

# EUNEC CONFERENCE

## LEADING TEACHERS' LEARNING

**GARY Ó DONNCHADHA**

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL

CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND TEACHER EDUCATION DIVISION

DUBLIN 21-22 SEPTEMBER 2015

O'CALLAGHAN STEPHEN'S GREEN HOTEL

Contact email: [gary\\_odonnchadha@education.gov.ie](mailto:gary_odonnchadha@education.gov.ie)

## THINKING ABOUT LEVERS THAT ENABLE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1) Overarching Vision for Education, Education Policies and the National Reform Agenda
- 2) A learner-centred focus – quality of learner experience and outcomes
- 3) The School as a Locus of Teacher Professional Learning - Quality and Accountability Policies for Schools
- 4) Teaching Council / Regulation and Enabling Professionalism / Phases of Teacher Education Provision
- 5) Projects that build Professional Capacity

## THEMES: THINKING ABOUT ENSURING THE PROVISION OF HIGH-QUALITY TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1) How Teachers' Reflective Practice may be enabled and embedded?
- 2) Who are the providers of professional development?
- 3) What should influence teachers' learning and development?
- 4) How will the quality of professional development be assured?
- 5) What are the challenges in leading teachers' learning and professional development?

## LEVERS I. OVERARCHING VISION FOR EDUCATION, EDUCATION POLICIES AND THE NATIONAL REFORM AGENDA

- The *vision and purposes for education* that we create and communicate across the education system strongly influence the professional work of teachers.
- *Teacher Beliefs* about Learning and Teaching influence teacher perspectives on educational change.
- *Synergies for Better Learning* between system elements are significant: teacher development, school leadership development, student assessment, and internal and external school evaluation.
- An *explicit learner-centred vision* is necessary to make the nature of the intended learning experience tangible.
- The *scope and breadth of the expectations* regarding learner competencies and outcomes present a pedagogical challenge for teachers.
- The *definitions of Teacher Professionalism articulated at system level* influence the shape of educational policies that teachers implement.
- Emphasis placed on the *Student Voice* and the Influence accorded to Students and Parents are very significant for what happens in classrooms.

## ..... OVERARCHING VISION FOR EDUCATION, EDUCATION POLICIES AND THE NATIONAL REFORM AGENDA

- The *role of teachers in national curriculum policy development* influences both curriculum development and implementation in classrooms
- The *structure and content of curriculum* matters. The format of the curriculum specification, the knowledge, skills and concepts articulated and the explicit and implicit learning processes have a deep impact on teachers' practice and professional development needs.
- *Assessment policies* and the balance between formal summative examinations and teacher-led classroom-based assessment influences classroom approaches.
- Teachers are influence by *national policies on performance data* at system and school levels.
- *Major national reforms* may be explicitly designed to change classroom practice and these can have very significant impacts – or not!

## LEVERS 2. A LEARNER-CENTRED FOCUS – QUALITY OF LEARNER EXPERIENCE AND OUTCOMES

- Teacher learning must *connect with student learning*. Our priorities for improving the learner experience and learner outcomes must drive teacher learning and development.
- *Curriculum and assessment reforms* at primary and second level aim to enhance learner experience and improve outcomes
- Learners with knowledge, skills, understanding and *dispositions for the 21st Century*
- Junior Cycle skills: *Being Literate, Communicating, Working with Others, Being Creative, Being Numerate, Managing Information and Thinking, Staying Well, Managing Myself*
- The *teacher competencies necessary* to facilitate learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are considerable and of a high order.
- Teachers should be enabled to develop *evidence-based approaches* to classroom practice and student learning.

## LEVERS 3. THE SCHOOL AS A LOCUS OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING - QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES FOR SCHOOLS

- The *Governance of the School* and concern for the quality of the educational experience of students
- The school's leadership team, the *espoused vision and the call to action*.
- *How resources are combined* to translate the school's vision and mission into action.
- The *professional expectations* in the school and the source of these expectation.
- Who has *ownership of the classroom space?* – cellular versus shared responsibility for practice.
- *Is the pedagogy entrepreneurial* in seeking out opportunities to exploit for the benefit of learners?
- What school routines promote and sustain *professional reflection?*
- What are the tangible signs of the *school's professional culture?*
- *How can we support* the school to be the primary locus of professional learning?

## ..... THE SCHOOL AS A LOCUS OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING - QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES FOR SCHOOLS

- Is there an *internal locus of control*? Is there agency within the school? Does the school take responsibility for the quality of services to learners? Is the school enabled to do this?
- What *national or regional quality frameworks* are implemented and do they foster professional engagement among teachers?
- Is a process and culture of *School Self-Evaluation* embedded? Do teachers lead the process? Are they enabled to gather evidence about their practice? *Is the core of learning and teaching central* to SSE?
- How are *individual teachers involved in action planning* arising from self-evaluation? Is there a practice of classroom-based *action research* that feeds into school review?
- *How fully is the student voice enabled* in the school? Are SSE tools enabling pupils to share perspectives on what is working well and what they want to change in learning and teaching in the school?
- Are *teachers enabled to work collegially* to support continuous improvement in learning and teaching?

## LEVERS 4. TEACHING COUNCIL / REGULATION AND ENABLING PROFESSIONALISM / PHASES OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROVISION

- Key function in articulating the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* – A guiding compass for teachers in their professional lives; sets out for others *what they can expect of professional teachers*; underpins fitness to teach provisions.
- Specifies the regulations that govern *registration of all teachers* in the school system
- *Section 30* provision that only registered teachers may be paid from public funds
- *Accreditation and Review* of Initial Teacher Education programmes
- Sets out procedures for *induction and probation (Droichead – Bridge)* – fellow professionals in a Professional Support Team enable the beginning teacher's professional journey into teaching.
- Consultation on *Continuing Professional Development of Teachers* to advise Minister – standards for teachers' professional learning; facilitates teachers in reflecting critically on their teaching; shows the range of modes including formal/informal, personal/professional, school-based/external, collaborative/individual.

## ..... TEACHING COUNCIL / REGULATION AND ENABLING PROFESSIONALISM / PHASES OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROVISION

- Government Reform: Transformation in provision and organisation of Teacher Education: new standards articulated by Teaching Council; *extension of concurrent programmes* to 4 years and consecutive post-graduate courses to 2-year *Professional Masters in Education*.
- Influence of *Literacy and Numeracy strategy* on course content: Greater emphasis on pedagogical knowledge and skills and extension of time on supervised school placement.
- *Teaching Council Reviews* a strong and supportive lever to underpin quality professional formation.
- *Induction and Probation model* is a hugely significant development – a shift from an external inspection process to enabling professional growth through the school's own *Professional Support Team*.
- CPD: Significant public funding for professional Support Services for the school system: Professional Development Service for Teachers (*PDST*); PDST-Technology in Education; Junior Cycle for Teachers (*JCT*); Special Education Support Service, National Educational Psychological Service – CPD Initiatives

## LEVERS 5. PROJECTS THAT BUILD PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

- *External projects accessed by schools* have significant capacity building potential.
- Green Flag; Health Promoting Schools; Active School Flag
- Digital Schools of Distinction
- Reading Recovery, Ready Set Go Maths
- Incredible Years – Supported by NEPS
- FIS – Film in Schools Project
- FI in Schools Technology Project
- Entrepreneurship Education initiatives
- *Schools in difficulty requiring Turnaround* - Improvement Group – DES initiative

## THEME I. HOW TEACHERS' REFLECTIVE PRACTICE MAY BE ENABLED AND EMBEDDED?

- *Professional reflection* should be at the heart of teacher professional development.
- Reflection brings teachers into *focusing on evidence from classroom* practice.
- *Structured initiatives and school organisational routines* such as School Self-Evaluation or arrangements for Classroom-based Assessment can facilitate collegial reflection.
- Professional reflection facilitates the *connection between student learning and teacher professional learning*.
- Professional reflection can enable *collegial professional discussion* among the staff team and help build the school as a *learning organisation*.

## THEME 2. WHO ARE THE PROVIDERS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

- *Schools and teachers sharing effective practices* among the teaching team as a community of practice. Individual teachers share their experience internally and externally.
- *Beacon schools* with particular competency facilitate visits and share resources and experiences.
- Local or municipal authorities with an education brief or network of local education centres provide *facilities for professional training* and set out termly modules of *CPD in priority areas*.
- National authorities through a formal team of support personnel such as the *Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)*
- *Higher Education Institutions* and Teacher Education providers with *outreach* connections
- National or international *educational consultants* support teachers or schools on a commercial basis.

## THEME 3 WHAT SHOULD INFLUENCE TEACHERS' LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT?

### SCHOOL OBJECTIVES, CLASSROOM PRIORITIES AND LEARNERS' NEEDS

- The *strategic direction of the school* and specific whole-school objectives
- Important projects and initiatives with which the school is identified
- The outcomes of the school's *self-evaluation and external evaluations*
- Conclusions from analysis of student *assessment data*
- *Parental priorities* for school development
- Outcomes of individual and *collective review and reflective practice*

## ..... WHAT SHOULD INFLUENCE TEACHERS' LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT?

### TEACHERS' INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND INTENTIONS

- *Individual* professional development needs arising from reflection on practice
- Competency *areas for attention* recognised by teachers through feedback from students, other teachers and school leadership
- *Areas of curriculum or pedagogy* identified by teacher as potential areas of specialism and expertise
- *Teacher's interest* and involvement in *co-curricular* initiatives and projects
- *External educational developments* that capture the teacher's imagination and professional interest
- Stimulus arising from engagement with *research findings*

## THEME 4. HOW WILL THE QUALITY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BE ASSURED?

- *How can funders* of teacher professional development (State, municipalities, schools, teachers or sponsors) *be assured of value for money* and a positive return on the investment of resources?
- *Is there a national framework* for teacher professional learning that brings coherence to the involvement of a wide range of providers and *ensures alignment with strategic priorities* for education and fulfils teacher's professional development requirements?
- *Who will set the criteria* and standards for teacher professional development programmes?
- *How will the views of teachers, students and schools be incorporated* in assessing the quality and impact of professional development?
- *How can specification of standards*, regulation and evaluation *be applied pragmatically* to such a diverse area of provision?

## THEME 5. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES IN LEADING TEACHERS' LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

- *Being responsive and up-to-date* with changing needs of learners, teachers and schools.
- Developing the *expertise and competencies for deeper engagement* with teachers on practice change initiatives rooted in the classroom.
- *Impacting on teacher beliefs* and behaviours through professional development requires higher-order leadership of learning
- Providers of high-quality professional development *travel the journey with the teacher.*
- Requires *competencies in evaluation, mentoring and expertise in classroom practice.*
- Places a premium on *relationships between providers and schools.*
- *Ensuring that programmes meet standards* as part of a national quality assurance framework.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Take *a whole-of-system approach* to locate teacher learning within the wider context.
- Understand the connection between *student learning and teacher learning* and appreciate the pedagogical challenges of facilitating high-quality learner experiences and outcomes.
- Consider the *influence of curriculum and assessment* developments for teacher education.
- Instil and embed *habits of professional reflection* and evidence-based practice among teachers from the start. *Give voice to students* about the quality of their learning experiences.
- Exploit the potential of *the school as the primary locus of teacher learning* and development.
- Examine *how best to enable job-embedded learning* for teachers and consider the implications for all providers of professional development. Exploit ICT in the development of blended learning models of CPD.
- *Establish standards* for teacher education and review provision to foster continuous improvement.
- Support school leaders and teachers in developing *an open culture of professional sharing* and enable them to be the *lead agents of professional learning*.