is that it differs greatly from school to school."[220] They give "enthusiasm on the parts of the participants" as a reason why problems of definition did not, in these early years, bring the project to a halt. They remark that "from their point of view the Transition Year, as they (the participants) are implementing it, is working satisfactorily...."[221]

Variances were not confined to those between schools. Even within schools there were differing opinions regarding the content of the programme, its aims and objectives. In their answers to Egan and O'Reilly's survey, teachers in the same school differed in their views. One staff member called for "the course to be outlined" while another writes "definitely no imposed curriculum from the Department" as a requirement for the success of the programme.[222]

Clearly, by 1983 the identity problems had taken their toll. As late as 1984, the IACD submission to The Minister for Education and the Members of the Interim Curriculum and Examinations Board on The Proposal to Institute a Statutory Curriculum and Examinations Board, includes the statement: "our idea of the Transition Year encompasses more than the transition from junior to senior cycle. A more important transition is that from school to the world outside school."[223] There is a recognisable difference between the Transition Year programme as it was outlined in 1974 by Minister Burke and the programme which developed in many schools.

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[219]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1979), "The Transition Year Project", *Oideas* 20, p.57.
[220]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1980), *The Evaluation of the Transition Year Project*, summary report to teachers, students and parents, p.2
[221]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1979), "The Transition Year Project", *Oideas* 20, p.57.
[222]Owen Egan and Joy O'Reilly, (1980), *The Transition Year Project 1974-1979: An Evaluation Conducted by The Educational Research Centre.*
[223]Submission by the Irish Association for Curriculum Development to: The Minister for Education and the Members of the Interim Curriculum and Examinations Board on The Proposal to Institute a Statutory Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1984, *Compass,* Vol.13, No.2, 1984, Special Edition, p.31.

Early signs of the effect of societal need on programme content are shown by the fact that although it was not originally intended that the course should include an element of work experience, this became an integral part of the programme in many schools. Other changes included the use of the year to prepare students for commercial examinations. This grew to the extent that one teacher in Egan and O'Reilly's report expressed concern that the Transition Year could become a "glorified commerce course" while another stated that getting jobs for the pupils should not be an objective.[224] While ultimately contributing to the identity problems of the programme, this is a good example of how societal interest combined with a flexible curriculum can facilitate the needs of students in the social climate of the time.

The implementation of a project is made more complex when the focus of the programme is not clear. Problems of identity lead to strife among staff members at school level if there is disagreement within the school as to the aims of the programme. Other difficulties in implementing programmes with unclear parameters include deciding on the type of support, training and resources needed to sustain the programme.

2.4.4 Summary:

The social context at the time of the introduction of the Transition Year programme was one in which education was viewed as an economic investment. It was also a climate in which equality of opportunity of access to education was promoted through various measures. An increasingly heterogeneous clientele, with different needs and abilities called for a response from the education community. The development of new curricula was part of the response to this challenge and the Transition Year Project was one initiative implemented in the 1970s.

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[224]John Walshe, (1978), "Stepping off the Academic Treadmill", *The Times Educational Supplement*, September 1st, 1978.

The process employed in implementing the Transition Year Project differs from that used in other programmes, such as the ISCIP programme which was centrally mandated, in the sense that the Transition Year programme content was decided at local level by individual schools and not centrally mandated. This freedom brings with it requirements for a special type of implementation process requiring support in a number of forms. Support from a central body can come from a national body, a regional co-ordinating body, a local co-ordinating body or a curriculum or course specific body, with responsibility for a particular programme. Support in the form of contact with other schools in order to compare notes and experience mutual positive reinforcement is also beneficial.

The national implementation process involved an announcement of the initiative by Minister Burke, followed by brainstorm sessions in a small number of schools in order to develop programmes that could be circulated to other schools. Contact with an inspector helped with this initial process and the schools involved met at a conference in July 1974. After this initial process schools would appear to have been largely left to their own devices as regards the operation of the programme.

Problems with the implementation of the programme in the 1970s can be divided into those factors affecting the national implementation process and those acting at local level, but there is some overlap. Lack of sustained support for the project at national and local level appears to be an important factor as does lack of finance. Pleas for resources, inservice training and extra time appear to have gone unheeded leading to frustration and eventual apathy at school level. In addition, problems with the status and identity of the programme in the 1970s did not help. Writing in 1996, a member of the Transition Year Support Team recalls that in its early stages of development the Transition Year was promoted by focusing on its differences from a normal academic programme.[225] While this may have been a selling point, the importance of academic

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[225]Gerry Jeffers, quoted by Anne Byrne, "Ireland's Transition has been an Example to Others", *Education and Living,* October 22nd, 1996, p.9.

qualifications in the traditional curriculum led to concern that the year may have been a "doss year".

An important factor emerging from this study of the implementation of the programme in the 1970s is the call for more contact with other schools to the extent that schools arranged their own contacts when no structure was forthcoming. Other important points such as the need for central support are as relevant today as they were in the 1970s. This support was generally requested in the form of extra resources in the form of finance, materials, extra teachers and time but support in the form of promotion of the programme was also required.

An equally important lesson from this period is the importance of the sustainability of a programme. An enthusiastic beginning is not sufficient to sustain the success of a programme if the support required is not continuous throughout the lifecycle of the project.

A review of the implementation of the Transition Year Option when the project was reintroduced in 1986 will indicate the extent to which lessons were learned from the experience of the 1970s and early 1980s.

Phase Two - The Reintroduction of the Transition Year in 1986/87

2.5 Introduction

Problems in the continued implementation of the programme in the early eighties meant that by the school year 1982/83 there were only eleven schools offering the Transition Year programme.

Despite the programme's decreasing popularity, the value of the programme had been recognised and in 1985 the programme was reintroduced by Minister Gemma Hussey as part of a six year post-primary cycle. Societal attitudes, advocating the need for work related curricula had not radically changed since the early eighties. Stalwarts of

the academic curriculum also remained a formidable force and may suggest why the extra year was used in some schools as a repeat junior cycle year or as an introductory course to the Leaving Certificate.

The demise of the programme raises some important questions regarding implementation. Had the Transition Year Programme, a victim of change forces both macro and micro, mutated into an entity unrecognisable as the same programme introduced less than a decade earlier and hence lost its place in the curriculum? Why was the programme resurrected at this particular time? Was the context different? Was the programme implemented differently this time? and had any lessons been learned from the experience of the 1970s?

This section examines the reasons for the reintroduction of the programme at this time and explores the implementation of the programme nationally and in schools.

2.6 The Social Context of the Reintroduction of the Programme in 1986

Interest in curriculum development continued into the 1980s and in 1984 *The Programme for Action in Education 1984-1987*, was published. The chapter on second level education states that "the Department in consultation with the Board (CEB) will adopt a flexibility in its rules governing granting schools the necessary authority to introduce alternative curricula...."[226]

The Curriculum and Examinations Board had been set up on an interim basis after many years of speculation on the issue of transferring responsibility for examinations or curriculum or both from the Department of Education to an independent body. The terms of reference of the board included formulation of "proposals for alternative senior cycle programmes, including programmes geared to preparation for work and those incorporating work experience and/or work simulation."[227] The CEB's first

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[226]Department of Education, (1984), *Programme for Action in Education 1984-1987*, par.5.3.
[227]Tony Crooks and Jim McKernan, (1984), *The Challenge of Change - Curriculum*

publication, a consultative document entitled *Issues and Structures in Education* was published in 1984. This publication suggested a "curricular structure that is sufficiently flexible to recognise and accommodate curriculum initiatives at school and regional levels."[228] This sentiment was echoed two years later in 1986 in another CEB document entitled *In our Schools*. In the section entitled "Recommendations to the Minister (senior cycle)" they include: "Transition Year programmes and VPT courses should be developed as a means of exploring flexibility promised to schools in *Ages for Learning - Decisions of Government*"[229] and remark that "Transition Year Options and VPT courses may provide major opportunities for schools to innovate at Senior Cycle."[230]

EC funded projects continued to flourish into the mid eighties. In 1983 the EEC Council of Ministers adopted a resolution providing for the development of vocational training policies in member states in the 1980s. The aim was to provide a full-time one or two year programme involving basic training and/or work experience to prepare early school leavers with no qualifications for entry into an occupation. In May, 1984, a circular was sent to all second level schools by the Department of Education inviting them to participate in a "new programme" called the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme which expanded the existing provision for pre-employment courses. The Department of Education decided that the new programme should be "acceptable as a terminal programme for those making the transition from school to working life and as part of an alternative senior cycle programme for those for whom the existing programme is not suitable."[231]

Development in Irish Post Primary Schools 1970-1984, p.129.

[228]Curriculum and Examinations Board, (1984), *Issues and Structures: a consultative document*, p.16.

[229]Curriculum and Examinations Board, (1986), *In Our Schools*, p.33.

[230]Ibid., p.30.

[231]Department of Education, (1984), *Vocational Preparation and Training Programme Syllabus*, quoted by Kevin Williams and Gerry McNamara, (1985), *The Vocational Preparation Course: An Educational Appraisal and Practical Guide*, p.9.

It was into this social and educational climate that the Transition Year Option was to be reintroduced.

2.7 The Implementation of the Transition Year Programme in 1986

2.7.1 Implementation at National Level:

In May, 1985, *Ages for Learning* gave renewed hope for the development of the Transition Year. Discussion on the ages of transition had arisen in 1984 through a submission to the Minister for Education and the Members of the Interim Curriculum and Examinations Board on the proposal to institute a Statutory Curriculum and Examinations Board[232] and through *The Ages of Learning*,[233] which was the predecessor to *Ages for Learning*. *Ages for Learning* discussed the appropriate age at which children should make various transitions within the education system and the number of years which a child should spend at different levels of education.

The case for extension of the tenure at second level had been made on many occasions. *Ages for Learning* introduced new structures at post-primary level, specifically that schools could offer a six year cycle with three years at senior cycle level. Four year junior cycles were to be abolished under the terms of the document but schools could keep their six year cycles by taking one of the following courses:

> 1. Transition Year immediately following the junior cycle. This course will allow for the development of broad general education, including academic study and elements of career education.
>
> 2. a) One or two year E.S.F. funded vocational preparation/training courses.

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[232]Submission by the Irish Association for Curriculum Development to: The Minister for Education and the Members of the Interim Curriculum and Examinations Board on The Proposal to Institute a Statutory Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1984, *Compass*, Vol.13, No.2, 1984, Special Edition.
[233]Department of Education, (1984*)*, *The Ages of Learning*, par. 4(d), p.1.

b) Post-Leaving Certificate E.S.F. funded one year vocational
training courses.[234]

Implementation of the Transition Year Option began in 1985 with a circular to the authorities of post-primary schools informing them that all schools could offer a six year programme, three years junior cycle and three years senior cycle: "Schools will be permitted to provide other courses........subject to the Minister's approval, so as to enable pupils to spend up to six years overall in post-primary school."[235] Minister Hussey was interested in removing "the unfairness of some schools having five post-primary years while others have six" and putting in place "a really good wide transition year...."[236] Development of the Transition Year Option was to be on a phased basis and controlled by the Department of Education. This cautious approach is evident in the following passage:

> It is extremely difficult to forecast the extent to which schools will opt to introduce the Transition Year. Development will only occur on a phased basis and will be controlled to do so. It is not intended that schools will introduce the course before the 1986/87 school year at the earliest.[237]

Achieving the provision of a six year cycle in 1985 was an arduous task. Government cutbacks were affecting all departments. Proponents of the Transition Year Option fought for it on the grounds that students in other EEC countries were leaving school better prepared for work and society.

The state of the economy meant that the decision to offer a three year Leaving Certificate was reversed. In 1987, when Minister Mary O'Rourke outlined the 1988 estimates, she announced that all recognised post-primary schools would be required

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[234]Department of Education, (1985), *Ages for Learning - Decisions of Government*, par.17, No.v, p.7.
[235]Department of Education, (1985), Circular M85/85.
[236]Gemma Hussey, (1990), *At the Cutting Edge: Cabinet Diaries 1982-1987*, p.102 (31st March 1984).
[237]Department of Education, (1985), *Ages for Learning - Decisions of Government*, par.22, p.9.

to complete junior and senior cycle programmes in three years and two years respectively. It was not until 1990 that it was announced that again, from 1991 all pupils entering post-primary schools would have access to a six year cycle. Despite cutbacks, the Transition Year Option went ahead with the stipulation that schools were to apply for permission to offer the programme in 1986/87. Initially the programme was quite popular. A total of 115 schools were granted permission to provide a Transition Year Option but the guarded approach of the Department of Education continued.

The CEB was reconstituted as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in December 1987. The CEB had planned to produce booklets to help in curriculum planning and supplement the guidelines for the Transition Year but the disbandment of the board meant that these did not materialise.

In 1987 the Department of Education decided that only schools then providing the Transition Year Option could continue to do so - as long as their curriculum planning was acceptable - and a new book of guidelines was issued.[238]

There were seventy-four schools on the list of schools approved to do the Transition Year in the year 1987/88.[239] In 1988 there was a directive that the Transition Year Option would only be available to junior cycle students of that same school, to stem the flow of transfers to schools offering Transition Year.[240] This would suggest that the programme was popular among parents and students but perhaps for the wrong reasons. Abuse of the extra year as a repeat junior cycle year is one explanation.

The same circular also allowed schools offering a four year junior cycle before 1985/86 to continue to do so on the basis that there would be a three year junior cycle,

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[238]Department of Education, (1987), *Transition Year option 1987-'88 Notes for Schools.*

[239]Department of Education, (1988), List of schools approved for Transition Year Option for the 1987/88 school year.

[240]Department of Education, (1988), Circular M8/88.

one year Transition Year and a two year senior cycle and stressed that all programmes would have to conform to the 1987/88 guidelines.[241]

2.7.2 Implementation at School/Local Level:

The guidelines published in 1986 by the CEB and in 1987 by the Department of Education served as the source of information for schools offering the programme for the first time. Following circular M85/85 schools applied to the Department of Education to do the course and if accepted, went ahead. No support structures were provided and there was no national inservice provision during the reintroduction of the programme. Despite this seeming lack of support, the numbers of students taking the course rose.

Table 2.3 shows participation figures for the years 1983-1993. Figure 2(b) shows these participation figures in the form of a trend graph.

Table 2.3

The Transition Year Project/Option - Participation Rates 1983-1993

Year	No. of students in TY	Total No. at 2nd level	% of total in TY
1983	503	309245	0.163
1984	425	329434	0.129
1985	484	335153	0.144
1986	2918	338533	0.862
1987	2786*	339556	0.82
1988	2673	338853	0.789
1989	5564	339132	1.641
1990	6105	342416	1.783
1991	8050	348917	2.31
1992	8193	358347	2.286
1993	8499	367645	2.312

* In the 1987/1988 statistical report the figure for those students following Transition Year programmes is included in this figure marked "Other General". What the "other" courses are is not specified. In subsequent years these other courses are included in the figure for Vocational Training courses.

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[241]Ibid.

Figure 2(b)

The Transition Year Project/Option - Participation Rates 1983-1993

TY Participation Rates 1983-1993
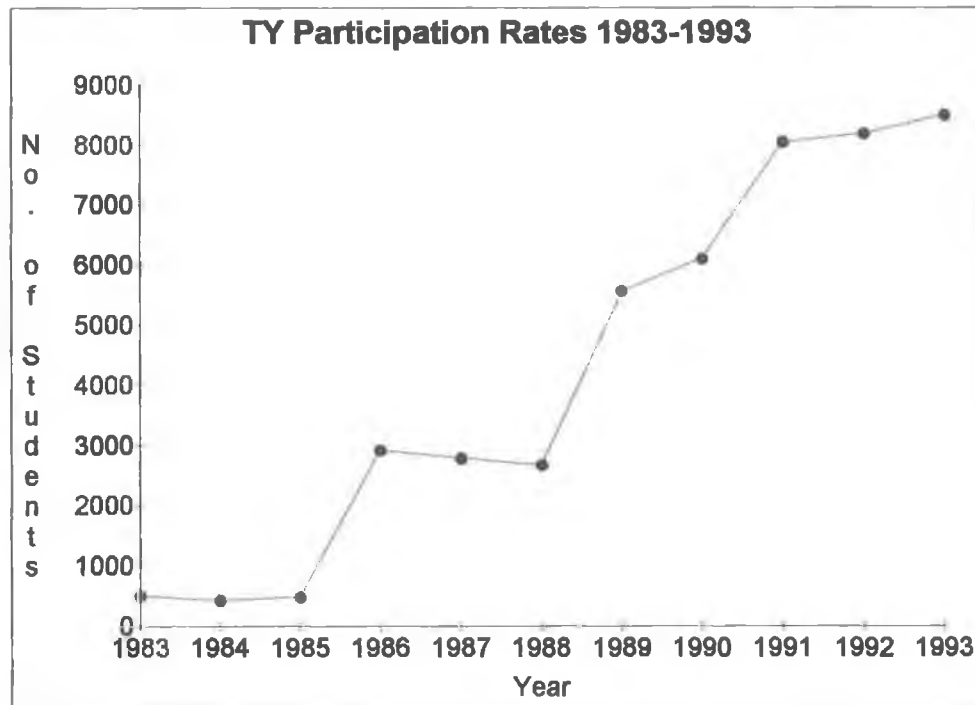
The context in which the programme was reintroduced was one in which transition from school to working life and social and personal development were important issues. It was also a period when choice of course was comparatively wide in order to facilitate students of diverse background and ability. The 1980s brought recession and high unemployment and the importance of qualifications in order to get jobs grew. Although the number of students taking the Transition Year course dropped in the early eighties, participation increased rapidly when the project was reintroduced in 1986. Despite this rise, the number of participating students and schools remained relatively low when compared to other programmes such as the VPTP, which experienced a huge rise in numbers in its first few years of operation. The reasons for the lack of popularity of the programme are multiple and convoluted and include such issues as the persistence of the academic curriculum, the importance of exam results, the shortcomings of the implementation process and the social and economic climate

at the time. One of these reasons, the failure of the implementation process, is discussed in the next section.

2.8 Factors Affecting the Implementation of the Programme after 1986

Many of the factors affecting the successful implementation of the programme after it was reintroduced in 1986 are similar to those operating in the 1970s and early1980s. The future of the Transition Year Option during the 1980s gave cause for concern. The 1984 submission by the IACD to the Minister for Education stated that:

> Given the financial constraints under which the education sector is operating at present, it seems unlikely that any further schools will get sanction for the introduction of such a programme, and we believe that many of those involved with the existing project fear that the experiment may be abandoned.[242]

Concern for the programme persisted into the 1990s. Writing in 1991 Kellaghan and Lewis remark that "the decrease in the number of schools offering the Transition Year which is paralleled by the number of schools offering a repeat Leaving Certificate year must raise questions about the future of the Transition Year Option."[243] Eileen Doyle describes the continuation of the programme as:

> evidence of the determination of school principals, teachers and parents to provide young people with an educational experience that seeks to go beyond the narrower confines of the State examination system.[244]

In 1985/86, 484 pupils participated in the Transition Year.[245] This number rose to 2,918 in the school year 1986/1987.[246] Although the number of students at second

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[242]Submission by the Irish Association for Curriculum Development to: The Minister for Education and the Members of the Interim Curriculum and Examinations Board on The Proposal to Institute a Statutory Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1984, *Compass*, Vol.13, No.2, 1984, Special Edition, p.31.
[243]Thomas Kellaghan and Mary Lewis, (1991), *Transition Education in Irish Schools*, p.7.
[244]Eileen Doyle, (1990), "The Transition Year", in Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams and Donald Herron, (1990), *Achievement and Aspirations: Curricular Initiatives in Irish Post-Primary Education in the 1980s*, p.30.

level rose from 338,533 in 1986/87 to 339,556 in 1987/88, the number of students taking the course dropped by more than one hundred.[247]

Again, factors affecting the implementation of the programme can be divided into those affecting implementation nationally and those acting at school level.

Factors affecting the implementation of the programme nationally include:

- The wide choice of programmes available.

- The guarded approach of the Department of Education.

- The endurance of the identity crisis of the programme.

- The concerns of parents.

2.8.1 Factors Affecting Implementation at National Level:

1. The wide choice of programmes available:

The VPT programme and various social and personal development programmes were very successful and Transition Education courses continued to thrive. The access to VPTP by the voluntary secondary schools from 1984 and the continuing competition for places in third level education perhaps complicated the position of the Transition Year. Principals were under increasing pressure to replace the Transition Year with a possible repeat Leaving Certificate year. There is also the possibility that in some schools the Transition Year Option was chosen as the "lesser of two evils" instead of the VPT programme and then watered down, as the schools' half hearted approach to the programme affected its implementation.[248]

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[245]Department of Education, *Statistical Report*, 1985/86, p.39.
[246]Department of Education, *Statistical Report*, 1986/87, p.36.
[247]Department of Education, *Statistical Report*, 1987/88, p.36. There is no figure given for those students taking Transition Year. A figure of 2,786 is given for "Other" courses and a footnote advises that this figure includes those taking Transition Year.
[248]Michael Sexton, (1993), "In Defence of TYO", *The Secondary Teacher*, Vol.22, No.2, 1993, p.11.

2. The guarded approach of the Department of Education:

In 1987 no additional schools were allowed to offer the programme and in 1988 a letter was sent to schools informing them of revised structures for post-primary courses. The Minister had decided that:

- The junior cycle should be of three years duration in all schools.

- The Leaving Certificate course should be of two years duration in all schools.[249]

Those schools already providing an approved Transition Year course were allowed to continue to do so for pupils graduating from their own Junior Cycle. The circular also announced that "approval for Transition Year courses cannot be given to any other schools until further notice."[250]

The Department of Education *Notes for Schools* bluntly stated that:

> approval of programmes by the Department of Education is granted on the understanding that no additional accommodation, equipment or staff over and above the standard pupil/teacher ratio will be required.[251]

This paucity of funding and support contributed to waning enthusiasm on the part of teachers after the initial implementation of the programme.

Michael Sexton also pin points a lack of evaluation of the programme by the Department of Education in discussing the demise of the concept of the Transition Year in the late eighties and early nineties.[252]

3. The endurance of the identity crisis of the programme:

The identity crisis prevailed. Writing in 1990, Eileen Doyle contends that:

> In schools where the TYO is currently provided, the perception of both teachers and parents is that the TYO is a prelude to the Leaving Certificate....there continues to be a distinction between schools where TYO is part of a six year cycle for all pupils and schools where the

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[249]Department of Education, (1988), Circular M8/88.

[250]Ibid.

[251]Department of Education, (1987), *The Transition Year Option 1987-'88: Notes for Schools,* p.10.

[252]Michael Sexton, (1993), "In Defence of TYO", *The Secondary Teacher,* Vol.22, No.2, 1993, p.11.

TYO is used to give academically weaker pupils an additional year to prepare for the Leaving Certificate.[253]

Michael Sexton laments the demise of the Transition Year concept as originally envisaged, cautioning that "the Transition Year may become little more than a three year Leaving Certificate programme."[254] He describes an inordinate emphasis on examinations and an excessive amount of Leaving Certificate course material covered in the Transition Year in some schools. He also draws attention to the fact that schools may have been producing "paper programmes" for the Department of Education while the reality is somewhat different.[255]

4. The concerns of parents:

The conflict concerning alternative programmes and interference with the academic content of school work still exists. Societal forces representing the concerns of parents and those of industry often pull in opposite directions. Industrial and economic forces call for more technical and vocational training and parents insist that the academic integrity of the curriculum be maintained. Concerns of parents regarding programmes such as the Transition Year reflect many similar elements. During the 1980s, the image of the programme as a "doss year" had grown. Despite the fact that parents are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of holistic education - including education for life and work, exam culture has become so well established that anything seen as a threat to this, however beneficial it may be, is looked upon with scepticism and suspicion. Eileen Doyle remarks that "parents are increasingly expressing concern that the TYO can be a wasted year"[256] and Helen O Colmain writes that:

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[253]Eileen Doyle, (1990), "The Transition Year", in Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams and Donald Herron, (1990), *Achievement and Aspirations: Curricular Initiatives in Irish Post-Primary Education in the 1980s*, p.22.

[254]Michael Sexton, (1993), "In Defence of TYO", *The Secondary Teacher*, Vol.22, No.2, 1993, p.10.

[255]Ibid., p.11.

[256]Eileen Doyle, (1990), "The Transition Year", in Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams and Donald Herron, 1990, *Achievement and Aspirations: Curricular Initiatives in Irish Post-Primary Education in the 1980s*, pp.22-23.

there would appear to be varying reactions to the introduction of the Transition Year which is offered to 20.5 % of secondary schools. Potentially it is an excellent year....however many parents seem to be suspicious of it and fear that their student son or daughter will lose study momentum and therefore "not get the points".[257]

In the school year 1986/87, 201 schools applied to offer the Transition Year programme. Of these, 115 received approval and eighty-seven schools proceeded to offer the programme. Twenty-five percent of the schools permitted to offer the course did not do so and cited a number of the factors recognised to affect implementation, as pertinent in their decision not to offer the programme.

Although the ASTI study pertains to the school year 1986/87, it highlights issues which persisted throughout the eighties and into the early nineties.

Factors affecting the implementation of the programme at school/local level include:

- the late notice of approval granted by the Department of Education in 1986,

- the refusal by the Department of Education to provide extra staff,

- lack of support from parents resulting in too few students applying to do the course,

- an increase in the workload of teachers accentuated by inadequate inservice training,

- lack of planning time,

- the effect of the Transition Year on the provision of other subjects/courses.[258]

2.8.2 Factors Affecting Implementation of the Programme at School/Local Level:

1. The late notice of approval granted by the Department of Education:

This was by far the most important reason given for not offering the programme in the first year of its reintroduction. By the time the approval notices reached schools in June/July of 1986, timetables had already been drawn up and book lists issued to

[257]Helen O Colmain, (1990), "Students' Perceptions of Second and Third Level Options", *Compass*, Vol.19, No.2, 1990, p.53.
[258]Bridghe Lavelle, (1987), *Report of ASTI Survey on Transition Year*, one page summary provided by the ASTI

pupils. The late notice also caused problems for those schools who did proceed to offer the course in areas such as information for parents and placement of pupils.

2. The refusal by the Department of Education to provide extra staff:

An average of fifteen teachers were involved in the provision of a Transition Year course for one class of pupils. These teachers were also involved in other programmes in the curriculum. The different demands of teaching a Transition Year class such as cross-curricular work and outings meant that extra teachers were needed for timetabling team teaching and other activities.

3. A lack of support from parents resulting in too few students applying to do the course:

The fact that a repeat Leaving Certificate would not be an option for students opting for the Transition Year was a contributory factor in this regard. Teachers also maintain that parents had a dim view of the programme due to prior experience with the Transition Year Project.

4. An increase in the workload of teachers:

In the ASTI survey, eighty-five percent of respondents maintained that the introduction of the course led to an increase in the workload of the teachers involved.[259] The increased workload was a result of the planning, implementation and co-ordination of the course without any extra staffing or resources. New elements such as project work, work experience and extra curricular pursuits were also factors. In particular the job of the co-ordinator was seen as an extremely time consuming one. No decrease in teaching hours was allowed and no additional financial allowance was granted.

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[259]Ibid.

5. Inadequate inservice training:

Although there was no organised national inservice programme for teachers, sixty-five percent of those teachers surveyed by the ASTI stated that inservice training had been provided for at least some staff members in their schools.[260] Providers of inservice training included The Department of Education, Teachers' Centres, The Curriculum and Examinations Board and the Trinity/Marino project. Some of the course provided were not specifically for Transition Year teachers and others were of the form of information sessions rather than training. In the ASTI survey, sixty-two percent of respondents felt that inservice training had been inadequate and of the thirty-eight percent who felt that it was adequate, many said that more inservice training would be required.[261]

6. Lack of planning time:

The increased workload involved in providing the course also included planning time outside of normal class time. No provision was made for the large amount of planning and co-ordination needed among teachers. Teachers in the position of co-ordinator particularly felt that a time allocation for planning was required in order to organise all the different curricular areas and to ensure co-operation among teachers involved in cross-curricular and team teaching approaches.

7. The effect of the Transition Year on the provision of other subjects/courses:

The large number of teachers involved in the course in some schools created a knock on effect on the provision of other courses and on other classes. Increased class sizes was cited as one of these effects. In the ASTI survey, thirty-five percent of teachers felt that the introduction of the course had an adverse effect on the provision of other subjects and courses.[262] The main effects cited were increased class sizes for other

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[260]Ibid.
[261]Ibid.
[262]Ibid.

fifth year classes, decreased range of options at Leaving Cert. level and an increase in mixed ability classes in fifth year.

Other problems mentioned by respondents in the ASTI survey included timetable problems, lack of space in the school, the necessity to employ part-time teachers at the school's expense, selecting the target group and designing a course suitable for a particular group of students.

Overall, a very controlled approach was adopted by the Department of Education in reintroducing the programme. The six year cycle had been promised and then financial constraints meant that it was withdrawn. The Transition Year survived, but because no new schools were allowed to offer the programme there was no real implementation process at this time. There was no drive to get new schools involved. Despite the fact that the CEB had advocated investment in inservice education, no national inservice and programme and no support structures were provided. The economic climate in which the Department of Education was operating is perhaps an explanation for the lack of support in the form of inservice provision and extra resources.

The 1987 Department of Education *Notes for Schools* provided the only source of information on the content, aims and objectives and assessment procedures of the programme. This objective approach to curriculum development left those offering the programme attempting to fulfil the aims and objectives as outlined in the guidelines with little additional support. Despite these and other obstacles such as inadequate funding and little formal evaluation, the programme was still offered in a number of schools before it was reintroduced in 1993.

A rise in numbers participating in the programme occurs in the years from 1989 - 1993 but the sharpest rise is for the school year 1989/90, when 5564 students followed the programme as opposed to 2673 students in the school year 1988/89. Despite the concerns of teachers as revealed in the ASTI survey, these figures suggest an upturn in the popularity of the programme. One possible explanation is the drop in pupil

numbers at second level in the school year 1987/88 (see table 2.3). One suggestion is that principals were looking for a way to keep pupil levels up in their schools and offering this extra year would ensure that pupils would not be lost and that teacher allocation would remain static at least. In addition to this, there was also a slight drop in the numbers of pupils in first year between 1987 and 1989. In 1987, 67,162 students entered first year. In 1988 only 66,228 pupils enrolled, rising to only 66,627 in 1989.

2.8.3 Summary:

The economic climate at the time of the programme's reintroduction in 1986 meant that a guarded approach was adopted by the Department of Education when it came to implementing the programme. There was no tangible support for the implementation of the programme in schools. Circulars and guidelines were issued and permission was granted to schools to offer the programme on a controlled basis.

Concern was expressed about the future of the programme throughout the late eighties. The factors directly affecting the implementation of the programme have much in common with those experienced in the 1970s. Lack of Department of Education support for the programme and problems with the status of the programme were still evident. There was also increased pressure for points and the availability of other programmes creating competition for the programme. The programme also had the added dimension of problems initiated in the 1970s, such as the status and public perception of the programme, persisting during the 1980s.

The factors affecting the implementation of the programme at school level are also similar to those operating in the 1970s. In 1986, the first year of the new Transition Year Option, the late notice of approval granted by the Department of Education was clearly a factor. Factors such as the refusal by the Department of Education to provide extra staff and the increased workload of teachers were accentuated by inadequate inservice training. The lack of planning time and the effect of the Transition Year on the provision of other subjects/courses were also factors. As happened in the 1970s

and early 1980s, the lack of support from parents for the course also had an effect on its status and implementation.

2.9 Conclusion - Lessons from the 1970s and 1980s

The importance of the social context in the implementation of a new programme cannot be overlooked. Society holds images of "an educated person" and hence hold ideas about what is required from schools. These images are an expression of society's aspirations for the intellectual, social, cultural and emotional competencies of young people. Kenneth Leithwood maintains that these images of the educated person are "tightly chained to shifts in social values and beliefs about what is possible."[263] An example of the effect of economic climate can be seen in the early 1980s when the programme was at its lowest ebb. In the early 1980s, demographic, economic, social-psychological and technological changes were accompanied by economic recession and a high rate of unemployment in western European countries. In 1981 people under the age of twenty-five accounted for almost half of the population (47.8%). The number of under twenty-fives registered as unemployed for one year increased four fold (from 3,800 to 16,300) between April 1980 and April 1985.[264] In such a climate, one would expect programmes specifically aimed at vocational training and work, or at achieving higher academic qualifications to be more successful than a Transition Year programme which didn't cater specifically for either need.

Trends such as the view of education as an economic investment and the drive for equality of opportunity present challenges to the education system. New programmes are required to suit a diverse clientele and the Transition Year programme was one answer to such a challenge. New programmes require implementation. Implementation

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[263]Kenneth A. Leithwood, "Implementing Core Curricula" in Ruud J. Gorter (Ed.), (1986), *Views on Core Curriculum: Contributions to an International Seminar*, p.72.
[264]Youth Employment Agency, (1986), *Transition from school to work*, quoted by Thomas Kelleghan and Mary Lewis, (1991), *Transition Education in Irish Schools*, p.2.

includes dissemination of the programmes nationally and adoption and institutionalisation at school level. The process involved in implementing the programme in the 1970s was by necessity different from that employed in the mid 1980s. The introduction of the programme in 1974 was as a completely new innovation whereas, by 1986, the programme had been in operation in a number of schools for twelve years. The implementation process in the 1970s consisted largely of initial contact with an inspector while the programme was being set up, but little long term resource support or moral support. It could be suggested that there was no real implementation of the programme in 1986 - that the programme was refloated or relaunched as regards permission to offer the programme but was not reimplemented as such, as there was no national inservice provision or support for schools starting the programme. The implementation process employed involved the issue of circulars and guidelines only.

The findings of this chapter would support the view of Fullan and Promfret, who maintain that successful implementation basically involves the "resocialisation of key actors" and that there is some evidence which suggests that the strategies and tactics important for implementation include "inservice training, resource support, feedback mechanisms and participation in decision making."[265] They find that these factors are mutually reinforcing and that "the presence of any one without the others would likely limit if not eliminate their effectiveness."[266]

Lessons that could perhaps be learned from the experiences of the 1970s and 1980s include the following:

1. Support from the Department of Education for schools implementing new programmes is required in several forms:

- moral support, recognising the difficulty of introducing changes to the curriculum.

- material support in the form of finance, teaching materials and extra teachers.

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[265]Michael Fullan and Alan Promfret, (1975), *Review of Research on Curriculum Implementation*, p.80.
[266]Ibid.

- support in the form of inservice provision.

- a more intangible form of support which allows more time for planning, assessment and evaluation.

Berman and McLoughlin identify support as a crucial factor in the implementation of innovation in schools:

> The institutional setting is a crucially important factor in effective implementation. The key elements were high teacher morale, support from the principal and from district administrators, and teacher willingness to make extra efforts. These conditions made initial adaptation more likely.[267]

It would appear that while teachers and principals were initially willing to make such extra efforts, lack of support gradually eroded enthusiasm.

While Department of Education monitoring of the programme may seem at first to imply an imposition on schools rather than a form of support, the onus on schools to submit an outline of their programme to the Department may protect the concept of the Transition Year as originally intended from erosion.

An illusive form of support - that of protecting the programme from competition with other programmes was also lacking. The Transition Year Option was operating within a crowded niche in the curriculum and the guarded approach of the Department of Education in the eighties did little to improve the status and legitimacy of the programme. The programme also had the legacy of the image of the programme as a "doss year" which had developed during the late seventies and early eighties.

Support in the forms listed above would contribute to providing another type of support for the programme, that of promoting a valid image of the programme in the public eye, particularly among parents, whose views can have a serious effect on the implementation of the programme. It cannot be expected that a programme which is not visibly supported centrally will have a positive public image. This is another point on which the implementation process failed.

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[267]P. Berman and M. McLaughlin, (1975), *Federal Programmes Supporting Educational Change, Vol.IV: The Findings in Review*, p.x.

2. Whole school support is essential to the successful operation of the Transition Year programme:

Another important type of support is that of the whole staff in a school. Change in the curriculum requires the co-operation of everyone involved in the process and to this extent the parents and members of the community could be included. By including the whole school community in promoting the concept of the Transition Year, the profile of the programme can be raised. Through information, myths circulating in relation to the Transition Year can be dispelled.

3. Contact with other schools provides scope for sharing experiences and ideas:

Studies of the comments from schools in Egan and O'Reilly's study and other documents would suggest that meetings with other schools were valuable to teachers as regards reinforcing what was happening in schools, comparing notes and problem solving in general. Although no formal structure was put in place by the Department of Education, schools began their own association and such mutual support may have been in place of absent Department of Education support.

The continuation of the Transition Year programme throughout the 1970s and 1980s is testament to the willingness of principals and teachers to work hard to implement new programmes, even in adverse conditions, in order to meet the needs of students. Despite the difficulties with the programme in the 1970s and early 1980s, 201 schools applied to offer the Transition Year Option when it was introduced in 1986 and despite the difficulties felt during the first year of the Transition Year Option, one hundred percent of teachers surveyed by the ASTI said that they would consider offering the programme in subsequent years.

The implementation of the Transition Year programme in 1974 involved a new concept requiring a new form of implementation. The implementation of the

programme in 1986 was in the form of a reintroduction of an already existing programme. To this extent it may be an unfair comparison to suggest that lessons should have been learned from the 1970s and employed after 1986. The extent of implementation judged to be required and attempted in 1986 was low compared to that involved in the brand new programme in 1974. A review of the numbers of students following the programme would suggest that the low key implementation employed in the late 1980s was relatively successful considering that there were 8,449 pupils taking the Transition Year Option in 1993, just before the launch of the third phase of implementation of the programme.

It could also be suggested that the level of implementation required was greater than that attempted. Level of implementation in part depends on why the programme was implemented in the first place, what it hoped to achieve and for whom. In 1986 the programme was offered as a choice along with several other programmes. Today, it is hoped that the majority of students will complete the senior cycle and the Transition Year Programme has been reintroduced and is being reimplemented as part of a six year post-primary cycle.

Writing in 1991, Kelleghan and Lewis maintained that the Transition Year catered for more students continuing into senior cycle education than for students proceeding to vocational courses or leaving school.[268] Perhaps for this reason, the new Transition Year Programme is specifically tailored to suit students continuing into senior cycle and the Leaving Certificate. Participation trends have facilitated the creation of a programme suited to those interested in following it.

The following chapter describes the implementation of the Transition Year Programme since 1993.

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[268]Thomas Kelleghan and Mary Lewis, (1991), *Transition Education in Irish Schools*, p.7.

CHAPTER THREE

The Implementation of the Transition Year Programme
1993-1997

3.1 Introduction

The Transition Year Programme has recently been introduced once more. This time the course has been envisaged as a programme leading to the senior cycle and the Leaving Certificate. To the uninitiated, the programme may appear in booklets and pamphlets as a completely new programme. In fact it contains many of the aims, objectives and content of the "old" Transition Year Project and Transition Year Option.

Many of the social factors concerning the implementation of the programme in the 1970s and again in the 1980s still exist and have influenced the reintroduction of the programme. Education for work and life is increasingly seen as part of the school's role. The social and personal development of the student is a high priority. The early start in primary school of most of today's post-primary pupils has aided calls for an extra year to increase maturity and give time for reflection and development. Changes in society have created a need for an adaptable and skilled workforce and the community has become an integral part of school life. Increased stay on rates have meant that diverse programmes are needed to cater for students of wide ranging ability and aspiration. In his forward to *Achievements and Aspirations* John Coolahan notes that:

> the very heterogeneous clientele in our schools with varying levels of
> ability, of varied motivation, with differing aspirations and expectations
> of schooling, challenges us to devise educational experiences for them
> of a much more varied character than those which served so long to a
> restricted clientele.[269]

The Transition Year is one such programme.

In order to ascertain the social climate in which the Transition Year is currently being reimplemented, the first part of this chapter gives a brief overview of the background

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[269]John Coolahan, (1990), *Achievement and Aspirations: curricular initiatives in Irish post-primary education in the 1980s*, p.v.

to the reintroduction of the programme. An outline of the curricular content of the programme is included in order to highlight the differences in content and hence, teaching styles and teacher/student relationships involved in the Transition Year Programme which in turn have implications for the implementation process. Part two examines the implementation strategies adopted at national level and reviews the method of inservice and the support structures available. A review of the Department of Education Evaluation Report is given in order to ascertain insight into the implementation process. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the differences in the implementation process used this time and that used in the 1974-1993 period.

This chapter deals largely with the national implementation strategies and support structures. The primary research of this study will deal with the implementation of the programme in schools, investigating the views of staff members regarding the strategies employed at national level and within their schools.

3.2 The Transition Year Programme

3.2.1 Background - Restructuring the Senior Cycle:

The reform of the senior cycle was preceded by several discussion documents on this topic, the first of which can be attributed to the Curriculum and Examinations Board as far back as 1986. The document entitled *Senior Cycle: Development and Direction* came soon after *Ages for Learning* and generated a wide range of responses. In 1990 the NCCA produced a consultative document, *Senior Cycle: Issues and Structures* and this was followed by a position paper entitled *The Curriculum at Senior Cycle: Structure, Format and Programmes*, which was presented to the Minister as part of the preparation for the Government Green Paper on Education in 1992. Other publications such as the 1991 OECD *Review of National Policies for Education, Ireland* and *A Time for Change: Industrial Policy for the 1990s* from the Industrial Policy Review Group in 1992 also made valuable contributions to the debate. In 1993

the NCCA produced a document designed to provide the policy framework for senior cycle programmes entitled *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Towards a New Century*. The essence of the policy is that:

> The great majority of young people in the age range 15 - 18 years, should be catered for within an expanded senior cycle programme. This will require a more flexible structure in terms of curriculum, assessment and certification.[270]

The document recommends a "comprehensive curriculum which will avoid spurious distinctions between academic and vocational education while allowing for diversity and specialisation."[271] The Transition Year Option is mentioned as an integral part of the three year senior cycle proposed by the Council. They describe the programme as being designed to "prepare young people for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society"[272] and outline two possible options for the Transition Year as part of the senior cycle:

1. A one year transition programme followed by a two year Leaving Certificate programme.

2. A transition programme and Leaving Certificate programme taken concurrently over three years, with a 1:2 time ratio (wedge model). [273]

The Department of Education Circular M31/93, outlines the interim arrangements for pupils entering senior cycle in September, 1994.[274] Little mention is made of the Transition Year as an option although the guidelines available are mentioned in the last paragraph. The circular stresses that a three year Leaving Certificate programme will not be permitted.

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[270]NCCA, (1993), *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Towards a New Century*, pp.4-5.
[271]Ibid., p.5.
[272]Ibid., p.57.
[273]Ibid., p.55.
[274]Department of Education, (1993), Circular M31/93.

Circular M47/93 can be described as a land mark publication in the implementation of the Transition Year Programme. This circular outlines the revised structure and content of the senior cycle curriculum for September 1995 and subsequent years. It refers to its predecessor but expands significantly on the role of the Transition Year. It describes the changes at senior cycle level as intended to provide "maximum flexibility in catering for the different needs, aptitudes and abilities of pupils" and describes the Transition Year Programme as "being introduced in order to provide pupils with wider opportunities for personal development."[275] The circular stipulates that schools will not be allowed to provide a three year Leaving Certificate as this would lead to erosion of the Transition Year Programme. This support for the programme was, in itself, a new departure.

3.2.2 Curricular Content:

The same description of the Transition Year Programme: "a one year interdisciplinary programme for pupils who have completed an approved course for recognised junior pupils" appeared in the 1976 *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools* and ten years later in the 1986/87 edition. The 1986/87 edition also contains the same list of suggested subjects for the curriculum.[276]

The description becomes more detailed in the 1987/88-1995/96 *Rules and Programme*. Instead of listing subjects for inclusion in the curriculum, this edition gives a mission statement:

> To promote the personal, social, educational and vocational development of pupils and to prepare them for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society.[277]

This edition outlines the aims of the Transition Year Programme as follows:

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[275]Department of Education, (1993), Circular M47/93.

[276]Department of Education, (1986), *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools*, p.167.

[277]Department of Education, (1987), *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools 1987/88-1995/96*, p.82.

1. Education for maturity with the emphasis on personal development including social awareness and increased social competence.

2. The promotion of general, technical and academic skills with an emphasis on interdisciplinary and self-directed learning.

3. Education through experience of adult and working life as a basis for personal development and maturity.[278]

The philosophy, rationale and overall aims of the Transition Year Programme have stayed much the same over the course of the decade and have much in common with the description of the course given in the 1974 edition of *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools*. The curricular content remains standard, changing only to keep pace with technological advance and interest in enterprise. An emphasis on teamwork and a whole school approach has emerged in recent years as has mention of staff development and inservice. Little change has taken place on the subjects of assessment, certification and evaluation. There are two significant changes which are evident in the 1994/1995 guidelines. What was formerly known as the Transition Year "Option" is now termed a "Programme" and the programme is no longer envisaged by the Minister as a final year for early school leavers.

The most recently published description of the Transition Year programme is from *Senior Cycle: The Restructured Curriculum for Second-Level Schools*, a booklet issued by the Department of Education in 1996 which outlines the changes at senior cycle. The overall objective of restructuring the senior cycle is:

> to provide for the holistic development of all students and to foster a sense of self-esteem, self reliance and innovation to help them to be involved actively in the social and economic future of society.[279]

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[278]Ibid.

[279]Department of Education, (1996), *Senior Cycle: The Restructured Curriculum for*

The Transition Year is described as a programme which "provides for a broad education of students" and is said to encourage students to "find and develop their own special academic, career and leisure interests as well as making them more socially aware of the needs of their community."[280] The booklet outlines the flexible nature of the curriculum and gives the following as the main features of a Transition Year curriculum:

- Short study units (modules)

- Cultural and Social Studies

- Environmental Studies

- Technology

- Wider choice of languages

- Field trips

- Leisure programmes

- Work experience

- Operating a business (mini-companies)

- Projects/assignments rather than traditional homework.[281]

It is suggested that students do not choose their options for Leaving Certificate at the beginning of the Transition Year but sample a range of subjects with a view to making more informed choices at the end of the year. Work experience can be in the form of work shadowing, work simulation or actual work placement. Schools are permitted to cover some Leaving Certificate material but as with earlier publications, it is stressed that the year should not be used to operate a three year Leaving Certificate programme.

Variables which affect the curricular content of a particular school's Transition Year Programme include the teachers available to teach the programme, whether the course

Second-Level Schools, p.2.
[280]Ibid., p.3.
[281]Ibid.

is designed for all post junior cycle students or for a particular group, the views and philosophy of the principal and staff members as regards the Transition Year, the needs of the community and the views of parents.

By examining the implementation process applied in the 1970s and that which operated during and after the reintroduction of the programme in 1986/87 it is possible to explore the factors affecting the change mechanism and highlight potential pitfalls in the reimplementation of the programme. Conclusions drawn from chapter two suggest that the factors likely to affect the implementation of the programme in schools include the level of support from the Department of Education - specifically financial aid and support in the form of resources and inservice training, whole school support for the project, the public image and status of the project in the curriculum and contact with other schools.

The following section explores the implementation of the Transition Year Programme in 1993 - 1997, with a view to determining whether there have been any advances in regrad to the implementation processes employed since the 1970s and 1980s.

3.3 The Implementation of the Transition Year Programme: 1993-1997

3.3.1 Introduction:

The aim of this chapter is to examine implementation at national level and to analyse the differences in implementation strategies developed since the 1970s and 1980s. This section discusses the introduction of the Transition Year Programme in 1993/94, the dissemination of the programme, inservice provision and the establishment and role of the Transition Year Support Team. These aspects are worthy of discussion considering that they address problems in implementation arising in chapter two such as the need for inservice training and Department of Education support for the programme. This

section also includes a review of the Department of Education Evaluation of the Transition Year Programme, published in 1996, as this gives some insight into the extent to which the programme is perceived to have been implemented in schools. Table 3.1 shows the participation figures for 1993/94-1996/97 to illustrate the rise in participation rates since the reintroduction of the programme in 1994/95. Figure 3(a) illustrates this information graphically.

Table 3.1

The Transition Year Programme - Participation Rates 1993-1996

Year	No. of students in TY	Total No. at 2nd level	% of students inTY
1993	8499	367645	2.312
1994	21173	371230	5.703
1995	24149	369865	6.529
1996	24292	371763*	6.534

*Provisional figure obtained form the database section of the Department of Education - based on the "October returns" submitted on September 30th 1996. The actual figure is not available at the time of writing and will not be available until July 1997.

Figure 3(a)

The Transition Year Programme - Participation Rates 1993-1996
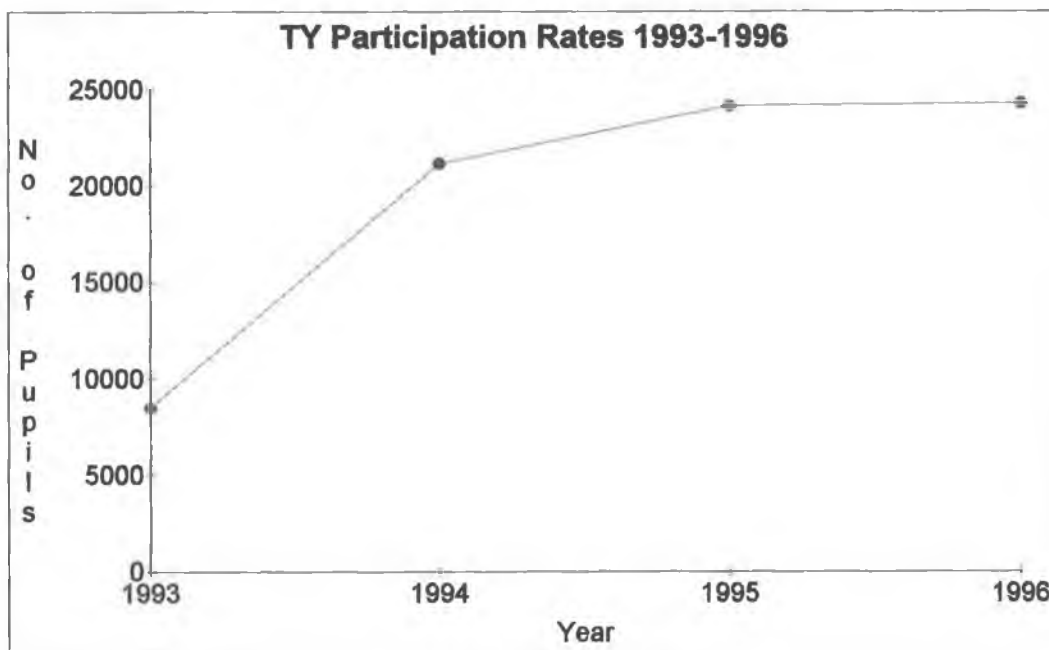
3.3.2 Dissemination of the Transition Year Programme to Schools:

Dissemination usually involves the distribution of new and detailed programme guidelines outlining aims, objectives, programme content and teaching methods to schools. In the case of the Transition Year Programme the process is slightly different in that the programme content is largely decided at local level, although a booklet of guidelines and a folder of information were provided for schools.

Circular M47/93 outlined the revised structured and content of the senior cycle curriculum for September 1995 and subsequent years and gave unprecedented support for the implementation of the Transition Year. Schools were advised that those wishing to offer the programme in the school year 1994/95 should notify the Department by December 3rd 1993. For those applying, application forms sent to schools were to be completed by this date. Schools were cautioned that a condition of applying to offer the course would be that the school participate in the planned inservice programme. The following section discusses this inservice provision.

3.3.3 Inservice Provision - The Transition Year In-career Development

   Programme:

The provision of inservice training is essential to successfully implementing curriculum change. The type of inservice provided and the model employed are important factors. Fullan and Promfret cite a report by Solomon which found that:

> teachers who receive maximum training (pre-service, inservice, materials) scored ten percent higher on degree of implementation than teachers who were given minimum training (materials only).[282]

The national inservice programme for the Transition Year represents a new departure for in-career development. Referring to the programme as a "significant innovation in

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[282]Michael Fullan and Alan Promfret, (1975), *Review of Research on Curriculum Implementation*, p.81.

inservice education", then Minister for Education, Niamh Breathnach, described the teachers involved as trainers as:

> pioneering a new style of inservice provision - provision which is driven not by the decisions of the providers but by the needs of the teachers, inservice education which is experiential and includes active participant involvement.[283]

The Transition Year In-career Development Programme ran from December 1993 to October 1994 and was based on a training of trainers model. The programme was developed and supported by an Action Group of five experienced teachers in consultation with a team of Department of Education inspectors. It was implemented by sixty-three teacher-trainers/regional co-ordinators who were recruited from schools which had Transition Year Programmes prior to 1994/95. The composition and tasks of the teams are well outlined by Lewis and McMahon as shown in table 3.2.[284]

Circular 3/94 was issued in January of 1994, informing schools that their application to offer a Transition Year Programme was approved "subject to the participation of the school in the forthcoming in-career development programme."[285] Schools were informed that the inservice training would consist of a briefing session for the principal and co-ordinator, a half day inservice session for the staff, a full day inservice for four or five teachers in a cluster with other schools and a further full day inservice for staff in the Autumn term of the 1994/1995 school year. This was to alter slightly to the briefing sessions for principals and staffs and two cluster days and only one whole staff inservice day in Spring of 1994.

Appendix two contains a more detailed account of the actual content of the inservice programme.

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[283]Minister Niamh Breathnach, in a letter to teachers involved in the "Train the Trainers" Programme at St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, January, 1994.
[284]Mary Lewis and Lean McMahon, (1996), *An Evaluation of a Training of Trainers In-service Education Model: The Transition Year in Career Development Programme*, Figure 2.1, p.4.
[285]Department of Education, (1994), Circular 3/94.

Table 3.2

Personnel Structures in the Transition Year In-career Development Programme

Personnel Structures in the Transition Year In-career development programme	
Personnel	**Input and Time Schedule**
Department of education:	
Senior Inspector (1)	Provide overall direction
Inspectors (5)	Liaise with and support Action Group
Action Group (5)	
Comprising four teachers representing each school type released full-time January/March '94 and periodically during November/December '93 and September/October '94 and one university lecturer, each member being responsible for three of fifteen regions.	Design and implement six-day training programme for Regional Co-ordinators (Dec '93 to Jan '94) Support Regional Co-ordinators in fifteen regions during implementation of briefing sessions and cluster days. Prepare reports (to include evaluation) Reports prepared Feb. '94 and June '94 Develop resource material for schools -resource materials published May '94. Provide two additional training days for Regional Co-ordinators (Sept '94).
Regional Co-ordinators (63)	Attend six-day training programme
Recruited from 160 schools representing all school types and in which Transition Year Programmes were already in operation distributed over 15 regions in teams of four released periodically during January/March '94 and September/October'94.	(Dec '93 to Jan '94) Hold half-day briefing sessions in schools (Spring '94) Implement two series of cluster days in selected venues (Spring/Autumn '94) Attend two-day training programme (Autumn '94).
Teachers, TY Co-ordinators, School Principals (2,005)*	Attend briefing session (Spring '94) Attend two cluster days (Spring/Autumn '94) and disseminate outcomes to school colleagues
Whole Staffs (583 schools)	Attend briefing session (spring '94)
*This estimate is based on the release of three teachers (1,749) from target schools (N=583)	

3.3.4 The Transition Year In-career Development Programme - Emerging Issues:

An evaluation of the "Training of Trainers" programme of inservice was undertaken by Lewis and McMahon.[286] Through this evaluation and through interviews with trainers and access to questionnaires filled by teachers involved, it is possible to make some assumptions about the success of the Transition Year inservice programme.

Lewis and McMahon found that "overall reactions in schools to Transition Year Inset were positive."[287] The findings of the evaluation also suggest that implementation was associated with the following positive outcomes:

1. The programme was perceived to provide valuable opportunities for professional development of teachers.

2. The school based component was singularly effective in reaching whole staff groups, including principals and was widely appreciated in schools.

3. The non-school based cluster days were welcomed by participants for the opportunity they afforded to meet and exchange information and ideas with colleagues in other schools.[288]

In general it would appear that "the aims and objectives of the training programme were largely achieved" according to the Regional Co-ordinators and Action Group members. The programme was thought to have helped to clarify aims and objectives and was found to be motivating. One trainer recalls some schools feeling that their Transition Year Programme had gone stale and spoke of the enthusiasm of new schools who had started planning already.

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[286]Mary Lewis and Lean McMahon, (1996), *An Evaluation of a Training of Trainers In-service Education Model: The Transition Year in Career Development Programme*, Educational Research Centre, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. The programme was provided for staff in six hundred schools. Lewis and McMahon interviewed twenty out of the sixty-three members of the action group. They interviewed Principals and co-ordinators in fifty-two schools and surveyed fifty-one teachers by questionnaire. In all, seventy schools were involved.
[287]Ibid., p.viii.
[288]Ibid.

Lewis and McMahon highlight a number of concerns from their report. Regional Co-ordinators felt that further training was needed in the areas of teaching methods and assessment and also commented on the perceived lack of attention in the training to skills involved in delivering and presenting information. This concern was echoed by the Action Group members who voiced concern about the presentation skills of "a small but significant number of trainers."[289] Action Group members felt that they discovered these shortcomings too late and would have liked to be able to diagnose them earlier. They also suggested that they would have liked more involvement with team selection.

Interviews with trainers reveal positive aspects and concerns. Individuals involved as trainers shared some of the concerns of the Action Group members. One trainer felt that there should have been separate days for schools with different levels of experience. Concern was expressed about the mixture of schools in the clusters - some with established Transition Year Programmes and others just starting - as this made it more difficult for team members to adapt their presentation to the group. Team members also felt unable to answer questions on resources, time and money "despite strong support from the Department of Education." Some were unhappy with the way in which the time they were absent from school due to inservice was scattered.

Trainers' evaluation sheets show that concerns voiced by teachers during the briefing session included - time for planning, the role of the co-ordinator, the provision of resources, concerns about the mini-company idea and finance as it was noted that the Transition Year "did not have the same funding or teacher allocation as the VPT programme."

Overall, reactions from respondents are described as "positive" by Lewis and McMahon. They found that of the fifty-one respondents, twenty-five of them said that

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[289]Ibid., p.21.

the inservice programme was better than that given for the Junior Certificate and seventeen felt that it was as good.

Lewis and McMahon found that individual components of the inservice programme earned different reactions from participants. There were differences of opinion on certain aims of the inservice programme depending on whether the school was new to the programme or not. For example, the initial briefing session was deemed to be more valuable by those schools introducing the Transition Year for the first time. Schools already offering the programme felt that it was useful in "reassuring staff and encouraging and motivating them."[290] As would be expected, those new to the programme felt that the inservice helped a lot in the planning of programmes whereas those already operating the programme felt that it facilitated the evaluation of the programme.

The key features of the inservice programme include the fact that it was devised in a way which sought to gain as much as possible from existing expertise in the system. The model aimed to promote an advisory service in which teachers in schools received information and advice from other teachers acting as advisors or regional co-ordinators.[291] Teams were constructed on a temporary basis and the model had a school based component. The programme was different from many inservice programmes in that it used a cluster day format which was not typically targeted at teachers on a subject basis.

While favoured over other forms of inservice education, successful implementation of the training of trainers model may be harder to achieve. Pitfalls include the failure to train trainers as change agents, failure to support them throughout the programme and to provide training that is of sufficient duration and substance.[292]

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[290]Ibid., p.25.
[291]Ibid., p.6.
[292]Ibid., pp.59-60.

Clearly this was a highly organised and efficient method of delivering inservice to schools but inservice represents only one step in the implementation process. The following section outlines support for the implementation of the project and includes a section on the role of the Transition Year Support Team in continuing the work of the inservice programme.

3.3.5 Support for the Implementation of the Transition Year Programme:

In researching chapter two, "support" was perhaps the factor most often appealed for and most obviously lacking. There is a need to support those implementing the Transition Year Programme on several fronts. One level of support involves an injection of curriculum ideas and materials for use in the classroom. Another level is to affirm and support individual teachers.

As emerged in chapter two, support comes in many forms: financial, moral and in the form of materials, resources, extra teachers, training and time for planning. Financial support is now provided by the Department of Education as a contribution towards the "planning and co-ordination necessary to ensure that students derive maximum benefit from the Transition Year Programme...."[293] Schools are at present granted £50 per student on an approved Transition Year Programme and can spend the money on extra teaching hours or other expenses. Time for planning is still in short supply but a number of the other forms of support mentioned are offered to some extent by the Transition Year Support Team

The Transition Year Support Team:

The Transition Year Support Team arose out of a proposal made by the original sixty-three member inservice team. The members of the team evaluated the responses of the teachers they dealt with during the course of the programme and those responses became the foundation for the work of the Support Team.

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[293]Department of Education, (1996), Circular M4/96, p.1.

The team was established in 1995 from sixty-three of the original regional co-ordinators. There are fourteen people in the team altogether - four core members and ten regional co-ordinators and the country is divided up into eleven regions. There are, for example, sixty-four schools in the "Liffey Region" and the co-ordinator of each region has the responsibility for building a relationship between those schools where the schools are willing to participate.

The view of one member of the Transition Year Support Team is that its function is:

> to support the TY in all its aspects in the school, to assist the school to review its written programme and to evaluate its work. To bring co-ordinators together, to deal with co-ordination issues....to prepare team building, motivation, organisation.....and to support individual subject teachers: in short to enhance the learning of all concerned.[294]

The Transition Year Support Team not only helps individual teachers, but arranges inservice training in the form of seminars and workshops. In its first year, the Team organised 110 subject based workshops and eighty workshops for co-ordinators.

The lifespan of the Support Team is uncertain. The Team was initially established for a two year span and its tenure is extended year to year. As of May 1997, the Team will be continued for the next school year.

The importance of continual support and training in the implementation of new curricula should not be underestimated. The literature suggests that continual inservice provision is highly valued in implementing educational change. An evaluation of the Project EXCEL Teacher Inservice Program in the U.S. supports this view. The goal of the project was to influence student achievement by accelerating the rate of integration of technology in the classroom through a collaborative teacher training programme. Project EXCEL provided inservice training and staff development on a continuous basis based on the finding that "one-shot or limited inservice does not provide for

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[294]The Transition Year Supporter in the "Liffey" Region, Alec McAlister, in an interview, October 1996.

increases in the use of technology nor does it lead to systematic changes in instructional/learning processes in classrooms."[295]

3.3.6 The Department of Education Evaluation Report:

The Department of Education Evaluation Report states that the main trust of the inspectors actions was towards evaluating how the guidelines on the Transition Year Programme were being implemented in each school. An evaluation instrument, designed to control the overall rating to be given to the Transition Year Programme in a school in the context of "Organisation of Content", was utilised in the course of the school visits. Organisation of content was considered to be the area in which most development should have taken place. The other categories were "Vision", "Teaching and Learning", "Assessment" and "Evaluation".

Fullan and Promfret maintain that:

> evaluation, especially at the start of a project, should be geared more towards facilitating implementation rather than judging the success or failure of the user's attempt at implementing the innovation.[296]

Based on this, a review of the findings of the Department of Education Evaluation Report may give some insights into facilitating further implementation of the programme.

The Evaluation Report:

Guidelines were issued by the Department of Education in the year 1994/1995. In the context of these guidelines the Transition Year Programme was evaluated by the inspectorate during the 1994/95 school year. In this year more than 20,000 pupils in 459 schools participated in the programme. The purpose of the appraisal was to evaluate:

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[295]Keith A. Wetzel, Ines M. Chisholm and Ray R. Buss, "An Evaluation of the Project EXCEL Teacher Inservice Program", Arizona State University West, Internet Source.
[296]Michael Fullan and Alan Promfret, (1975), *Review of Research on Curriculum Implementation*, p.110.

how the revised Transition Year Programme had been introduced in over 300 schools for the very first time and to ascertain how more than 150 schools had readjusted their programmes from its fore runner, the Transition Year Option.[297]

The appraisal was undertaken in 146 schools randomly selected from the different categories of post-primary schools. Two inspectors were assigned to visit each school and report on "the structure, appropriateness and effectiveness of the Transition Year Programme" in the school. Documentation supplied by the principal before the visit included the timetable, work placement information, teacher self-evaluation sheets, Transition Year evaluation sheets, assessment information, booklists and details of expenses incurred in offering the programme. The evaluation team spoke to the principal and vice-principal, Transition Year co-ordinator and other teachers involved in the programme. They also visited classrooms and appraised various projects. At the end of the monitoring period there was a closing meeting with the principal and co-ordinator of the programme.

Some Findings of the Report:

In the category regarding "Organisation of Content", eighty-nine percent of schools were following the Department of Education guidelines in a satisfactory manner, fifty-nine percent of schools have programmes which are considered creditable or better than creditable while thirty percent of the programmes are considered distinctive. Eleven percent of schools did not have creditable programmes. On average in the other categories, about fifty-five percent of schools were regarded as creditable or better while fifteen percent of schools required improvement. Weakest categories overall were those involving assessment and evaluation.[298]

Other findings from the report, relevant to this study include:

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[297]Department of Education, (1996), *Transition Year Programme 1994/95: An Evaluation by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education,* p.6.
[298]Ibid.

1.1 The consensus among principals, teachers and pupils is that the Transition Year Programme is a very worthwhile initiative, allowing the school to engage in genuine in-school curriculum development, affording teachers the opportunity to break free of overly compartmentalised subject teaching and giving pupils the space and time to grow in maturity and to develop in self confidence.

1.3 An efficient co-ordinator backed up by a committed and representative co-ordinating team is essential for the effective management of the programme.

1.4 Clear aims and objectives, careful planning, constant monitoring and regular reviewing are essential for a successful Transition Year Programme.[299]

These findings raise some valid points. The programme has been recognised as valuable by school staff members and students. Conclusions from chapter two would indicate that the acceptance of parents and the community and society in general is also important for the status of the programme.

The importance of clear aims and objectives and constant monitoring and evaluation of the programme is linked to the fact that an efficient and committed co-ordinator and co-ordination team are essential for successful implementation and management of the programme. The principal, co-ordinator and co-ordination team are pivotal in the successful implementation of the programme at school level and successful implementation requires clear aims and continual evaluation and development of the programme.

The Recommendations of the Study:

The recommendations of the study include several points relevant to a study on the implementation of the Transition Year Programme and raise issues regarding those factors emerging in the study of the prior attempts to implement the programme. These include: "Schools should ensure that there is a whole school approach at all

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[299]Ibid., pp.1-2.

stages and in all aspects of the Transition Year Programme" and "the informal networking of schools offering Transition Year in a particular region would be of enormous benefit in terms of improving and revitalising individual programmes."[300] Both of these points emerged in the study of the implementation processes of the 1970s and 1980s and are equally important today. Similarly, the report maintains that "school certification reflecting the experience, achievement and assessment of each pupil should be an integral part of all Transition Year Programmes"[301], a sentiment expressed by many participants in earlier programmes. The commitment of all staff members is essential in the creation and implementation of a programme which provides valuable learning experiences for students. Contact with other schools helps reinforce what is happening in schools and creates a forum for the sharing of ideas and resources. Contact with other schools can act as a type of feed-back mechanism. Feed back mechanisms include interactions with other partners in innovation such as administrators, parents and members of the community and are important in that they serve as a means of "identifying problems encountered during implementation in order to provide support for addressing them."[302]

3.4 Conclusion:

The most recent implementation of the Transition Year Programme has been as part of an overall restructuring of the senior cycle. This in itself lends more credence and legitimacy to the programme, more than it would have as a reform measure existing on its own. Several factors have contributed to the relatively successful implementation of the programme since 1993. Even without the apparent success reported in the Department of Education Evaluation Report, it is clear that the national

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[300]Ibid., p.3.
[301]Ibid., p.4.
[302]Michael Fullan and Alan Promfret, (1975), *Review of Research on Curriculum Implementation*, p.85.

implementation of the programme has been relatively successful. The programme is offered in more schools and is followed by more students.

The curricular content of the programme cannot solely be credited with this success. Content has changed to keep pace with advancements in industry, technology and culture but the central philosophy of the programme - the concentration on personal development and time for maturity have remained.

In chapter two the following salient issues emerged in the implementation of the Transition Year Programme in the 1970s and 1980s:

At National Level: 1974 - 1986

- Lack of central support for the project,

- Finance,

- Lack of assistance in the establishment of programmes and in

   teacher training,

- The operation of the programme in a crowded niche in the curriculum,

- Changes of Minister for Education and government,

At School/Local Level: 1974 - 1986

- Insufficient funding,

- Lack of support from the Department of Education,

- Scarcity of planning time,

- The status and legitimacy of the programme,

- Lack of contact with other schools,

- Insufficient resources including extra teachers,

- Lack of whole school support,

- Financial pressure on parents and the state,

- The success of transition education and social and personal development

   programmes.

At National Level: 1986-1993

- The wide choice of programmes available,

- The guarded approach of the Department of Education,

- The endurance of the identity crisis of the programme,

- The concerns of parents,

At School/Local Level: 1986 - 1993

- The late notice of approval granted by the Department of Education in 1986,

- The refusal by the Department of Education to provide extra staff,

- Lack of support from parents resulting in too few students applying to do the course,

- An increase in the workload of teachers accentuated by inadequate inservice training,

- Lack of planning time,

- The effect of offering the Transition Year programme on the provision of other subjects/courses.[303]

These issues raise some critical questions regarding the current implementation of the Transition Year Programme: How can support for the programme be improved? What types of support are needed for the implementation of the programme in the 1990s? How can inservice training be continued and improved? Training in which aspects? Content?, Methodology? What internal aspects can be improved? Teamwork? Support of the principal? Whole School Approach? Community involvement?

From the research into the national implementation strategies in this chapter it is possible to pin point a number of features which already suggest an improved implementation process. They include:

1. The Provision of Inservice Training: the inservice programme would appear to have been successful in fulfilling its aims. Inservice provision was named by teachers as one of the factors necessary for the success of the programme in the 1970s.

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[303]Bridghe Lavelle, (1987), *Report of ASTI Survey on Transition Year*, one page summary provided by the ASTI

2. Support Structures: the combination of financial support from the Department of Education and the functions of the Transition Year Support Team have created circumstances cited by teachers in the 1970s as crucial to the continuation of the programme. Factors such as support in the form of resources and materials, help in changing teaching methods and content, back-up services and contact with other schools are in place.

The Evaluation Report describes the extent to which the programme has been implemented in accordance with the 1994/1995 guidelines but does not seek to explore the actual implementation processes at school level. It does not assess the usefulness of the inservice programme or inquire as to other forms of support required by schools to implement the programme successfully. Nor does it aim to study the decision making and planning processes which aid successful implementation.

The aim of the following chapter is to explore how and by whom the programme has been implemented in schools, what processes have facilitated effective planning and implementation and the perceptions and attitudes of those involved in the ongoing implementation process.