# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REVISED CURRICULUM IN THE IRISH PRIMARY SCHOOL FROM PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAL TO CLASSROOM REALITY.

## APPLYING A THEORETICAL LENS TO THE PRACTICAL CLASSROOM.

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I hereby certify that this material, I now submit for assessment on the body of work leading to the award of the Master's degree, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed *Rivanna M<sup>c</sup> Cormack*

Date *July 07*

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My sincerest thanks to you all,

# Abstract

The Primary School Curriculum of 1999 endeavours to provide children with the most modern critical thought and educational theory in both ideal and classroom practice. Since its introduction the commonly-known Revised Curriculum has encountered much controversy and query. The uncertain response the curriculum generated was not cohesive with its promise of creativity and freedom. The ideals held did not sway those who had to work with it, from teacher and parent to child. As time passed, the acceptance of the curriculum altered, begging the question why. The aim of this research was to examine the development of the Revised Curriculum in relation to its philosophical foundations and theoretical ideals. The core concern is highlighting the praxis of key educational ideologies, where no philosophical framework has been proposed by the curriculum. The study group involved was comprised of a large, group of teachers, parents and children from numerous backgrounds and differing situations. Through the use of interviews, questionnaires and facilitated dialogue, the successes and failures of the ideals of curricular development were encountered. The data garnered in the study processes was analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively to give as concise and conclusive results as possible.

This study shows that revising the system does not necessarily create change, those involved in education must also see the value and not just the merit of change. This change is difficult to achieve when the partners of education have no access to a recognised theoretical framework. The thesis aims to provide such a theoretical framework, evident in its application in the research findings. Without such a recognised framework, the limits imposed on the development and understanding of the curriculum becomes apparent. The true aim of creating change cannot exist within the parameters of the curriculum without the provision of more fundamental access to genuine and authentic critical thinking and social integration, for teachers, parents and children. The Primary School Curriculum of 1999 has further to go.

# Table of Contents

# If the shoe doesn't fit, must we change the foot?

Gloria Steinem

# Introduction

## The Primary School Curriculum, a background to the study

This thesis is concerned with core issues of the Irish Educational System. The Primary School Curriculum of 1999, also known as the Revised Curriculum, was introduced as a response to changing times in an ever-changing world. I attended the lecture series of Dr Andrew Burke as a primary school teacher in training in St Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra. "Yesterday's answers are not adequate responses to today's questions,"[1] he said on one significant Wednesday. This, to me, represented the thrust and foundation of the Revised Curriculum – equipping children for the future. The aim of this thesis from its very inception to its conclusion, and all the research in between, is concerned with the impact of the Revised Curriculum upon the primary education system. The curriculum is presented as "an exciting opportunity for change and renewal in primary schools."[2] As such, the assumption would be that it is well received and successful in the Irish primary classroom. Yet is this in fact the case? The author raises the issue: *The Development of the Revised Curriculum in the Irish Primary School from Philosophical Ideal to Classroom Reality. Applying a theoretical lens to the practical classroom.* This body of work subsequently tracks the progress and development of the Primary School Curriculum 1999, as understood by teachers, parents and children. In the absence of a literature review provided by the curriculum, reference is made to a theoretical framework that is implicit in the ideology advocated by the curriculum. This framework is understood as central to the success of understanding and affecting change because it highlights the ideologies specific to revised curricula or simply the reasons for change. Making explicit the fundamental theories which inform educational practice as understood by the curriculum is core to this research document. Where the implementation of the curriculum reviews empirical data, this data is understood in terms of theoretical assertions made by a range of educational theorists. Their work is applied to the thesis in an attempt to allow the educational community a glimpse into the theory of what they are being asked to do and why, to make the implicit explicit.

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[1] Burke, A,                                  Lecture Series, St Patrick's College of Education,
                                               2002
[2] Primary School Curriculum, 1999, [Hereafter PSC] *Introduction*, pp3

## "A process of revision that is both evolutionary and developmental"[3]

In 1999, the Department of Education and Science in Ireland introduced the latest revision of the Primary School Curriculum. Replacing the 1971 Curriculum, this Revised Curriculum claims to "encompass the philosophical thrust of Curaclam na Bunscoile and reflect the thinking and aspirations of the National Convention on Education, 1994, the White Paper on Education – Charting our Educational Future, 1995, and the Education Act, 1998. Through the work of the NCCA committees, the curriculum incorporates current educational thinking and the most innovative and effective pedagogical practice."[4] The Review Body on the Primary Curriculum, which was published in 1990, "constituted a detailed appraisal of the 1971 curriculum and provided the basis for the redesign and restructuring that is presented in this (1999) curriculum."[5] The curriculum has proposed that the sound principles and expertise of old need to adapt to the changes borne of the reviews of the educational system – the old ways, the old expertise and old knowledge require renewal and revision. This central conviction rests on the development of the five principles of the 1971 curriculum claiming that "any future curriculum development should reflect them."[6] The pedagogical principles, integration and environment-based learning "have been subsumed into a wider range of learning principles."[7] These five principles are as follows:

- The full and harmonious development of the child,
- The importance of making due allowance for individual difference,
- The importance of activity and discovery methods,
- The integrated nature of the curriculum,
- The importance of environment-based learning.

Where the curriculum outlines in detail its central aims and convictions, it does not provide the educational community with a theoretical framework – or literature review. In light of this, the author applied a host of educational theories defined by educational theorists, to the ideologies implicit in the curriculum. These educational

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[3] PSC, Ibid,  *Introduction*, pp3
[4] PSC, ibid,  *Introduction*, pp2
[5] PSC,  *Introduction*, pp2
[6] PSC,  *Introduction*, The principles of the curriculum, pp8.
[7] PSC, ibid,  pp8.

thinkers comprise a Literature Review of eight theorists for the purposes of this research. It is by no means the intention of this Literature Review to be an exhaustive list of philosophical theorists, but rather that some framework be applied to help us understand what the curriculum aims to achieve through its core values. The selection of theorists is based upon those that Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) are most familiar with, then linking into the theorists surrounding these. The theorists were chosen because of the educational community's familiarity with them, and those whose ideologies and theories are significant in our understanding of what is considered "current educational thinking."[8] The Revised Curriculum has attempted to incorporate the experience of old with the theories and thought of critical education, in order to achieve its "overall purpose ...(which) is to enhance the quality of children's learning and to provide them with a developmental experience that is relevant to their present and future needs."[9]

## Modernisation and Change

The curriculum is a response to modernisation the world over, "incorporating the fruits of the most modern research and thinking in the theory and practice of primary education in Ireland."[10] Is it a response to Freire's claim "reality is a process undergoing constant formation?"[11] Is it an attempt to teach children that the questions of life are as important as the answers? Does the inclusion of a concepts and skills development section in each subject area of the curriculum aim to present education as a "restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry?"[12] Where the curriculum establishes itself as a modern educational programme, it does attest to the objectives inherent in thinking skills such as questioning, observing, evaluating, experimenting, recording et cetera. It also seeks to develop an awareness of the 'results' of encouraging such thinking skills – how the child copes in the world and also the fruits and facts of their endeavours. The child is expected to have a broadened knowledge base as a result of engaging with the curriculum. The concepts of questioning, observing, evaluating et cetera exist to aid a child in a post-primary education forum

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[8] PSC,      *Introduction*, Introduction, pp2
[9] PSC,      *Introduction*, Conclusion, pp75.
[10] PSC,      *Introduction*, Conclusion, pp75.
[11] Freire, P,      *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, [Hereafter PO], Chapter 2, pp56.
[12] Freire, P, PO, ibid,      pp53.

and are balanced by a development of the traditional knowledge base. Such ideals in objective and methodology make explicit the ideals that are implicit in the work of the selected educational theorists detailed in the Literature Review chapters.

However noble its objectives, the curriculum recognises that change will be difficult and require certain contributions from teachers. "These goals will only be achieved if the philosophy, aims and objectives of the curriculum are realised in its implementation. Achieving this presents a significant challenge...open-mindedness, a commitment to curriculum change and the most effective deployment of all the resources of primary education."[13] The curriculum introduction document acknowledges the challenges with which teachers are faced, and outlines the qualities necessary in modern educators. Education has seemingly been redefined in Freire's terms as "problem posing education."[14] This problem posing education "bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation."[15] Education is now ideally child-centred; the teacher resembles Illich's educational guide and skill teacher.[16] Education is about process, and not merely product. Where other educational theorists find a voice in the curriculum content, the specific recognition of a teacher as a guide and cultivator of thinking skills dominates the curriculum's understanding of the teacher. It is this understanding of the teacher that inspired this research in light of curricular change – teachers must be in a position to access fundamental theoretical ideologies which are expected to inform their educational ideologies and praxis. Without clarity surrounding the "fruits of the most modern research and thinking"[17] change may not be as forthcoming as the curriculum demands. This thesis aims to access a host of educational ideologies proposed by philosophical theorists. It is the aspiration of accessing such ideologies that a theoretical lens can be applied to the empirical data – the practical classroom.

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[13] PSC,                      *Introduction*, Conclusion, pp75.
[14] Freire, P, PO, ibid,      pp65
[15] Freire, P, PO, ibid,      pp65.
[16] Illich, I,                *Deschooling Society*, [Hereafter DS], Chapter 1,
                               Why we must disestablish schools, pp14
[17] PSC,                      *Introduction*, Conclusion, pp75.

# The implementation of the Primary School Curriculum, 1999

Essentially this thesis is concerned with the issue of applying a theoretical lens to curricular ideologies. The first and only glimpse a teacher has of specific educational theory is in training college. Freire claims "education is suffering from narration sickness."[18] Is this true of Irish education? Do we insist as educators on telling, delivering and pouring the curriculum into our students – our "receptacles to be filled,"[19] despite a thrust in another direction? Despite the research and modern theory, have we persisted in educating without alteration to our methodologies? Has the banking system, synonymous with the education systems of old, permeated the mainstay of what education is to many who uphold and sustain the system? If those already within the system consider 'round robin' education, delivery approach and recitation coupled with fact acquisition a sound basis for education, how can the educational principles proposed by the Revised Curriculum ever survive, let alone endure? Without a specific theoretical framework can the curriculum exist as a catalyst of change instead of mere lip service to change where little is actually done to effect real and value-based change?

## The aim of the Curriculum

Having adapted itself to the thrust of critical educational thought, several questions arise regarding the curriculum. Can we make explicit the core ideologies of educational thinkers, where these ideologies are implicit in the curriculum? Will accessing a theoretical framework make curricular aims and objectives clearer? A host of new questions emerge which are concerned with the practices of the classroom in relation to the Revised Curriculum. Is our current system adapting fully to the revision in methodologies and core subjects? Are our educators willing to adapt to change if change is recommended by the curriculum? Are our teachers responding to the challenges presented by the curriculum? Education now embodies all those characteristics of renewal, reinvention, on-going processes not only to realise a product but also to discover along the way. Knowledge is what the children acquire as they question and wonder, and not only as they learn off and regurgitate. The

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[18] Freire, P, PO, ibid,           pp52.
[19] Freire, P, PO, ibid,           pp53

educator guides and steers the children through their "zone of proximal development"[20] to realise their full potential. The teacher is the conductor, the escort, the *taxi driver* who "scaffolds"[21] each level for the child as they progress. "The curriculum emphasises particular empowering elements of learning. It stresses the importance of acquiring generic skills and abilities that help the child to transfer learning to other curriculum areas, to future learning situations and to his or her life experience."[22] Do teachers understand from where such methodological practices have arisen? Philosophically, do teachers have the freedom to break from traditionalist directives to choose their own directions within their classrooms? Does the point Ivan Illich makes ring true – do "schools create jobs for school teachers, no matter what their pupils learn from them?"[23] As teachers are faced with the new challenges of developing critical thought, do teachers stop to ask are children learning from this ideal? "We think too much about effective methods of teaching and not enough about effective methods of learning."[24] The author has asked many questions to highlight how vague and unclear the curriculum is when it is not presented alongside a specific theoretical framework to aid those in education in their a practical working environment.

A box of twenty-three curricular documents has been entrusted to each primary school teacher since 1999, with post-graduate students of certain colleges having to purchase their own. This introduction to the curriculum, coupled with a complete lack of Literature Review, culminates in resistance to change or acceptance of the merit of change on a superficial level. The true value of change, based on sound educational ideologies may not be comprehended until a theoretical framework of such ideologies is made specific and clear. Significantly, McLaren asks are we peddling "the ideological imperatives of the dominant culture?"[25] With an absence of a theoretical framework to tell us why changes are being made, are the Irish churning children out of an education system with revisions in methodologies and practice but

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[20] Vygotsky, L, in Whitebread, D (ed), *Teaching and Learning in the Early Years*, Chapter 1, Young children learning and early years teaching, pp3.

[21] Bruner, J, in Whitebread, D (ed), *Teaching and Learning in the Early Years*, Chapter 1, Young children learning and early years teaching, pp3.

[22] PSC, *Introduction*, Conclusion, pp75.

[23] Illich, I, DS, Chapter 2, *Phenomenology of School*, pp30

[24] Carolus, J, in Bourke, R, NEART, *An Information Booklet for Teachers of Children with Special Needs*, pp27

[25] McLaren, *Life in Schools*, pp164.

without revisions in core values? Is there a lip-service to change when all we are truly achieving is a rehashing of the dominant status quo – culturally accepted values placed upon our children telling them to achieve certain standards in exams, material gain, integrating special needs children into mainstream education to reach dominant value standards which are not their own etcetera? The theoretical framework necessary to understand change in ideology and subsequent methodology and objective is not confined to the realm of teacher, but must be accessed by the entire educational community. To provide a counter-point and as complete a picture of the living classroom as possible, the author includes a section detailing curricular understanding of both parents and children.

This thesis aims to examine and analyse the impact and implementation of the Revised Curriculum in the modern Irish classroom, through providing a theoretical framework of educational ideology. Over the next chapters, prominent educational theory and grass-root ideology will be scrutinised, probed and analysed to provide a theoretical framework for the curriculum; *The Development of the Revised Curriculum in the Irish Primary School from Philosophical Ideal to Classroom Reality. Applying a theoretical lens to the practical classroom.* Critical education is the lens through which the theme shall be viewed, with the concepts of both individualisation and socialisation forming the foundation and cornerstone of this research. The author reiterates that the philosophical lens applied to this research is by no means intended as an exhaustive list of educational theorists and their theories, but rather the author hopes to provide a snapshot of the Revised Curriculum as understood in terms of a philosophical framework in the living classroom.

# Chapter 1

# Critical Educational Theory –
# An Emphasis on Individualisation

# Critical Educational Theory – An Emphasis on Individualisation

Section 1.1

## Introduction

The educational theories that inform the Revised Curriculum are based on what the curriculum refers to as the "most modern research and thinking in the theory and practice of primary education in Ireland."[26] In debating the term modern we encounter many revolutionary educational theorists, whose hypotheses encompass much of what it is to generate "innovative and effective pedagogical practice."[27] Parallel to these renowned theorists, there are countless studies by various factions and independent researchers whose research contributes to modern education in the various periodicals, academic documents, and educational studies which teachers and researchers are privy to. There also exists the lesser known theorists, who grow in reputation as their studies and research find prominence. The literature review of this thesis is concerned with a broad range of theorists, spanning from the controversial radical to the feminist, the political nihilist to the humble educator, who find theories in their experience. Refining the Literature Review into specific theorists was no small task, and I have had to be necessarily selective. The criteria for including the theorists in this instance encompass those ideologies that seem most obviously implicit in the curriculum; objective, methodology and aims. I analysed these theorists in their entirety – where their theories are most obviously implicit in the curriculum. Application of such a framework ensures a contextual approach to the proposed theories. In other words, the lengthiness of each section is necessary in giving each theorist their due context and ensuring they themselves have their own literature review.

The literature review section has been divided into two chapters, where both theoretical frameworks are evident in the *Primary School Curriculum 1999* and as such, are significant informants of the fractious complexities that comprise modern Irish education. I have chosen to adopt a methodology of reading these theorists individually through the same sub-group of themes employed throughout the research.

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[26] Primary School Curriculum, 1999,     *Introduction*, Conclusion, pp75.
[27] Primary School Curriculum, 1999,     *Introduction*, pp2

This enables a focal point to be applied in the absence of a recognised theoretical framework. It is not claimed that this analysis is in any way exhaustive either of these individual theorists' work or of the vast array of educational theory relevant to this thesis. However, I have had to be necessarily selective and have focused on those thinkers who seem to provide the richest analysis with regard to the themes. I have also striven to include some conflicting voices to represent some of the tensions within current educational philosophy. The first chapter is concerned with critical educational theorists who focus on individualisation and the development of selfhood, not to the exclusion of more social concerns, but as their primary emphasis. The focus of these individual theorists' beliefs concentrates upon the creation of the individual self. Although these theorists use varying language to describe their concept of individuality, the thrust remains the same – education is creating and cultivating the ability to become an individual. Whether one uses the terminology of problem-posing, individuation, self-actualization or freedom, these theorists deem true education to strive for a sense of truth about the whole, independent self, rather than a societal rehashing of perceived realities upon a given group who claim they are individuals. Within this section, I have included reviews of the controversial revolutionary Paulo Freire, the contentious radical Ivan Illich, the feminist, scholar bell hooks, and the forthright, fearless Erich Fromm. Their theories serve to enlighten education of the significance inherent in the term individuality, and the subsequent freedom and truth therein. Their work seems to bear great influence upon the curriculum, where children are viewed as individuals, with individual needs and voices, where the curriculum serves to create individuals learning generic skills which can be applied across their lives.

The second chapter is concerned with a second and distinct group of critical educational theorists. These theorists, while seeing the necessity of individualisation, point to the overarching importance of socialisation in the construction of individuality and selfhood, especially in the context of education. Amongst these theorists I have included reviews of the balance-seeking Richard Rorty, the conceptual and discursive Peter McLaren, the political sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and the earnest, revered Henri Giroux. In some instances, these theorists fall beneath the label post-modernist, although in several instances they maintain an ambiguous relation to postmodernism. For example McLaren defines his critique of

postmodernism thus, "Broadly speaking, the postmodern critique concerns itself with a rejection or debunking of modernism's epistemic foundations or metanarratives; a dethronement of the authority of positivistic science that essentialises differences between what appear to be self-possessing identities, an attack on the notion of a unified goal of history, and a deconstruction of the magnificent Enlightenment swindle of the autonomous, stable, and self-contained ego that is supposed to be able to act independently of its own history, its own indigenist strands of meaning-making and cultural and linguistic situatedness, and free from inscriptions in the discourses of, among others, gender, race, and class."[28]   He continues to highlight how the popularity of postmodern thought has rendered change hesitant and ambiguous, or at the very least reactionary; "the fashionable apostasy of certain postmodern articulations and inflections of critical social theory have noticeably abandoned the language of social change, emancipatory practice, and transformative politics. In fact, many of them carry their intoxication with the ideal of cultural surplus a mordantly pessimistic and distinctively reactionary potential."[29]   In this light, the social emphases these theorists take serves to provide the debate with specific proactive solutions instead of mere ideological, popular reactions. This thrust of providing a sound theoretical foundation that serves education with proactive solutions, is precisely what the Revised Curriculum does not do. Thus the inclusion of theorists whose theories incorporate some premise of theoretical framework is useful to the research as a whole and enables the author to distinguish the confusion and inconsistency found in the curriculum in the absence of clear and concise ideologies and reference to the theories that inform them.

While the differing schools of thought vary greatly, both frameworks have served to inform the curriculum, not only in its aims and objectives, but also in its very philosophical thrust and intention. The irony of the juxtaposition of two vastly different ways of learning have not been lost on the partners of education, specifically the teachers, children and parents, whose opinions have been recorded and analysed in the thesis. The research at hand serves to broaden the reader's concepts of foundational educational theory and enlighten the thesis investigation. The author's

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[28]McLaren, P,                          *Multiculturalism and Postmodern Critique,* (|Hereafter MPC) Subaltern and feminist challenges to the postmodern critique, pp196
[29] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,                          pp196

approach to the analysis of the various theorists is in maintaining a connection with the themes prevalent in their work and in a philosophical understanding of the curriculum. Five themes have been identified with which the author has analysed each theorist: self-hood, freedom, responsibility, authority and ideology of education. A desired outcome of the Literature Review Chapters is to provide the Research Findings Chapters with complete and comprehensive analyses, through employing a theoretical lens, or theoretical lenses, to interpret the empirical data. Providing scope for redeveloping societal and cultural values is the foremost function of the social learning environment. As such, these theorists argue for emancipation through socialisation and a revolution in cultural values that either serve all equally or value all equally. The thrust of the Revised Curriculum incorporating methodologies of a social nature is reflected in the social theorists' agenda. Whatever the reason for the advocation of group-work, be it social learning or the development of learning in the social context, the theorists in this category attempt to create change through socialisation.

Section 1.2

## Erich Fromm

### "To be part of nature, and yet to transcend it"[30]

A critical theorist, Erich Fromm is distinguished from other critical theorists by the psychoanalytical approach he applies in his writings. His central thesis focuses on his belief that the school should serve the child. We adhere, he argues, to popular cultural norms because education, specifically school, in our Western Culture, creates reliance upon 'the system.' He argues that our perception of our freedom, and our misunderstanding of 'truth' limit our possibilities and hamper our lives. The core element and distinguishing feature of the critical theorist, is the emphasis he places on freedom.

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[30] Fromm, E, *Fear of Freedom,* [Hereafter FF], Chapter II, The Emergence of the Individual and the Ambiguity of Freedom, pp27

Fromm believes that our perception of freedom, and fear of *true freedom*, are responsible for our adherence to the popular cultural binds which prevent us from attaining our selfhood. Fromm argues – we feel what we are "supposed to feel."[31] Freedom as it is regarded in its broadest terms is not the true freedom Fromm purports. Fromm claims that in First World Countries where bonds of chains, religious oppression, dictatorship or monarch once held us, binds of societally accepted standards bind us instead. We embrace cultural acceptance and strive to 'become' through links to popular images and ideals. Fromm argues that this *pseudo-freedom* is even more dangerous than that garnered from shedding slavery, repression or oppression. "Our own personal attitudes and our own institutions of conditions …have given a victory to external authority, discipline, uniformity and dependence upon The Leader…the battlefield is within ourselves and our institutions."[32] Fromm has clearly, and concisely illustrated the gravity of his beliefs. The use of the term *battlefield*, signifies the war which Fromm argues must be borne out, if we are to attain truth and freedom. The implication for education rests in Fromm's stress on the critical, individual self emerging outside the parameters of society and social binds; education, he argues, must enable the growth of the true self, embracing of freedom instead of a mere clinging to the status quo which is secure but destroys individuality. In the ideal society, Fromm identifies man as the builder of his world. The irony now is that man serves his world. The world man created should in fact serve man, like the school created for the child should serve the child. The wholeness of the realm of work has become compromised. The world of work created as part of man and by man to provide for him, has transformed into a machine which man must regularly service and serve. The ideals of society to which we so readily conform are centred upon the workplace. Fromm states; "Man has built his world; he has built factories and houses, he produces cars and clothes, he grows grains and fruit. But he has become estranged from the product of his own hands, he is not really the master anymore of the world he has built; on the contrary, this man-made world has become his master, before whom he bows down, whom he tries to placate or to manipulate as

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[31] Fromm, E, FF, Ibid,  Chapter V, Mechanisms of Escape, pp172
[32] Dewey, J in Fromm, E  *Fear of Freedom*, Chapter I, Freedom – A
Psychological Problem? Pp 3

best he can."[33] Institutions are served by the people and work has become a means to an end. The oneness of self has adapted to this meritocratic 'freedom' and in fact strives to attain the ideals of cultural popularity, losing the oneness of self and true freedom. Fromm, like other theorists such as Illich and Freire, does not suggest that man embodies the role of the teacher, bus driver, doctor, mechanic and so on, rather that the pride and spontaneity of gainful employment is achieved when jobs are viewed as a means to an end. The individuality of the self, and the cultivation of self-hood are ongoing and in praxis; the child in education is actively engaged with learning to advance a concept of self-identity, independent of ascription to social binds. It can be argued that the Irish primary school labours beneath such societal ideals – where curricular revisions at this level serve only to ensure lip service to a changing educational climate. The fact that such revisions have not occurred at other educational levels, for example the secondary school, renders thinking skills obsolete when children progress to other education levels.

Critical Thinking; An Act of Freedom?

Critical Thinking, an act of self-hood, is rendered inefficient and unable to exist by our reliance on the status quo. Fromm claims the ability to think critically is dulled by the demands placed upon us by modern society. We become like a "marching soldier on an endless belt. We can act; but the sense of independence, significance, has gone."[34] Fromm's argument is that which makes us fully human in life is disregarding external influences. The subsequent internalising of these influences only creates further insecurities and hostilities. Full humanity in life comes from the living of it, passing through oneness with the world to the independence of self. "The right to express our thoughts means something only if we are able to have thoughts of our own."[35] Fromm's understanding of individual thought can be distinguished from bell hooks' work at this point. Where he places emphasis on individual thought from the outset, she places value on experience as a starting point for change. The curriculum agrees with bell hooks, asking teachers to plan for learning experiences

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[33] Fromm, E, FF, ibid, Modern Man, pp101      Chapter IV, The Two Aspects of Freedom for

[34] Fromm, E, FF, ibid, Modern Man, pp114      Chapter IV, The Two Aspects of Freedom for

[35] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,      Chapter VII, Freedom and Democracy, pp207

using the child's context as the staring point. Fromm's point of view allows for original thought and not for socially ascribed thought perceived as original. "The decisive point," for Fromm, "is not what is thought but how it is thought."[36] John Locke argues that "the floating of other men's opinions in our brains makes us not one jot more knowing...(we must)...employ our own reason to understand those truths."[37] Although both theorists inhabit very different philosophical backgrounds, they do share in common one belief. Originality of thought for Fromm is a necessity in attaining the oneness of self, and individual freedom. To Locke, originality of thought is sought and attained through reason, to be a thinker, and to be knowledgeable as an individual. The socio-political theorist would disagree with Fromm, regarding societal mores, regardless of the theories that inform them, as the core of self-development and the notion of autonomy. Fromm's freedom and democracy of the ideal life and world reflect a right to express our own, individual thoughts. The superimposed thoughts of the traditional educational system would not prevail. "...The emphasis on knowledge of facts ...or information. The pathetic superstition prevails that by knowing more and more facts one arrives at knowledge of reality."[38] The concept of Positive Freedom as understood by Fromm is his ideal of living within the world as a free being, acting spontaneously and of our own free will, creating a free world. "Positive Freedom consists in the spontaneous activity of the total, integrated personality."[39] Positive freedom is similar but not the same as self-actualization, individuation and problem-posing education as coined by other theorists. It implies the cultivation of learning and self-hood through a pursuit of truth, outside the binds of societal norms and accepted standards of living, to create equality and personal freedom. Where the curriculum advocates the cultivation of individual thinkers, it does so through reference to social learning scenarios. Fromm believes that the social learning setting cannot allow for positive freedom; thus the ideal of creating an individual thinker as indicated in the curriculum, finds itself in a theoretical debate with the ideologies of Erich Fromm.

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[36]Fromm, E, FF, ibid,        Chapter V, Mechanisms of Escape, pp168

[37] Locke, J in Burke, A        Lecture Series, St Patrick's College, 2001

[38] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,        Chapter VII, Freedom and Democracy, I, The Illusion of Individuality, pp213

[39] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,        Chapter VII, Freedom and Democracy, pp222

Avoiding Aloneness

An image of the self-hood Fromm deems ideal should already have become evident. His emphasis is placed upon truth and freedom. In order to become truly free, we must overcome the societal "chains that bind man,"[40] we must come to know and understand of our own accord and using our own questions. The distinction between Fromm and other theorists, who share the quest for individuality, or individuation, self-hood or self-actualization is this; Fromm is motivated by his pursuit of freedom, true freedom, and therein truth. Other theorists are motivated by the desire to attain individual thought for a plethora of alternative reasons. bell hooks seeks self-actualization for the individual self to know the individual self, as a woman, or ethnic diversity distinct from the dominant culture. McLaren seeks self-hood for political advancement of the under-privileged in society, who are restrained beneath the dominant culture. Freire is similar to McLaren, he revolutionized education methodology in his attempt to empower the Brazilian people he worked with. Illich resembles Fromm in his motivation for individuality. Individuality to Illich, allows for the dawning of our own reality. Illich seeks a revolution of the entire societal system – education; medicine; employment; economics; life. He seeks individual freedom and individual truth where all members of society – at each layer – embark on their journey of discovery. As the dominant culture continues to dominate, Illich sees us trapped beneath the binds of the status quo, and seeks a reformation of life for all. The crux of Fromm's hypothesis of individuality is outlined below. Fromm makes many references to our desire to avoid aloneness. The avoidance of aloneness – the fear of being alone in the world – leads to our search for security, which Fromm separates into distinct categories. He argues that we fear aloneness and seek measures to surround ourselves with others. These measures involve the differing and accepted societal values which dictate how we live our lives. He identifies Static Adaptation and Dynamic Adaptation as two drives to avoid aloneness. For some, static adaptation allows for adaptation to patterns through embracing new habits without altering their character. Dynamic adaptation, by contrast, creates and arouses new drives and new anxieties as the character structure changes to adapt to the new life

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[40]Rousseau, in Burke, A                         Lecture Series, St Patrick's, 2001

patterns presented, "The very essence of the human mode and the practice of life: the need to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness."[41]

Individuation

The need to avoid aloneness is not the only theory Fromm has presented us with. He uses the term *Individuation* to define his understanding of the self in its most whole and full form. Fromm explains the term Individuation as oneness with the world. "Emerging from a state of oneness with the natural world to an awareness of himself as an entity separate from surrounding nature and men."[42] This term is also used by McLaren to describe the same process of cultivating individuality. As the journey evolves the individual maintains integrity of self, has grown alone and is in a position to seek security with the world in new and different ways. The balance of this freedom with the community – with nature yet separate from it, is the formation of the *spontaneous* Individuation process. Fromm justifies this through the argument that thinking and reasoning are core aspects of humanity. These fundamental aspects distinguish the species from others. We are part of nature – yet we transcend it. The spontaneous relationship of man and nature is a relationship "that connects the individual with the world without eliminating his individuality."[43] In contrast to avoiding aloneness, and reacting to this fear through static or dynamic adaptation, individuation is the whole self responding and pro-acting to life. Interestingly, Fromm does not suggest that secure binds to the world must be forfeited, rather that such secure binds to the world are created after the process of individuation. First, we become whole, we then set about creating security in our worlds.

Submission

Fromm adds another dimension to the debate, with his theory of *submission*. "Perhaps the most important aspect and devastating instance of this spirit of instrumentality and alienation is the individual's relationship to his own self."[44]

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[41] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,                          Chapter 1, Freedom – A Psychological
Problem? Pp18
[42] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,                          Chapter II, The Emergence of the
Individual and the Ambiguity of Freedom, pp19
[43] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,                          Chapter II, The Emergence of the
Individual and the Ambiguity of Freedom, pp24
[44] Hegel and Marx, in Fromm, E, FF, ibid,       Chapter IV, The Two Aspects of
Freedom for Modern Man, pp103

Fromm argues that the submission of the self to accepted norms for the creation of security does exactly the opposite of what it intends. Ties to the world amplify and self-strength diminishes because of these bonds. Insecurity and hostility develop where the strength of self existed, the character is aware of the loss. In attempting to allay our fears of being different and conforming to the expectation of others, we neglect the expectations of ourselves. "The result of submission is the very opposite of what it was to be: submission increases the child's insecurity and at the same time increases hostility."[45] Adaptation to the norms of society, and submission to the norms of society, have resulted in what Fromm terms our *Mechanisms of Escape*. Figures of authority and symbols of authority are all aspects of the unfulfilled and unrealised individual – the unwhole character.


Mechanisms of Escape

The authority figure to Fromm is an insecure figure. The individual self has been discarded to 'become powerful.' *Sadism* has allowed for the loss of the critical self, to protect against one's own inferiority, through focusing upon others. *Masochism* allows one to 'get rid' of the burden of one's freedom in a bid to forget one's self. Suffering is not the aim but the means of shunning freedom. In order to feel we are full and real, we encroach upon the wholeness of others and ourselves. Fromm has a specific term for the union of two people. *Symbosis* – the destruction and subsequent loss of selfhood he believes occurs through the union of two people. As these two depend on one another, they oscillate between sadistic and masochistic tendencies. *Sado-Maschism*, to conclude, is the loss of the oneness of self and freedom through suffering beneath the label of love. The concept of *Automaton Conformity* refers to one who 'becomes' like all others. Fromm calls the thoughts and ponderings and reflections of this person pseudo thoughts and pseudo opinions – where these thoughts are in fact conformity to the established cultural ideals. He refers to the concept of Automaton Conformity as "harmonizing one's own wishes with an existing reality."[46] The insecure self seeks popularity and a sense of belonging through conforming to the status quo. Thus concludes Fromm's theories which affect this thesis. Although many concepts have a very limited bearing upon the education thesis under analysis, it

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[45] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,               Chapter II, The Emergence of the Individual and
the Ambiguity of Freedom, pp24
[46] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,               Chapter V, Mechanisms of Escape, pp172

is essential to contextualise Fromm's theories as distinct from one another. Fromm's resolute beliefs on the nature of individual freedom allow no space for traditional ways of life. In education, this means the child can only become an individual, a psychologically whole thinker, if school serves the child instead of school serving preordained societal binds determined by dominant cultures. The Primary School Curriculum 1999 makes specific reference to life after education and the skills necessary to community, society and the workplace. The difficulty emerges where the creation of the individual self according to Fromm, cannot emerge in a social context. Freedom, of self and of thought, is the spine of Fromm's thesis. Without freedom, we endanger our individuality and our truth. Fromm's extreme theories highlight his psychoanalytical perspective on life and his conviction of reality.

<div align="center">Authority and Responsibility</div>

According to Fromm, "the lust for power is not rooted in strength but in weakness. It is the expression of the inability of the individual self to stand alone and live."[47] Feelings of humility or hatred are not cultivated if the traditional 'superior' is admired. Admiration thereby becomes an excuse for allowing external authority in life. Traditional authority figures have been replaced with popular ideas and figures. Through internalisation of the external authority, we transform authority into duty and conscience. We act according to the request of duty, or as conscience has dictated. According to Fromm, we believe we act under the guise of our freedom and choices, but in fact are succumbing to some or other form of authority. The response to social demands and norms considered 'ethical' have created a far more dangerous authority to selfhood and freedom of this self. "Orders issued by man's conscience are ultimately not governed by demands of the individual self but by social demands which have assumed the dignity of ethical norms."[48] This anonymous and invisible authority subtly suggests how we should act and who we should be. The concept of the *Magic Helper* is Fromm's theory of 'the other' who will appear and care for the seeker of the Magic Helper. This person will guide and choose for the seeker, removing individual responsibility for own choices and actions. Ever present in the living classroom, the Magic Helper extends to all aspects of the school and school

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[47] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,                  pp139
[48] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,                  pp144

life. The schoolyard is one such domain, where the standardisation of yard duty means children are arguably less able to cope with problems encountered during playtime. The teacher swoops in, in the role of the Magic Helper – an external authority ready to make decisions on the child's behalf. Where children may learn from the modelling process, they may not learn to solve their own problems by themselves.

Destructiveness is a consequence of the unlived life, according to Fromm. This destructiveness he refers to can be both natural and reactive to the unlived life.[49] He also refers to *Irrational Destructiveness* where a depth of destructive tendencies develops. The measures of Irrational Destructive tendencies found in this hypothetical person reflect the amount that life has been curtailed. Thus to Fromm, authority may stem from a weakness for power – an admiration which allows others to make our choices for us. In schools, through the child's willingness to have an admired other make decisions on his/her behalf, we greatly disservice our future generations. We remove their ability to create their own thinking space, and subsequently encourage their submission to standard norms; combining to create ultimately compromised people.

## Conclusion

Fromm's journey has allowed access to concepts of compromised individuality, pseudo freedom to the spontaneous existence and the democratic, free life. He has identified a 'modern, free' world still burdened beneath the struggles to overcome the loss of self, experienced when the self is threatened or compromised. Hostilities and insecurities abound as true freedom and the oneness of self are lost and confused in the search for the subtle authority of popular culture. "Only if man masters society and subordinates the economic machine to the purposes of human happiness, and only if he actively participates in the societal process, can he overcome what now drives him to despair – his aloneness and his feelings of powerlessness."[50] Fromm concludes with an affirmation; "Faith in life, in truth and in freedom as an active and

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[49] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,                              pp158
[50] Fromm, E, FF,                               Chapter VII, Freedom and Democracy, pp238

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spontaneous realization of the spontaneous self."[51] This educational theorist has both identified absences in modern theoretical thought, and theorised as to why such absences of self exist. He has also identified solutions – alternative models of education which allow learners to become spontaneous and free; to Fromm this is truth.

Section 1.3

## bell hooks

## "Education as the Practice of Freedom"[52]

The critical educational theorist bell hooks brings a distinctive voice to education. From a feminist perspective, and as a black woman, she has a unique understanding of education which does not assume comparison with the other theorists studied. Her ideologies and theories of education will be analysed under the outlined themes and her contribution to education will be examined in the following review.

## Ideology and Self-hood

A concept of self-actualization

bell hooks' works are personal, experiential and introspective. She illustrates her journey towards educational theory through this experience. She expresses how her own schooling taught her to "learn that obedience, and not a zealous will to learn, was what was expected."[53] The traditional valuation of quietly concentrating children, assimilating facts for regurgitation characterised her educational experiences from an early age. Thus her educational theory emerged. bell hooks bases her central thesis on the concept of *self-actualization*. It is within this concept that we can access her ideal education system. The theory of self-actualization is based upon her belief that the full, holistic development of the individual self is a prerequisite to education itself. Within this concept we are enabled to view her perception and measure of what education is and should be. If education is about the development of the self and of

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[51] Fromm, E, FF, ibid,                    pp238
[52] bell hooks,                    *Teaching to Transgress,* [Hereafter TT] Chapter 14,
Ecstasy, Teaching and Learning Without Limits, pp207
[53] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    Introduction, pp3

self-actualization; education is then centred upon the pursuit of one's own interests and passions. Her basis of the concept of individualisation upon contextual realities is reflected in the Revised Curriculum; in the contextual learning environment it advocates. Self-actualization cannot occur for teacher or student otherwise. Self-actualization allows the individual to become a critical thinker – an independent, pondering and reflective person in one's own right. She believes there is a "serious crisis in education...(where) educators are compelled to confront biases that have shaped teaching practices."[54] In her work *Teaching to Transgress* bell hooks collects together her objectives in her ideal education system. She emphasises that the "pleasure of teaching is an act of resistance countering the overwhelming boredom, disinterest and apathy that so often characterises the way professionals and students feel about teaching and learning, about the classroom experience."[55] The concept of the ideology of education encompasses the active, reflective teacher who engages with a concept of critical thought in order to model and cultivate critical thought in their students. This is mirrored in the curriculum where learning experiences centred upon the guided-discovery methodologies are advocated.

The concept of the flexible classroom is a hub of bell hook's work. Her belief that agendas cannot be set, they have to "be flexible, to allow for spontaneous shifts in direction."[56] She concurs with many other educational theorists, such as Freire and Illich, that learning can only be 'owned' when the learner's experience is considered and developed, where the learner's questions guide the discussion and debate. "Students had to be seen in their particularity as individuals...and interacted with according to their needs."[57] Curriculum and agenda, set externally to the needs, motivations and learning requirements of the student and teacher, do not form part of hooks' hypothesis for education. The responsibility of the learner for their learning; an active seeking of understanding in context and knowing as a result of questioning, forms a central educational ideology. bell hooks' pedagogy "insists that everyone's presence is acknowledged."[58] The individual in the classroom ought to be recognized as different, and removed from the glut of the group or the social cluster. She

[54] bell hooks, TT,                Chapter 1, Engaged pedagogy, pp12
[55] bell hooks, TT,                Introduction, pp10
[56] bell hooks, TT, ibid,          pp7
[57] bell hooks, TT, ibid,          pp7
[58] bell hooks, TT, ibid,          pp8

identifies the pedagogical practices necessary in her active classroom ideal; "the professor must genuinely value everyone's presence,"[59] the learner must feel part of the learning circle and must feel that their absence would be noted and therefore a sense of a true self can emerge through the respect and esteem offered to them as individuals. In addition to this, she states; "there must be ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic,"[60] whereby each and every experience brings its own worth and importance. "Contributions are resources…to create an open learning community,"[61] in which the direction of learning is dictated by the needs and concepts of the entire class and learning can thus focus upon the construction of theory and discourse in context and meeting real experiences and needs.

The SPHE curriculum (Social, Personal, Health Education), new to the Primary School Curriculum, highlights the significance of the above theories as advantageous and a hub of the living classroom. She continues, "there has to be some deconstruction of the traditional notion that only the professor is responsible for classroom dynamics."[62] The teacher is not alone in the education of the student. Students take an active and responsible role in education, initiating discourse and discussion, owning their experiences and the learning produced. "Excitement is generated through collective effort."[63] The teacher is not the sole 'entertainer' in the class situation. The wonder and joy partaken in, is also the responsibility of the learner who brings their own vibrancy and vigour to the learning situation. Significantly for this thesis, hooks has identified an important aspect of modern education – the teacher as *entertainer*. As education and schooling has spanned history, and the traditionalist mode of strict, rote learning with quietly seated children, has evolved into active and dynamic education, the teacher's position has altered to incorporate the entertainer, the amuser, the performer, who must bridge curriculum or objective with keeping the student motivated and amused. Motivation is thus portrayed as external; ownership for learning is the teacher's responsibility. Teachers have lost traditional control and instead have gained the role of presenter who is still

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[59] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    pp8
[60] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    pp8
[61] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    pp8
[62] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    pp8
[63] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    pp8

perceived to be as responsible for the student's learning as he or she was in the past. hooks takes issue with this pseudo responsibility and the concept of collaboration is central to her ideology of education. She believes this responsibility is lacking because it does not allow for self-actualization of the learner; rather, the learner has passed responsibility for his/her learning onto the teacher. Thus collaboration between teachers and students emerges as central to both the success of the learning process and responsibility for this learning. Arguably, due to mitigating societal influences and indicated in the research, the children of today expect a measure of the entertainer in their teachers, as indicated in the research findings. Where lip service to responsibility is rendered part of the children's everyday classroom experiences, teachers have never before been so accountable in education – Whole School Evaluation reports alone substantiating this claim. Teachers are faced with published accounts of their work in a system that does not provide them with a literature review to contextualise their work. The apparent danger associated with this system sees a resemblance of the Payment-by-Results system of the past. This system saw teachers earn more based upon the results of inspections. As such, the children considered 'bright' were sought after in classrooms, to ensure a fair wage. Those children considered less bright or with learning difficulties were not encouraged to attend schools because they preformed less well for the inspector. The individuality of the children's learning styles, needs and abilities is not considered where national comparisons are made. The publishing of WSE reports skirts the payment-by-results downfall, making the system dependent on public perception regardless of the abilities of the children in any given school, especially where reference to standardised results is made. During the WSE process, parents receive a detailed meeting forum with the inspector conducting the WSE. To date, several instances of recommendations made, as outlined by teachers in the research findings, resulted directly from these cigire-parent meetings without recourse to policy, personal relationships, children's potential etc. bell hooks raises interesting points regarding responsibility and the notion of the entertainer in an educational system where no clear theoretical framework allows teachers to grapple with the ideologies prevalent to their careers and contained in published reports.

bell hooks places great significance on the need for wholeness of the teacher, "the union of mind, body and spirit."[64] She alludes to the classroom as a "mini-kingdom"[65] where authority and power have been exercised. The self-actualized teacher supports a classroom of excitement and learning nurtured firstly through themselves. This classroom "allows students to assume responsibility for their choices."[66] This learning environment is not simply for the learner but it is also a "place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process."[67] hooks sees a Revolution of Values[68] and Embracing Change[69] as necessities on the path to revolutionizing educational practices. Teachers must learn to 'become,' must embark on the journey of self-actualization in order to create self-actualization in their classroom. This is a mutual, collaborative process for both aspects of the classroom populous to grow. "Authentic help means that all who are involved help each other mutually, growing together in the common effort to understand the reality which they seek to transform."[70] In conclusion, bell hooks believes that the self-actualization of the teacher will glow from the teacher. She cites the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh, "when a sage is there you sit near him, you feel light, you feel peace."[71] This concept distinguishes bell hooks from other theorists and sets her apart in the field of education. Her theory on the teachers' selfhood allows for a refreshing take on education theory; she is among the first to propose the necessity of a theoretical guide for teacher development and fulfilment with a view to humanising all people.

bell hooks has coined specific theoretical terms to describe ideas within her work. One such concept is *Engaged Pedagogy*. To hooks, the concept of the Engaged Pedagogy is holistic and progressive. She distinguishes it from the *Critical Pedagogy*

[64] bell hooks, TT,                     Chapter 1, Engaged pedagogy, pp14
[65] bell hooks, TT, ibid,               pp17
[66] bell hooks, TT, ibid,               pp19
[67] bell hooks, TT, ibid,               pp21
[68] bell hooks, TT,                     Chapter 2, A Revolution of Values, The Promise of
Multicultural Change, pp23
[69] bell hooks, TT,                     Chapter 3, Embracing Change, Teaching in a
Multicultural World, pp35
[70] bell hooks, TT,                     Chapter 4, Paulo Freire, pp54
[71] Thcih Nhat Hanh in bell hooks, TT, ibid,   pp56

through her emphasis on "well-being."[72] "Teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students."[73] Her concept of the Engaged Pedagogy comes from her studies of the work of Paulo Freire. The praxis is an *informed action*. To bell hooks it is "action and reflection on the world in order to change it."[74] She again refers to the philosophies of Thich Nhat Hanh, where one should "focus on practice in conjunction with contemplation."[75] It is this thesis of engagement which distinguishes hooks from other critical theorists, she does not simply assume that self-hood will emerge from thinking critically, rather that it can be cultivated through engagement of teacher and student, carving meaning in their own social setting for their own individual needs, together. The concept of self-actualization is interesting in the context of this research. The development of the critical self is not a concern of the curriculum — where the development of the critical child is. However, bell hooks argues that self hood cannot emerge or be cultivated without an engaged praxis approach of self-actualization. The child can never become fully self-actualized without the teacher first modelling this as a fully self-actualized person himself or herself. In addition to this, teachers felt they had little to do with curricular revisions (See Chapter 4). This means the creation of the curriculum was not necessarily a process of engaged pedagogy for teachers. Without a theoretical lens to view the curriculum, the concept of self-actualization comes into question. Does the curriculum intend to create individuals or is it merely an ambiguous hope aimed at creating change? hooks claims change cannot be created without the concept of Engaged Pedagogy.

## Freedom and Authority

Similar to other critical educational theorists such as Fromm and McLaren, bell hooks differentiates education as the practice of freedom from education that reinforces domination. The freedom to grow and develop as a critical, educational individual thinker cannot flourish if education serves the status quo. Self-actualization is dependent upon education as the practice of freedom, and education as the practice of

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[72] bell hooks, TT,      Chapter 1, Engaged pedagogy, pp15
[73] bell hooks, TT, ibid,    pp15
[74] bell hooks, TT, ibid,    pp14
[75] Thich Nhat Hanh in Bell Hooks, TT, ibid, Chapter 1, Engaged pedagogy, pp14

freedom is dependent upon self-actualization. By contrast, authority in its traditional sense is viewed by bell hooks as the re-hashing of the constrictive, limiting status quo. Her work does not specifically reference the authority of an ideal, self-actualised educational culture, so one must assume authority is earned through practice and shared respect, as mirrored in other critical theorists' works. Her specific belief concerning the relevance of theory and theorising – a means of recording experience – also lends itself to procuring authority. (Though not, as she states, in the meritocratic sense). Here, she is similar to Peter McLaren, where distinct significance is placed upon theory as a necessity to inform developments in education. Both believe that it is through the theorizing of experience, that we attain a deeper understanding and record of progress and advancement in education. Similarly, both pursue equality, although for difference reasons. bell hooks seeks equality for women, and peoples of ethnic diversity from the traditionally dominant in society. McLaren seeks equality for the politically inconsequential in a given society. This concept of theorizing education is significant to this research. As previously stated, the curriculum is without a Literature Review and as such no framework for contextualising the curriculum is available. Education at primary level is blindly and ambiguously hopeful of effecting change without referencing why certain changes are to be made, and without following this through at post-primary level.

The Classroom as a Prison

"The university and the classroom begin to feel more like a prison, a place of punishment and confinement rather than a place of promise and possibility."[76] bell hooks recognised the claustrophobic confines of her educational experience. Her background and understanding of racial inequalities allowed her to access education as limiting and to know it as a catalyst which fortifies dominant culture ideals. The relevance of her work to those of other backgrounds and contexts lies in her awareness of the persuasiveness of the dominant culture, and the subsequent impact it has on all cultures. Ireland, as a nation emerging from historical prejudices also struggles beneath the dominant culture antithesis. Finding our identity as a first world nation results in our embracing certain elements of society's cultural habits. The impact of her work on the Irish national school is in becoming self-actualized – a

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[76] bell hooks, TT,                    Introduction, pp4

thinker, owning one's own actions and thoughts and modelling this to the nation's children. Thus her theories are prevalent in an Irish curriculum, where the development of each individual child is emphasised, and where the values of the Dominant Culture are mirrored through the objectives and methodologies of a curriculum, where discrepancies exist in the multi-faceted requirements of the curriculum and where the post-primary school offers a very different view of what education is.

bell hooks says she had a drive "to become a critical thinker."[77] Like Freire, she depicts traditional education as "based on the assumption that memorizing information and regurgitating it represented gaining knowledge that could be deposited, stored and used at a later date."[78] For bell hooks, boredom was ever present and not in the context of experience. "The classroom should be an exciting place, never boring...this excitement could co-exist with and even stimulate serious intellectual and/or academic engagement."[79] Despite resistance encountered, she believes we can "think and rethink...know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable."[80] Teaching is considered "a performative act...yet a catalyst that can encourage everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning."[81] The juxtaposition portrays bell hooks' view that education is a balancing act whose ultimate aim is to create for the learner an education that is "the practice of freedom."[82] Her theories on thinking link with those of the engaged pedagogy; thinking together, though not the same thoughts, discussing together, voicing differences and varying experiences, and allowing differences to inform who we are. This time for professional dialogue amongst teachers is controversial. Afforded in the past through in-service and staff-meetings, provision for professional dialogue time is bleak in 2007/2008, with ever-reduced allotments of time afforded to understanding the current educational situation without a theoretical framework.

[77] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    pp5
[78] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    pp5
[79] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    pp7
[80] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    pp12
[81] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    pp11
[82] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                    pp11

Theory as a Libratory Practice

"Children make the best theorists, since they have not yet been educated into accepting our routine social practices as "natural," and so insist on posing to those practices the most embarrassingly general and fundamental questions, regarding them in a wondering estrangement which we adults have long forgotten."[83] The challenge proposed by dominant culture is an issue for bell hooks, similar to other critical educational theorists. In her work, she refers to theory in education. Citing Childers and hooks' *A conversation about Race and Class*: "A certain kind of theoretical performance which only a small cadre of people can possibly understand"[84] has come to be seen as representative of any production of critical thought that will be given recognition within many academic circles as theory."[85] This 'theory,' she claims, does not exist in " 'lived' realities beyond the classroom."[86] hooks defends theory as a prerequisite to organised revolution and change – when theories form the foundations of transformation. As distinct from this belief, McLaren sees individual, critical thought as the cornerstone of selfhood. Self hood, for him, could not stem from organised acceptance of a theory, though individuation can stem from the social possibilities of a theory, and theory is informed by the experiences of the individual. To hooks, theory informs a group in need of 'equality' – African-Americans or feminists – of how to attain this equality. Her concept of theory is relative and contextual, attached to everyday experiences and needs. In reference to a feminist struggle, she states, "if we create feminist theory, feminist movements that address this pain, we will have no difficulty building a mass-based feminist resistance struggle."[87] Creating equality through differentiation has been a buzz-jargon term in education prior to the Revised Curriculum. Financial resources have been extended to many educational spheres to allow for special needs integration and socio-economic equality. hooks argues for the societal redevelopment of values to incorporate equality- redefining social practices. Similar to Bourdieu, she argues for social change to create equality. However, Bourdieu differs in this instance where he argues that dominant social values are placed upon varying vested interests (gender, race, special needs) that ask minority groups to adhere to dominant values instead of

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[83] Eagleton, T in bell hooks, TT,    Chapter 5, Theory as Liberatory Practice, pp59
[84] bell hooks, TT, ibid,    pp64
[85] bell hooks and Childers, TT, ibid,    pp64
[86] bell hooks, TT, ibid,    pp65
[87] bell hooks, TT, ibid,    Chapter 5, Theory as Liberatory Practice, pp75

celebrating their own values and cultural uniqueness. Bourdieu argues that the sheer acknowledgement that these minority groups need financial aid legitimises inequalities.

Essentialism and Experience

bell hooks' writings on experience highlight her beliefs on the authority of experience. The teacher, as "privileged transmitter of knowledge"[88] earns authority beyond the experience of the student. She argues that the individual experiences of others should be valued "to help create a learning process in the classroom that engages everyone."[89] Pedagogical practices must be revised and altered frequently to ensure each experience is heard and valued. She demonstrates how students' experiences can link "abstract constructs to concrete reality"[90] – critical thinking of the self begins with the self. Giroux states, "the notion of experience has to be situated within a theory of learning…we can critically engage that experience and we can move beyond it."[91] hooks deepens the concept of ownership in experience – the right to speak about experience. She asks the question "does experience of oppression confer jurisdiction over the right to speak about that oppression?"[92] She concurs with the theory of Fuss, as she answers her own question, "I believe that combining the analytical and experiential is a richer way of knowing."[93] What hooks refers to, through her perusal of feminist writing, as the *Authority of Experience*, is her conviction that experiences are understood in distinct ways. Individuals "cannot know these realities (experiences) but they can know them differently."[94] *Authority of Experience* means understanding an experience in ways which others cannot understand, because they have not had the same experiences. An experience creates an individual mode of knowing, distinct and lucid. In her reference to a 'white woman professor,' bell hooks affirms, "I sincerely believe that I would have learned even more from a progressive black professor, because this individual would have brought to the class that unique mixture of experiential and analytical ways of

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[88] bell hooks, TT, ibid,  Chapter 6, Essentialism and Experience, pp85
[89] bell hooks, TT, ibid,  pp86
[90] bell hooks, TT, ibid,  pp86
[91] bell hooks, TT, ibid,  pp88
[92] bell hooks, TT, ibid,  pp89
[93] bell hooks, TT, ibid,  pp89
[94] bell hooks, TT, ibid,  pp90

knowing – that is, a privileged standpoint."[95]   She concludes "this privileged standpoint does not emerge form the 'Authority of Experience' but rather from the *'Passion of Experience,'* the passion of remembrance."[96]

Conclusion

The combination of "theory and practice, in order to affirm and demonstrate pedagogical practices"[97] is necessary for educational advancement and revolution. hooks engaged in discussion with a colleague and philosopher friend of hers – Ron Scapp – to urge forward the periphery of their understandings of teaching, in an attempt to 'build a teaching community.' She eludes to the "liberating agent"[98] that is language, which we can use to counter the *Dominant Culture* ideals and the traditional teaching mode.   bell hooks' work reflects her dedication to racial and feminist struggles.   Through education and her love for learning, her theories of *Self-Actualization* and the *Passion of Experience* emerge.   "The purpose of education is to show students how to define themselves, 'authentically and spontaneously in relation' to the world."[99]   Teachers can be at their best, only if they themselves are self-actualized.  This concept is not an active aspect of education in an Irish context, and not part of the *Revised Curriculum,* however it *is* part of a theory of modernisation proposed by hooks.  When the studies conducted by the Inspectorate (reviewed in Chapter 5) found that a measure of responsibility of children for their own work was desirable, the concept of self-actualization becomes prevalent; in order to own one's own ideas and thinking, one must have a concept of oneself. This is the thesis hooks proposes; self-hood through an engaged pedagogy.  "The classroom is one of mutual engagement,"[100] she continues to illustrate how learning for and of the self can only occur if we are all responsible for our individual learning.  Teachers too enjoy the everyday journeys in the classroom.  All parties are responsible for themselves in the

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[95] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                        pp90
[96] bell hooks, TT, ibid,                        pp90
[97] Giroux and McLaren in Bell Hooks, TT,  Chapter 10, Building a Teaching Community, A Dialogue, pp129
[98] bell hooks, TT,                              Chapter 11, Language, Teaching New Worlds/ New Words, pp175
[99] bell hooks, TT,                              Chapter 13, Eros, Eroticism, and the Pedagogical Process, pp199
[100] bell hooks, TT,                             Chapter 14, Ecstasy, Teaching and Learning without Limits, pp204

learning environment. All parties grow through the process of active education and are challenged by it. "If classes become so full that it is impossible to know students' names, to spend quality time with each of them, then the effort to build a learning community fails."[101] She strongly advocates the hypothesis that manageable class groups who can connect with the teacher, are the only way forward in establishing a teaching community. This is reiterated in the desires of teachers in Chapter 4, where teachers make known their desires for reduced class sizes. Illich, by contrast, disagrees with the concept, advocating financial recognition for teachers (presumably at third level) who can attract large numbers of students to their learning centres and discussions. Thus the popular educator is rewarded. hooks considers language to be the catalyst of change, where each and every experience can be shared and heard. Only through language, can the individual passion of experience be articulated and the theories of a struggle be established. Then the ideals of a culture can be transcended. bell hooks has contributed to education in many ways. Her theories on 'theory' itself, feminism, equality and self-actualization have a strong connection to the Irish curriculum. We have developed an ideal modus operandi within the classroom that values the individuality of learner, albeit in a social setting, at odds with theories on Individuation or Self-Actualization held by many critical educational theorists. We seek to theorise the modern facets purported in the Revised Curriculum to make them accessible and available to the primary education community. She concludes, "when passion of experience informs our theories, to enable us to move against constraints together, when we own our own learning and teaching, when we work together to know our own realities and become self-actualized individuals, then we can build a teaching community, we can teach and learn without limitations."[102]

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[101] bell hooks,                        *Teaching to Transgress*, Chapter 14, Ecstasy, Teaching and Learning without Limits, pp204
[102] bell hooks, TT, ibid,          pp204

Section 1.4

## Paulo Freire

### "Education as the practice of freedom"[103]

Freire brought a new term to the critical educational debate in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. As an educational theorist he is a savage critic of oppression which he sees as an attempt by the dominant elite to still the dissenting undercurrents in an oppressed society or culture. This oppression stems from the rehashing and recycling of the limitations we accept as reality – the narrowing of our horizons to ensure the various strata of social cultures remain at their current levels. Moving beyond one's 'place in society' is not a possibility when we are educated to remain at our given place. As we accept the status quo as the norm and reality, we loose the reality of ourselves and the possibility of reshaping it. The cycle spirals on, repeating this reality where the injustices of any culture are allowed to impinge upon that culture. There is no scope for critical thinking or self-awareness – life is simply accepted as it is presented, because we are schooled to accept it thus. Freire argues that the banking system at work in our educational systems and institutions is to blame for this oppression. The banking system indoctrinates people into accepting narrowed horizons as reality. "Knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing."[104] Students, the "containers...receptacles" are to be "filled by the teacher."[105] Education is not about the individual in this context, but rather it is about churning-out accepted norms and patterns of reality. In opposition to this Freire proposes the problem-posing model of education as a response to the negative banking system of education. Where the banking system exists as a spiralling structure, intensifying oppression upon each generation as it acts, the problem-posing model attempts to lift this oppression from us. Through the "process of becoming"[106] we are equipped to experience life "through the restless, patient, continuing, hopeful enquiry human beings pursue in the

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[103] Freire, P,            *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, [Hereafter PO], Chapter 2,
pp62
[104] Freire, P, PO, ibid,      pp53
[105] Freire, P, PO, ibid,      pp53
[106] Freire, P, PO, ibid,      pp53

world, with the world and with each other."[107] As critical beings, we are enabled to see for ourselves and ask our own questions of the world, not merely accept the answers offered of the questions posed by others. Freire's contribution to education is complex and vast, but it is the specifics of his banking model of education and his problem-posing model of education which concerns us in this thesis. The curriculum advocates the concepts of problem-posing education through referencing the various thinking skills and guided-discovery methodologies outlined therein. This form of education parallels that which Freire has proposed. In addition to this, where no theorists were directly referenced, Freire has been actively engaged with in core philosophy courses in the Irish colleges of education. Thus the inclusion of Freire in this research; his relevance is without question.

## Freedom and Responsibility

The issue of freedom is a central theme in Freire's theories - seeing the world as one layered with strata dictated by the dominant elite. Within this structure, oppression is commonplace as the freedom of individuality which each person should have, has been removed. For Freire, education has become the chief means by which freedom can be reclaimed. The banking system where "the student records, memorizes, and repeats…without perceiving"[108] ensures that the cultural strata remain intact. There is no freedom in education, argues Freire, where "knowledge is a gift."[109] Progression and transcendence beyond one's cultural or social strata is rare. In contrast to the banking system, Freire's concept of *Liberation Education* proposes an alternative. Beginning with the teacher-student contradiction, Freire proposes that education would benefit from "reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students."[110] Finding its place alongside later critical educational theorists who argue the same logic, Freire is driven by the 'injustices' he witnessed in Brazil and also his belief that education without revolution serves such injustices. Freedom does not have a place in a system that conserves the status quo and prevents any given individual form stretching beyond their reality. Parallel to Freire's beliefs regarding freedom, he sees a responsibility within us to attain our

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[107] Freire, P, PO, ibid,          pp53
[108] Freire, P, PO, ibid,          pp52
[109] Freire, P, PO, ibid,          pp53
[110] Freire, P, PO, ibid,          pp53

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personal freedom. The banking system serves to prevent the student asking his or her own questions and the teacher from thinking beyond presented curricula. Freedom is therefore a rarity of attainment and arguably, once the spiral is spinning, almost unattainable. Thus Freire sees the revolution of the education system as a necessary step in the progression of our awareness and acceptance of our own freedom. There exists a danger akin to those problems identified by other educational theorists. This danger lies in the dominance of certain cultural values which replace others in the name of liberatory education. In other words, where the curriculum proposed to create change – akin to liberatory education – it may in fact be replacing one set of values with another, and thereby be a renewal of a banking system where the participants believe they are free. Liberatory education must truly see educators and students in educational praxis. As students and educators, Freire argues we have a responsibility to revolutionize education, to enable students to ask their own questions, to transcend the boundaries that enclose them and their freedom. To transcend "the fragmented view of reality deposited in them."[111] We also have a responsibility to enable teachers to decide their own professional direction – to engage with their own freedom as a means to becoming whole in their own right. Freire quotes Simone de Beauvoir, "the interests of the oppressors lie in 'changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them.'"[112] It is our responsibility in education to enable us to think for ourselves, therefore raising any given groups' awareness of themselves as individual, independent, free or oppressed. It is our responsibility in education to aid an individual in accessing his or her perceptions of reality, of the self and above all else, freedom.

## Educational Ideology and Self-Hood

It is within this concept of freedom of oneself and responsibility to oneself that Freire's theories of self-hood emerge. The solution to the problems and injustices he sees acting in our world, is not to "integrate them (the oppressed) into the structure of oppression, but to transform the structure so that they can become beings for themselves."[113] The quest for humanity, for originality and for individuality is to

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[111] Freire, P, PO, ibid,          pp54
[112] Freire, P, PO, ibid,          pp55
[113] Freire, P, PO, ibid,          pp55

Freire a fight for freedom, a fight to transcend the oppressive structures and identify one's own central part which one plays. The question thus emerges who is the oppressed and who is the oppressor? To Freire, the oppressors represent those members of a Brazilian society who enjoy perceived advantages such as monetary privileges and the domination of their values and beliefs upon that society. By contrast, the oppressed are those who are schooled to accept these value systems and toil beneath a perceived reality as it is presented to them. However, within this there is a contradiction – the oppressed feel that through 'hard work' and ascension through the educational processes as outlined by the value system, they could attain the advantages of the elite social group. This is prevalent in the current Irish context where it is hoped that the availability of financial resources in education, targeting the disadvantaged, will create equality. Arguably, little is done to target change of societal values. Freire argues that an oppressor does not realise that his or her freedom is also shackled by the value system. An oppressor must also regurgitate the value system and status quo in their everyday lives and actions. Freedom is not present to either the oppressor or the oppressed. Responsibility for freedom or self-hood cannot even be imagined. The banking system exists to conserve the status quo and the people within it. In the current thesis, both teachers and students can be considered oppressed. They are firstly oppressed by the value systems which both groups have been indoctrinated to maintain and exist within – one as a good, quiet learner, the other as a producer of the status quo, of the chalk and talk generation– equating real learning with regurgitation or revised guided discovery, but essentially filling a vessel. Both teacher and student have been trapped, without originality or input, without freedom and most worryingly for Freire, without an awareness of their predicament. In light of the underlying thesis, this lack of awareness of peddling the status quo renders the Revised Curriculum subject to mere deployment in the place of actual engagement. Engagement, thought or depth of knowing, which constructivism demands is secondary to the perusal of the curriculum on the surface level. Teachers as depicted in Chapter Four strive to achieve what they are asked to achieve with no provision of a theoretical reasoning as to why these revisions have been made. The curriculum is thus limited before it begins because it is not used as a tool to truly know, rather to rehash accepted societal standards. Theorists argue that transformation of societal values, which create genuine equality between minority and

majority groups, cannot happen within such parameters found to be in effect in Irish education.

## Authority

Authority emerges as a central issue in Freire's thesis on the banking system of education. This authority acts in a typical critical educational theory mode. It is both paradoxical and contradictory. Authority is associated with the traditional authority figures in society which Freire argues, maintain their authorative positions through the banking system. However, a paradox emerges where this authority is seen as pseudo-authority – as the authority figure has also been indoctrinated by the banking system. The authority figure is now seen as adhering to standards and norms of society and is not actively earning authority, rather is simply existing within it. Therefore, the authority figure is acting the part of the authority figure, and has done nothing to deserve this authority, nor has the authority figure played an active part in shaping or defining the structures within which others can exist. Authority to Freire is a term used to describe the traditionalist reproduction of standards and upkeep of the status quo in society. In his problem-posing model, authority is earned. This too affects the thesis because it purports that the Revised Curriculum teacher is merely acting out the role proposed by the curriculum and not actively engaging with it. Freire argues that where "reality is a process undergoing constant transformation"[114] readily defined knowledge cannot even exist, to be poured into the students, or "receptacles."[115] Knowledge is not a certainty, or a given, as was assumed through generations of delivery in the sophist ilk. Knowledge must be created, experienced and questioned first hand, by the individual in an individual process. When knowledge is seen as this, the problem – posing process can flourish. Within this framework, the authority of the educator is earned through a positive teacher/student relationship. "To achieve this, they (teachers) must be partners of the students in their relations with them."[116] Freire states, "from the outset, her (the teacher) efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization."[117] Authority has become imbued with responsibility – the teacher/student relationship of

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[114] Freire, P, PO, ibid,        pp56
[115] Freire, P, PO, ibid,        pp53
[116] Freire, P, PO, ibid,        pp56
[117] Freire, P, PO, ibid,        pp56

equity where the teacher serves to aid the student in the quest of gaining experience and questioning that experience in and with the world. "Problem-posing education, responding to the essence of consciousness – intentionally – rejects communiqués and embodies communication."[118] Through this experiential and contextual access of the world the student then carves out his or her own knowledge base and value system with which to live in the world. "Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it."[119]

Recollection at this point of Freire's quest to empower the oppressed is significant in his theories of education. Education is seen as a platform from which transformation and transcendence can occur. Though his ideals can often be political and this does not directly concern the current research, the notion of enabling students to critically assess their reality is central to the Primary School Curriculum 1999. Hope and possibility, creating "windows of opportunity"[120] is a hub of the Irish educational ideal. "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition"[121] and not merely "transferrals of information."[122] In the Irish educational context the transformation is occurring. The question thus emerges – do we adapt to change because of a revolution of ideals or because we are told to do so? The research findings serve to highlight the discrepancies which exist in perceptions of education in the Irish educational context – and indicate the awareness of the education community surveyed of attempts to create real change but the confusion surrounding the changes seemingly advocated by the curriculum.

## Conclusion

To Freire, education is a central theme of life – living to learn. Learning is not traditional, factual knowledge rather it is a life-long quest for and of humanity. Margaret Donaldson says, "We are beings who ask questions."[123] Teacher and student together must embark upon the "process in which all grow."[124] Like hooks,

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[118] Freire, P, PO, ibid,      pp60
[119] Freire, P, PO, ibid,      pp60
[120] Appendices,              Appendix 3
[121] Freire, P, PO, ibid,      pp60
[122] Freire, P, PO, ibid,      pp60
[123] Donaldson, M,           *Children's Minds*, pp112
[124] Freire, P, PO,           Chapter 2, pp61

the humanity of learning and education is central to his theories. This is mirrored in primary school practices in Ireland for generations; Irish primary education heavily relies on those working within it. Freire argues "people teach each other"[125] and therefore his problem-posing ideal of education serves to highlight his beliefs on how teachers and students can grow and attain both the freedom to exist as critical beings and transcending beings. His scathing critique upon the conservation of the status quo highlights how flawed a system of filling empty vessels could be – where we are indoctrinated to listen, memorize and regurgitate and never question. "Hence in the name of the preservation of culture and knowledge, we have a system which achieves neither true knowledge nor true culture."[126] Without critical questioning of our status quo and the societal standards we live beneath, the culture of which we believe ourselves to belong exists only as a pseudo-culture, bereft of any creativity or individuality to transform it. Freire calls us to consider "education as the practice of freedom."[127] Freedom is dependent upon self-hood – "overcoming (the) false perception of reality."[128] Self-hood is dependent upon a system and society where education is responsible for opening up the world, its authority garnered from our trust within it. With all these facets in place, education can emerge as the means to freedom, Freire's answer to the oppression of peoples by a system claiming to empower them.

Section 1.5

## Ivan Illich

### "New links to the world.[129]"

Ivan Illich has been at the helm of controversial educational theory for several decades. His published essays and collections have been divisive in the sphere of education and have contributed at least informally, to educational practice in Ireland at all levels, most notably third level. The Revised Curriculum of 1999 has also absorbed his beliefs and opinions into its fundamental philosophy as evident in the

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[125] Freire, P, PO, ibid      pp61
[126] Freire, P, PO, ibid,      pp61
[127] Freire, P, PO, ibid      pp62
[128] Freire, P, PO, ibid      pp67
[129] Illich, I,      *Deschooling Society,* [Hereafter DS], Chapter 6, Learning Webs, pp73

guided-discovery approach. His concepts of true education query the need for 'school' as an institution is one theory which does not concern education in Ireland as understood by this research. He firmly places responsibility for learning in the learner's hands. Education to Illich is not only about obligatory years spent in the confines of the classroom to achieve socially ascribed standards of what is considered educational completion. Education to Illich also allows the learner to choose his educational path, be it in the tradesman's apprenticeship or learning the machine's functions in the workplace or discussing a book in a café with equal– minded individuals. The ideas Illich brings to the public forum centre upon education, medicine, gender, religion, and unemployment. He is prolific in theories and ideologies. As a controversial theorist, he quashes the need for the institution in his theories. He is interesting in the context of this research because of this distinct ideology of education and living.

Considered an anti-institutional revolutionary, Ivan Illich's theories centre upon the pseudo truths professed as reality that governs our lives. Similar to other critical theorists, Illich considers the social milieu which we recognise as a measure of living, as detrimental to self-hood and freedom; the supremacy of societal structures squashes individuality and our capacity to change the world around us. In other words, Illich sees any given institution (Educational, Medical, Governmental, Religious) as creating and maintaining standards which become and are professed as "rules," or modes of normality, or ideas to be attained. These norms are a means of social control and maintain dominance for the culture which created them. Where he resembles other theorists regarding dominant social values, Illich is vastly different from others in that he savagely criticises all forms of traditionalist institutions and calls for a revolution in each one. He does not aim to reform education, but to revolutionize it. His distinct and marked diversity from other critical theorists is this revolutionary objective and purpose to his work; Illich is attempting to deschool and de-institutionalise what has become schooled and institutionalised in standardised, homogenized and regulated society, "even desires and fears are institutionalised."[130] Illich strives to communicate how and why change should occur, how societal norms are purchased by societal tribesmanship, and how the capacity for criticism and

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[130] Illich, I, DS,          Chapter 7, Rebirth of Epimethean Man, pp108

individuation need to be rekindled; "...the readiness and capacity for critical questioning of all assumptions and institutions (which have become idols under the name of common sense, logic and what is supposed to be "natural") ...means to question...a widening of awareness, of imaginative, creative vision of our possibilities and options."[131]


The revolutionized systems Illich proposes allow the individual to access what he/she desires in a more honest, truthful and self-fulfilling way. Realities shall be borne from honest quest and curiosity – not from perceived ideals to be attained. However, for one so anti-institutional, Illich nonetheless proposes a replacement. In this, he opens himself to the argument that one system has been used to replace another. One set of ideals (Individuality, Freedom, Equality, has been used to replace another (dominant culture status quo, economic machine, meritocracy). Illich not only has identified what he considers flaws or downright untruths of our reality, and specifically our education system, but he has also proposed a solution. Illich differs from many other educational theorists in that he does not simply relate to his own experience and propose steps to rectify flaws. Rather, Illich examines the western education system as a whole, across western countries, and proposes a way of life, an entirely diverse, revolutionized system to allow for change. The "savage critic of industrial society"[132] has unsettled many in his theories and radical ideals. The following analysis examines his concepts and observations, his portrayal of modern education following the aforementioned themes and its subsequent impact on our lives. Finally, it highlights the key features of his solution to the crisis he sees in education.

## Ideology of Education


"The pupil is schooled to confuse teaching with learning"[133]


In the first chapter of Illich's controversial work on education *Deschooling Society*, the very nature of structured education as we know it, comes under investigation. He

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[131] Illich, I,                          *Celebration of Awareness A Call for Institutional Reform,*
[Hereafter CA], Introduction, pp8
[132] *Times Educational Supplement,* in Illich I,        *Deschooling Society,* praise for Illich.
[133] Illich, I, DS,                        Introduction, pp 1

illustrates that educational advancement is deemed equivalent with years spent in formal schooling, with certification at the end of that period. We are " 'schooled' to accept service in place of value."[134] As a society comes to rely upon socially ascribed ideals, poverty is considered a reflection of peoples who "have fallen behind an advertised ideal of consumption."[135] This advertised ideal is arguably ever-present in Ireland of the Celtic Tiger, where consumerist values dictate how we live our lives, and we legitimise dominant values by acknowledging relative poverty – those without dominant culture material gains. All values therefore must adhere to dominant culture values. The poverty gap widens as middle classes attain the 'prerequisite' time required in attending formal schooling – a luxury not afforded a 'lower' class for a plethora of reasons ranging from contextual appropriateness of subject matter to higher education and employment opportunities in the demographics locale. According to Illich, education has become a consumer commodity. "School is a system of beliefs for dominant culture to prevail."[136] The quest for wisdom and sustaining curiosity and wonder has become an over the counter, packaged ideal of answers and prescribed curricula. "The poor need funds to enable them to learn, not to get certified for the treatment of their alleged disproportionate deficiencies."[137] As a civilisation attempting to bring ourselves onto the plateau of consumerism and capitalism, we loose sight of the truth education attempts to connect us with. Poverty is seen as an unfortunate position, where constituents need to yield an extra effort to accomplish the socially accepted certification which is customary. Arguably, in Ireland the children of certain socio-economic backgrounds, who do not choose to follow a path of Leaving Certification, and attaining a qualification in Third Level, are without the standard approval of the recognized norm. These children leave school and partake in the farming career or the apprenticeships of the trades or little else. As the economic climate improves for the latter, the significance of their choices challenges the 'traditional' ideal. However, this serves to copper fasten the hold upon perceived meritocratic ideals amongst the degree-earning and the certified. Illich

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[134] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                              pp1
[135] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                              pp3
[136] Illich, I, DS,                                    Chapter 3, The Ritualization of Progress, The
myth of self-perpetuating progress, pp45
[137] Illich, I, DS,                                    Chapter 1, Why we must disestablish school,
Introduction, pp6

concurs, "citizens have learned to think rich and live poor."[138] The true benefits of degree attainment are questionable for many in any given society – will they serve to be beneficial to the members of that society? Illich sees financial equality a deciding factor in creating equality; like Bourdieu who attests to the significance of social values as dictating our socio-economic ranking and subsequent educational achievement. We legitimise dominant cultural values through acknowledging the need for equality amongst minority groups.

Similarly in the situation where finances are driven into disadvantaged areas, results have shown that increasing the financial opportunities to advance to third level do not necessarily mean students will oblige the tax payer, rather that prevalent socio-political conditions which dictate their socio-economic climate may subsume the student into accepted economic practices in place of college placements. This is especially true in incidences of employment opportunities in traditionally, socially accepted jobs. Whelan and Hannon of the Economic Social Research Institute (ESRI) found, "...that families from different social classes seek to ensure that their children acquire a class position at least as advantageous as that from which they originate or, in other words, they seek to avoid downward mobility."[139] This research indicates the prevalent desire of all social classes to remain at least, at their given social level; equality cannot result from persistence to the norm. They continue, "...our results suggest that both parental education and economic circumstances are extremely important determinants of success at the first transition with education the most important factor."[140] Dictating to their children, the varying social classes prescribe their ideologies and norms to the next generation. Whelan and Hannon conclude, "...class origins continued to exert a significant effect on the likelihood of achieving a third level qualification...Both parents' education and childhood economic circumstances were found to mediate the impact of class origins."[141] With this research, the sociological impact of the ideology of social class is great, and specific

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[138] Illich, I, DS,            Introduction, Why we must disestablish school, pp7
[139] Whelan, C and Hannon, D,         *The Economic and Social Review (ESRI), Volume 30, No.3, July, pp285-307,* 9Hereafter ESRI), Class Inequalities in Educational Attainment among the Adult Population in the Republic of Ireland, VI Changes in the Class Origin Educational Attainment Link, The role of Parents' Education and Childhood Economic Circumstances, pp301
[140] Whelan, C and Hannon, D, ESRI, ibid,       VII Conclusions, pp302
[141] Whelan, C and Hannon, D, ESRI, ibid,       II Explaining Educational Inequalities, pp287

parental expectation a significant factor in children's educational attainment at the dominant culture's standard of third level education. In light of the findings, Illich brings noteworthy points to this debate, firstly that ascribed ideologies exist, and the measure and legitimisation of certain ideologies suit only the dominant classes, secondly that the revolution of the educational institute and subsequent revolution of social ideology through de-institutionalisation is the only means to achieve true equality. "Only a generation which grows up without obligatory schools will be able to recreate the university."[142] Bourdieu concurs with the ESRI claim, stating; "Each family transmits to its children, indirectly rather than directly, a certain cultural capital and a certain ethos."[143]

As the demands for resources increase in primary education, teachers are rendered useless in creating their own resources and stunt their own creativity in proceeding with their tasks and ideals. Textbooks, as results depict in Chapter 4, form the core of many teacher's educational objectives. Education is understood as formulaic, prescribed by another and stamped with a certificate to prove a child's ability. This view is widely accepted by all groups on the social ladder – even when it proves less than supportive to people who cannot achieve in the current meritocratic system because of social predeterminations. Illich proposes society has come to accept varying patterns and indicators of wealth, success and customs; and strives to attain them, even though these standards are established by the dominant classes and therefore are not available to others outside the terms of the dominant classes, but that the others do not strive to establish alternative cultures and standards, celebrating their own identities and characteristics. We are schooled to accept and strive towards ideals neither attainable nor of our own creation.

## Authority

Illich considers the success of the authority of a Western education system to exist in its ability to ritualise progress, "…all students are academically processed to be happy only in the company of fellow consumers of the products of the educational

[142] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                    Chapter 3 The Ritualization of Progress, pp38
[143] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J,          Contemporary Research in Sociology of
Education, The school as a conservative force: scholastic and cultural inequalities, pp32

machine."[144]    Illich makes several points regarding the pseudo-authority garnered by an education system which creates dependence upon it.  Firstly, he highlights how the education system signifies the "successful" participants in the system.  "No one is given tax funds for the leisure in which to educate himself or the right to educate others unless at the same time he can also be certified for achievement."[145]  We are undervalued, or indeed not valued at all, if we do not see our obligatory schooling through.    The university defines our societies through the consumer standards imposed upon us, "the university thus has the effect of imposing consumer standards at work and at home."[146]    We ritualise our pseudo–progress he claims, by attesting to the myth of education.  Illich hence draws upon what he believes is a significant point regarding our system; "obligatory public schools inevitably reproduce such a society, no matter what is taught in them."[147]    A society, which depends on school for education and therein upon certification for schooling, recycles the myth that we are firstly being educated and secondly serving ourselves.  The Myth of *Institutionalised Values* is one identified by Illich who claims that we associate progress and production with value and demand.  "School teaches us that instruction produces learning."[148]  More worrying still, if instruction is considered vital to learning, then instructors are subject to extreme scrutiny and training.  "Once the self-taught man or woman has been discredited, all non-professional activity is rendered suspect."[149] Illich claims, "most learning is not the result of instruction. It is rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting... Most people learn best by being with it."[150]  The concept of *with-it-ness* or the ignorance of context, has permeated the education system at third level Colleges of Education, a result of the contributions of Illich, theoretically active but not referenced in the Revised Curriculum.

To Illich "instruction smothers the horizon of their (student's) imaginations."[151] Forms of knowing are crushed beneath the ascribed knowledge in school, and the desire to know anything outside this ascribed knowledge is rendered circumspect and

[144] Illich, I, DS,                          Chapter 3, Ritualization of Progress, pp34
[145] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                     pp34
[146] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                     pp35
[147] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                     pp38
[148] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                     pp38
[149] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                     The myth of institutionalised values, pp39
[150] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                     pp39
[151] Illich, I, DS , ibid,                    pp39

undesirable. "School prepares for the alienating institutionalisation of life by teaching the need to be taught."[152] Students of the western education institution have become dependent upon others for their own personal educational advancement and for the certification that follows it. Education is not for them, sometimes it is not enjoyable and has to be delivered, staggered or encouraged by another. After a 'reasonable' time, this learning is then stamped and approved by 'the other.' Authority for education rests firmly in the grip of the system, and responsibility for individual learning is denied of the learner. "Schools are based upon the hypothesis that learning is the result of curricular teaching….Schools…pervert the natural inclination to grow and learn into the demand for instruction."[153] This authority of school distorts the universal 'truth' of education. "The value of a man's schooling is a function of the number of years he has completed and of the costliness of the schools he has attended."[154] The achievements of fee-paying education reflect the transferral of social values from parent to child which revolves around attaining high grades and subsequent access to college courses. This is considered successful as a dominant cultural ideal and those not achieving equally are considered impoverished; subsequently disadvantage is poverty legitimised through underachieving in accordance with dominant values. Thus learning is again confused with schooling. Illich's concept of authority is based on a dual perception of authority, which on one hand, describes genuine authority and on the other describes pseudo-authority; Illich does not subscribe to the notion of authority of the dominant class, and thus the authority of that class over education is pseudo-authority to him. Equally, this pseudo-authority is a genuine, life-governing authority to those who do ascribe to the societal mores of the dominant class. Therefore when Illich refers to authority, he is referring to both a concept held in respect to many, and one held in disrepute by others.

"If it [school] teaches nothing else, school teaches the value of escalation. Education is schooling, and this open ended process is counted in pupil hours."[155] The conversion of time spent in formal schooling to certification is an affirmation of

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[152] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                                  The new alienation, pp47
[153] Illich, I, DS,                                        Chapter 4, Institutional Spectrum, Schools as
false public utilities, pp60
[154] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                                  pp61
[155] Illich, I, DS,                                        Chapter 3, Ritualization of Progress, The myth of
self-perpetuating progress, pp42

formal education. *The Myth of Self-Perpetuating Progress* is the term Illich applies to this process. Years in schooling equating to educational attainment is a pseudo ideology to Illich, where the myth of certification meets only dominant ideals. He himself holds another ideology of education to be true. We are afforded a glimpse of this in his description of education never yielding "the joy of knowing something to one's satisfaction."[156] Illich does not equate rising expectations with changes which do not affirm individual responsibility and freedom. His ideology is simply that true education serves the individual and examples of education being confined to "the textbook racket"[157] confirm this. Institutionalisation of education is "depriving education of reality and work of creativity."[158] Rather controversially, Illich believes that "most learning requires no teaching."[159] His ideal educational situation is an independent, responsible act that serves the individual – not the "increased craving...for goods, services, that will remain the privilege of a few."[160] He states, "I believe in choosing a life of action over a life of consumption...a lifestyle which will enable us to be spontaneous, independent, yet related to each other."[161] Illich proposes new 'criteria' is necessary to assess the institution in an effort to identify those who "support personal growth."[162] The *Convivial Institution* is his offering to the field of education; providing "simplified opportunity within formally defined limits, while remaining a free agent."[163] This contrasts with the domination and addiction of others, to the "manipulative institutions."[164] A further ideological issue for Illich is man's spirituality. Illich considers the self-hood and the individual integrity of man to be integrated with man's spiritual self and he considers limiting institutions to deprive man of his spirituality. By making men abdicate the responsibility for their own growth, school leads many to a form of spiritual suicide."[165] Manipulative education has created a dependency upon others for one's own learning, a passing of responsibility for learning to the institution, and equation of years spent in education with knowledge gathered and certification thereafter.

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[156] Illich, I, D S, ibid,      pp42
[157] Illich, I, DS, ibid,      pp42
[158] Illich, I, D S, ibid,      The new alienation, pp47
[159] Illich, I, D S, ibid,      The revolutionary potential of Deschooling, pp47
[160] Illich, I, DS,      Chapter 4, Institutional Spectrum, pp52
[161] Illich, I, DS, ibid,      pp52
[162] Illich, I, DS, ibid,      pp53
[163] Illich, I, DS, ibid,      pp55
[164] Illich, I, DS, ibid,      pp55
[165] Illich, I, DS, ibid,      pp60

Illich proposes an alternative, "an institutional framework which constantly educates to action, participation and self help."[166] This institutional framework is a concrete proactive stance taken where other theorists simply react. In the concept of educational guide, we see a direct reference in the curriculum, and the need for a theoretical framework to be applied.

## Responsibility

The responsibility of the individual for himself or herself is a major issue for Illich. The school assumes responsibility for our education, therefore removing one's responsibility for one's own learning. "This transfer of responsibility from self to institution guarantees social regression,"[167] Illich claims, and he calls for the "return of initiative and accountability for learning to the learner or his most immediate tutor."[168] In the event that manipulative education has created a dependency upon others for one's own learning, a passing of responsibility for learning to the institution for knowledge, thus the economy has a problem. Illich explains "unemployment is the result of this modern nation: it is the idleness of a man for whom there is nothing to 'make' and who does not know what 'to do' – that is, how to "act"."[169] The responsibility assumed by the Curriculum is renamed and rehashed as an upgraded curriculum "visually aided, issue-centred...team taught...(or) student designed,"[170] but Illich claims it is professing the same reality. Education and the curriculum resemble the assembly line. "Curriculum production for most schools begins in alleged scientific research, on whose basis educational engineers predict future demands and tools for the assembly line, within the limits set by budgets and taboos."[171] Consumer–pupils are programmed to desire the packaged knowledge distributed by the teacher, they are "are taught to make their desires conform to marketable values."[172] As desires are reshaped to fit consumer demands, individual

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[166] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                                pp64
[167] Illich, I, DS,                           Chapter 3, Ritualization of Progress, The myth of
institutionalised values, pp39
[168] Illich, I, DS,                           Chapter 1, Why We Must Disestablish Schools, pp16
[169] Illich, I, DS,                           Chapter 4, Institutional Spectrum, pp63
[170] Illich, I, DS,                           Chapter 3, Ritualization of Progress, The myth of
packaging values, pp41
[171] Illich, I, DS,                           Chapter 4, Ritualization of Progress, The myth of
packaging values, pp41
[172] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                     pp41

responsibility for self and freedom of self are lost. Illich refers to these processes as the *Myth of Packaging Values*. Illich considers education in need of revolution in order to save the spiritual self, and as such he considers it the responsibility of society to embark upon new forms of education. "An educational revolution depends on...a new orientation for research and a new understanding of the educational style of emerging counterculture."[173] Illich proposes this new criterion to embrace diversity, an "educational network or web for...personal control of each learner."[174] His proposed *Convivial Institution* is thus established whereby "the relational structures ...are those which will enable each man to define himself by learning and contributing to the learning of others."[175] The *Learning Web* is another of Illich's proposed alternative education concepts, this idea is established by the very notion of self-motivated learning instead of employing teachers to bribe or compel the student to find the time and the will to learn. "The learning web enables the learner to access new links to the world, instead of continuing to funnel all education programs through the teacher."[176] A noble endeavour, it not only identifies perceived problems in education, but proposes solutions to these problems. However, the sociological thinker can find fault with the resolutions proposed for two reasons; firstly, the concept prioritises the autonomy of the self, and their learning situation, which conflicts with the notion of active sociology in the learning situation, and secondly; the issue of employability also arises, where outcomes of this form of education are limited in comparison to social education, which allows social mores regarding employment to occur.

In his proposition for education, Illich highlights several steps in facilitating the concepts of Learning Webs and Convivial Institution; those who wish to learn will firstly be provided with access to available resources, this will not just affect the youth, but an individual at any stage in their lives. Those wishing to share what they know will be in a position to share that knowledge – to find others who wish to learn from them. Those who wish to bring an issue to the public will be in a position to do that. The falsehood exists, claims Illich, that "schools are designed on the assumption

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[173] Illich, I, DS,           Chapter 5, Irrational Consistencies, pp70
[174] Illich, I, DS, ibid,      pp70
[175] Illich, I, DS, ibid,      pp71
[176] Illich, I, DS,           Chapter 6, Learning Webs, pp73

that there is a secret to everything in life."[177] The opportunity of the Learning Web allows access and equal opportunity for all to learn and teach, share and know. Services will firstly be referenced to educational objectives. Skill exchanges will then be established for the people. Thirdly, peer matching will then enable individuals to find each other. Finally, services will be referenced to education at large.[178] In the first step, education will be brought into a meaningful setting. Education will not only inhabit the four walls of the classroom that "shuts the learner out the world."[179] The notion of "educational tools…sacred paraphernalia of the school ritual"[180] will be replaced with the freedom to learn in context, in the workshop, in the establishment desired. The second step of skill exchange involves listing names and contact addresses (and presumably emails in modern society) which allows access to the skill model that is willing to demonstrate the desired skill to others.[181]

Illich assures us "people who can demonstrate skills will be plentiful as soon as we learn to recognise them outside the teaching profession."[182] Illich calls for a revolution of education where "the public is indoctrinated to believe that skills are valuable and reliable only if they are the result of formal schooling."[183] Skill centres would be established in Illich's ideological system, where each individual would be able to access the listed skill providers and their peer match. Using credits, they may access a skill or earn more credits through sharing their skills.[184] Equality would be ensured through granting a "larger credit to the underprivileged."[185] The conception of peer matching simply groups together those "sharing the same specific interest."[186] Illich suggests the use of tapes, where one imagines the use of the internet in modern society, is useful in this system. Finally, referencing services to education at large involves the employment of persons to create and operate the education networks. Students and parents will need guides to use the aforementioned networks. Another individual will be employed for this position. Other individuals will be required to

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[177] Illich, I, DS, ibid,        General characteristics of new, formal educational
institutions, pp76
[178] Illich, I, DS, ibid,        Four networks, pp78
[179] Illich, I, DS, ibid,        Reference services to educational objectives, pp80
[180] Illich, I, DS, ibid,        pp85
[181] Illich, I, DS, ibid,        pp87
[182] Illich, I, DS, ibid,        Skill exchanges, pp88
[183] Illich, I, DS, ibid,        pp89
[184] Illich, I, DS, ibid,        pp90
[185] Illich, I, DS, ibid,        pp90
[186] Illich, I, DS, ibid,        Peer matching, pp92

"act as a primus inter pares in undertaking difficult intellectual exploratory journeys."[187] The traditional position of the teacher as master of the realm of education is also questioned; "as masters of their art abandon the claim to be superior informants of skill models, their claim to superior wisdom will ring true."[188] The process of *Liberatory Education* has goals which Illich identifies as follows; liberating one's access to resources, to share skills available, to create critical and creative resources and finally, to free the individual from the obligation to shape his expectations to the services offered by any established profession.[189]

## Self-Hood

Where the issue of the self is an issue for certain educational theorists, such as bell hooks and Fromm, Illich is more concerned with de-institutionalisation because of its effect on the individual self. He is chiefly a revolutionary proposing the deschooling of society. The centrality of the self is based upon imagination in his theories. "Curriculum production for most schools begins with allegedly scientific research, on whose bases educational engineers predict future demands and tools for the assembly line within the limits set by budgets and taboos."[190] The Myth of Self-Perpetuating Progress is a term Illich coined to summarise a system which exists to promote mundane and disconnected learning. "If it [school] teaches nothing else, school teaches the value of escalation,"[191] Illich claims that the current education system of Western Cultures peddles a myth of progress and advancement, "education is schooling and this open-ended process is counted in pupil-hours."[192] This quantative view society takes of education not only drains responsibility for learning from the individual, but also allows one to equate years in school with knowledge and learning.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Illich claims, "man himself is at stake."[193] He states; "Inexorably we cultivate, treat, produce and school the world of existence."[194] Similar to the

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[187] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                  Professional educators, pp98
[188] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                  pp97
[189] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                  pp103
[190] Illich, I, DS,                        Chapter 4, Ritualization of Progress, The myth of
packaging values, pp41
[191] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                  pp42
[192] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                  pp42
[193] Illich, I, DS,                        Chapter 7, The Rebirth of Epimethean Man, pp107
[194] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                  pp110

optimists McLaren and Giroux, Illich believes we ought to "value hope above expectations...and love people more than products."[195]   As we are schooling ourselves out of our individuality and self-hood, maintaining societies that limit our creativity, never have we needed a revolution of education more.  The thrust of a materialistic society attempts to transform non-material needs into "demands for commodities."[196]  Illich sees a need to revolutionize this situation, where individuality is lost in the mass produced norms, and the spirit suffers beneath ascribed modes of living.  "The legitimation of education by schools tends to render all non-school education as accident, if not an outright misdemeanour."[197]   As modernisation of education increasingly becomes standardised, the humanity that has characterised primary education in Ireland for decades is at risk.  Through standardisation we may risk ascribing to institutional values less relevant to true education as the sheer interest the Irish took in being educated when hedge-school provided that role contests.  As education in Ireland suffers by comparison to European and International standardised test results according to OECD reports, we must ask ourselves of the true relevance of standardisation.  Are our standards improving with standardisation or are we peddling the myth of the institution?  The opening quote of the review cited new links to the world, and this is exactly what Illich proposes.  He is set apart from other theorists with his revolutionary call to de-institutionalise education and with the abundance of carefully selected suggestions and strategies to do just that.  "I suggest that we plunge our imagination into the construction of scenarios which would allow a bold reallocation of educational functions among industry, politics, short scholastic retreats, and intensive preparation of parents for providing early childhood education."[198]  This brings my analysis of the emphasis on individualisation to a close within the literature review section.  I will be returning to some of these concepts in my interpretation of my research findings in Chapters 4 and 5.  However, in the next chapter, I want to focus on an alternative set of theorists, whom emphasise more the process of socialisation than that of individualisation.

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[195] Illich, I, DS, ibid,                    pp115
[196] Illich, I, DS,                         Chapter 1, Why we must disestablish schools, pp1
[197] Illich, I, CA,                         Chapter 8, The futility of schooling, pp119
[198] Illich, I, CA, ibid,                   pp120

# Chapter 2

# Critical Educational Theory –
# An Emphasis on Socialisation

# Critical Educational Theory – An Emphasis on Socialisation

Section 1.1

## Introduction

While critical educational theorists of one kind prioritise the development of the critical individual self, a second group of these theorists emphasise the process of educational socialisation. The primary concern of this thesis regarding this second group of theorists is their identification of what this process of socialisation consists of. They argue this process of socialisation belongs in the primary school, or its equivalent in other countries. The inclusion of their ponderings serves the overall thesis – their ideas generate a powerful counter-point to the contributing theories of the critical educational theorists. Where one vein of educational theorist argues in favour of equipping a child for the uncertainties in life and an ever-changing world, another argues for the socialisation of that child into the world where criticism is generated later in adolescence or early adulthood. As Richard Rorty succinctly phrases, "things get difficult when one tries to figure out where socialization should stop and criticism start."[199]

Postmodern Socialisation

The foundational principles, which inform the postmodernist movement, are essentially difficult to define not least because many of the theorists involved are reluctant to be labelled as such – thereby rendering their definitive theories beyond the scope of the label postmodernist. Further to this, the specific arguments, ideals and notions of the postmodernist theorists differ greatly from one another, the motivations behind their theories being the connection that renders them a distinct school of philosophy. "Theoretical labels are nothing to be feared, they have a purpose as long as they are thought's servant rather than its master."[200] According to Cahoone, it is not only difficult but also unwise to attempt to define the motivation and theory of the postmodernist thinkers, however he does offer the following; "simply put, they (postmodernists) regard it (their philosophies and theories) as

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[199] Rorty, R ,  *Philosophy and Social Hope*, Chapter 7, Education as Socialization and as Individualization, Pp117
[200] Cahoone, L,  *From Modernism to Post-Modernism*, pp1

rejecting most of the fundamental intellectual pillars of Modern Western Civilisation."[201] Within this premise, one can assume that although individual theorists and theories may vary greatly, it is their response to and rejection of the theorists and theories that have informed Western philosophy in the main which renders them post-modernist. The socio-political facet of the theorist emerges when theorists see education as the forum for effecting social transcendence or political transcendence. This is by no means a new view in the education spectrum to date, however these theorists opt not to transcend the status quo through critical thought in primary school but rather through a socialisation process and appropriate critical appreciation for the society in which the student lives. A sub-group of this school of thought is concerned with education and its socio-political correlations within a society. Comprised of members such as the afore mentioned Richard Rorty, Pierre Bourdieu and Henri Giroux, a segment of educational theorists emerge who argue for socialisation of the student, before the critical emancipation of the student. With the aim of political liberation or preparation for society, these theorists delve into notions from the roots of post-modernism in Friedrich Nietzsche's writings, to the critical awareness of political liberators such as Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire. It is here that the counter-point of the thesis emerges, as criticism itself is questioned as a staple of the primary school curriculum. These theorists contend that socialisation and integration into a society, belong in the primary school curriculum, and criticism has its place outside the early school days. My thesis aims to highlight their contribution to education and the subsequent impact their theories have on the Irish Primary School Curriculum.

In an argument against Socrates, Rorty surmises well, his "infernal questioning...in Plato's apology, led to nothing positive and practical, undermined socially important beliefs, and could not justify itself except for his eccentric claim to a divine mission."[202] Where the latter aspect does not concern this thesis, the quote highlights how some socio-political theorists respond to the constant questioning and answerless philosophies of those philosophers occupying alternative schools of thought. Socio-political and post-modernist theorists reject the Nuevo–popular concepts of critical awareness and the place they occupy in the educational spectrum as embracing of

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[201] Cahoone, L, ibid,                pp1
[202] Rorty, R,                *Philosophy and Social Hope*, pp13

questioning, developing self-hood and critical awareness. The latter believe socialisation ought to be first on any educational agenda. They argue that all this questioning cannot lead to anything positive unless the structures which socialise our future generations have been laid down. These theorists argue that there is indeed a time for critical thought, however the primary school is simply not it.

Section 1.2

## Peter McLaren

### "One that knows the border and crosses the line"[203]

Peter McLaren brings many issues to the educational debate. Like Fromm, the issue of socially perceived ideals is central to his theories. However, McLaren's distinguishing feature comes from his belief that individual, critical thought is necessary to stimulate change. A border theorist, he bridges critical theory with socio-political and postmodernism in his hypotheses. McLaren sees society's quest to be like everybody else, to attain "the ideological and material imperatives of the dominant culture"[204] as a cycle which cannot be amended unless critical thinking is employed. He is preoccupied with our tolerance of a rehashing and continued supremacy of the white male dominant society. From this standpoint, McLaren highlights his distinct ideology from other critical educational theorists. His theories centre upon the political inequalities that permeate society as he sees it. McLaren also focuses on the societal interpretations of truth and reality, which he seeks to renounce within his theories, including the pseudo-autonomy professed by those who call themselves postmodernists. "...The more pressing need is to transform present social practices and institutional relations because history compels us to do so, because the present historical juncture in which we witness so much misery and suffering necessitates it." [205] The suffering he sees in society: the imbalance of material wealth and privilege is his chief motivation to theorise in the realm of education. His impact

[203] Sanchez-Tranquilino, M and Tagg, J, in McLaren, P,    *Multiculturalism and the Postmodern Critique: Towards a Pedagogy of Resistance and Transformation,,* Resistance as "la conciencia de la mestiza," pp219
[204] McLaren, P,                                            *Life in Schools,* pp164
[205] McLaren, P,                                            *Multiculturalism and the Postmodern Critique: Towards a Pedagogy of Resistance and Transformation,* [Hereafter MPC], Intensifying the obvious and accelerating the mundane, pp217

upon the educator is great; both frank and honest and he calls upon them to, "...stare boldly and unflinchingly into the historical present and assume a narrative space where conditions may be created where students can tell their own stories, listen closely to the stories of others, and dream the dream of liberation."[206]

## Ideology of Education and Self-Hood

McLaren believes that education is a transmitter of social acceptance itself. The *Egalitarian Dream*[207] he refers to is a rehashing of existing social modes. He identifies a "contradiction in the teaching process itself."[208] The teacher has become the keeper of the status quo, as schooling and education is limited and confined to perceived ideals of fact acquisition, and meets only the needs of the dominant culture. Like Fromm and Dewey, McLaren draws the distinction between education as a function of society and society as a function of education.[209] The social agenda is maintained, as school is increasingly considered necessary in economic achievement, the workplace and society – and not necessarily for the education of the individual learner. "Teachers can do no better than to create agendas of possibility in their classrooms,"[210] he claims, and in essence this captures the ideal of education he presents alongside his sincere belief of what education should be. His work gives a brief overview of the critical theory agenda. He distinguishes the genre as an examination of education and schools, "both in their historical context and as part of the existing social and political fabric that characterizes the dominant society."[211] He tells us theorists like Henry Giroux have produced works centring upon "the political economy of schooling, the state and education, the representation of texts, and the construction of student subjectivity."[212] McLaren illustrates the point that while critical theorists differ in many of their ideas, they are distinguished from other theorists by their "objectives: to empower the powerlessness and transform existing social inequalities and injustices."[213] Thus the theoretical and political nature of

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[206] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid      pp217
[207] McLaren, P,      *Life in Schools*, pp157
[208] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,      pp157
[209] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,      pp158
[210] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,      pp190
[211] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,      pp159
[212] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,      pp159
[213] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,      pp160

McLaren's analyses arises. He is critical of the postmodernist *laissez faire* attitude, where popular, "free-floating intellectuals who, despite their claim to be part of a collective deconstructive project, often fail to mobilize intellectual work in the interest of a liberatory praxis."[214] McLaren considers the postmodern thrust of the society he inhabits to peddle dominant ideologies and an elite way of life as reasoning and rationality: "The heroic cult of modernism which has naturalized the power and privilege of "dead white men" and accorded the pathology of domination the status of cultural reason."[215] Thus disproportionate levels of wealth are distributed and "economic dislocation and intergenerational poverty"[216] is suffered by minorities. McLaren's motivations are clear for a redefinition of an education system, through the media of social education. He critiques dominant cultures and their out-sourcing and free-trade policies that ensure their economic stability and success and our acceptance of this imbalance as "...an increasing dependency on social cues manufactured by the mass media to construct meaning and build consensus on moral issues."[217] This seems to be the position occupied by the Revised Curriculum – seeking change through a revision of ideologies with no reference to a theoretical framework which informs such ideologies.

McLaren has voiced concern of postmodernism, where it seems to reinforce the social injustices he sees active in our society. According to McLaren, when the Enlightenment ideals of autonomy were questioned by philosophers such as Fredrich Nietzsche, the consensus generated was that an individual could not act independently of their society – society informs the core of who we are and how we act. In replacement of these beliefs centring upon individuality, postmodern thinkers accepted the domination of society and rejected most of all else, including a desire to offer proactive theory or recipes for change. Postmodern thinkers saw no need to effect change, and accepted the rationality that given groups evolve, and that reason is the justification for not becoming involved. As a result the domination of certain powerful ideologies and social mores is prevalent – that of the white male. Arguably, postmodernism suited several minority groups as time passed, but McLaren argues a

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[214]McLaren, P,  *Multiculturalism and the Postmodern Critique: Towards a Pedagogy of Resistance and Transformation*, Social Justice under siege, pp193
[215] McLaren, MPC, ibid,  pp193
[216] McLaren, MPC, ibid,  pp193
[217] McLaren, MPC, ibid,  pp194

crucial point; that postmodernism "produced an aversion to rather than a respect for difference."[218] Difference from the societal norm was shunned and society resided in the safety of sameness, while existing beneath the pretence of autonomous individuality. Thus emerges McLaren's critique of postmodernism as a core of his educational ideology as highlighted in the introduction to this chapter; "The postmodern critique concerns itself with the rejection or debunking of modernism's epistemic foundations or metanarratives; a dethronement of the authority of positivistic science that essentialises differences between what appear to be self-possessing identities, an attack on the notion of a unified goal of history, and a deconstruction of the magnificent Enlightenment swindle of the autonomous, stable, and self-contained ego that is supposed to be able to act independently of its own history, its own indigenist strands of meaning-making and cultural and linguistic situatedness, and free from inscriptions in the discourses of, among others, gender, race, and class."[219] The core of *Ludic Postmodernism* asserts that "meaning itself is self-divided and indiscernible...it often simply reinscribes the status quo and reduces history to the supplementarity of signification or the free-floating trace of textuality."[220] McLaren is critical of the gripes imposed upon society by this type of postmodernism which does not provide a theory or thesis to solve them, or worse, it identifies problems but not in relation to life as a whole; to the bigger picture. He continues; "Ludic postmodernism often takes the form of a triumphalistic and hoary dismissal of Marxism and grand theory as being hopelessly embroiled in a futile project of world-historical magnitude that is out of place in these postmodern new times."[221] The populist grasp of Ludic postmodernism is prevalent in these terms. Resistance postmodernism is the form of critique McLaren chose to take; it "brings to ludic critique a form of materialistic intervention since it is not solely based in a textual theory of difference but rather on one that is social and historical...(where) difference is politicised by being situated in real social and historical conflicts rather than simply textual or semiotic contradictions."[222] The significance of social and

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[218] McLaren, P,                                    *Multiculturalism and the Postmodern Critique: Towards a Pedagogy of Resistance and Transformation,,* The dilemma of post-modern critique and the debate over multiculturalism, pp195
[219]McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,              Subaltern and feminist challenges to the postmodern critique, pp196
[220] Ebert, T, in McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,       Ludic and resistance postmodernism, pp198
[221]McLaren, MPC, ibid,                    pp199
[222] McLaren, MPC, ibid,                   pp199

historical perceptions inform this philosophy of postmodernism – defining theories as theories, and practicing these theories. McLaren's ideology of education sees the self emerge through prescribed, defined or theorised social interrractions instead of the populist belief in no action at all. Although theoretically dense, McLaren's ideologies must be placed in context to legitimise their relevance upon a curriculum where socialisation is referenced in the various social methodologies advocated.

McLaren has devised a series of concepts which form his theories and his ideology of education. The importance of theory is the first of these. McLaren agrees with the conception of theory, which concurs with nihilism of critical thought and disputes the laxity of postmodern thought. He states, theory should be, "a model that permits (students) to examine the underlying political, social and economic foundations of the larger society."[223] In this circumstance, McLaren suggests that theorization facilitates the educator and a given society to tweak and tailor that society to meet the needs of its inhabitants, while simultaneously equalising the discrepancies in prosperity distribution between all its members, not merely unquestioningly serving the dominant elite; "Resistance postmodernism offers teachers working in multicultural education a means of interrogating the locality, positionality, and specificity of knowledge and of generating of a plurality of truths (rather than one apodictic truth built around the invisible norm of Eurocentrism and white ethnicity), while at the same time situating the construction of meaning in terms of the material interests at work in the production of "truth-effects" – that is, the production of forms of intelligibility and social practices."[224] Another concept is the social construction of knowledge. "We do not stand before the social world; we live in the midst of it."[225] McLaren believes in a social basis for creating knowledge. The construction of theory and the practice of theory bring solidarity to the world, while this solidarity is both questionable and changeable; a positive, directional code of living that encompasses the diversity of difference and embraces practice of that difference. Creating knowledge is a key concept in the curriculum where objectives are perused in social learning contexts.

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[223] McLaren, P,                    *Life in Schools*, [Hereafter LS] pp169
[224] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,         Always totalise, pp209
[225] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,          pp169

Ideology in education is a major aspect of McLaren's thesis. Ideology is the production of sense and meaning, making sense of the world, structuring and directing our thoughts. "The production and representation of ideas, values, and beliefs and the matter in which they are expressed and lived out by both individuals and groups."[226] McLaren refers to the works of many other theorists including Stuart Hall, James Donald and John Thompson. In particular, Thompson refers to ideology as a negative function. He has devised theories of *Legimation* (legitimising a system of domination), *Dissimation* (concealing or denying relations of domination), *Fragmentation* (creation of 'meanings' which place groups in positions of opposition), and *Reification* (presentation of transitory ideals as permanent, natural and commonsensical).[227] To McLaren, the master narrative, moralistic and definite, is to be rejected in order to proposition a just, multi-faceted, provisional narrative that disparages master totality and welcomes relational totality. He states; "The resistance postmodern critique that I am suggesting educators consider repudiates the necessity or choice of any one master narrative because master narratives suggest that there is only one public sphere, one value, one conception of justice that triumphs over all…This does not mean trying to press them all into a homogenous cultural pulp but to suggest that there must be a multiplication of justices and pluralistic conception of justice, politics, ethics and aesthetics."[228] This concept of creating many cultural values, if employed in Irish primary education, would arguably see the re-division of Special Needs provision shift to accommodate the varying values attached to that minority – instead of asking that minority to adhere to dominant cultural values under the guise of equality.

Forms of knowledge emerge as essential aspects to consider in McLaren's theses – hence he identifies several types of knowledge; technical knowledge using empirical, analytical methods; practical knowledge which describes and analyses social situations historically or developmentally; and emancipatory knowledge which attempts to reconcile and transcend oppression between technical and practical knowledge. *Emancipatory Knowledge* focuses on "how social relationships are

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[226] Giroux, H in McLaren, P, LS, ibid,     pp176
[227] Thomas, J in McLaren, P, LS, ibid,     pp179
[228] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,     Always totalise, pp208

distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege."[229] This type of knowledge concerns critical theorists because it "creates the foundation for social justice, equality and employment."[230] Where the critical theorist does not attempt to govern education with a theory of what to teach, the socio-political theorist does precisely this, through emancipatory knowledge. Consequently, the totality of McLaren's theory of knowledge in education is neither dictating or decreeing, rather is embracing of the concept of difference; understood as "social contradictions...We need to retain some kind of moral, ethical, and political ground – albeit a provisional one – from which to negotiate among multiple interests."[231] McLaren's overlapping educational ideals essentially accept the significance of theory: that of an impermanent, socially relational theory. This 'theory' is replacing postmodernism's traditional, reactive viewpoint which is not accepted as theory.

Class is essential to McLaren's hypothesis of resistance postmodernism, where class "...refers to the economic, social and political relationships that govern life in a given social order."[232] Class and awareness of the diversity of culture are crucial facets of McLaren's concept of totality, "the particular ways in which a social group lives out and makes sense of its 'given' circumstances and conditions of life."[233] Through class and culture, the *Dominant Culture, Subordinate Culture* and *Subculture* can be identified. McLaren refers to Dominant Culture as "the social practices that affirm the central values, interests and concerns of the social class in control of the material and symbolic wealth of society."[234] He refers to Subordinate Culture as social groups who live in subordination to the Dominant Culture and Subcultures as "subsets of the two parent cultures"[235] who use distinct "social practices to help foster an identity outside that of the Dominant Culture."[236] The various cultures collide in a kaleidoscope of Cultural Forms that are "the symbols and social practices that express culture."[237] According to McLaren, current social mores are generated through signification, "through modes of intelligibility and ideological frames of sense

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[229] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,     pp170
[230] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,     pp170
[231] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,     Always totalise, pp207
[232] McLaren, MPC, ibid,     pp171
[233] McLaren, MPC, ibid,     pp171
[234] McLaren, MPC, ibid,     pp172
[235] McLaren, MPC, ibid,     pp172
[236] McLaren, MPC, ibid,     pp172
[237] McLaren, MPC, ibid,     pp173

making."[238]   Signification is the basis through which various aspects of culture 'become' and gradually are embraced as cues and codes for living.  Hegemony is essential to this concept of signification, expressing and exercising domination of subordinate groups through "consensual social practices, social forms and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system and the family."[239]  To McLaren, education is the catalyst of change, where "resistance postmodernism critique helps to understand how student identities are produced by a type of discursive ventriloquism in that they are creatures of the languages and knowledge that they have inherited and which unconsciously exert control over their thinking and behaviour."[240]  Thus totality and provisional theory exist to cultivate and enable change, on the terms of socialisation.

*Critical Pedagogy* and the Power/Knowledge Relation also prove significant in McLaren's concept of educational ideology.  He references the philosophers Michel Foucault and John Dewey in his explanation of the Power/Knowledge Relation.  Truth – our perception of it – is central to the issue of power; discourses in education (as understood by the philosopher Foucault,) are defined as "regular system (s) of statements."[241]  Discourses are the construction of meaning by engaging in thinking through words; "To most truly teach one must converse, to truly converse is to teach."[242]  These discourses are perceived as regimes of truth which dictate the books to be used, classroom methodologies, curriculum and what values teacher's transmit.  McLaren argues, "Teachers need to stress in their teaching the hypothetical or provisional and not the categorical embrace of utopia."[243]  Many types of discourse exist, according to McLaren.  He lists these as dominant discourses, conservative discourses, liberal discourses and critical discourses.  Social reality is given meaning through the way in which discourses dictate our ideals and thus the subsequent truth teachers transmit as a utopia or possible utopia.   Truth is established through discourses, and therefore does not necessarily mean 'absolute.'  "Truth is understood

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[238] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,          Difference and the politics of signification, pp204
[239] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,           pp173
[240] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,          Difference and the politics of signification, pp206
[241] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,           pp181
[242] Tharp, RG and Gallimore, R,     *Rousing Minds to Life: Teaching Learning and Schooling in Social Context,* pp111
[243] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,          Always totalise, pp210

only as changes in the determination of what can count as true."[244] Foucault agrees that truth is not relative but relational. "Statements considered "true" are dependent upon history, cultural context, relations of power operative in a given society, discipline (or) institution."[245] McLaren illustrates the Critical Theorist belief that the aim of eliminating pain, oppression and inequality"[246] guides the critical educational theorist in balancing their praxis with *phronesis* – "the disposition to act truly and rightly."[247] Critical educational theorists are moralistic in their endeavour to help, care or nurture. To McLaren, the ideal is meaning created through the discourses of the carer, balancing *relational sociology with autonomy; the desire to propose a totality and theory which is not mastering but rather offers possibility*, in order to provide the student with self-hood. The primary education system in Ireland plays host to this concept of phronesis: teachers who teach from the fiduciary and moral standpoint of carer. "School knowledge should help create the conditions productive *for student self determination in the larger society*."[248] McLaren states; "If teaching is cast in the form of what Henry Giroux refers to as a "language of possibility," then a greater potential exists for making learning relevant, critical and transformative."[249] The model of possibility underlies McLaren's work and encapsulates his optimism, like Giroux, in a postmodernist, and predominantly pessimistic arena.


## Freedom and Authority


To McLaren, education has become "teacher-proofed"[250] beneath the political, cultural and economic drives of the current social mode. Teachers have been "reduced to the role of semi-skilled, low-paid clerk."[251] The economic machine has churned out employees to create other employees. Teachers deliver the 'realities' of life to the learner – thinking for oneself would interrupt the system. His argument is that "schooling for self and social empowerment is ethically prior to a mastery of technical skills."[252] Education for the market place wrestles with education for the

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[244] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,        pp181
[245] McLaren, LS, ibid,        pp182
[246] McLaren, LS, ibid,        pp182
[247] McLaren, LS, ibid,        pp182
[248] McLaren, LS, ibid,        pp183
[249] McLaren, LS, ibid,        pp189
[250] McLaren, LS, ibid,        pp162
[251] McLaren, LS, ibid,        pp162
[252] McLaren, LS, ibid,        pp162

self. "Educators within the critical tradition argue that mainstream schooling supports an inherently unjust bias resulting in the transmission and reproduction of the dominant status quo culture."[253] McLaren argues; "As historical agents, educators are positioned within the tension produced by modernist and postmodernist attempts to resolve the living contradiction of being both the subject and the object of meaning,"[254] Freedom is found in the balance within the educational theory of relational totality and respect for difference; hypothetically students and teachers are free to decide for themselves as politically aware beings, outside the social norms professed by the white, male culture. In addition to education, McLaren's work also deals with concepts of gender and psychology in relation to education. He engages with issues surrounding student failure at school. He employs some of Freire's analyses of reducing learners and teachers as means to an end. He refers to "inputs and outputs"[255] and student learning styles as conforming to "Henry Ford's rust-proofed assembly lines."[256] When students and teachers are reduced to societal pawns, their self-hood and subsequent capacity to effect change is diminished – behaviour problems and ineffective education result for students and for teachers.

Essential to McLaren's political theories and concepts of education is his understanding of the *Hidden Curriculum*. This deals with critical pedagogy and the curriculum, "The introduction to a particular form of life; seems in part...to prepare students for dominant or subordinate positions in existing society."[257] The Hidden Curriculum embodies the "untended outcomes of the schooling process,"[258] the invisible authority that underlies school practices and ethos. The challenge identified by McLaren for critical educators is to "identify the structural and political assumptions upon which the hidden curriculum rests and to attempt to change the institutional arrangements of the classroom so as to offset the most undemocratic and oppressive outcomes."[259] The hidden curriculum projects the norms inherent in the postmodernist society resulting in the unquestioned acceptance of dominant ideologies which do little for minority groups. McLaren claims that the hidden

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[253] McLaren, LS, ibid,                        pp163
[254] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,                Always totalise, pp211
[255] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,                     pp222
[256] McLaren, LS, ibid,                         pp222
[257] White, D in McLaren, P, LS, ibid,     pp183
[258] White, D, in McLaren LS, ibid,         pp183
[259] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,                      pp185

curriculum is being used as a form of cultural politics. He shares a concept of empowerment with Stanley Aronowitz; "the process of appreciating and loving oneself."[260] McLaren defends empowerment as a force which allows the learner the opportunity to transcend, transform and redefine their lives and worlds, and not merely serve the social order.

McLaren believes that schools perpetuate or reproduce the social relationships and attitudes needed to sustain the existing dominant economic and class relations of the larger society."[261] He highlights the input of various theorists including Correspondence Theorists (Bowles, Gintis) who illustrate how schools reflect the inequalities in a given society. These include economic and class position, social, cultural and linguistic factors. Resistance Theorists (Giroux, Willis) distinguish themselves from Correspondence Theorists through emphasis on the "partial autonomy of the school culture."[262] These theorists focus on how resistance can ironically "displace the school's potential to help (students)...escape"[263] their traditional class and culture after their school experience. "This resistance only helps secure to an even greater degree the eventual fate of these students."[264] McLaren identifies many reasons for this resistance which involve the influences of identity; where the images of success perpetuated are unattainable for these students. The concept of *Cultural Capital*; where identity is lost when students conform to school ideals, the concept of *Delibinization*; where eros is denied, the concept of subordination. In addition, the groups have little access to the 'ideal' culture, and the student's potential as a worker: where dominant culture groups see these students only as workers. McLaren claims a culmination of these factors engenders a non-conformity in school culture by minority or discriminated social classes or groups. McLaren continues to highlight the point that our culture has cultivated a "passion for ignorance"[265] which he explains as our inability or refusal to admit that 'accepted truth' can be unaccepted, and that the status quo can be transcended. Here a link with Fromm can be made, the latter identifying fear as a mode of refusing to admit to the possibility of change.

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[260] McLaren, LS, ibid,                                    pp186
[261] Kennis and Fitzclarence, in McLaren, P  *Life in Schools*, pp187
[262] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,                                pp187
[263] McLaren, LS, ibid,                                    pp187
[264] McLaren, LS, ibid,                                    pp188
[265] McLaren, LS, ibid,                                    pp189

## Responsibility

McLaren argues that we have a responsibility as educators to create critical thinkers in our learning situations. We need to provide educators "with the vision and power to counter the dehumanising effects of modern supply-side capitalism."[266] The critical theorist's aim is to relieve pain, suffering and oppression. This cannot be done if we transmit only 'how to be' in the given culture at a given time. Currently we use "schooling as a mode of social control." [267] Society produces unreflective humans. Pierre Bourdieu popularised this concept which draws reference to social idiosyncrasies such as "ways of talking and acting, modes of style, moving, socialising, forms of knowledge, language practices, and values."[268] Subjects who...play out the ideologies of the dominant culture."[269] We must make individual questioning and wondering the core of our work. We must facilitate the learner to become a critical thinker – to become self empowered. We must facilitate social transcendence in society – providing its member with the "potential to transform society."[270] McLaren believes that we insist in treating education as an external activity, outside the realm of reality and real life, deeming this technologizing learning. "As teachers, we are encouraged to be good 'systems people,' to create synthetic environments for our students. We dish out knowledge like fast food."[271] He continues to highlight how teachers are de-skilled and devalued as the system makes decisions, and the capacity for critical thought is quashed. These 'systems people' continue along their teaching careers "under the guise of efficiency and procedural smoothness."[272] McLaren emphasizes the forms of knowledge which remain when teachers become 'systems people.' Productive or transformative knowledge is replaced with practical and technical forms of knowledge. Knowledge thus becomes technologized.

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[266] McLaren, LS, ibid,     pp164
[267] McLaren, LS, ibid,     pp165
[268] McLaren, LS, ibid,     pp190
[269] McLaren, LS, ibid,     pp164
[270] McLaren, LS, ibid,     pp165
[271] McLaren, LS, ibid,     pp222
[272] McLaren, LS, ibid,     pp222

McLaren's expression of responsibility is closely related to his theories of education – the notions of self-hood, the reflective human, and ideology of education dominate. "Students and teachers are all actors in narrative configurations and employments that they did not develop but that are the products of historical and discursive struggles that have been folded back into the unconscious."[273]

McLaren is direct and forthright in his theories and beliefs, and openly optimistic in his regard for the notion of human agency; "the theatre of agency is possibility."[274] The responsibility of the teacher resides not in traditionalist all-knowing teacher volunteered by the traditionalist and postmodernist culture, but rather "it means advancing a theory that does not elevate the teacher-other as individual knower and devalue the student as an objectified, unknowing entity. Students must not be constructed as the zombified ideal "always ready," open to manipulation for passive acquiescence to the status quo. We should not forfeit the opportunity of theorizing both teachers and students as historical agents of resistance."[275] The traditional understanding of meritocracy is an issue McLaren also brings to the debate. He explains the traditional impressions of meritocracy thus, "students who are more capable (are furnished) with their rightful rewards and excludes those who are less able."[276] To the neo-conservative, the concept and system of meritocracy reigns true, where any evidence to the contrary is ignored. They believe the *Intellectual Impediments Model*.[277] McLaren highlights many other studies which support his theory that "life chances are socially conditioned to a greater extent than they are determined by individual effort."[278] Olson's studies "point out that parental background makes a greater difference to school achievement than measured IQ."[279] Feinberg and Soltis' work underlines how compensatory school programmes will have a negligible effect on school achievement in the function of class culture."[280] Chomsky argues that "success is also correlated with traits much less sanguine than intelligence: manipulativeness, greed, dishonesty, a disregard for others and so

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[273] McLaren, P, *Multiculturalism and the Postmodern Critique: Towards a Pedagogy of Resistance and Transformation*, Always totalise, pp212
[274] McLaren, MPC, ibid, pp212
[275] McLaren, MPC, ibid, pp213
[276] McLaren, P, LS, ibid, pp223
[277] McLaren, LS, ibid, pp223
[278] McLaren, LS, ibid, pp225
[279] Olson, in McLaren, P, LS, ibid, pp225
[280] Feinberg, W and Soltis, J, in McLaren, P, LS, ibid, pp225

on."[281] McLaren concurs, "the education system gives those who begin with certain advantages...a better chance to retain those advantages all through school, and ensures that minority and economic disadvantaged students will remain at the bottom rung of the ladder."[282] He dispenses with the belief that cultural deprivation – the inability to "fit into the social milieu"[283] is a myth. The interests of the dominant culture are sustained. "Social conflicts are reduced to individual, subjective concerns rather than problems having to do with social and material inequality and collective greed and privilege."[284]

McLaren proposes a model for the inequalities he sees in education. Firstly, he argues "the Primacy of the Student Experience where the problems and needs of the students themselves...(is the) starting point. Student experience is intimately related to identity formation."[285] Giroux says "knowledge must be made meaningful before it can be made critical."[286] Teachers must begin from student experience and "support the process of theorizing and not the mere exposure to correct ideas."[287] The idea of solidarity is recurring in the work of McLaren and his thesis for education, teachers "...need to create a politics of alliance building, of dreaming together, of solidarity that moves beyond the condescensions...which actually serve to keep forms of institutionalised racism intact."[288] Kobena Mercer eloquently summarises the concept, "solidarity does not mean that everyone thinks the same way, it begins when people have the confidence to disagree over issues because they 'care' about constructing a common ground."[289] McLaren seeks unity in a theorised totality, in creating social awareness to balance traditional and dominant imbalances, and create proactive, optimistic hopeful futures.

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[281] Chomsky, N, in McLaren, P, LS, Ibid,  pp225
[282] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,  pp224
[283] McLaren, LS, ibid,  pp224
[284] McLaren, LS, ibid,  pp225
[285] McLaren, LS, ibid,  pp226
[286] Giroux, H, in McLaren, P, LS,  pp226
[287] Welch, S, in McLaren, P, LS,  pp228
[288] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,  Critical pedagogy: teaching for a hybrid citizenry and multicultural solidarity, pp213
[289] Mercer, K, in McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,  pp214

## Conclusion

In conclusion, McLaren identifies schools as "democratic public spheres."[290] It is in the school that the student learns "the language of responsibility...a fundamental respect for individual freedom and social justice."[291] By definition, school has become the "transformative agency for social change."[292] Giroux concurs, stating; "Self empowerment and social change can occur when one's own voice is heard and confirming this voice as legitimate means meaning can be given to everyday life. Language...gives form and shape to the development to a more critical self."[293] Teachers are dignified as intellectuals and social critics; whose work "make the preconditions for critical learning, social empowerment and democracy possible,"[294] their podium is the classroom, "the site of the teacher's own embodiment in theory/discourse, ethical disposition as moral and political agent, and situatedness as a cultural worker within a larger narrative identity."[295] He proposes the theory of action and proaction; of the practice of hope to transform and transcend; "a pedagogy ...to outface the barrenness of postmodern culture by employing a discourse and set of social practices that will not be content with infusing their pedagogies with the postmodern élan of the ludic metropolitan intellectual, with resurrecting a nostalgic past which can never be reclaimed, or with redescribing the present by simply textualizing it, leaving in place its malignant hierarchies of power and privilege, its defining pathologies."[296] The impact of McLaren's work is sincere and frank – he calls to reform education not to the pessimistic rehashing of the status quo beneath the guise of postmodernism, or the creation of the selfish pseudo-autonomy of the critical theory, rather through the social pedagogy of possibility and difference. McLaren concludes; "we must work hard to reverse the current decline of moral passion and the socially induced depletion of the human spirit...as agents of transformation and hope."[297]

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[290] McLaren, P, LS,                              pp238
[291] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,                        pp238
[292] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,                        pp240
[293] Giroux, in McLaren, P, LS,                   pp235
[294] McLaren, P, LS,                              pp239
[295] McLaren, P, MPC, ibid,                       Intensifying the obvious and accelerating the
mundane, pp216
[296] McLaren, MPC, ibid,                          pp217
[297] McLaren, P, LS, ibid,                        pp242

**Henry A Giroux**

**"The language of possibility"**[298]

Henry Giroux's theories centre upon his belief in the socio-political process. For this educational theorist, education is a doorway to producing a democratic and egalitarian society. Similar to his critical educational counterparts, Giroux believes in equality of culture and gender, of race and marginalized social groups. What sets him apart from other socio-political, post-modernist theorists is the infusion of the political ideal above all else, in his work. What distinguishes him from critical educational theorists is his rejection of the concept of critical individual thought as the exclusive means to achieve his socio-political ideal. "Education must be understood as producing not only knowledge but also political subjects. Rather than rejecting the language of politics, critical pedagogy must link public education to the negatives of a critical democracy."[299]

Having lived in a world that so highly prizes material and consumerist gain, Giroux sees children born into small families, where they are listened to, encouraged and communicated with in ways children of the past were not always so fortunate to experience. This inclusive and respectful environment which modern children inhabit is one that the critical educator would advocate and encourage. However according to Giroux, this society is "straining its resources to the very limits,"[300] where children are growing up bereft of traditional values of any given culture. The pervading sense of success associated with capitalism and its presentation as a steadfast reality annul the traditional values of the past. Giroux argues that this is not productive in any culture, society or political state. "...This means educators need to develop a critical pedagogy in which the knowledge, habits, and skills of critical rather than simply good citizenship are taught and practiced."[301] School and education is a hive of critical and political socialisation, where the child is granted the scope to rehearse the

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[298] Giroux, H,                                    *Towards a Postmodern Pedagogy,* [Hereafter
TPP], pp385
[299] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,                        pp384
[300] Thompson, EP,                                *The Nation,* January 29th, 1990
[301] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,                        pp384

skills required for later life. Similar to critical theorists' claims, Giroux believes in cultivating critical awareness. He differs from critical theorists, however, in that he considers this critical awareness part of a process of socialisation for the later socio-political arena. "It means providing students with the skills they will need to locate themselves in history, find their own voices, and provide the convictions and compassion necessary for exercising civic courage, taking risks, and furthering the habits, customs, and social relations that are essential to democratic, public forms."[302] Children must not only be equipped with the ability to question, but they must also be equipped with a sense of their place in history and culture. Giroux believes it is from the child's sense of place and sense of political culture that critical thought can emerge and transform. Giroux's educational ideology has become apparent – the juxtaposition of critical awareness with the facility to practise social and political functions as part of a productive society or culture. In addition to this he claims "the category of student experience should not be limited pedagogically to students exercising self-reflection but opened up as a race, gender, and class specific construct to include the diverse ways in which their experiences and identities have been constituted in different historical and social formations...how (the) differences between groups develop and are sustained around both enabling and disabling sets of relations."[303] Education is ideally understood in terms of the learner in his or her specific context, bringing a diversity and newness to the fore, reflecting upon all the members within a learning group. This is not simply the learner seeking his or her own knowledge, independent of the wealth of experience and socio-political culture surrounding him or her. Education is all encompassing, nurtured by the diversity of life involved in life, and not simply the critical theorist's lone search for understanding and a place in the world; education is about legitimising the values of difference.

Responsibility

Giroux places great importance upon the power of practising the socio-political dimensions in a given society. "Difference cannot be seen as simply a politics of assertion, of simply affirming one's voice or sense of the common good, it must be

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[302] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,                 pp384
[303] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,                 pp385

developed within practices in which differences can be affirmed and transformed in their articulation with categories central to public life: democracy, citizenship, public spheres."[304] The teacher's role and responsibility is thus defined as a member of society who creates difference – the alternatives and oppositions within the multi-cultural existence in modern society, the will and desire to live as individuals as part of a community, where the differences of the community are celebrated and employed as educational tools. Multiple narratives of experience and social practices are steadfast educational practices and offer students the opportunity to know the world in several different ways simultaneously. The urge to dominate, to persist in power practices and define authority structures is resisted through the student's experience with diversity and difference. Giroux deems this the language of possibility, the key to a transformative device present to the teacher as a means to educate the community. His ideal language of possibility allows those engaged with it to construct alternative democratic communities, embracing of the diversities that combine to create that society.

The notion and idea of *reason* also proves an issue for Giroux and a core theme in his work. According to Giroux, the commonly understood concept of reason, the Enlightment ideal, must be questioned. The sense of the ideal faculty of simply reasoning a problem to solution is problematic and dubious to Giroux, who claims that reason serves certain social echelons well, and other social strata less so. Reason provides a "script"[305] and guide to how a life should be conducted. The idea of using reasoning reflects Nietzsche's concepts of morality – reason like morality, exists to coin moral and cultural values which dictate the living of a life. For Giroux, reason is a lens through which life is spied, and curbs or limits the freedom one has to live as one chooses. "Reason is not innocent...curriculum can be viewed as a cultural script that introduces students to particular forms of reason which structure specific stories and ways of life."[306] Giroux takes issue with the curriculum in education – the textbook as the definition of what encompasses a student's education. The concept of reason, which is instilled in the school's conception of curriculum, may not always

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[304] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,          pp385
[305] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,          pp386
[306] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,          pp386

be used as a tool of Enlightment, freedom or possibility, but rather as a means of scripting responses to life's problems.

"Educators need to understand more fully how people learn through concrete social relations, through the ways the body is positioned, through the construction of habit and intuition, and through the production and investment of desire and affect..."[307] The possibility of learning through socialisation harnesses possibility in education, as critical awareness harnessed this possibility for critical theorists. Thus the responsibility is upon educators to create critical thinkers and employ the process of socialisation to create freedom and possibility, despite how socialisation has traditionally been associated with a lack of same. Although a seeming paradox, Giroux does not merely believe in socialisation for socialisation's sake – any sense of reason which allows for the conservation of societal ideals. Rather, Giroux sees education as an opportunity in the socio-political campaign to bring both a sense of critical awareness to students and a value system encompassing all society's members, where a traditional sense of reason, infused in curricula and policy, cannot bring this ideal about. Education, Giroux claims, needs to create a language of critique that "combines the issue of limits with the discourse of freedom and social responsibility...the question of freedom needs to be engaged dialectically not only as one of individual rights but also as part of the discourse of social responsibility."[308] The issue of freedom benefits from *dialectical* engagement, Giroux claims, and not merely mentioned as an individual human right, accepted as one but rarely practiced as one. The hub of Giroux's educational thesis concentrates on the discovery and practice of a social behaviour – exercising freedom and cultural diversity. The fundamental concepts of education may have been coloured with the negative language of despair which other post-modernist theorists assert. By contrast, Giroux's work is founded upon the bedrock of hope. Reaction and resistance yield little, he argues, thus the notion of possibility and hope permeates what he believes to be the responsibilities of educators.

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[307] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,                    pp387
[308] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,                    pp387

Taking authority to be earned rather than automatically granted, Giroux's concepts of authority mirror those of critical educational theorists. However Giroux also differs from these theorists – authority is earned through a teacher's responsibility to the socio-political agenda to the creation of difference. Teachers who educate the practice and development of an ideal, as opposed to simply the notion of it, have then earned their authority. According to the research, the traditional Irish perception of authority is earned through a combination of acquiring the appropriate qualification, experience, seniority etc, outlined in Chapter 4. In contrast to this, critical educational theorists feel educators earn their authority through their commitment to the cultivation of individual, critical thought and the creation of the individual self – where the teacher is simultaneously modelling and nurturing this. The teacher/student relationship thus materializes once again, a central theme in an educational theorist's work. In addition to the teacher/student relationship, textbooks are of concern to Giroux. The concept of textual authority illustrates the "struggle over culture fought out at the levels of curricula knowledge pedagogy, and the exercise of institutional power."[309] To Giroux, the knowledge contained in the text should not be treated as sacred, but rather "developed as part of an ongoing engagement with a variety of narratives and traditions that can be re-read and re-formulated in politically different terms."[310] Where knowledge can be redeveloped and "affirm...the multiplicity of narratives,"[311] as it can for critical educators, it is refigured for Giroux, in the "interests of creating more democratic forms of public life."[312]

Giroux considers teachers "public intellectuals"[313] who address the most social and political issues of their neighbourhood, nation and the wider global world."[314] Teachers occupy positions which carry significant political and social influence; therefore Giroux has targeted their authority as a strategic catalyst in bringing his ideal of education to fruition. "Rather than defining teacher's work through the narrow language of traditional professionalism, a critical pedagogy needs to ascertain

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[309] Aronowitz and Giroux, H, in Giroux, H, TPP, ibid, pp386
[310] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,                    pp385
[311] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,                    pp386
[312] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,                    pp386
[313] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,                    pp388
[314] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,                    pp388

more carefully what the role of teachers might be as cultural workers engaged in the production of ideologies and social practices."[315] This is a statement to highlight how *organic connections* can be made between teachers and students, how the practice of cultural and political socialisation can be cultivated through critical awareness, and how this practice of the process of socialisation can create real transformation in our world. These organic connections "are socialising roots which provide students with a voice, history and sense of belonging." [316] Teachers gain authority by being the chief connection with a socialising process which renders students critical, political thinkers connected to their sense of place.

## Conclusion

Deeply connected with the political struggle of the oppressed, Giroux sees education as the means of transformation in society, of transcending the "domination responsible for oppressive social relations."[317] He is sceptical of the concept of "raising one's consciousness (which) has increasingly become a pretext for legitimising hegemonic forms of separatism buttressed by self-serving appeals to the primacy of experience."[318] The freedom ideal spawned by the juxtaposition of critical thought and developed socialisation must be theorised in order to be effective. The creation of theories which marry the practice of critical awareness and socialisation with the experience of the educator is vital to the success of the education system according to Giroux and highlighted in the work of bell hooks. The aim of this active freedom permeates Giroux's work. The Revised Curriculum mirrors the ideal of freedom proposed by Giroux in its objectives that make reference to the centrality of context in the child's learning. The difficulty exists in separating fact acquisition from creating knowledge through freedom without a specific theoretic a lens.

Embodying myriad themes with which this thesis is concerned, Giroux's ideologies of education reflect his understanding of authority and responsibility as means to freedom. The concept he develops concerning self-hood differs to that of other educational theorists; socialisation of the group as a whole as opposed to the creation

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[315] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,          pp387
[316] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,          pp388
[317] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,          pp388
[318] Giroux, H, TPP, ibid,          pp388

of only a critically aware individual. Selfhood is created through critical reflection in a practiced socio-political educational environment. It is arguable that Giroux is a critical theorist with strong beliefs in a political socialisation process, a sociologist at the core. Regardless of the label one would apply, or the label he would employ himself, Giroux's theories stand for emancipation from social and political oppression in the world, and he deems education as the forum through which freedom can be achieved.

Section 1.4

## Pierre Bourdieu

## "Scholastic and Cultural Inequalities"[319]

Pierre Bourdieu brings the perspective of the sociologist to the fore. He is principally concerned with aspects of education, culture and dominance – the socio-political realm similar to those concerns of Henry Giroux and Richard Rorty. As a sociologist, the importance of his arguments cannot be over-stated in the current research because he questions the very foundation of the critical educational theorist's argument. Bourdieu's research suggests that despite individualization and a popular push towards critical self-awareness, certain social strata evident in any culture only conform to the expectations of that culture where education is concerned. Therefore, this theorist brings a new and previously mentioned dimension to education – the possibility that despite the noble or ignoble endeavour of opening an educational system to envelop critical ideologies, all students cannot achieve equally within this educational system. He can be considered a realist in the sense that he does not peddle a mere ideology and hope that it carries sufficient weight to transform society into the 'perfect' one. A French sociologist, Bourdieu's research reflects events on the cusp of a Western European society, and provides diversity to the research being undertaken, in a field dominated by American theorists. Preoccupied with inequality in education, Bourdieu does not see critical education as the means of creating equality or freedom. His arguments lie in his statistics and empirical research – depicting, despite the popular push towards critical education, that education fails to

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[319] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, *Contemporary Research in Sociology of Education,* The school as a conservative force: scholastic and cultural inequalities, [Hereafter CR], pp32

create the equality it claims to create. "The education system can help to perpetuate cultural privileges without those who are privileged having to use it. By giving cultural inequalities an endorsement which ... is in keeping with democratic ideals, it provides the best justification for these inequalities."[320]

## Educational Ideology and Freedom

Similar to many other educational theorists, Bourdieu sees freedom and equality as the chief educational aims. Freedom and cultural or gender equality are primary concerns of theorists from both philosophical and sociological backgrounds. Education, in Bourdieu's theory, perpetuates a myth of freedom. Education is the channel through which deliverance from oppression and inequality can be sought – the "liberating force...a means of increasing social mobility...even when...it is in fact one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern."[321] Bourdieu's originality as an educational theorist, who disagrees with perceived ideology and society's 'misplaced' faith in such a liberating system, stems from his belief that the *liberating force* underpinning education is a justification of the inequalities present in society. Education, he claims, is a "justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage that is...a social gift treated as a natural one."[322] The cultural values of the dominant culture become meshed in a perception and concept of truth and reality. In turn, this impression of the status quo becomes the norm – all social strata accept their conditions of life as understood by their reality and exist therein, where failure is seen as a lack of effort. Naturally gifted children are those who access the value system which exists to empower them, with others being considered "plodders,"[323] who complete their education bereft of the natural ability of their classmates. The educational system, be it based upon the cornerstones of traditional education or critical education, favours the child of natural ability. Bourdieu considers this educational system one which benefits and bolsters certain social strata, where they can easily find success operating within its parameters or manipulating the political arrangement, which satellite it. While the

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[320] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp42
[321] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp32
[322] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp32
[323] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp39

dominant strata experience success participating in the educational system, they also copper fasten the value system education emanates.

The power of the family culture acts as a catalyst to certain educational outcomes. "Each family transmits to its children...a certain cultural capital and a certain ethos."[324] Defining the next generation's attitude to education, job-prospects and social reality, the attitudes which family culture help to create, cultivate and convey are laden with the perceptions of reality found infused in the school culture. Despite the prospect of hope and the possibility of freedom or equality, critical education cannot achieve its ideal if this is merely a pseudo-ideal; true freedom as an outcome of this form of educational system cannot be attained when the educational system protects dominant, vested interests and justifies inequalities through its very critical teachings. Placing responsibility on the self and through one's own realization of the self means those who do not realise themselves, must be undeserving or unready for their liberty. Bourdieu believes in socialising the members of society through education. He believes in the creation and cultivation of liberty in social groups and not through individual units. Freedom is the result of educational practice creating group understanding of true freedom, and not merely the values of the dominant culture posing as reality.

*Parental choice* highlights how parents choose a place of education for their children, and the outcomes of choosing such a place of education are subsequent to this. Basing their choices on "real possibilities,"[325] Bourdieu highlights how certain social strata plan to ensure their children remain employed, living and active within their current social strata. Through passing subtle values along to their children, the concept of reality is created in the minds of the children. These children are students of an educational system where they are educated neither to create individuality nor to attain possibility for the future. "Crucial decisions have been taken at a very early stage,"[326] – these children function within the system to achieve the unambiguous objectives laid out for them, from a very early age, in their specific social class. As the generations ebb one into the next, "the same objective conditions as those which

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[324] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,     pp32
[325] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,     pp33
[326] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,     pp37

determine parental attitudes and dominate major choices in the school career of the child also govern the child's attitude to the same choices...their whole attitude towards school."[327] In regard to the Irish educational system, this element Bourdieu refers to as parental choice becomes relevant on two levels. Firstly it is relevant for the profundity of its candour, and secondly, it reflects the research findings discussed later in Chapters 4 and 5, which highlights the prospect of education for the marketplace and the economic machine, beneath the guise of individualisation and modernity. The possibility of creating an avenue for liberation post education dissipates when education is a means to the protection of the status quo, to the protection of dominant value systems. Bourdieu astutely reveals an emerging paradox; despite any society's strata achieving certain expectations of the dominant culture, all strata adhere to an ideal of attempting to attain certain expectations. They do this in order to change the social order, to alter the outcome they will inevitably reach. "Their behaviour is based on an empirical evaluation of the real hopes common to all individuals in their social group."[328] The ambition, which drives middle-class children to "get on,"[329] can also exist from a child from the lower economic strata, but can rarely be realised. All social classes live by a code which gilds the dominant class values yet allows an individual to think it is their own lack of natural ability, lack of drive, or lack of suitable sacrifice which has prevented their success in the system.

The concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy emerges. Socialisation has a distinct effect upon achievement according to Bourdieu, and where the standards of the group-at-large are low, the efforts, results, attainments or achievements of the individual will be reduced consequentially. Goals and aims will thus be set below what may have otherwise been achieved. By contrast, these goals and aims will be raised to mirror a rising of standards in the group as a whole.[330] Where Bourdieu is less clear is the prospect that if raising or lowering standards is sufficient to powerfully raise or lower an individual's standards (and thus their achievements), is this not enough to allow them access to the cultural superiority occupied by the dominant social class and their values? If a group beneath the dominant social strata increases its expectations to

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[327] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,　　pp33
[328] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,　　pp34
[329] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,　　pp34
[330] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,　　pp35

achieve the standards of the dominant social strata, and the individual members of that inferior social strata act accordingly, as Bourdieu claims they will, could this not result in their attainment of their expectations? Hope for both the traditional educational theorist and the critical educational theorist, exists in the scope for achievement when the expectation to do so is present. Within this context only the traditional educational theorist can avail of this hope, because it is through group psychology, or the process of socialisation, that *Transformative Learning* (Bourdieu's concept of freedom) can be attained. The acquirement of any educational aim, other than individualisation, is the crux of the assertion of socialisation at this point. Bourdieu claims despite an educational ideal, only certain cultural values are implicit as aims of education – therefore the hope of implicit expectations to increase participation in education cannot apply to individualisation in education, because individualisation is just that – an individual process and not a social process. A group cannot hope to become individuals in the critical sense because self-actualization, the creation of self-hood or the process of individualising oneself in any way must be an individual one. However, the aspiration to embark upon a quest of individualisation can be cultivated through a process of socialisation, where the prospect and possibility of individualisation can be sparked and respected.

For the members of the less dominant strata in any given social spectrum, who operate their daily lives attesting to the ascribed values of the dominant culture, an alternative level of success must be achieved to merit any advancement or continuation at a higher educational level. Bourdieu claims that they "...must be more successful for their family and their teachers to consider encouraging further study."[331] This claim, juxtaposed the "age criterion"[332] means where it is possible to transpose oneself into the realm of the dominate social class, it is a vastly difficult task compared to the child already in that class. Regardless of family direction and guidance, or a push towards transposition from one social realm to another, the reality depicted by the dominant social value is "reflected within the logic of the scholastic system proper."[333]

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[331] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp35
[332] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp35
[333] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp35

To Bourdieu, the school serves as a "conservative force"[334] where it is responsible for the "perpetuation of social inequalities."[335] Responsibility rests within the system itself, its teachers and the society that employs it, to portray a façade "of formal equity, which...is in reality unjust."[336] The responsibility of the system resides in protecting the dominant culture and its values. A seeming paradox emerges where Bourdieu highlights the unequal treatment of students "by treating all pupils, however unequal they may be in reality, as equal in rights and duties, the educational system is led to give its de facto sanction to initial cultural inequalities."[337] Assessing and measuring all children with a uniform standard ensures the transmission and dominance of certain cultural values – "protecting privileges."[338] "Teachers are the product of a system whose aim is to transmit an aristocratic culture."[339] Teachers are responsible for the degree of culture transmitted to students, according to Bourdieu; it is transmitted "with greater ardour in proportion to the degree to which they owe it their academic and social success."[340]

The hidden curriculum transmitted by the teachers is one loaded with messages, aimed at "stimulating the 'gifts' hidden in certain exceptional individuals."[341] Other students simply plod along outside the "culture of the elite,"[342] bereft of the natural exceptional gifts of their classmates. It is through the hidden curriculum that the school emanates the values society will live by. The responsibility of the teacher to transmit values rests in their assumption "that they already share a common language and set of values with their pupils, but this is only so when the system is dealing with its own heirs."[343] Language as it is used, is "a system of transposable mental postures which...reflect and dominate the whole of experience."[344] Where an education

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[334] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,   pp37
[335] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,   pp37
[336] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,   pp37
[337] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,   pp38
[338] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,   pp37
[339] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,   pp38
[340] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,   pp38
[341] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,   pp38
[342] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,   pp39
[343] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,   pp39
[344] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,   pp40

system values "oral examinations"[345] and are assessed through them, the educational system strives to standardise all language use amongst students – the language of the dominant elite. Therefore, the "strictly fair academic judgements... in fact perpetuate cultural privilege."[346] In Irish education, the push towards oral language development is growing, with recent revisions in the curriculum asserting the importance of oral language alongside reading and writing in all primary levels. The "abundance of oral language activity"[347] a child is expected to experience before a writing activity is testament to Bourdieu's claim, where the oral language serves to bolster the written piece and it may be the assessment tool used to evaluate the child's writing progress thereafter. Providing the child with as wide a vocabulary as possible is a noble endeavour to many, but is it propagating specific cultural privileges? The tools of observation for assessment at the teacher's disposal are questionable to Bourdieu; they are neither equitable aims of education nor do they portray a true reality beyond the classroom. Like the education theorist Peter McLaren, Bourdieu sees a child's struggle within a fabricated reality, and their subsequent behavioural reaction as "taking refuge in a kind of negative withdrawal which upsets teachers, and is expressed in forms of disorder previously unknown."[348] Standardising an educational system, tailoring values of a social milieu to the ideology of one social stratum is frustrating for the child who is without the advantages at his or her disposal, but which the child's classmates may enjoy. Yet these children are expected to operate within this system, advancing only to those set expectations that are the norm for his or her social class.

## Conclusion

Bourdieu is scathing in his references to an education system we call a liberating force. "By giving individuals educational aspirations strictly tailored to their position in the social hierarchy, and by operating a selection procedure which, although apparently formally equitable, endorses real inequalities, schools help both to

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[345] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp40
[346] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp40
[347] *Primary School Curriculum*, (1999), Chapter 3, First and Second Class, objective 1, pp 28
[348] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    The school as a conservative force: scholastic and cultural inequalities, pp41

perpetuate and legitimise inequalities."[349] His originality lies in his sociological perspective of education, the socialisation of the group as a whole and not the individual. Thus his contribution to the research at hand is relevant. School "transforms de facto inequalities into de jure ones and economic and social differences into distinctions of quality, and legitimates the transmission of cultural heritage."[350] The education system is a realm of conservation which manages to convince its members they have chosen it. It benefits pupils "who are in the particular position of possessing a cultural heritage conforming to that demanded by the school."[351] Those who are unfortunate and are not in that position, must still exist within the system, and blame their choices or their lack of natural ability for their 'failures.' In an Irish context, Bourdieu's work is relevant because it emphasises how cultural values perpetuated by the education system, are in fact limiting freedom. As a sociologist, Bourdieu adds to the argument for socialisation in education. Alongside Rorty and Giroux, Bourdieu advocates utilizing education to cultivate learning through socialisation. His work allows us the glimpsed possibility that an endeavour to legitimately revise a curriculum is merely a conservation of the values of the dominant social class. This is useful when attempting to apply a theoretical lens to the Revised Curriculum.

An education system for Bourdieu exists as the practice of creating freedom through group-work and a sense of community – generating liberty and transcendence. Individually such educational outcomes cannot be created. Apparently noble ideologies of self-actualization and individualisation are questioned through the process of socialisation. "What the education system both hands on and demands is an aristocratic culture and, above all, an aristocratic relationship with it."[352] Education at its worst is dominating the lives of those it claims to empower and perpetuating the myths it creates in order to protect the social hierarchy. Worse still is its insistence on legitimising the culture it claims is reality, forcing into subordinance those whom it allows to believe are to blame for their inability to transform their own lives. Education can only provide hope and possibility, freedom and equality, through socialisation of the people to think beyond dominant cultural values.

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[349] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp42
[350] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp42
[351] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp38
[352] Bourdieu, P, in Eggleston, J, CR, ibid,    pp39

Section 1.5

## Richard Rorty

## "There is only the shaping of an animal into a human being by a process of socialisation followed by self-individualization and self-creation"[353]

As a post-modernist theorist, Rorty's theories bring a succinct and definite understanding of the role of education to this particular debate. His work is laced with his view of the critical educational movement and the divide presented by the fresh thoughts of the post-modernist argument. Providing a clear analysis of the merits of a critical educational approach, he also makes very valid points regarding the socialization processes and crucially – the time at which socialization ends and critique (critical awareness) begins. His works and ideologies are core to concepts relevant to applying a theoretical framework to the Revised Curriculum. The discrepancies and contradictions implicit in the varying aims, objectives and methodologies of the curriculum reflect difficulties in education that Rorty identifies through his own theories of education. Education in an Irish context reflects this philosopher's theories of the problematical nature of picking and choosing in education. Irish education seems to be encumbered with the differing ideologies of societal agendas where on the surface the curriculum has been assembled with the choicest ideologies of major educational theorists. Little regard seems to have been made of the conflicts and contradictions of marrying such ideologies together or to the contextual underpinning of these ideologies. Rorty makes clear his succinct theories on the place of critical education and social education – he claims elementary education is never the place to create critical thinkers and that some basic facts must be learned at this level; these basic facts include socialisation into the given community. Rorty's relevance to this research is significant.

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[353] Rorty, R, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, [Hereafter PSH], Chapter 7, Education as Socialization and as Individualization, Pp114

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Rorty argues for education as a seat of socialization and of individuation. Reflecting on history, philosophy and the works of critical theorists, Rorty sees a place for socialization alongside the populist thrust towards self-hood, self-actualization and *individuation*. "The left pictures society as depriving the young of their freedom and of their essential humanity so that they may function as frictionless cogs in a vast inhuman socio-economic machine."[354] Thus he illustrates the drive behind the critical theorist machine at work in the educational arena. Rorty, however, makes two distinct points. Firstly, like Giroux, he believes the sense of reason employed in education, this "truth-tracking faculty," is questionable in its sincerity – and the values that inform reason from generation to generation, over culture and culture, must also be examined. Secondly, Rorty also points out that whether a theorist is from the traditionalist, conservative right, or from the liberal left, the notion of truth is distinctly linked to freedom – "there is a natural connection between truth and freedom."[355] The notion of 'finding truth leading directly to freedom' is one that permeates the educational divide. Rorty argues that the only differences that exist in the fundamental educational debate are political ones. "Even ardent radicals, for all their talk of 'education for freedom', secretly hope that the elementary schools will teach their kids to wait their turn in line, not to shoot up in the johns, to obey the cop in the corner, and to spell, punctuate, multiply and divide."[356] This blunt, interesting and honest retelling of an educational ideal is not without significant merit. Rorty has indicated his educational ideology as one that places socialization alongside and parallel to the process of individuation. Rorty argues the leftist and rightist movements "both fall into the trap of thinking that a single set of ideas will work."[357] At this point Rorty establishes his belief that the various levels of the educational powers differ greatly. Further to this, he argues, "the conservatives are wrong in thinking that we have either a truth-tracking facility called 'reason' or a true self that education brings to consciousness ... the radicals are wrong in believing that there is a true self which will emerge once the repressive influence of society is removed."[358]

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[354] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,      pp115
[355] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,      pp115
[356] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,      pp117
[357] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,      pp117
[358] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,      pp117

This ideology is core to a theoretical understanding of the Revised Curriculum: do we aim to socialise while creating individual thinkers? Or is the curriculum merely creating problem solvers in the social context?

Claiming "there is no such entity as human nature, in the deep sense in which Plato and Strauss use this term,"[359] Rorty has attested his educational ideology once more. At this point, vastly different from critical educational theorists he does not merely believe in education as a forum for creating the original, individual self. Rather, the individual self will not emerge bereft of oppressive structures – it will emerge as a response to the conditioning of "socialization."[360] Therefore, Rorty argues for the 'right kind' of socialization process to accompany the process of individualisation at school; "A process of socialization, followed (with luck) by the self-individualization, self-creation of that human being through his or her own later revolt against that very processes."[361] Rorty's argument for his ideology of education also considers the possibility of the student reworking "the self-image foisted on them by their past...into a new self image, one that they themselves have helped to create."[362] Thus the socialization process is balanced with the prospect of critical awareness. With particular relevance to primary education, Rorty states, "it is not, and never will be, the function of lower-level education to challenge the prevailing consensus about what is true."[363] In other words, the values taken to be true, which we transmit through education, which we question through critical education, are not open to questioning at primary school level. Here, at this level, Rorty argues we simply socialize our children into the afore-mentioned truth-talking, literate, numerate citizens who can later question critically and create their individual selves. This raises interesting concepts for Irish primary education, where our Revised Curriculum seeks schema-developing learning techniques involving critical thinking and contextual learning. Rorty argues criticism is not appropriate for this level of education. Are we using criticism to learn about facts – creating the guise of the individual while problem-solving? Or do we intend for our critical awareness to create individuals

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[359] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,          pp118
[360] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,          pp118
[361] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,          pp118
[362] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,          pp118
[363] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,          pp118

albeit in a social context? Without a literature review, a theoretical understanding of the curriculum is rendered postulation and conjecture.

## Responsibility and Authority

Dewey understands truth as a "belief result[ing] from a free, open encounter of opinions."[364] It is understood in terms of truth emerging when freedom abounds, to critical theorists. To an existentialist, the individual creates truth. These various concepts of truth vary greatly. At a primary level, responsibility lies in creating a socialization process where basic skills are learned or understood, and citizenship is earned. Teachers' responsibility and authority comes from his or her acceptance of what he or she can and should change, argues Rorty, and subsequently, of what he or she cannot and should not change: Socialisation at primary level, Individualization at higher schooling levels. Rorty views his debate and challenge to the account of truth as an argument that "gets rid of the idea that socio-political institutions need to be 'based' on some such outside foundation."[365] The teacher/student relationship is seen as a relationship centring more on "self-creation"[366] than on socialization. In this respect, Rorty views this teacher/student relationship as "the principal means by which the institutions of a liberal society get changed...making possible the invention of new forms of human freedom, taking liberties never taken before."[367] Similar to all other educational theorists included in the literature review, education is seen as a catalyst for change and for freedom.

## Freedom and School

Particularly preoccupied with Dewey, Rorty sees the theorist as our "Philosopher of Democracy..." offering "inspiring narratives and fuzzy utopias"[368] based on the possibility of hope, instead of providing us with maps to orientate ourselves on definitive educational paths. Dewey saw an educational ideology in seeking guidance from the self and community – ""rather than asking for reassurance or backdrop from

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[364] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,  pp119
[365] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,  pp119
[366] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,  pp124
[367] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,  pp126
[368] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,  pp120

outside."[369] It seems to be this guide that informs Rorty's sense of education as both socialization and individuation. To Rorty, freedom emerges at the right time – when critical questioning is all that remains to be completed in the quintessential educational experience. Self-hood thus emerges: individuation as a re-creation of society's image of the self, on the self. In response to the Dewey theory of education, Rorty says he doubts "that it ever occurred to Dewey that a day would come when students could graduate from an American high school not knowing who came first, Shakespeare, Napoleon or Lincoln, Frederick Douglass or Martin Luther King."[370] Here Rorty makes a point that sets him apart from any other educational theorists. Educational ideology, as understood by any philosophical movement, was founded by individuals who could not know how life would transpire to emerge – what facts would be known and unknown. What is true of the American system may become true to the experience of the Irish primary school. Will children leave primary education equipped with less facts or fictions than children once knew? Equally, Rorty claims; "Dewey too hastily assumed that nothing would ever stop the schools from piling on the information, and that the only possibility was to get them to do other things as well."[371] It is this achievement that provides the crux of this thesis – regardless of the critical education view held by those favouring socialization – the demands on the everyday classroom have increased enormously. This is a distinct disclosure of the research findings. The juxtaposition of Revised Curriculum demands, and traditionally accepted "piling on the information"[372] will no doubt have a backlash in the future. The point at which to balance fact and the 'other things' Rorty refers to is concerning – socialization and individuation. Rorty sees the primary or 'lower level' school as the base for socialization. As children at this level grow used to critical thought, will they allow Rorty's educational ideal to occur here – will they too consider themselves as third level students, "too old and too restless to put up with such a process?"[373] Should the balance be redressed at primary and higher educational levels, not just affording "open-ended"[374] education to third level?

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[369] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,          pp120
[370] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,          pp121
[371] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,          pp121
[372] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,          pp121
[373] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,          pp124
[374] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid,          pp124

In conclusion, Rorty offers the post-modernist twist on a critical educational debate. In order to attain new means and ways of viewing freedom, education must be a place which provides both the opportunity for socialization and an opportunity of individualization. Through the work of Dewey, Rorty finds a voice he contradicts and agrees with. He refers to the hope invested in Dewey's work as directionless yet loaded with possibility - "an exaltation as fruitful as it is fuzzy."[375] Rorty believes in a certain kind of education that allows freedom and fundamental change through hope and possibility, socialization and individualization. This brings the analysis of the emphasis on socialisation to a close within the literature review section. The author will be returning to some of these concepts in the interpretation of the research findings in Chapter 4 and 5. However, in the next chapter, the author wants to look at specific questions relating to the Research Methodology.

Section 1.6

## Conclusion to Chapters 1 and 2

The contradictions and tensions between the opposing views of critical education have been examined and analysed. The works of the theorists studied provide us with a plethora of theoretical terminology from which to base any educational curricula upon. It is assumed that these theoretical theses that have provided for the foundational philosophical basis of the Primary School Curriculum 1999. Within the context of Irish education and research gathered from primary schools around the country, the following study aims to research the impact, implementation and development of the curriculum as it evolved beneath the mantle provided by the individualisation and socialisation of modern educational ideology. The contradiction imposed upon the curriculum results from the tensions apparent in alternative principles of education; that is individualisation or socialisation. Where hooks, Freire, Illich and Fromm propose the development and the creation of the individual, be it termed self-actualisation, individuation, or selfhood, the opposite is true for the social theorists, such as Bourdieu, Giroux, McLaren and Rorty. These theorists believe in socially educating the individual, allowing for the critical development of powerful

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[375] Rorty, R, PSH, Ibid, pp126

social groups. These latter theorists deem certain aspects of shared individualisation with socialisation as necessary for the recreation and revolution of education, to either politically or socially emancipate. In addition, Rorty views individualistic critical education as misguided where certain facts, societal processes and the sheer youth of participants in education ought to dictate educational processes. In reference to the above findings, the following chapters aim to analyse the curriculum in the new light of the philosophical debate, referencing teachers, parents and children as they entertain and engage with the multi-faceted, much theorised Primary School Curriculum of 1999. It is the intention of this research that the development of the curriculum can be accessed through an application of a theoretical lens informed by the theorists analysed in the last two chapters. This research aims to create a philosophical framework that can be applied to the curriculum and empirical findings. Where the theories examined are by no means exhaustive of all the research and educational theories available to us at present, they are a selection of useful and prevalent hypotheses that are evident in the Revised Curriculum. Through the perusal and engagement of the teacher with the philosophical underpinnings of the research, these theorists have allowed us to create meaning-makers of our teachers.

# Chapter 3

# Research Methodology

Section 1

## Research Methodology – An Overview

For the purpose of this study, the author chose the case study methodology, examining its advantages and disadvantages, its biases and its importance as an exploratory tool. The author used both qualitative and quantitative investigation – interviews and questionnaires respectively. Through these interviews and questionnaires, broad themes emerged and the focus questions evolved, under which the author analysed the educational theorists.

Outline of the Study

Chapters One and Two explored the contributions of many educational theorists ranging from foundational theorists such as Paulo Freire through Critical Educational Theorists, such as McLaren, bell hooks and Erich Fromm, to socio-political contributions from theorists such as Richard Rorty, Pierre Bourdieu and Henri Giroux to the controversial anti-institutional Ivan Illich. The author has also analysed the particulars of the Primary School Curriculum 1999; its development over time, its correlations and comparisons with former curricula and its general contextualisation from inception to current situation. In Chapters Four and Five, the research findings are presented, analysis of the data procured, and the author correlated this analysis with the philosophy theorists. Finally, the author concludes the study in the last section. In Appendix 1, transcripts from the teachers' questionnaire are included. In Appendix 2, transcripts of six interviews with teachers to highlight the diversity of the responses are included. In Appendix 3, records of academic conversations and observations held with primary school teachers, parents and children are included. Appendix 4 records a selection of children's responses to the hybrid questionnaire / interview which were used to garner children's impressions of the Revised Curriculum. Finally, Appendix 5 records a selection of responses of parents to the Revised Curriculum questionnaire. Where the appendices section is broad, this was a necessary, in order to accommodate the use of phrases and thoughts as expressed by those surveyed in their due context.

Conclusion

This thesis endeavours to satisfy the issue, *The Development of the Revised Curriculum in the Irish Primary School from Philosophical Ideal to Classroom Reality. Applying a theoretical lens to the Practical Classroom.* Throughout the course of the study, the author has engaged with a plethora of educational and philosophy theorists, and a wealth of data pertaining to current primary school teachers and their methodological practices. The author hopes to provide a concise and consistent analysis that satisfies the issue originally posed, *The Development of the Revised Curriculum in the Irish Primary School from Philosophical Ideal to Classroom Reality. Applying a theoretical lens to the Practical Classroom.*

Section 1.1

## Research Methodology

## Introduction

The nature of the research – applying a philosophical lens to the Revised Curriculum – does not lend itself to facts and figures. Through data gathered it became increasingly clear that teachers do not like to be wrong. Through the nature of their training, the common, accepted perspective of their chosen career, and their existence within the 'system,' teachers have come to feel that they should be correct or right. Many teachers who formed the basis for my theory and inspired the research, searched for 'the right answer' in my questionnaires. In several instances, teachers grew annoyed with the questionnaire, the tone changing to indicate their frustration. The nature of the questioning had sparked some fibre of confusion, inadequacy, or irritation because the 'right' answer was far from clear. Age, gender or experience had little effect on the questionnaire findings in this regard – many teachers had a desire to be right, and to do it like they should.

As the research broadened, the author discovered that interviews could also pose a problem. The desire to be 'as they should,' and as society expects them to be, would surely influence the tone of an interview. The author devised an interview technique that does not lead the interviewee, and in that instance was sufficiently formal to afford the interviewer the opportunity to avoid polite 'agreement' statements that may

sway and guide the opinions of the interviewee. Some experienced teachers felt they ought to teach the author, as interviewer, the 'best' means and methods of their experiences. Clearly, knowledge and wisdom to these teachers was there for everyone, and was willingly shared with the author, as much a duty as a gesture of kindness and aid. Due to the complex nature of the investigation at hand, the author chose the case-study methodology. It provided the opportunity to access opinion through quantitative and qualitative methods – questionnaires and interviews respectively. The case study methodology allowed for access to empirical data, which can then be analysed within the framework of a theoretical lens. Through perusal of this situation, themes were devised to structure the analysis. The following is the report of how the author approached the research and the analysis of the findings.

Section 1.2

### Research Methodology – Case Study

The author chose the case study methodology because it is advantageous in gaining an understanding of a complex, multi-layered issue. The Revised Curriculum is the basis of the study, and the detailed analysis issue. The following are the sub-sections explored through the focus of the Revised Curriculum:

- Education Introduction and Ideology – What education means to teachers.
- The specifics of the Revised Curriculum – Individual understanding and the effects the Revised Curriculum has had on the educational community.
- In-Service Training – Understanding and appreciation of up-skilling provided by the Department of Education and Science.
- Class Allocation and Teaching Methodologies – Specific details about areas of the curriculum and contrasts between the 1999 Curriculum and that of the 1971 Curriculum.
- Newly Qualified Teachers – The opinions and perceptions held by NQTs (Newly Qualified Teachers, trained in the last five years) regarding the Revised Curriculum.
- Parents and Education – The influence parents have on teachers, their awareness of the Revised Curriculum and educational change.

- The Introduction of the Revised Curriculum – Problems encountered, advantages and disadvantages of the curriculum as considered by teachers.

In addition to the above, the author also examined other areas that were less relevant to the research at hand, but were necessarily included to contextualise the practical working environment of teachers. Where these areas are not included in the bulk of the research, they are included in the appendices. Robert Yin defines the case study methodology as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which sources of evidence are used."[376] The case study method employed in this research is a qualitative research method, which enables the author to examine the issues layered within the educational context of Ireland.

Section 1.3

**How I used the Case Study Methodology to undertake my research**

The impact of the Revised Curriculum provided a firm focus for the research. The author ensured that sub-case selection was varied yet focused, to ensure reliability of findings and to provide an insight into the collaborative issues that inform human thought and opinion – including societal, political, historical and personal issues. The literature review involved many educational theorists from philosophical backgrounds, and others from societal and educational backgrounds. Critical educational theorists of the individualistic and socialistic emphases were reviewed and analysed. This allowed the author to ascertain what information and theories exist presently that are implicit in the curriculum. The author therefore was in a position to refine the questions collaboratively with the themes, and create insightful avenues of enquiry to explore the various theories. Discrimination was key at this stage in the research. As already mentioned, the author ensured a wide sample through persistent reference to the focus themes and the following samples - geographical sample (rural and urban, country wide), experience sample (including NQT), school size sample (rural and urban) and responsibility sample (post-holder included).

The author approached the data gathering systematically, storing the data for later perusal and analysis, cross-referencing and cross-case examining. During the design

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[376] Yin, R. K. *Case Study Research; Design and Methods*, pp 23.

phase of the case study, the author made every effort to ensure the construct validity, internal and external validity and reliability of the study were steadfast and thereby negating any flaws which would otherwise be inevitably encountered. Clear procedures were established to collect the data in advance of the fieldwork, and for opportunities for triangulation of the work during the analysis phase of the study. Some examples of the procedural protocols include time deadlines, to ensure relevance of opinion during sample interviews and questionnaires, guideline formats for interview narratives and the aforementioned guidelines for ensuring the opinions of teachers from varying school size, rural and urban, of varied ages and experience were used in the study. The academic conversations held with teachers concerning the curriculum, prior to the author's desire to pursue a Masters Degree, formed the basis for the pilot study. It was through these conversations the author discovered the mixed responses to the curriculum and questioned the motivations behind such responses. During the development phase of the questionnaires, the author ensured the considerations of ethical issues – such as the awareness that the questionnaire was an intrusion, respect and sensitivity to issues and confidentiality.[377] In action research in the classroom, findings indicate that when students feel the questions asked test their own knowledge, fear of exposing their own ignorance was an issue.[378] This was a major consideration for the author, as the ideology of the teacher as "moral gatekeeper,"[379] ensures constant pressure is upon the teacher 'to be right.' Phrasing of questions in a safe, open way was essential. The use of multiple-choice questions allowed the author "to gain a purchase on complexity,"[380] as rating scales allowed the author to ascertain the intensity of responses. During the drawing-up phase of the interviews, the division of the interviews into themes was essential. Not alone did it help to remain focussed on the subject at hand, but it also allowed for simplified analysis procedures. When used in the past by student and teacher discourses, open contextual settings allowed for the development of exploratory language. This in turn allows for opinions to be shared more readily and evolve and become redefined throughout the interview.[381] This balance of open language, which did not threaten the interviewee, with the focus of the theme at hand, provided the core of the

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[377] Cohen, Mannion and Morrison,    *Research Methods in Education*, pp245
[378] Altrichter, Posch and Somekh,    *Teachers Investigate their Work*, pp45
[379] Fromm, E    *Fear of Freedom*, pp181
[380] Cohen, Mannion and Morrisson,    *Research Methods in Education*, pp251
[381] Day, Elliott, Somekh, winter, (eds.)    *Educational Action Research, An International Journal*, Vol. 9, Number 3, 2001, pp387

interview questioning and process. A smooth transition into the collection and analysis of the data was provided by the guidelines established, to ensure that samples were confidential and could be cross-referenced through the grouping of data into sub-sections. The skills necessary in becoming a good listener were considered prior to the interview data collection process, however the author inevitably further developed this throughout the duration of the study. Equally important was the development of a good questioning style, which allowed for clear and precise opinion to be expressed. The author reminded herself of the desire held by many teachers to be of the 'correct opinion' and this was a steadfast guide in the questioning process. With this in mind, the author was able to ask sufficiently open questions which did not lead the interviewee but equally, did not guide them to certain opinions. As a trained teacher, the author believes the questioning processes encountered daily in the classroom, were advantageous in advance of the interview process. Finally, the author attempted to confine the interpretation of answers given to the style and tone of the interview.

Upon later cross analysis, the author found certain answers would easily be misinterpreted should they be taken out of the interview context and examined independently. In this instance, the interview process provided a rich sample of opinion and illustrated how the nature of a study such as this is best served as a collaborative investigation. The research was recorded and documented systematically, and the author also kept field notes with intuitive feelings to act as a parallel guide for the study during the analysis phase. These field notes have provided an initial indication of the patterns that have coloured the research. Where the quantitative data collection provided number crunching opportunities and statistics, the interview process allowed the author to ascertain the climate which exists towards the questions asked. While variant answers and opinions were expressed as the norm, the interview process allowed the author to ascertain the motivations behind these opinions, as opposed to discovering the opinions themselves. The motivations behind such opinions are the cornerstone of the research. The necessity of contextualising the teachers' responses during interviews to understand the data was similar to contextualising the theorists in the literature review chapters. The author felt that a research document that advocates theory and

context had to also portray ideologies and present findings in context. The evaluation of the data findings involved cross-referencing and cross-examination. To ensure reliable and accurate findings, it was essential to move beyond the initial opinions and impressions held by the author. Deliberately looking for conflicting data allowed the author to investigate the motivations of the responses to questions instead of the responses themselves. The author challenged the findings in an attempt to disprove the findings. Repeat interviews also allowed the author to interpret motivations and deepen the analysis more systematically. Where the qualitative approach allowed the author to establish the theory – the rationale and relationship, quantitative data provided numbers and statistics to corroborate and support the qualitative data. The patterns that emerged, from one data type (based on the group-thinking of school cultures and desire of teachers to 'give the correct answer'), were cross-referenced and substantiated by the other data type. This made for stronger findings, producing core conclusions that satisfy the original issues and the subsequent sub-thematic foundation questions. In conclusion, the findings produced certain results, independent of the research motivations and previous thinking. The thesis attempts to portray the complex problem and the findings in a clear and explicit manner which enables anyone from the educational sphere to access the issues at hand in as concise a manner as possible.

Section 1.4

## The Disadvantages of the Case Study Methodology

Disadvantages do exist in the case study methodology. The means by which I attempted to negate the negative aspects of the case study methodology are outlined in this section.

Section 1.4.1

### Generality of Findings

Some researchers believe the small number involved in the case study methodology means that the generality of findings and subsequent reliability of findings is questionable. Small numbers are typically accessed to draw large pictures of the issue at hand, which by the nature of research, can be incorrect or varying. Teachers, parents and children formed the groups for this specific research and their opinions,

although a snapshot of the country; are valid in their own responses. Teachers were interviewed from both urban and rural areas, teaching in both urban and rural environments, of all ages and years of service, with multi layers of responsibility. This ensures a balance of opinions and thoughts on the issue at hand. Due to the nature of this specific research a wide sample of teachers was accessed, the findings proffered are a resolute exemplar of current thought and opinion. In addition, the data gathered on parental and child opinion regarding the Revised Curriculum serve to both multi-facet and copper fasten the findings; the results of the research indicate the richness of opinion and succinct strains upon the education system.

Section 1.4.2

**The case study as a taste of the big picture – but not the big picture**

While the author undertook one central case study, many sub-studies evolved throughout the research. The overall theme of the impact of the Revised Curriculum was soon sub-divided into research themes, which allowed the author to access the opinions of teachers, parents and children in relation to the Revised Curriculum. Sub-sections centred upon the Impact of the Revised Curriculum as follows;

- Initial responses to the Revised Curriculum,

- Understanding of the Revised Curriculum and its underlying principles

- In-Service training and up-skilling,

- Newly Qualified Teachers,

- Methodologies,

- The Introduction of the Revised Curriculum,

- The inspectorate and special educational needs were sub-sections occasionally touched upon for their large impact upon some teachers in the survey process.

As the author processed the findings new themes began to emerge. The literature review and research in existing philosophical theories informed the evolution of the final themes. These themes are as follows:

- Freedom
- Authority
- Ideology of Education
- Responsibility

- Self-Hood

Finally, the author cross-referenced the five themes until the findings proved concrete and thereby negated the theory that in this instance, a case study methodology cannot be considered general or reliable. This case study applies a theoretical foundation to its empirical data to create a sample of the national picture. The validity of differing opinion also qualifies the case study methodology in such research.

Section 1.4.3

**Biases**

Exposure to case studies for the duration of the research process can bias the researchers opinion of the case study subject. Research must obviously be unbiased, and evidence presented at the end of the research must be accumulated through objective, factual means. As the author is a teacher, studying other teachers and the impact of a curriculum in education, the author ensured that the focus of the research was well defined and distinct. The impact of the Revised Curriculum provided this focus, and the reasons as to why teachers liked or disliked it emerged from this. The impact of the Revised Curriculum was not the issue, rather the motivations of teachers in their responses to its impact was the issue. As the work evolved, and the detailed motivations became part of the research, the author learned that these motivations were varied and differing, taking a side, or following one style of opinion was pointless, as each thought type was valid and legitimate in its own right. As the work evolved further still, and the new motivational findings met the initial theories, a new concept emerged, which, regardless of why teachers react the way they do, united all. In the Irish context the concept of self-hood is a significant concept amongst teachers. In relation to parents and children, the concept of ideology emerged as a significant aspect which underpinned the findings.

Section 1.5

**The case study as solely an exploratory tool**

The impact of the Revised Curriculum in the Irish educational context has a complex yet specific nature. The case study methodology provided the author with the ability to access this complex matrix of information through several research tools (including interviews, questionnaires, observation and mini-surveys), and cross-reference it many times, to ensure the validity of the findings. In this way, the author has negated

the concept that the case study methodology is solely an exploratory tool – as it has been used to provide explicit findings. Education is a specific domain in a specific realm, and bearing this in mind, the case-study methodology allowed the author to penetrate the issues and understand the outcomes of the research while comprehending the external, societal, political and personal issues that impact upon education. The research is centred upon human beings in a modern, everyday reality and the case study methodology provided insight into a real-life situation, while also allowing for the provision of unambiguous and precise findings; applying a theoretical lens to the empirical data.

Section 1.6

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the research undertook a complex methodology that suited the complex nature of the problems and questions at hand. Large amounts of data emerged for analysis. Building upon the central theory, changing and altering the questions to examine and investigate motivations behind opinions led the author to the ultimate conclusions of the thesis. The applicability of the case-study methodology to real-life, human situations in the contemporary setting proved indispensable and most worthwhile. The accessibility of the findings in real-life situations is advantageous where this accessibility of the findings strengthens the thesis in general. Although most time-consuming and multi-layered, requiring constant cross-examination and analysis, the author found the case study to be a most beneficial and rewarding methodology in an attempt to apply a philosophical lens in the real-life learning situation.

Section 2

## Approaching the Data

Section 2.1

## The Breakdown of the Data

The Research Findings are divided into two chapters; chapter four is concerned with the findings in relation to Teachers and the Revised Curriculum. Chapter five is divided into three sections; section one is concerned with Children and the Revised

Curriculum, section two is concerned with Parents and the Revised Curriculum. In chapter four, Teachers and the Revised Curriculum, the data is presented in sub-sections with a brief explanation, followed by an analysis of the findings. By contrast, in chapter five, the data is followed by a summary combined with an analysis of the findings. This change to the presentation is necessary where the qualitative nature of the data concerning children and parents is best examined in light of the quantative findings.

Section 2.2

## Teachers and the Revised Curriculum

### Questionnaires – a quantitative approach to gathering data

The author has gathered data from hundreds of teachers. These teachers have been specifically targeted as members of rural and urban school staffs, of large, medium and small-scale schools. They teach single and multi-grade classes, with and without posts of responsibility, in classrooms and as support and resource teachers. The author has endeavoured at all times to guarantee as varied a response as possible, to ensure the validity of the research findings. The questionnaires have yielded the following research findings that illustrate the potential areas of the Revised Curriculum which are a cause of concern to many teachers and which may cause concern in the future. Of a total of five hundred questionnaires, three hundred and seventy-seven were returned and analysed.

### Interviews – a quantitative approach to gathering data

The nature of the interview process caused some concern for the author. Having been aware of the potential for 'people pleasing' and the possibility of fear of voicing an honest opinion, the author endeavoured to interview certain teachers. The author knew these teachers as notably active in their concerns and beliefs of the education arena. The author also interviewed teachers with whom she had no acquaintance with, prior to the interview. The author assured those interviewees that their personal data was confidential and vital as an absolutely honest response, to the validity of the work. The following sub-sections represent the analysis of the research findings um toto. The transcripts found in the appendices are a sample of the interviews and have

been chosen at random, except where inclusion of specific samples was necessary due to referencing. The author is satisfied that the responses are valid. Interviews were organised around specific, theme-related questions, which served to guide the course of the conversations and focus the work. The author also permitted her initiative to lead the interview on occasions where a deeper unveiling of the issue at hand would function to extend the research analysis. The author probed into issues only when the interviewee had signalled their invitation to do so. Of a total of one hundred scheduled possible interviews, fifty-one were held and the responses analysed.

Section 2.3

## The Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to satisfy the issue, *The Development of the Revised Curriculum in the Irish Primary School from Philosophical Ideal to Classroom Reality. Applying a theoretical lens to the Practical Classroom.* Every primary school teacher received boxed sets of the curriculum documents when it was introduced in 1999. Under the guidelines of the curriculum, redefinitions and developments in methodological practices and subjects themselves were proposed. Teachers were faced with a fresh curriculum. The status quo found itself faced with change. Since its introduction in 1999, all but one of the subject areas of the curriculum has been entirely facilitated by June 2007. The developments in methodological practices and philosophical approaches advocated by the curriculum centre upon the child as the learner – we educate the child from the child's realities and experiences. The child's questions guide the learning situation and context. Teachers transfer from delivering the curriculum to cultivating it. Yeats said education is not filling a pail, but lighting a fire.[382] This view, although developed from the 1971 curriculum, presents teachers with a challenge. Those who relied upon more traditionalist or banking[383] methodologies – and perhaps found these advantageous or positive – were now asked to consider and employ new ones. Many teachers, who had never engaged with teaching Science or Drama before, were now encouraged to do so. Not only did the re-organisation of the curriculum bring new subjects, it also brought new ways of organising them; namely in the form of strands and strand units. Concept and skill development sections asking teachers to cultivate

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[382] Yeats, in Bourke, R,    NEART, pp 54
[383] Freire, P    DS, Chapter 2.

questioning and thinking skills also emerged. Teachers were expected to engage with areas where assessment proved difficult and therefore assessment itself and basic education ideology proved an issue. Practices engaged with for many years were called into question. Teachers were encouraged to alter their objectives from measurable, obvious acquisitions to more abstract, conceptual and intangible ones. These teachers were expected to eventually adapt their modus operandi in their classrooms to cover curricular ideals that were measurable by supposition and postulation. Teachers had to ask themselves does the child think like an historian, where naming of facts in an area of history had been previously required. This created ambiguity for teachers who found themselves on unfamiliar ground and had been accustomed to measuring fact acquisition. Although presented with the freedom it encapsulates, the curriculum did bring a plethora of changes, questionable objectives and dubious methodologies for many teachers.

This chapter aims to present the research findings according to the impact of the Revised Curriculum upon the teachers who were expected to engage with it, endeavouring to satisfy the issue; *The Development of the Revised Curriculum in the Irish Primary School from Philosophical Ideal to Classroom Reality. Applying a theoretical lens to the Practical Classroom.* The author's experience has shown a general misunderstanding amongst members of the educational community, of the liberating aspects of this curriculum. Having been trained in the Revised Curriculum herself, the author was convinced that the positive aspects of the curriculum would outweigh any outstanding difficulties concerning its acceptance into the sphere of education. The freedom the curriculum offers and the redirection towards children's ownership of the learning which it promotes, leave the teacher in as fiduciary a position as the teacher previously occupied. However, on this occasion, the teacher's position is arguably less stressful and less pressured – the moral gatekeeper of traditional Ireland had moved to the station of educational guide who has the privilege of cultivating and inspiring wonder. An idealised view of education, no doubt, but the author's first experiences in the real world of teaching was surprising. Initially many teachers seemed to dislike and misinterpret the curriculum. Few viewed it as a positive change, and most whom the author encountered were sceptical of it. Where revisions were introduced and subjects re-organised, teachers were confused and disillusioned. The author was often told by other teachers that she too would adapt to

a modus operandi which would reflect the wisdom that had gone before, not what the future asked teachers to embrace. This thesis is concerned with the practicality and reality of the impact and implementation of the Revised Curriculum upon the following partners in education: the teachers, the children and the parents. By raising the issue, *The Development of the Revised Curriculum in the Irish Primary School from Philosophical Ideal to Classroom Reality. Applying a theoretical lens to the Practical Classroom,* the author hopes to resolve an issue which has consequences for education in the most philosophical sense, and which quenches her own curiosity as a teacher armed with a curriculum that initially was not wholly embraced.

Section 2.4

### What the study found – Data Gathering and Themes

Chapter 4 details the findings in relation to teachers and the Revised Curriculum. An initial section details the findings relating to the background of the teachers surveyed, age groups, male: female ratios in table form etcetera. The sub-sections which follow detail the research findings beneath the sub themes of the thesis; Educational Ideology, Freedom, Responsibility, Authority and Self-Hood. These themes referred to are the structural themes used throughout the entire document. The data is largely presented in table form, pie charts and bar charts, with brief explanations accompanying each. An analysis section follows the data at the end of each sub-section.

Section 2.5

### Children and the Revised Curriculum

Assimilating data based on children's views of the Revised Curriculum and its subsequent implementation proved difficult. Planning and organisation of the questionnaires and interviews required much consideration and several redrafts to perfect the data gathering process with children. The first difficulty encountered involved the child's inclination to 'teacher-please.' They sought answers to questions that they thought teachers would like to hear, particularly in the lower classes, the child's task is "one of inferring and discovering what the teacher wants them to say

and do."[384]   The second difficulty was concerned with how children were also inclined to parent please – particularly in senior classes.   The third difficulty concerned the societal influences upon any given group – the author discovered early on in the research that children tend to give societally accepted responses to questions, as dictated by the class at large; the influence of group psychology overriding a sense of individuality.   This latter point relates to the concept of Fromm's individuation, or bell hooks' self-actualization – both concepts are references to a hypothesis of self-hood and individuality which the curriculum endeavours to cultivate.   In juxtaposition to the process of individualisation, the process of socialisation as indicated by McLaren or Giroux captures what was happening in the classroom.   Could we, as educators, mould this process of socialisation to the benefit of society?   The influence of modelling cannot be underrated in the classroom, both as the curriculum perceives a teacher to model enjoying the reading process or traditionally the culture of being seated and remaining in that seat quietly was modelled generations before.   Group-psychology at work in the classroom witnesses dominant or alpha leaders setting the norms of reference for the group-at-large; societally accepted behaviour and beliefs are thus set in that classroom.   Children in the data-gathering context seemed to attest to the perceived right answer, if they all said the same thing.

Having had to re-organise the data acquisition techniques on several occasions, what follows is the final interview and questionnaire hybrid.   The author found that gathering children into small groups of four to six was the most effective method to successfully acquire honest and fear-free responses, because the children had the opportunity to answer honestly and without external influence.   The children were then supplied with a blank page and pencil upon which to write their answers.   Each hybrid interview/questionnaire was informally conducted.   Children were informed of how and why their help was needed.   The author also told the children of the level of confidentiality involved (the results would be used anonymously as data for a research thesis), and how the interviewer was not personally interested in the specifics of their answers – so long as they were honest.   The author engaged in this technique with many groups of children from second class through sixth class.   The children had the opportunity to write their responses, yet to discuss their opinions when and if they

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[384] Edwards, D and Mercer, N,                    *Common Knowledge:  The Development of*
*Understanding in the Classroom,* pp112

chose. To help focus the interview/questionnaire, the author asked the children to number the focus sections and write as they pleased, in one word responses or several sentences – the choice was theirs - therefore assisting the analysis of the data. Sectioning the focus questions assisted analysis of the data while affording the child scope to 'think out' their ideas about the questions.

The author used an informal interview process based on the hybrid interview/questionnaire with junior classes and first class. It transpired early on that this age group in particular were inclined to 'teacher-please.' The group-psychology determining a sense of belonging also influenced the children's responses. The fact that this age group were at an egotistical stage and could not write independently influenced the data gathering process, mitigating against their ability to respond to the questions with a greater measure of confidentiality than that which other classes were afforded. These factors rendered the data gathered dependent upon deep analysis to discern the messages the children were conveying. Where this was a difficult task it was by no means insurmountable and the children provided the research with a vast and varied response structure, emphasising the validity of their opinions. Using a thinking time approach in schools where the children were familiar with challenging their own thought processes; the author assimilated the data through questions – building upon their answers to derive their opinions and adhering to the focal questions simultaneously. The author did not guide the questions to reflect any bias she may have had, rather the author used the focal questions to funnel the children's responses to honestly answer the specific focal questions. An additional note worthy of mention at this point is the nature of the questions asked of children, and the vocabulary used to garner findings. The children's section of research incorporates language less formal than traditionally found in dissertation work of this level, however its inclusion was necessary to provide appropriate, contextual opportunities so the children surveyed could respond. A total of two hundred and fifty-two responses were analysed. The data concerning children and the Revised Curriculum is presented with a contextual orientation in the overlying theories significant to the thesis and cornerstone of the philosophical theorists outlined in the literature review chapters. The reasoning behind placing this brief outline and reminder of the philosophical theories rests in situating the questions posed in the hybrid questionnaire/interview in the philosophical nucleus of the thesis.

Section 2.6

## Parents and the Revised Curriculum

Parents were targeted in two ways in order to obtain the data for this research. Firstly, parents in a number of primary schools were simply asked if they would be interested in taking part in the research, and given an SAE with a questionnaire which, upon completion, could be posted back to the author. Secondly, the author approached parents' councils and asked for the SAEs to be distributed to parents through the council. To ensure variability, the author endeavoured to ask parents for their co-operation in rural and urban areas throughout the country. A very high number of SAEs were distributed to parents, the bulk of which were returned, however, not all of them were returned. Where this was an inconvenience, large numbers were returned and the author could consider the research findings valid. To ensure parents' awareness of the nature of the research, the questionnaire was short and specific. There was no scope for feedback, positive or negative, regarding teachers – it was the parents' views of education and the Revised Curriculum that was sought. Parents and the Revised Curriculum comprise the second section of Chapter Five. The data is presented in a similar form to that as presented in Section 1, Children and the Revised Curriculum, where the findings and analysis are presented jointly, beneath the sub-headings and themes of the findings. A total of one hundred and fifty responses were returned and analysed, from a possible total of two hundred questionnaires.

# Excursus

# A Note on The Primary School Curriculum of 1971

## A note on the Primary School Curriculum of 1971

As previously mentioned, the Primary School Curriculum of 1999 is based upon the ideals proposed by its predecessor, the Primary School Curriculum of 1971. The concepts and principles emphasised in the 1971 curriculum were built upon and developed, and are encompassed in the principles found in the 1999 Revised Curriculum. It is within this framework that the 1971 curriculum is of interest to this thesis – to examine the foundational principles at work in the 1971 curriculum. The revisions which took place were based upon a plethora of research and recommendations made by educational theorists and the successes of suggestions made in the 1971 documents. The Irish research undertaken suggests that the principles proposed by the 1971 curriculum have not been engaged with, in as sufficient a manner as the curriculum deemed necessary. Hence the revision of those principles to allow for the transfer of learning back to the learner, and the notion of sophist style teaching to yield to critical thought and contextual learning. The following section briefly outlines the proposals of the 1971 curriculum. It details the significance of some major propositions and their influence upon the current primary school curriculum.

The curriculum states; "The full development of the child cannot take place in isolation."[385] Contextual learning becomes the basis for the learning situation. The curriculum aims to allow each child to grow and learn at their own pace, to "develop his natural powers at his own rate to his fullest capacity."[386] The nature of pitching the education process to each child at their individual rate and to access personal curiosity and wonder for the learning process is inherent in the curricular ideals. The curriculum proposes to allow the child the opportunity to "experience the joy of discovery ...the enrichment of his personality."[387] Thus the social ideals of education become apparent alongside those of learning and teaching. With the development of the social sphere of the education process comes the shifting nature of the role of the student in their own learning and that which is to be learnt. The objectives and aims of the 1971 curriculum altered to access the concept of critical thinking as opposed to

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[385] Primary School Curriculum, 1971, [Hereafter PSC 71 }   *Chapter I, Aims and Functions,* pp13
[386] PSC, 1971, ibid,   pp13
[387] PSC, 1971, ibid,   pp16

mere factual recall. In addition to child-centred learning, the curriculum proposes to create critical thinkers; "It can develop the capacity to think clearly, creatively and critically, rather than the mere facility for remembering mechanically."[388] Within the parameters of this claim, the 1971 curriculum directly influences the Revised Curriculum, where the concept of fact-acquisition is reduced in favour of developing thinking skills. Philosophically significant, rejecting the notion of attaining facts in favour of developing the capacity to reason, imagine and reflect is central to the theoretical convictions of critical educational theorists such as Freire and Illich. This is a radical concept which strays from the safe mores of traditionalist educational methodology, shifting the emphasis of learning, intelligence and education from the all-knowing teacher to the eager student.

With this revision in learning objectives and subsequent methodology, the role of the student alters. Responsibility for one's own learning becomes an essential element of the education process. The Primary School Curriculum of 1971 acknowledged that education of the past was "curriculum-centred rather than child-centred, and the teacher's function in many cases, was that of a medium through whom knowledge was merely transferred to his pupils."[389] The activity of the child in their own learning, ownership and responsibility for learning became a large part of the education process – "children now play a more active role in their own education and consequently show much more self-reliance, confidence and flexibility of mind in tackling fresh challenges."[390] This concept of increased participation and responsibility for one's own learning is a central thesis in the Revised Curriculum. The attempt to allow the child to acquire knowledge through contextual learning included, "knowledge acquired through the child's personal experience and discovery is likely to be more meaningful... The child is now seen to be the most active agent in his own education."[391] In addition to this reference was made to learning readiness, differentiation towards readiness and cultural, socio-economic backgrounds informing learning abilities. "The child's learning must take place in a meaningful and relevant context."[392]

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[388] PSC, 1971, ibid,                    pp14
[389] PSC, 1971, ibid,                    pp15
[390] PSC, 1971, ibid,                    pp16
[391] PSC, 1971,                          *Chapter II, The Structure of the Curriculum*, pp18
[392] PSC, 1971, ibid,                    pp19

As shifts in the nature of the educational process occurred so too did the methodological means to attain the revised ideals and the methods of assessing same. Methodological transformations included "knowledge of group-teaching methods"[393] which was further developed in the 1999 curriculum. The plan of the classroom was also referenced as a particular aspect of change advocated by the 1971 curriculum. Space and the organisation of the classroom thus became significant. In addition the reorganisation of classrooms had allowed for "more floor space in the classrooms, more light, more efficient heating and more toilet facilities."[394] Finally, the pupil/teacher ratio was an issue when the 1971 curriculum was published and thus was mentioned; "substantial reductions have also been made in pupil/teacher ratio."[395] Ironically, several years after the advent of the Revised Curriculum of 1999, the pupil/teacher ratio is still an issue of debate.

Subjects which had been neatly packaged into individual units were now under scrutiny. Proposals were made to integrate these units into more complex amalgamations that reflected the shifting nature of the child's learning processes. An attempt at integration was thus made, to "correlate some of the...subjects."[396] Where the revision on paper exists, the practicality of the change was less successful than anticipated, thus the Revised Curricular ideal of thematic planning to integrate to the fullest and most plausible extent, emerged as a crucial tool in classroom planning. In addition to this, timetables were to be based on blocks of time to allow for this integration instead of the half-hour periods of the past. The role of the teacher altered alongside the nature of education. The curriculum aimed to create "a deeper professional consciousness and a greater opportunity for professional fulfilment."[397] Teachers were expected to engage in education as responsible agents – "More freedom will bring added responsibility for each individual teacher. He will be expected to be flexible in his approach to his work, to be receptive to new ideas, to be in touch with his fellow teachers and with educational thought in this and other lands. He will be expected to know each child as well as he can, and keep detailed records of

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[393] PSC, 1971,     *Chapter I, Aims and Functions*, pp16
[394] PSC, 1971, ibid,    pp16
[395] PSC, 1971, ibid,    pp16
[396] PSC, 1971,     *Chapter II, The Structure of the Curriculum*, pp18
[397] PSC, 1971,     *Chapter III, Organisation*, pp22

his all-round progress." [398] The concept of competent and complete record keeping became an essential aspect of the profession. Assessment was also an integral feature of the curriculum, coming under the term evaluation. "Research and regular evaluation will be necessary if the curriculum is to continue to keep pace with the changing conditions."[399] This is reflected in the growing significance placed upon the assessment in the current Revised Curriculum.

The Primary School Curriculum of 1971 brought many changes to the Irish education system. The incomplete transfer of these ideals from paper to practicality in the working classroom prompted the revisions that were published in 1999. While the research and investigation of many interested parties furnished the curriculum with modifications and modernisations in methodology, theory and thought, the Revised Curriculum is based on the fundamental aspects of the 1971 curriculum in ethos and spirit and character.

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[398] PSC, 197, ibid,            pp18
[399] PSC, 1971,            *Chapter II, The Structure of the Curriculum*, pp20

# Chapter 4

# Teachers and The Revised Curriculum

# Teachers and the Revised Curriculum

Section 1

## A background to those surveyed.

This research sought to analyse teachers' impressions of the Primary School Curriculum 1999, through the perceived realities at work in the teachers' individual learning situations. Through the research methodologies, the author endeavoured to demonstrate her own thesis regarding the implementation of the Revised Curriculum as well as meeting the theories of the various educational philosophers whose work is detailed throughout the literature review section of the thesis. The following are the results of the research and reflect education in Ireland according to the particular teachers surveyed. The aim of satisfying the issue, *To what extent is the Primary School Curriculum of 1999 being implemented, Applying a theoretical lens to the Practical Classroom,* is explored throughout the following section, where the fruits of research spanning four years of enquiry and analysis, culminate to substantiate my investigation.

The following section provides a background to the surveyed sample of teachers. The results are tabulated in the form of pie charts and bar charts.
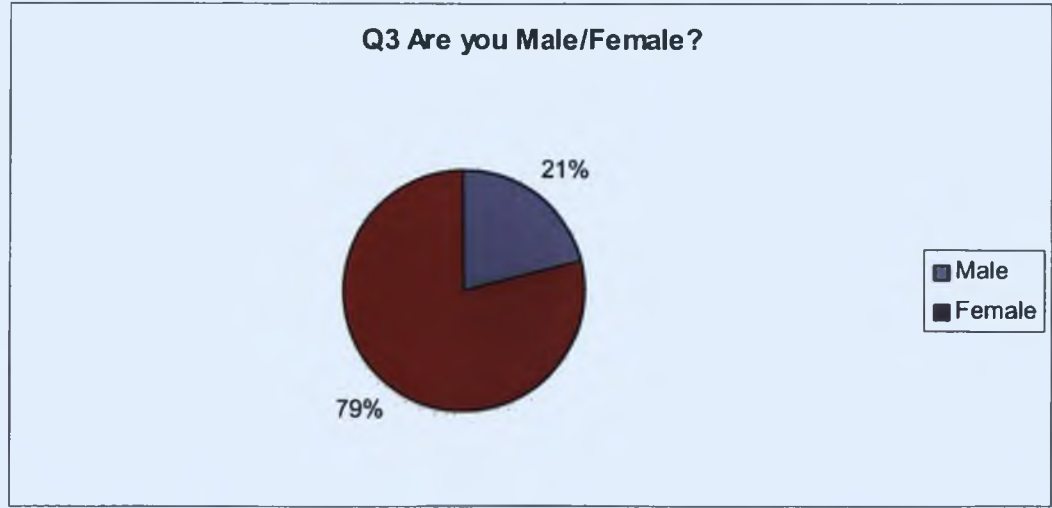


*Fig. 1*

The above pie-chart records the percentage of females and males surveyed, depicting a greater ratio of females to males. The following bar chart depicts the ages of participating teachers. The ages were divided into age-brackets; the teachers indicated the appropriate age-bracket.

**Q4 Which age group are you in?**
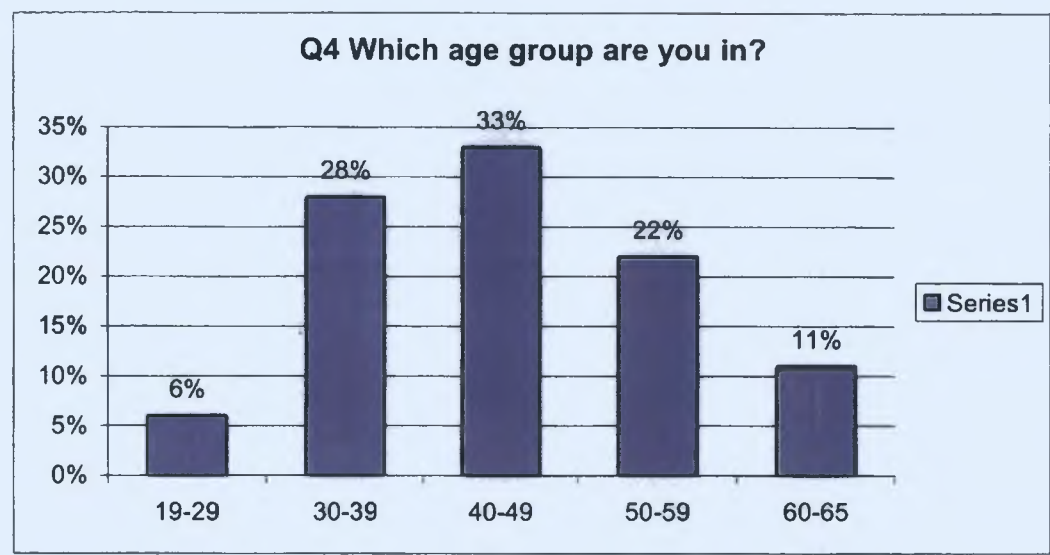


*Fig. 2*

The greatest number of teachers surveyed formed the 40-49 age-bracket, at thirty-three percent, with the least amount of teachers aged in the 19-29 age-bracket, at six percent.

**Q7 Do you hold any additional qualifications?**
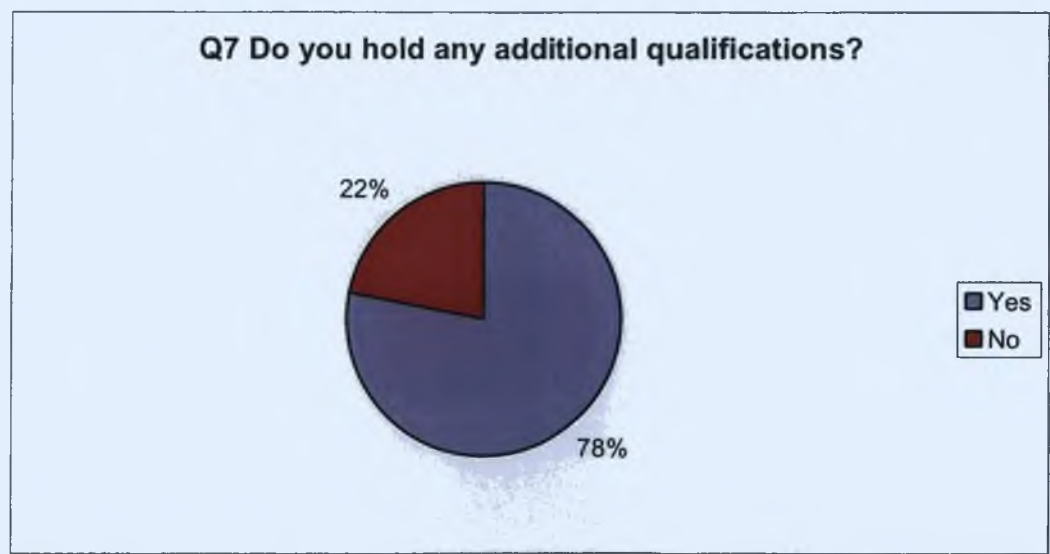


*Fig. 3*

The Majority of teachers surveyed held additional qualifications. The reasons stated for the acquirement of additional qualifications are illustrated in the bar chart below.

**Q8 Why did you pursue this qualification?**

*Fig. 4*



**Why are you the authority in your classroom or learning situation?**
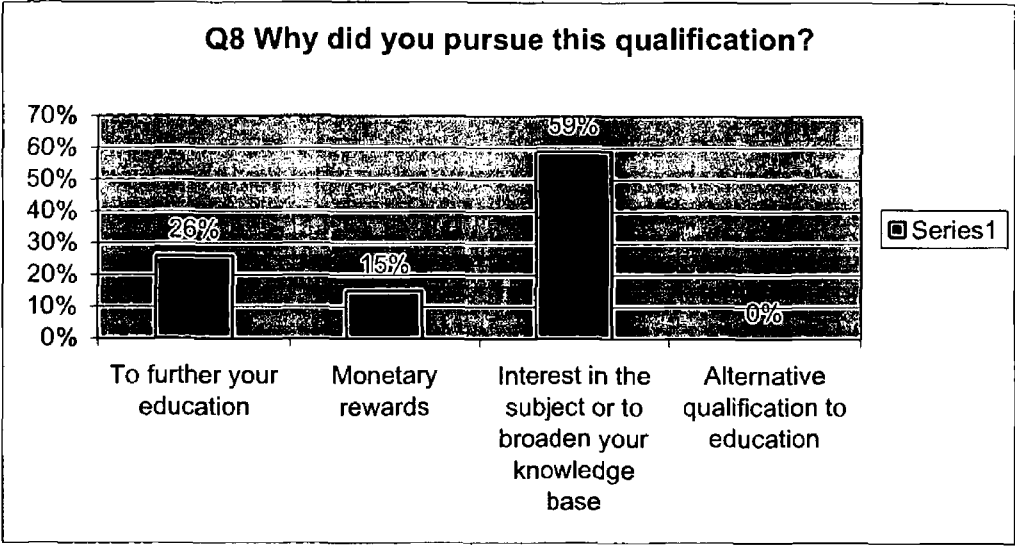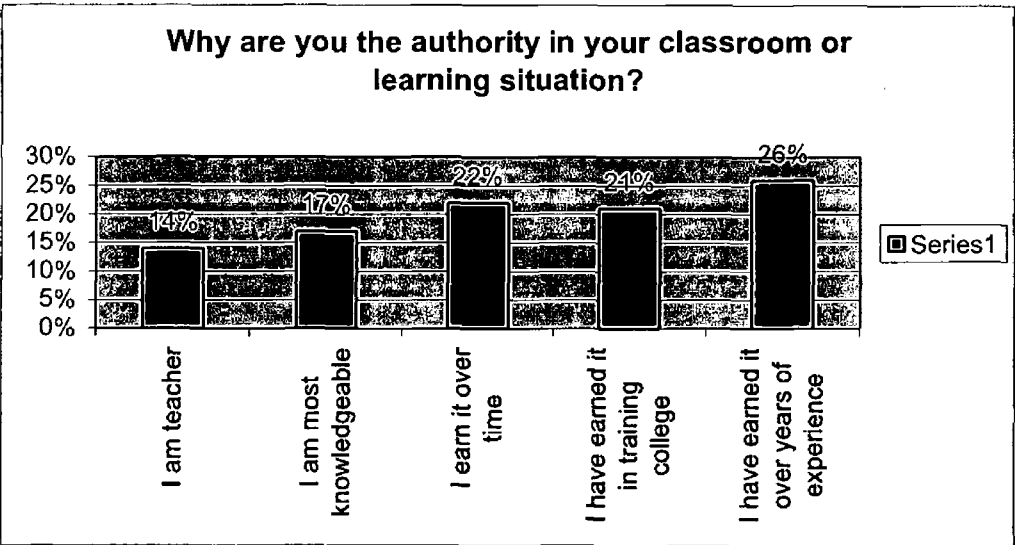
*Fig. 5*

Teachers identified several reasons as to why they are the authority in their classrooms. Experience in years teaching or in appropriate qualification formed the bulk of responses. Additionally, the teacher's knowledge base is significant in relation to the alternative result percentages.

In addition to the above, the final section of my questionnaire survey sought personal information in order to obtain a philosophical representation of the teachers surveyed. Where the questions were seemingly less relevant to the sections that went before,

their inclusion was necessary to contextualise the teachers surveyed, and to contribute auxiliary information regarding the perceived priorities in life and political inclinations. The statistics and results depicted provide a background to the teachers surveyed throughout the research. The following sub-sections detail the research findings beneath the sub themes of the thesis.

Section 2

## Ideology of Education
## A Background to Teachers' Ideology of Education

A priority in this section was firstly to attain a sense of the teachers' ideology of the purpose of education. Being difficult to measure, the employment of certain high-incidence words constituted a helpful measure. The target phrase emerged after the teachers had been surveyed and the results were tabulated, with the greatest percentage of teachers at ninety-eighty percent, subscribing in some form to the idea of 'life-long learning.' The author asked this question in an attempt to ascertain how teachers felt about education in light of the recent changes in the approach to education advocated by the Revised Curriculum, and in light of the often-differing outcomes that the educational arena proposes for its students. Where the actual wording of their responses to the question differed, teachers did agree that education was more than merely a means to third level education, or post-third level employment. The vast majority of teachers surveyed, at ninety-eight percent, used words that indicated and conveyed that education is life-long.

Within the parameters of this phrase, one can deduce that life-long learning describes not only the obvious continuous quality of learning which teachers feel is the purpose of education, but also indicates aspects of the teacher's conception of their role. If teachers consider the purpose of education to be constant and enduring, then their role beneath this premise is also one of constancy and permanence; ninety-eight percent of teachers exist in a role that permeates beyond their working hours and possibly their careers. Teachers exist within the traditionalist role that societally describes them, albeit a modern one, as mentors and guides in their daily carriage in life. The 'moral gatekeeper' referred to by Fromm is alive and well, whether submitting to the

**120**

traditionalist notion of the educators' role, or submitting to any other; the teachers view their position in the educational realm as fulfilling the ultimate purpose of life-long learning. This in itself was not surprising; these people have a good knowledge and skill base from which to access other forms of employment. The responsibility, complexity, high-intensity and comparatively low wage by other professional standards, means that those in the job are in all likelihood, morally invested. A number of concepts were also recurring and dominant in the research results that effectively deepened the theme of life-long learning. According to the findings, the tools for an individual to become a member of a community are perceived to be provided through education. The skills teachers mentioned include critical thinking skills, questioning skills, reading, writing, numeracy, language acquisition, skills associated with scientific, geographical and historical investigation, and skills associated with spirituality and the arts.

Section 2.1

**Analysis of Teachers' Ideology of Education in relation to Life-Long Learning**

The results depict the dual perception held by teachers where education is considered to be both individual and social. Therein the notion of education as depicted by critical educational theorists and by post-modernist, socio-political theorists is evident. Results show that teachers see education as partly the exploration and adaptation of skills required to think critically, while it is also a forum preparing students to live as members of any given society. The latter concept of education includes fact acquisition pertaining to the student's locality, history and sense of place. Teachers have made reference to concepts which underpin the revisions in the curriculum. Whether these references indicate the teachers' personal preferences for such ideologies or simply an adoption of these concepts as the ideal proposed by the Revised Curriculum, cannot be satisfied at this point. However as the research findings chapter expands, the issue of personal ideology for the individual teacher in light of their role, expectation and understanding of education becomes evident and is answered. Teachers value experience and meritocratic achievement in garnering authority in their classrooms.

While the skills required to think critically and to question the status quo were referred to in this section, the mention of skills that link to socialisation and being part of a community also requires analysis. According to the research findings, teachers see the integration of the self with the community as part of education. The argument of critical theorists claims that there can be no development of the critical self, when forced into socialisation because socialisation at any level is influencing the individual's freedom of thought. This concept counters that held by the teachers, who believe education can envelop a marriage of concepts. Socio-political theorists such as Giroux and Rorty argue that socialisation of the child involves the socialisation of an individual into a community – learning to be a whole self but a responsible, politically aware self at that. This latter theory most reflects how the teachers surveyed regard education – socialisation is central to the child's education and the critical self, while certainly developed, is encouraged or expected to conform in some part to the conventions of society, be they economic advancement through the workplace; religion; political awareness; local pride matters or popular issues such as green awareness or sporting achievement. Therefore the actual concrete motivations that inform any given community's school culture differ from area to area, region to region, and the crux of the issue resides not with these motivations but rather with creation of active members of society, where the individual self is socialised, cultured, encouraged or cultivated to become an active part of that community. In short, education to teachers is being a life-long member of a community.

Section 2.2

## Ideology, The Curriculum and Teachers

Issues surrounding teachers' perceptions of the Revised Curriculum are explored in this section. These issues are broad but pertain to the Revised Curriculum and teachers' Ideology of Education. The results are tabulated in pie-chart or bar-chart format and provide statistics of revisions which have occurred, whether or not teachers like the Revised Curriculum, the implementation of the curriculum, factors which influence why children learn, aspects affecting teachers' perceptions of the curriculum, and preference of methodological and organisational approaches.

**The Revised Curriculum – how teachers view the curriculum**

**Do you think the curriculum needed revision?**

37%

48%

15%

- Yes
- No
- In Certain areas
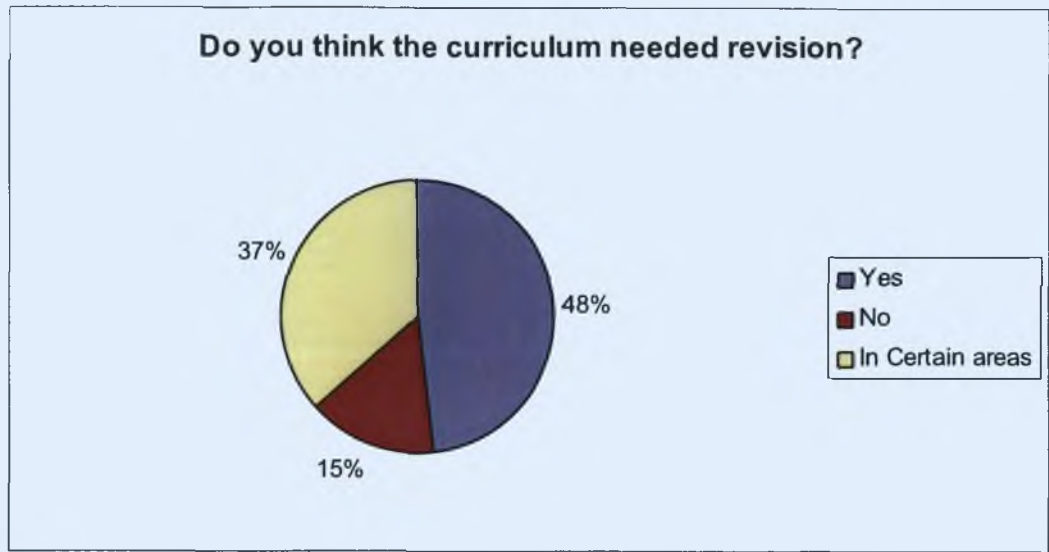
*Fig. 5*

The above graph depicts the results to the question asking teachers whether or not they considered the revisions to the curriculum necessary. A large percentage of teachers considered the curriculum, or certain aspects of it, to be in need of revision, with forty-eight percent considering it necessary, and thirty-seven percent considering revision necessary in specific areas.

**Do you find the curriculum difficult to implement?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 40% | |
| 35% | |
| 30% | 34% |
| 25% | 29% |
| 20% | 21% |
| 15% | 11% |
| 10% | |
| 5% | 5% |
| 0% | |

Not at all    A little    Somewhat    Difficult    Very Difficult

- Series 1
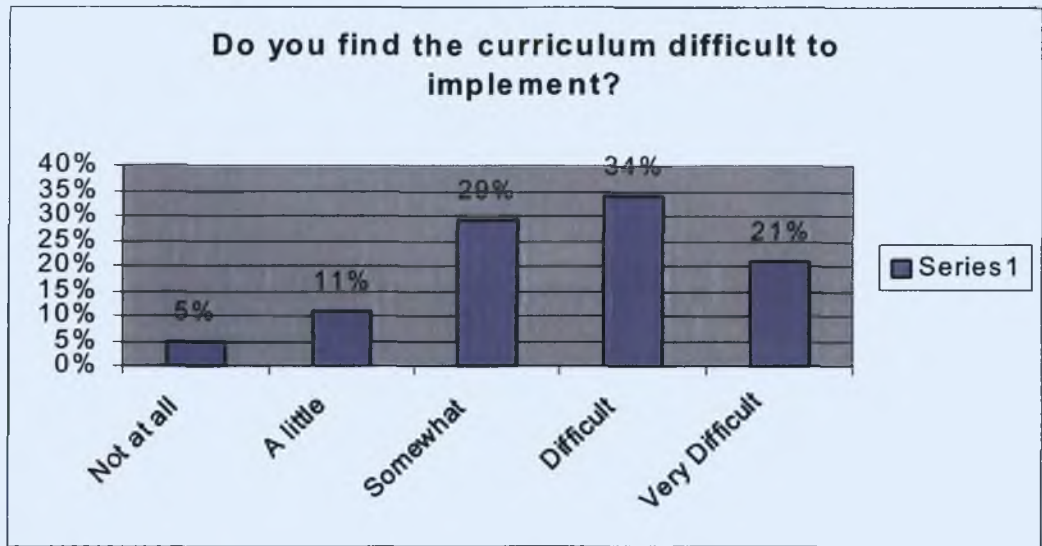
*Fig. 6*

The teachers surveyed found the Revised Curriculum difficult to implement as the statistics confirm, culminating in twenty-nine percent, thirty-four percent and twenty-

one percent, stretching from the median difficulty-level tendered to the extreme difficulty-level tendered respectively.



Do you agree with the principles of the revised curriculum of 1999?
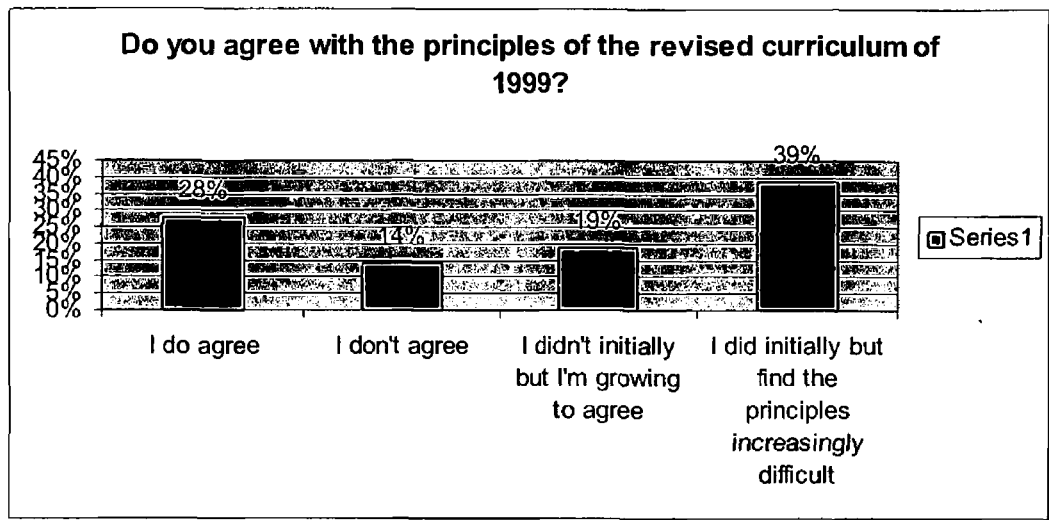
*Fig. 7*

The illustrated bar chart depicts the quantative and general response to questions asking teachers whether or not they liked the Revised Curriculum. Detailed responses to specific questions regarding various areas and subjects within the curricular framework were taken, thus this question highlights significant issues for the research. The specific responses teachers gave regarding their impression of the curriculum are detailed beneath the title; 'Aspects which affect teachers' perceptions of the Revised Curriculum.'



Do you consider the Revised Curriculum extra work?
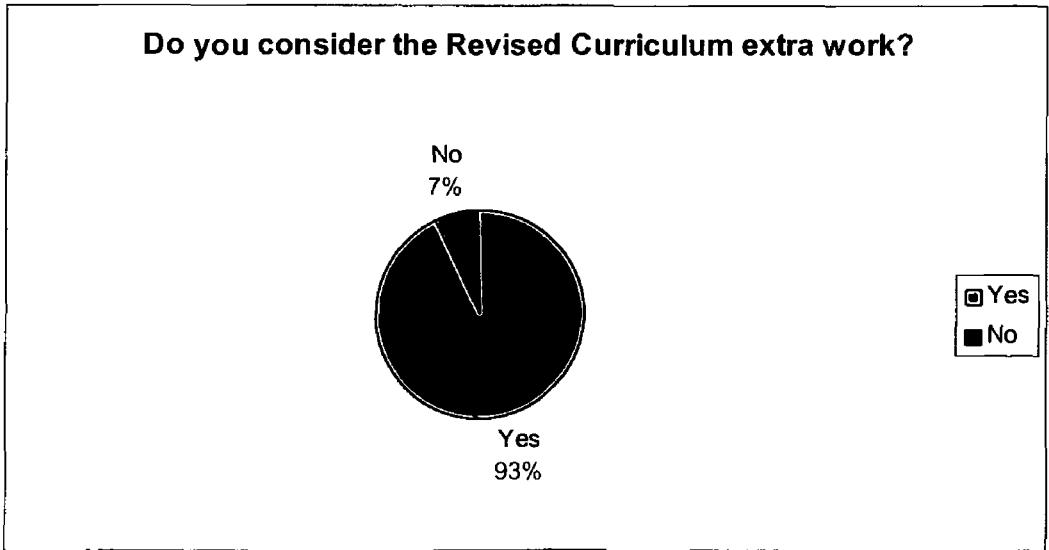
*Fig. 8*

The teachers surveyed were asked to identify whether or not they considered the Revised Curriculum to be extra work. The vast majority of teachers, at ninety-three percent considered the curriculum to be extra work. The teachers were then given a selection of words to choose from, which identified how they felt about the revision of specific subjects in the curriculum. The following table depicts the three most common high-incidence words selected by the teachers surveyed.

| High incidence words describing the revision of specific subjects in the curriculum |
| --- |
| Interesting, advantageous, stressful |

*Fig. 9*

The three most common recurring words were interesting, advantageous and stressful. One particular teacher succinctly voiced the opinion depicted in the results which was held by many other teachers; teachers are in a hurry to "get it right."[400] Teachers are rushing to fulfil the objectives they believe they ought to fulfil. In keeping with traditional professional conduct, teachers seek to be up skilled and in control, be that in a traditional role or through an awareness of the ideals advocated in the current educational climate.



**Were the philosophical changes of the curriculum and its methodologies ever explained by the inspector, facilitators or cuidethoeirs?**

9%
36%
31%
24%

■ Yes
■ No
□ Not entirely
■ Not sure
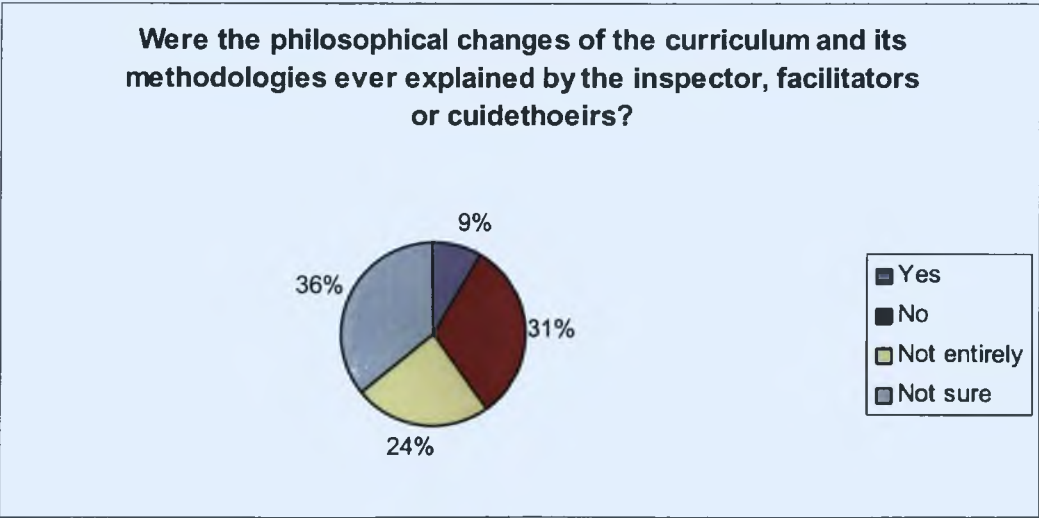
*Fig. 10*

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[400] Appendix 1.1,                    pp24

Only nine percent of the teachers surveyed feel that the philosophical changes and revisions in the Revised Curriculum had been explained to them.



**Do you agree with the means by which the curriculum was introduced?**
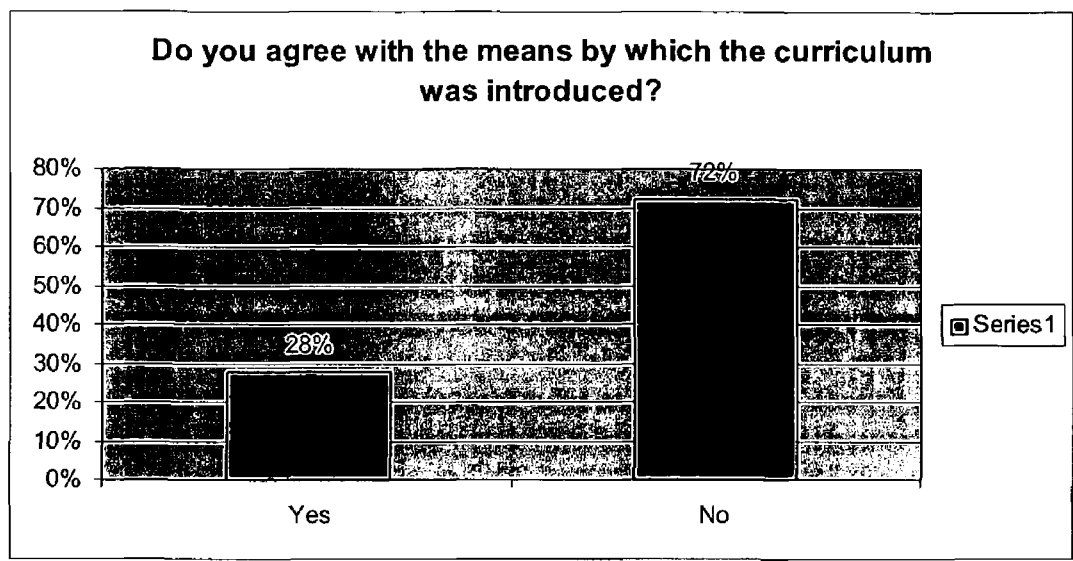
*Fig. 11*

Only twenty-eight percent of teachers felt that the introduction they were given to the Revised Curriculum was satisfactory and seventy-two percent of teachers surveyed disagreed with the introduction they received.

Section 2.2.2

**Aspects which affect teachers' perceptions of the Revised Curriculum**

The teachers surveyed were asked to specify how various aspects relating to the curriculum had affected their perception of the curriculum. The results are tabulated in the following bar-chart format, specific to each aspect.

*Fig. 12*



*Fig. 13*

**Objectives**

*Fig. 14*



**Introduction**

*Fig. 15*

*Fig. 16*



*Fig. 17*

**Parental concerns**
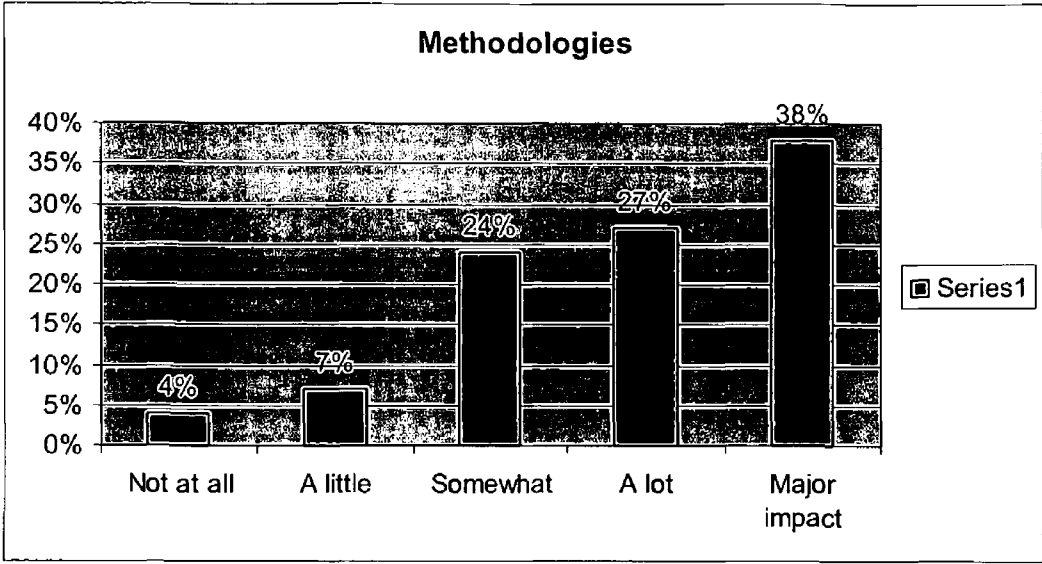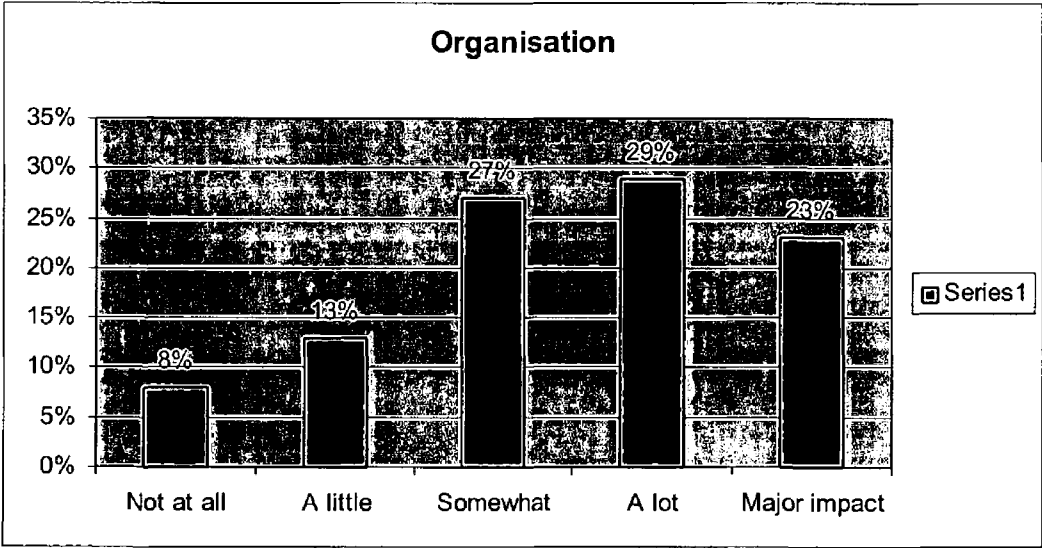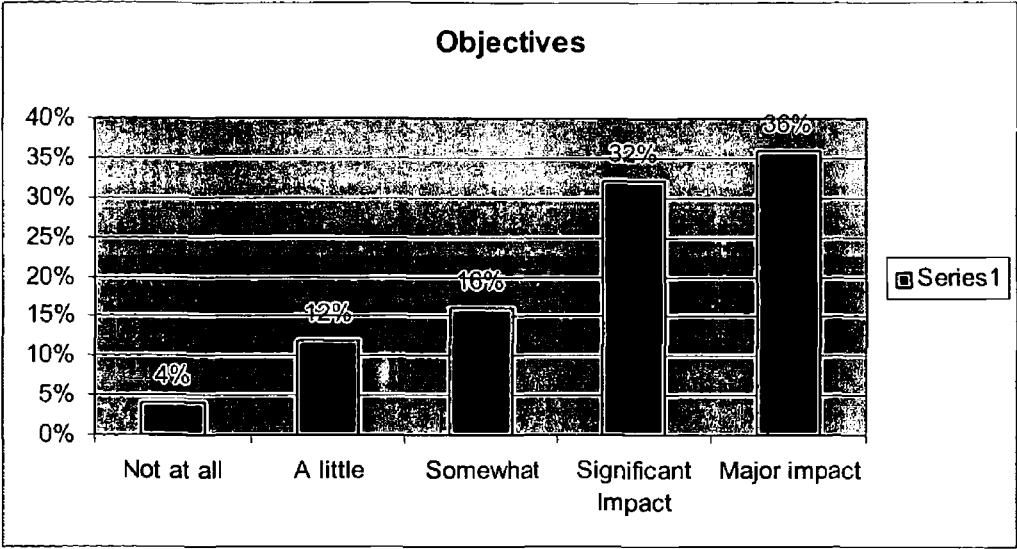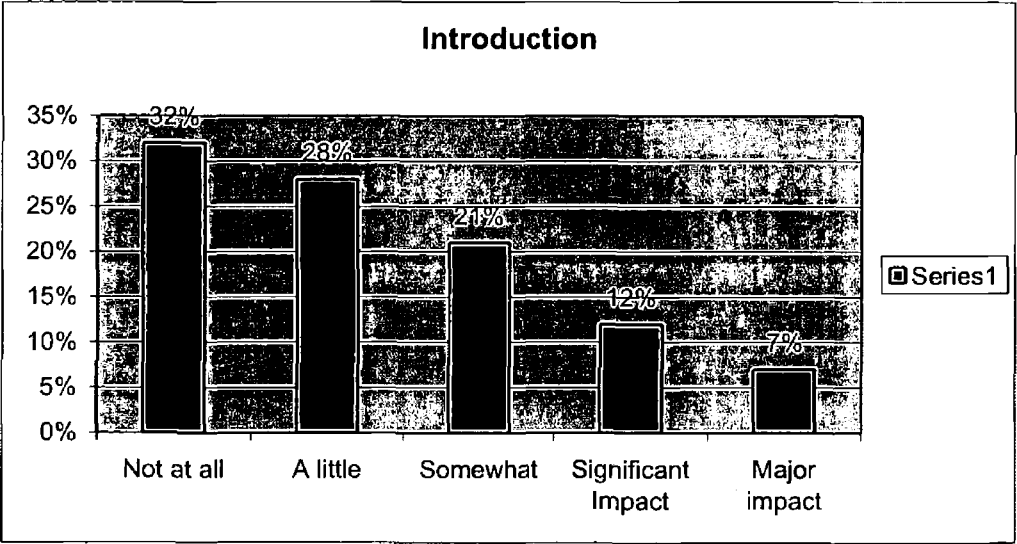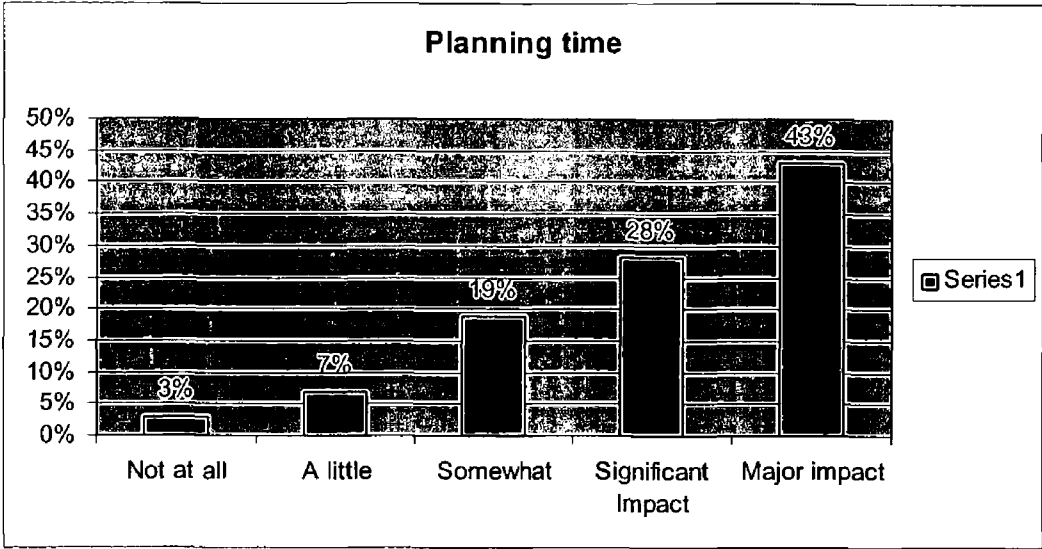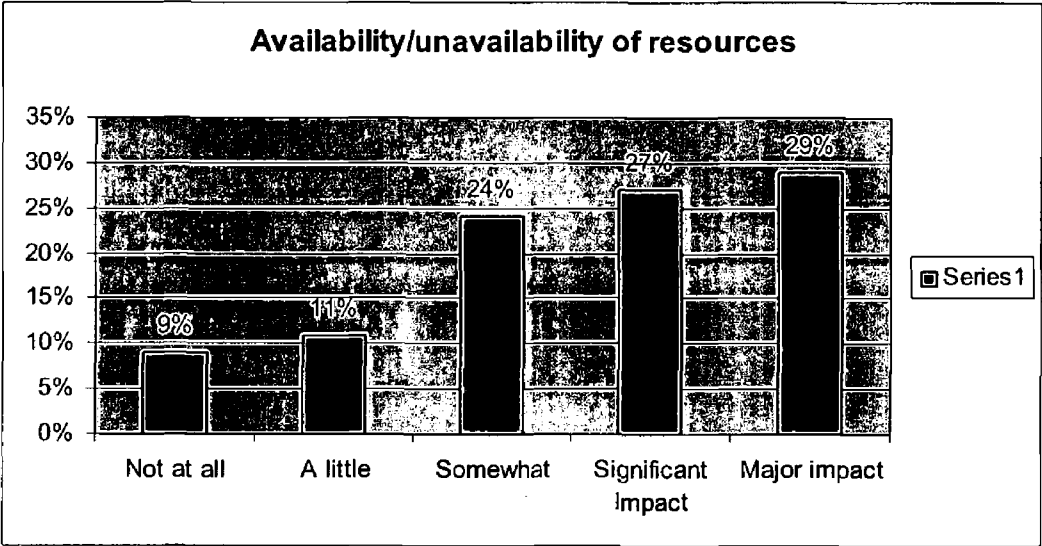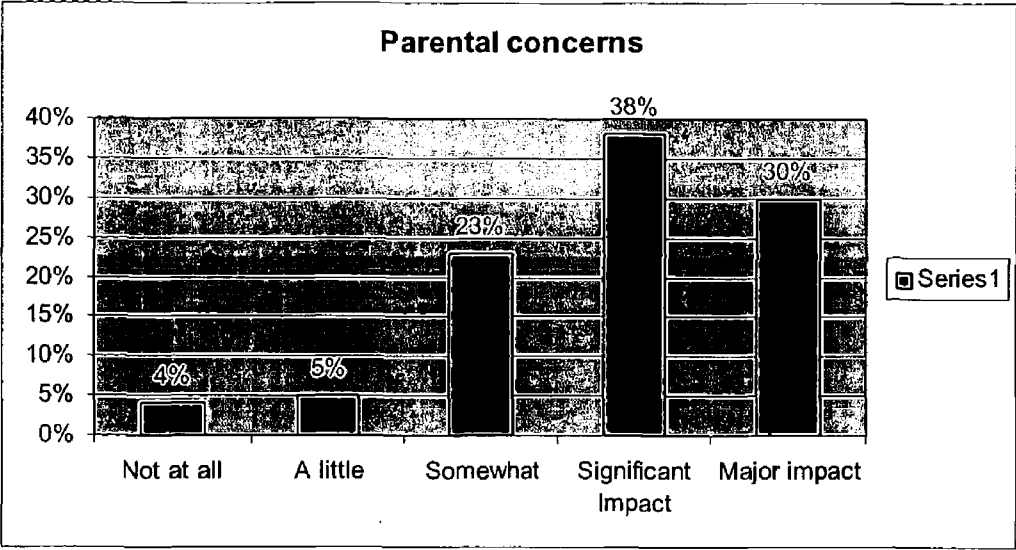
*Fig. 18*

Additionally, the teachers were asked to rank methodologies and organisational approaches, depicting which each individual teacher considered to work best. The results are in the Figure 19 below.



**In your opinion, which methodologies and organisational approaches work best?**
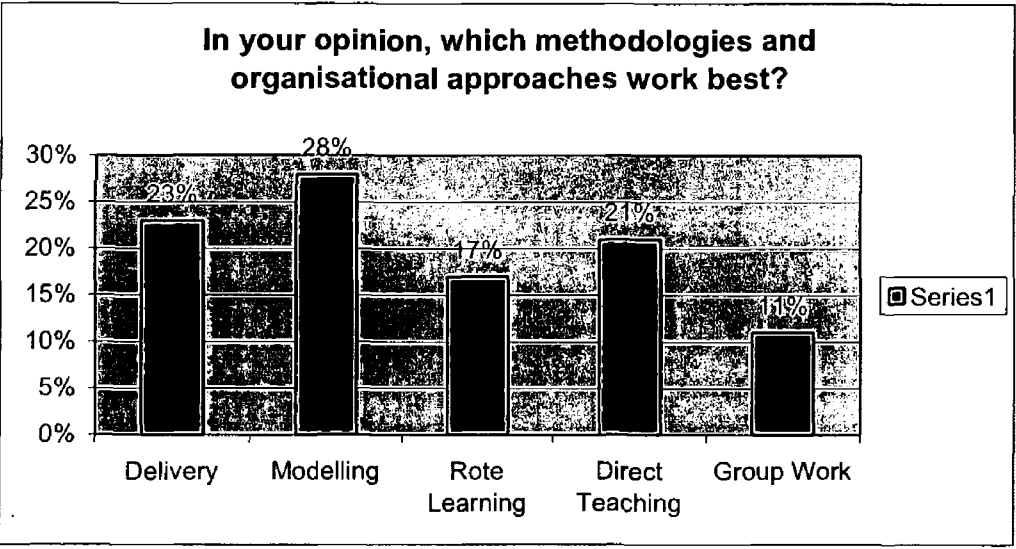
*Fig. 19*

Modelling, delivery and direct teaching formed the bulk of the teachers' responses concerned with methodology and organisational approaches. Group-work, a methodological tool identified as a choice methodology by the Revised Curriculum, proved the least popular, with 11% opting for this methodological tool as their preferred methodology. This illustrates that although the ideal of revision is ascribed

to, the majority of teachers surveyed at a cumulative 72%, still feel modelling, delivery and direct teaching work best. Modelling is a tool advocated by the Revised Curriculum, and both delivery and direct teaching are less popular with Revised Curriculum philosophy in comparison to modelling or group-work, which are both founded upon the concept of constructivism.

Section 2.2.3

## Factors which influence children's learning

In addition to the above findings, the teachers surveyed were asked to circle the factors which they believed influenced children's learning relative to the purpose of education. The following graphs illustrate the breakdown of the results according to a number of factors illustrating the factors teachers' believe are at work in the classroom.



*Fig. 20*

*Fig. 21*



**Interest in acquiring new knowledge**

- 18%
- 47%
- 35%

Big
Medium
Small

*Fig. 22*



**Competition within the class or schools or clusters**

- 11%
- 28%
- 61%

Big
Medium
Small

*Fig. 23*

132

**Rewards gained from home**

16%

20%

64%.

Big
Medium
Small
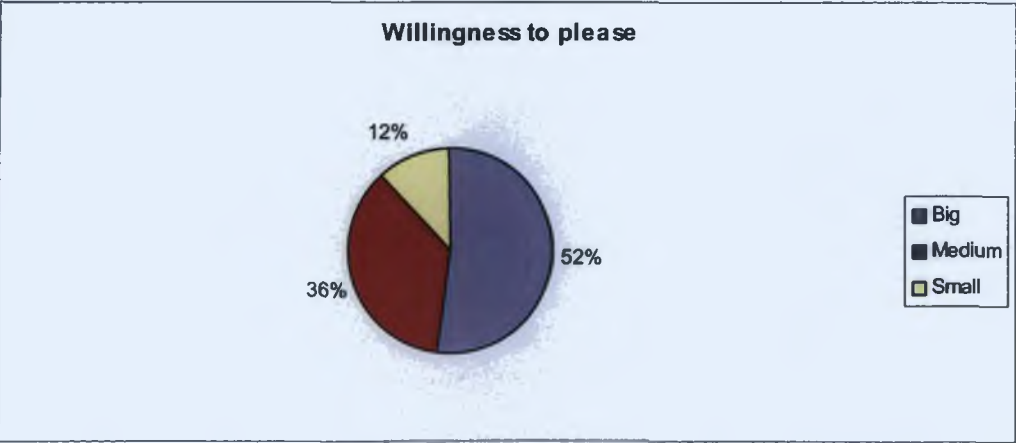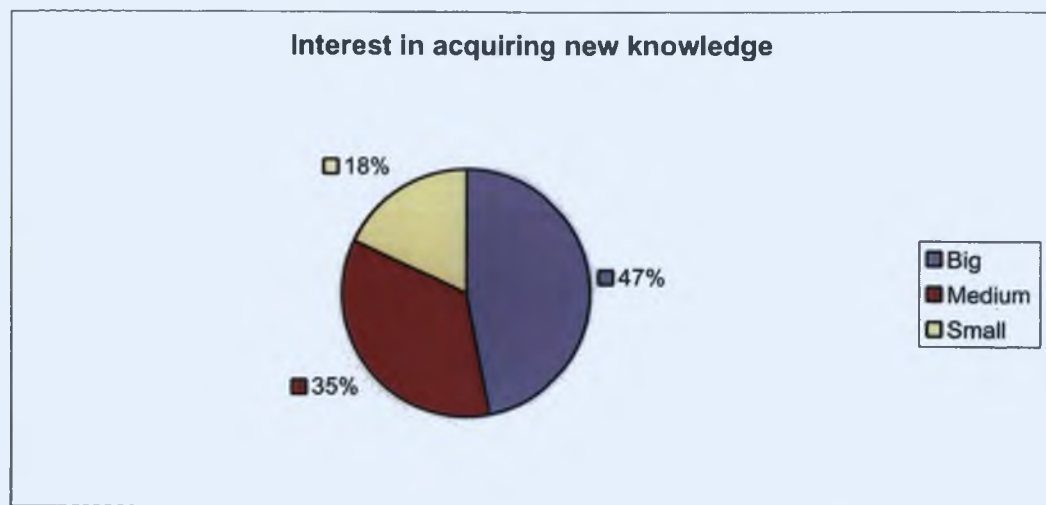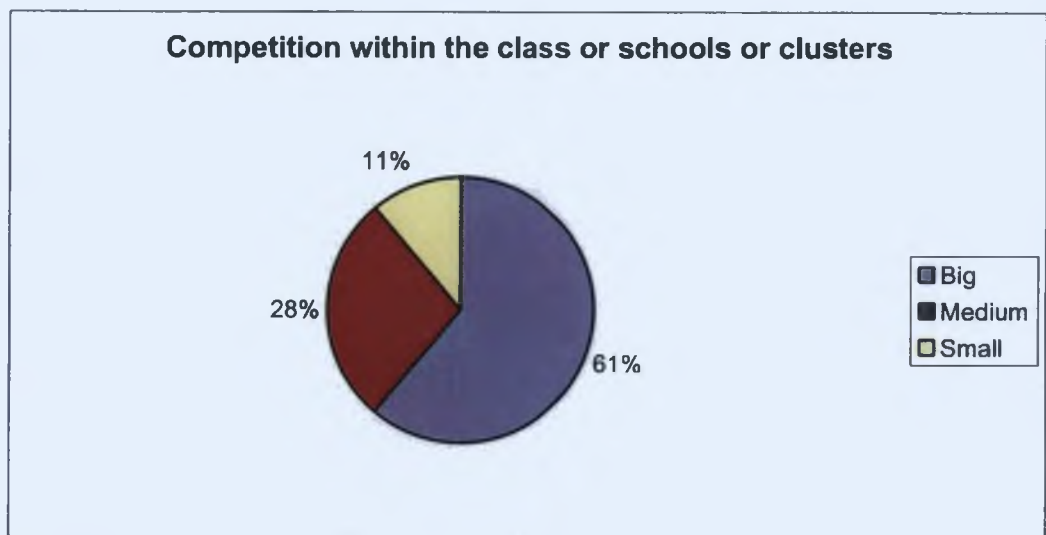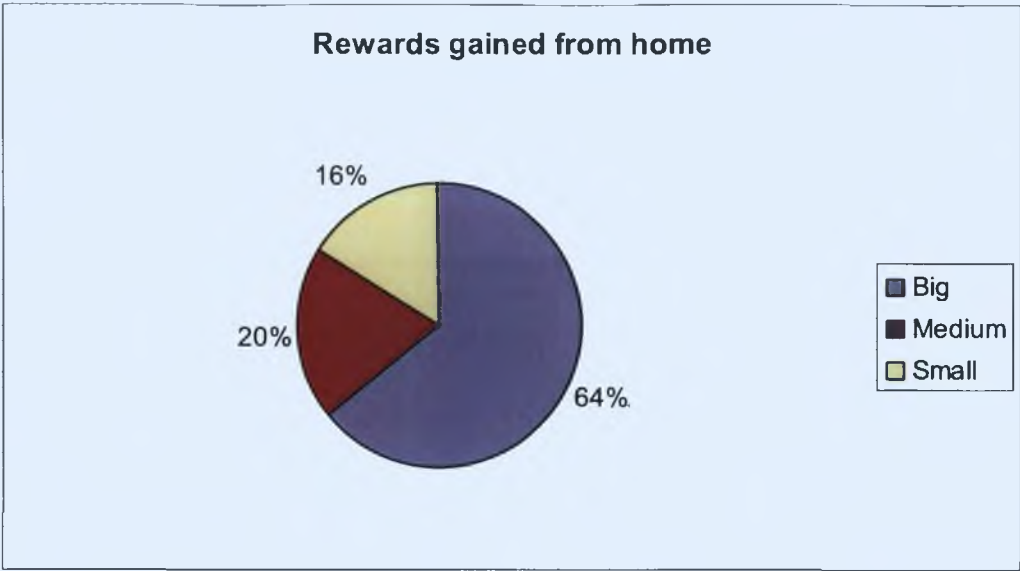
*Fig. 24*

Where the life-long nature of learning is perceived to be the purpose of education, which for the purposes of this research is understood as societal or individual, the above factors indicate a propensity for external motivational factors. According to the majority in five out of six cases, children embark on life-long learning at school through the external motivations of learning being required at school and willingness to please, competition in class clusters, and rewards from home and school. Interest in acquiring new knowledge is the only alternative to external motivational factors which teachers ranked highly in the majority of cases, as factors which influence why children learn.

Section 2.3

## Analysis of the Revised Curriculum and Teachers' Ideology of the Revised Curriculum

### Analysis of how teachers view the curriculum

Firstly, the large number of teachers found to agree with the principles of the Revised Curriculum does not necessarily equate with a given proficiency in either using, understanding or significantly for this thesis, comprehending the philosophical thrust of the curriculum. In other words, where the research indicates that many teachers

133

enjoy the curriculum or the concept of the curriculum, they do not necessarily engage with it as it aspires to be engaged with. Several reasons emerge for this finding; namely teachers may have responded to the questionnaires and interviews in a bid to furnish the author with the response they assumed the author would want to hear. In addition to this, it can be asserted that teachers may not necessarily comprehend the curriculum in order to engage with it, rather appreciate the reorganisation and uniformity, or some other aspect, which renders it likeable in principle. The statistics relating to the percentage of teachers who felt that revision was necessary in certain areas supports this. Also, teachers may find the curriculum likeable beneath the premise of revised educational goals and methodologies, attesting the need for change, but actually not intend to use them, or the rest of the curriculum, for any number of reasons ranging from their proximity to retirement, parental concerns or traditional use of texts as true learning tools in their schools etcetera.

Where teachers found the curriculum to be to their liking, many also named aspects which they considered negative. The high-incidence comments related to the curriculum can be broken into three distinct categories. The first is concerned with the logistics of teaching, where management issues surface beneath multi-grade teaching and over-large class size. Teachers understandably cannot alter their modus operandi and classroom conduct speedily where crowd-control of over-large classes is an issue – in classrooms with a larger pupil/teacher ratio. Equally, the management of differentiation in the classroom can render change difficult, where any given class can have huge ranges in ability; large class groups, multi-grade classes, and high incidence and low incidence special needs create enormous difficulties in generating change. The second category is concerned with the word difficult, in the context of the Revised Curriculum being difficult to use, and relates to the bar-chart measuring difficulty-levels, *Fig. 6*. The revised philosophical thrust of the curriculum replaces that which has gone before. Teachers have found it confusing when clashes with tradition emerge, and when the bulk of the changes prove overwhelming in new subject groupings. The final category involves the organisation of curriculum objectives and outcomes. The objectives of the curriculum are broad and less specific than the traditional norm, where higher-order thinking skills are prioritised. The objectives also highlight the attention to process-skills preferred by the Revised Curriculum, and thus teachers are faced with continuous, contextual learning instead

of the fact-acquisition and summative education common in the past. Therein the notion of assessment and educational outcomes emerges, where teachers must engage in process-based learning and assess same.

The findings suggest that the majority of teachers surveyed, at a culminative percentage of eighty-five percent, considered the curriculum to be in need of revision in some or all areas, and within this framework the introduction of revision of some sort can be considered favourable amongst teachers. Analysis of whether or not teachers liked the Revised Curriculum shows, unsurprisingly in light of the first findings, how teachers are largely happy to accept the Revised Curriculum and thereby the possibility of engagement with it is made all the more feasible when it is liked. The specific mention of confusion surrounding the Revised Curriculum by so many teachers is significant. Where the objectives are clear the approach to practical planning is not. Therefore one can conclude that the introduction to the Revised Curriculum did little to clarify and illuminate the foundational philosophies of the curriculum. The thrust of the changes stem from a revision in the philosophical principles which traditionally inform educational process and product. Confusion can naturally surround any change in the modus operandi and customary learning objectives in education when said change occurs. However, the nature of the confusion which surrounds the Revised Curriculum is one that, while it does not hamper the teachers' surface employment of the Revised Curriculum, may hamper its philosophical impetus. Subsequently, the new learning objectives and reorganised learning objectives of old, could be subjected to past methodologies with the emphasis on product, eclipsing the revised methodologies with the philosophical focus on process and the methodology of discovery. The in-service and facilitation of structures that provide teachers with understanding of the Revised Curriculum philosophy has been slow, and arguably had to be. The under-explored philosophy behind the changes in the Revised Curriculum seems to be a major reason for the teachers' confusion where the curriculum is concerned. Large percentages of teachers felt the introduction to the curriculum was unsatisfactory and that the philosophical underpinnings of the curriculum had not been officially and sufficiently explored with them. Therefore the activities facilitated during in-service can appear pointless or at the very least questionable, when they have been aimed at cultivating thinking skills instead of fact acquisition.

Through the mention of activities such as group-work and other Revised Curriculum methodologies and activities, teachers become aware of the concepts employed to meet the way in which children learn. Child-centring activities and tasks, and basing learning objectives upon a child-centred concept, is the hub of active learning in the Revised Curriculum. Results show teachers are clearly aware of this shift in thinking of how children learn and are making efforts to incorporate it to the best of their abilities within their classrooms. Large numbers of teachers felt they had had little input into the Revised Curriculum. Where changes occur in education, it is usual practice for an invitation requesting views from the education partners to be extended – as is the case in Continuous Professional Development Post 2007, the movement to ensure ongoing professional modernisation in education. The views of the education partners were then requested in the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) *In Touch* magazine, May 2006.[401] In analysis of the aspects which affect teachers' perceptions of the curriculum, methodologies, objectives, availability of planning time and resources have had a major impact. Parental concerns and curricular organisation also had a large impact.

Section 2.4

## Factors which affect teachers' ideologies of education and subsequent impressions of the Revised Curriculum

Throughout the interviews and questionnaires, a priority of the document was to establish the factors, thus the concerns, most prevalent to the theme of the research. A number of sub-themes emerged where teachers' concerns were categorised which bear a direct influence on their impression of the Revised Curriculum. The following are the results of the findings, beneath the sub-theme titles; class size, planning time, textbooks and resources, Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs), parental concerns as perceived by the teachers, and the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) process.

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[401] Continuous Professional Development Post 2007, *In Touch*, May 2006, Issue # 76, pp12

Section 2.4.1
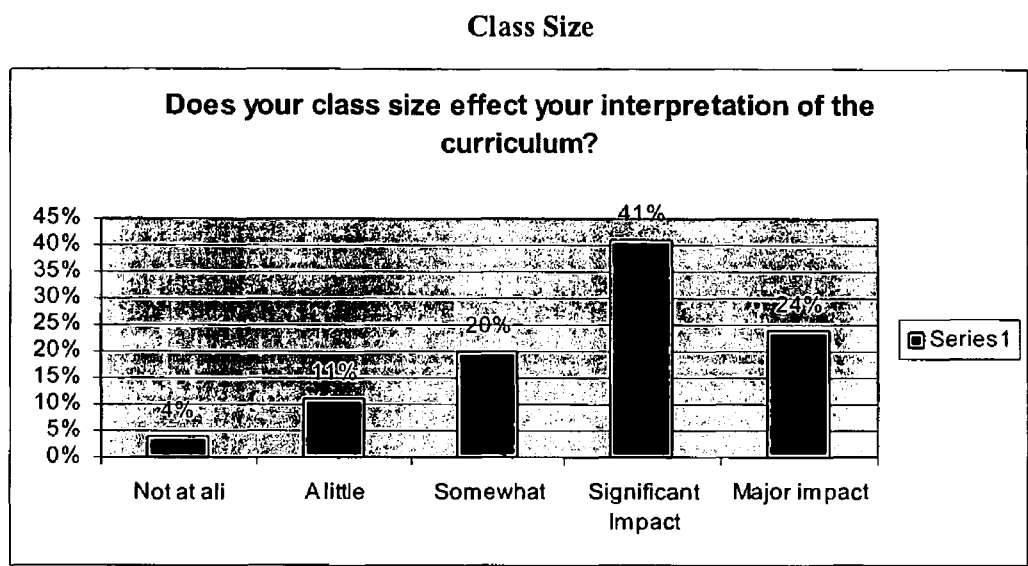
## Class Size



Fig. 25

Forty-one percent of teachers consider class size to have a significant impact upon the curriculum, with a further twenty-four percent considering class size to have a major impact upon the curriculum. A culminative sixty-five percent of teachers feel that class size has a significant or major impact upon the curriculum. Only four percent of teachers feel that class size has no impact upon the curriculum at all.

Section 2.4.2

## Analysis of Class Size Issues

Interestingly, a given teacher's ideology of education has less to do with specific educational ideologies and more to do with management issues. The research findings portray the willingness of the majority of teachers to embrace change and additional subject or curricular aspects. Within this framework, the issues that affect teachers most are ones concerned with management of education as a whole. Class size repeatedly surfaced as a frustrating element of education which hampered maximum educational outcome. This concern is highlighted in the following extract of a Dáil debate on the issue duly recorded in the INTO, *In Touch* magazine, June 2006.[402] Albeit a response to a housing boom and subsequent economic concerns

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[402] Dáil Debates Class Size          *In Touch*, June 2006, Issue # 77, pp26

coupled with the integrity of education, several politicians represented their individual and party interests in the debate. "It is important to deliver education...one of the rocks on which we have built our economic success,"[403] was a claim Joan Burton attributed to education, and which strengthens the thesis that education is considered a purveyor of skilled workers to sustain such an economy. Where the politician will always be concerned with economic stability and success, the debate highlighted other significant features. The Opposition parties (of the 2002-2007 Dáil) to the current government asserted their demands regarding current class size. "Working in classes of more than thirty pupils, teachers are expected to use the new curriculum (Revised Curriculum) which involves children moving around, interacting and so on," Ms Burton added. Minister Hannifin's statistics show Ireland's national average class size at twenty-four and "the staffing is on a general rule of at least one classroom teacher for every twenty-nine children."[404] The Minister continued, placing emphasis on the principal to "consider the benefits of having smaller multi-grade classes as against having large differences in class sizes at different levels in the school."[405] A suggestion of value in itself, this statement also happens to ignore the features of the Opposition parties' arguments, which call for a decrease in class size not a mere reorganisation of them. The Minister's comments imply that it is the responsibility of the principals in our schools to reduce class size, when an affluent and developed country such as Ireland arguably should not have "more than ninety-nine thousand children ...in classes of between thirty and thirty-four pupils and a further nine thousand children attend(ing) even larger classes,"[406] in the academic year 2004/2005.

The issue seems not to be reorganising but recruitment – more teachers are necessary to reduce class size. My findings support this claim, as teachers call for class size reductions. In an instance where one teacher considered the Revised Curriculum as "too much"[407] during the interview process, the issue of class size is significant in

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[403] Burton, J,    in Dáil Debates Class Size *In Touch*, June 2006, Issue # 77, pp26

Hanifin, M,    in Dáil Debates Class Size *In Touch*, June 2006, Issue # 77, pp26

Hanifin, M,    in Dáil Debates Class Size *In Touch*, June 2006, Issue # 77, pp26

[406]Enright, O,    in Dáil Debates Class Size *In Touch*, June 2006, Issue # 77, pp26in Dáil Debates Class Size *In Touch*, June 2006, Issue # 77, pp26

[407] Appendix 1.8,    pp99

hampering that teacher's exploration of the Revised Curriculum. "Kathleen Lynch stated said that class size was not just an abstract numbers game that teachers' unions and Opposition parties played against the government but a vital issue for thousands of young people who were losing opportunities for their future. She stated that research had shown consistently that outcomes for young people, especially those who are disadvantaged or have learning difficulties, are much better if they are in small classes."[408] Ivan Illich's proposals for education differ to those mentioned above. With a focus upon the third level system, he states, "the teacher could be paid according to the number of pupils he could attract for any full two-hour period."[409] This conflicts directly with the negative concept of payment by results which existed in Irish education in the past, where teachers were paid according to results of their students, similar to a notion of financial reward for numbers in attendance. Illich has also not considered the idea of group-psychology and sociology at work in groups of students who may decide attending certain lectures is the most acceptable course of action in a given social scenario. Where the usefulness of the teacher is guaranteed through his suggestion, the integrity of the individual student is not, and thereby the integrity of the teacher may be lost over time. Finally, the bar chart *Fig. 26* illustrates the large and direct effect of class-size upon teachers' interpretations of the Revised Curriculum. At 41% and 24% forming the largest percentile bars, class-size has a large, and major impact respectively upon teachers and their interpretations and interactions with the Revised Curriculum.

[408]Lynch, K,                                  in Dáil Debates Class Size *In Touch*, June 2006, Issue # 77, pp26

[409] Illich, I,                                 *Deschooling Society*, Chapter 6, Learning Webs, peer-matching, pp94

**Planning Time**



**Do you believe the curriculum provides you with more or less freedom in your work to plan and implement?**

More
37%

Less
63%

■ More
■ Less
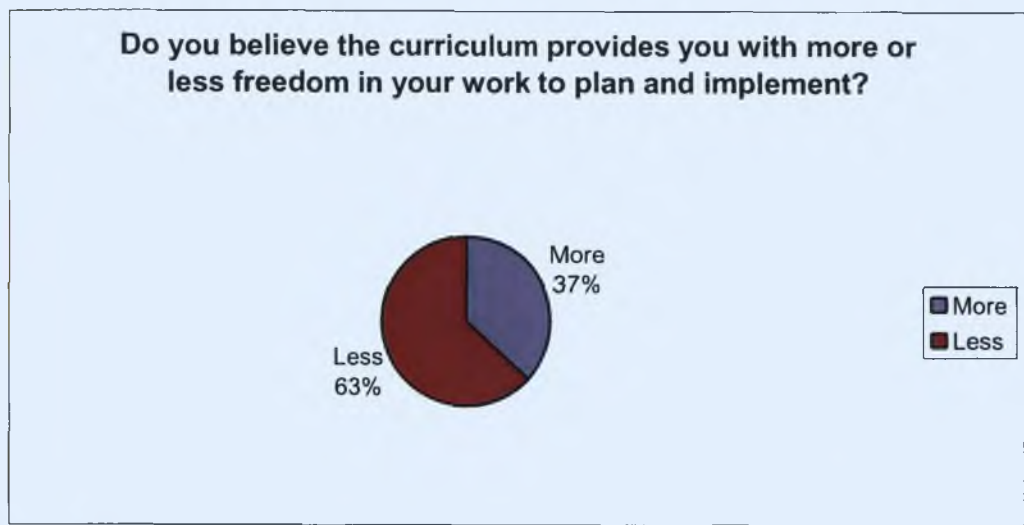
*Fig. 26*

Sixty-three percent of teachers surveyed considered the curriculum to give them less freedom in their planning and implementation of their work. Some teachers said they felt policies were formulated simply because these policies were obligatory and required, and as such had little guidance or input for the teacher's individual planning. As the period of survey progressed, some teachers did state during the interview process that they felt policies were being developed in reference to their individual teaching situation. However noble the endeavour to make standardised documentation specific to the individual school, the cases of proactive, engaged and useful planning time was minimal in statistical tabulation. Only three teachers interviewed felt that their planning days were beneficial to their given classroom environments and understanding of the curriculum. Teachers surveyed mention professional dialogue in several instances and the absence of sufficient professional dialogue time other than break-time, is a concern for teachers.

**Have you planned for multi-grade classes using the Revised Curriculum?**

28%

72%

Yes
No
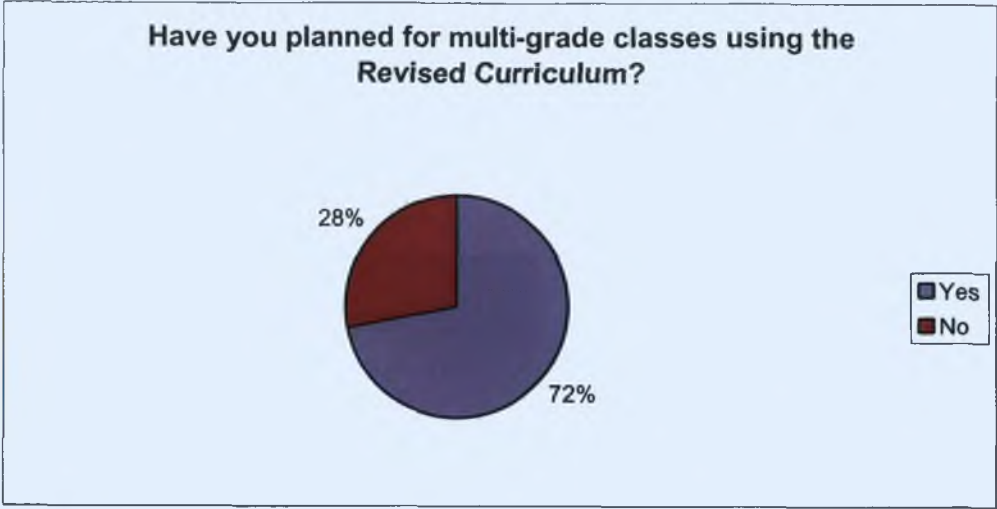
*Fig. 27*

The majority of teachers at seventy-two percent had planned using the Revised Curriculum documents for multi-grade class situations. The curricular documents are organised into two class groupings per curricula, with a total of four, two-class sections in each document.

**Would you like more help in curricular planning?**

14%

86%

Yes
No
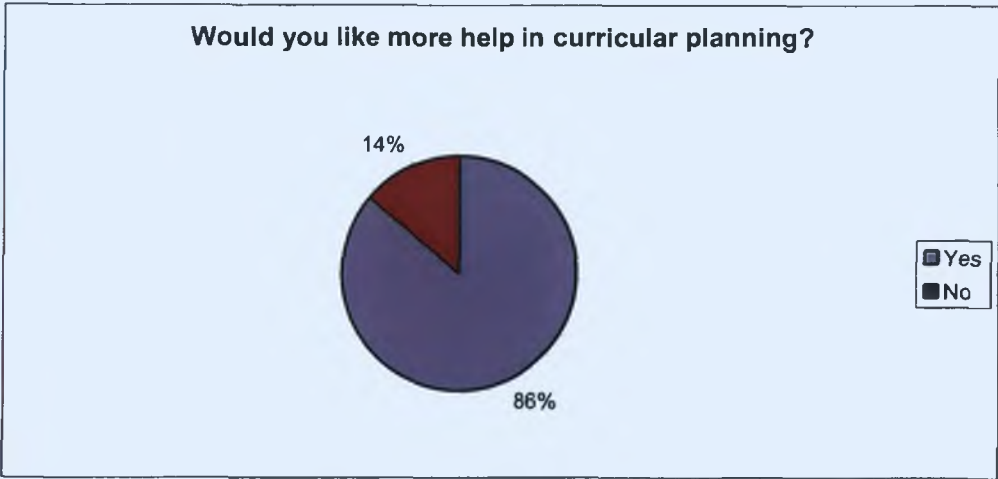
*Fig. 28*

Eighty-six percent of teachers felt they required more help where curricular planning was concerned.

Section 2.4.4

## Analysis of the planning time issues

Teachers feel they have less freedom to plan when using the Revised Curriculum, and would like more help planning with their curricular planning. The findings of *An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools* facilitated by the inspectorate corroborates the above findings, stating; "In some schools planning documents were devised because they are obligatory rather than as a response to the school's need to contextualise the curriculum to meet its specific requirements. These planning documents had little impact on classroom practice."[410] As *An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools* concurs: "Setting clear, attainable short-term objectives will assist teachers in clarifying learning outcomes and will contribute to effective assessment strategies."[411] Several suggestions were proffered by many of the teachers surveyed where such planning time could be afforded to the teacher using in-house, local arrangements. On afternoons where specialist teachers could be brought in to the school (supervised by the class teacher if required) or occasions where one teacher could supervise another teacher's class, such support allows a teacher time where planning could be built into the class week, thereby affording significant contextual time to set short, attainable goals. The recently published *Arts and Schools Guidelines, Towards Best Practice in Ireland* (2006) booklet offers suggestions for inclusion of such specialist teachers in the education forum; banking time for arts education, the value of specialist teachers and the significance of art in education. Within its claim that "it (arts education) can occur in all art forms and disciplines and range from one-off visits through more extended programmes, to intensive, collaborative projects."[412] The Artists~Schools project is one area where curricular requirements can be met, there are several other schemes in existence ranging from national and county council based schemes to local ones, which schools could avail of for a term each year. All parties concerned in the

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[410]*An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools,* The Inspectorate, [Hereafter ECI], Chapter 6, Conclusions and Recommendations, fig 6.1, Main Evaluation Findings, 6.1.1, Whole-school planning, pp47
[411] ECI, ibid,                                               fig 6.2, Recommendations, 6.2.2, Classroom planning, pp52
[412] *Arts and Schools Guidelines, Towards Best Practice in Ireland,*  What is Artists~Schools Practice, pp8

educational process are afforded equal entitlements, with the exception of the child, whose needs have been prioritised. Through this the teacher is afforded short bursts of frequent and useful planning time, the parent is ensured their child is receiving maximum planned learning opportunities, the principal is preserving the professionalism of planning within the school, the highest quality of learning experience for the child and the satisfaction of the Board Of Management and parent, and the child is in receipt of a planned learning experience.

The recent, varied guidelines that have been sent to primary schools, and replaced thereafter with revised guidelines, have seen schools under obligation to take equal time within and outside school hours to complete meetings etcetera. Reducing the teaching school day by fifteen minutes also featured in one such guideline for parent/teacher meetings. Where these guidelines seem to be the result of meetings of parents' committees, DES, and the INTO, they do little to serve any one interest sufficiently – children must lose time from their teaching and learning day, parents must still organise their daily lives around given parent/teacher meeting times. The Department of Education and Science has not secured teacher time wholly outside the teaching day and teachers end up "losing their voices"[413] after a day's work, and do not receive financial overtime for this which meets inflation rates or comparative financial pay rates of other professionals. Equally teachers presented concerns about insufficient provision for professional dialogue, which serves to hinder contextual understanding of the Revised Curriculum. The many theorists analysed in Chapters 1 and 2 have noted the importance of collegiality and professional dialogue. Notably, bell hooks has made clear her ideologies on self-actualization and the need for individual development, for the sake of the individual. Evidently, teachers too have noted the importance of time to talk.

Section 2.4.5
**The NCCA Study, the Revised Curriculum and Teachers' Ideology of Education**

The NCCA sent a representative sample of schools a Revised Curriculum assessment document to review and reflect upon the English, Visual Arts and Mathematics

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[413] Appendix 1.3,                              pp46

subject areas of the curriculum. "During the 2003/2004 school year, a year of curriculum review and consolidation, two different studies gathered information about how the Primary School Curriculum (1999) was shaping the classroom experiences of teachers and children. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) undertook a review of the curriculum, while the Department of Education and Science (DES), (based on the evaluation of teaching and learning by the Inspectorate), initiated an evaluation of curriculum implementation."[414]* The aim of the former review document stated; "This year has been provided in order that schools may take time to acknowledge success to date, to review progress, to reflect on future priorities, and to plan for future action in the implementation of curricular ideas."[415] In addition to this, it stated, "The DES has engaged in a comprehensive planning process in order to ensure a fruitful outcome from the Consolidation and Review Year for schools. The NCCA at the invitation of the DES, has prepared three templates to assist teachers and schools in reviewing and planning further implementation of English, Visual Art and Mathematics."[416] The following academic year, in the September of 2005, *The Primary Curriculum in Schools*, Insights from Curriculum Implementation Evaluation and the Primary Curriculum Review was sent to teachers. This little red booklet had several findings that both corroborate the author's findings and highlight where and how improvements can be made. Curriculum planning found varied effectiveness of whole school plans, where the most effective plans resulted from a "collaborative and constructive planning process."[417] In addition to this, many schools had obligatory plans, which had "little impact on classroom practice."[418] Regarding Revised Curriculum methodologies and their use, "both studies show that in general, children experienced limited opportunities in classrooms to develop their skills in higher-order thinking and problem-solving."[419] Where literacy was specifically concerned, "in a significant number of classrooms the content objectives

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[414] *The Primary Curriculum in Schools,*      Insights from Curriculum Implementation
         Evaluation and the Primary Curriculum Review,
         Introduction, pp1
* Both reports are available on line; www.ncca.ie and www.education.ie
[415]*Primary School Curriculum, Review and Reflection,* [Hereafter RR], Implementation of the Primary School Curriculum, 1999, Consolidation and Review Year, 2003-2004, Curriculum Review Booklet for Schools, Context, pp1
[416] PSC, RR, ibid,                      pp2
[417]PSC, RR,                      Insights from Curriculum
Implementation Evaluation and the Primary Curriculum Review, Curriculum Planning, pp2
[418] PSC, RR, ibid,                      pp2
[419] PSC, RR,                      Methods of Teaching and Learning, 5.
Higher-order thinking and problem-solving, pp4

for language development were not emphasised sufficiently, and oral language was taught incidentally rather than explicitly."[420] In concurrence, the finding of incidental oral language supports my findings that the transferral from product-based learning to process-based learning proved difficult for teachers traditionally familiar with concrete product objectives. The document continued, "It was a challenge to accept the value of writing as the process rather than the final product."[421]

Section 1.4.6

## Textbooks and Resources



Do you believe the children you teach consider "book based", product-based learning as real work and more valuable than process-based learning?

14%

86%

■ Yes
■ No
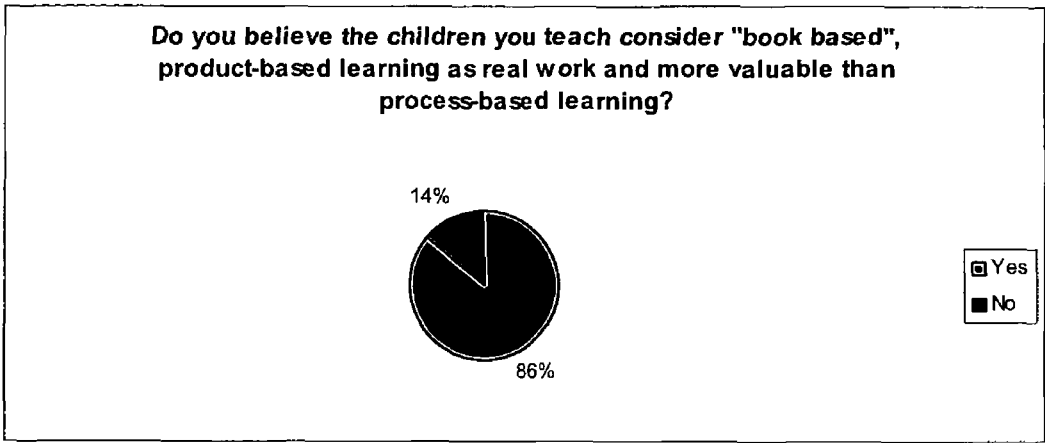
*Fig. 29*

Eighty-six percent of teachers felt that the children they teach regard book-based learning more valuable than process-based learning. Within the parameters of the textbook and the norms and expectations associated with its use, the traditionalist norms of fact-acquisition permeate education despite a thrust towards process-based learning. Throughout the interviews and questionnaires, a sizeable percentage of teachers at sixty-nine percent felt that the revised textbooks, which were introduced, post Revised Curriculum, lack specific objectives according to fact-acquisition standards. Teachers cited the huge quantities of 'knowledge' available in the Revised Curriculum textbooks, which they argue do not meet the objectives either; such vast amounts to be covered coupled with a lack of time to cover these topics thoroughly. One teacher illustrates the opinion of many others surveyed which indicates

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[420] PSC, RR,                     Literacy, pp4
[421] PSC, RR, ibid,               pp5

dissatisfaction with a textbook where "certain chapters seem pointless...what's the point of doing it, there's nothing to be gained from it."[422]

Section 2.4.7

## Newly Qualified Teachers and the textbook issue

| Are there sufficient resources packs in primary schools which replace textbooks? | |
|---|---|
| Number of teachers as a % who believe sufficient resource packs exist in classrooms | Number of teachers as a % who believe insufficient resource packs exist in classrooms |
| 4% | 96% |

*Fig. 30*

Ninety six percent of all NQTs surveyed mentioned the lack of resource packs available which could supplement learning.

Section 2.4.8

## Analysis of the textbook and the Revised Curriculum

Teachers claim that the Revised Curriculum textbooks deal with vast amounts of 'knowledge' but in insufficient detail to fulfil traditional objectives, despite the new objectives in the curriculum. The process-based objectives which presumably informed the mentioned chapter have lost significance to the teacher who believes the child values fact acquisition of some kind in each task, as depicted in the bar chart, *Fig. 29.* The findings also indicate that textbooks are also considered inadequate when dealing with Revised Curriculum objectives. Teachers felt saddled with these new textbooks where topics to be covered are in excess of the time available to cover them. In addition to this the possibility of developing integrated, thematic approaches to certain subjects, and thereby the cultivation of projects on these themes, remains at a deficit. Teachers complained of these new textbooks having been "rushed through"[423] to meet the demands of facilitated in-service days where the resources of such days often do not include textbooks. Teachers consider these rushed through

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[422] Appendix 1.8,            pp99
[423] Appendix 1.8,            pp99

textbooks as meaningless when the older textbooks provide for more concrete learning experiences. A problem has arisen with Revised Curriculum texts; these *texts attempt to meet several* strand objectives when, for example in history, a choice is given so the standard text simply cannot meet the choices of each class. Analysis of the textbook and resource issue highlights how teachers occupy a position between a desire to adapt to the changes in education, while relying on traditional staples to do so, and they are subsequently confined by the quality and suitability of texts available to them.

Resource packs are theme-based activities and worksheets which allow for a progression through a theme or strand unit, in any subject in an integrated and child centred way. Through a resource pack the afore-mentioned problem, where a teacher has a choice regarding strand material to be covered, the strand could be engaged with without having to purchase a text where subsequently several other optional areas would have to be covered. Thus more time is available to cover the desired topic well and in the detail chosen. Additionally, complaints regarding the purchase of textbooks would be reduced, and so too would the weight of school bags. Where there would be other costs according to the activities incorporated with the resource pack exploration, the overall aims of the Revised Curriculum, advocating active learning, would render most traditionally costly work confined to evaluation and recording activities, where investigations and probing activities of research would comprise the bulk of classroom work. Contribution to presentation requirements and paper would in all probability involve financial obligations where long booklists once existed. Publishing companies are not in a position to produce resource packs. NQTs have been largely trained to access resource packs before textbooks, and thereby find the expectations surrounding textbook use restricting. Arguably, a step towards reducing the limitations placed upon teachers regarding the textbook would be the introduction of resource packs by the traditional publishing houses. Such resource packs would cater for the child in mainstream education, in a single and multi-class situation, differentiation and individual learning needs, as the ever-spiralling pattern of education emphasises inclusion and integration of all children. A traditional perception that textbooks are essential to perceived 'good' learning rings true, despite the works of many theorists intent on dispelling this 'myth.' Henry Giroux is one

such theorist who argues that over-reliance upon the textbook serves neither education nor the child.

Section 2.5

**Teachers' Concerns Regarding Parents**



**In your experience, have parental misgivings regarding the curriculum interfered in any way with your implementation or planned implementation of the curriculum?**

14%

53%

33%

■ Not at all

■ Yes certainly

☐ Occasionally there is interference
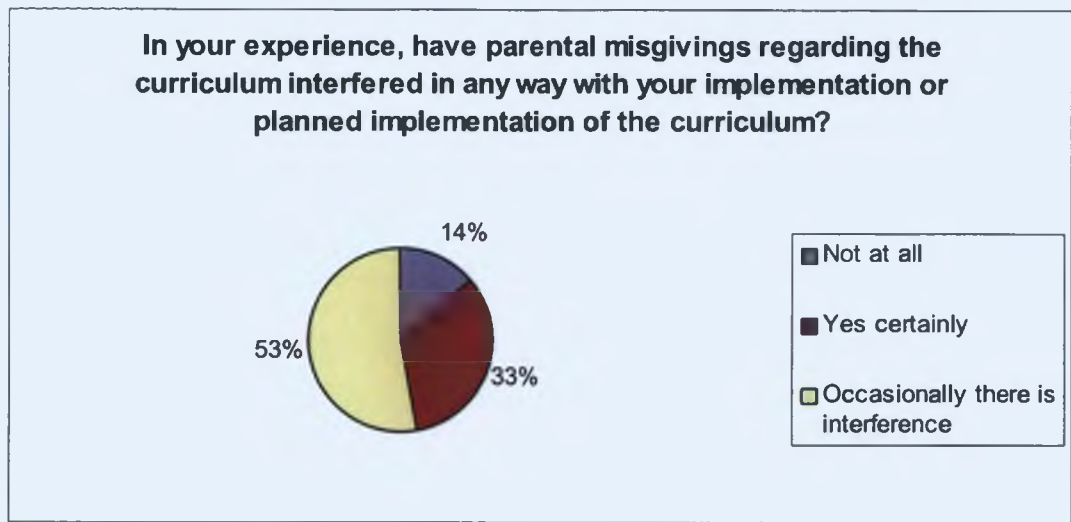
Fig. 31

Parental concerns regarding the Revised Curriculum also proved an issue for teachers. Fifty-three percent of the teachers surveyed referred to occasional interference from parents which impacted upon the teacher's planning through the perceived ideology of the Revised Curriculum. In particular, teaching English reading in junior classes was frequently mentioned. Parental expectations of junior infant pupils was specifically identified as an area where teachers had difficulty communicating realistic expectations, according to the curriculum, to parents. In addition to this, in section 2.2.2, *Fig.18* refers to parental concerns and aspects that affect teachers' perceptions of the Revised Curriculum as opposed to planning in the curriculum.

Section 2.5.1

**Analysis of parental understanding of the curriculum**

Teachers have expressed concern regarding parental understanding of the curriculum and parental expectations of homework. In the past other expectations were commonplace where the infant learnt several early reading books, basic phonics and

the alphabet – where the thrust of current teaching trends claims contextual, meaningful reading, phonological awareness and waiting to begin formal reading until the child is ready. In addition to this, the expectations and understanding of suitable and sufficient homework tasks differs from school to school, and often from parent to parent. Interestingly, teachers' concerns regarding parents' understandings of the Revised Curriculum find a direct contrast in the findings of the DES study. "Both studies (DES and Inspectorate) provide few examples of schools communicating with parents about the curriculum. The DES study notes that strategies to involve parents in their children's learning were only occasionally included in school planning documents and that parental involvement in policy formulation or in contributing to and organising learning resources for the school was limited. In interviews with parents, the NCCA found that parents wanted to have much more information about their child's curriculum, and the methods of teaching and assessment which teachers use and which parents themselves use to support their child's learning."[424]

Thus two significant issues arise. Firstly, the DES report attributes responsibility to the school or teacher, for informing parents of the revisions which the teachers themselves and the management of the school may not fully comprehend as yet, considering the unfinished facilitation of in-service. Secondly, this lack of responsibility to communicate changes by the DES, up to the delivery of the NCCA booklet *Your Child's Learning* (2001) and the more recent DVD *The What, Why and How of children's learning in primary* school, (2006) places parents in the position to suspect schools and teachers of laxity – parents clearly wish to know more about their children's learning and they do not receive this from their children's schools. Instead, they have come to witness changes within education and have little formal information on why such changes have occurred. (Please see Chapter 5, Parents and Children). The relationship between school and parent could suffer as a result of miscommunication. Thirdly, the issue of responsibility arises. Who is actually responsible for communicating these revisions? My research indicates that confusion still surrounds the Revised Curriculum for many teachers. Thus these teachers are not in a position to communicate change and subsequently the DES must put in place the

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[424]*The Primary Curriculum in Schools,*       Insights from Curriculum Implementation
Evaluation and the Primary Curriculum Review,
Involvement of Parents, pp5, 6

necessary structures to protect the integrity of the system, not simply suggest the school ought to communicate revisions when such revisions have not been facilitated in their entirety as yet. A discrepancy exists which widens the gap between the system, parents and teachers: "Schools should explore ways of supporting parents in becoming more fully involved in the education of their children."[425] Where the ideal exists, so does the reality that confusions abound for the teacher regarding the revisions in educational philosophy. Many schools may be in no position to involve parents in procedures and activities with which the teachers themselves are as yet unfamiliar. Perhaps the inspectors should take time to explain the foundational changes and expected methodology revisions taking place in primary schools and outside the WSE programme.

Section 2.6

**Analysis of Teachers' Ideology of Education and the Revised Curriculum**

The majority of teachers considered the Revised Curriculum to be extra work. The aspects of this extra work include planning, curricular additions and methodological revisions. Teachers consider education to be life-long, and revisions in the curriculum are both liked and considered necessary. The findings highlight how ideology and reality differ for the teacher. Once again, Fromm's theories on freedom resurface when the teacher makes reference to the slow change over from the former curriculum to that of 1999. The teacher who has been quoted as wanting to "get it right"[426] has indicated the traditional position occupied by the teacher and the thrust this position takes. The motivation behind the teacher's desire to 'get it right' is significant. Does the teacher want to be all knowing, as is the traditional norm; ought they 'get it right'? Is this reaction to the curriculum coming from a position of free choice or a lack thereof? Alternatively, has the teacher simply had enough in-service and Revised Curriculum banter? Does he or she simply want to revert to the safety and peace of his or her own classroom, where the teacher can accomplish what he or she "signed up to do"[427] in his or her own personal style?

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[425] ECI,                                      Chapter 6, Conclusions and Recommendations,
fig 6.2, Recommendations, 6.2.10, Parents' involvement, pp54.
[426] Appendix 1.1,                      pp24
[427] Appendix 1.3,          ·              pp46

According to the research, the analysis of in-service training shows teachers feel in-service falls short of the demands of the busy, often multi-graded classroom. Equally, style of in-service tasks and activities do not fit the realities of the classroom – they are once-off activities included to enable philosophical understanding of the curriculum, where teachers differ by seeking activities which can be implemented immediately into functioning classrooms. In addition to this, facilitators must have the necessary classroom experience teaching the Revised Curriculum to a class, in order to guarantee its success to sceptical teachers. Teachers expressed concern regarding the opportunity to plan using the curriculum. There remains a desire amongst teachers to up-skill.

Teachers have voiced concern over the standard of textbook available to the classroom which indicates a reliance on traditional methodologies and their concern over the process-based objectives which inform textbook activities. Newly qualified teachers are concerned over the lack of resource packs available to them to engage effectively with the Revised Curriculum in the classroom. My findings are corroborated by the DES study, a result of the Consolidation and Review Year 2003/2004. "The Department of Education and Science study notes that in classrooms where textbooks exerted a dominant influence on teaching and learning, teaching tended to be didactic and children were not sufficiently interested or engaged in their own learning."[428] In this instance the DES research not only substantiates my findings but also suggests a level of responsibility of children for their own learning. Teachers may choose to use textbooks to achieve learning targets, when the findings of DES sponsored research suggests otherwise. In addition to this, the statement also supports what many educational theorists purport, such as Henry Giroux, to be founded in very real situations. The report made by the Inspectorate *An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools* also concurs; "textbooks exert a dominant influence on teaching and learning in a significant number of classrooms. In these class settings the teacher tended to be didactic, and undemanding and repetitive learning tasks were provided for the pupils. There was little emphasis on the development of higher-order thinking skills, on nurturing pupils' creativity, or on

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[428] *The Primary Curriculum in Schools,*     Insights from Curriculum Implementation
Evaluation and the Primary Curriculum Review,
Methods of Teaching and Learning,
2. Environment-based learning, pp3.

encouraging pupils to respond emotionally or imaginatively. Teaching methodologies were restricted, and the essential emphases of the curriculum were not accorded due prominence. The quality of pupils' learning was found to have significant scope for development in these instances, and the pupils were not sufficiently interested or engaged in their learning."[429]

The issue of parental understandings of the Revised Curriculum, or traditional expectations of homework, have impacted upon teachers' ideologies and implementation of the Revised Curriculum. The parental expectations of homework also proved an issue of concern to teachers, where conflicting views of what constitutes sufficient and suitable homework tasks was evident amongst teachers and parents, and parents groups themselves. In conclusion, the results of the empirical data indicate divisions in educational ideology. The motivation for such diverse opinion is key to understanding teachers' educational ideology. The lack of a clear theoretical framework governing curricular ideology renders teachers basing their theoretical ideology and subsequent practical work upon supposition and popular group-psychology as understood in their given working environments. The results show a deep need to apply a theoretical framework to curricular ideologies in order to make explicit its intentions and ensure its success.

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[429] ECI,                                    Chapter 6, Conclusions and Recommendations,
fig 6.1, Main Evaluation Findings, 6.1.3, Quality of classroom organisation and support for curriculum implementation, Textbooks, pp49.

# Chapter 5

# Children and Parents and the Revised Curriculum

Section 1

## Children and Parents and the Revised Curriculum

This chapter is concerned with providing my research with a counter-point. The data gathered reflects the implementation of the Revised Curriculum, as viewed by parents and children. The first section deals specifically with children, and their response to education and the Revised Curriculum. The second section deals with parents and their views and opinions regarding the Revised Curriculum. The results are as follows.

Section 1.1

## Children and the Revised Curriculum

### Children and School
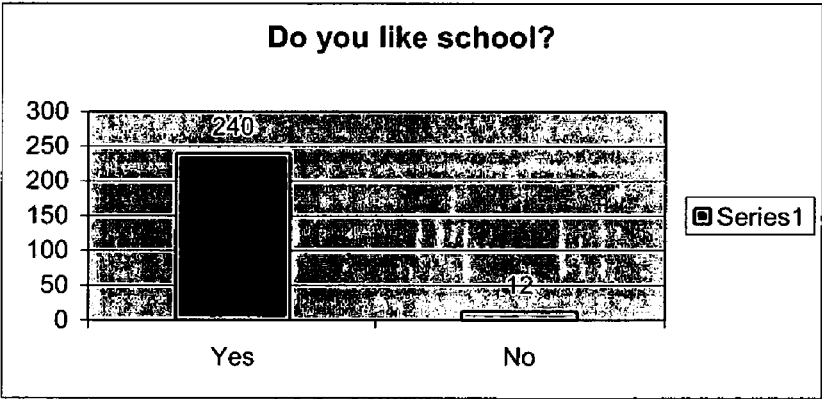


*Fig. 1*
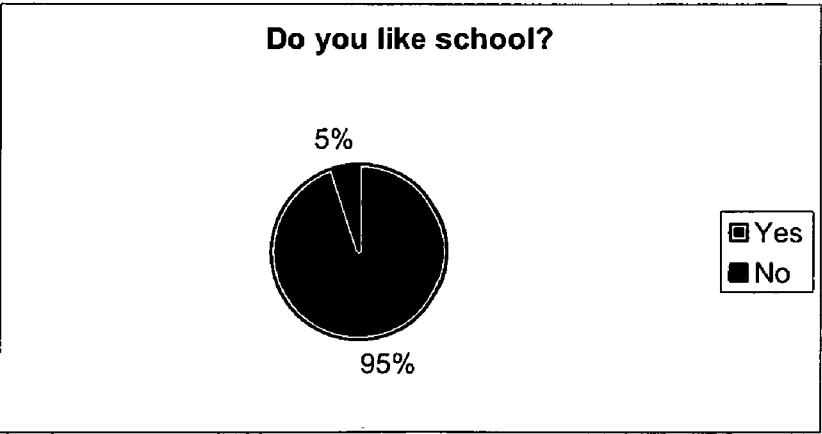


*Fig. 2*

The introductory question posed to the children attempted to ascertain whether or not children like school. A general question in itself, it was included to give a foundation to the section in its entirety. The above tables highlight numerical results and percentage results to the question. The majority of children totalling two hundred and forty said they did like school. However, the results reveal some interesting qualitative findings, which in this instance skew the quantative findings. The given class groups either predominately said yes, or predominantly said no to this question during the questionnaire/interview process. The qualitative findings indicated the power of group-psychology on children and class groups - overwhelmingly, this particular question drew a response which indicates group-psychology at work within the classroom. In other words, of the two hundred and forty children who said they did like school, those children belonged to class-groups which predominately said they liked school. Few children in these class-groups challenged the norms in their classroom and said they did not like school, when the established convention was to like school. Inversely, children from class-groups whom did not like school as the accepted social more, adhered to this standard, and few children stated in this instance that they liked school. On average, of a class-group of twenty-seven, only four children would buck the dominant trend of either liking or disliking school. Analysis of these statistics highlights how children are influenced to a large extent by group-psychology. However there were some qualifications to this, where children identified certain factors that inhibit their enjoyment of school on occasion although these children said they liked school; these included feeling bullied, nervous or bored.

# Can you name any positive or negative aspects of school?



169
41
79
22
112

Making Friends | Learning | The Teacher | Experiencing Success | Having Fun

**High Incidence "Positive" Responses**

Series1

*Fig. 3*

# Can you name any positive or negative aspects of school?



34
26
22
17
13
11

Feeling Stupid | Bullying | Feeling Left Out | Fear | Nervousness | Negative Teacher/Student Relationship

**High incedence "negative" responses**

Series1

*Fig. 4*

The children were asked to name the elements of school they considered positive and negative. Making friends, having fun, the teacher, learning and experiencing success comprised the high incidence elements identified. The children were asked to identify the negative aspects of school – feeling 'stupid,' bullying, feeling left-out and alone,

156

fear, nervousness and negative experiences with teachers were amongst the high incidence responses. The positive aspects of the schooling process reflect well on the proposed learning objectives and methodologies of the Revised Curriculum. Enjoyment and active, contextual engagement in education is a significant aspect of the findings, which reflect the aims of the Revised Curriculum. Where the negative aspects of education were present, the number of children identifying such responses was far fewer. The NCCA conducted an investigation into the opinions of children, as part of the Primary Curriculum Review. Six case study schools were used in the investigation. The responses to the study corroborate the findings of this thesis, with particular reference to the above findings. An outline of the study can be found in the section Children and the Revised Curriculum, A Note on the NCCA Study.

Section 1.2

## Children's perceptions of their teachers

The next section deals with children's perception of their teachers. This section has been included to examine whether or not there is scope for self-actualization within classrooms. In other words, if the teacher models an awareness of the self and subsequently allows for this self-development amongst children in the class. The alternative is the classroom where the children are in receipt of reward or praise for following traditionalist instruction and not necessarily thinking critically or of the development of themselves as self-aware or individuals. Self-actualization (the development of the self as a critical being) involves a measure of modelling from the teacher, to enable the child to become an 'individual' being, as proposed by bell hooks. A positive and mutual teacher/student relationship would be a desired product of the education experience. Teacher and student share a horizontal relationship...it's mutual."[430] "The important lesson is one of mutual engagement."[431] The teacher acting as a facilitator worthy of shared trust can communicate and cultivate more than the traditionally accepted norms of education. Buber refers to the teacher as the "tuner of the violin,"[432] and it is in this context that the significance of the question, and the qualitative responses rendered, indicate whether or not this desired student/teacher relationship exists.

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[430] Dunne, J,                    Lecture Series, Authority, May 2002
[431] bell hooks,                  Ecstasy, *Teaching to Transgress*, pp205.
[432] Buber, in Dunne, J           Lecture Series, Authority, May 2002

| High frequency words children used to describe teacher |
|---|
| All right, annoying, boring, caring, cross, kind, funny, generous, helpful, nice, ok, sound. |

*Fig. 5*

The children were asked to describe their teacher. The above is a list of high frequency words the children used – all right, annoying, boring, caring, cross, kind, funny, generous, helpful, nice, ok, sound. Some children extended their one word responses, "he's easy on homework," "he's sound as a pound, full stop."[433] The feedback from children reflects positive teacher/student relationships in the majority of cases. Where such positive relationships existed before the Revised Curriculum came into being, the philosophy of the curriculum sought to foster such a relationship both through an outcome of process-based methodologies and a concrete aim of the curriculum; "It is widely recognised that the child's social and emotional development significantly influences his or her success in learning. This is addressed most effectively through a school ethos that is characterised by a caring, interactive relationship between teachers and pupils."[434]

Section 1.3

## The Revised Curriculum and group-work



**Have you ever been involved in group-work?**

8%

92%

▣ Yes
■ No
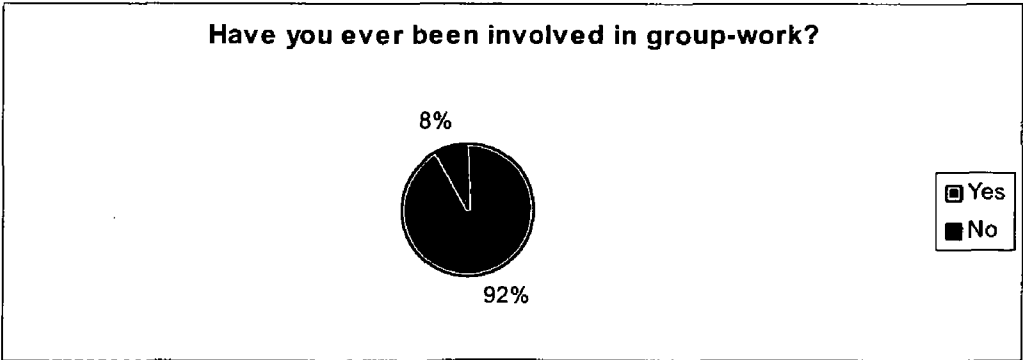
*Fig. 6*

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[433] Appendix 4.2,                                        pp135
[434] *Primary School Curriculum*, 1999,          Introduction, Chapter 2, Children and Learning, The social and emotional dimensions of learning, pp16

**Have you ever been involved in group-work?**
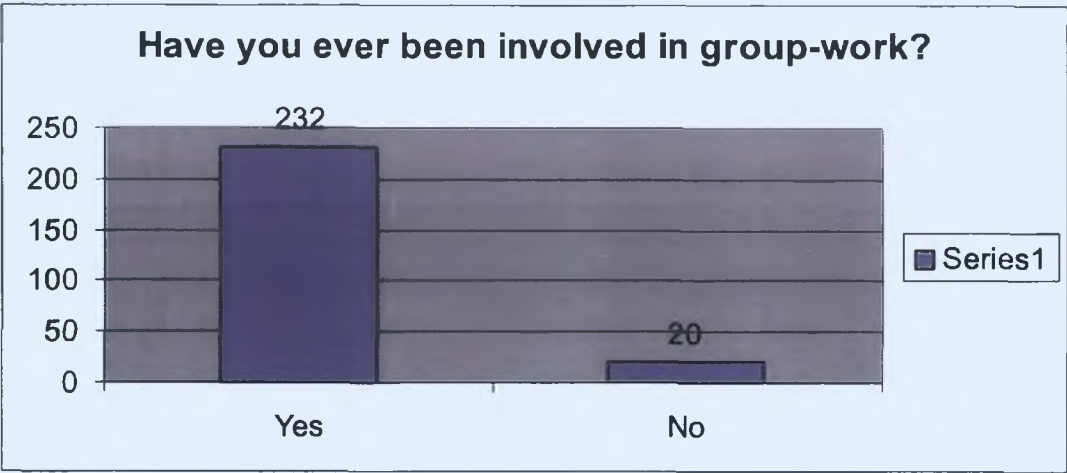
*Fig. 7*

The next section centred upon a Revised Curriculum methodology – group-work and *its impact* and implementation in primary schools at present. The children were asked if they had partaken in group-work or group-based investigation as a reference of a likely Revised Curriculum methodology, and if so, whether or not they liked it. Most children surveyed had experienced these methodological practices and activities. The findings are represented above in both numerical and percentage graphs.



**Do you like group-work?**
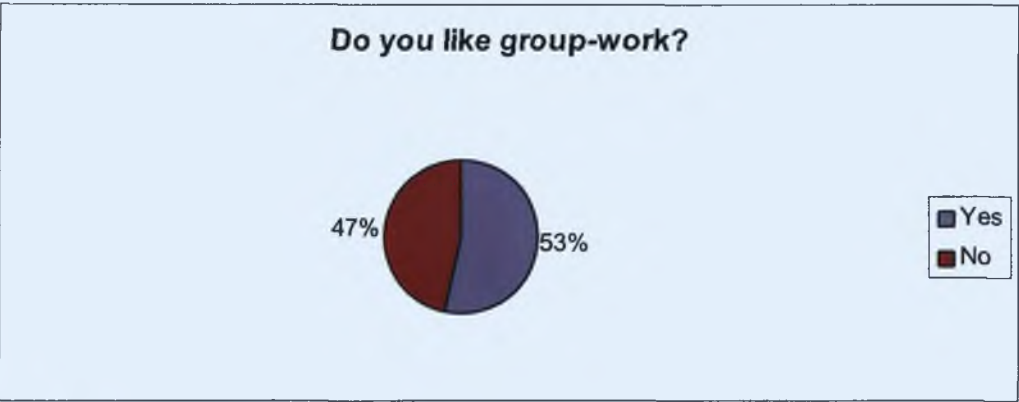
*Fig. 8*

The response to the latter part of this question, do children like group-work, highlighted a mixed opinion of group-work. Slightly more than half of those surveyed liked group-work. Anticipating a higher statistic in favour of group-work, ascertaining why many children did not like group-work became a priority. When asked to state why they found it unfavourable, children cited a number of reasons.

The main high-incidence word used to describe why children did not like group-work was 'difficult.' The majority of children of the above fifty-three percent, at ninety-four percent, indicated that the difficulty of the task prevented them from liking group-work. Several possibilities provide a possible reason for this, and a number of these were perused throughout the hybrid interview/questionnaire, and are outlined presently. Firstly, the task may indeed have been too difficult for the children. Secondly, the children may have been over-relying upon dictated tasks before engaging in group-work to the point where they may have felt incapable of working without the teacher's direct guidance and help. Thirdly, the task and nature of group-work may have been based upon objectives the children could not measure as other tasks may have once been measured. Therefore success could have proved elusive to regular 'high-achievers.' Finally, the strongest response encountered centred upon children equating education with the workplace and attaining coveted and perceived advantageous careers. The notion of high test scores and fact acquisition rates more favourably in children's minds than the other skills deemed as important in the workplace, such as the team-member skills acquired in group-work. Further to this, the objectives of the Revised Curriculum pivot around the crux of developing individual thinkers, while arguably, also supplying the work place. Teachers may clearly grasp the notion of developing traditional skills and by contrast not necessarily value the development of independent thinkers. Therefore, teachers may give children group-work tasks which can actually be best completed individually – in other words the task may seem "pointless"[435] to many children, who think the task given could have been better completed alone, "I like to work alone so I can concentrate and really learn something."[436] A total of forty-seven percent of children liked or enjoyed group-work, where working as a social unit, enjoyment of activities and achieving learning outcomes were identified as positive aspects of the group-work process.

The children were asked for their preference – working with others or working alone – to achieve tasks and to learn. The response was interesting. Firstly, the majority of children at fifty-seven percent said that to complete tasks which were very difficult, they would prefer group-work, but otherwise they would prefer working alone to

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[435] Appendix 4.1,          pp133
[436] Appendix 4.1,          pp133

actually "learn... something new."[437]   Children who did not find group-work favourable as opposed to working independently would prefer working with others if they thought they could not complete the task alone.   The recurring response of "I have to say it to myself to learn it"[438] reflects how children consider learning to be fact acquisition - tables, dates, spellings, poems, focail as Gaeilge.   Where group-work was the more popular option in this instance, children included enjoyment of learning, responsibility for tasks and projects, and experiencing real-life learning and social interaction through group-work as reasons for their preference.   In 1992, a Roger and David Johnson study found that there were "more experiences of discovery and higher level reasoning in groups."[439]   This study substantiates the findings of several studies into the outcomes of group-work, both to assess cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes.   Bruner stated, "I have increasingly come to realize that most learning in most settings is a communal activity."[440]   Vygotsky concurs; "Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to co-operate only when the child is interacting with his peers."[441]   Without a literature review, we can only assume these theses proffered by educational theorists provide the cornerstone for the inclusion of group-work based methodologies in the Revised Curriculum.

In conclusion to this section, many children are confused by the objectives and methodologies of group-work – they are unclear of what is being asked of them. Many rate fact acquisition as true education and therefore see other objectives which may be present in group-work tasks and game-approaches to learning as pointless.   If the task is less than ideal as a group-work task, they can do it faster and better alone. Alternatively, they can do the task but to what avail?   If the task is not based on measurable, obvious fact acquisition tasks, children question the task's worth.   One child in a multi-class situation stated; "we had to write a letter on what it felt like to be on the coffin ship, but last year's sixth class had it written in their books and I remembered it wasn't nice...like...it was cold and damp and they were crowded below deck with no air and very little food.   They often get sick.   So I didn't need to

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437 Appendix 4.3,                                      pp135
438 Appendix 4.2,                                      pp137
439 Johnson, P&R, in Mulryan, C,                       Lecture Series February 2001
440 Bruner, J, (1986), in Mulryan, C,                  Lecture Series, January 2001
441 Vygotsky, L, (1978), in Benet, N, & Dunne, E,      *Managing Classroom Groups*, 1992

**161**

write the letter, but I had to do it."[442]    By the very inclusion of these facts, the child

displayed how he or she felt I would be best served in my data research. His opinion

of group-work was surely not what I was seeking but rather he endeavoured to

reassure me, through his group-work explanations, that he knew his history. Thus it is

the overall impression of traditional educational aims that many children equate with

true education, even if they find these aims less enjoyable than newer, revised aims

which make use of revised methodologies. A popular perception of education and

schooling is not necessarily portrayed in the media as education understood in modern

terms.    Countless programmes and entertainment offers children a depiction of

education very different from that proposed by the Revised Curriculum, which may

influence their understanding of true education.    However, just over half of the

children surveyed enjoyed group-work, and had developed their own educational

ideals as to what educational methodologies they found most worthwhile.    One

significant finding which was identified through references to group-work and

learning and the outcome of both; children valued concrete evidence of what they

learned. The Revised Curriculum proposes projects and portfolios as assessment tools

where records made by the child while perusing a learning task or engaging in a

learning process may be contained. The DES studies found that children enjoyed

project-work and the choices they had regarding their learning, as illustrated in the

findings noted in the *A Note on the NCCA* study. By contrast, the findings of this

survey indicate that of those children surveyed, fifty-three percent do not like group-

work, where the types of tasks given hampered children's enjoyment of group-work.

As previously mentioned, the children in this case found the nature of the group-work

task to be best completed individually, instead of in the social setting. This indicates

that where methodologies of the Revised Curriculum are being employed, the design

and subsequent development of the group-work tasks are not necessarily utilized as

the curriculum suggests.


Section 1.4

**Tests and Assessment**

The next section dealt with tests and assessments.    Integral aspects of every

classroom, the children were posed a series of questions to ascertain the impact of

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[442] Appendix 4.4,                                 pp139


**162**

tests and assessments upon their understanding of education and educational outcomes. Initially children were asked what they thought education was for. The results are tabulated in the graph below.



**What are tests for?**

170

128

72    81    54

■ Series1

To see how I'm doing | To get a good job | To do well in life | Parent/teacher meetings | To determine my future

**High Incidence Responses**
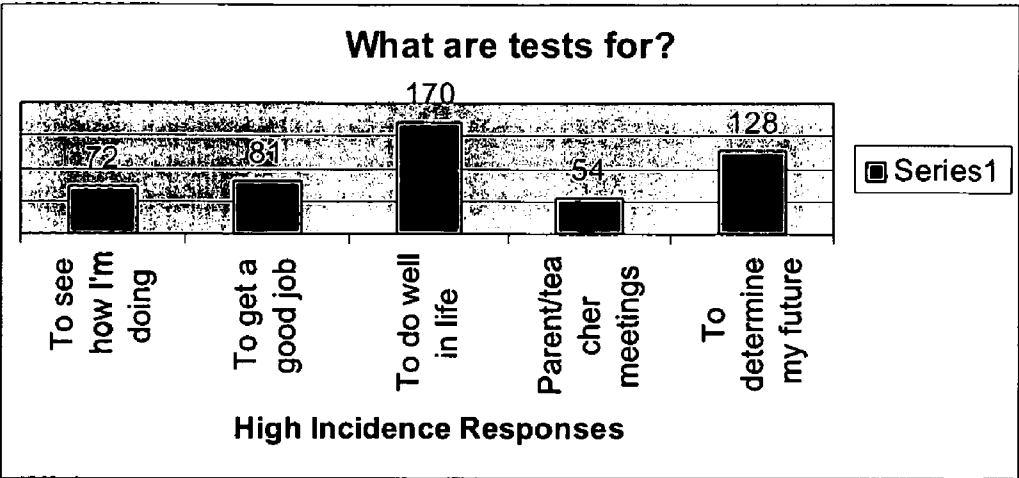
*Fig. 9*

Children stated that education existed to help them "in later life,"[443] to "get a good job."[444] In the majority of responses proffered by the children surveyed, education was viewed as a measure-stick to identify one's rung on the work-ladder of the economy and associated necessities. Wherever such ideals have been cultivated from, be it individual philosophy or that of the adults (including teacher) surrounding the child, these are the responses of the children surveyed. "The pupil is 'schooled' to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new."[445] Education is considered a stopgap to material gain; "poverty...refers to those who have fallen behind an advertised ideal."[446] Within the premise of testing, the children were encouraged to develop and further illustrate their responses. The more senior classes invariably cited the Leaving Certificate as the only important test because it dictates a college course and subsequent employment opportunities. Junior and middle classes saw tests as important. Although most children worried about tests, they felt that

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[443] Appendix 4.1,                         pp133
[444] Appendix 4.1,                         pp133
[445] Illich, I,                            *Deschooling Society*, Chapter 1, Why we must
disestablish schools, pp1
[446] Illich, I,                            *Deschooling Society*, Chapter 1, Why we must
disestablish schools, pp3

there was little point in tests outside the Leaving Certificate. Some children did state that tests provided "practice doing tests,"[447] however the particularity of any given test was considered less important in comparison to the Leaving Certificate at senior class level. Where children did value tests, they believed tests to dictate whether a child moved on a class or repeated, or that tests indicate how "smart you are."[448]

Section 1.5

## Enjoyment of learning in the Primary School.

A significant qualitative result of the survey found that children have defined ideas about the associations which exist between the processes of schooling and learning, and having fun. A reoccurring theme centred upon the concept that learning through rote and by heart was associated with 'real' learning. One child stated that he looked forward to secondary school - "where the real learning begins."[449] Through discussion and subsequent explanation, the children of certain groups said that learning was fun in primary school and in secondary school it was "ok, but not as much fun, they want you to learn more things and do well."[450] The distinction was further drawn amongst primary school teachers and secondary school teachers – the children said that primary school teachers are dealing with younger children and they have to "make it nice and fun"[451] for the children. In secondary school children are "older and able for real learning, and the harder stuff."[452] Analysis of the findings yielded through discussion proves interesting for two reasons; firstly, the equation of standards concurrent with the banking system of education, which exist in the children's perceived aim of tests and education. The majority of children surveyed attest to Freire's claim; "The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are."[453] Secondly, the children's reference to the 'real learning' of secondary school corroborates earlier findings within the last chapter – Teachers and the Revised Curriculum. In this chapter, teachers were found to make efforts with the ideals of the Revised Curriculum and as such, the Revised Curriculum

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[447] Appendix 4.4,  pp139
[448] Appendix 4.3,  pp137
[449] Appendix 4.3,  pp137
[450] Appendix 4.1,  pp133
[451] Appendix 4.5,  pp141
[452] Appendix 4.5,  pp141
[453] Freire, P,  *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Chapter 2, pp53

164

methodologies and activities are clearly taking place in primary schools. This is the case even where they are considered, in some instances, less valuable than traditional textbook drill recitation. Also, certain activities in infant classrooms may appear juvenile to older primary school children, many of whom took part in the data collection surveys for this thesis.

The findings in relation to tests and assessment indicate that children perceive real learning as fact acquisition, and subsequent assessment ascertainment reflecting 'good' job opportunities. The findings in this section also support Freire's banking education hypothesis where a traditional expectation of education is cultivated from generation to generation. To the child, education is largely fact acquisition and certification of these years spent in school acquiring facts. Illich concurs, "neither learning nor justice is promoted by schooling because educators insist on packaging instruction with certification."[454] Therefore, the child perceived to be doing the best at school is one who has achieved high levels in fact acquisition tasks. Interestingly, findings indicate a dual role of education where certification exists alongside popular and desirable social aspirations. In many instances, children strive to achieve both education certification and social accomplishments according to given groups' social codes. The attainment of socially perceived desirables places certain children in the alpha or dominant role in social settings, even though they may not have realised the educational achievements of their classmates. Further to the research findings, this indicates the strong influence of social mores at work in our classroom societies, at the expense of perceived educational goals.

In addition to the above findings, the concept of Howard Gardiner's multiple intelligences is appreciated by children, who value artistic, musical or sporting prowess and subsequent achievement in the talent. Gardiner proposes mere analytical forms of assessment; the summative Leaving Certificate, measures only analytical intelligence. Alternative intelligence types are ignored or considered extra-curricular. He claims; "Only if we expand and reformulate our view of what counts as human intellect will we be able to devise more appropriate ways of assessing it and more

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[454] Illich, I,         *Deschooling Society*, Chapter 1, Why we must
disestablish schools, pp11

effective ways of educating it."[455]  The children surveyed offered examples of children doing well at school, which involved attaining GAA and sporting trophies, awards for art and drama, choirs and science.  Yet these talents, however coveted, did not usurp the notion of true education being anything other than book learning.

Section 1.6

**How the child would teach if he or she were teacher**

**What would you change if you were the teacher?**

184

143

120

85

23

■ Series 1

Reduce written tasks

Have more discussion

Prizes

Omit subjects

No homework

**High Incidence Responses**
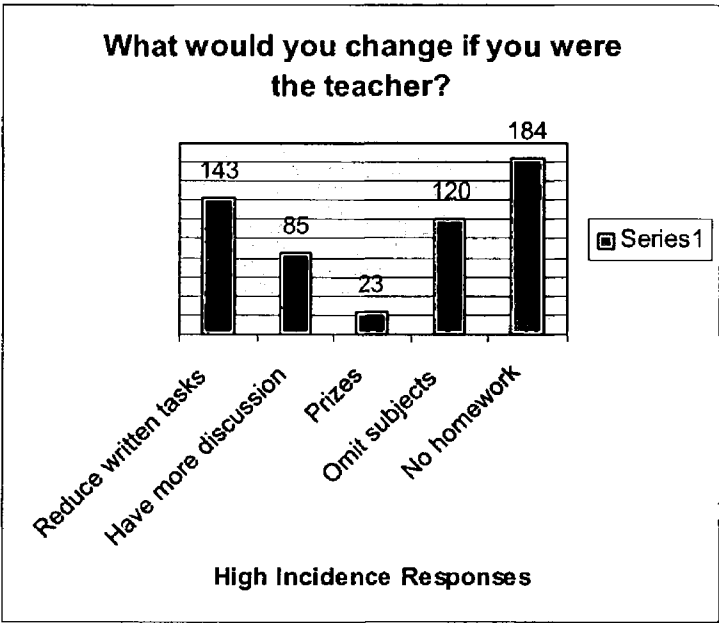
*Fig. 10*

The final section is concerned with how children would teach if they were the teacher, in other words, if the child were the teacher and had control in their school, how would they approach education.  High incidence responses included being funny, nice, kind, cool, calm and listening to children and are illustrated in the above graph. The children said they would teach through games and make learning fun.  In addition to the above question the children were also asked what they would change.  Children said they would reduce written tasks and have more oral discussion.  Some children

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[455] Gardiner, H,                         *Frames of Mind, Chapter* 1, The Idea of Multiple
Intelligences, pp 4

would have "prizes for the winners,"[456] and many children said they would omit certain subjects. Many children, at one hundred and eighty-four suggested that homework ought to be banned. Interestingly, these responses reflect the child's desire to ascend the ranks to be 'the best.' As egotistical beings, children often consider themselves "the best"[457] in a given classroom and therefore believe they would perform better than others in tasks and tests. The question of how an entire class of twelve to thirty-three could all be the best is thus raised. Children do not consider this particular aspect and instead value sumative assessments as true educational devices which affirm their positions as 'the best.' Children also valued discussion, being heard and being listened to. Where this is an occurrence each day in every classroom across the country, there is no doubt amongst children that they are heard less and listened to less, in an over-crowded classroom. "I prefer when we go to Mrs _____ because we get to talk more."[458] These findings are corroborated by the NCCA study findings illustrated in the section on group-work.

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Section 1.7

## A note on the NCCA Study

The NCCA investigation corroborates the findings of this thesis, where children expressed a desire to have more group-work in their classrooms and a boredom with learning as associated with the banking concept of education. Children wanted more collaborative learning in their classroom; "which they enjoy most of all,"[459] stating in one instance; "I like working with other people better than working on my own because if you put two minds together you get more clever stuff and things like that."[460] The study also noted that where children were less happy with collaborative group-work, for two reasons of difficulty sharing ideas, and individual accountability. There were two incidences of children disliking collaborative group-work of the six schools surveyed. Active learning was the second item on the children's wish list

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[456] Appendix 4.3,                         pp137
[457] Appendix 4.1,                         pp133
[458] Appendix 4.5,                         pp141
[459] *Info@ncca*,                      Supporting teaching and learning, what do children want from primary school? Pp11
[460] *Info@ncca*,                      Supporting teaching and learning, what do children want from primary school? September 2005, Issue #1, Pp11

where "they explained they would like more hands-on learning."[461] In addition to this type of learning, play was identified not only as a preference for hands-on learning approaches, but the children's concept of play correlates to that considered worthwhile by David Whitebread and Dorothy Heathcote; "In play, children can reach depths of understanding and complexity which the busy 'doing' activities...do not allow for."[462] The study concurs; "According to children, learning through play provides opportunities to experience, model, stimulate, test, hypothesize, imagine, succeed,"[463] where these are considered advantageous elements at work in the classroom. Autonomous learning proved the third item on the children's ideal education agenda. "Children in all six schools reported that they liked having control over their own learning by making choices about the content of their learning and the tools or activities they used in learning ... Children reported that lack of choice diminished their enjoyment of learning."[464] Linking to the issue of responsibility and the theories of critical educational theorists, the child's own sense of responsibility is significant, and freedom of choice makes the learning objective more valuable to the child – corroborating the various theories of responsibility held by the critical theorists. Finally, the study found that children wanted more authentic learning experiences in their classrooms; "...they would like a greater focus on the real world in their learning in order to prepare them for the world outside school."[465]

The dispute between the cultivation of the individual and the social development of a group in society is a central theme of this thesis. The critical theorist argues that the creation of the self cannot happen through the social lens. The socio-political theorist argues for the creation and development of pupils who ascribe to societal ideals considered advantageous to that society, but not those necessarily associated with economic advancement. Regardless of the debate proposed by the theorists, the curriculum proposes the dual role of cultivating the individual and the citizen in

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[461] *Info@ncca*,                    Supporting teaching and learning, what do children want from primary school? September 2005, Issue #1, Pp11
[462] Daniels, J, in Whitebread, D,          *Teaching and Learning in the Early Years*, Part B, Play and Language, Language, Narrative and Imaginative Play, Play and Learning, pp121
[463] *Info@ncca*,                    Supporting teaching and learning, what do children want from primary school? September 2005, Issue #1, Pp12
[464] *Info@ncca*,                    Supporting teaching and learning, what do children want from primary school? September 2005, Issue #1, Pp12
[465] *Info@ncca*,                    Supporting teaching and learning, what do children want from primary school? September 2005, Issue #1, Pp12

education. Within this premise, the significance of authentic learning, contextual in the wider environment comes to light. The prospect of authentic learning allows the child to access the reality within which they exist, but it may not necessarily allow them to be critical of this reality. The article continues with a second significant finding corroborated by the study conducted by the Inspectorate; "Children's enthusiasm for learning which mirrors the real world, contrasted with their lack of enthusiasm in general for learning from textbooks...As a replacement for textbooks, they suggested that project work provided enjoyable opportunities for 'learning about real people and animals and things."[466] In the light of these findings, the concepts of process-based learning advocated by the curriculum find support in the views and opinions of children, while the suggestion of projects supports the assessment strategies proposed by the curriculum for teachers to formatively inform teaching and learning experiences.

Section 1.8

## Analysis of Children and the Revised Curriculum,
## A Conclusion

The Revised Curriculum is being implemented in Irish primary school. Specific aspects of its implementation such as methodologies – namely guided discovery in group-work situations – seem to be causing problems for children. Where group-work is being implemented, children especially at the senior class level, feel that education would be best served in situations where they work independently. Thus the opinion that education is about round robin and 'de ghlan meabhar' learning is alive and relied upon in the primary school. Children do not necessarily feel they have learned anything if they have not acquired measurable, knowledgeable fact. Further to this, children do not view education as a tool for developing their individuality or personality. Instead, education is a mere means to employment opportunities and job acquisition – education is for the economic machine and the workplace. Incidental learning can be responsible for social skills and the other areas of development and growth a child may experience from group-work participation. However children do not view incidental learning as important in the same way they

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[466] _Info@ncca,_ Supporting teaching and learning, what do children want from primary school? September 2005, Issue #1, Pp12

view fact acquisition as important, or as an aim of education. Despite the implementation of the Revised Curriculum in the primary school, many children view education as a means to an end – the vast majority do not see education as a worthwhile, fulfilling process which can develop and facilitate children with the tools to become individual thinkers.

The reasoning behind such ideas is multi-faceted. Firstly, children may have reached this conclusion for themselves, from their experiences, thoughts and ponderings in the educational process. Secondly, children may be reflecting the experiences teachers may disclose through the hidden curriculum; if fact acquisition is valued above all else for the teacher, then it shall be valued above all else for children too. Thirdly, children may simply be reflecting the opinions of their parents, the primary educators, whose influence is great at primary school level. Where parents' views value the attainment of a stable, feasible and lucrative career, education is regarded as a series of levels or tests children must do well in to attain this stable, feasible and lucrative career. The very introduction of league tables or reports, and parents seeking the results of same, reflect how the partners in education desire the 'best' from Irish children. Education has therefore become less about the individual at the dawn of the curriculum that supports the development of the individual above all else, and more about what the child, or cog, or number, can attain for the economic situation of Ireland. We want our children 'to do well' but not for their sake. As J Dunne put it – "the point I wish to make ... is that education should indeed equip people to address their present society – and of course the shape of their own lives within this society – but that it will not adequately do this unless it enables them to reflect critically on this society by offering them fuller perspectives on the human good than they find instantiated in its institutions and practices."[467] We want our children to attain their rank on the ladder of the status quo leading to the economic machine, with little regard for their individuality. We are happy if they attain and achieve in the traditional sense of success. Where the Revised Curriculum is being implemented its message has fallen on deaf ears. Although this emphasis may shift and children may begin to realise the messages, at present this is not the case. We must ask ourselves if

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[467] Dunne, J in Hogan, P, What's the good of education? *Partnership and the Benefits of* Learning, pp80

we are using education to fulfil our obligations to children or using children to fulfil education?

Section 2

## Parents and the Revised Curriculum

The final section of this chapter reflects parents' views of the Revised Curriculum in the Irish primary school. The results corroborate the findings of Chapter Four and the findings of Section 1 of this chapter, Children and the Revised Curriculum. The following section illustrates the findings.

Section 2.1

## Are parents aware of changes in the curriculum?
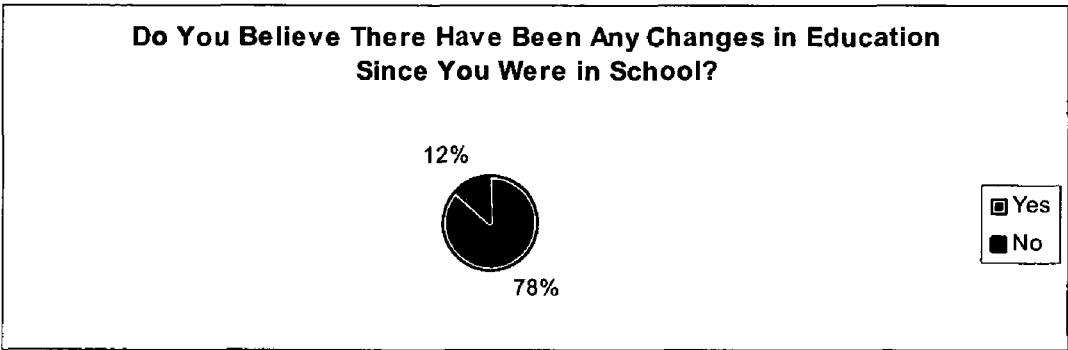


*Fig. 11*

The first questions contained in the questionnaire focused on whether or not parents were aware of changes in the curriculum and at school. The majority of parents surveyed at seventy-eight percent thought that changes had taken place in education. The following graph depicts the changes which parents were asked to identify if they felt changes had occurred.

**Can You Name or Explain These Changes?**

109 | 93 | | 101

40

- Significance of any one subject
- Less strict
- More fun
- Standardisation (of school year)
- More subjects

**High Incidence Responses (numerically)**

Series1
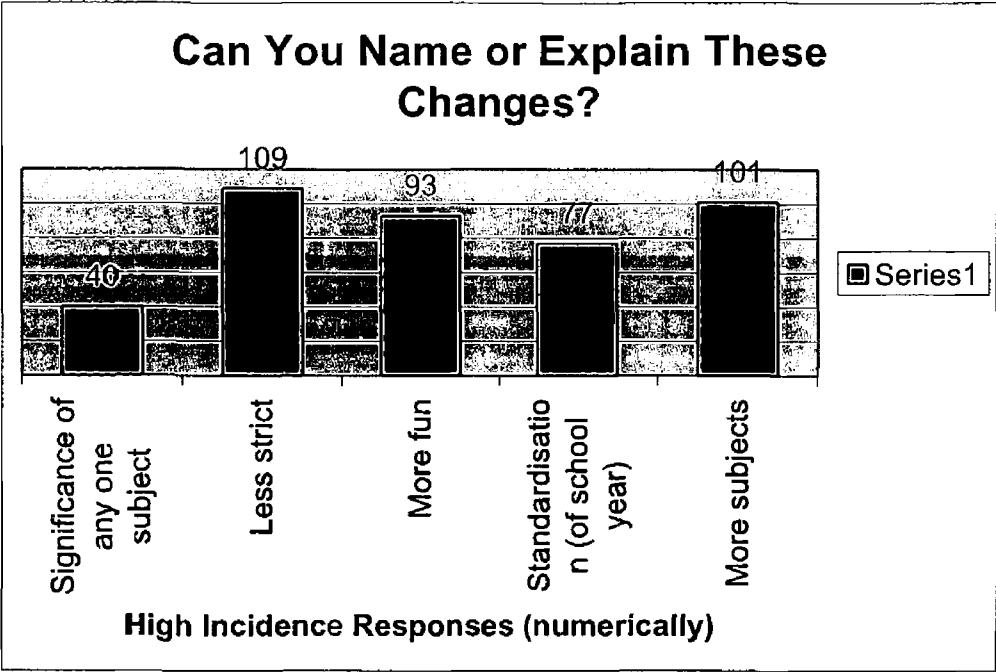
*Fig. 12*

This question asked parents to identify the changes they may have seen. Ninety-three parents' responses focused on how education had become fun for the child. Other high incidence responses included the addition of new subjects, standardisation of the school year and less strict outlooks of teachers in education.



**Sample of "Positive" responses (numerically)**

86 | 74 | | 52

41

Teachers are kind | School is fun | More interesting | More subjects

Series1

*Fig. 13*

## Sample of "Negative" responses (numerically)

43

34

28

18

Series1

Standards have dropped | Children not learning all they did | Parent/Teacher meetings | Discipline
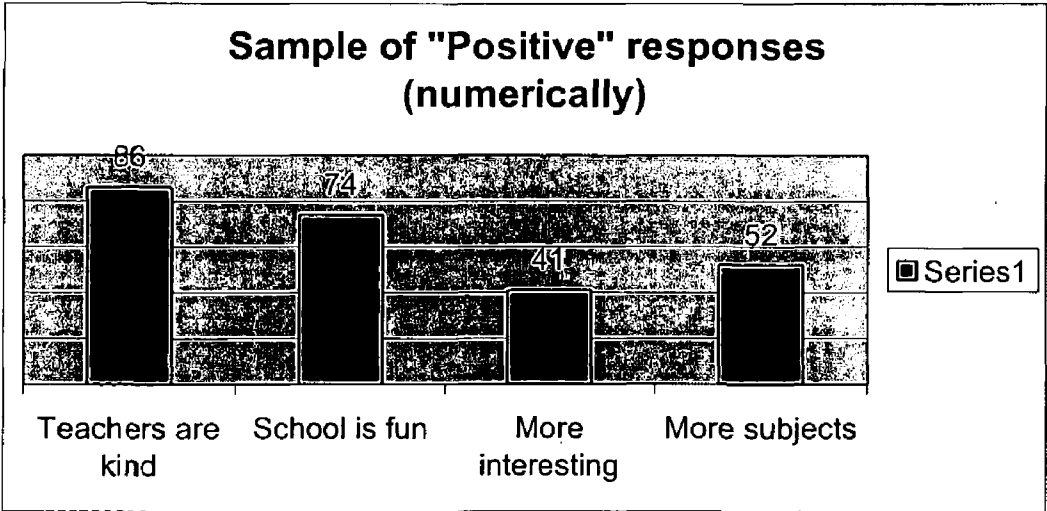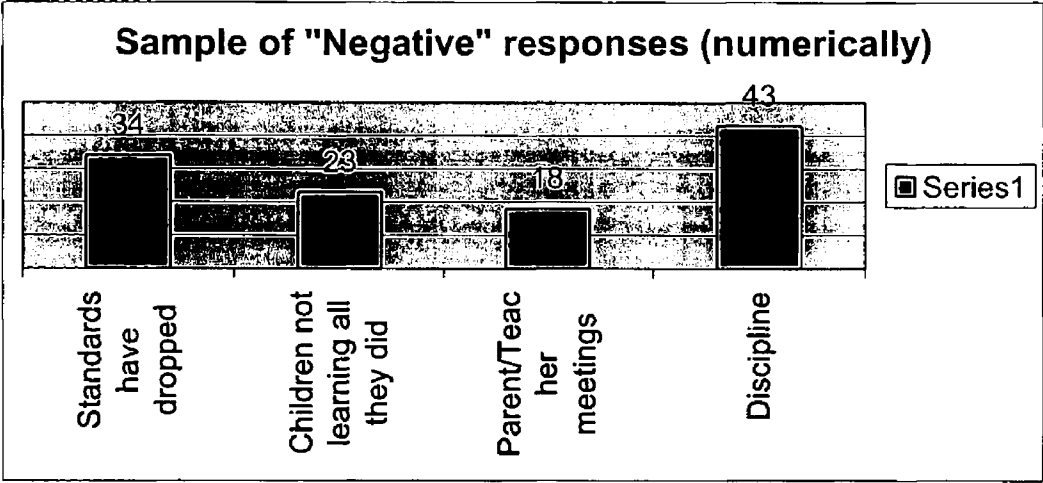
*Fig. 14*

The parents were asked to identify the positive and negative aspects of education. The majority of parents stated that teachers were kind to children and school was fun for them, as two of the identified positive aspects. On the other side of this, negative high incidence responses included dropping standards and that children were not learning all they could, or "all I knew at his age."[468] The measurable, fact-acquisition ideal is raised again, as the results depict a reliance on traditionalist norms of education. The DES studies completed by the NCCA and the Inspectorate corroborate my findings, stating; "Both studies provide few examples of schools communicating with parents about the curriculum (for example, through information evenings). The DES study notes that strategies to involve parents in their children's learning were only occasionally included in school planning documents and that parental involvement in policy formulation or in contributing to and organising learning resources for the school was limited. In interviews with parents, the NCCA found that parents wanted to have much more information about their child's curriculum, and the methods of teaching and assessment which teachers use and which parents themselves might use to support their child's learning."[469]

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[468] Appendix 5.1, pp148

[469] *The Primary Curriculum in Schools,* Insights from the Curriculum implementation Evaluation and the Primary Curriculum Review, Involvement of Parents, pp5&6

**What is the aim of education?**
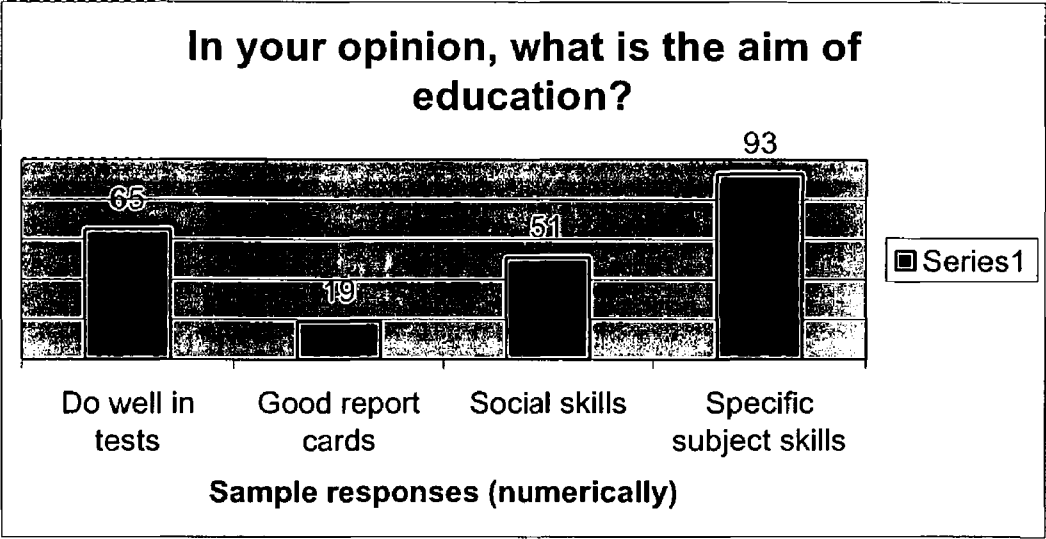


Fig. 15

The next question asked parents what they thought the aim of education to be. The vast majority of answers reflected how parents wished education to prepare the child for the world, including the world of work. Parents specifically referred to education as a gateway to "positive employment opportunities."[470] A large number of parents, at sixty-five of those parents surveyed want children to do well in school, through attaining good test scores and a further nineteen parents wish their children to acquire positive reports. The majority of parents desired specific subject skills – such as reading and writing.

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[470] Appendix 5.4, pp154

## Parental Changes to Education
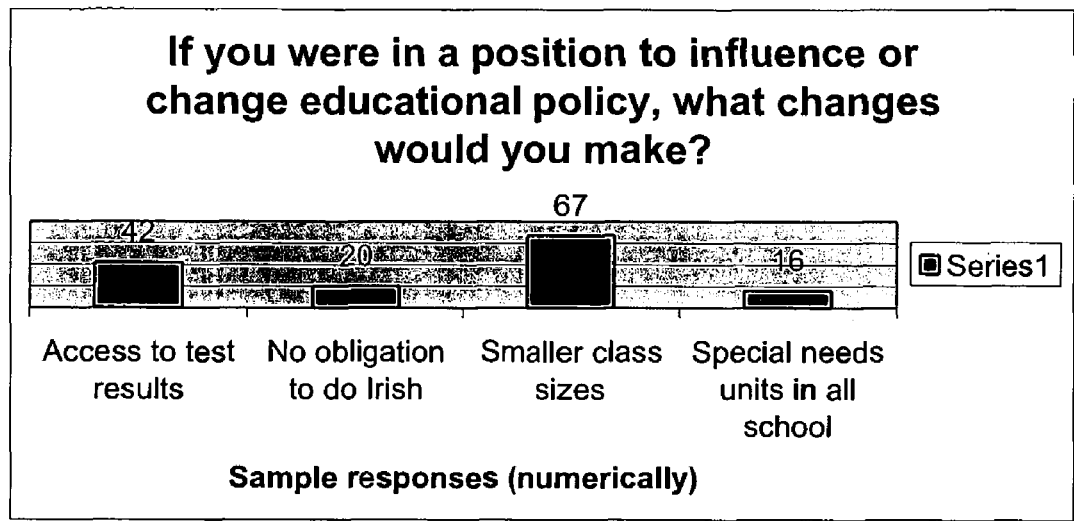


*Fig. 16*

My final question asked parents what they would change, omit or include if they were in a position to influence educational policy. Several suggestions were made, with high-incidence suggestions including reduced class sizes, special needs units attached to each school, reviewed obligations to engage in certain subjects, namely Gaeilge, and access to test results, assessments and evaluations made by teachers and inspectors. A significant finding is highlighted by the desire of parents to access reports or assessments. One parent identified this as an attempt to "keep track of my child's progress"[471] The specific assessment type has not been identified by this parent, although teacher feedback in the last chapter indicates parents' desires to access summative assessment. This is corroborated by the general feedback regarding assessment by parents in the surveys conducted for this thesis. The report by the Inspectorate claimed; "Assessment should be used for formative purposes, and the emphasis should be on enhancing teaching and learning."[472] Formative assessment is used to inform the assessor of the pupil's needs, and subsequently meet these needs. "These assessments are used to form or improve ongoing classroom processes and so

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[471] Appendix 5.2,                                    pp150
[472] *An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools*, The Inspectorate,    Chapter six, Conclusions and Recommendations, 6.2, Recommendations, 6.2.9,Assessment and pupils' achievement, pp54

are called formative assessments."[473] A paradox seemingly emerges where the aims proposed by the curriculum differ from the aims of assessment as desired by many parents surveyed. Where parents aim to access summative assessment results, the curriculum prefers formative assessments. In conflict are two very different forms of education. This highlights the discrepancy between parental understanding of the Revised Curriculum and that of the curriculum itself. Where the inspectorate, the curriculum and many teachers surveyed seek on-going assessment to inform pupil needs, parents and many teachers seek the easily understood graded systems of percentile ranks etc. Where these traditionalist tools of the past were useful, and still are to a degree, they cannot adequately assess the aims of creating self-hood amongst the social groups in schools. The assessment tools proposed by the curriculum are found in the form of portfolios, projects, teacher-designed tests and tasks and observation. The reality of education as understood by the curriculum involves problem posing, higher-order thinking, and providing the children with the tools to become individual thinkers – which cannot be assessed by summative education. Formative assessment can assess both the development of the individual and the development of the societal citizen – through the child's inter-personal and intra-personal skills at work in the classroom environment. These findings highlight the discrepancy of the perceived ideals of education held by the curriculum as representative of education, and those held by the parents, as representative of the public.

Small numbers of parents identified other aspects of education they would change, which were not of sufficiently high-incidence to be included. In this category, supervision outside official school hours was named, with a view to enable parents to go to work, or arrive later than school closing. Some parents specified that this would be best served as a homework club, or pre-school style care. A few parents specifically mentioned that the teacher should provide this care. Parents had split views on homework. Some parents considered that homework should be increased, where others considered that it should be decreased or abolished.

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[473] Airasian, P.W, *Assessment in the Classroom*, Chapter 4, Formal Assessment: Teacher-Made and Textbook Tests, pp94

**A brief reflection upon Parents and the Revised Curriculum, A Conclusion**

In conclusion, parents, though aware of the changes in the curriculum, are not aware of its ideals. Where teachers are as yet without a theoretical framework for the Revised Curriculum, it is no surprise that parents are without this ideology too. Some parents, but not all, received the parental booklet issued by the DES. The overall shift in principles to incorporate the development of the individual thinker was not amongst the majority of parents' educational ideals. Perhaps it would be if they were aware of its position in the curriculum as a relevant form of education. The DES studies proposed the schools would inform the parents of changes, alongside the afore-mentioned DVD. The controversy surrounding the shift of responsibility to the schools, from the DES, in the section on informing parents was dealt with in the last chapter, Teachers and the Revised Curriculum; Freedom.

Section 3

**A Conclusion**

**Children and Parents and the Revised Curriculum**

It is obvious that both children and parents as distinct groups have very concrete ideals of education. It is also obvious that such ideals differ on occasion from those endorsed by the Revised Curriculum and from teachers. If there is no service to provide for the up-skilling and up dating of parents' views of education, modernizing attempts can be viewed by parents as mis-endeavours in education. Equally, where teachers themselves are churned in the banking system's mixer, and believe in or promote certain 'hidden curricula,' children clearly cannot know any other system. Children are also highly responsive to the ideals of their environment, home and school, and this could prove to be a cycle of the system where the Revised Curriculum ideals are lost.

There is no doubt that while both children's and parents' views of education reflect the existence and implementation of the Revised Curriculum in primary school, there

is doubt concerning its integrity and the transparency of its philosophies. Producing vessels filled with facts, and high-test scores, are clear objectives of both children and parents. Producing high exam results is another objective. Providing the blocks upon which to stand and look over the symbolic wall of the status quo is less important or a non-entity, where laying the blocks to attain a desired career is seen as the ultimate aim of education, the data shows. Where the Revised Curriculum's philosophy is concerned with cultivating individual thinkers, many partners in education are concerned with other ideals – doing well within the system as a means to doing well outside it, not without it. Where this is promoted by groups such a parents, children and often teachers, the alternative objectives are lost – education becomes disassociated from the individual it exists to educate, becoming instead synonymous with providing an ascent to job prospects. The data also highlights how, despite the introduction of a modernizing curriculum in 1999, governmental and departmental direction has responded to the concerns of parents through the introduction of standard report cards, similar to the standardisation of the school year in the past. This aims to provide all schools with standardized report card templates by the end of 2007.[474] The nature of standardization removes individual choice and responsibility from the teacher and school community, imposing standards of education upon Irish schools and children, regardless of their rural or urban context, school size or culture. Where the Revised Curriculum provided choice in a curricular content, the gesture towards individuality, rather ironically, has been removed.

The vast differences apparent in the educational partners' ideology of education and subsequent expectation of education illustrate great discrepancies in what is deemed ideal. Despite a revision in the curriculum, the philosophies attempting to modernise education are still misunderstood by many in education without a theoretical framework. Further to the revision of the curriculum, much still remains to be done to create an awareness of the principles of the curriculum, both as an agent of social change and as a resource for cultivating individuality and self-hood.

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[474] INTO District Meeting, Castlebar Branch          18th October, 2005

# Conclusion

## Conclusion

Since its initiation and inclusion in the Irish educational system, the Primary School Curriculum 1999, has brought much controversy and debate. The development of the Revised Curriculum from inception to the present is the central concern of this research document. How the curriculum was received by the teacher, the child and the parent was studied and examined. Analysis of why it was received as it was, proves crucial in establishing the crux of the thesis. Without the provision of a theoretical framework or literature review, the curriculum labours beneath fuzzy ideologies and indistinct theories. This thesis attempts to apply a theoretical lens to the Revised Curriculum, in examining and analysing its impact, implementation and development in the living classroom. The following conclusion summarises the core findings of this research document. Each section highlights the research undertaken and the findings and analyses derived. Due to the breadth of the research involved, and the necessary time required to complete it, the findings obtained prove interesting for the reader. They also substantiate the need for further research and development due to the complexity and multifarious nature of the theme herein. The investigation conducted encompassed the theories and findings of educational theorists and philosophers, of the current educational situation and of the curricular documents themselves. Through conscientious enquiry, the introductory question seeking analysis of the extent, impact and implementation of the Primary School Curriculum through application of a theoretical lens, has been thoroughly explored.

The research was conducted through collaboration with a large number of schools, and with the direct involvement of a vast number of teachers, children and parents. The experience of teachers, children and parents and their exploration of the curriculum was detailed and analysed through the interviews, questionnaires and surveys. The co-operation of these participants was fundamental to the success of the research. Through these studies, a great deal of data was amassed relating to the impact and implementation of the Revised Curriculum. Autonomous and expanding from the research findings themselves, the analyses of the findings deepen the significance of the research as a philosophical document. The implications of the findings and the subsequent limitations on the reality of the curriculum point to the limits of the idealism of the curriculum. The most notable discoveries of the research

illustrate the willingness of the educational community to make changes. However the research also indicates the limits acting upon the educational community which do not permit the ideal of change; when tradition and convention supersede and in many cases dominate. In addition to this, the mixed ideologies vying for a place in the curriculum have created tension and confusion amongst the educational community.

The research began through thoroughly exploring the 1971 Primary School Curriculum, this having formed the cornerstone of the 1999 Primary School Curriculum. The results found focused upon the holistic development of the child, the individuality of the learner and subsequent responsibility of the teacher. This curriculum was significant because it aimed to transform the traditionalist educational trend of all-knowing teacher dispensing knowledge into the heads of vacant students. The Revised Curriculum developed upon the aims of the past curriculum, reorganising and fine-tuning the goals and purposes that went before. The curriculum was developed as a response to the need for change and modernisation which, although inherent in the aim of the 1971 curriculum, was not necessarily a reality. Thus the arrival of the reconstituted curriculum, complete with revisions, reorganisations and new subject areas. Assessment became a significant development. Methodology received dramatic transformations as did differentiation and the ideal of inclusion and special needs provision. Thorough exploration of the aims and ideals of the 1999 Primary School Curriculum followed. Building on the indicators of the past, the Revised Curriculum reorganised and developed the 1971 curriculum, introducing new subjects, advocating social learning methodologies, and emphasising the need for contextual, interactive learning. The Revised Curriculum was circulated amongst the educational community since its inception, through in-service programmes, training courses, booklets and various other forms of media. Frequent circulars to Irish Primary Schools aimed to support the transition from 1971 and pre 1971 curriculum to the revised edition. However the reasoning behind the reshuffle in curricular organisation was not as clear to those in education and the research shows this. It is within this context that the reluctance to partake in or appreciate the curriculum became apparent. The curriculum purports that it is the results of the "most modern research of theory and thinking,"[475] yet it does not

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[475] PSC, *Introduction*, Conclusion, pp75.

provide teachers, parents, children and the educational community with a theoretical framework from which such fruits came. Within this context, the author assumed a role of applying a theoretical lens to the curriculum in order to examine its impact, implementation and development. While the theoretical lens applied is vast, it is not intended as an exhaustive or all-encompassing list of theorists and their ideologies. Rather, this theoretical lens is a starting point for analysing empirical data regarding the Revised Curriculum and it recognises the central role those in education play in applying theory to the living classroom.

Many teachers, parents and in some cases children did not understand the educational value of alleged modernisations in the curriculum. The initial impact upon the educational community circa 1999 was both negative and disapproving. Teachers were confused by it. Few in the educational community recognised the value and clarity of revised educational ideas, not least because of a lack of clarity. As the curricular scaffold was developed and discussed amongst educational partners the outlook changed, and attitudes grew which embraced elements of the revisions proposed. Therein lies the difficulty of traditional and modern frameworks of education, as changes were being sought amongst the inspectorate. Some teachers, parents and most children surveyed, wanted change - others did not. Some who wanted change could not create it, because of the opposing expectations of their partners in education. Some, who wanted to remain as before, were thrust into situations they were not ready for. Equally, those either vying for change or avoiding change were unclear of what the curriculum was trying to achieve and most significantly, they were unclear as to why certain changes were proposed.

The Primary School Curriculum of 1999 has had a colourful, complex and above all interesting introduction in the Irish educational system. Initially its impact was great and its implementation basic and rudimentary. Since its introduction in 1999, it has enjoyed a lesser but significant impact and enhanced implementation. The curriculum goes from strength to strength as the partners in the educational community come to appreciate and comprehend its internal philosophical messages despite a lack of a theoretical framework. However this is not to say it is still without controversy. An aspect of this debate was exposed through this research document on a fundamental philosophical level. The juxtaposition of the ideals of social and critical education

remains controversial amongst philosophical educational theorists. Some critical educational theorists argue that the institutions of education prevent progress in real education ever taking place. Thus, according to these theorists, the failure of the curriculum is inevitable regardless of the attitudes of the current educational community, and as identified by those active in this community. Having endeavoured to combine the best of modern theoretical advice and thesis, the Primary Curriculum 1999, has ensured that the children taught by it will seek to be individual yet will conform to the socially-derived goals advocated by the present social situation. The increased demands placed upon our youth reflect the petitions of the curriculum — though it desires to create critical thinkers it endeavours to create critical thinkers content to ensure continuity of the social circumstance. The contradiction therein authenticates the social educational theorists' claims. In the case of the Revised Curriculum, the ideal of developing both critical and social thinkers is advocated. The children we teach are being encouraged to use social skills, to take responsibility for their own learning, and employ their capacity for critical thought yet transfer to a working economy that intends to exploit these skills. The child who grows into post-education is expected to use their generic skills in the economic sphere of their country. The child is encouraged to become a self-actualized individual insofar as the country can maintain social control. The controversy exists in the contradiction of ideals, and lack of clarity on what the curriculum aims to achieve.

The current social and economic situation finds an increase in materialism and consumption. Integral to this process is the emergence of learners educated to be pseudo critical beings. These learners prioritise the advancement of their social existence in-spite of the 'critical' education afforded them. The social climate reflects this assumed capacity for critical thought, allowing those within the system to continue their lives under the myth of choice. The reality of this situation is apparent in this research document. Those active in the educational community are aware of the hypocrisies operating in their society. The difficulties encountered through the interactive research completed to prepare this document reflect both discrepancies in personal educational philosophies and in ideals proposed by the curriculum. The ability of those active in the educational community to identify the contradictions inherent in the curricular ideals rose to the fore throughout this research, and is reflected in the theories of the educational thinkers. The proof of this lies in the initial

discrepancies in ideology between teachers, between parents and between children. However noble the aims of the curriculum, or the probability of critical beings deciding upon conformity to a given cause, the reality is that of contradiction and paradox. The current educational system in Ireland has witnessed a revision of past curricular aims, because those of the past were not accepted as they should – and because modernisation demands more. The question remains: is our modernisation a mere testament to modern, with little real cultural value changes? It seems that without a theoretical framework, education cannot alter its values because these values are unclear and unspecific. Change is merely prevalent on the surface; where the same cultural and educational values remain, albeit with improved financial standards to facilitate them.

The arrival of the Primary Curriculum 1999, has seen negative and positive impacts, with varied degrees of implementation. It has also seen the arrival of a rehashed and self-contradictory ideal of developing critical thought alongside social subservience. Ironically, neither seems to have yet been achieved within the parameters of recently documented social misbehaviour amongst our youth. The ideal of education promotes the vision of critical thought while at the same time peddling the hegemonic social norms that maintain the existing status quo. How might this situation be resolved? This thesis has attempted to identify some of the weaknesses and strengths within the current context of primary education. Recognising the strengths of the Revised Curriculum is no difficult task. The sheer number of areas addressed by recent revisions is admirable; major changes have occurred in planning, methodology and subject matter to name but a few. However, to oppose this drive towards modernisation, there have also been weaknesses in the Revised Curriculum. Through the research undertaken in assimilating this thesis, some of these weaknesses have been identified. The author has indicated some of the gaps in in-service training for teachers, the need for greater education of parents in relation to the changing curriculum and the need to work both with and against some of the children's expectations of education. Significantly, a lack of foundational theory; specific and referenced, has resulted in serious confusion and frustration; this is a major weakness of the curriculum. Theoretically, the author has pointed to the tensions between emphasis on concepts of individual selfhood and concepts of socialisation. So the proposed solution would seem to require a combination of theoretical and practical

components – a greater conceptual and philosophical clarity which will help to create a more consistent set of educational values while also supplementing this on the ground with more fully resourced in-service support for teachers, but also parents and crucially children. Education in the traditional sense places the responsibility for education firmly in the hands of the educators. The very nature and philosophical thrust of the Revised Curriculum seeks the construction of knowledge, creation of the individual and the social mobilisation of given groups in society – the disadvantaged and unequal. This transition of learning from the teacher to the learner takes more than what has been available thus far; teachers, children nor parents cannot hope to revise their perceptions of what education should be without sustained support and sense-making debate. Children also need to be helped to see the meta-level of the momentous changes which have taken place in Irish education over the last ten years. Otherwise, we as educators continue to run the risk of missing out on the most positive potential of such change. Crucially, on a theoretical level, the alternative and very different philosophies of individualisation and societal mobilisation cannot be married without specific, proactive guidance and theory to bridge the two. Otherwise education will slip into a dictated, thoughtless dedication to completing the outlined objectives in a given curricular document and the thinking skills advocated will be shunned or rendered worthless. If the curricular revisions and theoretical theses employed to create change are not entertained in a most fundamental and honest way, the Primary School Curriculum of 1999 will have been a hollow mirroring of past curricula and philosophical thought. Teachers must be in a position to access the theory which has informed the Revised Curriculum, and as such they must be afforded time for professional dialogue to legitimise the changes apparent and implicit in the curriculum, both in regard to cultural values and crucially in the living classroom.

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# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX 1

# Teachers and the Revised Curriculum
# A questionnaire

**Section One**

About You

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Are you a principal, a deputy principal, a post holder, a mainstream teacher, a resource teacher, a learning support teacher, other_____ (please state)

2 How many mainstream teachers are in your school? _____

3 Are you male/female?

4 Which age group are you in?  19-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 59-65.

5 In what county do you teach? _____

6 Do you have a B.Ed, degree post-grad, NT, other (please state) _____

7 Do you hold any additional qualifications - Masters Degree, PhD, Diploma or certificate independent of your initial education qualification (B.Ed/NT/H. Dip Ed) Yes/No

8 Why did you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education          Yes / No / Somewhat
- Monetary rewards                  Yes / No / Somewhat
- Interest in the subject or
  to broaden your knowledge base     Yes / No / Somewhat
- Alternative qualification to education   Yes / No / Somewhat

9 Are you currently studying to attain further qualifications related or not related to education?

Yes/No

10 Why do you pursue this qualification?

- To further your education                 Yes/No/Partly why
- Monetary rewards                      Yes/No/Partly why
- Interest in the subject or knowledge
  with a view to pursuing an alternative career     Yes/No/Partly why
- Alternative qualification to education         Yes/No/Partly why

11 In what college did you train? _____

**Section 2**

In your opinion...

1 What is education?

_____

_____


2 Who does a child's education
involve?_____


3 What skills does a child learn at school, as opposed to at home?

_____

_____


4 How do teachers teach?

_____

_____

_____

_____


5 What is the best way to teach?

_____

_____


6 In your opinion, which methodologies and organisational approaches work best? List your methodology preferences from most effective to least effective, eg delivery, modelling, rote learning etc

_____

_____


7 Who educates the child?

_____

8 Who is educated at school?

_____

9 How do children learn?

_____

_____

10 Order the following 1-6 according to their impact on a child's learning –

Rote learning          ____

drill learning         ____

language               ____

interest               ____

context                ____

subject matter         ____

Please circle the option which applies to you.

11 Can a child learn something that would be considered quite difficult for their age/ability if it is explained in a different way?  Yes / No / Usually

12 Can children learn something out of context with suitable language, ie volcanoes, Egyptian mummies?  Yes / No

13 Can children grasp complex situations if they believe they can?  Yes / No

14 Why do children learn?

_____

_____

15 Circle the factors which you consider to have an effect on children's learning.

Learning is required in school,                    Big/ Medium/ Small

Interest in acquiring new knowledge,               Big/ Medium/ Small

Willingness to please,                             Big/ Medium/ Small

Competition within the class or schools or clusters,   Big/ Medium/ Small

Rewards gained from teacher,               Big/ Medium/ Small

Rewards gained from home,                  Big/ Medium/ Small

Fear of failure,                           Big/ Medium/ Small

Other (please state)

_____          Big/ Medium/ Smalls


16 Why do you teach?  Circle as many of the following as apply to you.  Be honest!

| | |
|---|---|
| Summer holidays | Yes / No / A big incentive |
| Short working day | Yes / No / A big incentive |
| Change the lives of those I encounter | Yes / No / A big incentive |
| Love children | Yes / No / A big incentive |
| Respect associated with my profession | Yes / No / A big incentive |
| Deliver my wisdom | Yes / No / A big incentive |
| Help others | Yes / No / A big incentive |
| Interest in profession since youth | Yes / No / A big incentive |
| Other | Yes / No / A big incentive |


17 Do you teach what you consider important even though it may be outside the curriculum?  Yes / No / Sometimes


18 Why are you the authority in your classroom or learning situation?  Please tick options which apply to you.

I am teacher                        _____

I am most knowledgeable             _____

I earn it over time                 _____

I have earned it in training college  _____

I have earned it over years of experience  _____

None of the above, please comment

_____


19 Who is in authority in your school?  Please circle authorative figures from the list below.

Cigire, Principal, Deputy-Principal, Post-holders, Senior Staff, Junior Staff, Senior Class Teachers, Junior Class Teachers, Vocal Teachers, a particular teacher.

**Section 3**

*The Revised Curriculum*
Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you like the revised curriculum of 1999?
a) I like it, b) I don't like it, c) I didn't like it initially but I am growing to like it, d) I liked it initially but find it becoming increasingly difficult to use.

2 How have the following affected and impacted on your opinion of the revised Curriculum of 1999?

Methodologies a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Organisation   a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Objectives     a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

 Introduction   a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Lack of planning time a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Availability/unavailability of resources       a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Parental concerns   a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

3 Does your class size effect your interpretation of the curriculum   a)  not  at  all,  b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

4 Do your personal philosophical beliefs effect your interpretation of the curriculum a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

5 Have you found the curriculum motivating

a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact


6 Has the curriculum affected your good will?

a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact


7 Do you find the curriculum difficult to implement?

a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact


8 Are you aware that the curriculum proposes changes regarding the

teacher's position from 'sage on the stage to guide on the side'?

Yes / No / sounds familiar


9 Do you know why the curriculum has been revised?

Yes / No / I'm not fully sure


10 Do you think the curriculum needed revision?

Yes / No / In certain areas


11 Were you involved in the compilation of the curriculum? Yes/No  If so, how?

_____

Did your involvement change any views or preconceived ideas about the curriculum?

_____


12 Do you consider the Revised Curriculum extra work?

Yes / No


13 Do you believe the curriculum provides you with more or less freedom in your

work to plan and implement?

More / Less


14 Which curriculum do you prefer?

The Revised Curriculum / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum

15 Which curriculum do you find easiest to plan and implement?

The Revised Curriculum / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum

**Section4**

In-Service Training

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Did you find in-service useful?  Yes/No/A little

How so?  _____

2 How is in-service best explored?   Please tick

Through facilitated cluster groupings          _____

Facilitated in-house visits          _____

Unfacilitated school-based days          _____

Other          _____

3 Is a sufficient amount of time spent at in-service training for each subject area?

Yes / No

4 Is a sufficient amount of time spent on planning during in-service training?

Yes / No / Usually / Usually not

5 How do you feel after in-service training?

Crystal-clear, confused, no better off, some improvement.

6 Do you feel you have sufficient support for planning when in-service is over?

Yes / No.

7 Have you ever sought help with curriculum planning from any of the following (please circle) - the local education centre, e mails, cigire, principal, other teachers, PCSP facilitators?

8 Do you enjoy social meetings with other teachers, in own school and/or clusters?
Yes / No / Usually

9 Do you feel you reach understanding and solve problems at social meetings such as in-service? Yes / No / Sometimes

10 Could in-service be improved upon?
Yes / No
If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

11 Did any facilitator ever explain the overall background of the curriculum to your group?
Yes / No

12 Do you think that the reduced level of in-service training for the academic year 2003/2004 was sufficient?
Yes / No

13 Do you find the Revised Curriculum in any way insulting to your experience?
Yes / No
Please explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

14 Have you received any templates or scheme structures to help with your planning?
Yes / No
If so, were these templates/structures from your in-service co-ordinators or other sources? List other sources.

_____

15 Have you taken any steps to change aspects of the curriculum which you do not agree with, in the classroom or at meetings, with staff, contacting the Dept. Of Ed etc? Yes / No

**Section 5**

Classes and Methodologies

1 How many classes do you teach?

_____

2 Have you planned for multi-grade classes using the Revised Curriculum?
Yes / No
Was it easy?  Yes / No / Initially no, but it got easier/ Initially yes, but got more difficult

3 Would you like more help in curricular planning, ie – templates, experts, planning time etc
Yes / No

4 Can you name the full title of SESE and SPHE?  Please write the full titles without checking your curriculum documents!
SESE_____
SPHE_____

5 Can you identify any of the methodologies advocated by the curriculum?  If no, proceed to question six.

_____

❑  Have you used them?

_____

❑ Did they work?

_____

❑ What happened?

‹ _____

_____

_____

❑ Would you use them again?

_____

6 Can you identify any of the methodologies of the 1971 curriculum?
Yes / No

7 Can you compare the differences between the 1971 and 1999 curriculum methodologies?
Yes / No

8 Do you have a preferred methodology? Please explain what it is and why you prefer it.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Have you read the introduction to the curriculum? Please be honest!!
Yes / No

**Section 6**

Special Needs Education

1 Do you feel that the needs of a special educational needs child would be better served in a special class?

Yes / No / Certain children

Please explain why.

_____

_____

_____

_____

2 Do you have a special needs child in your class?

Yes / No

3 Have you ever taught a special needs child in a mainstream class?

Yes / No

4 Do you have children of your own?

Yes / No

5 Do you have a special needs assistant in your class?

Yes / No

6 Does this child go to a Resource Teacher?

Yes / No

7 How many hours a week does this child attend the Resource Teacher?

_____

8 Does the child go to Learning Support?

Yes / No

9 How many hours a week does this child spend in Learning Support?

_____

10 Have you used the Revised Curriculum with this child in the class?

Yes / No

11 Was it difficult to plan for this child using the Revised Curriculum?

Yes / No / In certain subject areas

12 In your opinion does the inclusion of a special needs child make your planning and work in the classroom using the Revised Curriculum... easier / more difficult / no effect

13 Have the child's parents requested planning in the Revised Curriculum?

Yes / No

14 Do you have a child with special needs of your own? If not, proceed to question sixteen.

Yes / No

15 Is this child in a special school or mainstream education?

_____

16 Any comments?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

## Section 7

The Inspectorate

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Was your inspector helpful in curricular planning using the curriculum since its introduction in 1999?

Yes / No

Why / why not?

_____

_____

_____

2 Do you believe your inspector understands the curriculum well enough to help you with it?

Yes / No

3 Have you asked any questions about the curriculum of your inspector?

Yes / No

4 Was the inspector at any stage unwilling or unable to answer your questions?

Yes / No

5 Have you attempted their solutions to your problems in your classroom?

Yes / No

6 Did their advice prove useful? Did it work?

Yes / No

7 Do you consider your inspector a 'facilitator' or 'inspector'?

_____

8 Are you afraid or nervous being in the company of, or expecting a visit from your inspector?

Yes / No

9 If so, do you think they are aware of your being nervous?

Yes / No

10 Does your inspector attempt to relieve your nerves in any way by their words or behaviour?

Yes / No

**Section 8**

Newly Qualified Teachers
Please circle the option which applies to you.

The following section applies only to those who entered Colleges of Education for primary school training in 1999 or after - teachers trained previous to a qualification date of June 2002 were not trained in *entirely* in the Revised Curriculum. This includes post-graduate diploma students.

1 Have you found your inspector helpful?
Yes / No

2 Do you find the curriculum you were trained in easy to implement in school?
Yes / No
Why / why not?  (I stress this is a confidential questionnaire.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

3 Do you feel the college prepared you adequately for your job in school?
Yes / No
Why / why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4 Do you see any conflicting attitudes to those presented by college in your school?
Yes/No/Once in a while
Can you explain?

_____

_____
_____
_____

**Section 9**

Parents and your school
Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do the parents in your school know there has been a revision in the curriculum?
Yes / No / Most do / Most don't

2 Do these parents understand why changes have come about?
Yes / No

3 In your experience, have you encountered parents who can identify changes eminent in the curriculum?
Yes / No

4 In your experience, have parental misgivings of the curriculum interfered in any way with your implementation or planned implementation of the curriculum (eg no scheme readers for formal reading instruction in junior infants)
Not at all / Yes certainly / Occasionally there is interference

5 Have you ever seen the parents booklet issued by the PCSP, Department of Education?
Yes / No

6 Have you ever read the booklet? Be honest!
Yes / No

7 Do you believe an expert in curricular change, in conjunction with your school/staff, should address the parents as a body to inform them of the changes - subjects, organisation, time, methodology, homework and philosophy?

Yes / No

8 In your opinion should this person come from within staff or from the Department of Education ie inspector?

Yes / No

**Section 10**

The Introduction of the Revised Curriculum
Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you agree with the means by which the curriculum was introduced?

Yes / No

2 Do you believe this introduction could have been improved?

Yes / No

If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

3 Were the philosophical changes of the curriculum and it's methodologies ever explained by the inspector, facilitators or cuidetheoirs?

Yes / No / Not entirely / Not sure

4 Choose three words to describe the curriculum from the list below, be honest!! - interesting, motivating, repetitive, attractive, appealing, organised, cramped, confusing, worth-while, boring, too much, excessive, positive, negative, threatening, worrying, foolish, wise, incorrect, regressive.

5 Do the children you teach enjoy the subjects in the Revised Curriculum?

Yes / No

6 When you are teaching aspects of the curriculum using the revised curriculum methodologies, such as co-operative, collaborative group work, do your children learn the process or thinking skills?

Yes / No

7 Do the children misbehave during group-work, do they get giddy?

Yes / No / Sometimes

8 Have you employed a revised curriculum methodology that despite initial giddiness, worked well by the end of the lesson or through practice?

Yes/No

9 Do you believe the children you teach consider 'book-based', product-based learning as real work and more valuable than process-based learning?

Yes / No

10 Which curriculum would you prefer to teach your own children? (Please tick)

The Revised Curriculum          _____

The 1971 Curriculum          _____

11 Please list the following in order of importance where 1 is most important and 6 is least important.

- ❑ Process skills – thinking skills,
- ❑ Product skills – finished product,
- ❑ Delivery,
- ❑ Problem-posing,
- ❑ Group-work,
- ❑ Individual work.

12 Please list any changes you would consider beneficial in the curriculum –

Planning

_____

introduction

_____

in-service

_____

organisation

_____

subjects

_____

strands

_____

strand-units

_____

parental attitudes

_____

Inspectorate

_____

reports

_____

other

_____

## Section 11

The Minister and the Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you feel the Minister of Education's current position upon standardisation of the school year has made you

    a) more willing

    b) less willing

    c) unaffected

in your attitude to your work?

2 Do you feel the Minister of Education's current position upon Parent/Teacher meeting time-tabling has made you

    d) more willing

e) less willing

f) unaffected

in your attitude to your work?

3 Do you feel the Revised Curriculum was 'thrust upon' you.

Yes / No / Somewhat

4 Do you believe the current Minister for Education has done a good job?

Yes / No / Partly

5 Do you believe the Minister tries to do a good job?

Yes / No

6 Do you admire the Minister's work or aims or attempts to better the educational system?

Yes / No

7 Do you feel the Minister for Education is in touch with the reality of education today?

Yes / No

8 Do you believe the Minister has portrayed teachers in a positive light?

Yes / No / Occasionally

9 Please indicate which of the following options best describes how you feel -

I consider myself free as a teacher, to teach the way you feel is beneficial, to teach what you consider to be most beneficial?                Yes / No

I believe there is more scope for freedom in education?  Yes / No

I consider myself progressing through dictated work?   Yes / No

**Section 12**

The following questions are related to philosophical ideas only and are personal. They do not have to be completed but please complete them if you do not find them intrusive. Thank-you.

1 Roughly how many countries have you been to?  Please circle the correct option.

1-3

4-6

7-9

10+

2 What engine size is your car?

_____

3 Do you support any of the following political parties, please circle the relevant party Fianna Fáil,    Fine Gael,   The Labour Party,   The Green Party,   The Progressive Democrats,   Sin Féin.

4  How  do  you  feel  after  completing  this  questionnaire?    (Besides  tired!)

_____

_____

_____

_____

A sincere thank-you for your time and patience in helping me with my research,

_____

Evanna McCormack

**Appendix 1.1**

### Teachers and the Revised Curriculum

# A questionnaire

**Section One**

#### About You

Please circle the option which applies to you. *(Italics denote answers given)*

1 Are you a principal, a deputy principal, a post holder, a mainstream teacher, a resource teacher, a learning support teacher, other ___*Mainstream*___ (please state)

2 How many mainstream teachers are in your school? _____*11*_____

3 Are you *male*/female?

4 Which age group are you in? *19-29*, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 59-65.

5 In what county do you teach? _____*Dublin*_____

6 Do you have a B.Ed, degree post-grad, NT, other (please state) _____*B.Ed*_____

7 Do you hold any additional qualifications - Masters Degree, PhD, Diploma or certificate independent of your initial education qualification (B.Ed/NT/H. Dip Ed)
*Yes*/No

8 Why did you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education                *Yes* / No / Somewhat
- Monetary rewards                            Yes / *No* / Somewhat
- Interest in the subject or
  to broaden your knowledge base          *Yes* / No / Somewhat
- Alternative qualification to education   Yes / *No* / Somewhat

9 Are you currently studying to attain further qualifications related or not related to education?
*Yes*/No

10 Why do you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education                *Yes*/No/Partly why
- Monetary rewards                            Yes/*No*/Partly why
- Interest in the subject or knowledge
  with a view to pursuing an alternative career   *Yes*/No/Partly why
- Alternative qualification to education   Yes/*No*/Partly why

11 In what college did you train? _____ *St Pat's*_____

## Section 2

In your opinion...

1 What is education?
   *How people learn to be more informed and to make more thoughtful choices.*

2 Who does a child's education involve?
   *Teachers, peers, parents, health workers, guards; many parts of society*

3 What skills does a child learn at school, as opposed to at home?
*Skills and training are more formally learned in school.*

4 How do teachers teach?
*(No answer given)*

5 What is the best way to teach?
   **Model and approach**

6 In your opinion, which methodologies and organisational approaches work best?
List your methodology preferences from most effective to least effective, eg delivery,
modelling, rote learning etc
   **Modelling**

7 Who educates the child?
   **Teacher, parents, peers**

8 Who is educated at school?
   **The children mostly, sometimes the teacher**

9 How do children learn?
   **By observation**

10 Order the following 1-6 according to their impact on a child's learning –
Rote learning        *6*
drill learning       *5*
language             *3*
interest             *2*
context              *1*
subject matter       *4*

Please circle the option which applies to you.

11 Can a child learn something that would be considered quite difficult for their age/ability if it is explained in a different way? Yes / No / *Usually*

12 Can children learn something out of context with suitable language, ie volcanoes, Egyptian mummies? *Yes* / No

13 Can children grasp complex situations if they believe they can? *Yes* / No

14 Why do children learn?
     *Children have to learn what's on the curriculum*

15 Circle the factors which you consider to have an effect on children's learning.
Learning is required in school,                           Big/ *Medium/* Small
Interest in acquiring new knowledge,                      Big/ *Medium/* Small
Willingness to please,                                    Big/ *Medium/* Small
Competition within the class or schools or clusters,      Big/ *Medium/* Small
Rewards gained from teacher,                              *Big/* Medium/ Small
Rewards gained from home,                                 *Big/* Medium/ Small
Fear of failure,                                          Big/ *Medium/* Small
Other (please state)
_____                  Big/ Medium/ Smalls

16 Why do you teach?  Circle as many of the following as apply to you.  Be honest!
Summer holidays                         Yes / No / *A big incentive*
Short working day                       *Yes* / No / A big incentive
Change the lives of those I encounter   Yes / No / *A big incentive*
Love children                           Yes / *No* / A big incentive
Respect associated with my profession   Yes / *No* / A big incentive
Deliver my wisdom                       Yes / *No* / A big incentive
Help others                             Yes / No / *A big incentive*
Interest in profession since youth      Yes / *No* / A big incentive
Other                                   Yes / *No* / A big incentive

17 Do you teach what you consider important even though it may be outside the curriculum?  Yes / No / *Sometimes*

18 Why are you the authority in your classroom or learning situation?  Please tick options which apply to you.
I am teacher                              √
I am most knowledgeable                   √
I earn it over time                       √
I have earned it in training college      √
I have earned it over years of experience √
None of the above, please comment

19 Who is in authority in your school? Please circle authorative figures from the list below.
Cigire, *Principal*, Deputy-Principal, Post-holders, Senior Staff, Junior Staff, Senior Class Teachers, Junior Class Teachers, Vocal Teachers, a particular teacher.

**Section 3**

The Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you like the revised curriculum of 1999?
a) I like it, b) I don't like it, c) I didn't like it initially but I am growing to like it, d) I liked it initially but find it becoming increasingly difficult to use.

2 How have the following affected and impacted on your opinion of the revised Curriculum of 1999?

Methodologies a) not at all, b) little, c) *somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

Organisation   a) not at all, b) little, c) *somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

Objectives     a) not at all, b) little, c) *somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

 Introduction    a) not at all, b) little, c) *somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

Lack of planning time a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) *a lot*, e) major impact

Availability/unavailability of resources      a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) *major impact*

Parental concerns   a) not at all, b) little, c) *somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

3 Does your class size effect your interpretation of the curriculum  a)  not  at  all,  b) little, c) somewhat, d) *a lot*, e) major impact

4 Do your personal philosophical beliefs effect your interpretation of the curriculum a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) *a lot*, e) major impact

5 Have you found the curriculum motivating
a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

6 Has the curriculum affected your good will?
a) not at all, b) little, c) *somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

7 Do you find the curriculum difficult to implement?
a) not at all, b) *little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

8 Are you aware that the curriculum proposes changes regarding the

teacher's position from 'sage on the stage to guide on the side'?
Yes / No / *sounds familiar*

9 Do you know why the curriculum has been revised?
*Yes* / No / I'm not fully sure

10 Do you think the curriculum needed revision?
*Yes* / No / In certain areas

11 Were you involved in the compilation of the curriculum? Yes/*No*  If so, how?
_____
Did your involvement change any views or preconceived ideas about the curriculum?
_____

12 Do you consider the Revised Curriculum extra work?
Yes / *No*

13 Do you believe the curriculum provides you with <u>more</u> or <u>less</u> freedom in your work to plan and implement?
*More* / Less

14 Which curriculum do you prefer?
*The Revised Curriculum* / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum

15 Which curriculum do you find easiest to plan and implement?
*The Revised Curriculum* / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum

**Section 4**

In-Service Training

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Did you find in-service useful? Yes/*No*/A little
How so? *Nothing more than was done in college*

2 How is in-service best explored?   Please tick
Through facilitated cluster groupings      √
Facilitated in-house visits                √
Unfacilitated school-based days            √
Other

3 Is a sufficient amount of time spent at in-service training for each subject area?
*Yes* / No

4 Is a sufficient amount of time spent on planning during in-service training?
Yes / No / *Usually* / Usually not

5 How do you feel after in-service training?
Crystal-clear, confused, *no better off,* some improvement.

6 Do you feel you have sufficient support for planning when in-service is over?
*Yes* / No.

7 Have you ever sought help with curriculum planning from any of the following (please circle) - the local education centre, e mails, cigire, *principal, other teachers,* PCSP facilitators?

8 Do you enjoy social meetings with other teachers, in own school and/or clusters?
*Yes* / No / Usually

9 Do you feel you reach understanding and solve problems at social meetings such as in-service? Yes / No / *Sometimes*

10 Could in-service be improved upon?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?
*More new ideas*

11 Did any facilitator ever explain the overall background of the curriculum to your group?
Yes / *No*

12 Do you think that the reduced level of in-service training for the academic year 2003/2004 was sufficient?
Yes / *No*

13 Do you find the Revised Curriculum in any way insulting to your experience?
Yes / *No*
Please explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

14 Have you received any templates or scheme structures to help with your planning?
*Yes* / No
If so, were these templates/structures from your in-service co-ordinators or other sources? List other sources.
*From other teachers in school*

15 Have you taken any steps to change aspects of the curriculum which you do not agree with, in the classroom or at meetings, with staff, contacting the Dept. Of Ed etc?
Yes / *No*

**Section 5**

Classes and Methodologies

1 How many classes do you teach?
*1*

2 Have you planned for multi-grade classes using the Revised Curriculum?
Yes / *No*
Was it easy?  Yes / No / Initially no, but it got easier/ Initially yes, but got more difficult

3 Would you like more help in curricular planning, ie – templates, experts, planning time etc
Yes / *No*

4 Can you name the full title of SESE and SPHE?  Please write the full titles without checking your curriculum documents!
SESE *Social, Environmental and Scientific Education*
SPHE *Social, Personal and Health Education*

5 Can you identify any of the methodologies advocated by the curriculum?  If no, proceed to question six.
**Integration, environment based, guided activity etc**

- ❑   Have you used them?
*Yes*

- ❑   Did they work?
*Yes, for most kids*

- ❑   What happened?
*(No answer given)*

- ❑   Would you use them again?
*Yes*

6 Can you identify any of the methodologies of the 1971 curriculum?
Yes / *No*

7 Can you compare the differences between the 1971 and 1999 curriculum methodologies?
Yes / *No*

8 Do you have a preferred methodology?  Please explain what it is and why you prefer it.
*(No answer given)*

Have you read the introduction to the curriculum?  Please be honest!!
*Yes* / No

**Section 6**

Newly Qualified Teachers

Please circle the option which applies to you.

The following section applies only to those who entered Colleges of Education for primary school training in 1999 or after - teachers trained previous to a qualification date of June 2002 were not trained in *entirely* in the Revised Curriculum. This includes post-graduate diploma students.

1 Have you found your inspector helpful?
*Yes* / No

2 Do you find the curriculum you were trained in easy to implement in school?
Yes / *No*
Why / why not? (I stress this is a confidential questionnaire.)
Many of the strategies thought in college were very idealistic and difficult to implement in a real class.

3 Do you feel the college prepared you adequately for your job in school?
Yes / *No*
Why / why not?
*See above*

4 Do you see any conflicting attitudes to those presented by college in your school?
Yes/No/*Once in a while*
Can you explain?
*(Once in a while)*


**Section 7**

Parents and your school

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do the parents in your school know there has been a revision in the curriculum?
Yes / No / *Most do* / Most don't

2 Do these parents understand why changes have come about?
Yes / *No*

3 In your experience, have you encountered parents who can identify changes eminent in the curriculum?
*Yes* / No

4 In your experience, have parental misgivings of the curriculum interfered in any way with your implementation or planned implementation of the curriculum (eg no scheme readers for formal reading instruction in junior infants)
*Not at all* / Yes certainly / Occasionally there is interference

5 Have you ever seen the parents booklet issued by the PCSP, Department of Education?
*Yes* / No

6 Have you ever read the booklet? Be honest!
Yes / *No*

7 Do you believe an expert in curricular change, in conjunction with your school/staff, should address the parents as a body to inform them of the changes - subjects, organisation, time, methodology, homework and philosophy?
*Yes* / No

8 In your opinion should this person come from within staff or from the Department of Education ie inspector?
Yes / No – *Perhaps both*


**Section 8**

The Introduction of the Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you agree with the means by which the curriculum was introduced?
*Yes* / No

2 Do you believe this introduction could have been improved?
Yes / *No*
If so, how?
*(No answer given)*

3 Were the philosophical changes of the curriculum and it's methodologies ever explained by the inspector, facilitators or cuidetheoirs?
Yes / No / *Not entirely* / Not sure

4 Choose three words to describe the curriculum from the list below, be honest!! -
*interesting*, motivating, repetitive, attractive, appealing, *organised*, *cramped*, confusing, worth-while, boring, too much, excessive, positive, negative, threatening, worrying, foolish, wise, incorrect, regressive.

5 Do the children you teach enjoy the subjects in the Revised Curriculum?
*Yes* / No

6 When you are teaching aspects of the curriculum using the revised curriculum methodologies, such as co-operative, collaborative group work, do your children learn the process or thinking skills?
*Yes* / No

7 Do the children misbehave during group-work, do they get giddy?
Yes / No / *Sometimes*

8 Have you employed a revised curriculum methodology that despite initial giddiness, worked well by the end of the lesson or through practice?
*Yes*/No

9 Do you believe the children you teach consider 'book-based', product-based learning as real work and more valuable than process-based learning?
*Yes* / No

10 Which curriculum would you prefer to teach your own children? (Please tick)
The Revised Curriculum      √
The 1971 Curriculum

11 Please list the following in order of importance where 1 is most important and 6 is least important.
  ❑  Process skills – thinking skills,      *1*
  ❑  Product skills – finished product,     *2*
  ❑  Delivery,                              *3*
  ❑  Problem-posing,                        *5*
  ❑  Group-work,                            *6*
  ❑  Individual work.                       *4*

12 Please list any changes you would consider beneficial in the curriculum –
Planning

introduction

in-service

organisation

subjects

strands

strand-units

parental attitudes

Inspectorate

reports

other

---

## Section 9

The following questions are related to philosophical ideas only and are personal. They do not have to be completed but please complete them if you do not find them intrusive. Thank-you.

1 Roughly how many countries have you been to? Please circle the correct option.
1-3
4-6
7-9
*10+*

2 What engine size is your car? *No car*

3 Do you support any of the following political parties, please circle the relevant party
Fianna Fáil,    Fine Gael,    *The Labour Party*,    The Green Party,    The Progressive Democrats,    Sin Féin.

4 How do you feel after completing this questionnaire? (Besides tired!)
   *I hope I got all the questions right!*

A sincere thank-you for your time and patience in helping me with my research,

---

Evanna McCormack

**Teachers and the Revised Curriculum**

# A questionnaire

**Section One**

About You

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Are you a principal, a deputy principal, a post holder, a mainstream teacher, a resource teacher, a learning support teacher, other *Mainstream* (please state)

2 How many mainstream teachers are in your school? *4*

3 Are you male/female? *Male*

4 Which age group are you in? *19-29*, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 59-65.

5 In what county do you teach? *Mayo*

6 Do you have a B.Ed, degree post-grad, NT, other (please state)  *Grad Dip*

7 Do you hold any additional qualifications - Masters Degree, PhD, Diploma or certificate independent of your initial education qualification (B.Ed/NT/H. Dip Ed) Yes/*No*

8 Why did you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education                         N/A
- Monetary rewards                                 N/A
- Interest in the subject or
  to broaden your knowledge base                   N/A
- Alternative qualification to education            N/A

9 Are you currently studying to attain further qualifications related or not related to education?
Yes/*No*

10 Why do you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education                         N/A
- Monetary rewards                                 N/A
- Interest in the subject or knowledge
  with a view to pursuing an alternative career     N/A
- Alternative qualification to education            N/A

11 In what college did you train? *St Pat's*

## Section 2

In your opinion...

1 What is education?
*Learning of any kind*

2 Who does a child's education involve?
   ***Themselves and family, friends and teachers***

3 What skills does a child learn at school, as opposed to at home?
*Formal education, many social skills away from parents*

4 How do teachers teach?
   ***In the manner they themselves feel works best***

5 What is the best way to teach?
Varied approach, range of methodologies – most successful when children are happy in school

6 In your opinion, which methodologies and organisational approaches work best?
List your methodology preferences from most effective to least effective, eg delivery, modelling, rote learning etc
Depends on subject. Often delivery is most effective, however group-work lends itself to a more discovery based learning

7 Who educates the child?
*Parents, teachers, family other adults*            .

8 Who is educated at school?
   ***Mostly children, but teachers too***

9 How do children learn?
   ***By doing***

10 Order the following 1-6 according to their impact on a child's learning –
Rote learning          6
drill learning          5
language                4
interest                  1
context                  3
subject matter         2

Please circle the option which applies to you.

11 Can a child learn something that would be considered quite difficult for their age/ability if it is explained in a different way? *Yes* / No / Usually

12 Can children learn something out of context with suitable language, ie volcanoes, Egyptian mummies? *Yes* / No

13 Can children grasp complex situations if they believe they can? *Yes* / No

14 Why do children learn?
  *Natural aptitude for knowledge acquisition*

15 Circle the factors which you consider to have an effect on children's learning.
| | |
|---|---|
| Learning is required in school, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Interest in acquiring new knowledge, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Willingness to please, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Competition within the class or schools or clusters, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Rewards gained from teacher, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Rewards gained from home, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Fear of failure, | Big/ Medium/ *Small* |
| Other (please state) | |
| | Big/ Medium/ Smalls |

16 Why do you teach? Circle as many of the following as apply to you. Be honest!
| | |
|---|---|
| Summer holidays | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Short working day | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Change the lives of those I encounter | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Love children | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Respect associated with my profession | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Deliver my wisdom | Yes / *No* / A big incentive |
| Help others | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Interest in profession since youth | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Other | Yes / No / A big incentive |

17 Do you teach what you consider important even though it may be outside the curriculum? *Yes* / No / Sometimes

18 Why are you the authority in your classroom or learning situation? Please tick options which apply to you.
| | |
|---|---|
| I am teacher | √ |
| I am most knowledgeable | |
| I earn it over time | √ |
| I have earned it in training college | |
| I have earned it over years of experience | |
| None of the above, please comment | |

19 Who is in authority in your school? Please circle authorative figures from the list below.
Cigire, *Principal*, Deputy-Principal, Post-holders, Senior Staff, Junior Staff, Senior Class Teachers, Junior Class Teachers, Vocal Teachers, a particular teacher.

**Section 3**

The Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you like the revised curriculum of 1999?
a) *I like it*, b) I don't like it, c) I didn't like it initially but I am growing to like it, d) I liked it initially but find it becoming increasingly difficult to use.

2 How have the following affected and impacted on your opinion of the revised Curriculum of 1999?

Methodologies a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) *major impact*

Organisation   a) not at all, b) little, c) *somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

Objectives      a) not at all, b) little, c) *somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

 Introduction    a) not at all, b) *little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Lack of planning time a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) *major impact*

Availability/unavailability of resources        a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) *a lot*, e) major impact

Parental concerns   a) not at all, b) *little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

3 Does your class size effect your interpretation of the curriculum   a)  not  at  all,  b) little, c) somewhat, d) *a lot*, e) major impact

4 Do your personal philosophical beliefs effect your interpretation of the curriculum
a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) *major impact*

5 Have you found the curriculum motivating
a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) *a lot*, e) major impact

6 Has the curriculum affected your good will?
a) *not at all*, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

7 Do you find the curriculum difficult to implement?
a) not at all, b) little, c) *somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

8 Are you aware that the curriculum proposes changes regarding the

teacher's position from 'sage on the stage to guide on the side'?
*Yes* / No / sounds familiar

9 Do you know why the curriculum has been revised?
*Yes* / No / I'm not fully sure

10 Do you think the curriculum needed revision?
Yes / No / *In certain areas*

11 Were you involved in the compilation of the curriculum? Yes/*No*   If so, how?

Did your involvement change any views or preconceived ideas about the curriculum?

12 Do you consider the Revised Curriculum extra work?
*Yes* / No

13 Do you believe the curriculum provides you with <u>more</u> or <u>less</u> freedom in your work to plan and implement?
*More* / Less

14 Which curriculum do you prefer?
*The Revised Curriculum* / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum

15 Which curriculum do you find easiest to plan and implement?
*The Revised Curriculum* / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum

**Section4**

In-Service Training

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Did you find in-service useful?  *Yes*/No/A little
How so?  *Good for new ideas and revision of college work*

2 How is in-service best explored?   Please tick
Through facilitated cluster groupings          √
Facilitated in-house visits
Unfacilitated school-based days
Other

3 Is a sufficient amount of time spent at in-service training for each subject area?
Yes / *No*

4 Is a sufficient amount of time spent on planning during in-service training?
Yes / *No* / Usually / Usually not

5 How do you feel after in-service training?
Crystal-clear, confused, no better off, *some improvement.*

6 Do you feel you have sufficient support for planning when in-service is over?
*Yes* / No.

7 Have you ever sought help with curriculum planning from any of the following (please circle) - the local education centre, e mails, *cigire, principal, other teachers,* PCSP facilitators?

8 Do you enjoy social meetings with other teachers, in own school and/or clusters?
*Yes* / No / Usually

9 Do you feel you reach understanding and solve problems at social meetings such as in-service? *Yes* / No / Sometimes

10 Could in-service be improved upon?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?
Needs to be more frequent, could be used for deployment of resource packs in various

subjects

11 Did any facilitator ever explain the overall background of the curriculum to your group?
Yes / *No*

12 Do you think that the reduced level of in-service training for the academic year 2003/2004 was sufficient?
Yes / *No*

13 Do you find the Revised Curriculum in any way insulting to your experience?
Yes / *No*
Please explain.
         *I qualified after 1999*

14 Have you received any templates or scheme structures to help with your planning?
*Yes* / No
If so, were these templates/structures from your in-service co-ordinators or other sources?  List other sources.
         ***Friends, colleagues***

15 Have you taken any steps to change aspects of the curriculum which you do not agree with, in the classroom or at meetings, with staff, contacting the Dept. Of Ed etc?
Yes / *No*

**Section 5**

Classes and Methodologies

1 How many classes do you teach? *2*

2 Have you planned for multi-grade classes using the Revised Curriculum?
*Yes* / No
Was it easy?   Yes / No / *Initially no, but it got easier/* Initially yes, but got more difficult

3 Would you like more help in curricular planning, ie – templates, experts, planning time etc
*Yes* / No

4 Can you name the full title of SESE and SPHE?  Please write the full titles without checking your curriculum documents!
SESE *Social, Environmental and Scientific Education*
SPHE *Social, Personal and Health Education*

5 Can you identify any of the methodologies advocated by the curriculum?  If no, proceed to question six.
Collaborative Group-work, paired work, hot-seating, drama role-play,

- Have you used them? Y*es*

- Did they work? *Yes*

- What happened? *(No answer given)*

- Would you use them again? *Yes*

6 Can you identify any of the methodologies of the 1971 curriculum?
*Yes* / No

7 Can you compare the differences between the 1971 and 1999 curriculum methodologies?
*Yes* / No

8 Do you have a preferred methodology?  Please explain what it is and why you prefer it.
I prefer the 1999 curriculum as I feel it is more child friendly and gives more freedom to the teacher in relation to planning

Have you read the introduction to the curriculum?  Please be honest!!
*Yes* / No

**Section 6**

Newly Qualified Teachers

Please circle the option which applies to you.

The following section applies only to those who entered Colleges of Education for primary school training in 1999 or after - teachers trained previous to a qualification date of June 2002 were not trained in *entirely* in the Revised Curriculum. This includes post-graduate diploma students.

1 Have you found your inspector helpful?
Yes / *No*

2 Do you find the curriculum you were trained in easy to implement in school?
Yes / *No*

Why / why not? (I stress this is a confidential questionnaire.)
Planning is difficult

3 Do you feel the college prepared you adequately for your job in school?
Yes / *No*
Why / why not?
*The reality of planning for a full year in all subjects is not realised*

4 Do you see any conflicting attitudes to those presented by college in your school?
Yes/*No*/Once in a while
Can you explain?


**Section 7**

Parents and your school

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do the parents in your school know there has been a revision in the curriculum?
Yes / No / Most do / *Most don't*

2 Do these parents understand why changes have come about?
*Yes* / No

3 In your experience, have you encountered parents who can identify changes eminent in the curriculum?
*Yes* / No

4 In your experience, have parental misgivings of the curriculum interfered in any way with your implementation or planned implementation of the curriculum (eg no scheme readers for formal reading instruction in junior infants)
Not at all / Yes certainly / *Occasionally there is interference*

5 Have you ever seen the parents booklet issued by the PCSP, Department of Education?
Yes / *No*

6 Have you ever read the booklet? Be honest!
Yes / *No*

7 Do you believe an expert in curricular change, in conjunction with your school/staff, should address the parents as a body to inform them of the changes - subjects, organisation, time, methodology, homework and philosophy?
*Yes* / No

8 In your opinion should this person come from within staff or from the Department of Education ie inspector?
*Yes* / No

## Section 8

The Introduction of the Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you agree with the means by which the curriculum was introduced?
*Yes* / No

2 Do you believe this introduction could have been improved?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?
                    *More emphases on the principals of new curriculum*

3  Were the philosophical changes of the curriculum and it's methodologies ever explained by the inspector, facilitators or cuidetheoirs?
Yes / *No* / Not entirely / Not sure

4  Choose three words to describe the curriculum from the list below, be honest!! - interesting, motivating, repetitive, attractive, appealing, organised, *cramped*, confusing, *worth-while*, boring, too much, excessive, *positive*, negative, threatening, worrying, foolish, wise, incorrect, regressive.

5 Do the children you teach enjoy the subjects in the Revised Curriculum?
*Yes* / No

6 When you are teaching aspects of the curriculum using the revised curriculum methodologies, such as co-operative, collaborative group work, do your children learn the process or thinking skills?
*Yes* / No

7 Do the children misbehave during group-work, do they get giddy?
Yes / No / *Sometimes*

8 Have you employed a revised curriculum methodology that despite initial giddiness, worked well by the end of the lesson or through practice?

*Yes/*No

9 Do you believe the children you teach consider 'book-based', product-based learning as real work and more valuable than process-based learning?
*Yes* / No

10 Which curriculum would you prefer to teach your own children? (Please tick)
The Revised Curriculum      √
The 1971 Curriculum

11 Please list the following in order of importance where 1 is most important and 6 is least important.
- ❑   Process skills – thinking skills,      1
- ❑   Product skills – finished product,      6
- ❑   Delivery,      5
- ❑   Problem-posing,      2
- ❑   Group-work,      4
- ❑   Individual work.      3

12 Please list any changes you would consider beneficial in the curriculum –
Planning
   *Some allotted time for teachers, perhaps at beginning of term*

introduction

in-service
   *More frequent*

organisation

subjects

strands

strand-units

parental attitudes
*Could be more informed*
Inspectorate

reports

other

## Section 9

The following questions are related to philosophical ideas only and are personal. They do not have to be completed but please complete them if you do not find them intrusive. Thank-you.

1 Roughly how many countries have you been to?  Please circle the correct option.
1-3
4-6
7-9
*10+*

2 What engine size is your car? *1600cl*

3 Do you support any of the following political parties, please circle the relevant party *Fianna Fáil,*   Fine Gael,  The Labour Party,  The Green Party,  The Progressive Democrats,  Sinn Féin.

4 How do you feel after completing this questionnaire?  (Besides tired!)
*Happy with my answers!*


A sincere thank-you for your time and patience in helping me with my research,

_____

Evanna McCormack

**Appendix 1.3**

**Teachers and the Revised Curriculum**

# A questionnaire

**Section One**

About You


Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Are you a principal, a deputy principal, a post holder, a mainstream teacher, a resource teacher, a learning support teacher, other *Mainstream* (please state)

2 How many mainstream teachers are in your school? *10*

3 Are you male/female? *Female*

4 Which age group are you in? 19-29, *30-39*, 40-49, 50-59, 59-65.

5 In what county do you teach? *Mayo*

6 Do you have a B.Ed, degree post-grad, NT, other (please state) *B.Ed*

7 Do you hold any additional qualifications - Masters Degree, PhD, Diploma or certificate independent of your initial education qualification (B.Ed/NT/H. Dip Ed) Yes/*No*

8 Why did you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education          N/A
- Monetary rewards          N/A
- Interest in the subject or
  to broaden your knowledge base          N/A
- Alternative qualification to education          N/A


9 Are you currently studying to attain further qualifications related or not related to education?
Yes/*No*

10 Why do you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education          N/A
- Monetary rewards          N/A
- Interest in the subject or knowledge
  with a view to pursuing an alternative career          N/A
- Alternative qualification to education          N/A

11 In what college did you train? *St Patrick's college*

**Section 2**

In your opinion...

1 What is education?
*A formal prolonged process of instruction*

2 Who does a child's education involve?
*Intellectual and social instruction*

3 What skills does a child learn at school, as opposed to at home?
   ***Skills of reading***

4 How do teachers teach?
   ***Formally through instruction and informally through interaction***

5 What is the best way to teach?
   ***Formally and informally***

6 In your opinion, which methodologies and organisational approaches work best?
List your methodology preferences from most effective to least effective, eg delivery,
modelling, rote learning etc
*(No answer given)*

7 Who educates the child? *Parents, teachers, people who are in contact with the child
and the child him/herself*

8 Who is educated at school? *Everyone present*

9 How do children learn?
   ***By being involved individually and actively***

10 Order the following 1-6 according to their impact on a child's learning –
Rote learning       5
drill learning      6
language            4
interest            1
context             2
subject matter      3

Please circle the option which applies to you.

11 Can a child learn something that would be considered quite difficult for their
age/ability if it is explained in a different way? Yes / No / *Usually*

12 Can children learn something out of context with suitable language, ie volcanoes, Egyptian mummies? *Yes* / No

13 Can children grasp complex situations if they believe they can? *Yes* / No

14 Why do children learn?
*(No answer given)*

15 Circle the factors which you consider to have an effect on children's learning.

| | |
|---|---|
| Learning is required in school, | Big/ *Medium/* Small |
| Interest in acquiring new knowledge, | *Big/* Medium/ Small |
| Willingness to please, | Big/ *Medium/* Small |
| Competition within the class or schools or clusters, | Big/ *Medium/* Small |
| Rewards gained from teacher, | Big/ *Medium/* Small |
| Rewards gained from home, | Big/ *Medium/* Small |
| Fear of failure, | Big/ *Medium/* Small |
| Other (please state) | |
| _____ | Big/ Medium/ Smalls |

16 Why do you teach?  Circle as many of the following as apply to you.  Be honest!

| | |
|---|---|
| Summer holidays | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Short working day | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Change the lives of those I encounter | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Love children | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Respect associated with my profession | Yes / *No* / A big incentive |
| Deliver my wisdom | Yes / *No* / A big incentive |
| Help others | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Interest in profession since youth | Yes / *No* / A big incentive |
| Other | Yes / No / A big incentive |

17 Do you teach what you consider important even though it may be outside the curriculum?  Yes / No / *Sometimes*

18 Why are you the authority in your classroom or learning situation?  Please tick options which apply to you.

I am teacher                          √
I am most knowledgeable
I earn it over time
I have earned it in training college
I have earned it over years of experience
None of the above, please comment
_____

19 Who is in authority in your school?  Please circle authorative figures from the list below.
*Cigire, Principal,* Deputy-Principal, Post-holders, *Senior Staff,* Junior Staff, Senior Class Teachers, Junior Class Teachers, *Vocal Teachers,* a particular teacher.

**Section 3**

The Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you like the revised curriculum of 1999?
a) *I like it,* b) I don't like it, c) I didn't like it initially but I am growing to like it, d) I liked it initially but find it becoming increasingly difficult to use.

2 How have the following affected and impacted on your opinion of the revised Curriculum of 1999?

Methodologies a) not at all, *b) little,* c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Organisation   a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat,* d) a lot, e) major impact

Objectives      a) not at all, *b) little,* c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

 Introduction    a) not at all, *b) little,* c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Lack of planning time a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat,* d) a lot, e) major impact

Availability/unavailability of resources      a) not at all, *b) little,* c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Parental concerns   *a) not at all,* b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

3 Does your class size effect your interpretation of the curriculum  a)  not  at  all,  b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, *e) major impact*

4 Do your personal philosophical beliefs effect your interpretation of the curriculum
a) not at all, *b) little,* c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

5 Have you found the curriculum motivating
a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat,* d) a lot, e) major impact

6 Has the curriculum affected your good will?
*a)* not at all, *b) little,* c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact        *It's not what I signed up to do!*

7 Do you find the curriculum difficult to implement?
a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat,* d) a lot, e) major impact

8 Are you aware that the curriculum proposes changes regarding the
teacher's position from 'sage on the stage to guide on the side'?
*Yes* / No / sounds familiar

9 Do you know why the curriculum has been revised?

Yes / No / *I'm not fully sure*

10 Do you think the curriculum needed revision?
Yes / No / *In certain areas*


11 Were you involved in the compilation of the curriculum? Yes/*No*   If so, how?

---

Did your involvement change any views or preconceived ideas about the curriculum?

---


12 Do you consider the Revised Curriculum extra work?
*Yes* / No


13 Do you believe the curriculum provides you with <u>more</u> or <u>less</u> freedom in your work to plan and implement?
More / *Less*

14 Which curriculum do you prefer?
*The Revised Curriculum* / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum

15 Which curriculum do you find easiest to plan and implement?
The Revised Curriculum / *1971 Curriculum* / pre-1971 Curriculum


**Section4**

In-Service Training

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Did you find in-service useful? *Yes*/No/A little
How so? *Very helpful as regards Science*

2 How is in-service best explored?   Please tick
Through facilitated cluster groupings                          √
Facilitated in-house visits                                        √
Unfacilitated school-based days
Other

3 Is a sufficient amount of time spent at in-service training for each subject area?
Yes / *No*

4 Is a sufficient amount of time spent on planning during in-service training?
Yes / No / *Usually* / Usually not

5 How do you feel after in-service training?
Crystal-clear, confused, no better off, *some improvement.*

6 Do you feel you have sufficient support for planning when in-service is over?

*Yes* / No.

7 Have you ever sought help with curriculum planning from any of the following (please circle) - the local education centre, e mails, cigire, principal, other teachers, *PCSP facilitators?*

8 Do you enjoy social meetings with other teachers, in own school and/or clusters?
Yes / *No* / Usually

9 Do you feel you reach understanding and solve problems at social meetings such as in-service? *Yes* / No / Sometimes

10 Could in-service be improved upon?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?
*More facilitated in-house visits*

11 Did any facilitator ever explain the overall background of the curriculum to your group?
Yes / *No*

12 Do you think that the reduced level of in-service training for the academic year 2003/2004 was sufficient?
Yes / *No*

13 Do you find the Revised Curriculum in any way insulting to your experience?
Yes / *No*
Please explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

14 Have you received any templates or scheme structures to help with your planning?
*Yes* / No
If so, were these templates/structures from your in-service co-ordinators or other sources? List other sources. *School facilitators*

15 Have you taken any steps to change aspects of the curriculum which you do not agree with, in the classroom or at meetings, with staff, contacting the Dept. Of Ed etc?
Yes / *No*

**Section 5**

Classes and Methodologies

1 How many classes do you teach? *1*

2 Have you planned for multi-grade classes using the Revised Curriculum?
Yes / *No*

Was it easy? N/A

3 Would you like more help in curricular planning, ie – templates, experts, planning time etc
*Yes* / No

4 Can you name the full title of SESE and SPHE? Please write the full titles without checking your curriculum documents!
SESE *Scientific, Environmental and Social Education*
SPHE *Social, Personal and Health Education*

5 Can you identify any of the methodologies advocated by the curriculum? If no, proceed to question six.
*No*

❑   Have you used them?

_____

❑   Did they work?

_____

❑   What happened?

_____

_____

_____

❑   Would you use them again?

_____

6 Can you identify any of the methodologies of the 1971 curriculum?
Yes / No   *(No answers given here)*

7 Can you compare the differences between the 1971 and 1999 curriculum methodologies?
Yes / No

8 Do you have a preferred methodology? Please explain what it is and why you prefer it.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Have you read the introduction to the curriculum? Please be honest!!
Yes / No

**Section 6**

Newly Qualified Teachers – *N/A*

Please circle the option which applies to you.

The following section applies only to those who entered Colleges of Education for primary school training in 1999 or after - teachers trained previous to a qualification date of June 2002 were not trained in *entirely* in the Revised Curriculum. This includes post-graduate diploma students.

1 Have you found your inspector helpful?
Yes / No

2 Do you find the curriculum you were trained in easy to implement in school?
Yes / No
Why / why not? (I stress this is a confidential questionnaire.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

3 Do you feel the college prepared you adequately for your job in school?
Yes / No
Why / why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4 Do you see any conflicting attitudes to those presented by college in your school?
Yes/No/Once in a while
Can you explain?

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Section 7**

Parents and your school

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do the parents in your school know there has been a revision in the curriculum?
Yes / No / Most do / *Most don't*

2 Do these parents understand why changes have come about?
Yes / *No*

3 In your experience, have you encountered parents who can identify changes eminent in the curriculum?
Yes / *No*

4 In your experience, have parental misgivings of the curriculum interfered in any way with your implementation or planned implementation of the curriculum (eg no scheme readers for formal reading instruction in junior infants)
Not at all / Yes certainly / *Occasionally there is interference*

5 Have you ever seen the parents booklet issued by the PCSP, Department of Education?
Yes / *No*

6 Have you ever read the booklet? Be honest!
Yes / *No*

7 Do you believe an expert in curricular change, in conjunction with your school/staff, should address the parents as a body to inform them of the changes - subjects, organisation, time, methodology, homework and philosophy?
*Yes* / No

8 In your opinion should this person come from within staff or from the Department of Education ie inspector?
Yes / *No*

## Section 8

The Introduction of the Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you agree with the means by which the curriculum was introduced?
Yes / *No*

2 Do you believe this introduction could have been improved?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?
*By more consultation with teachers*

3 Were the philosophical changes of the curriculum and it's methodologies ever explained by the inspector, facilitators or cuidetheoirs?
*Yes* / No / Not entirely / Not sure

4  Choose three words to describe the curriculum from the list below, be honest!! - *interesting*, motivating, repetitive, attractive, *appealing*, organised, cramped, confusing, worth-while, boring, *too much*, excessive, positive, negative, threatening, worrying, foolish, wise, incorrect, regressive.

5 Do the children you teach enjoy the subjects in the Revised Curriculum?
*Yes* / No

6 When you are teaching aspects of the curriculum using the revised curriculum methodologies, such as co-operative, collaborative group work, do your children learn the process or thinking skills?
*Yes* / No

7 Do the children misbehave during group-work, do they get giddy?
*Yes* / No / Sometimes

8 Have you employed a revised curriculum methodology that despite initial giddiness, worked well by the end of the lesson or through practice?
*Yes*/No

9 Do you believe the children you teach consider 'book-based', product-based learning as real work and more valuable than process-based learning?
*Yes* / No

10 Which curriculum would you prefer to teach your own children? (Please tick)
The Revised Curriculum      √
The 1971 Curriculum

11 Please list the following in order of importance where 1 is most important and 6 is least important.
- ❑  Process skills – thinking skills,      3
- ❑  Product skills – finished product,      6
- ❑  Delivery,      5
- ❑  Problem-posing,      2
- ❑  Group-work,      1
- ❑  Individual work.      4

12 Please list any changes you would consider beneficial in the curriculum –
Planning

introduction

in-service
*More in-house facilitators*
organisation
*More classroom assistants*
subjects

strands

strand-units

---

parental attitudes
*I think parent/teacher meetings should take place during school hours. Teachers end up loosing their voices when they have to teach all day and then speak to parents.*

Inspectorate

---

reports

---

other

---

---

## Section 9

The following questions are related to philosophical ideas only and are personal. They do not have to be completed but please complete them if you do not find them intrusive. Thank-you.

1 Roughly how many countries have you been to? Please circle the correct option.
*1-3*
*4-6*
*7-9*
10+

2 What engine size is your car?
*2 litre diesel*

3 Do you support any of the following political parties, please circle the relevant party *Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael,* The Labour Party, The Green Party, The Progressive Democrats, Sin Féin.

4 How do you feel after completing this questionnaire? (Besides tired!)
*Delighted I'm finished!*

A sincere thank-you for your time and patience in helping me with my research,

---

Evanna McCormack

**Appendix 1.4**

# Teachers and the Revised Curriculum
# A questionnaire

**Section One**

About You

Please circle the option which applies to you. *(Italics denote answer given)*

1 Are you a principal, a deputy principal, a post holder, a mainstream teacher, a resource teacher, a learning support teacher, other *Mainstream post-holder* (please state)

2 How many mainstream teachers are in your school? *8*

3 Are you male/*female*?

4 Which age group are you in? 19-29, 30-39, *40-49*, 50-59, 59-65.

5 In what county do you teach? *Dublin*

6 Do you have a B.Ed, degree post-grad, NT, other (please state) *B.Ed*

7 Do you hold any additional qualifications – Masters Degree, PhD, Diploma or certificate independent of your initial education qualification (B.Ed/NT/H. Dip Ed) Yes/*No*

8 Why did you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education     *N/A*
- Monetary rewards     *N/A*
- Interest in the subject or to broaden your knowledge base     *N/A*
- Alternative qualification to education     *N/A*

9 Are you currently studying to attain further qualifications related or not related to education?
Yes/*No*

10 Why do you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education     *N/A*
- Monetary rewards     *N/A*
- Interest in the subject or knowledge with a view to pursuing an alternative career     *N/A*
- Alternative qualification to education     *N/A*

11 In what college did you train? *St Pat's, Drumcondra*

**Section 2**

In your opinion...

1 What is education?
*Broadening and developing of mind and of whole person.*

2 Who does a child's education involve?
**Child – Teacher – Parent.**

3 What skills does a child learn at school, as opposed to at home?
**Academic, part of team, social.**

4 How do teachers teach?
*Present material, stimulate children's interest. Get them involved. Some drill also.*

5 What is the best way to teach?
*Be organised. Get interest of children. Mixture of methods.*

6 In your opinion, which methodologies and organisational approaches work best? List your methodology preferences from most effective to least effective, eg delivery, modelling, rote learning etc
*(No answer given)*

7 Who educates the child?
*Teacher. Parent.*

8 Who is educated at school?
**Children**

9 How do children learn?
*(No answer given)*

10 Order the following 1-6 according to their impact on a child's learning –

| | |
|---|---|
| Rote learning | *4* |
| drill learning | *5* |
| language | *6* |
| interest | *1* |
| context | *3* |
| subject matter | *2* |

Please circle the option which applies to you.

11 Can a child learn something that would be considered quite difficult for their age/ability if it is explained in a different way? Yes / No / *Usually*

12 Can children learn something out of context with suitable language, ie volcanoes, Egyptian mummies? *Yes* / No

13 Can children grasp complex situations if they believe they can? *Yes* / No

14 Why do children learn?
*(No answer given)*

15 Circle the factors which you consider to have an effect on children's learning.

| | |
|---|---|
| Learning is required in school, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Interest in acquiring new knowledge, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Willingness to please, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Competition within the class or schools or clusters, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Rewards gained from teacher, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Rewards gained from home, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Fear of failure, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Other (please state) | |
| _____ | Big/ Medium/ Smalls |

16 Why do you teach? Circle as many of the following as apply to you. Be honest!

| | |
|---|---|
| Summer holidays | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Short working day | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Change the lives of those I encounter | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Love children | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Respect associated with my profession | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Deliver my wisdom | Yes / *No* / A big incentive |
| Help others | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Interest in profession since youth | Yes / *No* / A big incentive |
| Other | Yes / No / A big incentive |

17 Do you teach what you consider important even though it may be outside the curriculum? Yes / No / *Sometimes*

18 Why are you the authority in your classroom or learning situation? Please tick options which apply to you.

| | |
|---|---|
| I am teacher | √ |
| I am most knowledgeable | |
| I earn it over time | √ |
| I have earned it in training college | √ |
| I have earned it over years of experience | √ |
| None of the above, please comment | |

19 Who is in authority in your school? Please circle authorative figures from the list below.
Cigire, *Principal*, Deputy-Principal, *Post-holders*, Senior Staff, Junior Staff, Senior Class Teachers, Junior Class Teachers, Vocal Teachers, a particular teacher.

**Section 3**

The Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you like the revised curriculum of 1999?
a) I like it, b) I don't like it, *c) I didn't like it initially but I am growing to like it*, d) I liked it initially but find it becoming increasingly difficult to use.

2 How have the following affected and impacted on your opinion of the revised Curriculum of 1999?

Methodologies a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

Organisation   a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

Objectives      a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

 Introduction   a) not at all, *b) little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Lack of planning time a) not at all, *b) little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Availability/unavailability of resources      a) not at all, *b) little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Parental concerns   a) not at all, *b) little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

3 Does your class size effect your interpretation of the curriculum  a)  not  at  all,  b) little, c) somewhat, *d) a lot*, e) major impact

4 Do your personal philosophical beliefs effect your interpretation of the curriculum
a) not at all, *b) little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

5 Have you found the curriculum motivating
a) not at all, *b) little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

6 Has the curriculum affected your good will?
*a) not at all*, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

7 Do you find the curriculum difficult to implement?
a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

8 Are you aware that the curriculum proposes changes regarding the teacher's position from 'sage on the stage to guide on the side'?
Yes / No / *sounds familiar*

9 Do you know why the curriculum has been revised?

Yes / No / *I'm not fully sure*

10 Do you think the curriculum needed revision?
Yes / No / *In certain areas*


11 Were you involved in the compilation of the curriculum? Yes/*No* If so, how?
_____
Did your involvement change any views or preconceived ideas about the curriculum?
_____


12 Do you consider the Revised Curriculum extra work?
*Yes* / No

13 Do you believe the curriculum provides you with <u>more</u> or <u>less</u> freedom in your work to plan and implement?
*More* / Less

14 Which curriculum do you prefer?
*The Revised Curriculum* / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum

15 Which curriculum do you find easiest to plan and implement?
The Revised Curriculum / *1971 Curriculum* / pre-1971 Curriculum


**Section 4**

In-Service Training

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Did you find in-service useful? Yes/No/*A little*
How so? _____

2 How is in-service best explored?   Please tick
Through facilitated cluster groupings          √
Facilitated in-house visits
Unfacilitated school-based days               √
Other

3 Is a sufficient amount of time spent at in-service training for each subject area?
Yes / *No*

4 Is a sufficient amount of time spent on planning during in-service training?
Yes / *No* / Usually / Usually not

5 How do you feel after in-service training?
Crystal-clear, confused, no better off, *some improvement.*

6 Do you feel you have sufficient support for planning when in-service is over?

*Yes* / No.

7 Have you ever sought help with curriculum planning from any of the following (please circle) - the local education centre, e mails, cigire, principal, other teachers, PCSP facilitators? *No*

8 Do you enjoy social meetings with other teachers, in own school and/or clusters? *Yes* / No / Usually

9 Do you feel you reach understanding and solve problems at social meetings such as in-service? *Yes* / No / Sometimes

10 Could in-service be improved upon?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?
       *More group-work*

11 Did any facilitator ever explain the overall background of the curriculum to your group?
Yes / *No*

12 Do you think that the reduced level of in-service training for the academic year 2003/2004 was sufficient?
Yes / *No*

13 Do you find the Revised Curriculum in any way insulting to your experience?
Yes / *No*
Please explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

14 Have you received any templates or scheme structures to help with your planning?
Yes / No
If so, were these templates/structures from your in-service co-ordinators or other sources? List other sources.
*In-service co-ordinators*

15 Have you taken any steps to change aspects of the curriculum which you do not agree with, in the classroom or at meetings, with staff, contacting the Dept. Of Ed etc?
Yes / *No*

**Section 5**

Classes and Methodologies

1 How many classes do you teach?
*1*

2 Have you planned for multi-grade classes using the Revised Curriculum?
Yes / *No*
Was it easy? Yes / No / Initially no, but it got easier/ Initially yes, but got more difficult

3 Would you like more help in curricular planning, ie – templates, experts, planning time etc
*Yes* / No

4 Can you name the full title of SESE and SPHE? Please write the full titles without checking your curriculum documents!
SESE_____
SPHE *Social, Personal and Health Education*

5 Can you identify any of the methodologies advocated by the curriculum? If no, proceed to question six.

---

❏ Have you used them?

---

❏ Did they work?

---

❏ What happened?

---

---

❏ Would you use them again?

---

6 Can you identify any of the methodologies of the 1971 curriculum?
Yes / No

7 Can you compare the differences between the 1971 and 1999 curriculum methodologies?
Yes / No

8 Do you have a preferred methodology? Please explain what it is and why you prefer it.

---

---

---

Have you read the introduction to the curriculum? Please be honest!!
Yes / *No*

**Section 6**

Newly Qualified Teachers *(Not applicable)*

Please circle the option which applies to you.

**Section 7**

Parents and your school

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do the parents in your school know there has been a revision in the curriculum?
Yes / No / *Most do* / Most don't

2 Do these parents understand why changes have come about?
*Yes* / No

3 In your experience, have you encountered parents who can identify changes eminent in the curriculum?
Yes / *No*

4 In your experience, have parental misgivings of the curriculum interfered in any way with your implementation or planned implementation of the curriculum (eg no scheme readers for formal reading instruction in junior infants)
*Not at all* / Yes certainly / Occasionally there is interference

5 Have you ever seen the parents booklet issued by the PCSP, Department of Education?
*Yes* / No

6 Have you ever read the booklet? Be honest!
*Yes* / No

7 Do you believe an expert in curricular change, in conjunction with your school/staff, should address the parents as a body to inform them of the changes - subjects, organisation, time, methodology, homework and philosophy?
*Yes* / No

8 In your opinion should this person come from within staff or from the Department of Education ie inspector?
*Yes* / No

**Section 8**

The Introduction of the Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you agree with the means by which the curriculum was introduced?
Yes / *No*

2 Do you believe this introduction could have been improved?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

3  Were the philosophical changes of the curriculum and it's methodologies ever explained by the inspector, facilitators or cuidetheoirs?
Yes / No / Not entirely / *Not sure*

4  Choose three words to describe the curriculum from the list below, be honest!! - *interesting*, motivating, repetitive, *attractive*, appealing, organised, *cramped*, confusing, *worth-while*, boring, *too much*, excessive, positive, negative, threatening, worrying, foolish, wise, incorrect, regressive.

5 Do the children you teach enjoy the subjects in the Revised Curriculum?
*Yes* / No

6 When you are teaching aspects of the curriculum using the revised curriculum methodologies, such as co-operative, collaborative group work, do your children learn the process or thinking skills?
*Yes* / No

7 Do the children misbehave during group-work, do they get giddy?
*Yes* / No / *Sometimes*

8 Have you employed a revised curriculum methodology that despite initial giddiness, worked well by the end of the lesson or through practice?
*Yes*/No

9 Do you believe the children you teach consider 'book-based', product-based learning as real work and more valuable than process-based learning?
*Yes* / No

10 Which curriculum would you prefer to teach your own children? (Please tick)
The Revised Curriculum      √
The 1971 Curriculum

11 Please list the following in order of importance where 1 is most important and 6 is least important.
- ❏   Process skills – thinking skills,      1
- ❏   Product skills – finished product,    5
- ❏   Delivery,                             4
- ❏   Problem-posing,                       2

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ❏ | Group-work, | 3 |
| ❏ | Individual work. | 6 |

12 Please list any changes you would consider beneficial in the curriculum –
Planning

introduction
_____

in-service
_____

organisation
_____

subjects
_____

strands
_____

strand-units
_____

parental attitudes
_____

Inspectorate
_____

reports
_____

other
_____

**Section 9**

The following questions are related to philosophical ideas only and are personal.
They do not have to be completed but please complete them if you do not find them
intrusive. Thank-you.

1 Roughly how many countries have you been to? Please circle the correct option.
1-3
4-6
*7-9*
10+

2 What engine size is your car?
*1.4*

3 Do you support any of the following political parties, please circle the relevant party
Fianna Fáil,   Fine Gael,   The Labour Party,   The Green Party,   The Progressive
Democrats,  Sin Féin. *(No answer given)*

4 How do you feel after completing this questionnaire? (Besides tired!)
*A little confused in areas. Hope this is not rushed. Good Luck!*

A sincere thank-you for your time and patience in helping me with my research,

Evanna McCormack

**Appendix 1.5**

**Teachers and the Revised Curriculum**

# A questionnaire

**Section One**

About You

Please circle the option which applies to you. *(Italics denote answers given)*

1 Are you a principal, a deputy principal, a post holder, a mainstream teacher, a resource teacher, a learning support teacher, other *Principal* (please state)

2 How many mainstream teachers are in your school? *2*

3 Are you male/*female*?

4 Which age group are you in? 19-29, 30-39, 40-49, *50-59*, 59-65.

5 In what county do you teach? *Louth*

6 Do you have a B.Ed, degree post-grad, NT, other (please state) *N.T.*

7 Do you hold any additional qualifications - Masters Degree, PhD, Diploma or certificate independent of your initial education qualification (B.Ed/NT/H. Dip Ed) *Yes*/No

8 Why did you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education                          *Yes* / No / Somewhat
- Monetary rewards                                   *Yes* / No / Somewhat
- Interest in the subject or
  to broaden your knowledge base                     *Yes* / No / Somewhat
- Alternative qualification to education             Yes / No / Somewhat

9 Are you currently studying to attain further qualifications related or not related to education?
*Yes*/No

10 Why do you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education                          *Yes*/No/Partly why
- Monetary rewards                                   *Yes*/No/Partly why
- Interest in the subject or knowledge
  with a view to pursuing an alternative career      *Yes*/No/Partly why
- Alternative qualification to education             Yes/No/Partly why

11 In what college did you train? *Carysfort*

**Section 2**

In your opinion...

1 What is education?
Teaching to think in enquiring manner. Spotlight on facts amassed. Provider of capacity to understand world.

2 Who does a child's education involve?
Diving of enabling a bedrock of/for capability to analyse world.

3 What skills does a child learn at school, as opposed to at home?
To structure, index, catalogue – to understand in structured way.

4 How do teachers teach?
   a) *As they were thought*
   b) *Intuitively*
   c) *According to their school management/ethos*

5 What is the best way to teach?
*None – whatever works to get the children doing what they're supposed to be doing. Personally/to the individual learning style.*

6 In your opinion, which methodologies and organisational approaches work best? List your methodology preferences from most effective to least effective, eg delivery, modelling, rote learning etc
*Discovery, doing, consolidation*

7 Who educates the child?
*The world – all experiences impact.*

8 Who is educated at school?
*Formally the child.*

9 How do children learn?
*By doing.*

10 Order the following 1-6 according to their impact on a child's learning –
Rote learning       5
drill learning      6
language            4
interest            2
context             3
subject matter      1

Please circle the option which applies to you.

11 Can a child learn something that would be considered quite difficult for their age/ability if it is explained in a different way? *Yes* / No / Usually

12 Can children learn something out of context with suitable language, ie volcanoes, Egyptian mummies? *Yes* / No

13 Can children grasp complex situations if they believe they can? Yes / *No*

14 Why do children learn?
*To make sense of their world. To survive. Ultimately to get a job as the workplace is the inevitable destination.*

15 Circle the factors which you consider to have an effect on children's learning.

| | |
|---|---|
| Learning is required in school, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Interest in acquiring new knowledge, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Willingness to please, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Competition within the class or schools or clusters, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Rewards gained from teacher, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Rewards gained from home, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Fear of failure, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Other (please state) | |
| _____ | Big/ Medium/ Smalls |

16 Why do you teach? Circle as many of the following as apply to you. Be honest!

| | |
|---|---|
| Summer holidays | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Short working day | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Change the lives of those I encounter | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Love children | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Respect associated with my profession | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Deliver my wisdom | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Help others | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Interest in profession since youth | Yes / *No* / A big incentive |
| Other | Yes / No / A big incentive |

17 Do you teach what you consider important even though it may be outside the curriculum? *Yes* / No / Sometimes

18 Why are you the authority in your classroom or learning situation? Please tick options which apply to you.
I am teacher
I am most knowledgeable
I earn it over time                                √
I have earned it in training college
I have earned it over years of experience   √
None of the above, please comment

19 Who is in authority in your school? Please circle authorative figures from the list below.
Cigire, *Principal*, Deputy-Principal, Post-holders, Senior Staff, Junior Staff, Senior Class Teachers, Junior Class Teachers, Vocal Teachers, a particular teacher.

**Section 3**

The Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you like the revised curriculum of 1999?
a) *I like it*, b) I don't like it, c) I didn't like it initially but I am growing to like it, d) I liked it initially but find it becoming increasingly difficult to use.

2 How have the following affected and impacted on your opinion of the revised Curriculum of 1999?

Methodologies *a) not at all*, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Organisation   *a) not at all*, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Objectives     *a) not at all*, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

 Introduction   *a) not at all*, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Lack of planning time a) not at all, *b) little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Availability/unavailability of resources     *a) not at all*, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Parental concerns   a) not at all, *b) little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

3 Does your class size effect your interpretation of the curriculum  *a) not at all*, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

4 Do your personal philosophical beliefs effect your interpretation of the curriculum a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, *d) a lot*, e) major impact

5 Have you found the curriculum motivating
a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

6 Has the curriculum affected your good will?
*a) not at all*, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

7 Do you find the curriculum difficult to implement?
*a) not at all*, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

8 Are you aware that the curriculum proposes changes regarding the teacher's position from 'sage on the stage to guide on the side'?
*Yes* / No / sounds familiar

9 Do you know why the curriculum has been revised?
*Yes* / No / I'm not fully sure

10 Do you think the curriculum needed revision?
Yes / *No* / In certain areas

11 Were you involved in the compilation of the curriculum?  Yes/*No*   If so, how?

Did your involvement change any views or preconceived ideas about the curriculum?

12 Do you consider the Revised Curriculum extra work?
*Yes* / No

13 Do you believe the curriculum provides you with <u>more</u> or <u>less</u> freedom in your work to plan and implement?
*More* / Less

14 Which curriculum do you prefer?
*The Revised Curriculum* / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum

15 Which curriculum do you find easiest to plan and implement?
The Revised Curriculum / *1971 Curriculum* / pre-1971 Curriculum

**Section 4**

In-Service Training

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Did you find in-service useful?  *Yes*/No/A little
How so?  *Upgrading of skills/ exchange of views*

2 How is in-service best explored?   Please tick
Through facilitated cluster groupings
Facilitated in-house visits
Unfacilitated school-based days                          √
Other

3 Is a sufficient amount of time spent at in-service training for each subject area?
Yes / *No*

4 Is a sufficient amount of time spent on planning during in-service training?
Yes / No / Usually / *Usually not*

5 How do you feel after in-service training?
Crystal-clear, confused, no better off, *some improvement.*

6 Do you feel you have sufficient support for planning when in-service is over?
*Yes* / No.

7 Have you ever sought help with curriculum planning from any of the following (please circle) - *the local education centre,* e mails, *cigire,* principal, *other teachers, PCSP facilitators?*

8 Do you enjoy social meetings with other teachers, in own school and/or clusters?
*Yes* / No / Usually

9 Do you feel you reach understanding and solve problems at social meetings such as in-service? *Yes* / No / Sometimes

10 Could in-service be improved upon?
Yes / *No*
If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

11 Did any facilitator ever explain the overall background of the curriculum to your group?
Yes / *No*

12 Do you think that the reduced level of in-service training for the academic year 2003/2004 was sufficient?
Yes / *No*

13 Do you find the Revised Curriculum in any way insulting to your experience?
Yes / *No*
Please explain.
    I don't regard myself an expert of every curricular aspect. Many thoughts and
                            experiences went into revised curriculum.

14 Have you received any templates or scheme structures to help with your planning?
*Yes* / No
If so, were these templates/structures from your in-service co-ordinators or other sources? List other sources.

_____

15 Have you taken any steps to change aspects of the curriculum which you do not agree with, in the classroom or at meetings, with staff, contacting the Dept. Of Ed etc?
*Yes* / No

**Section 5**

Classes and Methodologies

1 How many classes do you teach?
*4*

2 Have you planned for multi-grade classes using the Revised Curriculum?
*Yes* / No
Was it easy?   *Yes* / No / Initially no, but it got easier/ Initially yes, but got more difficult

3 Would you like more help in curricular planning, ie – templates, experts, planning time etc
*Yes* / No

4 Can you name the full title of SESE and SPHE?  Please write the full titles without checking your curriculum documents!
SESE *(No answer given)*
SPHE *(No answer given)*

5 Can you identify any of the methodologies advocated by the curriculum?  If no, proceed to question six.

_____

- ❏   Have you used them? *Yes*

- ❏   Did they work? *Yes*

- ❏   What happened? *Satisfactory*

- ❏   Would you use them again?

  ***Probably, I would  try them out, get them to work?***

6 Can you identify any of the methodologies of the 1971 curriculum?
*Yes* / No

7 Can you compare the differences between the 1971 and 1999 curriculum methodologies?
*Yes* / No

8 Do you have a preferred methodology?  Please explain what it is and why you prefer it.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Have you read the introduction to the curriculum?  Please be honest!!

*Yes* / No

## Section 6

Newly Qualified Teachers *(Not applicable)*

## Section 7

Parents and your school

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do the parents in your school know there has been a revision in the curriculum?
*Yes* / No / Most do / Most don't

2 Do these parents understand why changes have come about?
Yes / *No*

3 In your experience, have you encountered parents who can identify changes eminent in the curriculum?
*Yes* / No

4 In your experience, have parental misgivings of the curriculum interfered in any way with your implementation or planned implementation of the curriculum (eg no scheme readers for formal reading instruction in junior infants)
*Not at all* / Yes certainly / Occasionally there is interference

5 Have you ever seen the parents booklet issued by the PCSP, Department of Education?
*Yes* / No

6 Have you ever read the booklet? Be honest!
*Yes* / No

7 Do you believe an expert in curricular change, in conjunction with your school/staff, should address the parents as a body to inform them of the changes - subjects, organisation, time, methodology, homework and philosophy?
Yes / *No*

8 In your opinion should this person come from within staff or from the Department of Education ie inspector?
Yes / No        *N/A*

## Section 8

The Introduction of the Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you agree with the means by which the curriculum was introduced?
Yes / *No*

2 Do you believe this introduction could have been improved?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?
Slower – more time to introduce and assimilate.

3 Were the philosophical changes of the curriculum and it's methodologies ever explained by the inspector, facilitators or cuidetheoirs?
*Yes* / No / Not entirely / Not sure

4 Choose three words to describe the curriculum from the list below, be honest!! - *interesting*, motivating, repetitive, attractive, appealing, *organised*, cramped, confusing, *worth-while*, boring, *too much*, excessive, positive, negative, threatening, worrying, foolish, wise, incorrect, regressive.

5 Do the children you teach enjoy the subjects in the Revised Curriculum?
Yes / No      *Yes, but it has to be learned whether children like it or not*

6 When you are teaching aspects of the curriculum using the revised curriculum methodologies, such as co-operative, collaborative group work, do your children learn the process or thinking skills?
*Yes* / No

7 Do the children misbehave during group-work, do they get giddy?
Yes / *No* / Sometimes

8 Have you employed a revised curriculum methodology that despite initial giddiness, worked well by the end of the lesson or through practice?
Yes/No

9 Do you believe the children you teach consider 'book-based', product-based learning as real work and more valuable than process-based learning?
*Yes* / No

10 Which curriculum would you prefer to teach your own children? (Please tick)
The Revised Curriculum
The 1971 Curriculum      *Very similar*

11 Please list the following in order of importance where 1 is most important and 6 is least important.
- ❑ Process skills – thinking skills,      2
- ❑ Product skills – finished product,      4
- ❑ Delivery,      6
- ❑ Problem-posing,      1
- ❑ Group-work,      5
- ❑ Individual work.      3

12 Please list any changes you would consider beneficial in the curriculum –
Planning

introduction
_____

in-service
_____

organisation
_____

subjects
_____

strands
_____

strand-units
_____

parental attitudes
_____

Inspectorate
_____

reports
_____

other
_____

---

**Section 9**

The following questions are related to philosophical ideas only and are personal.
They do not have to be completed but please complete them if you do not find them
intrusive. Thank-you.

1 Roughly how many countries have you been to? Please circle the correct option.
1-3
4-6
7-9
*10+*

2 What engine size is your car?
***Don't know***

3 Do you support any of the following political parties, please circle the relevant party
Fianna Fáil,    Fine Gael,    The Labour Party,    The Green Party,    The Progressive
Democrats,    Sin Féin.

4 How do you feel after completing this questionnaire?    (Besides tired!)

A sincere thank-you for your time and patience in helping me with my research,

Evanna McCormack

**Appendix 1.6**

**Teachers and the Revised Curriculum**

# A questionnaire

**Section One**

About You

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Are you a principal, a deputy principal, a post holder, a mainstream teacher, a resource teacher, a learning support teacher, other *resource teacher* (please state)

2 How many mainstream teachers are in your school? *15*

3 Are you male/*female*?

4 Which age group are you in? 19-29, 30-39, *40-49*, 50-59, 59-65.

5 In what county do you teach? *Donegal*

6 Do you have a B.Ed, *degree post-grad*, NT, other (please state)   _____

7 Do you hold any additional qualifications - Masters Degree, PhD, Diploma or certificate independent of your initial education qualification (B.Ed/NT/H. Dip Ed)
Yes/*No*

8 Why did you pursue this qualification?
  • To further your education          *N/A*
  • Monetary rewards               *N/A*
  • Interest in the subject or
    to broaden your knowledge base    *N/A*
  • Alternative qualification to education   *N/A*

9 Are you currently studying to attain further qualifications related or not related to education?
*Yes*/No

10 Why do you pursue this qualification?
  • To further your education                    *Yes*/No/Partly why
  • Monetary rewards                         Yes/*No*/Partly why
  • Interest in the subject or knowledge
    with a view to pursuing an alternative career    Yes/*No*/Partly why
  • Alternative qualification to education          Yes/*No*/Partly why

11 In what college did you train? Carysfort TC

**Section 2**

In your opinion...

1 What is education?
*Preparation for life, to participate in all aspects of life.*

2 Who does a child's education involve?
*Parents, peers, school.*

3 What skills does a child learn at school, as opposed to at home? Concentration, attentiveness, reading, numeracy, initiative, independence.

4 How do teachers teach?
 ***With patience, perseverance and good humour.***

5 What is the best way to teach?
*Patiently.*

6 In your opinion, which methodologies and organisational approaches work best? List your methodology preferences from most effective to least effective, eg delivery, modelling, rote learning etc
*Delivery.*

7 Who educates the child?
*Parents, teachers, peers siblings.*

8 Who is educated at school?
*Student and teacher.*

9 How do children learn?
Through language, imitation.

10 Order the following 1-6 according to their impact on a child's learning –
Rote learning          6
drill learning          5
language                3
interest                  1
context                  2
subject matter       4

Please circle the option which applies to you.

11 Can a child learn something that would be considered quite difficult for their age/ability if it is explained in a different way? *Yes* / No / *Usually*

12 Can children learn something out of context with suitable language, ie volcanoes, Egyptian mummies? *Yes* / No

13 Can children grasp complex situations if they believe they can? *Yes* / No

14 Why do children learn?
*Curiosity.*

15 Circle the factors which you consider to have an effect on children's learning.

| | |
|---|---|
| Learning is required in school, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Interest in acquiring new knowledge, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Willingness to please, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Competition within the class or schools or clusters, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Rewards gained from teacher, | Big/ Medium/ *Small* |
| Rewards gained from home, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Fear of failure, | Big/ Medium/ *Small* |
| Other (please state) | |
| _____ | Big/ Medium/ Smalls |

16 Why do you teach? Circle as many of the following as apply to you. Be honest!

| | |
|---|---|
| Summer holidays | Yes / *No* / A big incentive |
| Short working day | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Change the lives of those I encounter | Yes / *No* / A big incentive |
| Love children | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Respect associated with my profession | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Deliver my wisdom | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Help others | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Interest in profession since youth | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Other | Yes / No / A big incentive |

17 Do you teach what you consider important even though it may be outside the curriculum? Yes / No / *Sometimes*

18 Why are you the authority in your classroom or learning situation? Please tick options which apply to you.
I am teacher                                    √
I am most knowledgeable
I earn it over time
I have earned it in training college
I have earned it over years of experience
None of the above, please comment

19 Who is in authority in your school? Please circle authorative figures from the list below.
*Cigire, Principal*, Deputy-Principal, Post-holders, Senior Staff, Junior Staff, Senior Class Teachers, Junior Class Teachers, Vocal Teachers, a particular teacher.

**Section 3**

The Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you like the revised curriculum of 1999?
a) I like it, b) I don't like it, *c) I didn't like it initially but I am growing to like it,* d) I liked it initially but find it becoming increasingly difficult to use.

2 How have the following affected and impacted on your opinion of the revised Curriculum of 1999?

Methodologies a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, *d) a lot,* e) major impact

Organisation   a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat,* d) a lot, e) major impact

Objectives     a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat,* d) a lot, e) major impact

 Introduction    *a) not at all,* b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Lack of planning time a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, *d) a lot,* e) major impact

Availability/unavailability of resources        a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, *d) a lot,* e) major impact

Parental concerns   *a) not at all,* b) little, c) somewhat, *d) a lot,* e) major impact

3 Does your class size effect your interpretation of the curriculum *a) not at all,* b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

4 Do your personal philosophical beliefs effect your interpretation of the curriculum a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat,* d) a lot, e) major impact

5 Have you found the curriculum motivating
*a) not at all,* b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

6 Has the curriculum affected your good will?
a) not at all, *b) little,* c) somewhat, d) a lot, *e) major impact*

7 Do you find the curriculum difficult to implement?
a) not at all, *b) little,* c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

8 Are you aware that the curriculum proposes changes regarding the teacher's position from 'sage on the stage to guide on the side'?
*Yes* / No / sounds familiar

9 Do you know why the curriculum has been revised?
*Yes* / No / I'm not fully sure

10 Do you think the curriculum needed revision?
Yes / No / *In certain areas*


11 Were you involved in the compilation of the curriculum? Yes/*No*   If so, how?

Did your involvement change any views or preconceived ideas about the curriculum?


12 Do you consider the Revised Curriculum extra work?
*Yes* / No


13 Do you believe the curriculum provides you with <u>more</u> or <u>less</u> freedom in your work to plan and implement?
*More* / Less


14 Which curriculum do you prefer?
*The Revised Curriculum* / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum


15 Which curriculum do you find easiest to plan and implement?
*The Revised Curriculum* / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum


**Section 4**

In-Service Training

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Did you find in-service useful?  Yes/No/*A little*
How so? *Some good, some bad lecturers.*

2 How is in-service best explored?   Please tick
Through facilitated cluster groupings              √
Facilitated in-house visits                              √
Unfacilitated school-based days
Other

3 Is a sufficient amount of time spent at in-service training for each subject area?
Yes / *No*

4 Is a sufficient amount of time spent on planning during in-service training?
*Yes* / No / Usually / Usually not

5 How do you feel after in-service training?
Crystal-clear, confused, no better off, *some improvement.*

6 Do you feel you have sufficient support for planning when in-service is over?
*Yes* / No.

7 Have you ever sought help with curriculum planning from any of the following (please circle) - the local education centre, e mails, cigire, principal, other teachers, PCSP facilitators? *No*

8 Do you enjoy social meetings with other teachers, in own school and/or clusters? *Yes* / No / Usually

9 Do you feel you reach understanding and solve problems at social meetings such as in-service? *Yes* / No / Sometimes

10 Could in-service be improved upon?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?
*More of it; more explanations and guidance*

11 Did any facilitator ever explain the overall background of the curriculum to your group?
*Yes* / No

12 Do you think that the reduced level of in-service training for the academic year 2003/2004 was sufficient?
Yes / *No*

13 Do you find the Revised Curriculum in any way insulting to your experience?
Yes / *No*
Please explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

14 Have you received any templates or scheme structures to help with your planning?
*Yes* / No
If so, were these templates/structures from your in-service co-ordinators or other sources?  List other sources.

_____

15 Have you taken any steps to change aspects of the curriculum which you do not agree with, in the classroom or at meetings, with staff, contacting the Dept. Of Ed etc?
*Yes* / No

**Section 5**

Classes and Methodologies

1 How many classes do you teach? *1*

2 Have you planned for multi-grade classes using the Revised Curriculum?
*Yes* / No

Was it easy? Yes / No / *Initially no, but it got easier*/ Initially yes, but got more difficult

3 Would you like more help in curricular planning, ie – templates, experts, planning time etc
*Yes* / No

4 Can you name the full title of SESE and SPHE? Please write the full titles without checking your curriculum documents!
SESE *Social, Environmental and Scientific Education*
SPHE *Social, Physical and Health Education*

5 Can you identify any of the methodologies advocated by the curriculum? If no, proceed to question six.

---

❑ Have you used them?
*Yes*

❑ Did they work?
***Mostly***

❑ What happened?
***Much organisation needed***

❑ Would you use them again?
***Yes***

6 Can you identify any of the methodologies of the 1971 curriculum?
*Yes* / No

7 Can you compare the differences between the 1971 and 1999 curriculum methodologies?
*Yes* / No

8 Do you have a preferred methodology? Please explain what it is and why you prefer it.
*Don't have a preference.*

Have you read the introduction to the curriculum? Please be honest!!
*Yes* / No

**Section 6**

Newly Qualified Teachers *(Not applicable)*

**Section 7**

Parents and your school

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do the parents in your school know there has been a revision in the curriculum?
*Yes* / No / Most do / Most don't

2 Do these parents understand why changes have come about?
*Yes* / No

3 In your experience, have you encountered parents who can identify changes eminent in the curriculum?
Yes / *No*

4 In your experience, have parental misgivings of the curriculum interfered in any way with your implementation or planned implementation of the curriculum (eg no scheme readers for formal reading instruction in junior infants)
*Not at all* / Yes certainly / Occasionally there is interference

5 Have you ever seen the parents booklet issued by the PCSP, Department of Education?
*Yes* / No

6 Have you ever read the booklet? Be honest!
*Yes* / No

7 Do you believe an expert in curricular change, in conjunction with your school/staff, should address the parents as a body to inform them of the changes - subjects, organisation, time, methodology, homework and philosophy?
Yes / *No*

8 In your opinion should this person come from within staff or from the Department of Education ie inspector?
*Yes* / No

**Section 8**

The Introduction of the Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you agree with the means by which the curriculum was introduced?
*Yes* / No

2 Do you believe this introduction could have been improved?
Yes / *No* ·

If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

3   Were the philosophical changes of the curriculum and it's methodologies ever explained by the inspector, facilitators or cuidetheoirs?
*Yes* / No / Not entirely / Not sure

4   Choose three words to describe the curriculum from the list below, be honest!! - *interesting, motivating*, repetitive, attractive, *appealing, organised*, cramped, confusing, worth-while, boring, too much, excessive, positive, negative, threatening, worrying, foolish, wise, incorrect, regressive.

5 Do the children you teach enjoy the subjects in the Revised Curriculum?
*Yes* / No

6 When you are teaching aspects of the curriculum using the revised curriculum methodologies, such as co-operative, collaborative group work, do your children learn the process or thinking skills?
*Yes* / No

7 Do the children misbehave during group-work, do they get giddy?
Yes / No / *Sometimes*

8 Have you employed a revised curriculum methodology that despite initial giddiness, worked well by the end of the lesson or through practice?
*Yes*/No

9 Do you believe the children you teach consider 'book-based', product-based learning as real work and more valuable than process-based learning?
Yes / *No*

10 Which curriculum would you prefer to teach your own children?  (Please tick)
The Revised Curriculum        √
The 1971 Curriculum

11 Please list the following in order of importance where 1 is most important and 6 is least important.
- ❑   Process skills – thinking skills,        1
- ❑   Product skills – finished product,        3
- ❑   Delivery,                6
- ❑   Problem-posing,            2
- ❑   Group-work,                4
- ❑   Individual work.                5

12 Please list any changes you would consider beneficial in the curriculum –
Planning
*Less*
introduction

|  | *More* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| in-service | *More* | | | |
| organisation | | | | |
| subjects | | | | |
| strands | | | | |
| strand-units | | | | |
| parental attitudes | | | | |
| Inspectorate | | | | |
| reports | *Less* | | | |
| other | | | | |

---

## Section 9

The following questions are related to philosophical ideas only and are personal. They do not have to be completed but please complete them if you do not find them intrusive. Thank-you.

1 Roughly how many countries have you been to?  Please circle the correct option.
1-3
4-6
7-9
*10+*

2 What engine size is your car?
*1.9 TDI*

3 Do you support any of the following political parties, please circle the relevant party
*Fianna Fáil*,   Fine Gael,   The Labour Party,   The Green Party,   The Progressive Democrats,   Sin Féin.

4 How do you feel after completing this questionnaire?  (Besides tired!)
*Drained – too much cerebral activity at the end of a traumatic and busy year. Bad timing!*

A sincere thank-you for your time and patience in helping me with my research,

_____

Evanna McCormack

**Appendix 1.7**

**Teachers and the Revised Curriculum**

# A questionnaire

**Section One**

About You

Please circle the option which applies to you. *(Italics denote answers given)*

1 Are you a principal, a deputy principal, a post holder, a mainstream teacher, a resource teacher, a learning support teacher, other *Learning Support* (please state)

2 How many mainstream teachers are in your school? *8*

3 Are you male/*female*?

4 Which age group are you in? 19-29, 30-39, *40-49*, 50-59, 59-65.

5 In what county do you teach?   Carlow

6 Do you have a B.Ed, degree post-grad, NT, other (please state)   *B.Ed. Post Grad Learning Support.*

7 Do you hold any additional qualifications - Masters Degree, PhD, Diploma or certificate independent of your initial education qualification (B.Ed/NT/H. Dip Ed) *Yes*/No

8 Why did you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education           Yes / No / *Somewhat*
- Monetary rewards                    Yes / *No* / Somewhat
- Interest in the subject or
  to broaden your knowledge base      *Yes* / No / Somewhat
- Alternative qualification to education   Yes / *No* / Somewhat

9 Are you currently studying to attain further qualifications related or not related to education?
Yes/*No*

10 Why do you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education           *N/A*
- Monetary rewards                    *N/A*
- Interest in the subject or knowledge
  with a view to pursuing an alternative career   *N/A*
- Alternative qualification to education   *N/A*

11 In what college did you train? *Carysfort*

**Section 2**

In your opinion...

1 What is education?
*Education is the means used to bring out the best in the person.*

2 Who does a child's education involve?
**Teacher, Parents, Peers.**

3 What skills does a child learn at school, as opposed to at home?
*Socialise, take its place in the world, value opinions of others.*

4 How do teachers teach?
*The way they've been thought themselves.*

5 What is the best way to teach?
*With your heart.*

6 In your opinion, which methodologies and organisational approaches work best? List your methodology preferences from most effective to least effective, eg delivery, modelling, rote learning etc
*(No answer given.)*

7 Who educates the child?
*Other pupils, teacher, parent*

8 Who is educated at school? *Pupil and teacher*

9 How do children learn?
**By example – parent/teacher**

*By being taught - teacher*

10 Order the following 1-6 according to their impact on a child's learning –
| | |
|---|---|
| Rote learning | 5 |
| drill learning | 4 |
| language | 3 |
| interest | 1 |
| context | 6 |
| subject matter | 2 |

Please circle the option which applies to you.

11 Can a child learn something that would be considered quite difficult for their age/ability if it is explained in a different way? *Yes* / No / Usually

12 Can children learn something out of context with suitable language, ie volcanoes, Egyptian mummies? *Yes* / No

13 Can children grasp complex situations if they believe they can? *Yes* / No

14 Why do children learn?
*No answer given.*

15 Circle the factors which you consider to have an effect on children's learning.

| | |
|---|---|
| Learning is required in school, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Interest in acquiring new knowledge, | Big/ Medium/ *Small* |
| Willingness to please, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Competition within the class or schools or clusters, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Rewards gained from teacher, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Rewards gained from home, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Fear of failure, | Big/ Medium/ *Small* |
| Other (please state) | |
| _____ | Big/ Medium/ Smalls |

16 Why do you teach? Circle as many of the following as apply to you. Be honest!

| | |
|---|---|
| Summer holidays | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Short working day | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Change the lives of those I encounter | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Love children | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Respect associated with my profession | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Deliver my wisdom | Yes / *No* / A big incentive |
| Help others | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Interest in profession since youth | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Other | Yes / No / A big incentive |

17 Do you teach what you consider important even though it may be outside the curriculum? Yes / *No* / Sometimes

18 Why are you the authority in your classroom or learning situation? Please tick options which apply to you.

| | |
|---|---|
| I am teacher | |
| I am most knowledgeable | √ |
| I earn it over time | |
| I have earned it in training college | |
| I have earned it over years of experience | √ |
| None of the above, please comment | |

19 Who is in authority in your school? Please circle authorative figures from the list below.
Cigire, *Principal*, Deputy-Principal, *Post-holders*, Senior Staff, Junior Staff, Senior Class Teachers, Junior Class Teachers, Vocal Teachers, a particular teacher.

**Section 3**

**The Revised Curriculum**

*This section is not relevant to me in Learning Support.*

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you like the revised curriculum of 1999?
a) I like it, b) I don't like it, c) I didn't like it initially but I am growing to like it, d) I liked it initially but find it becoming increasingly difficult to use.

2 How have the following affected and impacted on your opinion of the revised Curriculum of 1999?

Methodologies a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Organisation   a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Objectives     a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

 Introduction   a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Lack of planning time a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Availability/unavailability of resources     a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Parental concerns   a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

3 Does your class size effect your interpretation of the curriculum  a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

4 Do your personal philosophical beliefs effect your interpretation of the curriculum
a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

5 Have you found the curriculum motivating
a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

6 Has the curriculum affected your good will?
a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

7 Do you find the curriculum difficult to implement?
a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

8 Are you aware that the curriculum proposes changes regarding the
teacher's position from 'sage on the stage to guide on the side'?
Yes / No / sounds familiar

9 Do you know why the curriculum has been revised?
Yes / No / I'm not fully sure

10 Do you think the curriculum needed revision?
Yes / No / In certain areas


11 Were you involved in the compilation of the curriculum? Yes/No  If so, how?
_____
Did your involvement change any views or preconceived ideas about the curriculum?
_____


12 Do you consider the Revised Curriculum extra work?
Yes / No


13 Do you believe the curriculum provides you with <u>more</u> or <u>less</u> freedom in your work to plan and implement?
More / Less


14 Which curriculum do you prefer?
The Revised Curriculum / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum


15 Which curriculum do you find easiest to plan and implement?
The Revised Curriculum / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum


**Section 4**

In-Service Training

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Did you find in-service useful? *Yes*/No/A little
How so? _____

2 How is in-service best explored?   Please tick
Through facilitated cluster groupings
Facilitated in-house visits
Unfacilitated school-based days                          √
Other

3 Is a sufficient amount of time spent at in-service training for each subject area?
*Yes* / No

4 Is a sufficient amount of time spent on planning during in-service training?
*Yes* / No / Usually / Usually not

5 How do you feel after in-service training?
Crystal-clear, confused, no better off, *some improvement.*

6 Do you feel you have sufficient support for planning when in-service is over?
*Yes* / No.

7 Have you ever sought help with curriculum planning from any of the following (please circle) - the local education centre, e mails, cigire, principal, other teachers, PCSP facilitators? *No*

8 Do you enjoy social meetings with other teachers, in own school and/or clusters? *Yes* / No / Usually

9 Do you feel you reach understanding and solve problems at social meetings such as in-service? Yes / No / *Sometimes*

10 Could in-service be improved upon?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?
*(No answer given)*

11 Did any facilitator ever explain the overall background of the curriculum to your group?
Yes / *No*

12 Do you think that the reduced level of in-service training for the academic year 2003/2004 was sufficient?
Yes / *No*

13 Do you find the Revised Curriculum in any way insulting to your experience?
Yes / *No*
Please explain.
*(No answer given)*

14 Have you received any templates or scheme structures to help with your planning?
*Yes* / No
If so, were these templates/structures from your in-service co-ordinators or other sources? List other sources.
*No answer given*

15 Have you taken any steps to change aspects of the curriculum which you do not agree with, in the classroom or at meetings, with staff, contacting the Dept. Of Ed etc?
Yes / *No*

Section 5 – *Not relavent – learning support.*


**Section 6**

**Newly Qualified Teachers -** *N/A*

**Section 7**

Parents and your school

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do the parents in your school know there has been a revision in the curriculum?
*Yes* / No / Most do / Most don't

2 Do these parents understand why changes have come about?
*Yes* / No

3 In your experience, have you encountered parents who can identify changes eminent in the curriculum?
Yes / No   *No answer given*

4 In your experience, have parental misgivings of the curriculum interfered in any way with your implementation or planned implementation of the curriculum (eg no scheme readers for formal reading instruction in junior infants)
*Not at all* / Yes certainly / Occasionally there is interference

5 Have you ever seen the parents booklet issued by the PCSP, Department of Education?
*Yes* / No

6 Have you ever read the booklet?  Be honest!
*Yes* / No

7 Do you believe an expert in curricular change, in conjunction with your school/staff, should address the parents as a body to inform them of the changes - subjects, organisation, time, methodology, homework and philosophy?
Yes / No      *No answer given*

8 In your opinion should this person come from within staff or from the Department of Education ie inspector?
Yes / No      *No answer given*

**Section 8**

The Introduction of the Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you agree with the means by which the curriculum was introduced?
*Yes* / No

2 Do you believe this introduction could have been improved?
Yes / *No*

If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

3 Were the philosophical changes of the curriculum and it's methodologies ever explained by the inspector, facilitators or cuidetheoirs?
Yes / No / Not entirely / Not sure     *No answer given*

4 Choose three words to describe the curriculum from the list below, be honest!! - *interesting*, motivating, repetitive, *attractive*, appealing, organised, cramped, confusing, worth-while, boring, *too much*, excessive, positive, negative, threatening, worrying, foolish, wise, incorrect, regressive.

5 Do the children you teach enjoy the subjects in the Revised Curriculum?
Yes / No     *No answer given*

6 When you are teaching aspects of the curriculum using the revised curriculum methodologies, such as co-operative, collaborative group work, do your children learn the process or thinking skills?
Yes / No     *No answer given*

7 Do the children misbehave during group-work, do they get giddy?
Yes / No / Sometimes     *No answer given*

8 Have you employed a revised curriculum methodology that despite initial giddiness, worked well by the end of the lesson or through practice?
Yes/No     *No answer given*

9 Do you believe the children you teach consider 'book-based', product-based learning as real work and more valuable than process-based learning?
Yes / No     *No answer given*

10 Which curriculum would you prefer to teach your own children? (Please tick)
The Revised Curriculum          _____
The 1971 Curriculum          _____     *No answer given*

11 Please list the following in order of importance where 1 is most important and 6 is least important.
- ❑ Process skills – thinking skills,
- ❑ Product skills – finished product,
- ❑ Delivery,
- ❑ Problem-posing,
- ❑ Group-work,
- ❑ Individual work.          *No answer given*

12 Please list any changes you would consider beneficial in the curriculum –
Planning

introduction
_____

in-service
_____

organisation
_____

subjects
_____

strands
_____

strand-units
_____

parental attitudes
_____

Inspectorate
_____

reports
_____

other
_____
_____


## Section 9

The following questions are related to philosophical ideas only and are personal. They do not have to be completed but please complete them if you do not find them intrusive. Thank-you.

1 Roughly how many countries have you been to? Please circle the correct option.
1-3
*4-6*
7-9
10+

2 What engine size is your car? *Don't know! Will find out*

3 Do you support any of the following political parties, please circle the relevant party Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, The Labour Party, The Green Party, The Progressive Democrats, Sinn Féin. *No answer given*

4 How do you feel after completing this questionnaire? (Besides tired!)
*My contribution is small because the new curriculum does not really affect me in my role of learning support. Sorry!*


A sincere thank-you for your time and patience in helping me with my research,


_____
Evanna McCormack

**Appendix 1.8**

**Teachers and the Revised Curriculum**

# A questionnaire

**Section One**

About You

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Are you a principal, a deputy principal, a post holder, a mainstream teacher, a resource teacher, a learning support teacher, other
*Mainstream post-holder* (please state)

2 How many mainstream teachers are in your school? *12*

3 Are you male/*female*?

4 Which age group are you in?  19-29, 30-39, 40-49, *50-59*, 59-65.

5 In what county do you teach?  *Mayo*

6 Do you have a B.Ed, degree post-grad, NT, other (please state)  *N.T*

7 Do you hold any additional qualifications - Masters Degree, PhD, Diploma or certificate independent of your initial education qualification (B.Ed/NT/H. Dip Ed)
Yes/*No*

8 Why did you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education             *N/A*
- Monetary rewards                      *N/A*
- Interest in the subject or
  to broaden your knowledge base        *N/A*
- Alternative qualification to education   *N/A*

9 Are you currently studying to attain further qualifications related or not related to education?
Yes/*No*

10 Why do you pursue this qualification?
- To further your education             *N/A*
- Monetary rewards                      *N/A*
- Interest in the subject or knowledge
  with a view to pursuing an alternative career   *N/A*

- Alternative qualification to education          *N/A*

11 In what college did you train? *Carysfort*

**Section 2**

In your opinion...

1 What is education?
*Developing and nurturing child's talents, preparing them for life*

2 Who does a child's education involve?
**Teachers and parents**

3 What skills does a child learn at school, as opposed to at home?
**The three Rs**

4 How do teachers teach?
**Often the way they were taught themselves added to their own experience**

5 What is the best way to teach?
**All teachers teach differently, it depends on the teacher or the children.**

6 In your opinion, which methodologies and organisational approaches work best? List your methodology preferences from most effective to least effective, eg delivery, modelling, rote learning etc
**Modelling, rote learning**

7 Who educates the child?
*Teacher, parents*

8 Who is educated at school?
*Children and teachers*

9 How do children learn?
**By being involved and practice**

10 Order the following 1-6 according to their impact on a child's learning –
Rote learning          4
drill learning          5
language               1
interest               3
context                6
subject matter          2

Please circle the option which applies to you.

11 Can a child learn something that would be considered quite difficult for their age/ability if it is explained in a different way? *Yes* / No / Usually

12 Can children learn something out of context with suitable language, ie volcanoes, Egyptian mummies? *Yes* / No

13 Can children grasp complex situations if they believe they can? *Yes* / No

14 Why do children learn?
    *To get a good head start in life*

15 Circle the factors which you consider to have an effect on children's learning.

| | |
|---|---|
| Learning is required in school, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Interest in acquiring new knowledge, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Willingness to please, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Competition within the class or schools or clusters, | *Big*/ Medium/ Small |
| Rewards gained from teacher, | Big/ *Medium*/ Small |
| Rewards gained from home, | Big/ Medium/ *Small* |
| Fear of failure, | Big/ Medium/ *Small* |
| Other (please state) | |
| _____ | Big/ Medium/ Smalls |

16 Why do you teach? Circle as many of the following as apply to you. Be honest!

| | |
|---|---|
| Summer holidays | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Short working day | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Change the lives of those I encounter | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Love children | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Respect associated with my profession | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Deliver my wisdom | Yes / No / *A big incentive* |
| Help others | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Interest in profession since youth | *Yes* / No / A big incentive |
| Other | Yes / No / A big incentive |

17 Do you teach what you consider important even though it may be outside the curriculum? Yes / *No* / Sometimes

18 Why are you the authority in your classroom or learning situation? Please tick options which apply to you.

| | |
|---|---|
| I am teacher | |
| I am most knowledgeable | |
| I earn it over time | √ |
| I have earned it in training college | |
| I have earned it over years of experience | √ |
| None of the above, please comment | |

19 Who is in authority in your school? Please circle authorative figures from the list below.
Cigire, *Principal*, Deputy-Principal, Post-holders, Senior Staff, Junior Staff, Senior Class Teachers, Junior Class Teachers, Vocal Teachers, a particular teacher.

**Section 3**

The Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you like the revised curriculum of 1999?
a) I like it, b) I don't like it, c) I didn't like it initially but I am growing to like it, d) I liked it initially but find it becoming increasingly difficult to use.
- *I like it but there's so much to cover*
2 How have the following affected and impacted on your opinion of the revised Curriculum of 1999?

Methodologies a) not at all, b) *little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Organisation   a) not at all, b) *little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Objectives      a) not at all, b) *little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

 Introduction    a) not at all, b) *little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

Lack of planning time a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, d) *a lot*, e) major impact

Availability/unavailability of resources        a) not at all, b) little, c) *somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

Parental concerns   *a) not at all*, b) little, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

3 Does your class size effect your interpretation of the curriculum  a)  not  at  all,  b) little, *c) somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

4 Do your personal philosophical beliefs effect your interpretation of the curriculum a) not at all, b) little, c) somewhat, *d) a lot*, e) major impact

5 Have you found the curriculum motivating
a) not at all, *b) little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

6 Has the curriculum affected your good will?
a) not at all, *b) little*, c) somewhat, d) a lot, e) major impact

7 Do you find the curriculum difficult to implement?
a) not at all, b) little, *c) somewhat*, d) a lot, e) major impact

8 Are you aware that the curriculum proposes changes regarding the

teacher's position from 'sage on the stage to guide on the side'?
Yes / No / *sounds familiar*

9 Do you know why the curriculum has been revised?
*Yes* / No / I'm not fully sure

10 Do you think the curriculum needed revision?
Yes / No / *In certain areas*


11 Were you involved in the compilation of the curriculum? Yes/*No*   If so, how?
_____
Did your involvement change any views or preconceived ideas about the curriculum?
_____

12 Do you consider the Revised Curriculum extra work?
*Yes* / No

13 Do you believe the curriculum provides you with more or less freedom in your work to plan and implement?
*More* / Less

14 Which curriculum do you prefer?
*The Revised Curriculum* / 1971 Curriculum / pre-1971 Curriculum

15 Which curriculum do you find easiest to plan and implement?
The Revised Curriculum / *1971 Curriculum* / pre-1971 Curriculum


**Section 4**

In-Service Training

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Did you find in-service useful? *Yes*/No/A little
How so? *No answer given*

2 How is in-service best explored?   Please tick
Through facilitated cluster groupings
Facilitated in-house visits                               √
Unfacilitated school-based days
Other

3 Is a sufficient amount of time spent at in-service training for each subject area?
Yes / *No*

4 Is a sufficient amount of time spent on planning during in-service training?
Yes / No / Usually / *Usually not*

5 How do you feel after in-service training?
Crystal-clear, confused, no better off, *some improvement.*

6 Do you feel you have sufficient support for planning when in-service is over?
*Yes* / No.

7 Have you ever sought help with curriculum planning from any of the following (please circle) - the local education centre, e mails, cigire, principal, other teachers, PCSP facilitators?    *No*

8 Do you enjoy social meetings with other teachers, in own school and/or clusters?
*Yes* / No / Usually

9 Do you feel you reach understanding and solve problems at social meetings such as in-service? Yes / No / *Sometimes*

10 Could in-service be improved upon?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?
**More discussion time**

11 Did any facilitator ever explain the overall background of the curriculum to your group?
Yes / *No*

12 Do you think that the reduced level of in-service training for the academic year 2003/2004 was sufficient?
Yes / *No*

13 Do you find the Revised Curriculum in any way insulting to your experience?
Yes / *No*
Please explain.

_____

_____
_____
_____

14 Have you received any templates or scheme structures to help with your planning?
*Yes* / No
If so, were these templates/structures from your in-service co-ordinators or other sources?  List other sources.
*Principal*

15 Have you taken any steps to change aspects of the curriculum which you do not agree with, in the classroom or at meetings, with staff, contacting the Dept. Of Ed etc?
Yes / *No*

**Section 5**

Classes and Methodologies

1 How many classes do you teach?
*1*

2 Have you planned for multi-grade classes using the Revised Curriculum?
Yes / *No*
Was it easy?   Yes / No / Initially no, but it got easier/ Initially yes, but got more difficult *N/A*

3 Would you like more help in curricular planning, ie – templates, experts, planning time etc
*Yes* / No

4 Can you name the full title of SESE and SPHE?  Please write the full titles without checking your curriculum documents!
SESE *Social, Environmental and Scientific Education*
SPHE_____

5 Can you identify any of the methodologies advocated by the curriculum?  If no, proceed to question six.
   ***No answer given***

   ❑   Have you used them?
   ***Yes, Activity pack and new text books***

   ❑   Did they work?
   ***To a limited extent, there's too much in there***

   ❑   What happened?
Certain chapters seem pointless, not concrete enough, what's the point of doing it, there's nothing to be gained from it?

   ❑   Would you use them again?
   Preferably not, the text-books were rushed through. It was difficult trying to get

everything covered.

6 Can you identify any of the methodologies of the 1971 curriculum?
*Yes* / No

7 Can you compare the differences between the 1971 and 1999 curriculum methodologies?
*Yes* / No

8 Do you have a preferred methodology?  Please explain what it is and why you prefer it.
*No answer given*

Have you read the introduction to the curriculum?  Please be honest!!
*Yes* / No

**Section 6**

Newly Qualified Teachers – *N/A*

**Section 7**

Parents and your school

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do the parents in your school know there has been a revision in the curriculum?
Yes / No / *Most do* / Most don't

2 Do these parents understand why changes have come about?
*Yes* / No

3 In your experience, have you encountered parents who can identify changes eminent in the curriculum?
Yes / *No*

4 In your experience, have parental misgivings of the curriculum interfered in any way with your implementation or planned implementation of the curriculum (eg no scheme readers for formal reading instruction in junior infants)
*Not at all* / Yes certainly / Occasionally there is interference

5 Have you ever seen the parents booklet issued by the PCSP, Department of Education?
*Yes* / No

6 Have you ever read the booklet? Be honest!
*Yes* / No

7 Do you believe an expert in curricular change, in conjunction with your school/staff, should address the parents as a body to inform them of the changes - subjects, organisation, time, methodology, homework and philosophy?
*Yes* / No

8 In your opinion should this person come from within staff or from the Department of Education ie inspector?
*Yes* / No

**Section 8**

The Introduction of the Revised Curriculum

Please circle the option which applies to you.

1 Do you agree with the means by which the curriculum was introduced?
*Yes* / No

2 Do you believe this introduction could have been improved?
*Yes* / No
If so, how?
*No answer given*

3 Were the philosophical changes of the curriculum and it's methodologies ever explained by the inspector, facilitators or cuidetheoirs?
Yes / *No* / Not entirely / Not sure

4 Choose three words to describe the curriculum from the list below, be honest!! - interesting, motivating, repetitive, attractive, appealing, organised, *cramped*, confusing, worth-while, boring, *too much*, excessive, *positive*, negative, threatening, worrying, foolish, wise, incorrect, regressive.

5 Do the children you teach enjoy the subjects in the Revised Curriculum?
*Yes* / No

6 When you are teaching aspects of the curriculum using the revised curriculum methodologies, such as co-operative, collaborative group work, do your children learn the process or thinking skills?
Yes / No      *No answer given*

7 Do the children misbehave during group-work, do they get giddy?
Yes / No / *Sometimes*

8 Have you employed a revised curriculum methodology that despite initial giddiness, worked well by the end of the lesson or through practice?
*Yes*/No

9 Do you believe the children you teach consider 'book-based', product-based learning as real work and more valuable than process-based learning?
*Yes* / No

10 Which curriculum would you prefer to teach your own children?  (Please tick)
The Revised Curriculum        _____
The 1971 Curriculum          _____      *Either*

11 Please list the following in order of importance where 1 is most important and 6 is least important.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ❑ | Process skills – thinking skills, | 2 |
| ❑ | Product skills – finished product, | 1 |
| ❑ | Delivery, | 6 |
| ❑ | Problem-posing, | 3 |
| ❑ | Group-work, | 5 |
| ❑ | Individual work. | 4 |

12 Please list any changes you would consider beneficial in the curriculum –

Planning

| introduction |  |
| --- | --- |

| in-service |  |
| --- | --- |

| organisation |  |
| --- | --- |

| subjects |  |
| --- | --- |

| strands |  |
| --- | --- |

| strand-units | . | . |
| --- | --- | --- |

| parental attitudes |  |
| --- | --- |

| Inspectorate |  |
| --- | --- |

| reports | . |
| --- | --- |

| other |  |
| --- | --- |

## Section 9

The following questions are related to philosophical ideas only and are personal. They do not have to be completed but please complete them if you do not find them intrusive. Thank-you.

1 Roughly how many countries have you been to? Please circle the correct option.
1-3
4-6
7-9
*10+*

2 What engine size is your car?
*1.6*

3 Do you support any of the following political parties, please circle the relevant party
Fianna Fáil,   *Fine Gael,*   The Labour Party,   The Green Party,   The Progressive Democrats,   Sin Féin.

4 How do you feel after completing this questionnaire?  (Besides tired!)
*Hope my answers were of some help to you in your research! Good luck.*

A sincere thank-you for your time and patience in helping me with my research,

_____

Evanna McCormack

**APPENDIX 2**

## Appendix 2.1

### An interview on the theme: Responsibility in Education.
### This interview was selected at random from a collection of interviews on the
### same theme.

Questions will be denoted by **Q**, and answers will be denoted by **A**.

**Q;**     Who do you think is responsible for education?

**A;**     Parents have the first responsibility for education of their children, then the
school is responsible once they come to school. It's our job to educate them.

**Q;**     Are you responsible for education in your classroom? Is there anyone else
involved?

**A;**     Yes. I am responsible but so is the principle. The whole school is responsible
for the plans and work, and each teacher is responsible for their class. The principal is
responsible for the overall picture, to make sure no one slips through the net.

**Q;**     What about the children? Are they ever responsible?

**A;**     Yes, they are responsible for their own learning, but we're responsible for
giving them what they are to learn. They wouldn't know what to learn if we didn't
tell them.

**Q;**     Do you ever give the children individual responsibilities in the classroom?

**A;**     What do you mean?

**Q;**     Do you ever share daily classroom elements of organisation with them?

**A;**     Indeed I do. They have their little jobs, the library, the paints, the nature table
and all the rest... I think it's good for them, to have the jobs. It's a good idea to rotate
them too, so they have a go at every job. Of course, though, you'll have someone in
about it. I had a parent once who came in. She said her child wasn't sent to school
for that. She was in an awful huff about it.

**Q;**     What did you do about it?

**A;**     I tried to calm her down, explain the point of it, and what does she say? she
said that she knew he'd be happier if he had the library as his job, not the sink!... So I
told her we'd be rotating and he'd get all the jobs before the end of the year.

**Q;**     Who decides what you teach and how you teach?

**A;**     I decide. Well, I decide what to teach everyday but I'm following the plan. I teach what needs to be taught. The curriculum tells us what subjects to teach. I make my plans as the year goes on, and I follow them...But I'm at this so long, I know what needs to be done. I know what I'm doing at this stage.

**Q:**     Have you ever based a lesson on what a child brings in to the class?

**A;**     Oh, often.

**Q;**     Like what?

**A;**     You know, shells, stones, photographs of their holidays, books. We discuss what they bring in, and they tell us about their thing they've brought in.

**Q;**     Do you like it when children bring in objects and you follow their questions? Instead of following the timetabled lesson?

**A;**     Yes, I do. But there's always a spate of bringing things in. I mean...they just pick something up on the way to school. Some can't even remember where they got it! You have to be careful. And there's so much to do anyway that really...there isn't time for it.

**Q;**     Do the children in your school generally like school?

**A;**     Yes, they generally do. Of course there's one or two.

**Q;**     Do they have a least favourite subject?

**A;**     Gaeilge! They hate it, it's cool not to like it. Now, there's a few who are excellent at it, and they like it quietly, but it's not cool to like it, so they don't.

**Q;**     Do you think we can do anything about that?

**A;**     The curriculum has some nice cluiche and ways of teaching it, but they still need the drill or they don't know anything after the game! Event the new books, there just isn't enough reading in there for them. What are they supposed to know if they can't read and write? They can identify names for things, but ask them to put it into a sentence and it's a different story.

**Q;**     Do you think children can take responsibility for their own learning?

**A;**     They should know that if they don't put the effort in, they won't learn. All we can do is guide them, and give them what they need to know. It's up to them to go and learn it. I mean...there are some children who still haven't found their pencil by the time the lesson is finished. They've missed everything, rooting away, and then they ask me what they're supposed to do. They haven't focused on what's happening at all. And I know there's type of people who just loose things, and all the rest, but it gets frustrating. And we just don't have time for it. There's so much to cover.

**Appendix 2.2**

**An interview on the theme: Responsibility in Education.**
**This interview was selected at random from a collection of interviews on the**
**same theme.**

Questions will be denoted by Q, and answers will be denoted by A.

**Q;**    Who do you think is responsible for education?

**A;**    Everyone. Parents, teachers, society in general...and the children themselves.

**Q;**    Are you responsible for education in your classroom?  Is there anyone else involved?

**A;**    Oh yes, I draw up my plans from the curriculum, these are tied in with the teacher who has fourth class, in case we double up over the two year course.  The policies generally guide us too.

**Q;**    Who has responsibility on a day to day basis in your classroom?

**A;**    The children and myself. I guide them through the curriculum, and they are responsible for how they engage with what's happening.  I don't rely on books only, we like to come from the thematic perspective and the children do well in that way.

**Q;**    Do you ever give the children individual responsibilities in the classroom?

**A;**    Yes, we're all responsible for our classroom together.

**Q;**    Who decides what you teach and how you teach?

**A;**    I follow the curriculum as a guide. But it's meaningless if it doesn't connect with the children.  It's a good idea to go with things that are happening now, like...that mean something in their lives.

**Q:**    Have you ever based a lesson on what a child brings in to the class?

**A;**    All the time, but I try to guide what comes in.  Like, if the theme for the week or whatever is the sea, then the shells come in.  If it's homes picture books come in of Eskimos!  But if a one off comes in, like a musical instrument from Africa came in once, that had to go home with Aunty Mary that evening, so we investigated Africa as well that week!

**Q;**    Do you like it when children bring in objects and you follow their questions? Instead of following the timetabled lesson?

A;     Yes, I do. Timetabled lessons are restrictive, it's better to go with the flow. But be careful to cover the hours recommended for each subject over the week. Like…It's easy to neglect an area if you're caught up in Division or something and it becomes Mount Everest and there's no energy left for other things.  Strike the balance!

Q;     Do the children in your school generally like school?

A;     Generally – there's always the one or two, of course.

Q;     Do they have a least favourite subject?

A;     They don't seem to.  Certain children like certain subjects, others aren't so impressed with them!

Q;     Do you think we can do anything about that?

A;     In fairness, we bend over backways to get children to enjoy learning.  It's school –' the show' – sometimes.  We do our best, we make learning fun, and the children lead the questioning, and we play the games…just sometimes it's best to admit to ourselves that Johnny will never be the world's best mathematician… and that Mary mightn't make Da Vinci's level as an artist.  And that's OK!  Like, work with their strengths.

Q;     Do you think children can take responsibility for their own learning?

A;     They do in my school, because no one can learn it for them.  If they enjoy it, it'll happen for them.  They have to want to know.

Q;     Do you think responsibility over the years has changed for children?

A;     It has, absolutely.  Like…once children were told to sit, and wait to be told, and listen and there they go, they knew it then.  Now, there's an awareness of their part in the plan, they have to learn or they won't know…it's up to them.

Q;     Do you think there's a different level of responsibility required at different school ages and levels?

A;     In a way, it's easier for small ones…infants, because they always want to know.  The idea of subject isn't there, its just new information.  They're always curious.  Older classes really should be responsible for their own learning.  It's ok to not be the best as they get older too, they understand that like.  Children, especially in this day and age, blame the system more.  Maybe they should look first at themselves.  They should be responsible for what they learn and want to learn.

Q;     Want to learn?

A;     Yeah, when they go into secondary school they have choices.

**Q;** Do you mean that they should have choices in Primary School?

**A;** Well, the choice to not be the best. The choice to read that book or not, to like it or not. Maybe if they make their own choices more, they can follow them through more too, you know, excel at what they choose to excel at.

**Q;** What if a child doesn't like maths, or Irish?

**A;** Well, they can learn most at primary level, so maybe they shouldn't be able to just not do a subject. Like, they'll need these things for certain jobs down the line. But with more input into what they do, they'll be better able to be responsible and make decisions later on, not just go with the flow.

**Q;** Finally, do you think the idea...the notion of responsibility has changed because of the Revised Curriculum?

**A;** I always believed that children should have a say, or an influence over their school lives. But I suppose...for some people they never thought about it before, like, would have felt responsible for everything themselves. The Revised Curriculum does put the idea out there that there's more than you involved in teaching and learning. But it was always an option!

**Appendix 2.3**

### An interview on the theme: Ideology in Education.
### This interview was selected at random from a collection of interviews on the
### same theme.

Q;     Do you like the Revised Curriculum?

A;     It's good. There's a lot in it though.

Q;     Why do you think they revised it?

A;     New packaging, really, isn't it. They've changed it into subjects instead of all together. It's what we've always taught. Well, drama is new, but everything else was always done. SPHE was done everyday, just wasn't called SPHE. The same with SESE.

Q:     Do you think there are any changes in how children learn, or why they learn.

A;     Oh yeah, they want children to ask their own questions, and start from the child's circumstance.

Q:     Do you feel you have any input into the curriculum?

A;     I suppose I do, but when it's there for me...

Q;     Have you found there's differences in the teaching styles advocated, encouraged by the Revised Curriculum and the way you were taught?

A;     Oh, yeah. 1 had lovely teachers, but old-fashioned, you know? Sit there, and be a good girl, and that kind of thing, you know? In college, they wanted you to start with the child, child-centred, and make it fun and let the child discover their way through the subject, or theme. You know?

Q;     Is this the style you're happiest using?

A;     Yeah, I like it. It gives the children freedom too.

Q:     Do you feel you had freedom when you were learning about that style yourself?

A;     Am...not really. We had to get out of training college too, you know? So the best way to do that was to let them hear what they wanted to hear. But, at the same time, I like that style, and I wouldn't teach other ways.

Q;     What other ways would you not teach?

A;     I wouldn't use the delivery approach, really. An odd time you have to use it, but mostly I prefer group work, and letting them lead the discussion – I mean, what's

the point in education if they can't ask their questions instead of being told the facts, or whatever, by teacher.

Q;     What is the point of education?  What is education?

A;     Enabling children to deal with the world, to be part of life, you know?  To read and write, count, and think.

**Appendix 2.4**

### An interview on the theme: Ideology in Education.
**This interview was selected at random from a collection of interviews on the same theme.**

Q;   Do you like the Revised Curriculum?

A;   Yes.

Q;   Is there anything you don't like about it?

A;   It's very full, there's a lot in there. But it's very well organised and clear. I know what I have to do.

Q;   Why do you think they revised it?

A;   An update, making sure we know what we're supposed to be doing and making sure the Irish Education System is up to date with education all over the world.

Q:   Do you think there are any changes in how children learn, or why they learn.

A;   Certainly, there are many new methodologies, excellent ones. Perhaps they were always part of education, just not as clear to us, so unexplored.

Q;   Do you use these?

A;   I've tried many of the activities we used in in-service. Most worked, I must say. The children loved it. I just didn't use the one's that didn't work again. When you find a way that works, stick with it.

Q;   Did you read the documents before in-service?

A;   Yes, but I must say they were quite difficult to understand until you could see the practical side of things at in-service. Actually, it's a little frustrating that aspects weren't covered at in-service.

Q;   What do you mean?

A;   Well, they don't cover everything, because they don't have time, but then you're just left with half the curriculum to cover! But patience is what we need.

Q:   Do you feel you have any input into the curriculum?

A;   Not really, no. It's clear and detailed and there for me to use.

Q;   What is your ideal educational system?

A;   Equipping children for today's world as best we can. Making it possible for them to be successful participants in society. Smaller classes and bigger rooms, with

time for planning, those documents are heavy for carrying home. It's unfair that we're expected to deliver them without proper planning time and in-service.

Q;    Does the Revised Curriculum deal with equipping children for today's world appropriately?

A;    I think so. In a case where I haven't received in- service, or think there's a gap, I fill it in myself, with what I think the children will need to know.

Q:    How do you judge that?

A;    Well, they'll need to know about the Normans, or the Celts, or whatever, so, because I haven't had in-service in history, and the books don't present the facts they should know, I'll tell them.

Q;    You said that education is about equipping children for the world…

A;    Yes, children need to know as much as they can for secondary school, for their Leaving Certs and so on. We've failed them if they haven't been brought to the highest level they can achieve.

Q;    Would you consider the Leaving Cert part of your ideal education system?

A;    Mmm…no, but we would have to replace it with some way of enabling children gain access to the colleges and jobs they want. Maybe continuous assessment?

Q;    Would your ideal system be about suiting children to the right jobs?

A;    Eventually, and one that they enjoyed along the way, where they could learn as much as possible along the way.

Appendix 2.5

## An interview on the theme: Authority in Education.
### This interview was selected at random from a collection of interviews on the same theme.

**Q;** Who has authority in the classroom?

**A;** I do.

**Q;** Where does it come from?

**A;** Experience, years of service.

**Q;** Why do you have it?

**A;** I'm the teacher.

**Q;** What does authority mean to you as a teacher?

**A;** It means that I make the decisions in my room. I am responsible for the learning that goes on in my room. I am responsible for safety in the classroom. I have years of experience and I know what I'm doing. Authority is the right to make decisions which I have earned. I've found a teaching style that works, a way that works and I'll stick with it.

**Q;** Do you think anyone else has authority in the arena of education.

**A;** The principal has authority for the school. The other teachers are responsible for their classrooms. The Board of Management has authority too, as does the inspector - especially for Diplomas and Turaisc Scoiles.

**Q;** Do children have authority?

**A;** No.

**Q;** Parents?

**A;** Yes, for their children. But they don't have the same authority as teacher when the child is in school – the child is then under my care, I am in loco parentis.

**Q;** Does this ever pose problems, in your opinion. Do clashes ever occur between authority figures?

**A;** Absolutely. Parents feel they know what's best and are often right. But teachers have been trained in the system and the curriculum, psychology, philosophy, sociology and all the other parts of education. That earns the right to authority of your domain.

**Q;** Does a Newly Qualified Teacher have the same right to authority?

**A;** They should have, really. But youth and inexperience go against them. They need to be able to be authorative and that comes with experience.

**Q;** Go on…

**A;** Well, young or new teachers have to be teaching for long enough to be completely comfortable with the curriculum and know what the child needs to know. This takes time. When they have that experience, it's easier to be authorative, you've earned it.

**Q;** What specific factors do you consider necessary to acquire authority in the classroom.

**A;** Training – teachers must have appropriate and specific educational qualifications. Experience too.

**Q;** Would you consider a Newly Qualified Teacher with training in the Revised Curriculum more authorative than a teacher with more experience but who wasn't trained in the Revised Curriculum?

**A;** The teacher with experience. No offense intended for the NQT, they'll gain that experience over time. The teacher with practical experience is the teacher who will be most beneficial to the child and the school.

**Q;** Is there any way where this necessary experience could be gained before qualification?

**A;** Absolutely, teachers in training haven't a clue about what goes on in the real classroom. They need more practical, hands-on class work before qualification. This proposal of a four year course in college with a year teaching practice style… is a good one. I know that the diploma year is a year of practical experience but more practical work knowing just exactly what's involved is important. I mean, the NQTs come out all ideas and then the real world hits them.

**Q;** Are you proposing that it may be a better idea to tie in ideas with experience or allow the practical experience to guide the teacher?

**A;** Both really, ideas are all well and good, but really what benefit are they? Practical use of these ideas – like the ones we get at in-service – means NQTs are able to cope with the real classroom. And there are other advantages, like schools can mould the teacher into what they need, not what the college wants to send out.

**Q;** Do you think the colleges have authority in the production of teacher ideals?

**A;** They do, the new teachers are, as I said, full of ideas, often impractical, and they don't see what's really needed in the classroom.

**Q;** What do you think is really needed in the classroom?

**A;** The children need to know something at the end of the day and at the end of the year.

Appendix 2.6

**An interview on the theme: Authority in Education.**
**This interview was selected at random from a collection of interviews on the**
**same theme.**

**Q;**     Who has authority in the classroom?

**A;**     I do.

**Q;**     Where does it come from?

**A;**     I earned it, I suppose.  Well, there's a certain amount you get from being the teacher anyway, but to keep it and get the best out of your class you have to earn it.

**Q;**     How did you earn it?

**A;**     Maintaining a good relationship with the children and with the parents.  And most especially with the other teachers.  I think a happy school is one where the teachers are happy.

**Q;**     Do other teachers have more or less authority than you?

**A;**     Each teacher should have some input into the decision making process.  Post-holders have responsibility for their posts, and therefore authority over them.  Principals are responsible for the school, so are the main school authority.

**Q;**     Would you consider experience a key factor in having authority as a teacher?

**A;**     Ehm...not really.  The experienced teacher is usually the senior member of staff and knows what to do if something goes wrong, but really every teacher should be held in equal importance.

**Q;**     Why do you have authority?

**A;**     I'm the teacher, I'm a staff member, I try to get on with my colleagues and class.

**Q;**     What does authority mean to you as a teacher?

**A;**     It means that I make the decisions in my room, with the children of course!  It means that I am shown respect by parents and teachers and children.

**Q;**     Do children have authority?

**A;**     Yes, for themselves, because they have choices at school.  And in another way, they don't, because their parents are responsible for them, and if anything happens teacher is responsible for them at school.

**Q;**     Do parents have authority?

**A;**     Definitely. They are parents. They have a say in school life too.

**Q;**     Does this ever pose problems, in your opinion.

**A;**     Yes, parents often don't know what certain teachers are about, and think they're not doing the job right. Worse, some think that we teach the way they were taught and are ready to do battle before they know what's going on.

**Q;**     Go on...

**A;**     Well, am...a conflict can exist because of a break in communication.

**Q;**     How would you fix this?

**A;**     More communication on a surface level, but remember a lot of teaching time is taken up with parents on the phone and at the door.

**Q;**     Would you suggest somebody else was available to explain your case?

**A;**     Like a principal?

**Q;**     Maybe? Do you think that would work?

**A;**     Only in big schools, not teaching principals. Maybe the inspector should? They would be perceived as an authority figure who could explain.

**Q;**     What would they explain?

**A;**     What we do and why we do it – like why we don't rote teach like what used to be done, and why...why we can't do it certain ways too, like issues of class size and the Revised Curriculum.

**Q;**     What specific factors do you consider necessary to acquire authority in the classroom.

**A;**     Qualification, membership of staff, and that has to be earned...you have to try and get along with people.

**Q;**     Explain the point you made on qualification, please.

**A;**     Qualified teachers are important because they have the training, they know how to treat children, ...look at some of the visitors to school...they can present things in such a boring way, sometimes. Teachers should attend in-service and upskill themselves, be part of an ongoing process.

**Q;**     What about experience?

**A;**     Some experienced teachers are lovely – others miss the mark, I think. Am...some teachers are considered old-fashioned and they're up to date and make changes or at least try them out. Others just aren't nice to the kids.

**Q;**     Would you consider being nice to the children important?

**A;** They're why we're in the job, aren't they? If you're not nice to them, they won't respect you, or they will for the wrong reasons.

**Q;** Would it be fair to say we earn our authority?

**A;** Yeah, I think we do.

**Q;** Do you have any advice about authority for new teachers?

**A;** Be nice to the children, earn their respect, earn your authority.

**Q;** Do you think theory is important in education?

**A;** Experience and practice are more important.

**Q;** Could your advice on authority be considered your theory?

**A;** Ha ha..yeah, I think so! Theory is important in its own way, but it has to be linked to practice, and it has to mean something to us.

**Q;** When I said theory what did you think of?

**A;** I thought of mathematical equations! Not my own ideas.

**Q;** What would be the best way to learn about educational theories?

**A;** Am...maybe to meet them during practical classroom ways, like when you have a class.

**Q;** Would you consider theory as authorative?

**A;** I wouldn't have until today! But maybe, when it's meaningful to us, then it's a good rule of thumb for teachers.

**Q;** Like your advice about earning authority?

**A;** Yeah.

**Q:** Would you have come up with this theory before you started teaching?

**A;** Probably, like...it's how I'd think. But I wouldn't be able to prove it ...wasn't able to prove it until I started teaching, to be sure!

**Q;** Would you think, from this, that theory is best understood when experienced and applied?

**A;** Yes.

# APPENDIX 3

## Conversations and Observations

Over the course of the academic year 2003/2004 I was approached by a parent who was confused by my teaching method towards English spelling. I was new to the school and engaged in a personalised spelling scheme approach to English spelling. The parent in question asked me when I was going to get the "proper book." She hurriedly continued on to ask questions relating to her son's performance, having realised the meaning her question conveyed. It illustrated for me the lack of understanding that existed at that time surrounding the modern educational developments.

Personalised spelling tests are more beneficial and specific to the child's needs, where traditional age-based books (although useful), were superficially easier to use in the classroom from teacher's perspective. Inexperience was misconstrued as a lack of understanding. Although the Revised Curriculum was launched since 1999, its impact had yet to reach this particular parent.

During my first year as a teacher, in the academic year 2002/2003, I had on numerous occasions to explain what drama, SPHE, and SESE were, and why they were engaged with in Infant, First and Second class level. Parents did not realise there had been a revision in the curriculum at all, and furthermore did not realise the new methodologies that were part of the foundations of the revision. Where inexperience was cited more than once as the reason why I approached education differently, one parent went as far as to say her daughter was learning nothing for the first four months in my classroom! A very poor first parent teacher meeting which firmly allowed me to gain the pleasurable position of being virtually infallible in subsequent meetings – I cannot be driven to tears like that again!

In a conversation with a colleague where the Revised Curriculum was under discussion I was informed that "the Revised Curriculum doesn't apply to me." This particular colleague did not, at that time, work within a classroom situation but in the role of a Support Teacher for Special Educational Needs. I was extremely surprised to know that this person considered the Revised Curriculum methodologies external to the demands of the Support Teacher role, and that curricular emphases were

irrelevant to that position. Surely the foundational principles and philosophies therein should have formed some aspect of consideration for any support teacher, I wondered.

During one in-service session, the facilitator, struggling to enliven the cynical faces surrounding her, emphasised the fun we would have at that day's PE activities. Succeeding in balancing the theory with the practice of active and engaged tasks, she took the time to describe the thrust of the PE curriculum to the teachers attending the in-service session. She said that the central aim of the PE curriculum was not to advance Ireland's sporting opportunities on a global level, nor produce skill-perfect sports children, rather the curriculum sought to provide children with a range of skills which they could enjoy, participate in, and practice to keep them fit and healthy; the curriculum provides "windows of opportunity" to children to grow and develop as rounded, healthy individuals.

Participating in the Discover Science programme, I attended a facilitation course, which furnished me with the resource outlines and activity packs necessary to peruse the programme with my class during February 2005. During the course, which was facilitated by two Primary School teachers, one teacher sought to explain the significance of curiosity in the history of education. He said, "Why we have succeeded in being masters of the planet is through curiosity." This reflects a philosophical understanding of the drive for learning, and the basic question asked by many of the philosophers analysed in the Literature Review. Learning through a process as opposed to attaining a product was also mentioned; highlighting a feature of the curriculum, where success is measured in participation and not summative accruement. Through active and process-based learning, "there's no such thing as failure." He continued to explain the shift in thinking of the Revised Curriculum, stating, "we need to get away from the idea of learning something through books." This encapsulates the focus of the curriculum, illustrating how books cannot provide the practical and engaging and active learning of the investigation and contextual enquiry.

NB: All quotes have been included with the permission of the teachers involved.

# APPENDIX 4

Appendix 4

# Children and the Revised Curriculum
# A hybrid questionnaire/interview

## Section 1

School

1. Do you like school?
2. Why do you think you like or dislike school?
3. Can you name any positive or negative aspects of school / what, do you think, are the best bits and the worst bits of school?

## Section 2

Your teacher

1. Describe your teacher in any way you like.

## Section 3

Methodologies – one example of a Revised Curriculum methodology

1. Do you know what group-work is?
2. Have you ever been involved in group-work?
3. Do you like it?
4. Why do you like it / why don't you like it?
5. Do you like working with other children?
6. Which do you prefer, working alone or working with others when you are trying to learn something or complete a task?

**Section 4**

Tests

1. Do you like tests?
2. Do you see them as important?
3. What are tests for?
4. Do you think there are any tests more important than others?
5. If you think there is one test more important than others, is there any point doing other tests so?

**Section 5**

Education

1. Why do we come to school?
2. What is education for?

**Section 6**

Subjects

1. Do you have favourite subjects?
2. Why are they your favourite subjects?
3. Do you worry about certain subjects?

4. Why do you worry?

5. Do you believe all subjects are of equal importance?

\* In some instances, the difference between primary school and secondary school was explored at this point.

6. What do you think the difference is between primary and secondary school is?


## Section 7

Ideals of education

1. If you could make any changes at all, changes that would be in any school you wanted them to be in, what changes would you make to schools, classrooms and education in general?

**Appendix 4.1**

**Children and the Revised Curriculum**
**A hybrid questionnaire/interview**

## Section 1

School

1. Do you like school?   *Yes*
2. Why do you think you like or dislike school?       *I like school because I like meeting my friends and taking part in different things and having fun*
3. Can you name any positive or negative aspects of school / what, do you think, are the best bits and worst bits of school?     *The worst bits of school for me is if I fall out with my friends. The best bits are having PE going to gaelic matches and things like that.*

## Section 2

Your teacher

1. Describe your teacher in any way you like.  *Our teacher is very nice and sound to us but sometimes I think he has more interest in the boys than the girls when it comes to sports.*

## Section 3

Methodologies – one example of a revised curriculum methodology

1. Do you know what group-work is?   *Yes*
2. Have you ever been involved in group-work?      *Yes*
3. Do you like it? *Yes*
4. Why do you like it / don't you like it?       *I like it because there's more than jus one of us and you can work as a team, but sometimes it's a bit pointless because you don't really learn anything.*
5. Do you like working with other children? *Yes*
6. Which do you prefer, working alone or working with others when you are trying to learn something or complete a task? *I like to work alone so I can concentrate more and really learn something.*

## Section 4

Tests

1. Do you like tests?     *No*
2. Do you see them as important?     *Yes*
3. What are tests for?     *I think tests are for to see how you're doing at school and sometimes to see who is best.*
4. Do you think there are any tests more important than others?     *Yes*
5. If you think there is one test more important than others, is there any point doing other tests so?     *Yes I think there is just to get you used of them and not to be so nervous*

## Section 5

Education

1. Why do we come to school? *We come to school to get an education*
2. What is education for?     *Education is for to help us in later life and to get a good job*

## Section 6

Subjects

1. Do you have favourite subjects?     *Yes. Maths.*
2. Why are they your favourite subjects?     *Maths is one of my favourite subjects because I understand it well.*
3. Do you worry about certain subjects?     *No, only if it's a test*
4. Why do you worry?     *Because I would not know what to expect*
5. Do you believe all subjects are of equal importance?     *No*
6. What do you think the difference between primary and secondary school is? *Secondary is ok, but not as much fun, they want you to learn more things and do well.*

## Section 7

Ideals of education

1. If you could make any changes at all, changes that would be in any school you wanted them to be in, what changes would you make to schools, classrooms and education in general?     *I would have a bigger hall for PE and shows. And I would have more stuff in the playground.*

# Children and the Revised Curriculum
## A hybrid questionnaire/interview

### Section 1

School

4. Do you like school?   *It's okay*
5. Why do you think you like or dislike school?   *I don't like it because you have to get up early, I like it because you meet your friends*
6. Can you name any positive or negative aspects of school / what, do you think, are the best bits and worst bits of school?   *I like the sport and my friends. I don't like getting up early and having to do work..*

### Section 2

Your teacher

2. Describe your teacher in any way you like.   *I like him because he's very nice and doesn't shout. And he always explains everything. Also, he's easy on homework compared to other teachers. He's sound as a pound, full stop.*

### Section 3

Methodologies – one example of a revised curriculum methodology

7. Do you know what group-work is?   *It's working with other people*
8. Have you ever been involved in group-work?   *Yes, when we do drama*
9. Do you like it? *Yes*
10. Why do you like it / don't you like it?   *I like it because it's good fun*
11. Do you like working with other children? *Yes*
12. Which do you prefer, working alone or working with others when you are trying to learn something or complete a task? *With somebody. But sometimes it's better to be on my own like before a test if I have to say something to myself to learn it.*

### Section 4

Tests

6. Do you like tests?   *No*

7. Do you see them as important? *Yes*
8. What are tests for? *To see what job you can get*
9. Do you think there are any tests more important than others? *Maths*
10. If you think there is one test more important than others, is there any point doing other tests so? *Yes*

## Section 5

Education

3. Why do we come to school? *To get an education*
4. What is education for? *To get a job*

## Section 6

Subjects

7. Do you have favourite subjects? *No.*
8. Why are they your favourite subjects?
9. Do you worry about certain subjects? *Maths*
10. Why do you worry? *Because I can never remember them*
11. Do you believe all subjects are of equal importance? *Depends on what job you want*
12. What do you think the difference between primary and secondary school is? *Secondary is stricter, longer hours and big exams.*

## Section 7

Ideals of education

2. If you could make any changes at all, changes that would be in any school you wanted them to be in, what changes would you make to schools, classrooms and education in general? *Smaller classes and bigger schools.*

Appendix 4.3

## Children and the Revised Curriculum
## A hybrid questionnaire/interview

### Section 1

School

7.  Do you like school?   *Yes*
8.  Why do you think you like or dislike school?   *Because we do a lot of activities in our subjects*
9.  Can you name any positive or negative aspects of school / what, do you think, are the best bits and worst bits of school?   *The best bit is sport and the friendship.*

### Section 2

Your teacher

3.  Describe your teacher in any way you like.   *Really nice and kind. And a really good manager for sport.*

### Section 3

Methodologies – one example of a revised curriculum methodology

13. Do you know what group-work is?   *When 4 or 5 of us gather to do work together.*
14. Have you ever been involved in group-work?   *Yes*
15. Do you like it? *Yes*
16. Why do you like it / don't you like it?   *I loke it because we're involved in things together.*
17. Do you like working with other children? *Yes*
18. Which do you prefer, working alone or working with others when you are trying to learn something or complete a task? *Working alone when learning something new. But when doing reading I prefer group-work.*

### Section 4

Tests

11. Do you like tests?   *No*
12. Do you see them as important?   *Yes*

13. What are tests for?    *To see how you're doing and to see how smart you are.*
14. Do you think there are any tests more important than others?    *No*
15. If you think there is one test more important than others, is there any point doing other tests so?

## Section 5

Education

5.  Why do we come to school? *To learn*
6.  What is education for?    *To get a good job*

## Section 6

Subjects

13. Do you have favourite subjects?    *Yes.*
14. Why are they your favourite subjects?    *Because it's easy.*
15. Do you worry about certain subjects?    *Yes.*
16. Why do you worry?   *Because it can be hard at times*
17. Do you believe all subjects are of equal importance?    *Yes*
18. What do you think the difference between primary and secondary school is? *You learn the basics in National School and the more complicated stuff in Secondary. In national school you can have more fun but secondary is where the real learning begins.*

## Section 7

Ideals of education

3.  If you could make any changes at all, changes that would be in any school you wanted them to be in, what changes would you make to schools, classrooms and education in general?    *Sometimes on Fridays after tests you could have prizes for the winners. More PE and Art.*

**Appendix 4.4**

## Children and the Revised Curriculum
## A hybrid questionnaire/interview

**Section 1**

School

10. Do you like school?   *Yes*
11. Why do you think you like or dislike school?       *School is good because our teacher makes learning fun.*
12. Can you name any positive or negative aspects of school / what, do you think, are the best bits and worst bits of school?   *When it's raining at break and have to stay inside all our pieces from our board games are missing!*

**Section 2**

Your teacher

4.   Describe your teacher in any way you like.   *He is kind and knows a lot about different subjects.*

**Section 3**

Methodologies – one example of a revised curriculum methodology

19. Do you know what group-work is?   *Yes*
20. Have you ever been involved in group-work?       *We had to write a letter on what it would be like to be on the coffin ship, but last year's sixth class had written it in their books and I remembered it wasn't nice, like it was cold and damp and they were crowded below deck with no air and very little food. They often got sick. So I didn't need to write the letter, but I had to do it.*
21. Do you like it? *Yes*
22. Why do you like it / don't you like it?       *If you don't know an answer other people might.*
23. Do you like working with other children? *Yes*
24. Which do you prefer, working alone or working with others when you are trying to learn something or complete a task? *Working with others.*

**Section 4**

Tests

16. Do you like tests?     *No*
17. Do you see them as important?     *No*
18. What are tests for?     *To see how you're doing in subjects.*
19. Do you think there are any tests more important than others?     *Yes*
20. If you think there is one test more important than others, is there any point doing other tests so?     *Yes, to practice doing tests.*

## Section 5

Education

7.   Why do we come to school? *To learn.*
8.   What is education for?     *To know things and to get a good job.*

## Section 6

Subjects

19. Do you have favourite subjects?     *Yes. English and History.*
20. Why are they your favourite subjects?     *In History you learn a lot about History.*
21. Do you worry about certain subjects?     *Sometimes.*
22. Why do you worry? *If you don't understand things.*
23. Do you believe all subjects are of equal importance?     *No*
24. What do you think the difference between primary and secondary school is? *It's harder work in Secondary.*

## Section 7

Ideals of education

4.   If you could make any changes at all, changes that would be in any school you wanted them to be in, what changes would you make to schools, classrooms and education in general?     *I'd build a playground outside.*

**Appendix 4.5**

**Children and the Revised Curriculum**
**A hybrid questionnaire/interview**

**Section 1**

School

13. Do you like school?    *Yes*
14. Why do you think you like or dislike school?    *I like it because I have a nice teacher.*
15. Can you name any positive or negative aspects of school / what, do you think, are the best bits and worst bits of school?    *I like PE and sports. I don't like staying in when it rains. I like going to Mrs ******'s room because we get to talk more.*

**Section 2**

Your teacher

5. Describe your teacher in any way you like.    *He is kind and doesn't do too much work.*

**Section 3**

Methodologies – one example of a revised curriculum methodology

25. Do you know what group-work is?    *Yes*
26. Have you ever been involved in group-work?    *Yes*
27. Do you like it? *Yes*
28. Why do you like it / don't you like it?    *Because you get to be with friends*
29. Do you like working with other children? *Yes*
30. Which do you prefer, working alone or working with others when you are trying to learn something or complete a task? *I prefer working with others.*

**Section 4**

Tests

21. Do you like tests?    *No*
22. Do you see them as important?    *No*
23. What are tests for?    *To see how you are getting on at school.*

24. Do you think there are any tests more important than others?     *No*
25. If you think there is one test more important than others, is there any point doing other tests so?


**Section 5**

Education

   9. Why do we come to school? *So we can get an education and get a job*
10. What is education for?     *To get a job when I'm older*


**Section 6**

Subjects

25. Do you have favourite subjects?     *Yes.*
26. Why are they your favourite subjects?     *They're easy.*
27. Do you worry about certain subjects?     *No.*
28. Why do you worry?
29. Do you believe all subjects are of equal importance?     *Yes*
30. What do you think the difference between primary and secondary school is? *Primary is easier and they make it nice and fun because secondary are older and able for real learning, and the harder stuff.*


**Section 7**

Ideals of education

   5. If you could make any changes at all, changes that would be in any school you wanted them to be in, what changes would you make to schools, classrooms and education in general?     *Get nets for goals. Nothing else.*

# APPENDIX 5

# Parents and the Revised Curriculum

# A questionnaire

1. Do you think there have been any changes in education since you were in school?

_____

2. If you believe there have been changes, can you name or explain your changes?

_____

_____

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_____

3. Do you think there have been any changes in education in recent years – since the Millennium?

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4. If you believe there have been changes, can you name these or explain them?

_____

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5. In your opinion, what are the positive and negative aspects of education today?

**Positive**

_____

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_____

**Negative**

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6. In your opinion, what is the aim of education?

_____

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7. If you were in a position to influence or change

educational policy, what changes would you make?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Appendix 5.1**

# Parents and the Revised Curriculum
# A questionnaire

1. Do you think there have been any changes in education since you were in school?

   *Yes*

2. If you believe there have been changes, can you name or explain your changes?

   *I think school is a lot easier nowadays.*

   *Teachers are different.*

   *Schools are open to the outside world.*

3. Do you think there have been any changes in education in recent years – since the Millennium?

   *Not really?*

4. In your opinion, what are the positive and negative aspects of education today?

   **Positive**

   *School is more open, there's no corporeal punishment anymore.*

   *Children are happier.*

**Negative**

*They're not learning as much as they used to.*

*I don't think my son has learned half of all I knew at his age.*

5. In your opinion, what is the aim of education?

*To prepare children for the wider world.*

*Set them up well for a good job.*

6. If you were in a position to influence or change educational policy, what changes would you make?

*I think school has gotten a bit too soft, I'd pull back a little on that. But overall, I'd still say things are better than they used to be.*

**Appendix 5.2**

# Parents and the Revised Curriculum
# A questionnaire

1. Do you think there have been any changes in education since you were in school?

    *Yes*

2. If you believe there have been changes, can you name or explain your changes?

    *School is not as formal.*

    *Children get on better with teachers.*

    *Teachers have relaxed a lot.*

3. Do you think there have been any changes in education in recent years – since the Millennium?

    *I've heard about a new curriculum, teachers going away on training days.*

4. In your opinion, what are the positive and negative aspects of education today?

    **Positive**

*Teachers aren't as cross as they used to be.*

*My kids enjoy going to school.*

*There's more extra curricular activities then there used to be.*

**Negative**

*Maybe they're not working as hard as they used to.*

*It's hard to keep track of my child's progress all year round.*

5. In your opinion, what is the aim of education?

   *Give children a good foundation for a successful life.*

6. If you were in a position to influence or change educational policy, what changes would you make?

   *Homework clubs in all schools.*

**Appendix 5.3**

# Parents and the Revised Curriculum
# A questionnaire

1. Do you think there have been any changes in education since you were in school?

   *Yes*

2. If you believe there have been changes, can you name or explain your changes?

   *Schools are more modern.*

   *Some subjects are gone, like catechism.*

   *Less learning off than there used to be.*

3. Do you think there have been any changes in education in recent years – since the Millennium?

   *Just more modern again.*

4. If you believe there have been changes, can you name these or explain them?

   *Children are using computers in school and at home.*

5. In your opinion, what are the positive and negative aspects of education today?

**Positive**

*Children are happier going to school.*

*A lot more facilities in school because schools have money now that they once didn't have.*

**Negative**

*No discipline is taught in schools anymore.*

6. In your opinion, what is the aim of education?

   *To help the child get the best grade she can, so she can do well and go to college and get a job.*

7. If you were in a position to influence or change educational policy, what changes would you make?

   *More discipline at schools – so children have manners.*

**Appendix 5.4**

# Parents and the Revised Curriculum
# A questionnaire

1. Do you think there have been any changes in education since you were in school?

   *Yes*

2. If you believe there have been changes, can you name or explain your changes?

   *A lot more reading books, they're different, they're easier.*

   *A lot less geography books, and history books.*

   *Science is a subject now in the National School.*

   *Bigger school inspections.*

3. In your opinion, what are the positive and negative aspects of education today?

   **Positive**

   *Children enjoy school now, they like going in everyday.*
   *It's not the torture it was in the past, when we would be hit.*

**Negative**

*I think the changes are all positive.*

4. In your opinion, what is the aim of education?

   *To give our children the best start in life, to open up positive employment opportunities for them when they're older.*

5. If you were in a position to influence or change educational policy, what changes would you make?

   *More time for meeting the teacher to discuss my child.*