

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF

P.D.A.

MR. BRIAN Ó MAOILCHIARÁIN

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2013

WESTPORT

AREA 11

(MAYO)

A chairde, is mór an chúis áthais agus bróid dom é Fáilte Uí Cheallaigh a chur romhaibh go léir chuig comhdháil bhliantúil PDA anseo i gCathair na Mart, Maigh Eo. Tá súil agam go mbainfidh sibh idir tairbhe agus taitneamh as bhur gcuairt.

As PDA President it's my pleasant duty to bid you all a genial welcome to our 44th Annual Conference. How quickly time goes, it hardly seems like a year since we last met, and in other ways, with all that has changed in the intervening months, it feels like a very long time. But how pleasing it is see so many familiar faces - peers, past and present colleagues, friends, your resilience has been well tested in the last year and clearly you survived it! Personally, on my own behalf and on behalf of PDA national executive I thank you and appreciate your efforts to join us for national conference.

The conference theme ***'Meeting the Challenge of Change'*** was aptly chosen. It suitably reflects the scene brought about by the continuing, numerous reforms to teaching and learning in our schools. Successive budgetary cutbacks, new legislation,

and a plethora of initiatives have brought transformational change to our schools and colleges in recent times.

As I said last year and I must emphasise again this year, PDA accepts that in a world of constant change it is necessary to keep apace, to embrace necessary change and to adapt new methodologies and approaches. Notwithstanding that, PDA also recognises that a prerequisite to any reform is the system capacity to manage change.

Colleagues, we must stand together, we must impress upon the Department the need to adequately resource schools, we must demand by all and any means possible that an appropriately sufficient level of middle management be provided in our schools.

At times of austerity there is a reducing minimum beneath which one cannot go, I believe, delegates, I believe that we have been brought to that point and I call on you today to note this in your boards of managements minutes, to progress the urgency of the matter to the ETBs and from there to the DES!

I reported to you last year that PDA had met with DES officials the previous spring, a meeting at which we highlighted the genuine concern - that little heed was been given to the cumulative effect of the changes which were being rolled out and to their effects on schools, on staffs and on students.

PDA stressed then, and continues to stress today, that in our reformed education system it is critical to :-

- Ensure the welfare of Principals, Deputy Principals and school staffs
- Ensure the quality of teaching and learning and student welfare
- Ensure the sustainability of current provision and quality in the system

PDA identified pressures which were having a negative adverse impact on the school system. Among the main points discussed nearly two years ago were -

Dismantled Middle Management Structure and the consequential increased workload for Principals and Deputy Principals; (I will come back to this topic shortly)

Reduced time for leadership; Revised PTR; Guidance Provision (effectively a cut in PTR); School-Budget Cuts (capitation, resource hours etc.); Public Service Agreement- transfers and redeployment issues.

PDA, also flagged the additional responsibilities attaching to new initiatives, including - Junior Cycle Framework, School Self Evaluation, Literacy and Numeracy strategy, Further Education – SOLAS-Education Training Boards (ETB), Teacher Education – Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT's),

I tell you this again today delegates because, regrettably, nothing has changed for the better, no additional posts have been created to support the implementation of these initiatives, no support has been forthcoming. The situation, delegates, has deteriorated –the additional duties have come on-stream and more besides, the lack of support, the absence of middle managers renders the current situation untenable and unsustainable!

PDA sought a further meeting last year and I had hoped to be reporting on that today but circumstances dictated otherwise.

Haddington Road Agreement

I am sure you will agree that last year was an unusually strange year punctuated by various trade union and government activities. There was a hiatus, of sorts, during which no meaningful discussions about improving 'middle management structures' and the continuing plight of Principals and Deputies Principals could be facilitated. It is with regret that I report to you today that no progress has been made since we last met to address the chronic deficit of supports in our schools and colleges.

The early spring triumphantly heralded what, initially at least, seemed to be a unified stance by public sector workers against austerity measures as Croke Park 2 was rejected! It appeared for a short while that the government would have to rethink and bow to the 'enough is enough' cries of disgruntled, demoralised public servants. Unexpectedly, an opportunity to influence work

condition had arisen but alas, it was short-lived as the Unions were outmanoeuvred, the collective was too easily fragmented by the lure of individual negotiations and the Haddington Road Agreement was all but passed in early summer.

The enactment, in July, of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act (FEMPI) quenched much of the remaining fighting spirit as the futility of the exercise had become glaringly obvious, and that all but sealed the deal for the Government. The uncertainty surrounding the HRA was very much to the fore when we returned to our schools in September and it has continued since then.

FEMPI, as you are well aware, affected Principals, Deputy Principals and Assistant Principals most. The promise in the HRA of a full restoration of pay in January 2018 is just that, a promise! In the intervening four years there will be little or no incentive for teachers, especially so those at the top of the scale, to seek promotion due to the draconian measures applicable to salaries in excess of €65,000.

If another cohort of our experienced teacher colleagues retire as expected by the 31st August 2014 deadline so as to receive pensions based on pre-cut salaries, I hardly suspect teachers to be queuing to replace them.

Doing 'more for less' is punitive in itself, but expecting principals and deputy principals to take on additional duties for nothing is a step too far, and shows little more than contempt for the profession!

Schools have managed, despite the relentless cutbacks in recent years, schools have managed to keep the ship afloat so to speak but we now need support to successfully implement all that is expected and, in certain cases, demanded of us, the restoration of middle management is critical in this regard. I will take this opportunity to comment on some of the more recent changes.

Education and Training Boards

Without a doubt, the establishment of sixteen Education and Training Boards on July 1st 2013 marked an historic day in Irish education. These new statutory education authorities, formed

from the aggregation of Ireland's 33 VECs and the integration of the 16 FÁS Training Centres signal a structural overhaul of the education and training sector. This transformation process seeks to align education and training provision with nationally agreed priorities and strategies.

The process also necessitated the establishment of the new further education and training authority An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS), under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills. The commencement of SOLAS brought about the dissolution of FÁS. SOLAS in partnership with the 16 new ETBs, will be responsible for the integration, co-ordination and funding of training and further education programmes around Ireland. One of its first tasks will be to devise a strategy for the development of a unified further education and training sector. PDA congratulates Sean Burke on his recent appointment to the Board of SOLAS and wishes him and the board continued success with this ambitious reform.

However, unlike FÁS, SOLAS will not be directly involved in the delivery of training. The FÁS training division will be transferred on a phased basis to the sixteen ETBs. As you well know, delegates, our colleges have a very well developed further education sector which has met the needs of students for decades, has devised and delivered tailored programmes to meet those needs. It is of paramount importance that our FE sector is not adversely affected by the merger of two cultures – education (VEC) and training (FÁS).

It is planned that SOLAS will play a key role in Ireland's economic recovery through the creation of a world class further education and training sector. In this new era, PDA will press to ensure that SOLAS exploits the well-developed services of our FE Colleges.

BUDGET

This year's education budget was relatively benign, but not surprisingly so. The depth and severity of budgetary adjustments in the recent past has left nothing more to be cut. What is there left to cut, in a system devoid of ample middle management and where 30% pay cuts have already been imposed??

Almost €9 million has been included in the 2014 allocation to continue rolling out the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. Almost €70 million in funding for repairs to school buildings has been recently announced, of which €40 million will be allocated under a summer works scheme in 2014. The summer works scheme, as you know, had been suspended in recent years, due to the economic downturn. PDA welcomes this necessary expenditure and the re-introduction of the minor works scheme but let's not be carried away – these are routine maintenance issues, the removal of which left some schools, as seen last week on television news reports, in damp, dilapidated states!

Yes, there will be additional teaching posts next year but this is largely due to demographics – 6.3% increase in recent years. Maintaining the existing pupil-teacher ratios (PTR), while welcome, is not something at which to be overjoyed, because Delegates I ask you- is the PTR, is it not at the same unsatisfactory level at which it was? The guidance provision remains in quota, does it not?

Delivering this year's budget the Minister said, and I quote: -

“As we come to the end of Ireland's bailout, I firmly believe that protecting the education system is one of the best ways to invest in our economic recovery.

“Education is no different to other areas in needing to contribute to the stabilisation of the nation's finances and this year, the Government is making it very clear that education is important to us”

And so the ministers explains the neutral budget inferring a connection between few cuts, (capitation grants were cut 1%) and education being important – I say to you delegates, I say

that the reason is, the main reason for this year's neutral budget is, that education has over contributed to the bailout programme and it is now time for principals from every sector to be of one voice in our efforts to reclaim the vital supports and resources taken from our schools and colleges!

I will move on to the changes emanating from the Teaching Council and with your permission return to middle management later.

TEACHING COUNCIL

The Teaching Council also recognises that the world we live in is changing constantly; hence the Council sees teaching as an ever-evolving profession. The conference theme – meeting the challenge – sits well with recent approaches adopted by the Council.

Acknowledging change, the Council is introducing a new model of induction and probation for primary and post-primary teachers on a pilot basis over the next two years. Central to this new model is a period of post-qualification professional

practice called *Droichead*, which is designed to reflect the importance of the induction phase on the teachers' lifelong learning journey.

This will facilitate professionally-led regulation, a welcome reform whereby the profession will be its own gatekeeper so to speak. It will also be a major step in building the continuum of teacher education in Ireland.

In PDA's newsletter, Tom Hughes gives an insightful account of 'Reconceptualising induction and probation', I urge you to read his article but for now I will draw on the main points in the context of change and the challenges for schools in managing these reforms.

It is envisaged that during the induction phase, the newly qualified teacher (NQT) will practise in a supportive environment with access to a mentor, complete a programme of induction workshops and remain conditionally registered. A satisfactory engagement with *Droichead* will be attached to every NQT's registration as a condition. In order to fulfil this *Droichead* condition each NQT will be required to:

- engage in a period of school- based induction
- be confirmed by an experienced fellow professional/s,
following that process as having satisfied certain criteria
and
- complete a minimum period of post-qualification practice,
which may take place in one or more schools.

There are significant implications for schools, school leaders and teachers in the newly conceptualised process. Principals will be expected to sign off on the process. The Council recommends the establishment of professional support teams (PSTs). It is suggested that the PST would be comprised of principals, mentors and other experienced teachers each of whom might have distinct roles. The mentor would support the NQT during the induction phase while other members of the PST would work together to form a joint opinion and make a recommendation to the Teaching Council in relation to the NQTs practice. Colleagues, the theory behind this is sound, however, volunteers for the PST may not be easily identifiable.

PDA also recognises the additional duties and responsibilities associated with this reform. During the pilot phase, schools will be funded to the tune of €1,000 euro but no definite resourcing has been guaranteed thereafter. PDA, while welcoming the change, also recognises the additional work and time involved and will be pressing for the requisite levels of funding and time remission, so as to positively engage with the procedures.

A further reform from the Teaching Council applies to **Initial Teacher Education (ITE)**. Programmes are currently being developed which will see an extended school placement experience commencing in September 2014. Needless to say, accommodating trainee teachers for two years instead of one and, facilitating them in accessing a varied teaching experience, will undoubtedly have implications for schools. PDA will continue to stress that schools should be incentivised and up skilled to engage with both ITE and Droichead programmes.

Also coming from the Teaching Council is the recent signing of the commencement order for **Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001**, to become operational from 28 January 2014. This legislation introduces a major reform whereby only registered teachers in recognised schools may be paid from public funds.

This measure will enhance the status of the teaching profession through fair and transparent regulation of entry to, and continued membership of, the teaching profession. PDA again has welcomed this reform in principle. However, in many of our FE Colleges some of the finest teachers are unqualified according to the terms of the Act. PDA will continue to request TUI to seek a fair outcome for those caught in this legacy issue.

Chief Inspector's Report 2010-12

I now draw your attention to the Chief Inspector's report. The report, which is based on inspections carried out by between 2010 and 2012, found the standards of teaching and learning were satisfactory or better in the majority of lessons inspected.

For the first time, the Chief Inspector's Report includes parental surveys that show very high levels of satisfaction with schools - in post-primary schools, 87 per cent of the 20,000 parents surveyed had positive views of their schools.

You have probably read the report by now; however, I would like to comment on the inspectorate's observations regarding school leadership and management. The Report describes the "challenging" environment in which schools operated in the period 2010-12. It also shows that in that time student numbers rose by 5.5 per cent at primary level and by 6.3 per cent at post-primary level but that the number of teachers was relatively static.

More interestingly for us, among the developments noted by the Chief Inspector is the retirement of large numbers of experienced teachers and the loss of middle management posts in schools due to the public service moratorium.

He refers, neither to the 'reduction' nor 'revision of' but to the '**loss**' of middle management because delegates that is what it

is – a loss, and a big loss at that, a forced, arguably needless loss of intellectual capital.

Later, on page 63 of the report it reads that an important feature of effective senior management teams was their ability to build capacity among staff by promoting distributed leadership opportunities. It goes on to say that the Inspectors frequently commented on how, in the more effective schools, leadership roles were clearly defined and mutually agreed among all staff, and leadership positions were devolved in line with the skills and interests of the staff.

I am sure that such was the case, nonetheless, I ask, was due consideration given to the fact that not all schools were equally affected by the moratorium, some schools depending on age profile lost 3, 4 and up to 6 assistant principals, while still others were not affected. Is it not fair to say that some schools could indeed operate more effectively than others because they, with a measure of luck, simply remained better resourced?

PDA also welcomes the commentary on effective leadership on page 72 of the report. Here the Chief inspector acknowledges the critical role played by effective school leaders – principals and deputy principals. He also notes that there have been a high number of retirements from, and new appointments to, these roles in post-primary schools since 2010.

Significantly, he says that the medium-term to long-term effect of this has yet to be seen in the school system but the high number of new appointments means that the provision of high quality professional development for school leaders is more necessary than ever.

On middle management the report cites that one of the most common features of successful senior management teams was their ability to distribute leadership across the school. Furthermore, he does acknowledge that this ability often, of course, depends on the willingness of staff to take on leadership roles.

Most importantly he suggests that the replacement of promoted posts to meet school developmental needs, while ensuring distributed leadership and real management opportunities for staff would be beneficial.

I tell you colleagues, it is heartening to hear the chief inspector echoing what we have been saying for years – the loss of experience, the loss of corporate memory, the loss of promotional opportunities, and the loss of middle management is negatively affecting schools. I believe the Chief Inspector has added credence to our demand for the replacement of the posts structure.

The Inspectorate frequently refers to ‘distributed’ leadership; volumes of literature have been devoted to the topic. There is a consensus that it has become the preferred leadership model in the 21st century.

As you well know, this model advocates that leadership may arise anywhere in the organisation and is not confined to formal

leaders. However, delegates, it is also well argued that the motivation for distribution arises partly from the growing recognition that principals and other senior leaders are overloaded. Indeed, Hartley (2010: 27) argues, and I quote, that 'its popularity may be pragmatic: to ease the burden of overworked head teachers'.

Colleagues, we must be careful to resist what is becoming more evident with each passing term, to resist, or if you prefer, to accept conditionally, the raft of changes, legislation and procedures foisted upon our school communities by those who seem to have a broad interpretation of the distributed leadership model – by this I mean the unreasonable expectation that principals, and deputies, and teachers will embrace reform along with all the additional associated work – and do this for nothing!

Perhaps, those authors who adopt a more sceptical stance, arguing that distributed leadership is a way of encouraging

schools to do more work, a form of disguised managerialism, perhaps they are not that far off the mark!

And that, delegates, is from 2006 (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006), can you imagine what they would say today? Even then, in 2006, it was implied that the 'considerable investment' in the principal as transformational leader had failed, quite simply because the job of principal was too big for one person!

A Chairde, before I move on to comment on some of those aforementioned changes, the least of which is not the Junior Cycle framework, can I put a question out there – who is going to do the work associated with the implementation of the revised bullying procedures announced in September?, who is going to do the work associated with the consultation on school uniforms announced this week?

Apologies, there are two questions there, but both tasks must be concluded by February. Not unlike yourselves, I had a plan at the commencement of term, a plan based on identified

necessary priorities. Now, I wonder which essential tasks I will leave undone to make time for these dictated, prescriptive, time bound demands which land on my desk without notice or prior consultation. I will move on to some of the more recent reforms announced by Minister Quinn.

Admissions

The minister recently published a draft General Scheme for an Education (Admission to Schools) Bill, 2013 as well as draft regulations for discussion ahead of enacting legislation. If enacted, this framework will improve access to schools for all pupils and will ensure there is consistency, fairness and transparency in the admissions policies of all schools.

Under the proposals

- Schools would not be allowed to accept applications for admission before October 1st of the year preceding the year of enrolment with a longer period allowed for boarding schools.

- The Minister may regulate that no admission fees may be sought or charged as a condition of application for admission to a school.
- Schools would not be able to conduct interviews with parents and children ahead of enrolment
- Schools will be allowed to prioritise places for an applicant who is a sibling of an existing or former student
- Schools that can establish that they have waiting lists in place may, under derogation, be allowed to clear those lists over a period of a few years
- Appeals will be dealt with at school level under simplified arrangements.

Colleagues, PDA welcomes the draft guidelines as a discussion document, I direct you to the ETBI's submission on the issue of admission, and stress the importance of ensuring that the final draft would be clear, unambiguous and not unduly burden schools in its implementation, a template admission policy would be welcome in this regard.

Tomorrow morning, Gearóid Ó Brádaigh will address you on this very current and topical issue, I am confident that you will

be updated and suitably informed to engage in the discussion surrounding the draft guidelines.

Cyber bullying

The admissions guidelines were not the only ones to be introduced this term, we will also have to implement new procedures as prescribed by [Department Circular 0045/13](#) – I refer here to Anti-Bullying Policies that all schools must develop in accordance with the new procedures which replace guidelines that were issued to schools in 1993.

All schools are required to **immediately** commence the necessary arrangements for developing and formally adopting an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the new procedures. This is expected to be completed by each school as early as possible in the 2013/14 school year but in any event by no later than the end of the second term of the 2013/14 school year. The policy must be developed in consultation with parents, students, and all school staff, and aim to create a positive school culture and climate that is

inclusive and welcoming of difference. Under the new procedures, schools will be required to have education and prevention strategies for cyberbullying

Key elements of the procedures are:

- A school-wide approach to preventing and tackling bullying behaviour
- A requirement that all schools must adhere to the standardised policy template for developing their anti-bullying policy
- Requirement for schools to publish their anti-bullying policy on the school's website and give it to the parents association
- Making clear that the definition of bullying includes cyber-bullying and identity based bullying (such as homophobic and racist bullying)
- Practical tips for building a positive school culture based on inclusivity and respect
- Clear procedures for investigating, recording and dealing with bullying.

And, delegates arising from the commitments in the *Action Plan on Bullying*, the Department's Inspectorate will be placing a stronger focus on the actions schools take to prevent and tackle bullying. I wonder delegates, whether there will be an equally strong focus placed on the resourcing and necessary CPD required to implement the procedures?

I see a very clear link between this issue and the guidance counselling provision in our schools. The increase in cyberbullying in no small way has contributed to these revised procedures. This special form of bullying is an increasing challenge for schools. Let me for a moment draw your attention to some facts in relation to cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying involves harassing, insulting, physically threatening, socially excluding, and/or humiliating others using electronic media such as email, Internet sites, instant Internet messaging, and mobile phone text messages.

Another worrying characteristic of cyberbullying is that many youths who cyberbully choose to remain anonymous. This anonymity represents power, as the victim cannot identify the source of the aggression. Cyberbullying is also ubiquitous, widening the scope of bullying beyond the school environment and leaving victims without a safe haven.

In addition, cyberbullying has a great breadth of impact as youths who cyberbully can easily disseminate hurtful emails, webpage links, photographs, instant messages, or text messages to a large number of peers in seconds. Unlike traditional forms of bullying, the power inherent in cyberbullying is not socially constrained and can be exercised by any youth, regardless of his or her social standing or popularity at school.

Cyberbullying is common and harmful among adolescents and these aggressive behaviours do not occur in isolation. Moreover, our attempts to protect students from accessing

inappropriate online content or becoming the subject of cyber bullying are becoming progressively more difficult.

Clearly delegates there are complexities involved here and my concern is that most schools do not have the necessary resources to tackle the issues involved. The pervasive, 24/7 access to social media also gives rise to the question whether schools feel it is their responsibility to help students who are being cyber bullied outside the school environment.

Colleagues, the loss of ex-quota guidance counselling allocation to our schools must be reinstated. Since its abolition, principals and deputies have been placed in a most difficult space where we find greater demands on our time dealing with distressed students. Frankly, it must be stated that many principals and deputies have neither the training, the one-one counselling skills, nor the time to provide a service which should be delivered by qualified counsellors.

It is now prescribed under the new procedures that all school staff involve themselves in preventing and dealing with bullying issues. Is this not bringing the notion of distributed leadership to an unreasonable extreme? Sadly, in the last year, there have been too many tragic deaths linked to bullying. I remind you that in other instances allocations were reinstated to support schools deal with bullying issues.

I also say to you today that all schools need support, on-going permanent support to tackle this modern day scourge. It is both unreasonable and unfair to expect schools to take this burden upon themselves in the absence of meaningful levels of professional support.

Delegates, of course we will do all in our power to assist our students! The minister, too, must do his part in supporting schools. The ex-quota guidance provision is needed more now than ever. Not supporting, not resourcing schools to successfully implement the revised procedures amounts to little more than lipservice! A lack of resources is also evident in the revised Junior Cycle framework.

PDA – NCCA Network of Small Schools

The new revised Junior Cycle Framework is arguably the most significant curricular reform in recent decades. It fundamentally changes the manner in which the curriculum will be delivered, assessed and accredited.

The implementation of the new Junior Cycle Framework will require an extensive and multi-faceted approach at school level. JUNIOR CYCLE FOR TEACHERS or JCT has been established to provide a dedicated CPD service for schools.

PDA welcomes JCT, because as you well know, the successful implementation of the framework will depend on the schools capacity to engage with the high degree of change involved. JCT plans to engage with school leaders across each of the 4 implementation phases of the Framework commencing in sept 2014 with English, with other subject coming on stream in 2015, 2016, and 2017.

But delegates, CPD is only one part of the scaffolding required, it is worrying that no plans are in the pipeline to resource schools at local level – no additional posts, no coordination time, no moderation time, the lists goes on. There still remain many unanswered questions. These concerns were highlighted at last year’s conference and arising from a presentation by Dr. Anne Looney, CEO of the NCCA, PDA successfully managed to establish a partner network funded by the NCCA to investigate further the concerns raised.

Eleven schools were selected to participate. Fortunately for PDA, Michael Daly, former Principal and a past President of the PDA was available to act as network co-ordinator. I direct you to Michael’s article in our newsletter; there you will find an excellent summary of the work to date. Unsurprisingly there are some emerging issues -

- The implementation of the curriculum content as described in ‘A Framework for Junior Cycle 2012’. The planning of the programme in small schools.

- The time tabling of the programme in the school especially when the TYP, LCVP, LC and PLC programmes are also to be considered.
- Subject options and the anticipated competition for subject versus short courses on the timetable for subjects. Fear for the loss of subject options and courses in small schools. Potential for 'turf war' in staffrooms
- The position of students with special educational needs in the programme and the addressing of their needs.
- The resources to support the implementation. Schools feel that adequate resources would not be made available to schools by the DES.
- The time needed for implementation by Principals/Deputy Principals and Teachers. Where in the school year will this time be found.
- Some schools have limited or no access to Broadband in certain areas of the country. This provision was viewed as a minimum requirement.
- The needs of the assessment regime as described - internal and external moderation proposals. Quality assurance can be relied upon at present. The exact

application of the internal and external moderation in schools and between schools is a concern.

- The local school certification of students. Why not have national certification of some type.
- The involvement of parents and the presentation of the programme to parents. The perception of parents, pivotal to the programme's success.

- Features of Quality (F of Q) work referenced to these.

Students would reference their own work against these F of Q

- The timetabling for the assessment events – the SEC and the DES are considering/discussing this at present. Extra time will be allocated. Possible ½ to 1 day. Two periods of time will be allocated for school based aspect of the assessment ie. the 40% of the assessment.

- Teachers will assess first and then the moderation process will take place.

- The situation regarding teachers with more than one subject to be assessed.

- Moderation will be done in school. When and How?
- The Principal will have a role when teachers disagree on

the score?

- Possible intransigence by some teachers. Who decides?

- Storage of work, the logistics of the storage of the students work for schools Video files – being worked on at present.
- Appeals procedure. When, who decides etc.?

I realise the list is long but probably not exhaustive. Delegates, these issues are real, they reflect the genuine concerns raised by the participating schools. You will notice the huge demands on time and personnel. Later today, a workshop on the Framework will be facilitated by Mick Daly, TUI research officer, Bernie Judge will also be in attendance. It promises to be a most insightful workshop as many of the issues will be discussed.

Again delegates, and not to labour the point, but there seems to be an expectation that schools can somehow ‘distribute’ the workload without any additional resources to support the implementation process. It beggars belief! Professor Ciarán

Sugrue's presentation tomorrow will focus on the challenges and how we can best meet them.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that principals and deputies are overburdened and under-supported. The requirements of leading a school include fiscal, administrative, managerial, personnel and other tasks that can overwhelm and limit principals' time and focus on broader issues such as leadership. Many principals and deputies have received neither training nor support for taking on these issues in their schools. Change, delegates, is only one of the forces competing for our attention and usually not the most compelling one. And when it is compelling, it is difficult to focus and sustain the work needed for reform to be effective.

TUI has given a commitment to PDA that a meeting with the DES will be arranged as a matter of urgency, it is my intention to highlight the immediate need to adequately resource schools so as to ensure their effectiveness. I hope, when we meet again one year from now, that our schools and colleges will

have adequate post structures to effectively support their education provision.

Before I finish there are some people I wish to thank. Firstly, Area 11 conference organising committee which has been meticulous in its preparations during the last year. I hope that you will be enlightened by the conference speakers, all three of whom are esteemed specialists in their areas, and who, I am confident, will touch a cord with our most recent lived experiences. Shane Martin's insightful, entertaining presentation earlier today has set the tone for informative thought-provoking presentations and practical hands-on workshops.

Secondly, to all our TUI colleagues – President Gerry Craughwell, General Secretary John Mac Gabhann, and all at TUI head office – for their continued support, advice and assistance to PDA, I thank you. Sincere thanks also to Michael Moriarty and his staff in the ETBI.

Finally, to PDA National Executive, and its officers Mary, Gerry, Stephen, Kevin, – for your encouragement and support I am very grateful, it is indeed a privilege to work with you and with such a diligent, committed executive.

Mar fhocal scoirr, undoubtedly, we are operating in times of enormous change but we will, as the conference theme suggests, we will meet the challenge.

As it is so aptly expressed in Irish – *'Is ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine'*, colleagues, friends, we will, with each other's support, work through these testing times and hopefully, not in the too distant future, find ourselves in a better place.

Go mbéarfaimid beo ag an am seo arís. Go raibh míle maith agaibh.