



**CREATIVE
EDUCATION**
TOWARDS A MORE **CREATIVE** FUTURE

Voices from the Field

‘From co-dependent to co-creative’

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‘Towards a More Creative Education System’

Introduction: The Task at Hand

We live in a time characterised as Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA). The OECD in its recent [Education 2030](#) recognizes that the challenge this poses for educational systems is to equip students with the personal agency and the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to navigate this uncertain terrain. Given that education systems have been characterised as fuelled by nostalgia, innately conservative and influenced by an industrial-age ideology, the shift to creative agency is a profound challenge to the education project as traditionally conceived.

Until very recently, curriculum and pedagogy could be anchored to the knowns of teachers’ pasts, safe in the knowledge that this would be appropriate for pupils’ futures. In the age of globalisation, climate change, digital innovation, artificial intelligence, and other disruptive changes this can no longer be the case. Putting the student’s creative agency centre stage with the ability to question, be curious, make connection, innovate, problems solve, communicate, collaborate and think critically is the transformation which the current context makes urgent.

Creativity cannot be mandated. Ghandi’s injunction to ‘be the change you want to see in the world’ seems a relevant message for all stakeholders at this time. Neither can creativity be an ‘add-on’ to the existing way of doing things. It changes the system. How can the education system meet this challenge which calls into question much of accepted practice up to now? And what role can the arts play in this transformation?

The following document presents a harvest of views on the Irish education system - primarily from interviews but also including comments gleaned from symposia and the conduct of focus groups - collated in the first half of 2018 and framed in anticipation of the Symposium ‘Towards a more creative Education System’. The interviews with the actors detailed in Annex, who range across the field of education, were largely unstructured and designed to elicit frank perspectives on the system. What emerges is the articulation of a set of preoccupations and concerns which, while varying in emphases, often paradoxical and frequently contradictory, coalesce into a coherent picture. The arrangement of the views into themes is necessarily subjective but is justified by the need to put some order on what would otherwise be a discordant jumble.

In spite of anger, frustration and overwhelm, the overall tone is one of optimism that now is a good moment in education and that the system has potential for a major reset. While there are deep-rooted systemic challenges there is also huge energy and experimentation at play at all levels. How to harness this energy into a more coherent whole capable of realizing the ambition to be the best education system in Europe? The conditions seem

right, or so many sense, for a maturing and coming of age of the system to match the shifting contours of the modern world. What might this reset look like?

'Voices from the Field' point towards a set of possible conclusions about what is necessary for a systemic reset that might be characterised as 'from co-dependent to co-creative'. Ultimately, what is at stake is a reset of mental models, assumptions and prerogatives towards:

- Making the best interest of the child the lodestar of all policy;
- A decentralising of initiative and trust from the centre in a system that is more capable of open self-reflection and dialogue at all levels;
- A process of empowering, trusting and enhancing the professionalism of, and collaboration between, those at the coal-face of education, the teaching profession;
- A teaching profession that stands in its own power vis-à-vis the centre, trusting itself and trusting students in turn as the active agents in learning;
- An integration of arts initiatives within a coherent understanding of their role in a creative education system;
- Higher Education Institutions challenging themselves to engage seriously and urgently with reform of the transition to third level, the tail that many feel is wagging the dog and
- Systemic leadership, particularly from teachers, that allows parents have confidence in the unsettling but necessary transition towards a more creative education system.

Some comments venture into more speculative and contentious territory suggesting:

- The resourcing of unions to embrace a stronger role in relation to the professional development of teachers (in place of a strictly IR role) and
- Providing a process to assist the church to unburden itself of the responsibilities it carries in the field of education.

Voices from the Field

1. Prologue: 'Anything is possible – We are in Liquid Times'

In spite of the many challenges that confront the education system there is considerable optimism about the potential for change at this time.

- It is a good moment in education.
- Thanks to the efforts of many who have spent years 'bursting a gut' trying to reform it, the education system is not in a bad place as measured by international metrics.
- The capacity for the system to reset is powerful (at present).
- Things go in cycles. We are in 'liquid times', the need for change will assert itself and richer understandings will emerge.
- We are at a 'light-bulb' moment.
- I am very optimistic about the present moment with connections between science and the arts – STEAM – everything is possible.
- As someone coming from the outside, I see the system as very scholarly and wouldn't want to dumb down that dimension.
- The system is not bad for the majority and teachers are now well-trained.
- The focus on and naming of wellbeing and mental health in all aspects of the new Junior Cycle (JC) is commendable.
- We are on the cusp of joining the dots – we are very close to coherence. There are nodes of possibility each carrying exciting vision within our grasp.
- The JC reform was the single most important reform in second level education. There is now more money in the system to help progress. Reform of the Senior Cycle (SC) will move faster.
- There's lots to like in the new JC - it just needed longer to gestate. As a former art teacher I would love to be teaching the new SC art syllabus.
- There is great enthusiasm for what is possible under the new JC and the focus on wellbeing. The move from rote learning to experiential learning and skills is wonderful.
- Teachers talking to teachers and amplifying best practice is happening all over the country at teachers meeting with speed-dating approaches to spreading new pedagogical approaches.
- There is a national consensus on the importance of education. There are good people at the helm of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the universities and now is a good time to innovate.
- The strength of the system is the importance that society places on education and some of the brightest (daughters) go into teaching.

- In general terms the primary system is very broad and serves most students well.
- Parents are happy with schools - well-run, safe places with more than 80% happy with quality of school life.
- Of those who start school at 4 there is a retention rate of over 90% at 18 years – quite exceptional in Europe – and 70% of the 90% go on to some form of 3rd level.
- Ireland’s first technical university is likely by September and, for the first time, will require 30% non-standard entry routes.
- Some Institutes of Technology (IT) are assessing new entrants for their preferred learning styles and universal design for learning informs lecturers’ teaching approaches.
- The DES has a strategy to make the Irish education system the best in Europe by 2026. There are detailed plans to 2020 and onward built thematically with responsibilities allocated and with capacity being built. There is very clear specification of actions. The Minister has a clear focus with deliverable actions, with a particular focus on the STEM strategy.
- There is a broad consensus across the system about the direction of travel – built around the idea of cross-cutting competencies (in addition to curricular development). The train has left the station at least two years. The JC reforms are under way and the SC reforms commencing. Reform has also taken place in early-years education.
- Already 10 year olds are best in Europe at reading though not yet at science; the inspectorate ranking of schools as poor has halved; we’re changing the way we teach early years (focus on play) as a function of international best practice; drop-out rates in DEIS schools have halved from 30% to 15%; we have among the highest retention rates up to LC; more children with special needs and from dis-advantaged backgrounds are going to 3rd level.
- DES is funding innovations in 1,000 of our 4,000 schools involved in DEIS clusters, creative clusters, digital clusters etc. By providing resources for innovation DES is moving from ‘one size fits all’ approach.
- A new Admissions Bill will provide for non-discriminatory entry. A Parent/Student Charter is coming shortly which will enhance the rights of both parents and students. The DES is seeking to facilitate new models of patronage.
- DES is the biggest beneficiary in the National Development Plan with €8.8bn earmarked for school building over the next 10 years – double what was spent in the last 10 years. There will also be deep refurbishment of schools more than 10 years old.
- Schools are engaging with self-evaluation; leadership development is happening with 1,000 principals being coached and mentored; 1,500 new assistant principal posts have been created.
- Real change is taking place in breaking out of silos e.g. the NCSE is operating across departmental boundaries in relation to speech and language therapy.
- The direction in which curriculum change is travelling reflects international [research](#) as well as feedback on extensive consultations which have been a hallmark of the NCCA’s work.

2. Setting the Scene

Alongside the sense of optimism that now is a good time for a reset of the education system there were frank characterisations of the system as: lacking the capacity for self-reflection; being inherently conservative and self-perpetuating; serving the interests of the middle-class and being deficient at addressing larger issues of purpose and citizenship.

2.1 The Challenge of Self-reflection

A recurring theme is the apparent inability of the education system to hold a mirror up to itself:

- The system is not nearly self-reflective enough – when it does see a problem it rarely asks, ‘What can we do differently?’
- As well as being ‘high-control/low-trust’ with decentralisation of responsibility for solving issues, the education system doesn’t like space and can’t hold a question – it only wants solutions.
- There is no space for critique of/in this system.
- I’ve never seen so much compliance (covering rear) but no one asking the real questions.
- As a recent arrival in the world of teacher education I find a system incapable of being critical of itself.
- It’s not clear we have an overarching community of practice in education – rather lots of separate communities of practice.
- The system is incapable of social processing – it hasn’t the capacity for dialogue.
- Universities don’t criticize themselves - to what extent are they involved in co-enquiry?
- At national level we lack the ability to design and co-create.
- We jump too quickly from ‘what kind of child’ we want to what the teacher needs to do to achieve this. We don’t stop long enough to unpack the process.
- Why is the system asking the same questions as in 1914?
- There is a lack of democratic practice – a lack of ownership/authorship.
- Things need to change.

2.2 Whose Interests are being served?

The ultimate criterion of system’s effectiveness is how well it serves those whose interests it is supposed to serve – but whose interests is it actually serving?

- The system probably serves the interests of the middle class with its academic focus.
- Longitudinal studies show that many are not well served - those who get switched off from 2nd year on.

- While failing many less academic students it's questionable if it's serving even the 'good students' well;
- The system fails the academically bright, particularly when from working-class backgrounds. A good school plays to multiple strengths and education is a process of exploration.
- The system may work for compliant middle-class females but less so for males and completely fails non-compliant working-class males who are brutalised by the system.
- While great for the brighter students how about those who are not? It's serving boys less well than girls and suicide seems to be on rise.
- In a time of 'massification' students from second level are rendered passive by points system and social media.
- Why so many suspensions – 13,000 last year? What are we doing - we need alternatives for boys aged 12-15 years.
- We're turning out students at both second and third levels who don't question the nature of society or the system.
- The education system fails the tests of citizenship and sustainability – 12-16 year old's spend just forty minutes per week on SPHE. Where are values, ethics and citizenship?

2.3 The Bigger Context, Framing & Purpose

What does the bigger context of education call for and what forces are at work?

- **Context & Framing:** Given the state of the world with the planet at a tipping point and a tech revolution under way four levels of learning are required – global for living sustainably, societal for navigating a disrupted landscape of work, inter-personal to develop capacity for good relationships and intra-personal for self-nurturing and wellbeing.
- The future is not fixed but some trends are clear. Set a clear purpose for Education – whether or not the purpose should be to thrive, at least open a debate.
- We need to focus on the theme of disruption & design – and include 'drop-outs', challenging voices and the mental health challenge.
- The OECD have now moved to new sophisticated assessments of collaborative problem solving and global competencies which will use scenarios to test children. In the next five years 'learner agency' will be a defining concept, with forms of personalisation, familiar in the primary system, taking hold more widely. By learner agency I mean owning my own learning pathway, having more agency in learning, discretion to work on issues I'm interested in (e.g. social issues), having choice and voice, re-inventing schools such that they are so compelling that kids want to be there.

- Durham University is working on a measure of creativity for the 2021 PISA tests. The five Creative Habits of Mind model is based on curiosity, perseverance, Imagination, discipline and collaboration. Research also suggests that feeling well (wellbeing) and having a sense of agency are at the heart of good learning.
- What do we want to leave our LC students with – ‘a good sense of themselves’ - a new view of the student as a citizen/agent interacting with the world and co-author of active learning – the OECD’s active responsible engaged citizens;
- It’s twenty years since the last major change with Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Transition Year (TY). The context has changed with globalisation, developments in IT, sustainability challenge and well-being concerns. Since 2006 critical thinking and problem solving skills have been emphasised, powerful pedagogies, engaged learners – the learner at the centre of the educational experience. However while the notion of the active, engaged, confident, resourceful learner is central to JC parents are asking about the link between the JC and SC?
- The NCCA conducted a [Review](#) of upper 2nd level education in eight countries. The message was that we are looking for ‘adaptable, future-focused individuals and responsible citizens’. No one size fits all and there is a search for an alternative to the traditional. The outside environment makes a key contributions to experiential learning. There is a search for other official measures besides the final exam. There is a focus on physical and mental wellbeing. The OECD’s points for reflection for Ireland says the system is stable and robust but there is room for improvement. There is no one right model. Equity and excellence are seen as joint forces by which the education system can contribute to inclusive growth. The Netherlands, which has conducted a national debate over a number of years has concluded that ‘less is more’ i.e. there should be less focus on qualifications, more attention needs to be paid to participation in society and there is need for more emphasis on personal development.
- There is a ‘hidden curriculum’ within the ‘new science’ deployed by PISA and it is valid to ask who is driving it?
- The ‘New Science of Education’ approach is powerful, based on rigorous approaches such as randomised controlled trials and is spreading across the world. The weaknesses are that it simplifies complex educational processes, the teacher is treated as a technician and it provides specialist expert knowledge distant from everyday practice.
- Within the practical knowledge traditions, there is ‘networked professional knowledge’ which is practice-based and tested through sharing but lacks the rigour of the academic approach. This approach is based on networks of knowledge-creating schools working together with decentralised CPD and curriculum.
- **Purpose & Assumptions:** In theory the system is child-centred, particularly with the wellbeing agenda; in practice the caring school is about getting students over the line (exams).
- Up to now the understanding of ‘well educated’ has been polite, academic and ready for the professions but rarely has it included the vocational or the female. For the future the understanding needs to have a much wider base, including positive

mental health, self-confidence – ‘even if people don’t like me’ - emotionally aware, engaged in society and ready to go ‘other’ routes.

- The foundational narrative of education which was driven by the economic paradigm is a ‘busted flush’. I’m interested in system’s change, (like disruptive change in industries such as IT/Media) and not beautiful exceptions to a custodial model.
- Education should prepare young people for an unpredictable world. Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial skills are all closely related in creating economic, cultural and social value.
- The senior cycle consultation is starting with exploring the question of purpose. This is a subversive question that will bubble up uncomfortable truths.
- The first consultation cycle will explore the purpose of the SC reflecting needs up to 2030 and with an ambition to have the best education system by 2026. A child starting school in 2017 will do the JC in 2025 and the SC in 2028 – what will they need to succeed?
- Education was designed for the industrial age, the requirement being to be capable of understanding, being docile and following the rules. Now value resides in being able to think in ways that add value. Innovations require creative capacity. Creative people are often ill-served by the old system. We need to view technology as the artist’s tool. Science and technology are slow magic.
- The question of purpose is not dealt with explicitly (in schools) but is often present in the undefined curriculum – ‘The ABC Way’ running in the veins, ethos and values of schools. Religious may be gone but crosses still adorn schools.
- ‘Why are we here?’ is a central question. I am driven by social justice.
- Without purpose, mental health problems result - values of empathy, inclusiveness, what’s our social impact are central. Our buddy system in arts and sports builds a sense in the students that they have a purpose and role to play in society.
- Keep the expectations high rather than conveying that certain kids can’t hack it. Likewise within the new JC there is scope to aim for common or higher level – why not aspire high?
- Religion was the only subject where students could sit around and address the bigger questions – education for life, personal development linking into SPHE and well-being. Now DES is proposing opt-out for those who don’t want to attend with requirement that other subjects be time-tabled and the Minister seems confused about the difference between religious instruction and religious education.
- Business is not the problem in the system even if is sometimes represented as the barbarians at the gates seeking proles for satanic mills.

2.4 But Education is innately conservative & about control?

The system was characterised by many as innately conservative, centralised and control-oriented:

- All inter-generational systems are fuelled by nostalgia and are innately conservative. Formal education was always about control. Parents are universally conservative.

- An US report likened education policy formation to a big storm over the ocean with the ocean in a state of constant froth and ferment; meanwhile down in the murky depths education goes on in its usual way.
- It's really hard to bring about change in education.
- Narrow framing of issues (curriculum/transitions), instead of asking fundamental questions, maintains the status quo.
- The power structures of education are inter-linked (e.g. through who sits on interview boards etc) and know how to perpetuate themselves.
- Conservatism may be desirable given that innovations that don't work will have impact for many years – the UK is prone to very regular changes.
- Sometimes dictat from on high is appropriate particularly in contexts such as child protection to ensure implementation.
- Unions are under pressure to do as they have always done.
- Some kids are as conservative as the older generation judged by a recent student presentation to the Oireachtas Committee.
- You are more likely to find innovative teachers than innovative schools.
- The conservatism of the system is partly down to the sheer number of schools – over 700 secondary and over 3,000 primary schools, all competing.
- Many teachers spending 30 years, often in the same school, militates against innovation.
- The system doesn't change because it can accommodate wide fluctuations, particularly at primary level where there is lots of discretion – there is less flexibility at secondary level.
- In transitioning from training college to school, teachers become 'occupationally socialized' – the principal whispers in your ear, 'this is how things are done here'. The prevailing values assert themselves.
- The system keeps control. It is difficult to get decisions such is the current fixation on corporate governance.
- Our culture is parochial, watchful, jealous and competitive with one another. Everyone knows everyone else. We operate in secret whether in the HSE or the school system. The exam system is old-established and perceived as fair. If self-assessment were introduced there would be pretence that all is well 'in our school'.
- We are missing the students' voices in an ongoing way.
- The tradition of the Church's role in social control needs to be borne in mind.
- Education is a strange system – often privately owned but publicly funded with very centralised control.
- The CAO and Examinations Boards are creatures respectively of the universities and DES and are resistant to change.
- From my experience of going into schools the environment of many is regimented and stuck. Schools reflect wider society.
- Education is a profoundly complex system.

3. Some of the Actors

Interviews threw up a range of comments about various actors in the system, constituting a kind of 360 degree feedback on the system. Apart from the general character of control and hierarchy across the system, particular criticism was reserved, by those who chose to address the issue, for the limited industrial relations role played by the teacher unions at the expense of the potential for enhancing the professionalism of teachers. Meanwhile the church was in need of assistance to disengage from a role that that had become increasingly onerous but whose intractability would probably require a citizen's assembly to do justice to.

3.1 NCCA – consultative within constrained terms of reference

- The NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) is good and is very representative and consultative – indeed the system consults to death.
- The MO of the NCCA is typically to conduct extensive research on a curriculum area, consult very extensively and when they have buy-in they pass the new curriculum proposal to the DES which appends its stamp and promulgates. It is a stakeholder body with only the student voice not formally represented. They have 3 sub-boards for the JC, SC and Primary with similar subject-specific representation. They have a pivotal and potentially creative role between the DES on one side and the schools on the other.
- The NCCA has become more representative of unions and less innovative.
- What often appears as change on the surface is actually maintaining the status-quo. The NCCA is very consultative but engages around subject headings. The framing is within the subject-matter of subjects such as history and the area of expertise of the teacher instead of addressing issues such as violence in society. The big educational question is around inter and trans-disciplinarity. Reductionist subject headings kill learning dead.
- Progress is effectively limited by what the teachers, nominated by the unions, say is acceptable – there is no point in the NCCA going solo to the DES with something that hasn't got buy-in from the unions.
- The NCCA can't change the wider system – they must get on with consulting on curriculum reform within current constraints. They must wait for the 'Transitions Group' to change the bigger picture.
- The NCCA is embarked on a preliminary consultation on SC reform using a new process and starting with 40 schools, listening to what teachers, students and parents have to say followed by three one-day national seminars. Elsewhere there have been national debates but they may be captured by vested interests.

3.2 Administrative System

- The Government know the current system is not OK and are open to change while treading carefully.
- We have a very ethical civil service which will not openly disagree with what the Minister has laid down and will hold the line with outsiders. However their body language will reveal they don't buy the level of grand ambition - battle plans never survive first encounter with the enemy. Civil servants have ways of slowing down the over-wrought ambitions - too much, too quickly - of ministers.
- While measurement is in vogue and the Minister is particularly partial - with his recent plan containing no less than 200 metrics for the 3rd level - I believe the system is smart enough to subvert such approaches.
- The DES is divided into 12 directorates - silos that are quite conservative.
- The Inspectorate acts effectively as the policy arm of the DES and are very influential. However they tend to be conservative.
- I was assigned a senior minder by the Inspectorate to ensure I was on message and didn't say anything controversial.
- The inspectors are 'very nice people' and want to do things right. But they don't always use people/resources well – don't join the dots of Droichead, CPD etc. A third of teachers are in posts of responsibility but often the system doesn't interrogate the relevance of the posts in changing circumstances and what they might be doing more meaningfully.
- The DES are administrators, not educators. The Inspectorate which comes from a teaching background acts as a bridge. They are arrogant as a group. However when they agree on a strategy such as numeracy and literacy things happen. If they took a priority approach to creativity in the system things might also happen.
- Whose School Evaluation (WSE) was developed to take the focus off inspection of the teacher in the classroom – which teachers were uncomfortable with given the state of 'learned helplessness' and ASTI's insistence on the autonomy of the teacher in the classroom. WSE takes in many factors other than the teacher in the classroom.
- The current reality is that the Trades Unions/DES binary drives education. The DES lives in perennial dread of the unions. Management bodies are consulted when the deal is done. Unions have the power to withdraw labour – management bodies have no such power.
- The DES has used money as a bargaining chip with voluntary schools.

3.3 Parents and Students

In addition to interviews, the following section draws extensively on comments from the 2018 NAPD Symposium on senior cycle reform.

- Parents are the biggest obstacle to necessary reform. The plain people of Ireland need to realize that the world won't come to an end if schools engage in self-assessment.
- The National Parents Council will say points don't matter, we just want our children to be happy. However, upon examination, it transpires that most parents' conception of a 'happy child' is someone who scores high points and qualifies for medicine. In the real world parents support exams, control, discipline and points as important criteria in their view of a good education system.
- Teachers live in the shadow of parental expectations of the exam system and results whereas parents are probably much more open to creative approaches than teachers think – as witness the journey they are on with the JC.
- Parents are happy with schools - well-run, safe places with more than 80% happy with quality of school life.
- Middle-class parents are appalled that there might not be a JC exam; in fact the JC reforms weren't radical enough. Parents determine what's important in the political arena. Teachers could offer leadership to parents.
- Parents are currently responding to the system as they find it and current primary parents will respond to the system they find when their children reach 5th/6th year of the secondary school system. Change the system and they will change – but for now points are the driver at the senior cycle
- The system and parents are inherently conservative. However, there is a chicken and egg situation – parents need a new system before they can buy into it.
- Reform must start with what we are seeking to achieve to meet the needs of the student – with the teacher as the enabler. We are missing the students' own voices in an ongoing way.
- There is a real hunger for change. Our system is not individualised enough. Why have a primary-secondary threshold when other countries have a single system from 4 to 14 years? After a reform process why is the JC still a high-stakes exam? Hopefully the SC reform will be better and have a drip-down effect on Junior Cert.
- The JC reform got captured by teachers from early on. There is a need to consult primary parents whose children will encounter the system, not those who have been through it. Parents must not miss the chance to influence Leaving Cert reform.
- In primary school parents take a big interest – small schools, parish-based. With students becoming teenagers and the focus shifting to points, parental involvement falls off at 2nd level;
- Teachers don't get enough support or training in dealing with parents, active listening, restorative practice and how to deal with travellers.
- ESRI research indicates that 50% of students feel unprepared for higher education due to the focus on exams instead of thinking for one's self. TY and LCA are good for sampling what the student likes/doesn't like. Work experience should be part of LC. School prepares you for college which is where you learn about life.
- Students must be consulted on the SC reforms.
- Prior to students arriving in our school we survey them as to what they want in school. I believe the student voice is not recognized nearly enough.

- The UN Convention on Rights of Child requires no discrimination (how about grinds?), best interests of child as main criterion, voice of the child must be listened to and given weight – parent/student charter coming. Article 29 speaks of development of the child’s personality/talents/abilities and preparation for life in a free society.
- Kids are over-protected from real life to the detriment of resilience.
- While PISA tells us we are good at reading and writing only 15% of D17 kids go to 3rd level whereas 99% of D6 kids do.
- In dealing with disadvantage we need to help kids to handle ‘red’ feelings and transform through breathing to ‘green’ emotions.
- The potential role for parents as part of the school community is diluted by the conspiracy at 2nd level to keep parents out.
- The DES ‘Action Plan for Education 2018’ wisely places focus on Improving learning experience and success of learners, particularly those at risk of educational disadvantage.

3.4 Trades Unions

- ‘We have no problem with the assessment component – it already exists in many subjects – but we won’t mark it ourselves’.
- ASTI is dysfunctional even if some of its management are fine. DES were getting their defences in at recent union conferences re new SC reform even before anything is announced.
- ASTI is utterly dysfunctional and not part of the solution. It is not representative - 28% of conference attendees are retired members and it is organised through branches often remote from members. Its narrative is about teachers whereas INTO’s narrative is about students.
- Don’t go there.
- Unions are ultra-conservative caught between being professional bodies and being unions and favouring the latter.
- Don’t go there. Both major unions can be problematic – at present it’s the TUI’s turn. At recent conferences unions were already erecting flags about SC reform.
- The obstacle to change is the dysfunctional nature of the teacher unions, particularly ASTI. They keep teachers in a Scargillite world of restrictive practices. They are a regressive, defensive, negative force saying no to everything, de-professionalising their members.
- There is a problem with the elected members who tend to be activists, ideologically motivated and not representative of the silent majority. (They have an interesting pedigree going back to the foundation of the State and there may be something in their DNA that reflects this sense of their role in the State). For them ‘We don’t assess our own pupils’ is an article of faith whereas such feedback loops are essential for the integrity of the system and to not trust their own members to self-assess is a

perverse stance for a union to take. Why the JC should be an IR issue baffles me and pedagogy that doesn't involved assessment of one's own students is not education.

- For as long as the religious had numbers they gave preference to their own with lay teachers being treated like hired farm-hands. As a result the attitude developed among lay teachers in voluntary secondary schools represented by ASTI that they wouldn't carry out any work outside what was prescribed without special pay and allowances. The TUI are more progressive because they represented schools without religious control – though there was local political interference. The INTO doff the cap to the idea of professionalism as one of their roles as opposed to a strictly IR role.
- They resisted CPD for the new JC for several years. They have just sent circulars to the 40 schools chosen for the SC consultation saying no one is to agree to self-assessment.
- An entrenched old guard is out of touch with many on the ground – there is a war between the old 'not-an-inch' and the more reform-minded.
- The unions do a poor job of mediating with the DES.
- Unions know that extending the school year which is based on the needs of a former agrarian society would release pressure on their members. However, they are unwilling to agree changes to the terms and conditions of employment.
- A fundamental problem in Ireland is the conflict/competition between teacher unions and between unions and the DES – compared with Finland with one union which works in partnership with the Ministry of Education.
- The current reality is that the Trades Unions/DES binary drives education.
- Give each union €1m to set up CPD opportunities and accredited courses for their members on Industrial Relations, history and pathways to creativity etc. that would allow them to transform from reactionary trade-unionists to professional enrichment of their members. They need a 'Vatican Two' moment.

3.5 Church & State

- The role of the Bishops is the elephant in the room in relation to discussion on education. 93% of primary schools are under the trusteeship of Bishops and about 50% of 2nd level schools are owned and run by religious while being funded by the State at a time of increasing multi-culturalism and liberalism/secularism. This gives rise to real questions for the State of control of the school system and responding to changing dynamics.
- While confronted by real issues of control and the legacy of abuse and while seeking to introduce reform validated by western European opinion, the State has responded in a ham-fisted fashion in trying to bludgeon Catholic schools into shape. In this more secular era there is no longer the partnership and consultation that once characterised the State's approach to Trustees.

- In the eyes of the OECD Ireland has a very autonomous school system. How much reporting is done by national schools? DES has very few sanctions for non-performing principals or teachers. There is little mobility or moving from one school to another.
 - The Bishops' control of much of the education system must be a nightmare for them. There must be a thousand schools under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. How do you maintain oversight of that number of schools with the responsibilities attendant on patrons? With control of 93% of national schools at a time when the practice of faith is c40% how do they release ownership? How to escape either the dictates of Canon Law or some ongoing unwillingness to let go of control?
 - Education is best done by educationalists, not by Government which should be enablers, not prescribers. The principle of 'subsidiarity' gives maximum agency to the local, respecting the individual and giving space for creativity. Local agency requires trust allowing the citizen to flourish. At present the Catholic Church is being hounded. There is legislation in place of talking.
 - Bishops would love to un-burden themselves of the responsibilities associated with school patronage if only they knew how. A citizens' assembly is needed to resolve church/state relations.
 - The Church needs help to escape its current predicament. However it may be that this issue is too intractable just now to focus on and is best left out of the debate – schools get on with their business with little enough regard to who the trustees are.
 - DES is encouraging transfer of patronage from RC to multi-denominational or non-denominational patrons through amalgamation, closure and vestiture. Each of the 16 ETB's has been asked to solicit an appetite for one such school in each of their areas. The RC church supports the principle of what the DES is seeking to do but has some difficulties in practice. The DES' role is to facilitate parents' wishes.
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4. System Dynamics

Among the most interesting comments were those on the nature of the dynamics at play within the education system ranging from the perception of increased control and decentralisation of responsibility by the centre after the financial crash; the disjuncture between the quality of policy formulation on the one hand and problematic implementation on the other - such as was evident with the reform of the JC; the perceived dysfunctional relationship between the DES and the teaching profession; a somewhat similar patriarchal relationship between teachers and students; the creative opportunities opened up by technology with the capacity to free up teachers from their role as gate-keepers of knowledge and, finally, a widespread critique of the points system and the failure to seriously address its failings.

4.1 Taking Stock, after the Crash

- Post the crash the approach of the Government is that no one can be trusted. This has generated a whole new approach of accountability with responsibility being decentralised. The prevailing government philosophy is that 'someone is to blame and it's not me'. Consultation is formulaic rather than genuine listening.
- Education policy has moved from an historic understanding of the inner/outer nature of education to tick-the-box 'datafication' – dealing with a system rather than people.
- We have a performative high-control, low-trust model where the centre is decentralising responsibility for solving issues.
- I've never seen so much compliance (back covering) and no one asking the real questions. With child protection, data protection etc the pendulum has swung – it worries me a lot.
- Since the financial crash the OECD-mandated system is based on fear with micro-management and control. There is little room for the wild rush of creativity in this. Inspectors no longer dialogue with teachers – they are ignored – but rather tell principals what needs to be done. The focus is on measurement boxes.
- Right now the 'bureaucratic technocratic' approach is in the ascendancy over the communitarian approach. This is part of a managerialism approach, audit culture, neoliberal economics, rankings, massification, diversity, knowledge socialism, intellectual commons, technology and the teaching of ethics. There is a search for the right solution that can be scaled and delivered as reliably and uniformly as possible. This is part of a global trend deriving from the notion that expertise resides at the top and obedience at the bottom.
- There are three levels of challenge: at national level an inability to design and co-create; at mid-level, fetishizing the way things are (e.g. supposing that the each child will have the same LC experience – confusing standardisation with standards); at a concrete operational level unable to imagine a continuous assessment model as happens in other countries e.g. what went wrong with the JC was the failure to

cluster schools for the purpose of assessment given the discomfort teachers have with assessing their own students.

- The educational environment has become regulated and directorial. Schools feel swamped by all the regulatory requirements – child protection, data protection, changing curricula and admission regulations – with creativity being drained from the system. A culture of compliance and conformity to directives has taken hold. There is no longer the freedom to offer what you understand is best in keeping with your mission of education.
- The system is not broken. We perform OK on PISA. Citizens still place high value on education. The system is average.
- I can't think of anyone who thinks the system is good.
- While the education system has its merits it's sensible to review from time to time.
- The system is broken. Achievement-obsessive and points-driven both parents and teachers are afraid to change the system as it is. With a fear of experimentation it's less flexible, even in subject innovation, than other countries. There is a high suicide rate.
- The system is ruptured and fractured. Mental health issues are at crisis point in the third level. The NAPD are worried at what they are seeing at second level.
- The system is schizophrenic - seeking to make primary and junior cycles reforms work while the tail-end is unreformed.
- The 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not attuned to the needs of this century. Much more flexibility is needed – which also means more resources. Wellbeing is a huge issue from online bullying to self-harm.
- I was a big fan of LCA (Leaving Certificate Applied) but the system failed students who did this excellent programme by not providing follow-on paths. There was no currency in the system for the skills they had acquired.
- If 60% of jobs that our children will work in haven't been invented yet we're not preparing kids well.
- The leaving cert terminal exam doesn't capture the central aspects of education – the how (teacher), the what (curriculum) and the values that society seeks to honour. Primary starts too young. Males are struggling at 2nd level. Transitions are problematic.
- Schools are not realizing the three purposes of education - student welfare, learning and teaching. The DES agenda is keep them incarcerated and off the street, teach resilience and, by the way, teach them subjects as well.

4.2. JC Reform

- JC Reform is the single most important reform in second level education even if the Minister's approach to its introduction was cack-handed. When fully implemented it will probably realize 75% of its original intention. By going with a more engaged

form of learning in JC, students will have the thinking ability required for LC. There is now more money in the system to help progress. Reform of the SC will move faster.

- JC is the most important policy innovation in a generation and needs resourcing and implementation. It locates the curriculum more in schools with the ability to tailor to local needs. The reforms were introduced at a time of austerity when salaries were being cut and teachers demoralised. The Minister, frustrated by years to resistance to reform, adopted a unilateral approach in announcing the JC reforms. Leadership of unions were unwilling to cooperate and sabotaged/diluted the programme such that it is not as it started out. There was also a question of the confidence of teachers to teach the new approach.
- I'm very disappointed with the JC reform – why should JC still be a high-stakes exam? Hopefully the SC reform will be better and have a drip-down effect on JC.
- There are major changes at JC with classroom-based assessment but students will then transition to SC where they will have to focus on the points agenda with concomitant stress. After 4/5 years of working into new JC we still have the old SC.
- The JC was 'barged in'; little listening; no training – though sporadically so of late e.g. online engagement in relation to how JC is working.
- JC reform, while trying to liberate something positive, was announced and introduced on the cheap without resourcing and without consultation. It was introduced in an arrogant and dismissive way.
- The DES approach to introducing new JC was deficient. Simply putting up consultation papers online is not good enough. You need focus groups, cluster meetings, deep and meaningful engagement. Lots of initiatives on literacy and numeracy etc were introduced at the same time without joining the dots. No asking how to time-table the implementation of new JC over 5 years. More real consultation took place late in the day after the changes were introduced. The new JC involves 24 statements of learning and 6/8 cross-cutting skills for which there is written material but no in-service/CPD.
- The lack of real consultation that might have ironed out problems got backs up in what is a conservative system with the result that resistance crystallised around the unwillingness to assess one's own pupils. Indeed whereas in science 35% of marks went to assessed work previously this is now down to 10%. Likewise in construction studies and agricultural science much assessment was done by teachers in the past with extra pay. So the new self-assessment takes up much time/effort but with only 10% or marks its implementation represents regression in some respects.
- What went wrong with the JC was the failure to cluster schools for the purpose of assessment given the discomfort teachers have with assessing their own students.
- Without reform of the SC, transition year will be stood on its head from being experiential (as with new JC) to getting students back on track with the points system.

4.3 The DES vis-a-vis Schools – a co-dependent Relationship?

- There is good and bad in the current relationships between schools and the DES. The managerial bodies look to the DES for circulars when an issue arises. ‘Tell us what you want us to do’. Last year there was an edict from the Minister about school uniforms.
- As a positive I see the DES as head of a system with schools looking to the DES for leadership. However who represents the 2nd level now that the religious are fading from the scene?
- The system is very centralised but is seeking to give frameworks to teachers so that they can fill in the skills – other countries are less prescriptive.
- There is structurally-ingrained rigidity between the teaching profession and the DES and its agencies which control everything and make it difficult to pilot anything. There is no room for ‘reasonable risk’. We seek to perfect the operation of a flawed system.
- Teachers are suffering from ‘Stockholm Syndrome’; they’re so inured to the DES uni-directional approach that when invited to assess their own students they feel unable to do so – it must be done by others (teachers) under the aegis of the DES. The top-down mind-set informs the current drive-by inspections instead of inspectorate as a support to schools.
- Looked at as a co-dependent relationship, the dynamic between the DES and the teaching profession evokes the image of two drunks propping each other up. Their post-colonial habits are predictable. The DES pulls levers never saying what it means or doing what it says. The other parties understand the routine and respond accordingly. This post-colonial guerrilla approach contrasts with the Scandinavian willingness for policy-makers to say what they propose and be happy if others disagree with them. And yet the senior inspectorate is visionary and very knowledgeable about international thinking – but there is a dearth of political leadership.
- The characterisation of the DES as ‘Ruling by Circular’ from the top and ‘covering its rear’, in particular re child protection, has some merit. Its default setting is ‘tell them’ and the default setting of many schools is ‘tell us’ what we need to do to produce what you want.
- There is lack of consultation with teachers on the ground – expecting teachers to keep on top of documents on the DES website is not real consultation. The unions do a poor job of mediating with DES. The people who create DES circulars need to walk a day in the shoes of teachers.

- Teachers as suffering from ‘Learned Helplessness’, which Martin Seligman defines as the state of people who feel oppressed and who develop behaviours and attitudes which accentuate the condition.

- We engage as positively as we can with change that comes from the top down. The DES has always decided what and how much change and we creatively find ways to implement it.
- The principles of design and co-creation are not in the 2nd level curriculum and assessment.
- There is a national inability to unlock the potential for change in the teaching profession.
- The DES can engage in climate control but the version of the curriculum that students encounter is what is mediated by the teacher.
- We're great at policy but poor at implementation.
- We're good at curriculum but poor at getting it out there.
- We consult interminably but fail at implementation.
- In the primary sector the district inspector used to be looked to as the monitor and support – his/her role is now no longer central. In the eyes of the OECD Ireland has a very autonomous school system. How much reporting goes on by national schools? DES has very few sanctions for non-performing principals or teachers. The system is under-administered.
- There is little mobility or moving from one school to another.

4.4 Teacher-Student Relationship

- The LC promotes a teacher-centred approach with passive students, homework, the teacher talking with little group or project work. Teaching to the test becomes seen as 'good teaching' – students have developed an instrumentalist attitude, wanting the teacher to focus on what gets points.
- Students want greater autonomy. In reality there's a hierarchical relationship between teacher and student with the teacher stricter than parents. Student councils enacted under the Education Act 1999 are consulted on 'little things' but not core issues. While this improves with senior classes there is still hierarchical discipline which provokes misbehaviour; students are looking for reciprocity and respect.
- The teacher/student relationship is a good predictor of school learning – a positive relationship yields less stress and a poor relationship leads to less education and training after LC. Gaps are preparation for adult life, sport, work, reading for pleasure and appreciation of art/music.
- Our research indicated the need to listen to students more and create more democratic relationships. We need a variety of teaching methods e.g. group and process work. Exams lead to an instrumental approach by students with detrimental impact on life-long learning. We need better preparation for third level and exposure to work and career opportunities.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child is quite critical of the Irish system's failure to give voice to students – an authoritarian system characterisation which is echoed by the ESRI. This is a rising issue. Student and migrant voices need to be heard.

4.5 Technology – the new ‘Sage on the Stage’

- Technology helps with the externalisation of knowledge just as pen and paper did. With all the knowledge available online kids don’t need to retain information and can focus on contextualising knowledge, discerning good/bad/fake information. Now that Google is the Sage on the Stage – the gate-keeper of knowledge, a role previously performed by the teacher - the teacher’s time can be freed up to focus on the weakest. Technology can scaffold their learning.
- The curriculum for the new computer science subject in LC will be trialled in 40 schools from September. There has been good liaison between NCCA and the PDST on CPD to support the programme.
- With the development of high-level language for new media, kids are now much freer to express themselves – film being a readily accessible form. Text, image, audio and even 3-D printing are all now readily available.
- Just because technology is available doesn’t mean it should be used. Start with what learning, skills and content you want and work back to how technology can help - not ‘we must use the technology just because we have a load of iPads’.
- Without good pedagogical approaches the potential of technology won’t be realized – tech is only as good as the pedagogy which it supports.

4.6 Leaving Cert & the Points System – brutal and unchanging

- **Points System:** This has been looked at twice during my time in the system and there is no political appetite for change. Two tweaks have been introduced which have been effective. The scoring protocol was made less granular last year and this took some of the heat out of the leaving-cert results as reflected in the diminution of press coverage. Secondly research was conducted into the predictability of leaving cert questions and showed the concern to be unfounded.
- The NCCA/HEA Transitions Conference 2012 which gave rise to the Transitions [Group](#) was the biggest missed opportunity in Irish education. Lots of effort went into ensuring no real change occurred. Instead of addressing how the 3rd level recruitment process through the CAO points system was overwhelming the second level and making it a supplier of fodder for the third level they focused on issues such as the predictability of leaving-cert exam questions. This ensured the process never went anywhere serious.
- The leaving cert and points/CAO system is institutionalised child and family abuse by the third level system which can’t be bothered to create its own forms of assessment. The horse-trading that higher education institutions do in relation to the points system behind the scenes is shocking and lacking in transparency, despite protestations to the contrary. ‘The centre can no longer hold’. There is need for new forms of matriculation and broader entry routes into university.
- The CAO system has process virtues such as being transparent, equitable and scaleable. However it is vicious from the point of view of creativity - forcing essay

marking to be capable of being reduced to a fixed categorisation that can be defended on appeal. The weaknesses in the system are now too great and require a change process to be engaged. The points system combined with the funding model is a 'murder machine' - though drop-out rates in 3rd level are less than in other countries.

- The points system is simple, easy to understand, fair and brutal.
- It's a great way for universities to fill 1st year. But they recognize it's not meeting their needs for reflective students. The points system limits the role of the 'good teacher' to teaching to the exam. It leads to gaming the system.
- While the third level complain that students are not team players they know that high-point students will stay the university courses.
- The media focus on the 0.2% who make 600 points whereas the average is 280-300 points. 3rd level undergraduate courses should be broader. Employers are getting wiser to the practical as opposed to the academic skills. 'Hire for attitude, train for knowledge'.
- The cut-backs in funding had incentivised the third level to pile on the numbers in 1st/2nd years for capitation.
- The elephant in the room is the points system. We need an education convention to bring parents, teachers and students together – there is a mental health problem.
- The 3rd level has a corporatist culture of performativity with everything measured (publications/citations etc.) and despite their own complaints about the product of the second level they perpetuate the points system and are the educators of the teachers who staff the second level.
- Since 2014 the further education system is very coherent, output-focused and structured as a function of employers and government. Drop-out rates are a result of the failure to create self-directed learners. Points are off the agenda.
- The points system masks class problems – it's an apparent meritocracy that is fair/transparent while actually masking the reality of class bias.
- Ireland is unique in having a unitary stream geared towards university. We haven't cracked other vocational paths with esteem.
- Parents will follow points system if that is what the system suggests is best for their children.
- The third level has an ongoing grip on the system with students looking for easiest route to points. The report of the Points Commission in the 90's disappeared into a black hole – everything was fine with the system. Only the third level is being recognized as of value.
- The primary problem with the third level is not the points but the construction of a single focus on third level with demand exceeding supply and some courses constructed to be high points courses. Why is it great that 62% go to 3rd level?
- **Leaving Cert:** There is a general consensus around the need to maintain a pointless exam.
- There is a singular focus on the terminal exam.
- It's fair and transparent but is it serving students well? The marking system with open review of scripts means there is little room for judgment.

- Is the current system a necessary evil or just evil? The LC distorts teaching and learning; two thirds of LC girls are losing sleep – it's not healthy.
 - Beware of tinkering with the LC high-stakes exam. Its academic focus is driven by dominant forces in society and it inspires huge confidence. The current system has snob appeal and its published league tables indicates what we value.
 - The message of the current system is that content is king whereas it should be the queen and creativity should be the emperor.
 - The message is that it's a selection process for third level which is an insult to the 20% who don't go to higher level - instead of being a transition to a continuum of options.
 - LC is viewed as pinnacle of our lives – success/failure – the message from parents, teachers and others.
 - It's inflexible taking no account of illness/bereavement and having to wait 12 months for repeat.
 - It's an elitist accreditation driving grinds for those who can afford them.
 - It creates chronic stress with LC classes 50% empty as students go for grinds;
 - The media accentuate the LC stress by the amount of focus they give to it;
 - No attention is given to LCA. The weakest need support – the brightest will succeed anyway.
 - In a recent survey of parents of primary-school children 65% were in favour of change (interview, assessment and terminal exam), 11% didn't know and 6% favoured staying the same – with 67% in favour of continuous assessment.
 - All parents will tell of stress and the nightmare of the Leaving Cert for them and don't want it to be like that for their children.
 - The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its 2016 assessment, recommended reform of the LC to reduce stress.
 - It has some assets but the link to the CAO is bad – it leads to gaming the system, high stress levels and narrows the focus with no education in citizenship.
 - The real issue was that the Leaving Cert became a filter for going to 3rd level instead of being an inflection point for going in one of several different directions. Snobbery is the underlying issue where everyone wants their child to go to university.
 - There is overload of work at LC – students move from a two hour essay at JC to six hours at SC. A teacher of English doesn't have time to expand outside the syllabus and dive deeply into a subject or put on a play.
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5. The Teaching Profession

The role of teachers as the key actors in the system was highlighted in the interviews which reflected on the forces of inertia at play, the sense of overwhelm at the onrush of initiatives and the need for more CPD to enable the greater professionalism of teachers.

5.1 The Teacher at the Coal-face (i) – the forces of inertia

- The status quo is supported by the teaching contract, the tradition of the individual teacher in ‘my classroom’ whose measure is the performance of my students in the final exam.
- Teachers like the status quo of JC/LC exams. This creates the idea of meritocracy of an objective state-sponsored exam. Removing the State exam places the teacher in the central role.
- Teachers like the old system – that’s what they know, what they loved and what brought them back to the classroom.
- Teachers are self-selecting from a narrow band which is conservative. The colleges of education are likewise conservative.
- School culture captures teachers who may have been momentarily rendered innovative by their training.
- Teachers are conditioned by habit and the fear of change. Teachers are products of a middle-class white profession and feel valued for delivering A’s.
- Reform may need change of teacher cohort. Thirty years ago teachers were largely left to their own devices. Now there’s much more they are expected to do – bureaucracy, accountability, working with other teachers.
- With the new JC/LC in Ireland teachers are key in developing or subverting the curriculum.
- We have one of the lowest number of school days and include exam days in the school year.
- There is simply too little time to do all that needs to be done in a very cramped school year.
- 165 days is too short to carry one-year’s work load. The DES doesn’t want to fight it. The trades unions know that extending this would release pressure but are not willing to change terms and conditions of members even if the structure of the school year is a function of a former agrarian society.
- The school year is a nonsense leading to short intense terms with students needing one month to catch up on learning after summer – two months for weaker students. The structure needs reform.
- In Ireland teachers’ pay may be fine when you have full hours but, in reality, many are on short hours which don’t support the cost of living, particularly in Dublin.
- Many of society’s issues are left at the door of the school – the informal curriculum and we want A’s. I miss teaching ‘but not the other stuff’.

- With the Joe Duffy syndrome afflicting perceptions of teachers it may not be as prestigious as it once was and there may be less voluntarism. And the profession is not yet reflective of the ethnic mix of society and where are the males?
- Teachers live in the shadow of the parental expectations of the exam system and results whereas parents are probably much more open to creative approaches than teachers think – as witness the journey they are on with the JC.
- Secondary teachers teach subjects rather than students.
- There is an inability to translate the individual teacher voice into a collective voice - the unions aren't doing this and it isn't necessarily their function. There is a national inability to unlock the potential for change in the teaching profession.
- Society respects the individual teacher who teaches their son/daughter but are appalled at the Luddite behaviour they see at union conferences.
- The 2nd level is very academic in approach and is staffed by those who did well in the traditional academic system and go on to replicate its values. Never being part of the IT world they have no experience or knowledge of level 6 options. They reinforce the academic bias in the system. And the academic model is cheaper than applied approaches.
- Teachers enter the profession enthusiastic but find a big credibility gap between theory and practice leading to deeply-embedded cynicism among many. They tend to be conservative with a focus on the three R's. Unlike in the adult education domain they don't trust students to learn and run a mile from the personal empowerment entailed by assessing their own students.
- There are three categories of teachers - 'Innovators', principals and teachers for whom the pace of change is too slow; the 'opposers' and the middle ground who wake up to long-promised change at the last moment but go along with it. DES lost the middle ground with the JC reform happening at time of salary cuts, housing crisis, promotional and posts of responsibility cut-backs.
- The JC is a low-stakes exam but teachers are afraid to self-assess – there are some valid concerns given the parochial nature of Irish life – but there is need for 'wisdom space' in which low-key assessment can take place. SLAR (Subject learning and review) meetings, taken from 3rd level, allow teachers to collaboratively reach consistency in their judgments about classroom-based assessment of students work against externally set features of quality.
- In the new JC if teachers dropped their preoccupations with mocks at Christmas and later there would be less problems and stress with the new ongoing assessment.
- Schools are not set up for collaboration. Provided a subject teacher in her classroom gets the results no one asks how the teaching and learning is done. Teachers are good foot soldiers, following the rules, getting the A's.
- Teachers are reluctant to change – it will need a new generation. Why change when they're getting results required with the old approaches. We need to change the Teaching Contract restricting teaching to 22 hours.
- Teachers emerging from college need some time to acquire the confidence to be risk-takers. It's a constant fight to keep them from defaulting to the safety of the

curriculum and the plan. A team context of leadership and openness to change is crucial.

- Volunteerism is forthcoming when teachers are motivated and inspired.
- Teachers are afraid to mark their own pupils – partly a function of the small and familiar nature of Irish society and schools.
- Teaching is a vocation, we are passionate and love what we're doing. Money couldn't compensate for what we do.

5.2 Teachers at the Coalface (ii) – in danger of overwhelm

- Teachers feel rushed, crushed, crunched, isolated, distrusted and under-valued. Teachers' spirits are crushed. Their souls need to be nourished afresh. We need a new narrative.
- After an in-service day on GDPR, SSE, Child Protection, CBA, JC framework our general feeling is of being over-whelmed. With so many initiatives there isn't time to digest. The DES needs to take the foot off the accelerator.
- There is initiative overload.
- There were twenty-one initiatives between May and October over two calendar years. It wasn't possible to keep up with reading, much less assimilating so many initiatives/circulars.
- Much is happening with continuous assessment and sequential introduction of subjects into the new JC syllabus but there is a lack of manpower and it's having a serious impact when combined with the new RSE, internet safety, wellbeing (PE/SPHE/CSPE), coding and Mandarin options. Where's the time – putting huge pressure on schools. Our system is too broad while the UK's is too narrow. Much of the reform is good but teachers are not sufficiently supported and ill-prepared for reflective practice. Continuous assessment is worth only 10% of marks but the need to present work is positive.
- The JC cycle isn't fully complete yet. Teachers believe in the concept though there is fear of dumbing down. CPD to support JC is lagging because of IR issues.
- There is now a focus on resilience-building but the amount of time being allocated to wellbeing leaves less time for basics of other subjects.
- Initiatives should be decommissioned when new ones are introduced.
- There is initiative fatigue – though this can be over-hyped; but some initiatives should be decommissioned when new ones launched.
- Teachers are suffocated and overwhelmed by externally-mandated stuff – things they would do themselves if professionalised.
- There is lack of consultation with teachers on the ground.
- Schools are overwhelmed by the enormous demands being made on them by the department and are likely to view a new 'initiative' as just another imposition.
- The inspectorate has moved more from inspection to 'scaffolding of change' seeking to help schools to meet change with self-evaluation. In meeting schools in this new

role they have become aware of how schools are struggling with the volume of stuff being thrown at them.

- While there is complaint of loading the schools with more stuff we can't step off the drive for improvement.
- Manage expectations. Early on in innovation there will be disruption until students learn to self-regulate.
- Teachers can be very isolated in their classrooms.

5.3 Need for CPD to support Teachers & School Leadership

- **Teacher Support:** DES underestimated CPD (for new JC) - teachers don't feel supported in the change.
- Under the new 'Looking at our School Framework' there is a national drive to emphasise CPD. The National Teaching Council's 'Droichead' programme of peer observation for teachers entering the system is now being complemented by 'Cosán' (three years old) for ongoing CPD. More generally 'peer observation' where teachers invite other teachers to drop into their classes to observe is a very empowering approach to CPD. Under the PDST (Professional Development Service for Teachers) those aspiring to being principals will get opportunities to shadow other principals in other schools.
- NTC's 'cosán' programme is seeking to make the informal learning that goes on explicit – vs hitting teachers with more imposed material i.e. giving a language for explicitly speaking about teaching and learning. Their 'Droichead' programme helps bridge the transition from college to classroom. Conversation is crucial. The 'Féile' programme talks about and celebrates diversity of learning.
- We encourage in-service and CPD but there's a lack of opportunities to implement new learnings. Pop-up workshops as done in-school to share innovative pedagogical practice is part of the solution.
- CPD is weak in Ireland. In Finland there is a focus on 'professionalism'; teachers spend four hours in the classroom but the rest is devoted to working with colleagues on collaborative planning and upskilling. The UK's administrative burden is more oriented towards control.
- With the eight cross-cutting skills in the JC when do teachers get to experience that which they are supposed to be facilitating in their students? They need experiential in-service training. They need to know what creativity is like.
- Teachers need to be empowered and to accept as normal that they are accountable and subject to review.
- **School Leaderships** feel abandoned and overwhelmed, the two primal fears for which we are hardwired. No one represents them. Given the psychodynamics of abandonment and overwhelm the capacity for the system to reset is powerful.
- The DES prepares teachers poorly for leadership in terms of CPD – limited and tied to the curriculum. An OECD 2007 report on school leadership found that promotion to

principal was as a function of being a good teacher versus being equipped for the administrative responsibilities that principals face. In Singapore there is a structured career path all the way up to the top of the ministry of education.

- There is a crisis of management because of the dearth of a structured approach to development for leadership. Induction programmes for new principals are not compulsory. Pathways of development need to be created. Without preparation, becoming principal is too stressful and many are dropping out after one or two years at both primary and second level. The CSL (Centre for School Leadership) is working with NAPD and IPPN to deal with this.



6. The Arts in Education

Given their importance the arts should be a core part of the education system. Is there scope for a better joining of the dots between the various arts initiatives and funding sources? Will various arts pilots wither? And is there a coherent understanding of the role of the arts within a creative education context? These were some of the questions arising.

6.1 Importance of the Arts

- Arts together with civic pride and citizenship should be at the heart of a civilised school.
- Engaging with the arts needs to be as natural as engaging with any other subject.
- From the perspective of the best interest of the child, teachers have a moral/ethical obligation to cultivate creativity.
- I feel real sadness as an art teacher that art and wellbeing are sacrificed on the altar of the points system.
- Creativity in Ireland, being oral, informal and organic, looks and feels different to artistic/creative expression elsewhere.
- The debate about creative schools is really about being Irish so it brings up some deep (emotional) issues of cultural identity and history. Creative schools can open a space where teachers, artists and students can explore what creativity is about and dispel the shadow.

6.2 Creative Schools, Creative Engagement, CPD for the Arts

- We are forging a new era of change with a sense of gathering momentum from the Arts in Education Charter 2013 and the Arts Portal 2015 to Creative Ireland 2017.
- We need creativity in this age of acceleration and schools need to prepare students for more rapid change than ever before.
- In general we find Irish graduates difficult to assimilate into the work place. Young Irish students are used to being told what to do and tend to be linear thinkers. Europeans are more creative and able to get on with the job.
- Irish students don't learn computational thinking as a 2nd level discipline. While the computers can do the computation we need graduates who can define the problems that need to be solved using big data, data analytics, arrays of numbers etc.
- There are sloppy definitions and sloppy thinking around the distinction between the arts in education and creative education. The understanding needs to be that creativity should underpin the entire education process in class-rooms and in the learning environment – not as a functional approach but as a set of understandings and approaches that includes ecology and connection. This connects with the EU

acknowledgement that 24% of populations are unprepared in terms of skills for the world we're living in.

- The teacher knows education and the artist knows about re-imagining. The interaction between the two leads to a change of ethos of teaching and opening the door to infinite possibilities.
- For children the arts introduce a new dynamic where the normal rules don't apply. This gives rise to initial chaos until they determine the new rules that will apply.
- The benefits are huge for a range of students with ADHD, chronic social anxiety etc. Often children don't understand their potential until they are pushed to do something. Giving students a sense of purpose from the moment they apply to enter the school has led to high levels of retention in the school system. And teaching through the arts and IT can bring layers of learning outcomes where, for example, costume design can relate to a history of the origins and associations of the design - starting with a story.
- The choice of pedagogical approach determines whether the arts are creative. Learning art history isn't creative.
- Exploring a new art form is discovering a new language and each new language opens access to a new world and new identities of the heart and the head. Children can be trapped in a particular identity which is limiting. Acquiring new language is key to discovering new identities and possibilities.
- Government seems more attached to rhetoric than practice – nice for branding but where's the proof it contributes to the new economy? Coding's relevance is more obvious. There is no in-depth investigation of what creativity is or the state of creativity in Ireland. The budget doesn't suggest huge commitment.
- Creative Schools is one of the confusing array of titles for the Arts in Education initiative and may be due for a new title. There are three strands within Arts-in-Education – the junior cycle, Creative Schools and CPD.
- The conception of the arts has been restricted – music related to church choir, the visual as decoration i.e. arts as tokenistic presences.
- The philosophy of ARIS (Arts Rich Schools) which is now being absorbed into Creative Schools was 'recognize, incentivise and celebrate' - recognize the many schools doing good things and promote clustering/sharing while recognizing inequality and that one size cannot fit all; provide targets and expertise and money to incentivise and celebrate by having a national day for the arts somewhat like the 'Young Scientist' competition.
- With the absorption of ARIS into Creative Schools and with the latter's programmes being pilots the danger is that they will go the way of most arts pilots and wither away.
- If Creative School is targeting 150 schools in the coming year how long will it take to impact our 4,000 schools?
- I'm quite cynical about the 'branding' of all kinds of initiatives with the 'creative Ireland' label.
- It is very challenging to deliver an arts-rich programmes within the constraints of the curriculum and requires a lot of volunteerism. Arts need time and space – more

than is available in teaching contract of 22 hours per week and 28 hours for student in class. The JC allows just 1 hour for Artistic Performance.

- A high-level advisory group for Pillar One is being set up to ensure that Creative Schools stays on mission and is not distracted by systematisation.
- As well as the 150 schools that will initially be part of the Creative Schools initiative the idea of creative school clusters is one of 18 actions that have been taken up by the Minister and announced at the Teacher Conferences.
- While there are four strategies within the Creative Youth Plan encompassing the formal and informal, embedding creative process and CPD there is a sense of 'ad-hoc' about all of this. There is need for some agency to align everything particularly with funding coming from a variety of different sources.
- The €2k per school available under the Creative Schools programme is too little to make much impact. The various arts programmes need to be unified.
- 300 of the 730 secondary schools in the country have worked with the NAPD's Creative Engagement over 8 years.
- Notwithstanding the work of the NAPD and the Arts in Education initiative chaired by Professor John Coolahan they weren't consulted about the Creative Schools initiative. There is a failure to consult and join the dots.
- Right now arts experience and creative process get circumvented by art teachers and expressed as product. We need to get teachers and artists to engage with process. Funding has been secured for CPD in arts through the twenty one Education Centres.
- The Arts in Education Charter needs to be refreshed.
- The new JC art programme, while great, has 45 'learning outcomes' that need to be revisited over the three-year cycle.
- In relation to the JC's cross-cutting skills which includes the 'Be creative' skill no in-service training has been developed – just a booklet with ideas. You need to send a number of teachers on in-service who will become the key champions for creativity in school.
- Creative habits are about being non-compliant. Collaboration is not about compliance but cooperating to get results you want. Employers want non-compliant behaviours. In Finland high PISA scores for science correlate with poor self-concept and intention to pursue science – like South Korea. They are good at PISA tests because Finns are culturally compliant like the South Koreans.
- While the focus in debate about education tends to be on the inter-face between 2nd and 3rd levels a very interesting threshold is between early-years (3-5 years) and junior infants. Early years has a great curriculum of play, creativity, think-making, break-making etc which emphasise the agency of the child whereas progressing to junior infants you find parents expect children to be in uniform and subject to control and with less freedom to run about. The older the child the more constraints we keep on him/her. The notion that primary is creative and secondary is the problem is not necessarily so. National school teachers may be good at pedagogies but not necessarily at thinking beyond the confines of what they have been taught to do in their training.

7. Some Suggestions for Change

Lots of suggestions arose in the course of the interview process, some focusing on the process of, and agenda for, change while others focused on concrete suggestions and desiderata for change at various points in the education system.

7.1 Co-creative Change Process

- Re-imagining things being different is the first step towards things becoming different.
- We are story tellers - merely shining a light in an area can cause change e.g. the focus on literacy/numeracy.
- Should we do reform faster?
- The honouring of process - issues such as inclusion, creativity, values, wellbeing and the nature of pedagogy rather than the politics of curriculum silos and box-ticking - is required for transforming the system.
- Successful interventions are the result of solutions co-produced by local agencies, service providers and citizens. Canada gives status to, and trusts, teachers. They get all the forces into one room as a collaborative professional community.
- We need to open up spaces of fecundity encompassing bureaucratic, academic and professional voices rather than the current bureaucratic rationality. We need decentralised co-creative approaches to engagement rather than the imposition of top-down expert solutions.
- All actors need to be in the same room. We need to find spaces and places in the existing framework to crack open the system. There is no single answer.
- Change (e.g. re points) is a process requiring engagement over a number of years but is worth doing. It won't be done by the civil service or ministerial directive. It needs universities, IT's, unions etc to create a group that is trusted and funded to work over a period of time with six-monthly reports (rather like the citizens assembly) – a process with Chatham House Rules.
- Educational change requires engaging the system - teachers, policy makers, curriculum developers etc.
- Changing the system requires a social movement – the issue is a political one, not a research one.
- I have come to realize that moving from an industrial to a twenty-first century model of education requires a conversational process rather than big declarations. Top-down doesn't work.
- Developing a systemic understanding to underpin system's change requires a common language. Like a murmuration of birds it requires mastery of a very few rules to allow spontaneous emergence to occur. Life is inherently creative. The approach of design thinking is to enquire 'How might we' vs 'what's the problem to be solved?' The focus is on prototypes around different points in the system. Generating exemplars is very important.

- It's necessary to have the whole system present – the 2nd level is wedged between the greater diversity at 3rd level and the innovations at primary level.
- We need to have the teacher's voice heard.
- There is need for a split-screen approach where one half is improving and the other half is disrupting.
- We need to move from 'Mind full to Mindful'.
- The cycle of conservatism needed to be broken. Full-frontal attack won't work. We need a side-ways approach from personal stories and testimonies of what actually changed peoples' lives in the education system.
- Scaling new innovation is the challenge - ideally you need catalysts who can connect with teachers, researchers and policy-makers working with new management agenda's and improving teaching practice; this requires a wide-angled lens embracing research and engagement.
- Influencing policy-makers requires working inside the system sufficiently to understand their thinking while remaining autonomous (vs staying on outside detached or critical or working on the inside and losing autonomy).
- Academics are typically good at speaking to teachers but not great at engaging with parents and policy-makers – we need to become proficient in our roles as advocates.
- It may take years to see impact and this is typically not part of funded research.
- There is need for reform from the top down.
- Focus on reforms that are limited and doable without needing to disrupt everything at once but capable of being built upon.
- The Teaching Council is largely represented by teachers and needs to open a movement of teachers – needs to go beyond mediation/meeting of teachers to address resistance of teachers, another elephant in the room.
- A citizens' assembly is needed to resolve church/state relations.
- The growth in classroom supports for special needs to a position where it now accounts for 20% of teaching input has all happened at second level since 2006 which shows how quickly change can happen.

7.2 Reprise of 1993 Convention on Education:

- A reprise is needed of the model chaired by John Coolahan in 1993 which led to the 1995 White Paper.
- It is 25 years since the 1993 national convention which showed that Irish society can do what's needed. It's now timely and crucial to renew the debate.
- We need an education convention to address the points issue bringing parents, teachers and students together – there is a mental health problem.
- The Convention required support from a big secretariat.
- The Convention was productive of keeping the established order in place. Instead there needs to be disruption – a framing such as 'Health & Wellbeing in Education'.

- The Convention was a great idea but one event wouldn't hold water. Changing the curriculum is a complex socio-political enterprise – it needs substance and depth instead of sound-bites.
- The system is replete with many 'fora' with many people feeling maxed out on participation in existing 'fora' which have clear missions.

7.3 The Agenda – whose Interests should be served?

- Vested interests must be challenged and the best outcomes for children need to be the main criterion.
- The interests of children must come first and they must be in the room. Democracy is key and Ireland can be a leader.
- Ask how to make the system really child-centred? Ask the big questions about what we are seeking from system and unpack and understand this before implementing solutions.
- 'Fora' are reflective of the 'advantaged' – we need to give voice to the disadvantaged.
- The biggest need is for wellbeing to be the core of teacher training. Training in mindfulness should be part of teacher training – not just something for RE class. And it should start in primary school so that it's integral to education.
- Curriculum needs to be reformed to meet skills needs and assessment needs to move accordingly. We need new pathways through the primary and secondary system.
- How to design the 'classroom of the future' – the environment in which students spend from 9am to 4pm each day?

7.4 Teachers as true professionals

- No system can outperform the quality of its teachers.
- Think of the contact time that teachers have with the kids – moulding the future. They have to be the designers of creativity and collaborative experiences. We assume they can do it but it takes a lot of learning and experience to be able. Are we giving them the opportunity to do group work etc? What stifles creativity is people's unwillingness to say what they mean.
- Change of the education system starts with the teacher – and de-programming student-teachers.
- There needs to be a better fit for new teachers meeting the reformed junior cycle curriculum - both teacher formation and system reform are important.
- If I had a magic wand I'd open the hearts and minds of teachers.
- A central need is for teachers to acquire a strong sense of self-confidence in their own professionalism and standing in their own shoes with confidence when it comes

to self-assessment. They need to find their voice in an age when soft skills become the essential hard skills. They need to be able to deviate from the class-room plans and creatively adapt thereby modelling creativity and the ability to admit not knowing to students.

- Make space for creative incubation: teachers are overwhelmed with lack of time and space for incubation within the intensity of the school day; (ditto for students with their always-on media). The curriculum needs to move away from a convergent approach to more social learning and co-creation. Convergent thinking breeds anxiety in teachers – there is no room to engage with the student who believes 4 is a prime number; no room or crack for the light to get in. Teachers need to shut up and make space for the student – as in the title of a recent book, ‘Teachers should never work harder than their Students’. There is need for a lighter syllabus and curriculum and challenge the ‘canal thinking’ of the text book that must be completed to the end. Teachers are very skilled at the craft of completing the set text. They teach subjects rather than students. A cognitive shift is required. It’s the daylight that frightens them.
- We need to create agency and trust in teachers to bring about change, getting them to work in pairs and using technology to create class-room pedagogy.
- The parochial nature of Irish life might make assessment uncomfortable but it would do wonder for the status of teachers if they were ready to be professionally engaged in assessing student presentations and new modes of assessment.
- The real question is, ‘What ought we to be doing in the classroom?’ Where is the professional and moral agency? Teachers are suffocated by overwhelm of externally-mandated stuff – things they would do themselves if professionalised. My biggest message is the need for the re-professionalising of teachers.
- Teachers need to be internally subversive and re-professionalise. In relation to creativity there’s no point in throwing Ken Robinson at them. They would feel guilty and ashamed, deflated and disempowered. We need a different conversation.
- I would dearly like to see a team-based approach in schools – groups of professionals engaged in cross-curricular planning with more conversation and cooperation within and between subjects/disciplines. This is under-resourced – there is need for more CPD.
- Professional collaboration is the key to progress.
- There is need for collaboration between teachers and between schools. Moving to group learning in class is potentially transformational - while entailing more class preparation the impact on learning and engagement is huge and allows the learning to be much more visible.
- What’s needed in teacher formation and development: Focus on what it means to be a professional as a teacher; the inspectorate needs to clarify its understanding of initial teacher training – what do you want your graduate to be (being and doing)? Respect the teacher’s context; Create space for innovation.
- There could be more support for management, bringing principals together. There is need for change of culture which you sometimes get with the principal and deputy axis.

- ‘How to open the doors and share?’ Teachers need to collaborate with those who are different and acknowledge they don’t have all the answers and can get it wrong. ‘Teach as you want people to learn’. The attitude needs to be to work/learn with me not from me. Teachers must model the collaborative style they are asking of their students. They need to be less terrified of others coming to view their innovations and who is in charge. Collaboration is the acupuncture point of most potential in the system. Getting out of professional learning silos may require to be forced initially until it becomes a new culture/habit.
- ‘It’s not about how intelligent we are but how we are intelligent’. The information is in the room, the question is by how many doors can we access it; maths through theory, the visual, demonstration etc.
- There is a need to find ways to trust the profession (teachers).
- There is a need here for networks of good practice and mentoring.
- You need to send a number of teachers on in-service who will become the key champions for creativity in school.

7.5 Reform of Senior Cycle, the Points System & 3rd Level

- Second level needs to be changed to continuous assessment;
- We need new pathways through the primary and secondary system.
- We need new routes through 2nd level with high value being attached to apprenticeships.
- Is the assessment system fit for purpose in the 21st Century after 15 years of debate?
- The JC is a low-stakes exam but teachers are afraid to self-assess – there are some valid concerns given parochial nature of Irish life – but there is need for ‘wisdom space’ in which low-key assessment can take place. SLAR (Subject learning and review meetings), taken from 3rd level, allows teachers to collaboratively reach consistency in their judgments on students work against externally set features of quality.
- Whereas much good innovation is being done e.g. student reflection in new JC, there is little acknowledgement of this in the assessment of students (10%) or in recognition of teachers i.e. the soft skills aren’t really being assessed and acknowledged.
- While new JC and TY provide opportunities for creativity, there is a disconnect from the SC – we have ‘done’ the wellbeing, can’t afford to be creative, must cram! It should be possible to add a ‘portfolio’ approach to other subjects as is done in art in JC with JC profile of achievement and continuous assessment and credits for extra-curricular. After all third level provide marks for ongoing essays during the years.
- Universities need to stop creating a ‘points-race’ with low-entry high-points courses.
- The SC needs to be a threshold of many possibilities.
- Finding solutions that are transparent and work at scale is no easy matter. The Leaving Cert (and the points system) should be seen as inflection nodes leading in many different directions rather than one-way filter to university.

- If progression could be framed in NFQ terms (Levels 1-9) students could begin to look at a scaffolding approach to progression. There is a need to change the hearts and minds of parents that you can study business equally at an IT as in TCD with the same currency of standards.
- Employability statements may be a way of convincing parents to change their thinking. Education needs to be about resourcing students for the longer journey with digital and community (citizenship) skills.
- At leaving cert we could introduce interviews for transition to certain courses (mindful of the history of nepotism) and there needs to be points for different styles of exam for applied courses.
- In my reformed system every school has an independent therapist, measures of self-esteem and self-confidence, active promotion of the 65% who earn less than 400 points, championing of LCA and LC Vocational and support for well-being of teachers as a desirably profession.

7.6 Structural & Process Reforms

- Ideally I would also like to see intermediary bodies between the DES and the schools (like the ETB's) – there are 4,000 schools. In the UK the Local Authorities have responsibility. In Canada there are district administrators. In Finland there are local education authorities providing strong management support.
- The system doesn't always use people/resources well e.g. not joining the dots of Droichead, CPD etc. A third of teachers are in posts of responsibility but often the system doesn't interrogate the relevance of the posts in changing circumstances and what they might be doing more meaningfully.
- DES needs to use IR bargaining (e.g. aligning conditions of new and existing teachers) to secure extension in the school year.
- Need to change the teaching contract restricting teaching to 22 hours.
- There is scope for flexibility in teacher training models - Mary Immaculate follows a thematic approach, Hibernia an online approach while St Pat's has been approved to pursue an 'Emancipatory & Social Justice' model, all approved by the Teaching Council.
- Teacher education is moving in the direction of meeting the requirements of the international baccalaureate.
- There is a challenge of teacher retention with new teachers having the expense of additional two years PME masters for a total of 6 years and related cost with no guarantee of permanent posts at the end.
- Instructional Leadership, under the auspices of the ETB, is a behaviour-changing journey over two years about personal and professional identity vs the one-day fireworks of CPD. In the words of Ken Robinson it's about 'climate control vs command and control'. The Cosán programme of the Teaching Council likewise gives

more influence to the teacher in deciding on the form of legitimate CPD – opening a more meaningful professional learning experience.

- For innovation to happen senior management needs to give space to teachers to innovate and be on a leadership development path. The overarching structures need to be right.
- We need to scale models of success – normalising rather than treating as extraordinary - particularly in the arts? We need missionaries to spread the good news that creative process is normal process

7.7 More Suggestions – Primary to Tertiary

- **Primary** system: Can primary programme be made more like the early childhood approach?
- **Transition to secondary**: There is scope for smoother transition, particularly to 1st year experience where there could be more thematic and experiential work as in primary school with more hands-on experiential (v directed) learning. There is no communication between primary and secondary sectors except at special needs level. ‘Primary teachers love their pupils; Secondary teachers love their subjects’;
- **Secondary**: I would like to see JC realized in its purest form and banish formal exams in JC. Class-room based assessment are valuable for a moment in time to indicate you’re doing what is appropriate – then move on. There would be many pathways through SC with space and time for students to be the learners they can be.
- I would like more phenomena-based learning - explore each subject for a sustained period around a theme - but the DES is resisting the idea that formal classes might be closed down for a week to facilitate this. Longer-duration classes give space to explore themes in some depth;
- The focus needs to be on differentiation – the idea that kids have different abilities and that teaching and learning needs to be contextualised with different strategies for different learning styles.
- **Tertiary**: I would like to throw open the third-level system such that funding wasn’t solely for full-time students; it allowed the accumulation of credits – work placement and international placement; institutions would be allowed to allocate a budget for student support without having to label students as deaf or mentally challenged – integrations vs stigmatisation; there would be positive branding for Technical Universities that celebrates what they have vs every university wanting to be Trinity and every IT wanting to be a university; Inculcate ‘Universal design for learning’ concept; social justice would be a guiding principle and take the ego out of education.
- I’m passionate about the need to reinvent and celebrate apprenticeships which don’t enjoy parity of esteem with the traditional bounded master/apprentice approach – I want to see progression to PhD level.
- What set of things should we do to maximize the joy of learning – that all students will find something in the school experience that will support and stimulate life-long

learning. There is a lack of joy. I advise PhD students to worry less about the outcome – the value is in the process.

1.8.18



Acronyms

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
CBA	Classroom Based Assessment
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSL	Centre for School Leadership
CSPE	Civic Social and Political Education
DES	Department of Education and Skills
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETB	Education Training Board
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HEA	Higher Education Authority
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals Network
JC	Junior Cycle
IR	Industrial Relations
LC	Leaving Certificate
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
NAPD	National Association of Principals and Deputies
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NTC	National Teaching Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PE	Physical Education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
RC	Roman Catholic
RE	Religious education
RSE	Relationship and Sexuality Education
SC	Senior Cycle
SLAR	Subject Learning and Review

- SPHE** Social Personal and Health Education
- SSE** School Self Evaluation
- TUI** Teachers Union of Ireland
- TY** Transition Year
- WSE** Whole School Evaluation

Acknowledging the Voices from the Field

Those interviewed in compiling the 'Voices from the Field' included the following broad, but by no means complete, cross-section of the education system. We are hugely indebted to each for sharing so generously, frankly and often passionately their perspectives and aspirations for the system. In addition, comments were collated from speakers who contributed to the three symposia referenced at the end of this Annex.

Institutional & Policy Framework:

- Tomás Ó Ruairc, Director of Teaching Council;
- Clive Byrne, Director NAPD;
- Barry Slattery, (+Fred Bass and Ben Murray), Director of Curriculum Change, Senior Cycle, NCCA;
- Bridget McManus, Chair of NCCA and former Secretary General DES
- Muireann Ní Mhórain, Príomh Fheidhmeannach, COGG (an Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta);
- Áine Lynch, CEO, Parents Council Primary;
- Gary Mac Donnacha & Dr Suzanne Dillon (respectively Deputy & Assistant Chief Inspectors DES) and Daniel Kearns (Curriculum development and creative schools within DES);
- Dr Don Thornhill, former Secretary General DES and former Executive Chairman of the HEA, is current chair of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority, the Chartered Accountants Regulatory Board and the Joint Standing Committee of the Dublin Maternity Hospitals and board member of the NCH.

Creative Schools & Creativity in Education:

- Michael O'Reilly, ex-Creative Ireland;
- Dr Michael Finneran, Head of Drama and Theatre Studies, Mary Immaculate College UL and Advisor to Creative Schools;
- Paul Collard, CEO of CCE (Creativity Culture and Education), Project lead for Creative Schools.
- Karol Sadlier – former adviser to Creative Schools
- Dr Katie Sweeney – Chair of Arts in Education Portal
- Margaret O'Shea – CPD – Art
- Dr Jane O'Hanlon – Poetry Ireland

3rd Level Education Departments:

- Dr Ann Looney, Dean of Institute of Education, DCU and former CEO of NCCA;
- Dr Áine Hyland, Professor Emeritus and former VP UCC;
- Professor Marie Parker Jenkins, Professor of Education, UL;

- Dr Mike Wride, Centre for Academic Practice, TCD;
- Professor Jim Deegan, Head of the Graduate School, Mary Immaculate College, UL;
- Dr Finn O’Murchu, Head of School, Post Primary, MIC, UL, Thurles;
- Dr Geraldine Mooney Simmie, Director Structured Phd in Education, UL;
- Dr Mary Fleming, Director of teacher education, NUIG;
- Dr Shane Bergin, UCD school of Education.
- Dr Jake Byrne – TCD, Bridge-21

3rd Level Leadership:

- Tom Boland, BH Associates, CEO of HEA to 2016;
- Dr Jim Browne, Professor Emeritus and President NUIG to 2017;
- Professor Philip Nolan, President NUIM and member of Transitions Group;
- Larry McNutt, Registrar, ITB Blanchardstown.
- Dr Tom Collins, Chair of DIT, ITB and ITT, Emeritus Professor of Education NUIM

Post-primary Principals

- Norma O’Brien, Coláiste Mhuire, Askeaton, Co Limerick
- Seosaimhín Uí Donnáilín (+Mary Fahey), Scoil Mhuire, Ennistymon, Co Clare
- Focus groups: teachers in the above schools.
- Fiona Collins, Ashoka Change-maker schools (Primary principal)
- Aoife O’Kelly Gibson (Malahide & Portmarnock Educate Together)

Student Bodies

- Tim Hammersley, Spun out
- Colin Clerk, ISSU

Post-primary Managerial & Union Bodies:

- Valerie Lewis, Post-primary support officer, ETBI;
- John Irwin and Áine O’Sullivan (General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary) ACCS (Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools);
- Brian Flannery, Delegate for Education, Jesuit Provincialate;
- Dr Michael Redmond, Director, Research and Development Unit, JMB.
- Moira Leydon: Assistant General Secretary, ASTI.

Business:

- Tony Donohoe, Head of Education and Social Policy, Ibec;
- Dr Kevin Marshall, Head of Education at Microsoft;
- Gráinne Noonan and Shane Mulchrone, Business in the Community.

Voices from the following four Symposia

1. UCD 7th Festival of Educators 27 January 2018

- Valerie Hannon, Innovation Institute

2. UL International Winter School 2018 9/10 February 2018

- Professor Merrilyn Goos – Professor STEM Education, UL
- Professor John Furlong – Emeritus Professor of Education, Oxford.
- Dr Seth Chaiklin, University College, Denmark.

[Dr Geraldine Mooney Simmie, UL and Professor Jim Deegan, Mary Immaculate College also spoke and were also interviewed separately]

3. NAPD Symposium 13 March 2018 about Senior Cycle Reform:

- Professor Emer Smyth, ESRI
- Jane Hayes Nally, President, ISSU
- Dr Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children

[Tomás Ó Ruairc, Teaching Council, Áine Lynch of NPC Primary and Barry Slattery, NCCA also spoke – and were also the subject of separate interviews].

NPC Primary Education Conference 14th June 2018

- Richard Bruton, TD, Minister for Education.