

**PROVIDING FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF  
TEACHERS IN SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS**

A Survey of  
School Principals



SECOND LEVEL  
SUPPORT SERVICE



# Acknowledgements

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# Abstract

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## Providing for Professional Development of Teachers in Second Level Schools: A Survey of School Principals

The Second Level Support Service (SLSS) was set up in early 2001. The remit of the SLSS is to promote co-ordination and coherence in the provision of support to teachers in second level schools. In response to the concerns expressed by management and principals' representative bodies, it was decided to undertake a study to identify and quantify these concerns. The study was conducted by means of a questionnaire and five in-depth interviews with a representative number of principals.

The findings of the survey indicate that principals feel they devote insufficient time to staff development. There tends to be an *ad hoc* approach to the choice of topic for staff development events and little sequential building on topics addressed in this way. Schools have availed extensively of in-career support related to the introduction of new programmes. Principals recognise that this support has been of a very high quality and has resulted in significant professional development of staff. They also point out, however, that professional development other than that which is programme related should receive attention, in particular, teaching and learning within the overall classroom experience.

While there is general satisfaction with the quality of the in career support currently being provided, principals have difficulty with some of the models of provision being employed. Both in school and out-of-school inservice erode teacher time and impact negatively on the day-to-day management of schools. As a result, principals feel the time is coming when they will no longer be able to facilitate the release of teachers for inservice. In the absence of suitably qualified substitute teachers and an agreed in-school supervision system, principals conclude that in-service should be held out of school time. Teachers should be adequately remunerated for attending such in-career development programmes and a formal accreditation system should be put in place. A re-examination of the length of the school year would be necessary in this context.

Principals acknowledge the need for on-going teacher development but this must not be met at the expense of teaching time. Among the recommendations emerging from the study is the proposal that further research needs to be done on inservice provision from the teachers' perspective so that a more complete and comprehensive picture may be drawn.





# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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### 1.1 Introduction

In the Second Level Support Service (SLSS) discussion document “The Potential for Development” it was suggested that a research project should be undertaken “to quantify the extent of the difficulties facing schools in releasing teachers for In-Career Development events and to propose a range of workable solutions.”(SLSS 2001, p.9).

This document presents the results of a study undertaken in response to this suggestion. The scope of the study was broadened to include the identification of needs in relation to the professional development of teachers and the views of principals on current practice in in-service delivery.

The study is based on the findings of a survey that involved twenty-four principals, and in-depth interviews with five principals. The respondents were drawn from the Executive of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) and the membership of the Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (AMCSS), Region 4. This document reports the findings of the empirical study and provides analysis of the findings against a background of qualitative data emerging from the interviews.

### 1.2 Background

In 1994 information Seminars for principals of Post-Primary schools were held throughout the country to provide an overview of the Senior Cycle and suggested a format for in-career development, which was:

- School-based work with whole schools.
- School-based work with principals.
- Locally based work with school clusters.

*(Dept. Ed/ NCCA Information Folders Dec. 1994)*

The benefits of this in-career process were listed as:

- More school based and less disruptive.
- Better support for whole school management and staff.
- Improved networking of local school clusters.
- More cost effective.
- Better support of internal and external linkages.
- Less dependent on Department Administration.

*(Ibid)*

The volume of inservice has grown considerably since this model was originally proposed. As a result, the demands

on schools and principals have greatly increased. These concerns were highlighted by George O'Callaghan, General Secretary of the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) when he suggested that "the delivery of inservice to teachers causes as much erosion of teaching time as orals and practicals." He went on to say "the length of the teaching year and the considerable erosion of teaching time that already exists make it imperative that the timing and delivery of inservice be dealt with through the development of new models." (General Secretary's Report 2000-2001, P.20)

In addition, a study commissioned by NAPD on the erosion of the school year found that principals are "increasingly concerned at the number of teaching days, which are eroded through teachers undertaking examining and inservice training requirements" (Erosion of School Year, March 2001 p.1)

The NAPD study further suggests that erosion has undesirable ramifications in the areas of:

- Completion of the curriculum within the time frame available.
- Unsupervised classes.
- Effects on the level of student attainment.

It was against this background and in an attempt to clarify the issues involved that this survey was undertaken.

### **1.3 Aims**

This study was undertaken as an attempt to hear the voice of principals as critically important partners in the inservice debate. The intention was to inform future practice by identifying key concerns in the provision of in-career development opportunities from a school management perspective. It is hoped that this study will prompt more comprehensive research, which will include the perspective of the practising teacher.

### **1.4 Outline of the Paper**

Chapter Two outlines the design of the study and its administration. Chapter Three outlines the presentation and analysis of findings and Chapter Four presents the conclusions and recommendations.

## Chapter 2

### Design of the Study

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#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the aims and objectives of the survey in section two. Section three deals with the design of the survey instrument. Section four details how the survey was carried out.

#### 2.2 Rationale

This study was undertaken in an effort to unravel some of the issues involved in inservice provision from a principal's perspective. It attempts to give an insight into principals' perceptions of teachers' needs and the manner in which these needs are currently being addressed. The main aims of the survey were as follows: -

- To establish a base line indicator of the professional needs of teaching staff as perceived by principals.
- To establish the attitudes of principals to current in-career development provision.
- To inform the work of inservice programme planners.
- To inform the design of further, more comprehensive research.

#### 2.3 Format of Questionnaire

The survey was conducted by means of a questionnaire completed by twenty-four principals and in depth interviews with five of the principals. This approach was used in order to provide a body of quantitative data together with qualitative data, which could be used to enhance and authenticate it. Miles and Huberman (1994) cited in Fitzmaurice (1998 p.31) noted, "At bottom, we have to face the fact that numbers and words are needed if we are to understand the world."

The questionnaire was designed in four parts:

Section A	General Information
Section B	Identifying Needs
Section C	Servicing the Needs
Section D	Proposing Solutions.

**Section A** sought factual data on the school type, the respondents' years of experience as principal and the programmes on offer in their respective schools.

**Section B** was designed to obtain data on staff development policies and the development needs of teachers as perceived by principals. Data was sought on staff developments to date and on future plans for in-career development.

**Section C** sought to quantify the number of teachers released from school for inservice in 2000-2001 and the number of days of tuition time involved. Principals were also asked to quantify the number of occasions on which they felt unable to facilitate the release of teachers for inservice training. In addition Section C set out to establish the level of satisfaction of principals with the current models of inservice provision being employed. Section C also sought to measure the extent to which principals viewed the inservice as being effective in meeting staff needs.

**Section D** was designed to allow principals to identify the main obstacles to the release of teachers for inservice. Principals were then given the opportunity to propose solutions to the problems presented in releasing teachers for in career development.

## **2.4 Administration of the Questionnaire and the Conduct of the Interviews.**

The survey was conducted by means of a questionnaire and five in-depth interviews. It was a small-scale survey (twenty-four respondents) necessitated by the pressure of time and in recognition of the fact that “it is always better to go for a small-scale project which can be completed than an over ambitious design which fails because of pressure of work” (Scottish Council for Research in Education 1995 p. 2). The questionnaire was pilot tested in consultation with four principals and adjusted in the light of their comments.

The template for the interviews was closely aligned with the questionnaire. This allowed the researcher to probe for depth of response and to seek honesty and candour, which are the hallmarks of qualitative data.

The questionnaire was administered at the May (2001) meetings of AMCSS (Region 4) and of NAPD respectively. There was an 80% response rate. The interviews were conducted in June 2001 and the work was completed in November 2001.

## Chapter 3

### Presentation and Analysis of Findings

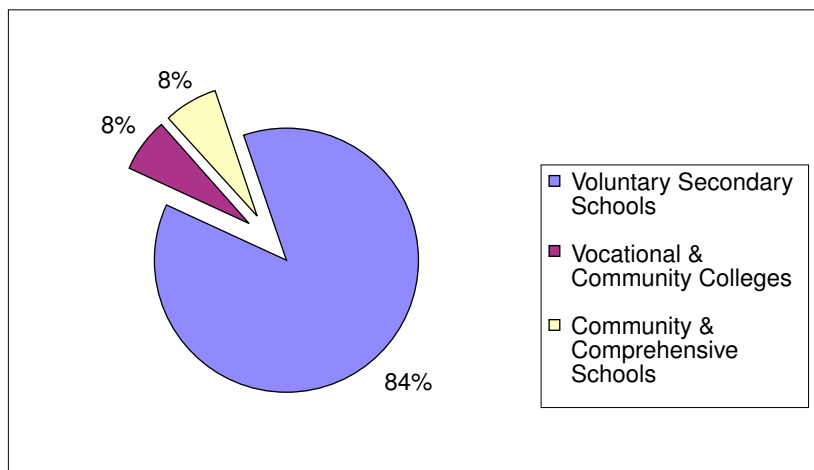
#### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the data derived from the questionnaire administered to the principals and the five in-depth interviews is presented and analysed. The chapter is divided into three sections and the findings are discussed under the following headings:

- General profile of the schools and the principals in the survey.
- The perception of principals of professional development needs.
- Making provision to meet the needs.
- Summary of findings.

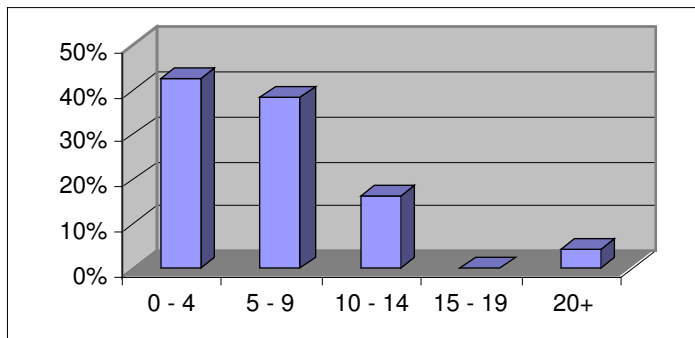
#### 3.2 Profile of Schools and Principals

**Fig 3.1**            Respondents by School Type



The great majority of respondents (84%) were from the voluntary secondary sector. Equal numbers of responses (8%) were received from respondents in the vocational sector and in the community and comprehensive schools. The interviews were conducted with three principals from the voluntary sector and one from each of the other sectors, which broadly reflects the balance at national level where 60% of schools are in the voluntary sector and the balance are in the vocational sector and community and comprehensive sector.

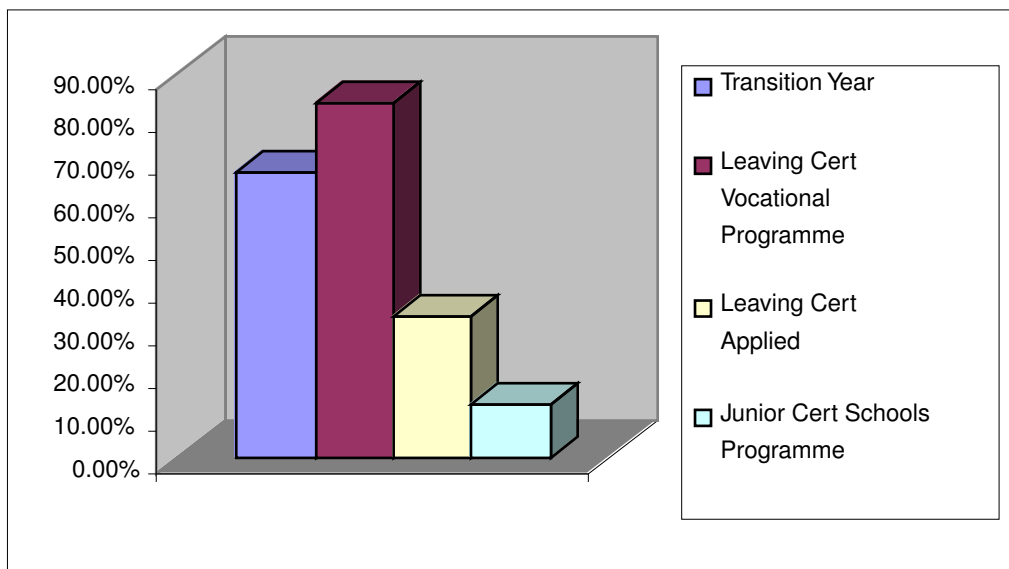
**Fig 3.2 Number of Years as Principal**



N = 24

Of the respondents, 58% had five years or more experience in the position of principal. This indicates a balance in the sample between those with a considerable degree of experience in school management and those with the fresh perspective of the newcomer.

**Fig 3.3 Provision of Programmes within Respondent Schools.**



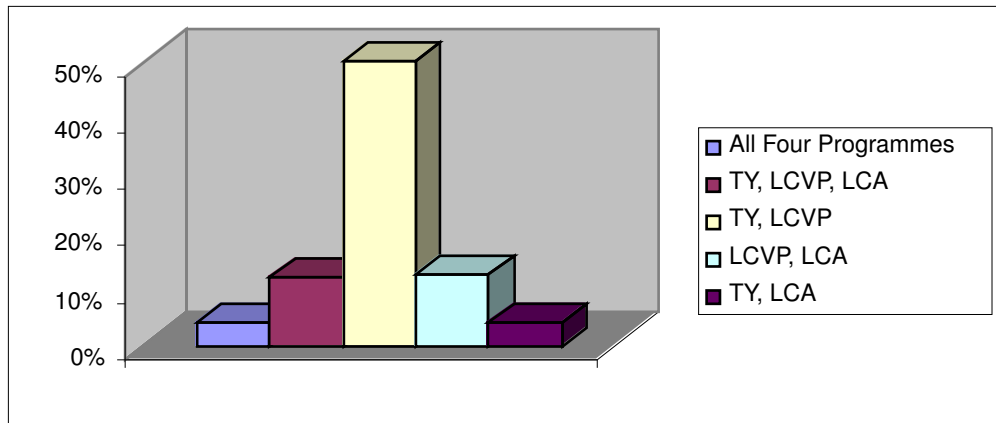
N = 24

Question 3 asked respondents to indicate the number of programmes on offer in their respective schools

Responses indicated that: -

- 83% of schools offered the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)
- 67% offered Transition Year (TY)
- 33% offered the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)
- 12.5% offered the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP)

**Fig 3.4 Programme Combinations**

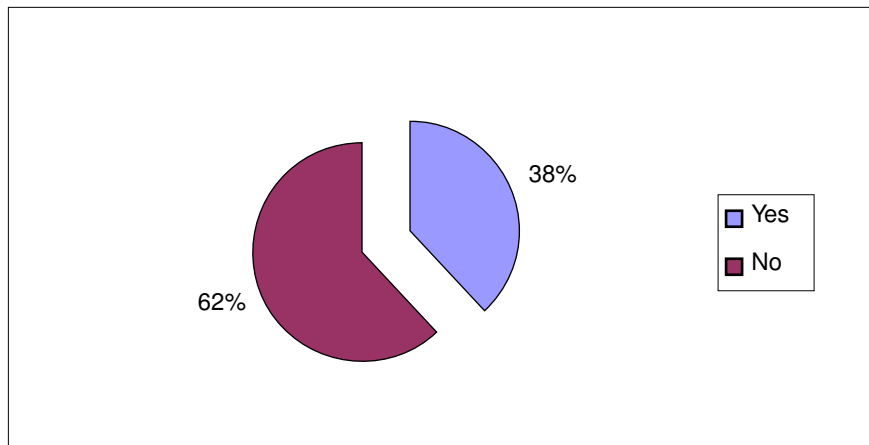


N=24

Further examination of the data from question 3 showed that 83% of respondents had two or more programmes on offer in their schools. This level of programme provision entails a large commitment to inservice for the schools involved; in fact, it is a mandatory requirement of some programmes. This commitment is an on-going one since new staff members become involved in the teaching and /or co-ordination of the programmes over the course of time.

### 3.3 Perception of Professional Development Needs

**Fig 3.5 Staff Development Policy**

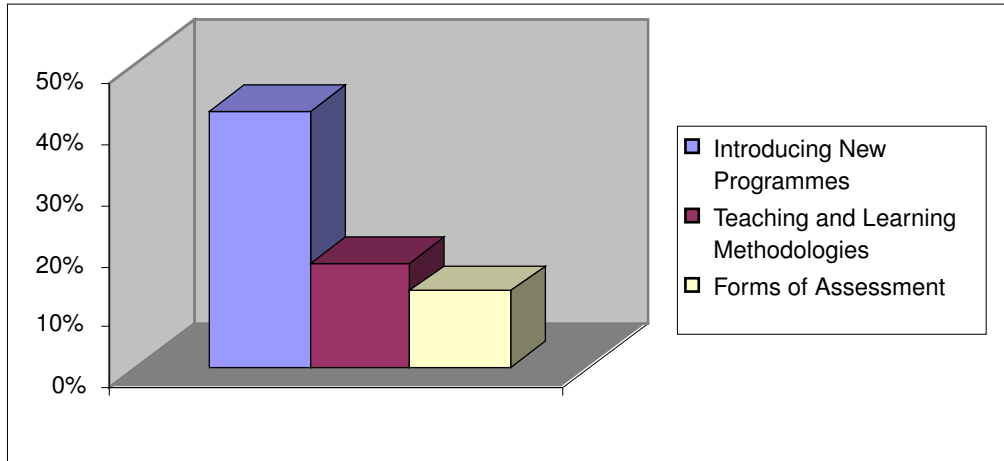


N = 24

Principals were asked to indicate if staff development policies were in place in their schools. Of the respondents, 38% indicated that they had a formal staff development policy in place while the remaining 62% did not. There was, however, a broad recognition in the commentary related to questions five and six that staff development was an area of concern to Principals and they did forward plan in relation to it, albeit in an *ad hoc* way. The pressure of day-to-day administrative duties and the demands made by staff and pupils limit the time devoted by principals to the consideration of staff development issues. This is reflected in the report on Principals and Principalship where the difference between actual time allocated and ideal time allocated to staff development is highlighted;

... staff development, curriculum development and pastoral care are not only activities in which principals think they should be spending most of their time, but also these activities are reported as occupying a small proportion of their time. (Leader and Boldt, 1994, p88)

**Fig 3.6 Professional development experience to date**



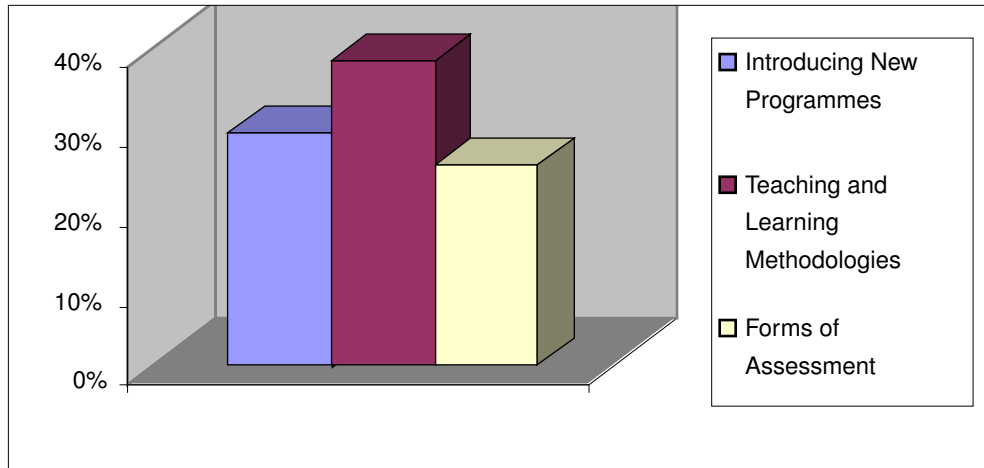
N = 24

When asked to indicate the areas of experience in professional development to date, 42% of principals identified new programmes as the focus of such development for their schools. A further 17% had focused on in-career development related to teaching and learning while 12% had offered in-career development opportunities related to assessment for learning. A lower priority was attached to a range of other topics such as:

- School Planning.
- Pastoral Care
- Mixed Ability Teaching/Streaming
- I.T.
- Positive Discipline
- Managing Stress
- Dealing with learning difficulties
- Holistic Education.
- Teachers and the law.

Commentary from respondents suggests that offering in career development opportunities on an *ad hoc* basis is not effective. Provision needs to be of an integrated and coherent nature. Kavanagh (1993,p.52) points out that once off events are not effective “staff development is not so much an event or a series of events but rather an attitude which grows from the realisation that each member of a school staff has a capacity for growth and development. He further states that “academic qualifications fade quickly and teachers especially are called upon to be life-long learners”. Principals identified the need for a more strategic approach to be taken to needs identification, planning and delivery of in career development programmes. The principal of school C noted that “planning is slow and ponderous because of lack of time and resources, yet it is the way forward”



**Fig 3.7 Future Professional Development Needs**

N = 24

Question 6 asked respondents to indicate the areas in which they wished their staff to have access to in-career development opportunities. Introducing new programmes, teaching and learning methodologies and assessment for learning again predominated as the areas of greatest interest. Most respondents (38%) favoured in-career opportunities related to teaching and learning, a further 29% saw the introduction of new programmes as their priority while 25% of respondents prioritised assessment for learning. It is significant from the perspective of support providers that 63% of the sample prioritised the broader areas of teaching and learning as target areas for future in career development while less than half that number prioritised programme specific support.

Commentary from the interviews indicates that the growing interest in teaching and learning stems from a concern among principals that changes in society are impacting forcibly on schools and that there is an increasing need for teachers to be equipped to respond appropriately.

The principal of school B commented “many teachers use the same disciplinary approach and adopt the same attitudes as they did many years ago” and points out “we moved from streaming to mixed ability while the teaching approach has remained the same.” The principal of School C remarked, “change at syllabus level has not always resulted in a change in methodology - the old Intermediate Certificate became the Junior Certificate yet all remained the same in terms of teaching and learning.” This principal expressed the hope that future change will not only impact on the curriculum but on delivery as well.

Interviewees agreed that progress has been made through the introduction of new programmes. The principal of School E commented “the skills learned from the introduction of Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Civic, Social and Political Education and the new English Programme have created a bank of skills for the teachers involved.” This has enabled the principal in question to initiate change in a variety of ways and the principal hopes that “it will bring about a change of mind-set with regard to teaching and learning.”

In addition to the three areas which predominated in the responses, smaller numbers of respondents indicated priorities as listed in table 1 below: -

**Table 3.1 Additional Areas for Inservice**

Whole School Planning	5
Mixed Ability/Streaming	3
Positive Discipline/Behaviour	3
Student Welfare needs	3
Information Technology	2
Provide for Learning Needs	2
Managing Stress	1
Co-education	1
Classroom Management	1
Record-Keeping	1
Induction of new staff	1
Learning Styles	1
Pastoral Care	1
Staff Dynamics/Gender Issues	1

These other areas of priority could be classified under the headings of pupil needs, staff needs and management needs. Pupil needs were in such areas as positive behaviour, classroom management, student welfare and providing for varied learning needs and styles. In relation to the teacher as professional, issues such as mixed ability teaching, co-education, information technology and stress management were identified. Comment from principals of co-education schools attached great importance to support for teachers in teaching boys and girls together. The principal of school E commented “the need for gender balancing is critical, classroom management skills need to be more finely tuned as current practice often reinforces gender difference with teacher contact being monopolised by boys”. In terms of management, the issues mentioned were whole school planning, induction of new staff, record keeping, staff dynamics and gender issues.

**Table 3.2. The Importance of Inservice for Teachers.**

	Very Important	Important	Not Important	Not Unsure
<b>Revised Syllabus</b>				
<b>Content</b>	20	4	0	0
<b>Programme Support</b>	18	6	0	0
<b>Forms of assessment</b>	18	6	0	0
<b>Methodologies</b>	20	4	0	0
<b>N=24</b>				

Question 7 asked respondents to rate the importance of inservice under four different headings on a four-point scale. The great majority felt it was very important in all cases. This would suggest that despite the concomitant difficulties principals value the potential of inservice for effecting change and enhancing school provision. Kavanagh reflects this when he states: -

... the need for good inservice is obvious, school-based and otherwise to enable teachers to acquire the attitudes and skills needed for a satisfactory implementation of a changed curriculum. (Kavanagh, 1993, p.93)

### 3.4 Making provision to meet the needs

In order to establish the extent of the commitment made to inservice, respondents were asked to estimate the number of teachers who received in-career training in 2000/2001. In this period, national inservice had taken place in Junior Certificate Mathematics, Leaving Certificate English, Chemistry and Physics. In addition, there had been inservice support in Social, Personal and Health Education, Religious Education, Physical Education, Civic Social and Political Education and Home/School Liaison Training. The four programmes JCSP, TY, LCVP and LCA also offered inservice days for teachers.

#### Teaching time spent on Inservice Courses

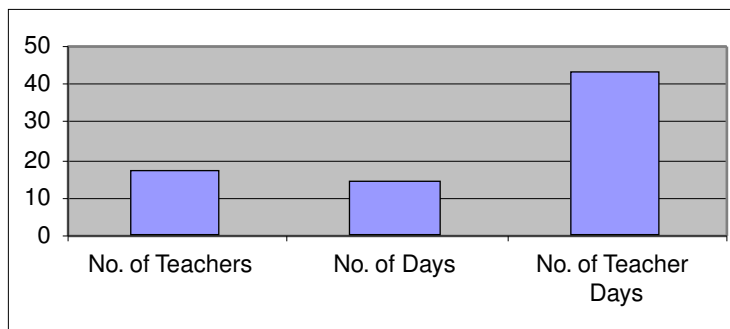
In question 8, principals were asked to estimate the number of teachers who received in-service training and the number of days involved in their respective schools. The principal of a school of 489 pupils and a staff of 31 completed the table as follows: -

**Table 3.3**      **Sample School**

	No. Of Teachers	No. Of Days Days	Number of teacher days
<b>Junior Cert. Mathematics</b>	-	-	-
<b>Leaving Cert. English</b>	4	1.5	6
<b>Leaving Cert. Chemistry</b>	1	2	2
<b>Leaving Cert. Physics</b>	2	2	4
<b>Leaving Cert. Voc. Prog.</b>	-	-	-
<b>Leaving Cert. Applied</b>	-	-	-
<b>Transition Year</b>	1	2	2
<b>Other areas – Please specify</b> <i>Religious Education</i>	4	3	12
<b>Total</b>	12	10.5	26

When the teacher days (26) assigned to inservice were expressed as a proportion of the total teacher days (31x167) in this school we see that 0.5% of actual teaching time was lost due to inservice in this particular school.

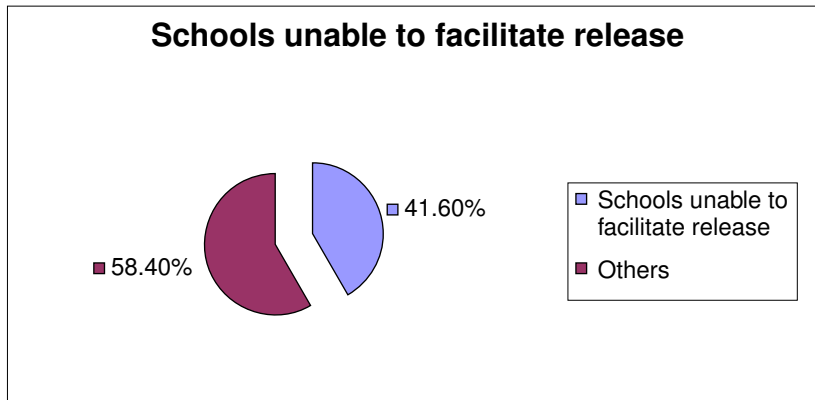
**Fig 3.8** **Average amount of teacher time spent on Inservice Courses**



N = 24

When this calculation is applied to all of the schools in the sample we find that, on average, 17 teachers per school attended in-career development courses in 2000/2001, from an average staff size of 25 teachers. (The average staff size in the sample corresponds with the national average school size of 25 teachers / 450 pupils). Inservice took place on 14 days of the school year. The average number of teacher days lost due to inservice was 43, which represents 1% of teaching days for the schools involved. While this seems like a very small amount, from a management perspective it represents a sizeable requirement for substitutes and a substantial loss of teaching time. In addition, the school calendar has the effect of concentrating inservice into certain periods of time as a result of staggered opening dates, mid-term breaks and the embargo on inservice in the third term. This exacerbates the disruptive effect on schools.

**Fig 3.9 Schools Unable to Facilitate the Release of Teachers for Inservice.**



Question 10 asked respondents to indicate the number of times they were unable to release all of the teachers who requested to attend inservice in the year 2000/2001. In reply, 41.6% of principals stated that they were unable to facilitate all requests in this regard. The main factors, identified by respondents, which prevented the release of teachers were:

- Lack of substitution
- Colleagues unwilling to cover
- Recent industrial dispute
- Resultant disorganisation
- Inadequate notice
- Overlap of inservice.

Comments in this regard on the questionnaire were: -

- “Will have to review the situation for the future.”
- “Facilitating teachers causes major disruption.”
- “Necessary for professional development but ...”
- “Impossible to find substitutes.”
- “Students teaching time must be preserved.”

In the commentary from the interviews, the principal of school C quoted an instance when a teacher was on inservice and there was no substitution available. A pupil was injured while the class was unattended. This experience has caused him to reflect carefully on the release of teachers for inservice in the future. The principal of School E pointed out that the visible absence of teachers at regular intervals is a major problem. He further commented that parents notice when students are supervised for a number of classes on a particular day and they are often quick to complain. He observed that when teachers teach more than one subject they often attend more than one in-service event and “there is a significant loss of teaching time as a result”.

In the commentary from principals, the lack of advance notice of in-career events and the difficulty of claiming for substitution have increased the problems in releasing teachers.

The principal of school E pointed out that “a timetable in advance of in-career development events would enable planning within the calendar year to minimise disruption and a system of cover is needed for absent teachers.”

**The Effectiveness of Inservice in addressing Staff Needs**

Question 9 asked principals for their views on how effective the inservice courses (2000/2001) had been in meeting the needs of staff under four different headings on a four-point scale. They were asked to base their opinions on feedback received from teachers attending inservice courses. In general, the response was very positive with between 74% and 100% of respondents rating the inservice as being effective or very effective.

**Table 3.4 The effectiveness of Inservice in addressing Staff Needs**

	Very Effective	Effective	Ineffective	Unsure
<b>Junior Cert. Maths</b>	3	14	6	0
<b>Leaving Cert. English</b>	12	10	0	0
<b>Leaving Cert. Chemistry</b>	5	13	1	0
<b>Leaving Cert. Physics</b>	8	10	0	0
<b>Leaving Cert.</b>				
<b>Vocational Prog.</b>	8	9	1	1
<b>Leaving Cert. Applied</b>	4	3	1	0
<b>Transition Year</b>	4	6	2	1
<b>N=24</b>				

There was a degree of discontent with the Junior Certificate Mathematics support, which may stem from the fact that a half-day approach was taken for the provision of inservice. This was seen as being quite disruptive at school level and more unpredictable than a full day. The principal of school E commented “it is more difficult to find substitutes for part of a day than for a full day and the time of return of the teacher(s) made it more difficult to plan.”

The value of some of the Programme specific support was questioned. In some instances, it was felt that once a school had embraced a programme and tailored it to suit its needs “the need for on-going support is limited.” The principal of school B, however, felt that the investment in the programme co-ordinators had been a great source of personal and professional growth for them but “it was a pity that there was not a similar emphasis on the other members of the programme team”.

All principals interviewed regretted the lack of any process of in-school dissemination following attendance at inservice. On return to school there is little sharing of what has been learned. As one principal commented “ there is no mechanism for sharing what has been learned with colleagues and no time allocation for formal dissemination. This often results in a net loss to the school.” Another principal suggested that “teachers need to ‘tease out’ what they have learned and share best practice.”

What comes through from the data is that there needs to be some provision made within schools for dissemination through the sharing of acquired knowledge and expertise. If this is to happen there are implications for reflection and planning time. Tuohy touches on this when he states

... there is a need to build into the definition of the profession the structures of reflective practice. This requires that time be given to reflection and planning. No one would seriously propose trying to service their car while driving at 60 mph down the Naas dual carriageway. However, the present practice of inservice often seems to ask the equivalent of teachers. (Tuohy, 1994,p.18)

**Table 3. 5. Views on models of delivery (Management Perspective).**

	Very Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsure
<b>In-school Visits</b>	13	4	6	1
<b>Out-of-School Clusters</b>	6	7	10	1
<b>Full-Day Conference</b>	1	6	16	1
<b>Half-Day Conference</b>	2	6	14	2
<b>N=24</b>				

**Table 3. 6. Effectiveness of Inservice delivery (Teachers' feedback to Principals)**

	Very Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsure
<b>In-school Visits</b>	18	6	0	0
<b>Out-of-School Clusters</b>	6	17	2	0
<b>Full-Day Conference</b>	1	16	5	2
<b>Half-Day Conference</b>	2	15	5	2
<b>N=24</b>				

Questions 13 and 14 asked principals to indicate their views on current models of inservice delivery from a management perspective and on the basis of feedback from teachers. The majority of principals (71%) regarded school-based in-career development as the most suitable while just over half of them (54%) favoured cluster-based in-service in school time. The majority of principals felt that conference style events were unsatisfactory. Principals reported that all of teachers (100%) found school based inservice satisfactory and that 92% felt the same way about cluster-based inservice in school time. A majority (71%) of teachers were also reported by principals to favour conference style event

Overall, in-school visits were regarded as the most satisfactory and this is supported by interviews. The principal of school E noted, "In-school visits address local needs and difficulties. There is a feeling on the part of the staff that the expert came to them - the feedback is always positive. However, clusters are necessary as they give rise to a sharing of best practice." The principal of school C reflected this view when he stated, "in terms of feedback teachers seem to find in-school visits the most satisfactory and I feel likewise." The principal of school A felt able to release one-seventh of his staff - an average of three teachers per session for in-school events. In his view, pupils who have seen teachers engaged in inservice have accepted this as a necessary and valid activity. The visible and on-site nature of school-based in-career development means a minimal loss of teaching time and in consequence commands greater pupil and parent acceptance.

There was a concern about the value of conference style meetings, which are impoverished by a lack of teacher interaction. They are pitched at a homogeneous audience and as the principal of school B points out allow “ a switch off mentality”. A comment from a respondent, which suggests a combination of models at appropriate times, is perhaps an endorsement of a combination of in-school visits and regional clusters as good models.

**Proposed solutions of Principals**

Question 15 asked principals to identify the main obstacles they encountered in the release of teachers for inservice and the responses are listed in table 3.7. In question 16 they were asked to propose a range of strategies to overcome the difficulties identified.

**Table 3. 7. Main Obstacles to the Release of Teachers for Inservice.**

<b>Main Obstacles</b>	
Substitution Difficulties	20
Loss of Teaching Time	8
Disruption/Behavioural Difficulties	5
Parent Objections	2
Overlapping of inservice	2
Classes not being taught/just minded	2
Strike	1
Timing	1
Difficulty involved in claiming refunds for subs	1
Reticence on some teachers’ part to participate	1
Inadequate notice	1
N=24	

The lack of suitable substitutes was a primary concern to 20 principals, which represents 83% of the sample. This was seen as a contributory factor to the loss of teaching time, which was a concern to 33% of the respondents. The disruption and behaviour problems associated with ‘absent’ teachers created problems for 21% of the sample. Interviews with principals indicated a belief that a better in-school system of supervision and substitution would go some way to facilitating the release of teachers for inservice and alleviating the pressure on schools. O’Callaghan suggests, “the Department should make a clear commitment to provide paid substitution in all instances of teacher inservice” (O’Callaghan, 2001. p.20). Many of the other issues raised were of an administrative nature and could be solved by better overall planning by the inservice providers.

The preferred solutions to the erosion of teaching time were that inservice should be held at the following times:

- Weekends
- Evenings
- Last week in August
- Holiday time
- Early June
- Extended school year

One principal suggested that teachers “ should be paid to attend Inservice and expenses offset by savings on substitution. Teachers should teach 162 days and a balance of 7 days should be devoted to inservice”. A variation on

this option was recommended by another principal who suggested a quid-pro-quo scenario where both teachers and the Department of Education and Science compromise on days specifically for inservice. Another principal suggested that courses should be certified and allowances paid in recognition of inservice attended. A credit system for teachers to encourage them to avail of inservice on an on-going basis should be developed suggested another respondent.

The observation by the principal of School D that teachers should be involved in their Subject Associations underlines an appreciation by principals that teachers should have a role in meeting their own professional development needs. This principal also recommended distance learning as an option to be explored.

A constant theme in the commentary was that the current practice of inservice delivery was unsustainable. The solutions proposed by principals suggest that the problem needs to be addressed nationally in the context of teachers' terms and conditions of employment. At a local level the issue of substitution could be addressed by a more comprehensive supervision and substitution structure where principals would have a "bank" of hours available to them to use when teachers are engaged in school-based inservice or on out-of-school events. Teachers on Eligible Part Time (EPT) contracts and part-time teachers would be available for the additional hours which would be allocated by the Department of Education and Science at the outset of the school year on a pro-rata basis relative to school size. The principal of school E suggests, "plan nationally and with proper substitution we can cater better at school level".

### **3.5 Summary of Findings**

- Principals need support and advice in identifying needs and in drawing up staff development policies.
- There is a commitment among principals to continuing professional development and there is a very high satisfaction rating with the quality of support received to date.
- Teaching and learning is a priority area for future professional development. This reflects a concern among principals about the impact of societal change on the classroom experience of students and teachers.
- In-school visits are felt to be the most effective mode of inservice delivery followed by regional clusters held in school time. The reservations expressed in relation to regional clusters centred primarily on a lack of suitable substitute teachers at school level.
- Little dissemination takes place when teachers return to their schools following inservice experiences.
- On average 1% of total teaching time is lost annually through attendance at in-career development events. This represents a significant loss of teaching time for pupils in an environment where suitable substitutes are hard to find.
- Over 40% of principals felt unable, at some point, to facilitate the release of teachers for in-career development courses in the year 2000-2001
- The preference of principals was for all inservice to take place in teachers' own time, at weekends and during the holiday period. Teachers should be compensated for the time devoted to in-career development.



## Chapter 4

# Conclusion and Recommendations

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### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will draw some conclusions from the findings of the survey and make a number of recommendations in relation to the provision of in-career development.

### 4.2 Aims

The broad aims of the survey as set out in Chapter 1 are:

- To establish the attitude of principals to current in-career development provision.
- To establish a base line indicator of the professional needs of teaching staff as perceived by principals.
- To inform the work of Inservice Programme planners.
- To inform the design of further more comprehensive research.

### 4.3 Limitations and Strengths of the Study

Chapter 2 sets out the design of the survey. This was a small-scale study with twenty-four principals and had both qualitative and quantitative dimensions to it. These principals were drawn from the Executive of NAPD and the membership of AMCSS, Region 4. The interviews were conducted with three principals from the voluntary sector, one each from the vocational and community and comprehensive sector.

The interviews illuminated data derived from the questionnaire and provided examples from the lived experience of principals. The data is collated and analysed in Chapter 3 and a report of findings is presented. This study was intended as a base line for a more extensive and comprehensive study at a later stage.

### 4.4 Conclusions

There follows an attempt to draw some conclusions from the findings of this survey and to make some recommendations: -

1. Staff development is a priority area for all principals and they need advice and guidance on needs analysis and forward planning. This is becoming more urgent as changes in society impact on the classroom and teachers are faced with new challenges.
2. Teaching and learning - the classroom experience- was identified by the majority of principals as a priority area for the concentration of future inservice.

3. Principals regard on-going professional development as essential and despite the difficulties being experienced in releasing teachers for inservice they remain committed to it.
4. All current models of inservice delivery carry an element of disruption from a management perspective.
5. The average loss of teaching time through attendance at inservice is 1% of teaching time.
6. In-school visits are by far the most effective mode of delivery from the perspective of the principal and the teacher. Regional clusters are also held in high regard but conference style events find little favour.
7. The lack of available substitutes to replace teachers is the greatest obstacle to the release of teachers for inservice. The other main obstacles are a loss of teaching time for pupils and the disruption caused by teacher absences.
8. A better in school system of supervision and substitution would improve the current situation for principals and it would make it easier to facilitate the release of teachers for in-career development events.
9. The main solution to the erosion of teaching time was for inservice to be held in teachers' own time, such as, weekends and holidays.

#### **4.5 Recommendations**

1. The School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) and the SLSS should work collaboratively to assist schools in identifying and addressing staff professional development needs.
2. The enhancement of the classroom experience for the student and the teacher should become the focus of the work of SLSS. The service should develop a capacity to meet the broader needs of schools in this regard.
3. School-based inservice is the most effective mode of delivery of in-career development. A proper system of substitution and cover for colleagues should be put in place to support this model. Such a system would equally support of out of school events.
4. A formal mechanism should be put in place in schools for sharing with colleagues what has been learned at inservice so that it does not remain exclusively the preserve of those who attended the event. There is a need to provide time for reflection and for the sharing of best practice among teachers in schools.
5. Immediate steps should be taken to provide accreditation for teachers undertaking professional development.
6. The rights and responsibilities of teachers with regard to professional development should be clearly set out in teachers' conditions of service.
7. A pilot project should be undertaken to test a variety of models for professional development in order to find an approach which strikes the best balance between staff needs and the day-to-day functioning of schools. The SLSS should consult with the partners and propose new approaches and models for testing.
8. A further study should be carried out to explore professional development issues from the perspective of the teacher so that a more complete picture may be drawn from the overall in-career development experience.

# Appendix

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#Pupils	
#Teachers	

*Please place a (√) in the appropriate box for each question.*

**Section A – General Information**

1. School Type:

Voluntary Secondary	
Vocational/Community College	
Community/Comprehensive	

2. Number of years as Principal:

<5	<10	<15	<20	>20
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3. Please indicate which Programmes are on offer in your school:

Transition Year	
Leaving Cert. Vocational Prog.	
Leaving Cert. Applied	
Junior Cert. School Programme	
Any other initiative (please specify)	

**Section B - Identifying Needs**

4. Do you have a Staff Development Policy in the area of Curriculum?

Yes	
No	

If 'Yes' please answer Question 5.

If 'No' please answer Question 6.

5. Please indicate the areas you have explored to date (e.g. Introducing New Programmes/Active Teaching & Learning Methodologies/ Forms of Assessment):

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6. Please indicate the areas you wish the Staff to explore given the opportunity:

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7. Based on your experience, how important is it for Teachers to receive Inservice in the following areas:

	Very important	Important	Not important	Unsure
Revised Syllabi- Programme Content				
Programme Support- TY/LCVP/LCA/JCSP				
Upskilling in new Initiatives e.g. Forms of Assessment				
General Professional Development- e.g. Active Methodologies				

**Section C. Servicing the Need:**

8. Could you please estimate how often your Staff has availed of Inservice Training in the Year 2000/2001 in the following areas:

	No. of Teachers	No. of Days
Junior Cert. Mathematics		
Leaving Cert. English		
Leaving Cert. Chemistry		
Leaving Cert. Physics		
Leaving Cert. Voc. Prog.		
Leaving Cert. Applied		
Transition Year		
Other areas – Please specify		

**9. On the basis of your feedback, how effective has this Inservice been in addressing Staff needs?**

	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective	Unsure
Junior Cert. Mathematics				
Leaving Cert. English				
Leaving Cert. Chemistry				
Leaving Cert. Physics				
Leaving Cert. Voc. Prog.				
Leaving Cert. Applied				
Transition Year				
Other areas – Please specify				

**10. Have you felt unable to facilitate Teachers' release on certain occasions?**

Yes	
No	

**11. Please estimate how often this has happened in the Year 2000/2001:**

No. of Teachers multiplied by	No. of Courses	
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**12. Please indicate why you have felt unable to facilitate Teachers' release for Inservice:**

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**13. Current models of Inservice are listed below. Please indicate your views on these practices in terms of School management:**

	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsure
In-school visit by Support Personnel				
Out-of-school cluster groups with specific focus				
Conference-style meetings for full day out-of-school				
Conference-style meetings for half-day out-of-school				

**14. On the basis of feed-back, how effective has this Inservice been in addressing Staff needs?**

	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective	Unsure
In-school visit by Support Personnel				
Out-of-school cluster groups with specific focus				
Conference-style meetings for full day				
Conference-style meetings for half-day				

**Section D: Solutions**

**15. What are the main obstacles you have encountered in the release of Teachers for Inservice?**

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**16. What are your preferred solutions to the erosion of teaching time by Inservice?**

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**Thank you for completing this questionnaire. I will furnish you with the outcome as a token of appreciation.**

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