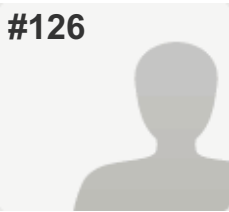


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PAGE 1: Please complete this consultation paper in respect of your area of interest and/or expertise

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Q4: 1(a) What improvements can be made within existing resources

Rather than separate new communities with the provision of denominational and Educate Together schools, the community national school with the ETB's as patrons school be further explored.

The potential for increased autonomy for Boards of Management and primary principals in the allocation of teachers within the school to meet the needs of children should be explored. The impact to children of additional support teachers such as learning- support, resource and EAL teachers and SNA provision needs further exploration in a context where class size has increased in recent years.

Q5: 1(b) What improvements can be made through new provision

In consultation with the Teaching Council, additional funding should be made available for the continuing professional development of teachers, with an emphasis on gaining a deep understanding of the practice of teaching. Enthusiastic, well-informed teachers can transform the school experience of children and students

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Q6: 2. Comment on work currently being undertaken by the Department in your area of interest and/or expertise. (What are we doing well, what could we do better)?

The extension of initial teacher education programmes - four year B.Ed and two year PME is warmly welcomed. The renewed focus on literacy and numeracy has generated interesting new approaches based on the most up-to-date research. We are very pleased that resources are finally being put in to early childhood education provision.

ECE needs further attention.

The Irish language is being neglected.

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Q7: 3. Are there opportunities (e.g. new areas of work) which the Department should consider when developing the 2016 - 2018 strategy which would advance the achievement of our mission, vision and objectives across the continuum of education and skills?

Good work has started in the area of further education and apprenticeship opportunities. This needs to be further embedded in the system and clear options need to be provided for those who do not aspire to higher education.

It would be a pity if the IT's in aspiring to become Technological Universities became fixated on providing level 8, 9 and 10 courses.

Early years and further education are the neglected elements of the system and could have the most impact on ensuring a more equal education system.

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Q8: 4. How should success on achieving our strategies be measured.

Figures relating to student retention and successful transition to the next phase of the education system would provide quantitative evidence of success.

Prevention is more effective than intervention - investing in high quality ECE will reap dividends.

Some consideration needs to be given to qualitative information also, so that the cracks in the system can be understood.

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Q9: 5. Comment on any issues relating to the continuum of education and skills, in addition to your particular area of interest and/or expertise

ECE - scope for development, weak

Primary - competent, good

Second-level - scope for development

Further Ed - scope for development

Apprenticeships and other options - experiencing significant difficulties, very weak

Higher education - scope for development

The focus on ECE in recent years along with further education and apprenticeships is good. The lack of progress in Junior and Senior Cycle reform at second-level is distressing.

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Q10: 6. Any other observations that you would suggest the Department should consider in the formulation of our strategy for education and skills 2016 - 2018

CPD for teacher is vital.

A review of teacher salaries, particularly the remuneration of new teachers needs to be addressed if we are to continue to attract and retain high quality graduates in the profession. It is crucial for the future of our country that teaching remains a highly valued profession.

The broad based curriculum at primary is important but potentially children will be exposed to too much breadth and no depth. It may be possible to address this by changing from the current subject focus of the curriculum to a thematic approach such as the areas suggested in the Cambridge Primary Review.

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Q11: 1(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

The emphasis on the professional development of ECE staff and the renewed focus on education and care are essential.

Enhanced training for practitioners and provision for children with SEN in Early Years is the correct approach and will need to be complemented by EAL training in due course.

Q12: 1(b) How should progress on Prioritising Early Years be measured?

The development of the Early Years Inspectorate with a strong role in overseeing the quality of the educational experience of young children to complement inspections focusing on the care environment and structures is important in measuring outcomes in prioritising Early Years.

In time appropriate, 'readiness for primary school' outcomes could be identified with the potential for observations schedules which could contribute to deepening understanding of progress in prioritising Early Years.

Q13: 1(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

1. CPD for practitioners, both formal and informal. Participation in level 5,6,7, 8, 9 and 10 programmes to be incentivised so that a critical mass of expert practitioners and researchers are developed. (outcome = better trained EY practitioners)
 2. The current plans for the enhancement of SEN training is to be commended. (outcome = enhanced provision and participation of young children with SEN)
 3. Given the changing and more diverse population in the country a focus on intercultural education, including identity, EAL, religious diversity and human rights would be important for Early Year practitioners. (outcome = enhance participation of children from families for whom English is not their first language)
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Q14: 2(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Priority 1 = Early Years education is a right not an intervention. The focus on ECE is to be welcomed.

Priority 2 = The focus on education and not solely on schooling is positive. it takes a village to raise a child. Summer camps / courses, after school clubs, encouragement of parental involvement are all important in raising expectations regarding the potential of education

Priority 3 = Restoration of guidance counsellors at second level is positive

Priority 4 = Targeted interventions such as HEAR and DARE are important in attempting to attract children from designated areas of disadvantage to higher education

Q15: 2(b) How should progress on Tackling Disadvantaged be measured?

Welfare Board statistics need to be monitored and ongoing research should inform future policy.

As Tusla now has a role in education eg. oversight of HSCL, Education Welfare officers and School Completion personnel, improved data on children and families at risk should be available. Improved services to children and families from the introduction of TUSLA requires monitoring and measurement

Q16: 2(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

ECE centres catering for children from designated areas of disadvantage should be prioritised for CPD provision and incentives.

Opening schools to community use should be explored.

The mental health issues of young people and interventions to alleviate same should be prioritised.

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Q17: 3(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

The silent majority of parents who want to continue to educate their children within a particular faith context should not be ignored.

A conversation on the philosophy of education appropriate for the 21st century would be welcome, as would more diversity within the system.

Suggestions such as the preparation for sacraments taking place outside of the school day need to be progress. It is sad to see children from the same community, walking in the same school gate but dividing then to go left and right to the Educate Together or Catholic school.

Q18: 3(b) How should progress on Diversity and Choice for Parents be measured?

The concept of the community national school could be further explored. Maria Montessori states that the spiritual exigencies of young children need to be explored as well as their physical, intellectual and other capacities.

Q19: 3(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

More new schools could be community national schools with the ETB's as patrons.

Religious education (broad based, all faith and none) should continue as a subject within the school day. Children whose parents object should be provided with appropriate ERB and Ethics

A dialogue to explore the concept of a Charter for Parents would be worthwhile

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Q20: 4(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Focus on Digital Strategy, coding for Junior Cycle, ICT/Computer Science for Leaving Cert all positive
PE as subject for LC the correct approach

Q21: 4(b) How should progress on Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools be measured?

Progress will be evident if assessment at second level changes to provide opportunities for group assignments, viva's, reflections, digital objects etc

Enhanced engagement in fitness and well-being activities by children and young people should be measurable.

Q22: 4(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

CPD in instructional design, design thinking and IT should be priority actions

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Q23: 5(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

The focus on promoting creativity and entrepreneurial capacity in students is to be welcomed.
For those who do not aspire to higher education, the setting up of the Apprenticeship Council, Solas and the reconfiguration of the VEC sector and establishment of the ETB's are crucial structural changes that are most welcome.

Q24: 5(b) How should progress on Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students be measured?

The numbers of students engaging in STEM subjects at school and choosing courses in these areas at further and higher education will provide rich data.

Methods of assessment at second level need to include group assignments and presentations, portfolio work and the production of digital objects etc to measure student creativity and entrepreneurial capacity.

Q25: 5(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Broadening of assessment types at all levels within the education system

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Q26: 6(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

I concur that educational assets should be more readily available to the wider community.
Models of good practice should be identified (ie schools where there is currently significant use by the community of the facilities) and the protocols for a partnership approach to the school use should be developed in advance of any change

Q27: 6(b) How should progress on Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities be measured?

An element of all whole school evaluations could be a comment / observation / recommendation on the engagement of the school with the wider community and use of the school building for activities such as summer camps, breakfast and homework clubs etc

Q28: 6(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

1. Models of good practice should be identified
 2. Protocols should be drawn up and agreed in consultation with BOM's, principals, teachers, parents and the wider school community.
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Q29: 7(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

In-school speech and language provision is most welcome as is an increase in the number of educational psychologists.

Q30: 7(b) How should progress on Special Needs Education be measured?

Progress on Special Needs Education requires ongoing monitoring based on the most recent research and scholarship both nationally and internationally. A focused longitudinal study such as the Growing up in Ireland Study would be most useful in monitoring progress and developing further policy.

Q31: 7(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Expansion of NEPS provision
In-school speech and language provision
Review of SEN provision for children with Down's Syndrome

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Q32: 8(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Priorities such as STEM education, creativity and entrepreneurial skills development and the literacy and numeracy outcomes are essential issues.

Structural matters for consideration include at last achieving joined up thinking between the second-level, further education, the Apprenticeship Council, Solas and ETB's.

The potential for Technological Universities will further enhance the diversity of provision in education.

Q33: 8(b) How should progress on Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future be measured?

Applications for appropriate courses in further and higher education should continue to be monitored by the HEA and others.

Job opportunities and applications would also provide rich data.

Q34: 8(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Ongoing development of collaboration between the relevant agencies and providers to ensure an integrated approach to the provision of courses and progression routed for students and young people.
