



PRINCIPALS' AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION CUMANN PRÍOMHOIDÍ AGUS PRÍOMHOIDÍ TÁNAISTEACHA

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



A Chara, welcome to the latest issue of PDA newsletter. I wish you continued success for the new school year. In these challenging times I hope you take some assurance from the fact that PDA continues to represent your views to the Department of Education and Skills (DES), TUI, and the IVEA while also liaising with our representatives on the National Parents Council (APVSCC). If there are issues or concerns confronting you, in your efforts to manage and adapt to our ever changing work conditions, be confident that your local PDA representative will support you through the PDA network of experienced colleagues around the country.

In recent years the Irish educational context has changed radically as a result of successive budgetary cutbacks. PDA is concerned that little heed is been given to the cumulative effect of the changes that are being rolled out and to their effects on schools, staffs and students. This concern was among the main priorities which PDA brought to the attention of DES at a meeting last term. PDA stressed that in the new education landscape it was critical to:

- Ensure the welfare of Principals, Deputy Principals and school staffs

- Ensure quality of teaching and learning and student welfare
- Ensure sustainability of current provision and quality in the system

Regarding the above, PDA identified current pressures which are having a negative impact on the school system and brought same to the attention of the DES officials, the following were some of the main points discussed:- Dismantled Middle Management Structure; Revised PTR; Guidance Provision (a further cut in PTR); School-Budget Cuts- capitation, resource hours etc.; Increased workload for Principals and Deputy Principals; Reduction in VEC administration staff; Reduced time for leadership; Public Service Agreement – transfers and redeployment issues; DES Inspections - MLL, Programme Inspection.

Furthermore, PDA highlighted that additional challenges were looming and that consideration should be given to the difficulties posed by the implementation of new programmes at a time of unprecedented change. The recent dismantling of middle management structure coupled with the revised PTR has left schools under resourced to meet current demands and consequently ill-equipped to implement new initiatives. Moreover, additional challenges will arise under the following areas:- Induction Probation; Career Entry Professional Programme & NIPT; Further 6% cut in capitation over next 4 years; Junior Certificate Reform; Literacy and Numeracy Strategy; Teaching Council Revisions; Incidental Inspections, Legislative demands; SOLAS and the changes facing the Further Education sector; Any cuts to allowances / SnS scheme etc.

The senior DES officials listened attentively to PDA acknowledging that schools were doing great work under very challenging conditions. In conclusion, having indicated an increased level of awareness, the DES accepted that schools couldn't meet all the demands and would need to prioritise areas. Unfortunately, due to the continuing economic situation it is unlikely that matters will improve in the short term.

Indeed, as schools reopened for the current year the abolition of ex-quota Guidance Counsellors combined with recent increases in PTR proved most problematic as schools attempted to timetable and maintain an appropriate level of service. Additionally, the decreasing number of SNAs and SEN resource hours being allocated to schools is hugely challenging for the inclusion of special needs students.

In recent times the dismantling of middle management and the lack of promotional opportunities in the profession is of major concern to PDA. We continue to press for a review of the revised structures for Posts of Responsibility. Reduced salaries for teachers, reduced hours, reduced pensions combine to render teaching less attractive for new entrants. A direct consequence of the recruitment moratorium in the public service and of great concern to PDA is the casualisation of the teaching profession. The latest figures from TUI indicate that 25% of its memberships are on part-time contracts. This current lack of opportunity whereby new entrants are working on temporary contracts or dependant on substitution work has the effect of pushing teachers towards alternative careers or emigration to classrooms in other jurisdictions.

All these issues and more will be the subjects of discussion at PDA Annual Conference in Sligo. Guest speakers include Dr. Anne Looney, CEO NCCA; Deirdre Matthews, Assistant Chief Inspector DES and Professor John Coolahan. PDA continues its efforts to represent the current challenges facing its members and I urge you to attend what promises to be a most informative conference in Sligo on 14th - 16th November.

Finally, PDA congratulates Gerry Craughwell on his recent election to President of TUI and wish him well in leading TUI through these challenging times. PDA also extends its best wishes to Bernie Ruane, past-president, and thank her for all her support to PDA during her tenure.

SCHOOL SELF EVALUATION

The DES issued draft proposals in respect of School Self Evaluation in January. If these proposals were to be implemented in full they would have serious implications for the working conditions of Principals, Deputies and Teachers at a time when schools and colleges are already at near breaking point. PDA met with TUI on two occasions in June to discuss this and other pressing issues. At our last meeting TUI informed the PDA that the two second level unions had met with the Chief Inspector, Harold Hislop and that he had told the unions that self evaluation is a long term project which will in time overtake School Development Planning which is now effectively a paper exercise. There is a 12 school pilot taking place – schools choose one of the 10 criteria outlined in the draft. Taking part in the pilot does not necessarily mean that all staff must buy into the process. Some schools in the pilot felt that their priorities were not necessarily encompassed in the 10 criteria as outlined in the draft proposals and have chosen their own priority area. Schools have reported back to the DES that they have found the process useful but TUI has not yet verified this by talking to our members – there are 3 VEC schools in the pilot. The DES is adamant that self evaluation has no linkage with inspections - want it to be an internal rather than an external process. DES accepted that the draft proposals need to be significantly revised and invited TUI and ASTI to participate in a working group that would look at revisions. DES stated that Whole School Evaluations are to be suspended for two years to assist schools with self evaluation.

SUPPORT FOR PRINCIPALS AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

One of the major advantages of PDA membership is the access that it affords members to a network of experienced Principals and Deputy Principals in Vocational Schools, Community Colleges, Colleges of Further Education and Gaelcholasti throughout the country.

In the first instance, support and advice is available at regional level through your local area representative.

Each area representative has access to the National Executive of PDA and issues can be raised at regular meetings throughout the year.

If, for some reason, a member needs more immediate advice, then he/she can make contact with any of the officers, who in turn will arrange an appropriate contact.

SOLAS (SÉIRBHÍSI OIDEACHAIS LEANÚNAIGH AGUS SCILEANNA)

PDA congratulate Fiona Hartley on her appointment and wish her every success as director of SOLAS. The structural reform agenda includes the establishment of a further Education and Training Sector as well as a Labour Market Activation strategy. The structural reform programme

provides for the dissolution of FÁS and the establishment of a new Further Education and Training Authority-SOLAS (Séirbhísi Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna), the establishment of 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs), the establishment of the National Employment and Entitlements Service (NEES), the establishment of Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland (QQAI), and the launch of the Pathways to Work Initiative.

Establishment of SOLAS

The impending SOLAS legislation will provide for the dissolution of FÁS and the establishment of SOLAS as a new statutory authority to oversee the Further Education and Training sector. As legislation is enacted, phasing arrangement will emerge around the incorporation of the 16 FÁS training centres and the 800 FÁS staff into the 16 ETBs.

SOLAS is to be responsible for the co-ordination and funding of training and further education programmes around the country, while ETBs will ultimately be responsible for the delivery of publicly-funded FET programmes. SOLAS will enter into annual Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with ETBs. These SLAs will align the strategies of ETBs with national priorities across education and training provision.

ETBs

Draft Heads of Bill have been published by government to provide for the aggregation of the 33 VECs into 16 ETBs. As legislation is enacted, phasing arrangements will emerge around the incorporation of the existing Training Division of FÁS into the ETB network.

NEES

All employment and benefits services will be integrated into a single delivery unit - the *National Employment and Entitlements Service* (NEES) - to be managed by the Department of Social Protection (DSP). Already the FÁS Employment Services have been transferred to the DSP (January 1st 2012) as part of the establishment of NEES.

The NEES therefore is a single delivery unit - or "one-stop-shop" - which will support people to establish their benefits entitlements, advise them about their training options, and assist them in securing employment. NEES will closely interact with ETBs and SOLAS in regard to the referral of individuals for Further Education and Training. This will require specific protocols and operational mechanisms to be agreed between SOLAS and ETBs, and DSP/NEES.

QQAI

The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the Irish Universities Quality Boards (IUQB) are being amalgamated into a new single agency - Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland (QQAI). It is clear that QQAI will also play a significant and key role in the development of an integrated FET sector.

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Pay your subscription to your Area representative or Area treasurer before November 2012



BY CHOICE HOTELS

The Management & Staff at the Clarion Hotel Sligo would like to pre welcome all members of the P.D.A who will attend the Annual conference on the 14th-16th November 2012



Clarion Hotel Sligo offers the following:

162 Bedrooms including 89 Suites;
10 Meeting Rooms;
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PDA Conference - Sligo 2012

Programme of Events

Wednesday 14th November

9.00pm Speaker 1 - **Gerry Farrell** - *an informal conversation*
Self Care Skills for Senior Managers in Schools

Gerry Farrell is a former senior counsellor with the Probation and Welfare Services in Castlereagh. With a background in teaching clinical psychiatry, Gerry now Lectures in NUI Maynooth while pursuing a private practice in counselling and supervision to professionals working in the care areas.

Thursday 15th November

12.00pm Speaker 4 - **Deirdre Mathews**
School Self Evaluation

Deirdre is an Assistant Chief Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills. She is currently responsible for managing the Inspectorate School Improvement and Quality Unit. Her Doctoral thesis involved research on school self-evaluation.

8.00pm **Conference Dinner.**

After Dinner Speaker - **Mickey Harte**

A former school teacher in St. Ciaran's College, Ballygawley, Mickey's skills as a Football manager are renowned. His motivational skills are unsurpassed.

Friday 16th November

10.00am Speaker 5 - **Professor John Coolahan**
Education a Change and Challenge

John was described some years ago as the man "who knows more than anyone about Irish education" We await John's thoughts

11.00am Speaker 2 - **Anne Looney.**

The Junior Cert Curriculum: Changes and Challenges

Anne who holds a Doctorate in Education from the Institute of Education of the University of London is a former teacher of Religious Ed. & English. Anne has been CEO of the NCCA for over ten years

JUNIOR CYCLE REFORM

The Junior Cycle reforms propose to:

- Provide greater flexibility and autonomy for schools.
- Focus on the programme instead of the exam
- Provide access to a more varied curriculum.
- Help students develop critical thinking skills.
- Improve basic skills such as numeracy and literacy.

While these are admirable aspirations, it could be argued that the current JC programme provides for the above more than adequately. The problem is the LC. And the JC is a dry run for the LC or a mini training run for this 'high stakes' exam. This creates the 'learning to the exam' atmosphere to prevail in lots of classrooms. Thus creativity, flexibility, autonomy and variety are gone and 'learning off' becomes the important theme.

In November 2011 NCCA published a document 'Towards a Framework for Junior Cycle - Innovation and Identity'. This described the learning at the core of the JC in 24 statements of learning. These statements describe what students should know, understand, value and be able to do at the end of junior cycle, having fully engaged with and participated in the JC programme in their school.

While many argue that change should start with the LC, the JC not being a terminal exam for the vast majority of students, allows for more flexibility. And most teachers would agree that we should spend more time on developing the critical thinking skills of our students and less on

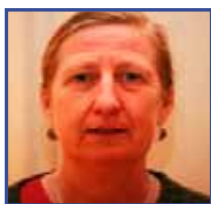
rote learning. It is also widely accepted that a significant number of First Year students do not make progress at Second Level and quite a number of Second Year students - male students in particular - become disengaged from the learning process. But change requires time for thinking, planning and collaboration. As classes are increasing in size and management structures are disappearing from schools, teachers are being stretched more and more to simply maintain the status quo. It is also envisaged that teachers will provide students with high quality feedback as assessment becomes a key part of teaching and learning across the JC. While teachers have always engaged in the assessment of their students as part of student learning these are big changes and any change is traumatic, thus it is vital that we as Principals and Deputy Principals do not put undue stress on our teachers or ourselves in rushing into unnecessary changes. TUI has issued some good guidelines to schools.

NCCA has set up a Network of schools nationally to develop and trial some new courses / modules / assessment procedures, etc and TUI Education Officer, Bernie Judge wants to liaise with the TUI schools (approx. 23) in this Network. These schools can provide valuable information on the viability, feasibility and resource requirements of the various aspects of the proposals. Other schools should not rush into unnecessary extra work. But staff should be encouraged to discuss the JC reform proposals and as information and templates appear on the NCCA website, schools can let their views be known to TUI and NCCA.

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