National University of Ireland, Maynooth

The Professional Development of Teachers:

The Perspective of the Practicing Transition Year Teacher

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Chapter 1

The Emergence of the Transition Year Programme

Introduction

This study is an inquiry into the contribution of the Transition Year Programme to the professional development of teachers and by implication of such development to the development of the school as a whole. The central focus of the study however, is on the potential for the professional development of the individual teacher through his or her engagement in the Transition Year Programme. The author seeks to identify ways in which the Transition Year initiative has contributed to teachers' professional growth and to their extended professional engagement in school life.

As a teacher and school principal the author has both a personal and professional interest in teacher development.

As a teacher one has felt it necessary to invest time in professional development. Such engagement has energised an ongoing enthusiasm for and commitment to learning and teaching. As a school principal, one is committed to facilitating continuous teacher development and believes that it underpins the quality of relationship that is necessary between teacher and student. Such a relationship and commitment is vital to the development and vitality of the educational opportunities we seek to promote.

Teacher development may be considered in at least three particular respects:

> ➢ The professional development of the individual teacher

> ➢ The professional development of the staff as a whole, and

> ➢ The commitment of the school community to ongoing teaching and learning.

Other reasons for undertaking this study include the constantly evolving climate of Irish education and in particular the current debate with regard to future curricular provision at Senior Cycle. The study will attempt to highlight some of the issues involved in teacher development from teachers' perspectives. It will attempt to give an insight into teachers' perceptions of their own professional development needs and to the manner in which they might be addressed in future initiatives.

The study seeks:

> To gain insight into the attitudes and perspectives of teachers towards current opportunities for professional development as presented in TYO.

> To identify specific areas of professional development of interest to teachers currently involved it the TY programme.

> To identify ways in which teachers of TY promote their own professional growth.

> To inform the work of in-school management in respect of providing for professional development opportunities of staff.

> To inform the work of in-service programme planners.

This chapter locates the emergence of the Transition Year Programme as a Senior Cycle option in the broader context of educational development. It treats of three particular issues. Firstly, it looks briefly at the introduction and historical development of the programme to date. Secondly, it places the programme in the context of the recent educational legislation and policy initiatives; finally it treats of the specific characteristics of the Transition Year Programme planning and implementation process, as it affords an opportunity for teachers' professional development. The chapter seeks to show how and why this is the case.

The Transition Year Programme.

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.
(An Evaluation by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education, 1994-1995, p.1)

The Transition Year Programme is a one-year course offered to students on the completion of Junior Cycle and prior to their undertaking of the Leaving Certificate programme. It seeks to offer students the opportunity to mature and develop their interest and aptitude free from the pressure of external examination.

It provides a bridge to enable students make the transition from Junior to Senior Cycle. It encourages personal and social development and recognises the need for students to grow in independence...It encourages the development of a wide range of transferable critical thinking and creative problem–solving skills. (The Transition Year Curriculum Support Service, 2000)

The Transition Year Programme differs in a number of ways from either of the programmes that proceed or follow it. While the curriculum and individual syllabus content of both Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate programmes are strictly prescribed, the curriculum content of the TY programme is a matter for selection and adaptation by individual schools. The programme is designed to offer students the opportunity to learn, develop and mature in the absence of examination pressure and the school is asked to ensure that within the programme offered every effort is made to make a clear distinction between the curriculum of TY and the corresponding Leaving Certificate programme.

A key feature of the Transition Year Programme should be to the use of a wide range of teaching/learning methodologies and situations. (Transition Year Guidelines, 1996)

The course guidelines place significant emphasis on the value of interdisciplinary and self-directed learning and the curricular principles as set out in the guidelines stress the importance of remediation and compensatory studies, interdisciplinary work and work experience throughout. Assessment is also

identified as an integral part of learning process and a broad range of diagnostic and formative techniques are suggested.

Historical Background

Minister Richard Burke first introduced the Transition Year Programme in April 1974. The course was initially conceived of as a pilot scheme and it is important to locate its emergence in the context of the economic and education policy climate of the time.

Perceptions as to the role of education and of schools had changed significantly over the 1960s and 1970s and this development contributed to the belief that investment in education could be regarded as investment in the economy of the country. Economic policy documents of the time indicate this development. The Second Programme for Economic Expansion published in 1963 devoted a chapter to education and the Third Programme for Economic and Social Development, 1969 - 1972 highlighted the importance of education in the economic and social development of the country. It was acknowledged at national level that expenditure on education was in fact, an investment in the country's primary resource – its people. The Minister of Education, Dr. Hillery, acknowledged in 1962 that "Education is now accepted an investment of national resources."(Hyland and Milne, 1992, P.31) Such education could be expected to yield increasing returns in respect of economic progress and development.

The publication of an OECD report, "Investment in Education" (1965) highlighted significant social and geographical inequalities of opportunity that existed within our educational system and it recommended the establishment of a special development unit within the Department of Education that would be active in the initiation and development of educational policy to address this difficulty. (Coolahan, 1981) The report spoke of the manpower planning needs of the economy and recommended that we develop strategies to meet these needs. It also emphasised the importance of forging greater links between the education system and the economy. The report gave considerable cause for concern

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at the time and "sign-posted the direction of educational reform." (O'Connor cited in Coolahan, 1981, p.168) The Minister of Education, Donogh O'Malley remarked of it in 1966 "It has certainly been a guideline and a basis document for us to work on for the future." (ibid, p.168)

The same Minister announced the introduction of 'free post-primary education' in 1966 and a new school transport scheme in 1967, providing for free bus transport for pupils living more than three miles from their nearest school. The introduction of free post-primary education, free school transport and the subsequent raising of the school leaving age by the Minister led to a considerable growth in participation rates at second level over the following years. This development together with the introduction of the Comprehensive School in 1966 and the Community School in 1970 addressed the need to provide a broader curriculum to meet the diverse needs of an expanding participant student population.

The Introduction of Transition Year Programme

The Transition Year Project was introduced in 1974, by the then Minister of Education, Mr. Richard Burke, T.D. as one such response to the developing educational context and challenge of the time. In proposing its introduction Minister Burke stressed the need for his department and schools to address the growing pressures on second level students for "high grades and competitive success" and he cited the initiative as an opportunity for students to develop competencies in relation to their intellectual, emotional and social maturity in the absence of the pressures of an "academic tread mill". (Richard Burke, T.D. Dun Laoghaire, 1974.) The programme was defined as "a one-year interdisciplinary programme for pupils who have completed an approved course for recognised junior pupils."(Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools, 1986/87, p.167) It would also offer teachers and students an opportunity to assess and address pupils' abilities and weakness in the absence of the pressure of examinations.

In inviting schools to apply, the Minister stated that each school would devise its own programme in co-operation with an Inspector from the Department of Education. He emphasised the autonomy of individual schools in respect of programme planning and stated that is was important that curriculum planning would not evolve from "Marlborough Street or Hawkins House, but from the classrooms and common rooms of the participating schools" (Richard Burke, T.D., Synge Street, 1974) While the broad parameters of the course were to be agreed the finer details of curriculum were to be a matter for the individual school. (In an address to the regional meeting of the Dublin Council for Secondary Schools in Synge Street, on 2nd December, 1974.)

Three Phases in the Development of Transition Year.

Since its introduction the Transition Year programme has developed in what could be described as three particular phases and has been referred to by three different titles, a) The Transition Year Project, 1974 - 1986; b) The Transition Year Option, 1986 - 1994; c) The Transition Year Programme, 1994 – to date. It is also important to note that the development of Transition Year has run in tandem with other curricular initiatives, across second level schools, over the past 30 years.

From 1974 until 1986 the course was referred to as the Transition Year Project. Over that time the number of students participating in the programme grew from sixty-six to two thousand, nine hundred and eighteen (2,918). However, the programme met with mixed reaction and support over the period. An appraisal of the programme was commissioned by the Department of Education in 1979. Although critical in respect of particular areas of implementation, the appraisal found that the programme had much to offer the students who participated in it. One particular finding and acknowledgement in the report, of relevance to this study, is that it had introduced schools to the experience of educational innovation. (Egan and O'Reilly, 1979, p. 58) It also referred to the positive

outcomes in terms of students' self-confidence, teacher/pupil relationships and those between and among students, as a result of their participation in the programme.

Despite the recommendation of the evaluation committee that the project be developed beyond its pilot stage and offered to a broader cross-section of schools the Department did not respond at the time and no new schools were granted permission to offer the course in the following years. The small financial contribution given to schools offering the programme was withdrawn in 1983 and participation rates decreased accordingly. It would appear that a national economic downturn and consequential budgetary constraints might have influenced this development. However, while particular projects such as T.Y. were not being actively promoted the emphasis on educational planning and expansion was being perused at national policy level, and the provision of senior cycle education for all was seen as a priority. (Programme for Government, 1982; Programme for Action, 1984; Building on Reality, 1985-1987).

The second phase of Transition Year extended from 1986 to 1993 and the re-ignition of energy in and commitment to the course may be understood in the context of emergent ideology and policy of the time. Following the publication of "Ages for Learning" by the Minister of Education, Ms Gemma Hussey, in which she proposed that all students "spend up to six years overall in a post-primary school" (1985) various curricular options were proposed. Circular letter M85/85 outlined the proposals contained in "Ages for Learning" and gave direction to schools in respect of its implementation. The Transition Year Option was re-offered to schools on a controlled basis on foot of this circular, as one such option within the framework of the six-year cycle. (Doyle, 1990) The circular also stated "The Department intends to issue guidelines on the Transition Year programmes following receipt of recommendations from the Curriculum and Examinations Board." (M85/85, Dept. of Education)

The first set of guidelines was issued to schools in 1986 and a subsequent set was issued in 1987/88. Controlled access to the programme continued over subsequent years and by 1992, 8,193

students were participating in the programme. This represented almost 2.3% of the total student population in post-primary schools. (Department of Education Statistical Reports, 1992) Major expansion of the course did not occur until the third phase of the programme's development was initiated in 1994.

The third phase of the programme from 1994 may be treated of in respect of three of its salient features, which are of particular relevance to this study. They are:

➤ The promotion of the programme

➤ The in-service provision and support for teachers proposed, and

➤ The development of and the role of the Transition Year Support Team

Circular M47/93 outlined the "Revised Structure and Content of the Senior Cycle Curriculum for September 1995 and Subsequent Years" and stated "The Transition Year programme is being introduced to provide pupils with wider opportunities for personal development." (Department of Education, 1993) It prohibited the schools from offering a three-year Leaving Certificate as it was felt that such would lead to the erosion of the Transition Year Programme. Such direction was taken as giving unqualified support to the initiative. The circular also stated that the Department was "committed to providing a comprehensive programme of in-service to help schools and teachers implement the changes." Circular M3/94, issued in the following year also treated of the programme and informed schools that their application to offer Transition Year was "subject to the participation of the school in the forthcoming in-career development programme." (Department of Education, 1994)

This national in-service initiative for Transition Year represented a new departure and an increased commitment on the part of the Department. They adopted a model of in-service in which teacher-practitioners acted as mentors and trainers for those undertaking the programme for the first time. The Minister of Education, Ms. Niamh Breathnach T.D. described those providing the in-service as:

Pioneering a new style of in-service provision – provision which is driven not by the decisions of the providers but by the needs of the teachers, in-service education which is experiential and includes active participant involvement.

(Breathnach, 1994)

The particular model was reviewed and evaluated by The Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra, in 1996 and the finding of the evaluation suggests that the implementation of the "Training of Trainers" programme of in-service provided valuable opportunities for the professional development of teachers and that the school-based aspect of the process was particularly appreciated, as effective, by schools. Non-school based cluster days were also found to be of value as they afforded teacher participants the opportunity to meet and share best practice with colleagues in other schools. (Lewis and McMahon, 1996) The OECD also made reference to its benefits in its study of the professional development of teachers in 1998. (OECD, 1998, p. 84)

The Development of the Support Service

The Transition Year Support Team was established in 1995 and has developed through various stages, in parallel with other curricular support initiatives over the past nine years. It now forms part of the 'Second Level Support Service' to schools. Support for the Transition Year programme is provided in the first instance by a team of seven people who make up the Transition Year Curriculum Support Service (TYCSS). The team is comprised of a National Co-ordinator, five Development Officers and an Administrator. While the team's headquarters are in Dublin, the team members are based regionally across the country. The team works to support schools in the planning, design and the delivery of the programme and each development officer is available to:

> Work with school principals and their planning teams

> Work with the TY co-ordinator and the core team within each school

> Work with an individual or group of teachers, as appropriate.

The service seeks to offer support that focuses "on generic areas such as teaching and learning methodologies, the curriculum aspect of school development planning, independent learning skills ......and literacy across the curriculum" (SSLS, 2003)

The Support Service states their aims as:

> ➢ Assisting teachers in acquiring the skills they need to provide their pupils with desired learning experiences
> ➢ Assisting schools in making informed choices about the programmes that best suit their pupils
> ➢ To promote greater coherence in the provision of support and,
> ➢ To take account of the constraints within which schools operate.

Recent Legislation and Policy Initiatives

This study is concerned with the professional development of teachers and to the extent that they perceive their development as being facilitated by teaching on Transition Year Programme. However, it must be acknowledged that the professional life of teachers has also developed in the broader context of curricular, policy and legislative initiatives and that teachers' practice has developed within an arena of increased emphasis on planning, quality and professionalism. Recent legislation relevant in this regard includes the passing into law of the Education Act, 1998; the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000; The Equal Status Act, 2000 and the Teaching Council Act, 2001. Each of these Acts has placed enhanced professional and statutory responsibility on teachers.

In addition to the legislative developments that have taken place, the past number of years has seen the publication of numerous reports and the introduction of significant policy initiatives that have had a bearing on practice. These include the introduction of School Development Planning, the OECD report on the professional development of teachers and more recently the *Consultative Paper* (2002)

and the *Directions for Development* (2003) documents published by the NCCA in relation to senior cycle education.

Whole School Evaluation has been mainstreamed in response to Section 7(2)(b) of the Education Act, 1998 and presents a model for quality assurance "that emphasises school development planning through internal school review and self-evaluation, with the support of external evaluation carried out by the Inspectorate." (Department of Education and Science, 2003, p.viii)

The Education Act, also places responsibility on schools for both the review of staff development needs and for the provision of in-service training [sections 9(j), 23(2)(c), 41(2)(e)]. In this context it is important to note that the school plan must take account of teachers' professional development needs and as key participants in the development of that plan, teachers play a large part in identifying their own and their collective needs. Teachers are asked to take ownership of their own development. Schools are required to facilitate and support that process.

The perceived benefits of the School Development Planning Initiative, introduced to schools in 1999, include the opportunity for teachers to exercise greater responsibility for their professional role in schools. "SDP enhances the professional role of teachers: it provides support for and recognition of effective practice, the isolation of classrooms is overcome and a sense of collegiality is developed. SDP increases the feeling of being in control of events rather than being controlled by them." (M20/99)

In their recent policy document *Developing Senior Cycle Education – Directions for Development* the NCCA echoes previous challenges posed by the White Paper on Education and the more recent report of the Commission on the Points System in relation to the educational provision of all students. They stress in particular the need to support the independent self –directed learning of students in preparation for and as a foundation of life-long learning. The future scenarios that they pose "are aimed at maintaining and improving the quality of the educational experience for senior cycle students and the quality of the professional experience for those who work with them." (2003, p.1-2)

The OECD (1998) in its study of the professional development of teachers acknowledged that curriculum development and teacher professional development are interlinked and that school policy makers were increasingly treating of teacher development within the broader context of overall school planning. It would appear that the NCCA understand teachers to be key participants in the development and implementation of the vision they propose for future Senior Cycle reform and that the school is identified as "the critical site of professional development for teachers and for whole staffs," (NCCA, 2003, p.13) Such professional development is seen to be supported by parallel initiatives such as School Development Planning and the establishment of the Teaching Council.

Each of these initiatives brings to bear a particular imperative and encourages us to address and develop school policy in the context of the evolving legislation and educational policy at both national and international level. However, the teacher in the classroom remains central to the process of learning and teaching and as such assumes significant responsibility in any future debate and in the development of policy. The competent and confident teacher is better positioned to engage in and contribute in this arena. In turn, the teacher who engages and contributes to such deliberation is more likely to be committed to such outcomes of the process and to the implementation of agreed policy into the future. The researcher believes that it is important therefore, to commit to and facilitate the ongoing development of teachers in tandem with each of the legislative, curricular and school planning initiatives being implemented in schools at present.

The NCCA has acknowledged the Transition Year Programme as having contributed to the present climate of on-going educational innovation and change, and from her own professional experience as a school principal at post primary level, the researcher has been particularly impressed by the impact this programme has had within the life of her own school. One has been struck by the particular enthusiasm with which teachers have engaged in and embraced the programme since its introduction. While Transition Year was originally proposed with the intention of broadening and

developing the educational provision of senior cycle students one believes that it has also facilitated opportunities for ongoing and progressive staff development. Its introduction and on-going implementation has contributed to and enhanced the culture of learning and teaching within the school.

The Transition Year Programme as a Conduit for Teacher Development

Teachers are the key connection between the expectations of society and the students in their care. (OECD, 1998, p.17) The extended professional development of teachers becomes a priority in this context. The development of curricula, the fostering of independent learning, participation in interdisciplinary teaching and the development of a broad repertoire of assessment techniques have become key elements in the evolution of the Transition Year Programme. Teachers engaged in the programme have been required to develop skills in each of these areas in order to provide for the diverse learning needs of the students undertaking the course.

The author suggests that teachers who have become involved in such curricular areas have been offered an opportunity to develop an enhanced capacity to cope with the changing demands of teaching and may be better placed to become innovative in future initiatives within schools. Specific characteristics of the Transition Year Programme planning and implementation process include the following:

> ➢ A whole-school approach
>
> ➢ Team planning
>
> ➢ Co-ordination and teamwork, and
>
> ➢ Staff development and in-service

Each of the areas presents an opportunity for both individual teachers and indeed the school as a whole to develop knowledge, experience, skills and attitudes that contribute to the enhancement of teaching and learning.

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Within this study the author is interested in examining the perspective of practicing teachers and in identifying from their experience the characteristics that contribute to and facilitate teacher development. One is particularly interested to identify and examine whether the skills, knowledge and attitudes that may be developed within the experience of TY, contribute to and/or impact on other areas of teachers' school life. In suggesting that teacher development assumes a position of importance the researcher is conscious of the literature that stresses the need for teacher and school development to be interlinked. Where the institution can bring together the individual teachers' interests for personal and career development with the needs of the school as resulting from its aims, it will facilitate both individual and organisational development (Bell, 1991).

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Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter undertakes a review of the research literature on the professional development of teachers and focuses on specific areas of professional development that are of relevance to this study. It refers to readings in respect of:

➢ The context within which professional development is important

➢ The professional development opportunities offered by course providers

➢ The opportunities for the professional development of teachers as presented within school, and

➢ The responsibility of the teacher in relation to his/her professional development.

The Context within which Professional Development is Important

The increased challenge posed for teachers in the context of the rapidly evolving society within which they work, emphasises the need for on-going professional development. Increased participation rates on the part of students, greater stress on competition in education, the influence of new technologies and the broad variety of social problems which impact upon and influence the exercise of curriculum in schools, each present their own imperative. The provision of support for ongoing professional development opportunities assumes a place of particular importance if teachers are to meet the challenge of fulfilling their role as the key connections between the expectation of society and what students learn in a rapidly changing world. (OECD, 1998, p.17)

There is an emerging consensus that the continuous professional development of teachers is a prerequisite for successful educational reform and that such development facilitates practitioners in

addressing the evolving challenges presented as they guide and nurture their students' interest in life-long learning. As Professor John Coolahan has stated, "In all walks of life it is realised that initial professional training, no matter how good, is insufficient for high level, career-long performance. This is particularly the case in the teaching profession." (Coolahan, 1991, p.1)

Ireland has been the subject of criticism with regard to its provision for teacher development in the past. The OECD report of 1991 remarked that our provision of teacher in-service in general, was inadequate, consisting largely of short term courses more often than not financed by the teachers themselves and dealing with topics chosen in a fairly arbitrary manner. (OECD, 1991) With specific reference to provision for the Transition Year programme, which is the subject of discussion throughout this dissertation, Eileen Doyle stated in 1990 that, "…in general the in-service opportunities made available to teachers and principals of TYO schools have been very limited." (Doyle, 1990, p.30)

However, teacher development programmes have expanded considerably over the past decade and in-service education for teachers is now facilitated through course-based, cluster-based, school-based and individual subject-based models. Curriculum Development is accepted as the part of the professional responsibility of all teachers and is stressed across a range of teacher training programmes.

The National Education Convention reported in 1994 and stated that, "…the case for in-service teacher education no longer needs to be made and that attention should be focused on appropriate structures and best modes of delivery." (Coolahan, 1994, p.87) The convention stressed that the variety and range of courses to be provided should take account of the personal and professional needs of teachers as well as that of the education system. It also recommended that appropriate incentives be facilitated to encourage and reward teachers who undertake courses and obtain enhanced professional qualifications. Their thinking was in line with the international research on continuing professional development for teachers. It emphasised the importance of a collaborative partnership across a range of different providers in teacher education. (Drudy, 2002)

Government policy, since 1994 has supported the Convention's thinking. The White Paper, *Charting our Education Future* that followed and was published in 1995 acknowledged the need for "a cohesive national policy on, and a comprehensive programme of, in-career development for teachers, related to the long-term development of the teaching profession and the education system generally." (1995, p.126) In response, the Education Act, (1998) legislated for in-career development and support in each of five sections under the functions of the Minister, the schools, the principals, the inspectorate and the NCCA. The P.C.W. agreement in 1999, followed by providing for the partial refund of fees paid by teachers who undertake certified courses.

Thus, the past decade has seen the development of a range of courses, modules and provision financial considerations designed to assist teachers and meet their needs across a diverse range of circumstances. Courses have been provided by a variety of agencies within the education system.

The Professional Development Opportunities Offered by Course Providers

Skill-Based In-Service Provision

Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) argue that it is important to equip teachers with enhanced knowledge and skills in order that they develop their ability to provide improved learning opportunities for students, in classrooms. In-service courses, which focus on the enhancement of teachers' knowledge of content and the development of an extended repertoire of teaching strategies, fall into the category of skill development modules. (Tuohy, 1991) This dimension of teacher development has the most immediate consequences for classroom and school improvement as it is through the enhancement of professional expertise that teachers contribute directly to the growth of student. (Leithwood, 1999)

A teaching force that is more knowledgeable of its subject matter offers greater flexibility in its teaching strategies and is better able to improve the achievement of its pupils. Teachers acknowledge this approach to professional development as being practical and clearly focused on methodology

related to their daily practice. It offers easily understandable strategies for immediate use in classrooms and time commitments in terms of in-service are not excessive.

However, it is also pointed out that the skills based model can have significant shortcomings. Many writers refer to the extent to which teachers apply and integrate the knowledge and skills they have accessed on courses. Elliot Eisner cautions that teacher in-service initiatives may fall short of their intention because course providers often have inadequate knowledge of where participants are coming from in terms of experience and may not have the opportunity to observe classroom practice. "The assumption is that once teachers are exposed to such wisdom, they will implement the practices suggested in their own classrooms. The in-service seminar is one in which the advice-giver typically has never seen the teachers who comprise the audience. The advice-giver does not know the teachers' strength or their weaknesses." (Eisner, 1999, p.161)

Where in-service is offered in a top-down fashion it often fails to involve participants in the planning and delivery of the programme. It may not take account of the varying circumstances of participants' experience and may not offer teachers discretion over the degree and pace of implementation. This particular criticism was leveled at the in-service initiatives in relation to the implementation of the Junior Certificate curriculum in the early 1990's. (Tuohy, 1997, p.11)

The top-down approach may be also be perceived as portraying disrespect for existing teaching experience, judgment and professionalism. In addition, it is important to consider that in a rapidly changing world characterised by unpredictability and interdependency teachers' faith in such prescriptive methodologies can be misplaced and prove unreliable, in practice.

The Course-Based Model

"The course model of professional development was and still is the most common and widely accepted approach to the development of teachers. For many, professional development is 'going on a course'." (Bell, 1991, p. 5) These courses can be of varying duration. While some may be short courses

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focused on specific curricular issues others address a broader range of educational topics and may offer Diploma or Degree qualification. The availability of such courses presents many and varied opportunities for teachers and can offer choice in response to participants' individual requirements. They acknowledge the varying needs of teachers at different stages in their career and offer choice with regard to time and intensity of commitment appropriate to personal circumstances. Learning opportunities are offered through workshops, presentations and lecture sessions.

The significant advantage of the course-based model is that it offers teachers flexibility and choice across a range of variables including the topic selected, the type of course selected and the degree and intensity of engagement. It also offers participants the chance to meet with, mix and share ideas with similarly motivated colleagues with different experiences and not necessarily from their own school. (Lieberman and Miller, 1999)

The Training of Trainers Model

The Transition Year in–career development programme adopted a "Training of Trainers" model of in-service education from December 1993. This initiative was developed by a small group of experienced teachers in consultation with a team of Department of Education inspectors and continues to be implemented by teacher-trainers and co-ordinators that are recruited from schools where Transition Year programmes are provided. It is believed that facilitators on the 'Training of Trainers' programme are those who have acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to guide and assist colleagues to become familiar with new programmes. Such trainers are expected to appreciate how change takes place within the school organisation and how that change impacts on the individuals and groups within it. (O'Canainn, S., 1991, p.36)

It recognises that both pressure and support are necessary for professional development and curriculum change. Interactions among colleagues are facilitated and as Wildy et al. explain, in the context of Australian in-service experience:

> Most purposeful 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. (Wildy, H., Wallace. J., & Parker, L. 1996, p. 24-25)

The Opportunities for the Professional Development of Teachers as Presented within School

The 1995 White Paper 'Charting our Education Future' identified specific priorities for development and stressed the need to support curricular changes through school-focused development initiatives, not in place of external programmes but in addition to them. It stated,

> Teacher Education is a continuum in which quality initial training and well-managed structured induction are followed by well-devised in-career training programmes, available periodically throughout a teacher's career. (White Paper, 1995)

The OECD recommended as a principle of policy that teacher development:

> ...Should be oriented to fostering a culture of lifelong learning, rather than focusing solely on subject knowledge or particular aspects of pedagogical techniques. (OECD, 1998, p.58)

More recently, the NCCA has stated that:

> Professional development is characterised by comprehensive approaches to planning, and thorough and ongoing evaluation procedures. Regular, systematic participation in professional development is seen as essential at every stage of the teacher's career. Professional development is focused on areas such as
>
> - ➤ recognition and accommodation of distinct learning styles
> - ➤ assessment
> - ➤ motivational influences in the learning of young adults
> - ➤ teaching for skill-related learning
> - ➤ strategies for promoting reflective practice in teaching
> - ➤ in-school curriculum development

There is an emphasis on the school as the critical site of professional development for teachers and for whole staffs. (NCCA, 2003, p.13)

In interpreting teacher development within the context of ecological change, Hargreaves treats of the circumstances within which teacher development initiatives are realised. He stresses the importance of understanding and appreciating the context of participants' working environment and acknowledges that the absence of supportive conditions can create serious stumbling blocks for educational change and professional development. He argues that the culture of the teaching context is a focal point for development and change (Hargreaves, 1994).

Ivor Goodson (1992) stresses the importance of engaging the teachers' 'voice' in any professional development initiative. He connects the practice of teachers' work to the person that teacher is and argues that the purpose of professional development should be to help teachers articulate their voice "...as a way of constructing and reconstructing the purposes and priorities in their work, both individually and collectively."(Hargreaves, and Fullan, eds 1992, p.5) It is widely accepted that our behavior and beliefs are closely related and so the importance of personal experience as underpinning teacher development and change is acknowledged. School based development initiatives affirm the commitment and expertise of teachers to address issues of local concern and acknowledge their experience and expertise to address their specific needs.

While referring to conventional approaches to teacher development as deficit models, Lieberman and Miller suggest that the school-based approach "... is based on the idea of growth-in-practice."(1999, P.59) They argue from the premise that teaching is an intellectual activity and that "professional development occurs when teachers have the opportunity to learn from theory and practice as part of their job."(Ibid, p.60) In emphasising the importance of process over results and product they identify the development of a professional community, the combining of inside knowledge with outside knowledge, and the creation of an ethic of collaboration among teachers as significant contributors to

the on-going professional development of the people involved. In reviewing specific opportunities as presented within schools for the professional development of teachers the following key issues emerge:

> The importance of collaborative activity among teachers.

> The importance of fostering teacher leadership within schools, and

> The role of principals in facilitating professional development opportunities for members of their staff.

Collaborative Activity

Hall and Wallace (1993, p.103) have described collaboration as "a way of thinking where two or more people combine their resources to achieve specific goals over a period of time" or as "joint work for joint purposes" while Hargreaves has stressed that where the culture of the school is one of collaborative endeavour teachers are encouraged to support and learn from one another. They are also encouraged to take local circumstances into account and are presented with an opportunity to develop in partnership. Good practice is shared and positive learning for both teachers and students is facilitated. (Hargreaves, A., 1994)

Bell claims that where staffs are engaged in addressing their own professional needs, they are motivated by a greater sense of local autonomy. (Bell, 1991, p.9) By sharing experience within the school, colleagues are offered the opportunity to be more flexible to develop programmes in response to immediate and presenting needs.

It would appear that the collaborative approach to learning and teaching as promoted in the Transition Year Programme (Dept. of Education, 1995) has the potential to increase the opportunity for the professional development of teachers. The programme encourages the use of a "broad, varied and integrated curriculum" (C.E.B., 1986) and the "use of a wide range of teaching/learning methodologies and situations." (SLSS, 2000) It can also assist in the reduction of compartmentalised and discreet

packages of knowledge being presented to students. (Coolahan, 1995) Transition Year teaching also offers an opportunity to address the problem of 'teacher isolation,' which has been identified by Elliot Eisner (1999, p.161) as a significant factor inhibiting schools efforts towards reform.

The Fostering of Teacher Leadership

The importance of fostering of teacher leadership within the school is emphasised throughout the literature (Leithwood et al, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1996; Stoll and Fink, 1995). These authors agree that the development of teacher leadership within schools is an important part of any formal leader's role. Sergiovanni states that less emphasis should be placed on 'doing for teachers' and greater efforts should be directed towards helping teachers do things for themselves (1996, p.7-8), thus providing opportunities for "…professionals to create their practice in use." (Ibid, p.145) The researchers argue that where teachers are invited to participate more fully and assume greater responsibility within schools, their own professional development is facilitated. In his paper on 'Leadership for Learning' John McBeath states that, "Teachers make a difference… [*and*] if improvement initiatives are to bear fruit they must start first and foremost with the individual and collective capacity of teachers to learn and through learning to meet and initiate change" (2002, p.5). He suggests that in order to facilitate such learning among teachers, schools need to examine their structures and create greater opportunities where teachers are invited to assume leadership roles and thus enhance their professional experience and development. "With a little imagination these 'leaderful' experiences can be transfused into the daily practice of learning and teaching" (ibid, p.9). Within the TY programme the appointment of a Transition Year Co-ordinator acknowledges the "personal qualities and professionalism that facilitate team leadership" (C.E.B., 1986, p.11). The position offers the possibility for further professional development on the part of the incumbents and facilitates the professional development of other members of staff under their guidance. The emphasis placed on the development of school-specific

programmes involving collaborative team planning, encourages the TY team to work together and become actively involved in curriculum development (C.E.B., 1986). This in turn, offers opportunities for teachers' enhanced professional engagement.

The Role of the Principal

> The role of the principal is important in setting a context for the change and in determining how the challenge of change and development is embraced within the school. (Kavanagh, 1993.)

As principal, one has primary responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school (Education Act, 1998) and is in a significant position to influence and develop the culture of the school. The principal is in a position to create opportunities for teacher development on both an individual and collective basis. (Sergiovanni, 1996; Stoll and Fink, 1999; Leithwood et al., 1990)

The role of the principal in relation to the development of the Transition Year programme in schools is clearly set out in the Guidelines for Schools. The principal is expected to "Provide staff with adequate opportunities for continued personal and skills development and an appreciation of curriculum development. "Every effort should be made through the provision of in-service training to promote the development and improvement of teaching methodologies including interdisciplinary teaching" (C.E.B., 1986, p.10-11).

It is suggested that, by knowing one's staff well, it is possible to manage situations and offer responsibility such that a particular teacher's interest and expertise may be tapped. Individual teachers are offered the opportunity to assume responsibility and authority for specific roles and the development of a TY teaching team. In essence "...effective leadership *(on the part of principals)* requires an approach that transforms the feelings, attitudes and beliefs of their followers" (Mitchell and Tucker cited in Stoll and Fink, 1995, p.106)

The Responsibility of the Teacher in Relation to His/Her Professional Development.

The concept of continuous reflection and practice as central to the ongoing development of the teacher is documented throughout teacher development literature. It would appear that in any developed model of ongoing teacher development, it is necessary to build upon skills and strategies and to integrate them as part of the reflective process.

"The best source for teachers to learn more about teaching and learning …materials and methods is through an examination of one's own practice" (Perone cited in Sergiovanni, 1996, p.141) It is broadly documented that as teachers develop an enhanced understanding of their own work they are empowered to further pursue their craft with confidence and "…create their practice in use. For them the process of enquiry and the practice of their profession are inseparable." (ibid, p.143) Robin Smyth and John Coldron state that the 'developing' teacher is one who enjoys the challenge of being creative in practice while at the same time being thoughtful of the relevant theory. (Smith and Coldron, in Pollard (ed.) 2002, p.338)

Teacher development as self-understanding, involves more than the adaptation of teachers' classroom behaviour and methodology. It extends to engaging and changing the person the teacher is. The centrality of the teacher as a 'person' is highlighted by each of Leithwood et al. (1999), Hargreaves et al., (1992) and Huberman, (1993). Goodson, (in Hargreaves, 1992, Ch. 7) suggests that when we focus on teachers' work in the context of their lives we draw on a rich source of data and dialogue. The teacher is affirmed as purposeful and resourceful as well as practical and is accorded an active role in the process of his / her own development.

However, it must also be noted that in inviting any teacher to become active in the process of professional development, one is dependent on them "giving the ultimate commitment in respect of the level and quality of his or her involvement." (Kavanagh, 1993) Teachers' theories and understanding

are grounded in their own lives and one can appreciate the position adopted by Stoll and Fink (1995) when they state that it is ultimately up to each teacher to take ownership of his or her ongoing development. They acknowledge that teacher development can be seen to take place in its broadest sense where teachers become involved in improving their schools in addition to their own classrooms. "…they become part of a learning community where they see themselves as responsible, on a daily basis, for their own and their colleagues' development." (ibid. p.160) While schools and in-service providers can facilitate opportunities within which teachers can develop, "Teacher growth in terms of self and career is primarily the responsibility of the individual." (Tuohy, 1999)

Conclusion

Bell (1991) points to the complexity of managing educational change and explains that schools often require both external and internal support in an effort to meet the challenge. Fullan states, "At least three strands of the problem require radical rethinking and integration, namely the individual, the school and the district" (1990, p.21). Within this context, neither the school based or course based approach to professional development, undertaken in isolation appears to meet the present challenges. Current initiatives to address the issue encourage policy makers to provide for teacher development in the context of whole school planning and development (OECD, 1998). In commenting on Switzerland's experience of teacher development programmes they state that that countrys' provision for in-service, by way of short courses has only been successful where it is well sequenced with opportunities for the application of the skills promoted on such courses, within teachers' classroom practice (OECD, 1998, p.49).

Both Bell (1991) and Eisner (1999) affirm the benefits of combining course-based models of in-service with other forms of professional development and place particular emphasis on the importance of teachers' classroom and school practice in this regard. These sentiments relate well with the points

raised earlier in relation to the importance of exploiting professional development opportunities within teachers' most immediate experience and environment, namely their classroom and their school in general.

The literature on the professional development of teachers emphasises the importance of a respectful and collaborative partnership between a variety of teacher education providers. It stresses the importance of enabling teachers to keep abreast of educational and social changes and enabling them to critically reflect upon their practice. "One major challenge will be to sustain capacity and to develop a framework to ensure that theory, research and practice relate in a synergistic way in continuing professional development." (Drudy, 2002, p.13)

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Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Framework and Design

While the initial area of interest for this study was that of the professional development of teachers, the focus was narrowed at an early stage to consider the more specific potential for the professional development of the individual teacher through his or her engagement in the Transition Year Programme. On further reflection and in consideration of the length of the study, the timeframe within which the study was to be completed and the author's professional responsibilities it was decided to refine the focus further and to concentrate specifically on the perceptions of practicing teachers with regard to their own professional growth. It was through this process that the final title of "The Professional Development of Teachers – The Perspective of the Practicing Transition Year Teacher" was decided upon.

The researcher's approach to the study was guided by the opinions of Bogdan and Biklen (1982) who stated that "…you are not there to give views, but to learn what the subjects' views are and why they are that way" and so the study undertook to:

> ➢ To gain insight into the attitudes of teachers towards current opportunities for professional development as presented in TYO.

> ➢ To identify specific areas of professional development of interest to teachers currently involved it the programme.

> ➢ To identify ways in which the teachers promote their own professional growth.

> To inform the work of in-school Management in respect of providing for professional development opportunities of staff and,

> To inform the work of in-service programme planners.

Elements that influenced the design of this study included the following:

> The time frame within which the study was to be conducted.

> The importance of including the perceptions of teachers from within each of the Voluntary Secondary, Community and Comprehensive, and Vocational sectors of education.

> The cost of administering the study, and

> The sensitivities / sensibilities of teacher participants around the researcher's position as a school principal.

In consideration of each of these factors it was decided to conduct the study by means of an initial questionnaire followed by a series of semi-structured interviews in the qualitative mode. While it was initially hoped to include the school within which the researcher worked, on reflection it was decided that as the potential participants there would not have a comparable relationship with the researcher as that of other participants the validity of the study could be compromised.

The Choice of Research Instrument

> Many dissertations now use research design that is made up of some combination of research styles: for example a quantitative survey using questionnaires, combined with a qualitative instrument such as a structured interview with a few key informants. (P. Hogan. Lecture notes 4 of 4, 23.10.02)

In selecting the most appropriate instruments for the collection of data for the study the researcher was guided by Jutith Bell's (1987) observation that "different styles, traditions or approaches use different methods of collecting data, but no approach prescribes nor automatically rejects any particular method"

Twenty practicing Transition Year teachers, across five participating schools, were invited to complete a questionnaire. In-depth interviews were then conducted with five teachers, one from each of the participating schools. This approach was used in order to provide a body of quantitative data together with qualitative data that could be used to enhance and authenticate it. The emerging themes and issues from the questionnaires influenced the areas for focus in later interviews.

The schools selected to participate in the study included three Voluntary Secondary schools, one Community and Comprehensive school and a Community College. This breakdown broadly reflects the balance of second-level schools at national level where 60% of schools are under Voluntary management while the other 40% are managed by the Vocational Education, and the Community and Comprehensive sector. Within the Voluntary sector schools one co-educational and two single sex schools – one boys' and one girls' were surveyed. In selecting the schools for inclusion in the survey the researcher sought to invite the views of teachers from schools of different size and varying geographical location. The length of time that each school was engaged in the Transition Year programme was also a considered as it allowed for the opinions of teachers with varying length of engagement with it.

The following diagram illustrates the breakdown of the schools selected and reflects the coding system used in the researcher's subsequent analysis of data:

Code	School Type	Number of Students	Geographical Location	Length of engagement with TYO
A	Community / Comprehensive	1150	Urban	11 years
B	Community College V.E.C	850	Urban	15years
C	Voluntary Secondary Boys	350	Rural Town	8 years
D	Voluntary Secondary Girls	650	Satellite Town	22 years
E	Voluntary Secondary Co-Educational	420	Rural Town	4 years

Access to Schools

Initial contact was made with the principals of each school by telephone and their permission to include their school in the survey was sought. Letters were then delivered personally to the principals, enclosing a copy of the questionnaire and the covering letter that would be given to participating teachers. (See Appendices A, B and C) The researcher met with a teacher of Transition Year and asked him/her to distribute the questionnaires among colleagues of his/her choice. The participating teachers were each given a covering letter explaining the purpose of the research and the fact that confidentiality in terms of response would be assured. A self-addressed envelope to the researcher was attached to each questionnaire to assist in this endeavour. It was also agreed that the questionnaires would be collected from each school within a week of initial delivery.

The researcher adopted this particular approach in view of the small sample and in consideration of a threatened 'postal dispute'. It was also felt that by delivering and collecting the questionnaire personally and having an opportunity to discuss the nature and context of the project with key personnel in the school, greater personal commitment would be forthcoming, than if the questionnaires were delivered and returned by post. This expectation was realised as, on re-visiting the schools to collect the completed questionnaires a full complement was received.

The Questionnaire

The use of the questionnaire as a research instrument facilitated the collection of specific information from a cross-section of teachers in a relatively short period of time. It also provided the researcher with a body of quantitative data that could be used to inform subsequent semi-structured interviews in the qualitative mode. The researcher was mindful of both the benefits and limitations of the questionnaire as a research tool. Borroughs (1971, p.106) remarks, "the questionnaire provides the easiest known way of assembling a mass of information," while Nachmias and Nachmais state that the

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use of questionnaires "reduces biasing errors that might result from the personal characteristics of interviewers and variabilities in their skill." (1976, p.107) However there are also limitations in the use of this tool. Questionnaires do not allow for the possibility of probing a given response or clarifying the meaning of a particular answer. Many researchers also agree that a study based on questionnaires can suffer if a sufficient percentage of replies are not received. Based on these considerations this study was designed to include both questionnaires and interviews. In designing the questionnaire specific consideration was given to the importance of avoiding difficulty at the analysis and interpretation stage of the study. (Bell, 1993) Particular attention was given to removing ambiguity, avoiding leading questions and ensuring that the language contained within it was jargon free. A draft questionnaire was developed and thirty questions were included under seven broad headings:

> School details

> Personal details

> Professional qualifications

> Professional development opportunities within the school

> Professional development opportunities as facilitated by other providers

> The motivational factors involved in teaching the Transition Year programme

> The possible impact of Transition Year teaching in other areas of respondents' professional engagement.

The draft questionnaire was piloted among three teachers known to the researcher, each of whom had taught on the Transition Year programme. These teachers were asked to answer the questionnaire and submit critical comments, taking account of its structure and logical sequence, the clarity of language and any possible ambiguity. Adjustments were made to the initial draft in the light of the feedback. The sequence in which the questions were placed was changed, the typesetting of the questions and accompanying instructions was adapted and two spelling errors were rectified.

The final questionnaire consisted of a cover page that included seven items relating to the school and a set of thirty-one questions, which were in a closed form. Each required respondents to indicate qualities, choose from lists, categories or scales or to rank order given options. In order to address the possibility of restrictions imposed by this form, open responses were invited at the end of or as a follow on to six questions. This was done through the use of phrases such as "if other, please specify" or similar.

The Interviews

Borg and Gall (1983) describe the advantages and disadvantages of the interview as a research tool. They acknowledge interviews as facilitating a greater depth of understanding on the part of the interviewer than that of other methods of data collection. When open-ended questions are used such interviews are said to yield more complete data and offer the interviewer an opportunity to delve more deeply and to clarify issues as they arise. In the case of this study it was felt that the interview offered an opportunity to build upon material that had been collected in the previously administered questionnaires, and facilitate greater insight into participants' perceptions of issues presented in the literature reviewed as it related to the professional development of teachers.

However, Nachmias and Nachmais' observation regarding the danger of biasing errors, as mentioned above must be considered. Borg and Gall also caution as to the possibility of bias. They state that while interviews offer the advantage of the flexibility and adaptability of human engagement, that bias can also be their greatest weakness.

Bearing each of these considerations in mind, a preliminary pilot interview was conducted with a colleague in order to identify possible pitfalls. The particular weakness that was indicated during and after that process was that the interview had been too rigidly structured, in advance.

As the purpose of the research was to gain insight into the perceptions of practicing teachers in relation to the opportunities for professional development as presented in the Transition Year programme the researcher then concentrated on five key areas of interest and framed broad questions in line with each. The areas included were as follows:

➢ The comparisons and contrasts in teaching Transition Year and other academic programmes.

➢ The school / team supports involved in delivering the Transition Year programme.

➢ The external supports available for teachers of the programme.

➢ The personal and professional experience gained through the teaching of Transition Year and,

➢ The possible impact of such engagement such engagement has had in interviewees teaching, in general.

Each of these areas has been highlighted in the researcher's review of the literature on the professional development of teachers and has been included for observation within questionnaires distributed for the purposes of this study's primary research.

A second pilot interview was undertaken. In this instance the researcher appraised the interviewee of the broad areas to be covered in an informal way prior to interview. The process was then undertaken as a "purposeful conversation." (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982) On reflecting on this approach, it was felt that as the respondent would have greater scope to say what he wanted to say and give examples of his own. The interview flowed with greater ease than the first pilot interview and each of the key areas were covered without reference to a particular order in questioning.

For the formal process, interviewees were chosen at random from among those who had completed the questionnaire. As each school had been allocated a code A – E and a number 1- 5 had been allocated to each teacher it was decided that participants A1, B2, C3, D4 and E2 would be

approached. An initial contact was made through the co-operating teacher of Transition Year, in each school. The researcher then spoke with potential interviewees by telephone and all agreed to participate and mutually suitable dates were set. While each interview was expected to last between 50 minutes and one hour the researcher decided to ask for approximately two hours of participants' time. In adopting this approach she was mindful of Bogden and Biklin's advice that effective "researchers try to interact with their subjects in a natural, unobtrusive and non-threatening manner" (1982) and so time was set aside to meet each participant on an informal basis prior to the interview. This time was intended to facilitate the building of a personal rapport and the addressing of any questions that the interviewee might have in relation to the interview.

As each participant had previously completed a questionnaire in relation to the survey, he/she was keen to understand the context within which the study had 'been born' and so easy conversations ensued. Building on Bogden and Biklin's advice, interviews were conducted in the qualitative mode and were in fact 'purposeful conversations'. (Ibid. p.135) This together with the insight gained in the pilot interviews prompted the researcher to direct the situation such that while the particular broad headings were addressed enough latitude and ease was afforded to facilitate the interviewee in saying what s/he wanted to say.

In all cases the interviewee was made aware in advance of the areas that would be discussed as part of the interview. It was felt that by doing so he/she could approach the situation with a greater felt sense of ease and personal control. As interviews were to be taped it was explained that the recordings were for the purposes of the researcher's recalling and coding of information received and the absolute confidentiality of the process was assured. Mindful of Borg and Gall's (1983) caution that the use of a tape recorder can negatively influence the nature of the interview process, it was suggested and agreed that the apparatus be placed behind the speakers and out of sight. It is believed that this, taken together

with attention to the importance of the ease within which the conversations should evolve, influenced the quality of interviews that followed.

Empathy was expressed throughout through the use of supportive words such as "I see" or "That's interesting" and gestures such as affirmative eye contact or an encouraging nod proved helpful. The seating plan was also considered. In all cases, positions were taken at the corner of a table and so while there was somewhere to rest a hand or write a note, it did not place a significant barrier between the participants. Brief field notes were taken throughout the interview as a reminder to the interviewer of possible areas that might need further clarification at a later point in the conversation. It was explained that such notes were being taken as a 'memory jog'. This was readily accepted and did not appear to cause any apprehension.

The decision to interview one teacher from each of the initial schools had been taken to allow for as broad a cross-section of opinion as possible given the size of the sample and the time constraints of the study period. It is noted that in the case of each interview the varying context of participant's situation and teaching experience was important.

> Even when an interview guide is employed, qualitative interviews offer the interviewer considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the subject the chance to shape the content of the interview."
>
> (Bogdan and Biklin, p.136)

It was noted, that as cited by Bogdan and Biklin, each of the interviews took shape and were guided in a different way. While the five key questions gave direction to the process, the content of the interview was in fact guided by the experience of the interviewee. It was felt that rich data emerged and transcripts were filled with details and examples that revealed participant's perceptions and interest in relation to the topic under review. However, the challenge to the researcher throughout was to meet the requirement as noted in lecture notes - that while the interviewee determines the sequence of the

questions it is up to the researcher to be alert and sense the opportune time to ask the pertinent question (Jim Callan, Lecture 31.03.03).

It was felt that by probing interviewee's perspectives under the headings mentioned above, valuable data was collected in respect of five teachers working within different contexts but sharing similar experience by virtue of their teaching the same course. Such 'sameness' yet difference facilitated the collection of a valuable bank of material from which the researcher could identify common strands and accumulate data which could be organised, broken down into manageable units and synthesised such that patterns could be identified. (Ibid. p.145)

Analysis of Data

> Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organising it, searching for patterns, deciding what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what you will tell others. (Bogdan and Biklin, p.145)

As explained above all questions were coded, by school and participant teacher. Each interview was indexed in the same way. On receipt of completed questionnaires and prior to interviews, all information was transferred to a template questionnaire form. It was then possible to review all responses both individually and as a unit, and to identify possible patterns in responses. It was also possible to make a note of possible questions that could arise in relation to those patterns and as to why they may have been so.

Bogdan and Biklin suggest that quantitative data can have conventional use in qualitative research.

> It can suggest trends in a setting...it can also provide descriptive information about a population...quantitative data is often included in qualitative writing in the form of descriptive statistics. (Bogdan and Biklin, 1982, p.112)

Miles and Huberman (1994) state, "At bottom, we have to face the fact that numbers and words are both needed if we are to understand the world." (p.41) By analysing the data as supplied on completed questionnaires it was possible to identify certain trends and to create a template for subsequent interviews that would be closely be aligned to the questionnaires.

As each interview was recorded it could be re-played at a later time for the purpose of preparation of data for analysis. In doing, so each recording was listened to three or four times. Brief interview notes were expanded upon and developed into transcripts. These were indexed according to the coding system already outlined. The transcripts also took account of the reference on the number counter on the tape recorder used. Thus a statement that "Relationships within teams in T.Y. are a big thing really" was indexed as 'C3, 141'. This meant that the transcription referred to School C (The Boys Secondary School), Teacher 3, and the tape starting-point 141.

Categorising

A study of the data returned on completed questionnaires and an analysis of the tapes of each of the five interviews undertaken led to the generation of broad categories within which the participants' views could be presented. The final categories chosen were also broadly in line with those suggested within the literature review.

Every aspect of the data collected was placed within either existing categories or where unexpected material presented, new categories were included. When all the data had been documented and presented on a large 'data-base like' sheet the researcher then sought to establish relationships across the categories and key headings emerged. These headings were subsequently used in presenting the researchers' findings in Chapter 4 of the study.

Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness

These three issues were central to the question of data analysis. The validity and reliability of measurements used in a study determine the level of faith that can be placed in its results. Validity and reliability refer to different aspects of a study's credibility.

Reliability refers to the precision and accuracy of the research instruments used within the study and it is particularly important in the case of quantitative research. Bell (1987) describes validity as "…the extent to which a test or procedure produced similar findings under constant conditions on all occasions." These considerations informed the research design of this study. It is noted that questions that sought the opinion of participants could be difficult to measure against this reliability check. However, the inclusion of questions such as those referring to factual information and school details, length of engagement with T.Y. and those related to qualifications, allowed for comparison and the consistency of answers and indicated that the questions related to same were reliable.

The validity of any body of research refers to its quality of truth. It is a key requirement in any type of research - qualitative or quantitative and refers to its accuracy, its honest sampling, its data collection procedures and reporting strategies. Woods (1986) explains that interviews should to be used in conjunction with other methods of research and he suggests that they should ideally be accompanied by observation. (ibid. p.88) Lack of time imposed limitations on the research methods that could be undertaken for the purpose of this study. However, considerable efforts were made to establish conditions that espoused the qualities of integrity, openness and trust throughout. The researcher sought to give an accurate, relevant and factual account of the data gathered from both the completed questionnaires and the interviews undertaken with each of the five teachers involved.

Chapter 2 of this study reviewed the literature pertaining to the professional development of teachers and identified specific areas which included:

> The knowledge and skills necessary for a teacher to provide for student learning,

> An understanding of the person the teacher is and,

> The context within which the teacher works

As such, the chapter set a descriptive base from which research questions were decided upon and developed. The ways in which questionnaires were administered and subsequent interviews were facilitated are detailed above. Efforts were made throughout, to establish research conditions under which it was most likely that valid information could be collected. The pilot process undertaken in the preparation of both questionnaires and interviews together with issues of trust, confidentiality and the ease with which participants co-operated in the process contributed to the validity of the research. Multiple methodologies of data collection were used and triangulation was considered in respect of methodology, participant engagement and time.

While Chapter 2 attended to the literature review on teacher development Chapter 4 is concerned with teacher participants' perspectives of the same issue. This chapter has outlined the procedures that were followed through the research design and methodology. It has indicated the thinking that lay behind the approaches undertaken and the questions asked in questionnaires and interviews. It has given a rationale relating to the selection of the sample population of key informants.

The process of preparation and piloting of both the questionnaire and interview has been described. The administration of the questionnaire and the undertaking of interviews have been discussed and the method of analysis has been documented. The chapter has also treated of the issues of validity, reliability and trustworthiness.

The researcher believes that the rationale and process of the study has been guided by what Bogdan and Biklin's describe as "participant perspectives." As the "...researcher's primary goal is to

add to the knowledge, not to pass judgement on the setting. The worth of a study is the degree to which it generates theory, description or understanding" (ibid, p.42).

Limitations of the Study

This survey was conducted by means of a questionnaire to twenty teachers and five in-depth interviews. It was a small-scale study necessitated by time and in recognition that …"it is always better to go for a small-scale project which can be completed than an over ambitious design which fails because of pressure of work" (SCRE, 1995, p.2). However, these limitations of time and the sample size mean that that sample is not representative of the whole population of Transition Year teachers, in schools. While the sample was selected to take account of school size, school type and geographical spread and valid results were obtained, no attempt is made to establish generalisations based on the results from the sample population.

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Chapter 4

Presentation of Research Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify ways in which the Transition Year initiative has contributed to teachers' professional growth and to their extended professional engagement in school life.

This chapter is concerned with the opinions of practicing teachers in relation to the subject and presents the views of twenty respondents to questionnaires administered across five schools and the perceptions of five practicing T.Y teachers who participated in in-depth interviews for the purpose of the primary research of the dissertation. (A copy of the questionnaire and categories covered at interview is attached in appendices B and C.) The chapter presents the research findings under the following broad headings, which best reflect the opinions of the teachers surveyed:

- ➤ Teacher Collaboration
- ➤ Active Learning and Teaching Methodologies
- ➤ The Development of Relationships
- ➤ The Role of the Transition Year Co-ordinator
- ➤ In-service and Support, and
- ➤ The Professional Challenges and Needs of the Teachers Concerned

Teacher Collaboration

Experience of collaborative work among Transition Year teachers was indicated strongly in the finding of this research. The majority of those surveyed believed that the design of the programme encouraged collaboration and that team members felt that they shared the responsibility for its success. Examples of their collaborative efforts included work in team planning and theme collaboration. However, it is noted that while 65% of the teachers questioned had been involved in TY team planning a sizable proportion had not been so engaged. The latter point will be referred to later in this chapter.

Team Planning

Teachers' responses on the returned questionnaires indicated that team planning formed an important element of Transition Year course preparation and that they were happy to be involved in it. Cross-curricular work is promoted in the Transition Year Guidelines (1994), therefore participating teachers are encouraged to be open to share. Those interviewed agreed that the nature of the Transition Year programme facilitated the easy exchange of professional opinion among teachers and that the teachers involved felt freer to speak with colleagues about their T.Y. teaching than they did in relation to other areas of their work. Máire from school B explained that,

> There is a greater sense of openness in discussing class-work with colleagues in
> TY. I can't explain why this is the case. We're not quite as guarded and maybe
> it's because we're not determined by the exam and we don't feel that others are
> assessing us.

The research would indicate that the teachers were involved in planning and decision-making in respect of the course and felt a shared sense of responsibility for it. They identified with their colleagues and referred to projects that were undertaken jointly. Teachers spoke of the importance of teamwork in teaching the course and were happy to engage in collaborative planning as they felt it reaped benefits in their classroom endeavours. They indicated that because they had planned the course

in tandem with others, there was an emphasis on work being prepared with the needs of the class and overall course in mind as opposed to that of their specific subjects, in isolation. Teachers were motivated by the 'team effort". One teacher spoke of her appreciation of being part of a "bigger picture." (Anne, School C) Another stated, "It's the difference between participating in a team sport and playing an individual sport." She said that because she was involved in a team she could share ideas and feel the support of colleagues.

Tony, from school D remarked,

> For TY to work well each teacher needs to know what students are studying in other classes. At some times, I can organise my coursework to coincide with the relevant material being covered in another subject area.

Mary from school A noted that she found it helpful to be aware of the sequence and content of the programmes being covered by colleagues in other classes. She explained that it afforded her the opportunity to compliment that work by way of what she was covering in her own classes. She cited the example of studying Statistics at a time when a project on Healthy Eating was being undertaken in the Home Economics classes and felt that the relevance of what she was teaching had greater impact on students because it could be applied to practical effect. It would appear that this aspect of T.Y work encouraged teachers to reflect on the value of interdisciplinary work and to seek additional ways to promote it. They stated that it also alerted them as to the possible value of collaborative approaches to class-work and offered them an opportunity to practice some of those approaches with classes that were free of the pressure of undertaking State Examinations.

All interviewees agreed that the experience they had gained in collaborative work, in T.Y. had influenced their practice in other areas of their teaching and their extended professional engagement within the school although the perceived degree of influence differed across the group. Some referred to their increased efforts to find ways of interacting across subjects in Junior Certificate classes, for example in Science and Home Economics, or in Maths and Business Studies. Others identified the

benefits for student learning, in terms of reinforcement where teachers plan their courses in tandem. Two interviewees made reference to the importance of collaborative planning in relation to policy issues and school planning, in general.

Two teachers identified limitations to the transferability of such practice. Anne explained that while she was committed to the value of collaborative work - her subject at Senior Level (Accounting) did not lend itself easily to interdisciplinary activity. However, she stated that she had become involved in projects where Business Studies had been linked with History and Mathematics at Junior Certificate level.

Theme Collaboration

The opportunity for theme teaching was also raised. Edel, who teaches English, had found it helpful to work with colleagues and share the teaching of particular aspects of the course in TY. She subsequently suggested that the teachers working with Leaving Certificate classes would try to incorporate this experience within their Senior Classes. She stated,

> Three of us have now divided parts of the English syllabus between us. I teach poetry, while another teacher works on the novel. The third teacher concentrates on composition work. We find that very helpful as it cuts our workload in terms of preparation. The students benefit by being taught by someone who knows their subject very well.

Tony, explained that he saw no difficulty teaching alongside colleagues and stated,

> In practical subjects like metalwork you have to rely on the co-operation of colleagues. We share equipment and help each other in assisting students with their projects. Our students are constantly moving between us.

However, not all teachers involved in the study attested to the value of collaborative work among colleagues and even within this group there were varying degrees of opinion.

Mary, from school A stated that while she appreciated the benefits of team teaching she did not feel comfortable in a team-teaching setting. She explained,

I can see the benefit to students, particularly in a mixed ability class, but personally I don't feel comfortable teaching with a colleague in the room.

Other interviewees agreed that not all teachers on staff were natural "team players." (Tony, School D) However it was felt that teachers of Transition Year might be better disposed to the concept than their non-TY colleagues. The school specific nature of the programme and its encouragement of interactive methodologies were cited as contributing factors here. Team planning caused least difficulty and was widely reported through returned questionnaires and in subsequent interviews, while experience of team teaching was not widely acknowledged. Not withstanding this reservation, what is emerging is that TY is engendering more openness among teachers to share ideas, to collaborate on simultaneous teaching of topics and in some cases, to share ideas within a subject.

Active Learning and Teaching Methodologies

The Inspectors' evaluation of the Transition Year Programme (1995, p.20) acknowledged the emphasis that teachers place on varied teaching and learning methodologies.

Most schools are providing pupils with as wide a range of stimulating activities and learning experiences as possible. In this regard, activity based learning projects are very much in evidence.

The teachers surveyed for the purpose of this study showed that they appreciated the importance of varied approaches to learning and were keen to develop their repertoire of skills so that students' learning opportunities could be enhanced.

The following responses offer a representative sample of teachers' views when asked to give an example of an aspect of their teaching that had been positively affected by virtue their engagement in the programme:

T.Y. helps to develop investigative and research skills in the lab - increases my own awareness of the role of applying the multiple intelligences and seeing that students can excel in areas other than academics. (Respondent B, 3)

> T.Y. has given me more confidence in trying alternative methods of teaching – and breaking away from the book. I've tried out different approaches to teaching Maths, which I now use in my mainstream classes. (Respondent C, 2)

> I see the importance of mixed ability teaching, the motivation of students and the importance of lesson design. (Respondent B, 4)

> I have a better chance to get to know students in a non-pressurised situation and this has helped in further years. (Respondent A, 3)

Máire from school B spoke of her experience in teaching Gaeilge – one that she identified as particularly difficult when she first became involved with the programme. Faced with the dilemma of presenting a subject which many students did not consider 'enjoyable' she had to devise ways of making her subject credible while, at the same time, nurturing students' interest and competence in the language so that they would approach both that year's course and a subsequent Leaving Certificate syllabus with greater enthusiasm and skills of learning. She explained,

> I was put to the pin of my collar to keep students with me for the first few weeks ... however, by choosing a text from the L.C. course 'A Thig na Tit Orm' whose author Maidhc Dainín O'Sé is still alive, I had the opportunity of inviting the author to meet the class. By researching the circumstances of the places treated of in the text, and studying the music, which was the subject of the book, students could appreciate the subject to greater effect.

She then went on to say that the experience she had gained in the TY class, had also given her greater confidence in approaching syllabus material in other classes, in a more creative way.

> Within TY, I have more control yet have greater freedom with my syllabus. I'm teaching things that I believe to be valuable – rather than those that someone else has set down as necessary to teach. I have the freedom to open students up to things that I think are worthwhile for them. I'm now also more likely to do the same with my Junior Cert. classes.

Anne from school C confirmed this sense of enhanced confidence. She stated,

> Because you are not allowed to cover Leaving Certificate material per se in T.Y. you are forced into the position of looking for more creative ways of approaching your subject. I teach Accounting and it is a challenging. However, I'm now far more conscious of making the subject more meaningful for all

students – particularly in my junior classes. I find that I'm not as tied to the book as I used to be.

Mary, from School A spoke of the opportunity she had to devise more creative homework assignments. She stated,

I teach Maths and so in Transition Year I have the chance to revise, remediate and set basic skills in motion for when students officially begin their Leaving Certificate course in 5th year. However, students do not appreciate the traditional style of homework in this class. I have to keep reinforcing the basic skills without running the risk of loosing students' interest and so creative homework assignments are essential.

The researcher was impressed by the degree to which teachers expressed the merits of T.Y. teaching methodology as having something to offer their other classes, and by implication to their own professional practice.

The Development of Relationships

The quality of the relationship that develops between teacher and student and similarly among teachers themselves, in Transition Year was a recurrent theme throughout the research and was one that had not been anticipated by the researcher. Both the teachers surveyed and those interviewed emphasised that an enhanced level of mutual trust is necessary for the Transition Year programme to work well. They cited examples of how that trust is developed and evidenced throughout the course. It would appear that the more interactive nature of the curriculum and the variety of learning and teaching methodologies employed in Transition Year have a large part to play. The teachers also appreciated that the relationship developed between teacher and student impacts, in turn on the quality of work in subsequent Leaving Certificate classes.

Máire from School B remarked that she had had the opportunity to develop greater relationships with her T.Y. students by virtue of the more interactive nature of one of her subjects- P.E. (She teaches

P. E and Gaeilge.) She also stated that the level of trust that nurtured in Transition Year follows through and influences the quality of her class-work in subsequent 5th Year classes. She stated,

> Senior students appear to trust me more and believe me now when I say a thing.
> They seem to have greater respect for my opinion and that helps them, in turn.

Mary, School A, made a similar point in relation to her having time to sit alongside students who are having a difficulty in Maths and work through problems with them.

> Students are really appreciative of this and a little light goes on. These are the
> times when I say – Yes, it's clicked.

Tony from School D, who teaches Metal Technology in a co-educational school confirmed the benefit of the greater levels of trust and stated,

> Traditionally the boys in our school have taken Metalwork and the girls take
> Home Economics in J.C., but in T.Y. all students study both subjects. The
> girls can be very wary at first but it's amazing - when you build up their
> confidence they produce some lovely work. Some of the girls go on to take
> Engineering for L.C. and the experience of T.Y. helps both the students and me.
> I've gotten to know them a lot better and students need that to face into the
> demands of the honours programme at Leaving Certificate – particularly when
> they haven't taken the subject for Junior Certificate.

When asked as to the specific features of the programme that facilitated it, three interviewees stated that the freedom from examination pressure and the rigidity of prescribed courses afforded greater scope. The fact that the emphasis in T.Y. is on school designed and school specific programmes was identified again as a contributing factor here.

Teachers' observations on the importance of relationships in T.Y. were particularly interesting. The teachers themselves reported a gain within their own professional practice by virtue of their enhanced relationships with students. They expressed their feeling of increased professional satisfaction as a result of the greater level of mutual trust and welcomed students' affirmation of the contribution they were making. They also made reference to the impact these enhanced relationships had had on the quality of work undertaken in the classroom, both in TY classes and in subsequent year

groups. The relationships that are built between colleagues through collaborative planning were also stressed and as indicated above, they offer an added dimension to teachers' professional engagement. It would appear that the quality of relationships in schools have a significant contribution to make in terms of professional experience and development of teachers.

The Role of the Transition Year Co-ordinator

When asked to whom the teachers refer for support and assistance in their teaching of the programme 60% of respondents indicated that they felt free to approach another colleague within the school. The type of help they receive from colleagues has been presented in the sections related to teacher collaboration, above. In addition, 55% of those questioned noted that they would approach their Transition Year co-ordinator for assistance in the planning and teaching of the course. 65% of respondents had undertaken team planning in-service within the school. Such in-service was generally reported as being facilitated by the co-ordinator; therefore the majority of this number had received the advice of the co-ordinator in such a forum.

The specific assistance offered by the co-ordinator was identified as being concerned with a range of issues. Administrative issues related to such areas as in the planning of calendar events and in helping teachers in the scheduling of their modules. The co-ordinator also offered professional support by keeping teachers abreast of development in curriculum and in the provision of teaching resources. One teacher (Tony, School D) made reference to the fact that the co-ordinator ensured that the momentum of the course was on-going and stated "She keeps me on my toes!" All interviewees referred to the co-ordinator as the person with overall responsibility within the team, for the success of the programme and the person with whom teachers liaise most often regarding the preparation and implementation of their courses of work.

Edel, a teacher from school E referred to the Co-ordinator as,

> ...the person who leads the team. She facilitates the setting up of the course each year, the selection of students to be included in the group and has the ear of the principal throughout – she's like a mini-principal and so if I have any difficulties I go to her. She can recommend texts or people to contact. She also gives me advice on who is teaching complimentary aspects of the course and sets up links so that we can dovetail our work with our students.

Anne, from school C has held the position of Co-ordinator within her own school for the past four years and explained that she felt that it was up to her to offer professional support to teaching colleagues in respect of T.Y. She observed,

> While a lot of our teachers like to work independently, it's up to me to look for ways in which I might offer them support. I act as the link between the T.Y. support service and the teachers on the ground. If new teaching resources become available it's up to me to make teachers aware of them and also to promote their use in the classroom. I also make links between teachers – say P.E. and Science – through the Health and Safety Course. I have also linked the history teacher with the Metalwork dept. around a project on the Vikings. I'm very often the one who sets up the links and suggests the interdisciplinary projects that could be done.

The research findings highlight two key opportunities for the professional development of teachers as presented by the appointment of a Transition Year Co-ordinator. The first relates to the potential for the professional development of the co-ordinator him/herself. The second relates to the assistance and professional guidance the co-ordinator offers to other teachers.

Respondents indicated that the T.Y. co-ordinator is offered the opportunity to become a teacher-leader within the school. The potential for personal and professional development of the incumbent is apparent in this case. In assuming the role a teacher steps outside his or her classroom so to speak, and accepts responsibility for the co-ordination of a course of study and the leadership of a team of teachers concerned. Anne from school C was very clear as to the opportunities the role of T.Y co-ordinator had offered her in respect of her professional growth. She cited examples of her experience in administration and leadership as a result of her appointment and she stated,

> Without a doubt I have gained an awful lot and my confidence is growing as I go along. Because I have responsibility for the course and for the educational

programme of fifty-eight students I have had to develop a broader perspective. I see the importance of teachers working together but I also have the headaches of administration and co-ordination. I'm delighted with the added responsibility but I see now how isolated and insulated I was before. I only had to worry about what on inside my own classroom. I have to think of a far bigger picture now and my work affects a lot more of what happens in the school.

Likewise the opportunity for teachers' to have the added support and professional guidance of a colleague is evidenced. The teachers surveyed referred to the support offered by their respective co-ordinators. The post-holder acted as an advisor, administrator and resource provider for those concerned. The potential for their professional leadership of colleagues was indicated. A colleague may often have greater credibility in terms of teacher leadership than the principal in certain circumstances and with certain teachers.

In-Service and Support

In discussing the structures and format within which support is offered to teachers to further develop their professional expertise the following opportunities for teacher development were discussed:

> The support offered from within the school

> The models of in-service training preferred by teachers and,

> The opportunities available for teachers to undertake further professional development in their own time.

Support Offered from Within the School

Respondents acknowledged the support they receive from colleagues and the value they place on meeting with colleagues to share experience and learn from one another. However, it appeared that teachers' experience was largely limited to networking within their own schools. The professional help

and encouragement offered by co-ordinators and discussed above was also acknowledged by a large percentage of respondents and by all interviewees.

Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate if staff development policies were in place in their schools. No respondent indicated that a formal policy was in place although it would appear from participants' responses to other questions and from feedback in interviews that principals recognised the need to support staff development initiatives. Examples of their support included their releasing of teachers to participate in in-service, the provision of time at staff meetings for teachers to meet in subject grouping and their encouragement of teachers' involvement in the School Development Planning.

Preferred Models of In-Service

Teachers' preferred style of in-service was discussed within each of the five interviews held. It was generally felt that the offering of in-service on an ad hoc basis is not effective but that the quality of such provision had improved in recent years. Respondents believed that school-based workshops were the most effective form of in-service. They felt that the conference and lecture format was outdated, as it did not facilitate the sharing of experience among colleagues. Their willingness to participate in school-based workshops stemmed from their belief that they had an opportunity to share good practice with colleagues based on sound educational principles, within such a forum. Workshops also counteract the danger of passive involvement and non-engagement with current developments, on the part of those attending.

Three teachers had taken part in cluster workshops involving participants from other schools and stated that they had gained a lot from that experience. Anne explained that her in-service, as co-ordinator of to TY is organised on a cluster basis and it offers her the opportunity of gaining insight into how other schools approach such issues as the teaching of mixed ability groups and the structuring

of modules of study to optimise students' learning potential. She felt that her knowledge and experience had developed as a result. Máire described a similar experience in relation to her teaching of Gaeilge. Edel raised the issue of the dissemination of information among colleagues on teachers' return from in-service. Her school had a system in place whereby subject teachers met formally, on a monthly basis and this gave an opportunity to share any information received.

When this point was discussed in subsequent interviews two teachers agreed that the professional development of a greater number of people would be facilitated if there was a better system in place for teachers to share their experience on return to school. Edel had made the point that that because she was expected to report back to colleagues she was encouraged to process that which she had learned to a greater degree. She also acknowledged that she was more likely to integrate new methods with the support of colleagues as they had had the chance to "tease them out with other teachers and see how they'd fit into their existing programme."

The question of teachers' engagement in in-service was raised in the light of the results of the research findings. While all but one of those surveyed indicated that they would welcome further support from in-service providers only three of those interviewed and 30% of those questioned had participated in in-service offered by the Transition Year Support Service. An apparent contradiction presents. Anne, the co-ordinator offered the possibility of recent cutbacks within the SLSS contributing to this finding. However, such cutbacks would not account for the dearth of 'take-up' in other than the past year.

Whatever the reason, an apparent mis-match is evident. On one hand teachers state that they would welcome additional assistance while on the other hand a surprisingly few have undertaken formal in-service in relation to their teaching of the programme. Further examination as to why this is the case is required. However, time did not allow for such exploration within the present study.

Professional Challenges and Professional Needs

The design of specific curricular modules, the use of active teaching methodologies and the motivation of students in the Transition Year class were identified as the areas that presented the greatest challenge for the teachers who participated in the initial survey for the purpose of this study. Feedback from the subsequent interviews confirmed the teachers' concerns in relation to each of the areas.

From the survey and interview data key areas of need for support were identified. These areas overlap to a significant extent with teachers' responses to the challenges that they have experienced in teaching TY. The areas in which they felt most challenged and in which they indicated a need for further support included:

> ➢ Student motivation

> ➢ The use of active teaching and learning methodologies

> ➢ The planning and delivery of interdisciplinary work

In addition their experience of teaching mixed ability groups was identified as important and one in which needs to be further developed.

Student Motivation

At an earlier point of this chapter it was noted that the teachers identified student motivation and the quality of relationships within TY classes as two very positive features of the programme. Identifying student motivation as a challenge at this point led the researcher to question an apparent contradiction. Why, on one hand would it be promoted as a positive attribute while on the other it is presented, as an area in which there is such a felt need for further support? Participants expressed a difficulty in 'coming up' with a specific or conclusive answer to this question but explained that their

need for further support stems from their concern that changes in society are impacting negatively in classrooms and that teachers have to be better equipped to respond appropriately. One teacher explained, "Everything outside school seems to happen so fast and a lot of our students have little tolerance for the pace at which we approach things at school." Another teacher from a co-educational school commented, "I'd appreciate some help in motivating both boys and girls together, in the one class. I notice that the boys look for a lot more attention - and in a lot cases they get it. I feel that the girls loose out, sometimes."

The use of Active Teaching and Learning Methodologies

Teachers gave examples of a range of teaching and learning methodologies with which they had become familiar through their experience in Transition Year. They also stated that they would welcome further support in becoming familiar with others. Those most commonly mentioned were: project work, visiting speakers, computer-based learning, field trips, group-work and experience in the use of audio-visual equipment as a learning tool. Teachers indicated that they would welcome further support in such areas as the use of drama in education, research techniques and in role-play. All interviewees agreed that the inclusion of such strategies had made their classroom work more interesting - both for them and for students - to date, although they also pointed out that a lot more class-preparation was needed where such methodologies were used. When asked if their experience in the use of an enhanced repertoire of teaching methods had influenced teachers' practice in other classes, four interviewees agreed that it had. Their views were fairly represented by Edel's observation that she now felt "freer to have debates and to undertake project-work." Each of the four also agreed however, that such strategies were more likely to be used in Junior Cycle classes. Mary's comment that "Leaving Cert. work is far too demanding" summarised the feelings of her counterparts in relation to the issue.

From the comments received, it appeared that the 'subject' in question also influenced teachers' use of varied methodologies in Senior Cycle classes. Tony, who teaches Engineering and Technical Drawing, uses audio-visual equipment and I.T. in working with Leaving Certificate classes and Máire cited examples of inviting local business people to work with her Leaving Certificate Vocational class group. The teachers of Mathematics and Accounting, on the other hand felt that a more didactic teaching approach was appropriate in their classes, at the same level.

Inter-Disciplinary Work

A large percentage of teachers indicated that they would welcome further support in the use of inter-disciplinary work in Transition Year classes. They reported that they felt least confident in undertaking this aspect of the course and cited their lack of previous experience in working with colleagues across subjects as contributing to their feeling of inadequacy. They felt that they did not fully exploit the possibility of devising themes that could be treated in a simultaneous manner across different subject areas. Teachers' insight as to the benefit of cross-curricular work has been presented earlier in this chapter. However, it is interesting to note that while the merits of this approach are appreciated, two of those interviewed indicated that this was the area where they envisaged most difficulty in integrating their practice into other areas of curriculum. Tony, School D summarised their sentiments when he said, "We all have a long way to go before interdisciplinary work is taken for granted throughout the school."

Mixed Ability Teaching

When discussing the challenge of teaching in a mixed-ability setting, opinion differed across the five interviews. Two participants explained that they found it more difficult to teach in a mixed-ability class while three did not appear to share this concern. It was noted that each of the interviewees in the

second group taught in schools that had a policy mixed-ability class placement. All interviewees agreed that looking after the needs of students with learning difficulties who hope to progress to Leaving Certificate posed a particular challenge. They explained that increased student participation rates in school had led to more students transferring to Senior Cycle and completing Secondary Education and that this presented an additional challenge for teachers. Two teachers expressed their feeling of inadequacy with meeting the needs of "non-academic students." (Mary, School A) The emphasis on remediation was noted and one teacher reflected,

> I don't feel that I'm equipped to deal with this *(Learning Difficulties)* in any way. Teaching TY in a mixed-ability setting is most rewarding but I don't have to meet the requirements of an examination. Yet, I have my eye on the Leaving Cert. course and I wonder how I can be of most help to the girls who will find it difficult. I need more help in this area. (Edel, School E)

It appears that while teachers of Transition Year gain professional satisfaction from teaching mixed ability groups and they are prepared to embrace the teaching methodologies promoted by the programme planners, Anne's comment with regard to having 'one eye on the examination' is pertinent. Teachers made a clear distinction between mixed ability teaching within T.Y. and within examination-focused programmes.

Conclusion

This Chapter has presented the research findings of the study. The quantitative data that emerged from the initial survey presented the researcher with a profile of each of the five schools involved in the study and of each of the twenty teachers surveyed. The chapter presented the views of teachers in respect of their perceptions regarding the potential of the Transition Year programme to contribute to their professional development. In addition, the data that emerged from interviews with five teachers across each of the school surveyed provided valuable insight into those teachers' views, perceptions, experiences and expectations regarding of their on-going professional development needs.

Six themes were explored at interview and teachers' perceptions in respect of each provide a picture from which the researcher will draw in consideration of the issues presented in the final chapter of the study.

Chapter 5

Analysis of the Research Finding

Introduction

Chapter 1 of this study located the emergence of the Transition Year programme as a curricular initiative within the broader context of educational development. It sought to identify ways in which the TY programme offered teachers an opportunity for professional development. Chapter 2 presented a review of literature concerned with teacher professional development, in general. The last chapter gave an insight into teachers' perceptions and the research findings were concerned with the extent to which teachers perceived their professional development as being facilitated by their engagement in the Transition Year programme. The purpose of this chapter is to relate the findings of the primary research as presented in Chapter 4 to the material discussed in the earlier chapters. The issues which will be discussed are inter-linked and related but will be presented under the following broad headings to best reflect the recurrent themes which emerged throughout the study.

They are:

> The importance of teacher professional development

> Transition Year as conduit for the professional development of teachers

> The school as a critical site for the professional development of teachers

> The development of relationships

> The role of the principal

> The models of in-service preferred, and

> Life-long learning.

In considering the emerging issues, it will link the findings of the study to the research literature on the professional development of teachers as reported in Chapter 2. Throughout the chapter, a number of questions will be raised and some observations and recommendations will be made with regard issues that might be addressed in further study.

The Professional Development of Teachers

The importance of the on-going development of teachers as emphasized in the literature and pertaining to Ireland in particular, was presented in Chapter 2. Its importance was set in terms of the ever evolving social context within which teachers exercise their professional role and responsibility.

Policy makers have stressed that the variety and range of professional development opportunities provided should take account of both the teachers' personal and professional needs. The past decade has seen the development of a range of provisions which have been designed to assist teachers to meet these needs across a diverse range of circumstances. (OECD, 1991; Coolahan, 1991; N.E.C., 1994) The Education Act, (1998) legislated for the in-career development and support of teachers in each of five of its sections under the functions of the Minister, the schools, the principals, the inspectorate and the NCCA.

Transition Year as a Conduit for Teacher Development

The NCCA (2002) has acknowledged the Transition Year programme as having contributed to the present climate of on-going educational innovation and change. It would appear that the collaborative approach to learning and teaching as promoted in the Transition Year Programme (Dept. of Education, 1985) has the potential to increase the opportunity for the professional development of teachers. The Inspectorate found that the programme allowed schools to engage in genuine in-school

curriculum development and afforded teachers an opportunity to break free of overly compartmentalised subject teaching. The research conducted for the purpose of this study, indicated that by virtue of their engagement in Transition Year teachers' professional growth and greater professional engagement in school was facilitated. As the programme encourages the use of a "broad, varied and integrated curriculum" (C.E.B., 1986) and the "use of a wide range of teaching/learning methodologies and situations" (SLSS, 2000) teachers who participate are encouraged to reflect on the merits of interdisciplinary work and co-operative teaching across subject lines.

The school-specific nature of the course gives them greater freedom to "...have more control yet greater freedom" with their curriculum, (Maire, School B) and encourages them to look for more creative ways in approaching their teaching. (Anne, School C) The development of an enhanced repertoire of T.Y. teaching and learning methodologies offers teachers the opportunity to develop expertise in these areas and to use them, as appropriate in their other classes. Such development in professional practice, by implication contributes to those teachers on-going professional development in general.

The potential for the professional growth of the Transition Year co-ordinator was also evidenced in the study. In assuming this role one steps outside the confines of a specific classroom and accepts responsibility for the organization of a course of study for students and the leadership of a team of colleagues in meeting the educational needs of the students concerned. The development of curricula, the fostering of a team spirit, the encouragement of participation in interdisciplinary teaching and the development of a broad repertoire of assessment techniques have become key elements of Transition Year programme planning and delivery. Co-ordinators have been required to develop skills in each of these areas in order to provide for the diverse learning needs of the students undertaking the course and in assisting colleagues in integrating these elements within their courses. The research found that co-ordinators gained experience in administration, curriculum leadership and development

and felt an enhanced sense of professional responsibility. Their colleagues' perception of them was also adjusted as they assumed greater authority within the school.

The School as a Critical Site for Professional Development

The literature reviewed on professional development stresses the need for teacher and school development to be interlinked (Bell, 1991) and the NCCA has identified the school as "the critical site of professional development for teachers and for whole staffs" (2003, p.13). Researchers agree that as teaching is an intellectual activity "…professional development occurs when teachers have the opportunity to learn from theory and practice as part of their job."(Lieberman and Miller 1999, p.60) The development of the professional community and the encouragement of collaborative activity among teachers facilitate participants' professional growth in and through their practice.

The study found evidence of varying degrees of collaborative work among teachers through the planning and delivery of their Transition Year programmes. Examples of such co-operation and collaboration in other areas of the school curriculum were also indicated. The school specific nature of the Transition Year curriculum design encouraged a collaborative culture of planning and teaching within the school. Teachers' sense of greater freedom to discuss their class work on this course and their acceptance of the consequential benefits of such collaboration was acknowledged by participants. Transition year is perceived as offering colleagues greater flexibility in addressing their professional needs by virtue of their greater sense of local autonomy. However, reticence in relation to colleagues sharing when engaged in other courses was also expressed. While school-based initiatives affirm the commitment and expertise of teachers to address issues of local concern and acknowledge teachers as having the experience and expertise to address their specific needs, Eisner's caution that, "Despite what seems obvious, we have designed schools both physically and organizationally to restrict the teachers access to other professionals" has particular relevance in this context. (Eisner, 1999, p.161)

The Development of Relationships

The development of teacher/pupil relationships and those among students were identified as positive outcomes of the Transition Year programme, by Egan and O'Reilly in 1979 and more recently, the NCCA (2003) has identified "the motivational influences in the learning of young adults" as an area that should be focused upon in teacher development programmes. The evidence of this study indicates that positive outcomes in terms of pupil/teacher relationships are a feature of Transition Year classes and that the relationships developed within the programme have impacted in turn on the quality of work undertaken in subsequent Leaving Certificate classes.

Teachers' views on the motivation of students within the course appeared to be somewhat contradictory at first. While on one hand they identified student motivation as a positive attribute of the course, on the other they presented it as an area in which they had a need for greater support. This apparent conflict may be explained in the light of the evolving social change and teachers' felt the need to be better equipped to respond to this context. Teachers' were aware that ongoing efforts are needed in developing enhanced learning environments for students. By implication they are open to develop their professional expertise.

It would appear that the quality of relationships within schools have a significant contribution to make to the professional experience and development of teachers. The relationships that are built among teaching colleagues through collaborative planning offer an added dimension to teachers' professional engagement. This is consistent with the literature which promotes collaborative work within learning organisations as contributing to the professional development of staff, (Stoll and Fink, 1996; Fullan, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994) and that which emphasises the character and quality of relationship that exists in schools as underpinning a meaningful context for the professional development of staff and the quality of learning and teaching enjoyed there.

The Role of the Principal

The principal's role in the professional development of staff is emphasised in the literature (Fullan, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1996; Leithwood et al., 1999) and his/her position in relation to the creation of opportunities of teacher development has been discussed in Chapter 2 above. The evidence from this study would indicate that principals recognise the need to support staff development initiatives. While there was no evidence of formal staff development policies in place and there was no indication that specific staff development programmes were undertaken within the schools in question, by encouraging the development of, and in supporting such programmes as Transition Year it has been possible to offer responsibility to individual teachers and teaching teams for specific aspects of learning and teaching within the school. By inviting these teachers to become involved principals are providing opportunities for such teachers' professional growth in practice and in partnership with colleagues.

The researcher suggests that in light of the perceived benefits to staff of interdisciplinary work and collaborative planning, school management could identify other ways in which more cross curricular work might be promoted. The inclusion of responsibility for curriculum leadership and development could also be considered within the schedule of posts. Evidence from the study would indicate that the role of co-ordinator has offered significant benefits for the professional development of both the incumbent and for teaching colleagues. It is suggested that further exploration as to the possibilities of developing on this experience in other areas of the curriculum would be worthwhile. Such practice would build on Leithwood's understanding that the fostering of teacher leadership enables and revitalises teachers through increased interaction with colleagues and offers them an increased sense of professionalism and satisfaction within their work. (Leithwood, 1999)

In-Service Formats Preferred

The issues that emmerge in relation to in-service provision and participation in this study relate to the value teachers place on school-based in-service and the benefits of sharing knowledge and experience with colleagues. Best practices in the dissemination of knowledge gathered at in-service and the low level of participation in Transition Year in-service are also discussed.

Transition Year in-career development has been offered under the 'Training of Trainers' model since 1993. As acknowledged by Minister Breathnach at the time, this style of in-service is directed by the needs of teachers and involves their active participation. (Breathnach, 1994) It takes account of the necessity to connect with teachers' classroom practice and experience (Bell, 1991; Eisner, 1999; Hargreaves, 1994) and it is consistent with Sergiovanni's advice that more efforts be directed in enabling teachers as opposed to 'doing for them.' It recognises their capacity to learn through sharing best practice with colleagues and offers an opportunity for teachers to return to their classrooms and re-create their practice in use (Sergiovanni, 1996). Teachers who participated in this study attested to the value of school-based in-service and indicated that they welcomed the opportunity to share their experience with and learn from colleagues. Their experience is consistent with the findings of Lewis and McMahon's evaluation of in-service provision for Transition Year, in 1996. Those teachers who had undertaken Transition Year in-service acknowledged the benefits of sharing best practice with colleagues from other schools and of gaining from the insight of the facilitators concerned. However two issues arise in this regard. The first concerns the necessity of accessing good quality facilitators in any programme of teacher in-service and the second relates to the relatively low take-up of in-service for Transition Year as evidenced in the study.

School-based and cluster based in-service differs significantly from the more formal lecture style and traditional knowledge-based models in terms of the way in which they are presented. Such enhanced models of delivery call for greater skills on the part of the facilitator. The need for knowledge

and expertise is not enough and has to be complemented with strong interpersonal communication and facilitation skills on the part of the 'Trainer' concerned. (Lewis and Mc Mahon, 1996)

The low take-up of Transition Year in-service emerged as an issue within the research for the study. While teachers valued the assistance of in-service providers surprisingly few had participated in training programmes. As acknowledged in Chapter 4, time did not allow for exploration of the reasons underlying this. It is suggested that further examination of the matter is required.

The dissemination of information acquired at in-service among the teachers, on their return to school was also raised within the study. Varying practices with regard to the provision of time for teachers to meet for this purpose were evidenced in the research. The time that teachers set aside for sharing – most often on a voluntary basis – was acknowledged as benefiting their subsequent practice, in classes. It would appear that there is a need for more time-tabled time for teachers to share professional experience and plan for such courses as Transition Year. It is suggested that where formal time is allocated for such purposes the process assumes a greater status and credibility within the school and greater levels of expectation in terms of collaborative work among colleagues is supported. However the challenge for schools lies in the devising of creative ways of facilitating time for such activity.

Life-Long Learning

The importance of involving teachers in the process of providing for their own professional development has been discussed throughout the study. Under the Education Act, 1998 schools have a responsibility for both the review of school and teacher development needs and for the provision of in-service training. (Section 9) However, teachers are also asked to take ownership of their own professional growth. As stated in Chapter 2, the OECD has recommended a policy of in-career development that facilitates a culture of life-long learning. The NCCA has proposed that regular

participation in professional development is recognised as essential throughout a teachers' career. (NCCA, 2003) Huberman (1993) and Leithwood (1999) agree that teachers' development extends beyond the classroom and invites teachers to grow in self-understanding. The teacher is identified and affirmed as resourceful as well as practical in the process of his/her development and as Tuohy (1999) has stated the process of professional and personal growth is inseparable.

The OECD acknowledged the "voluntary commitment of Irish teachers to in-service training" (OECD 1998, p.98) and Chapter 4 above has presented this researcher's finding in relation to teachers' commitment to this aspect of their work. They cite their taking of courses in learning support, catechetics, in computers and in continental languages in addition to their teaching commitment. Some of these courses have been undertaken in teachers' own time and often at considerable expense to themselves.

The researcher suggests that the Department of Education and Science might provide greater incentives and give financial recognition to teachers who undertake professional development courses in their own time. The current financial gain as a result of undertaking post-graduate study is not considerable and as the OECD has stated, teachers are not entitled to any allowance "for specialist one year post-graduate diploma courses." (OECD, 1998, P.81) This position does not affirm the teacher who is prepared to give of his/her time and commitment in terms of further professional development. Little reference was made to the contribution of 'Subject Associations' to teachers' professional development within this study. However, in the researcher's experience, teachers have received significant professional development and support as a result of their engagement in such associations. Teachers may not be availing of as full a support service and network as is available to them. By not doing so they may be depriving themselves of an opportunity to keep abreast of current developments in curricular practice and methodology. They may also be depriving themselves of the opportunity of contributing to future policy development, in their subject, by virtue of their lack of involvement.

Conclusion

What we know from the literature and what this study has also revealed is that working with colleagues, having meaningful teacher leadership at school level and engaging in relevant and practical in-service activities and having such activities located at school level, promotes teacher development in significant ways.

In undertaking this study the researcher sought to gain insight into the attitudes of teachers towards current opportunities for professional development as presented in TY. Throughout the research one was keen to identify specific areas of professional development of interest to teachers and to find evidence of ways in which the teachers promoted their own professional growth. The experience of the study has developed in the author a deeper understanding of the importance of the on-going professional development of the teacher. This deeper understanding has created an appreciation of and sensitivity to the needs and concerns of teachers, and with particular reference to development opportunities that might be better facilitated from within the school. As a school principal, the researcher is particularly conscious of one's personal responsibility in this regard.

While there are personal responsibilities on the part of senior school personnel to respond to the professional development needs of teachers and to their own needs, equally there are responsibilities on the part of policy makers to provide on-going and meaningful supports in the realisation of teacher, curriculum and school development.

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Appendix A

31, Lynally Grove,
Mucklagh,
Tullamore,
Co. Offaly.
19th February 2004.

Dear Colleague,

I am currently researching the professional development opportunities available for teachers of Transition Year in part fulfilment of a Masters in Education (School Leadership) programme at N.U.I., Maynooth. The title of the study is 'The Professional Development of Teachers engaged in the Transition Year Programme – A Study from the Perspective of the Practicing Teacher'

Your principal has very kindly offered me the opportunity to circulate this questionnaire to staff within your school. I would be very grateful if you could take the time to complete it. I appreciate the many demands on your time; particularly at this time of year and to this end the questions have been designed to facilitate speed in answering.

Please be assured that all information gathered is for the purposes of this research only and will be treated in the strictest confidence. I attach an envelope to the questionnaire to ensure confidentiality. I am very grateful for you co-operation and thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Moynihan.

Appendix B

Questionnaire

School Details

1. Type of School

   Community / Comprehensive School   _____

   Voluntary Secondary School   _____

   V.E.C / Community College   _____

   Other   _____

2. Co-ed   _____   Single sex   _____

3. Total number of students in the school   _____

4. Length of time that TYO is running in the school   _____

5. No of students in TYO 2003-2004   _____

6. No. of teachers involved in TYO 2003-2004   _____

7. How are teachers selected for TYO please tick:

              Volunteer   _____

Invited by Principal/Deputy _____

Invited by Co-ordinator _____

Mixture of above _____

8. Does your school have a Staff Development Policy in place? _____

Personal (Please tick as appropriate)

1. Male _____   Female _____

2. Age-group: Under 30 ___ 30-34 ___ 35-39 ___ 40-44 ___ 45-49 ___

50 or over ___ .

3. Length of teaching service: Less than 5 years ___   5-9 years ___   10-14 years ___

15-19 years ___   20-25 years ___   25 years + ___

4. Please state the number of years you have been engaged with TYO: _____

5. Position in school: Permanent Whole-time _____   Pro-Rata _____

6. Do you hold a post of responsibility in the school? Yes ___ No ___

7. In what subjects do you have a primary degree? *Please State*: _____

8. How did you become involved in TYO?   By invitation _____ Volunteered _____

9. For how many hours do you teach in total, each week: *Please state:* _____

10. For how many hours do you teach TYO? _____

11. Who is involved in designing the Transition Year Programme, in your school each year?

    Please tick as appropriate:

    Individual Teachers _____

    The team of Transition Year teachers in school _____

    The Second Level Support Service _____

    Whole staff _____

    Co-ordinator _____

12. To whom do you look to for support and assistance in your teaching?

    Please tick as appropriate

    The TY Co-ordinator _____

    A colleague in your own school _____

    A colleague in another school _____

    The TYO Support Team _____

    Other: Please Specify _____

13. What type of in-service have you availed of in relation to Transition Year Teaching?

    Please tick as appropriate

    Transition Year Support Service in-school workshops _____

Meeting with regional co-ordinators of TY   _____

Whole-school planning for TY   _____

TY Team planning   _____

Cluster support   _____

Short courses   _____

Other, Please specify: _____

14. At what stage of your engagement with TYO did in-service take place?

Please tick as appropriate:

Initial involvement   _____

Annual / on-going in-service   _____

To meet particular needs e.g. Development of new modules _____

15. Can you request or access TYO in-service readily?

In school: Yes _____   No _____

From TY support service: Yes _____   No _____

16. How frequently are Timetabled meetings with Transition Year colleagues facilitated in your school?

Please tick as appropriate: Never   _____

One per year   _____

One per term   _____

One per month   _____

Weekly   _____

Other, please specify   _____

17. Do you believe the current arrangements to be satisfactory?

Yes   _____   No   _____

18. In considering the best use of time in respect of planning for Transition Year teaching, please

rank the following in order of importance to you, giving **1 to your first choice etc:**

Informal meetings with colleagues   _____

Formal meetings with colleagues   _____

Extra preparation time   _____

Observing good practice   _____

I.T skills support   _____

19. What format do you think in-service courses should take? Please tick any of the following that

you think are suitable and then rank them in order of importance to you with

1 indicating the most beneficial:	Tick	Rank Order
Whole-school workshops:		
(Presentations, working in groups, feedback)	_____	_____
TYO Team workshops (School-based)	_____	_____
SLSS Cluster workshops (Outside school)	_____	_____
Formal lectures	_____	_____
Formal lectures followed by workshop	_____	_____

20. What is your level of interest in obtaining further support in the following areas: Please rank in

order giving   **1 to your first choice**   Tick   Rank order

        Active learning and teaching methodologies   ____   _____

        Interdisciplinary work   ____   _____

        Approaches to assessment   ____   _____

        Subject specific work   ____   _____

21. What is your level of interest in obtaining further support in the following areas relating to the

specific needs of TY? Please rank in order of preference to you giving **1 to your first**

preference

                                                    Rank order

        Teaching mixed ability groupings   ____

        Teaching students with learning difficulties in mixed ability groups _____

        Teaching 'Gifted' students in mixed ability groups   ____

        Motivating TYO students   ____

        Interdisciplinary work   ____

22. What is your level of interest in obtaining further support in the following areas? Please rank in

order of importance to you, giving **1 to your first choice**

                                                    Rank order

        Planning meetings of TY teachers   ____

        Responsibility for co-ordination of TY   ____

        Conducting formal meetings   ____

        Meetings with parents   ____

Negotiating with school management   _____

23. Is there an Education Centre convenient to you?   Yes _____   No _____

24. Have you ever taken a course at an Education Centre? Yes _____   No _____

25. What would motivate you to undertake a short course (e.g. 6 sessions each of 2 hours duration) in relation to your teaching? Please tick as appropriate and rank order giving **1 to the area that is of greatest interest to you.**   Tick   Rank order

	Tick	Rank order
To meet a deficit / gap in your subject expertise	_____	_____
To gain insight into developed teaching methodologies	_____	_____
To keep abreast of curriculum change and development	_____	_____
To make contact with similarly motivated colleagues	_____	_____
To discuss education matters of mutual concern	_____	_____

26. Do you believe that the experience you have gained by teaching the Transition Year
Programme has impacted on other areas of your teaching?   Yes _____   No _____

27. If you have answered Yes Q. 16, please state the areas that you believe have been most affected.

_____

28. Are you currently involved in other professional development courses? Yes ___ No ___ If
Yes, please specify:

_____

29. What motivational factors would influence you to study for a further degree or diploma? *Please indicate those areas of most interest to you and rank them beginning with 1 for the most important.*

	Tick	*Rank order*
To develop greater understanding of a particular area	_____	_____
To extend your current academic qualifications	_____	_____
To improve your prospects of promotion	_____	_____
To access an enhanced qualification allowance	_____	_____
To engage with similarly motivated people	_____	_____
To use your leisure time in a constructive way	_____	_____
Other, please specify	_____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Appendix C

The five broad categories which were discussed at interview with five participants for the purpose of this study were as follows:

➢ The comparisons and contrasts in teaching Transition Year and other academic programmes.

➢ The school / team supports involved in delivering the Transition Year programme.

➢ The external supports available for teachers of the programme.

➢ The personal and professional experience gained through the teaching of Transition Year and,

➢ The possible impact of such engagement such engagement has had in interviewees teaching, in general.