



**SCHOOL AND CURRICULUM
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**

**PAPERS PRESENTED
AT
TWO DISSEMINATION SEMINARS**

IN

**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT,
NUIM 21st SEPTEMBER 2001**

**EDUCATION CENTRE,
PORTLAOISE, 19th OCTOBER 2001.**

EDITED

BY

JIM CALLAN

The Conference was jointly organised by
**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
OF IRELAND MAYNOOTH**

**AND
IN-CAREER DEVELOPMENT UNIT,
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE.**

**SCHOOL AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
INITIATIVE**

**PAPERS PRESENTED
AT
TWO DISSEMINATION SEMINARS**

IN

**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT,
NUIM 21st SEPTEMBER 2001**

**EDUCATION CENTRE, PORTLAOISE,
19th OCTOBER 2001.**

EDITED

BY

JIM CALLAN

© EDITOR

CONTENTS

MR. JIM CALLAN	v
<i>Education Department, N.U.I.M.</i>	
MR. GABRIEL MARTIN	1
<i>Department of Education and Science</i>	
PROF. JOHN COOLAHAN	3
<i>EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, N.U.I.M.</i>	
MR. JIM CALLAN	7
<i>Education Department, N.U.I.M.</i>	
School and Curriculum Development (SCD) Initiative: Its Culture and Guiding Principles	
MR. JOHN CURTIS (<i>Principal Knockbeg College</i>)	21
CAITLÍN MHC CÁRTHAIGH (<i>Príomhoide Gaelcholaiste Cheatharlach</i>)	
MR. JIM CALLAN (<i>Education Department, N.U.I.M.</i>)	
SCD – Curriculum Development as School Development Curriculum as a Wedge in School Planning	
J. PAUL TYRRELL (<i>Principal Cross & Passion Secondary School, Kilcullen</i>).....	30
SEAMUS MULLOOLY (<i>Principal, Patrician secondary School, Newbridge</i>)	
MR. JIM CALLAN (<i>Education Department, N.U.I.M.</i>)	
Staff Involvement and School and Curriculum Development .	
MARY TEAHAN (<i>Holy Family Secondary School, Newbridge</i>).....	46
Staff Involvement and School and Curriculum Development .	
MR. DAVE BARRON (<i>St. Mary's C.B.S., Carlow</i>).....	56
SCD Initiative: Voices From ‘The Boiler House’	

Editors' Note

The School and Curriculum Development (SCD) initiative worked with 20 second level schools from 1995 to 2001. Its key task was to effect an implementation process of national policies that deal with school and curriculum developments at local level. The initiative was instigated by personnel in the Education Department, National University of Ireland Maynooth which I designed and co-ordinated as a member of this Department. In co-ordinating the work of the initiative I was ably assisted by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from the participating schools, local authorities, national agencies, as well as the University.

The initiative was funded by the In-career Development Unit, Department of Education and Science. I would like to extend my appreciation to the Department of Education and Science for their generous financial support for the initiative.

The engagement of personnel from local and national agencies, and personnel from school and universities in the decision-making body of the initiative reflects a fundamental principle that has informed the initiative, viz. that partnership and collaboration between agencies is a necessary requirement for effecting school and curriculum development. It also reflects the aspirations that were being expressed throughout the 1990's in various reviews, reports, and government papers for increased partnership and collaboration among educational and other personnel in order to effect school and curriculum development. This initiative was conceived in such a climate.

This collection of papers contains, in essence, the presentations made by SCD personnel to personnel from various national agencies at two dissemination seminars held in autumn 2001. The first seminar held in National University of Ireland, Maynooth in September focused on the work of the initiative from the perspective of school development planning. A high percentage of the participants were personnel from the School Development Planning initiative, in addition to personnel from other national agencies. The second seminar, held in Education Centre, Portlaoise in October, focused on the teaching and learning aspects of the initiative. Personnel from the Second Level Support Services as well as NCCA were in attendance.

The papers here include my own presentation, which focuses on some of the principles that informed the initiative, and papers from school principals and our two field officers which focus on S.C.D. activities and developments. Also included is the introductory presentation given by a Senior Inspector from the In-Career Development Unit, D.E.S., and the presentation given by the Head of the Education Department, Maynooth University.

The developments at teacher, principal and school levels that are noted in the presentations are supported by data obtained through visits to schools and a number of interviews with initiative participants at different times in the course of the initiative. They are also supported by the data obtained from a major review exercise undertaken towards the end of the initiative with principals, facilitators and teachers.

The fundamental rationale informing the work of the initiative was that the systems of teacher development, curriculum development and school development are inextricably inter-linked. Hence our logo of three interlocking circles, each circle representing each of these systems. The data on our work confirms the necessary relationship between these three systems in effecting school and curriculum development.

While a more detailed account of the work of the initiative is currently in progress these proceedings provide some information into what our work has entailed. The key objective of the seminars was to provide feedback to personnel currently engaged in work similar to that of our SCD work. Accordingly, we were keen to focus on the rationale which informed our work: its style and principles of operation, how we addressed school and curriculum development and effected staff involvement in doing so, and how we effected teachers' focus on teaching and learning in their classrooms.

In order to ensure maximum benefit for participants the seminars were planned by SCD personnel in discussions with personnel from In-Career Development Unit (D.E.S.), School Development Planning Initiative, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, and the Second Level Support Services. I would like to thank the personnel from these various national agencies for their co-operation and support in this regard. Such open collaborative endeavours among professionals from various agencies should be further encouraged in the pursuit of meaningful school and curriculum development. Both seminars were very well attended. Feedback indicates that participants felt that the presentations and the follow on group discussions were informative and insightful. The collaborative planning of the seminars was a contributory factor in this regard.

My thanks also to the principals and field officers/facilitators who worked diligently in preparing their presentations for the seminars and in preparing them for this publication. As with all their work during the lifetime of SCD they have shown a genuine commitment to seeking ways of realising the objectives of this initiative from its initiation stage to its dissemination stage. Equally, I would like to acknowledge the contributions from all the other school principals, deputy principals, facilitators and teachers who responded to the initiative's proposal and helped shape and refine it over the course of its duration. It was a formative experience for all of us engaged in this work. We can say that new understandings about school and curriculum development were obtained. In doing so, new commitments were given, new roles were engaged in, and new developments were realised at the individual and school levels. These presentation give some insight into what some of these have been.

***Jim Callan,
Senior Lecturer/SCD Co-ordinator,
Education Department,
National University of Ireland,
Maynooth.***

SCD: A LOCAL INITIATIVE INFORMED BY NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS.

Pascal allowed that we may be reeds but he added that we are thinking reeds. This predicate makes all the difference. Analogously, a teacher may be just a teacher or s/he may be a thinking teacher, and again the "thinking" makes all the difference.

From the start, SCD has relentlessly invited, encouraged, facilitated teachers to reflect on their own classroom teaching. In doing so it has encouraged teachers to think in a collaborative context within their own schools and across schools within their own geographical clusters. This has been its primary goal.

The SCD initiative was a joint venture with the Department of Education and Science, a Third Level College, namely: National University of Ireland, Maynooth, and a number of second level schools, working in close co-operation with the expressed purpose of developing national policy at local level.

Apart from its being funded by public money, both directly and indirectly, such an extensive intervention into the very heart of the education system, the classroom, is too important to be simply written up and filed away for research interests.

It has, of course, benefited participating schools, their teachers and therefore, of necessity, their pupils. But why let it stop there? Any intervention based on the first hand classroom experience of a considerable number of teachers has relevance for all teachers, and for all schools, and consequently for all pupils.

But it cannot have relevance for all if its findings are not fed back into the system. The seminars at which these proceedings were presented were designed specifically for this purpose. In order to avail of the experience of the initiative in its effort to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools, the education system needs to know what went on. Specifically, what were the developments, the successes, the approaches used, the difficulties, the attitudes of teachers, and the changing attitudes of teachers, if change there was. What were the obstacles? Such questions as these are focused on in the various papers in this collection.

To know what the obstacles were may be a great help towards planning future initiatives. In-career development, for instance, is an integral element in the life of a school and the more we know about ways of addressing and influencing teachers' attitudes and behaviours towards new proposals for change the more likely our implementation strategies will be successful.

There can be no change in education without a change in the attitudes of teachers.

Syllabus and curriculum change is also an integral part of school life today. What is involved in successfully introducing new syllabus changes in the classroom? Has this initiative anything to say to course committees? In this regard, the initiative's

strategy informed by the principle that *curriculum development and teacher development are inextricably linked and both necessitate school development*, is of particular interest.

School development planning has come to stay. This initiative is also about the school as a planned learning unit under the leadership of a curriculum-focused Principal. It has been promoting the idea of the school as a learning community. In schools within its area of operation SCD has reduced the isolation of the classroom teacher and sensitively indicated a better way, the way of collegiality, both within the school and across clusters of schools.

It will have come up against the understandable innate conservatism of schools, that cautious trepidation about trying new methods or introducing new material. I say "understandable" because in a way, for many teachers, there is no practice green. **Each 40-minute class period** is the real thing with any apparent present failure likely to militate against future success. A bit like life, I suppose! How has the SCD initiative coped with such conservatism, if, in fact, it has met with it? Accordingly, the observations made in the presentations should be read carefully, noting the supports and strategies engaged in by the initiative to stimulate and support school environments towards becoming more dynamic and alert interactive settings.

The Principals and teachers involved were prepared to go a step further than they might have been expected to do and all are to be sincerely complimented on their commitment to making their schools better centres of learning. The evidence shows that during the course of the initiative schools became more imaginative places in dealing with curriculum, teaching and learning matters. Principals became more aware of what is involved in supporting change in curriculum/syllabus developments, and of how to relate these to school planning. Teachers became more engaged as professionals working in a collaborative way on school as well as classroom issues.

I have been involved in SCD for a number of years and I know it to have been a very serious project led by Jim Callan, with his unstinting professionalism. He was always at hand to provide the theoretical and conceptual basis for each intervention while, at the same time, being very much aware of the realities that constitute the school situation.

The Department of Education at NUI, Maynooth, is to be highly commended for its wholehearted support and promotion of this valuable intervention.

Gabriel Martin,

Senior Inspector, ICDU, Department of Education and Science.

INTRODUCTION

Irish Education has been experiencing a period of unprecedented analysis, consultation, policy formulation, legislative change and general expansion and renewal as Irish society seeks to position its education system to meet the challenges of the knowledge society in an era of lifelong learning. It is widely recognised that education is central to the social, cultural and economic well-being and progress of the society. As one indication of this, one notes the increased national investment in education, with the annual budget increasing from £1.348 billion in 1990 to reach £4.320 billion by the year 2002. A further £5.350 billion has been allocated to education in the National Development Plan, 1999 -2006.

While the educational reform agenda includes a comprehensive range of important issues, it is arguable that the core area of reform of the institutional life of the school and, in particular, its curricular policy and teaching and learning style is of pivotal importance. The future quality of our education system depends a great deal on the success of school reform. The school as an institution was designed by an earlier society for different educational and social purposes. Many of its inherited characteristics are deeply embedded in habitual procedures and constraints. While recognising qualitative aspects of this inherited tradition, current national policy is seeking to move the school in new directions and to encourage it to adopt procedures in keeping with research findings on effective and efficient schools, and exemplars of best practice in contemporary schools. It seeks to promote forms of curriculum and learning experiences needed by all pupils in a fast changing society. Among the new emphases are the promotion of whole school planning, new styles of school leadership, greater collegiality among staffs, the reform of curricula, the promotion of active learning methodologies, including the integration of ICT, and more attention to the learning needs of the significant minority of under achieving pupils.

These concerns highlight the centrality of the teaching force to the reform effort. The judgement of the OECD in its review of Irish Education in 1991, that Ireland “is fortunate in the quality of its teaching force” still holds true. The academic ability, the quality of personnel and the standard of their professional training form a national asset which, as the Government agreed in the Green and White Papers, should be cherished and nurtured. To help teachers cope with the many new challenges of national policy they need sophisticated supports. In particular, they are entitled to in-career development opportunities which are well devised, which draw on research evidence, which incorporate experiential learning in a non-judgemental context, which are sustained and which are affirmative of pro-active professional engagement. With the long-term reform agenda which is now underway, there is also a need for investment in research grounded in Irish circumstances, tradition and context which can illuminate issues to guide good practice on what a range of international studies emphasise is a very complex process - the implementation of major educational reform.

It is in this context that I consider that School Curriculum Development initiative,(1995-2001) to be of major relevance. Emerging contemporaneously, with the White Paper in 1995, it set out as a research and development project to assist the implementation of national policy at local level. The White Paper had enunciated “Partnership” as one of the five principles underpinning the reform effort, and the SCD project was a fine example of Partnership in action. The Department of Education and Science funded the project and both the Department and N.C.C.A were represented on the Steering Group. The Education Department of N.U.I. Maynooth facilitated and supported the initiative which was designed and led by Mr. Jim Callan, a Senior lecturer in the Department. A close partnership was developed with twenty post-primary schools in counties Kildare and Carlow. The Principals and Deputy Principals of the schools opted for the project and teachers of seven subject areas were invited to join. The operation of SCD involved many innovative features and broke new ground as an in-career development in a variety of ways. The rationale of the project emphasised the inter-relationship between curricular, teacher and school development. As well as fostering collaborative relationships within the schools, it also established such relationships between schools, through school cluster activities. The multi-layered design incorporated roles for Facilitators and Field Officers working in close co-operation with Jim as Co-ordinator.

I warmly welcome the publication of these proceedings from two disseminating conferences, held in the autumn of 2001. The proceedings form a valuable addition to the too few published research studies of curricular innovations and in-career development initiatives in Ireland. We need insights, understandings and guidelines from grounded Irish experience to assist in the provision of qualitative in-career development. The core focus of this study was on the essence of what genuine school improvement is about - the promotion of curricular reform and improving the quality of teaching and learning in the schools. But, because the attainment of these aims depends on a variety of contributing factors, what we get insight into is the inner dynamics of the school as a learning organisation, and on the difficulties, the enabling circumstances and the procedures which affect pathways of progress. One of the great advantages of this publication is that it provides a kaleidoscope of perspectives from the key agents involved, who draw upon review findings of all who participated.

Jim Callan's opening article is a succinct but very informative account and reflection on the rationale and operation of S.C.D. Inspired by his vision for the initiative, “the development of a system of interactive professionalism in and across the schools whose purpose is the promotion of the school as a learning community”, he has been indefatigable in his attention to what he terms “the evolutionary planning” of the initiative. His overview of the project bears eloquent testimony to the SCD.'s view that “national proposals for curriculum and school development need local implementation supports that are sensitive to school contexts and that enable frequent personal contacts with school personnel”. The extent of close personal

contacts and good communications bore out Ernest House's admonition, "Direct personal contacts are the medium through which innovations must flow".

The joint article by John Curtis, Caitlín Mhic Cárthaig and Jim Callan gives the Principals' testimony to the sensitivity displayed towards school cultures. In a particular way, it highlights how the focus on curriculum proved to be a very valuable agency for school planning, whereby Principals found that "curriculum review led to school planning, and not vice-versa". The authors report, "A key observation from the Principals' Review has been that of the significant place of curriculum, teaching and learning in any school development process". The Principals also note how the initiative had enabled and encouraged their teachers to take part in planning and development work in the school that traditionally they would not have seen as part of their role. The engagement of Principals and Deputy Principals in association with staff members highlighted the value of professional communications between them. Principals were also helped to shift the emphasis of their role from being primarily school administrators to that of school leaders of educational programmes. The Principals also record the value of the links with the university stating, "Guidance from the outside professionals who work closely with school personnel in the provision of ideas, an understanding of change processes, sharing of responsibilities, ensured that the work had been maintained in a serious and systematic way".

In the joint paper by Paul Tyrrell, Séamus Mullooly and Jim Callan entitled, "Staff Involvement and School and Curriculum Development Planning" we are given a very insightful view of how the dynamic of changing curricula and teaching and learning practices was created. The workshops for Principals and Deputy Principals are seen as being crucial in helping them to develop professional environments which were supportive and open for initiatives to take root. The fact that these senior personnel were actively involved in decision-making regarding themes for workshops fostered a sense of ownership which, as S.C.D. developed, also became a hallmark of staff engagement. Again, the significance of personal contacts and fostering trustful inter-personal relationships is seen as being a necessary pre-condition so that enriched teaching and learning processes may be explored with confidence and some enthusiasm. A particularly fascinating outcome highlights the key role of the facilitators in enabling Principals to move from the more traditional role as administrator to that of instructional and curriculum leader. The facilitators were a vital support to the Principals/Deputy Principals in establishing connections with the teachers, and in enabling the school community to develop its own distinctive response to new proposals. The article acknowledges that the facilitators were key agents in helping school communities to develop the capacities of their personnel. For one reader, one of the most telling and gripping sentences in the whole publication states, "These capacities represent the wealth of expertise, talent and creative abilities which in many instances are left untapped or undiscovered within staff". This is what we should concern ourselves with - to create the circumstances and opportunities so that this potential may be unleashed for the greater professional self-realisation of the teachers, and for the benefit of our school communities.

We are provided with a stimulating insider's view of subject workshops within the school clusters in Mary Teahan's paper. An exciting feature is the extent to which the facilitators themselves become more empowered in the process, building confidence and sophisticated competence as the work progressed. She reports on the positive effects on teachers through participating in the workshops. She records that "Teachers used their own ideas and shared these ideas with their subject colleagues They gained confidence in their teaching methods and were less afraid to try something new in the classroom, even if it was not always a total success".

Dave Barron entitles his paper "Voices from the boiler house", giving the perspectives of classroom teachers and facilitators, "grounded in the authentic voices from the schools". Teachers reported increased collaboration between colleagues and a greater ownership in relation to school-wide developments. Dave records, "One of the more important developments arising from the initiative was in the area of schools responding to their local needs through the expertise and collective wisdom of the teachers". The fostering of this sense of ownership and self-reliance among school staff promises well for on-going development. Teachers found that the facilitators and field officers "provided an energy and support in addition to helping to maintain a focus on curriculum related issues", which gave validity to SCD in the schools.

The variety and range of activities promoted by the SCD initiative were breaking old moulds and fostering the realisation that individual professionalism can be enhanced by collaborative, collegial forms of engagement. It proved that relationships within school community are the bedrock for developing the school as a learning organisation. We are at a transition stage in the evolution of the school as a social institution. Work such as that of the SCD initiative is crucial in propelling the change forward in ways which win the support and allegiance of the key practitioners. The new vision of the school has the potential to release synergies, energies, creativity and innovation from teachers which older, habitual practices may have inhibited. As Jim Callan puts it, "The initiative was essentially about seeking ways of releasing the energies which professional personnel in our schools have towards their work and stimulating them to improve the quality of their own practices and, as a result, the learning of their students". Everyone is a winner from such a process. This is why we must sustain our efforts, through good practice procedures, to provide the framework for the emergence of the "new" school to support the future quality of Irish education.

Dr. John Coolahan
Professor of Education,
National University of Ireland,
Maynooth.

SCHOOL AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT (SCD) INITIATIVE: ITS CULTURE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES.

Jim Callan, SCD Co-ordinator, NUIM

Introduction:

In this paper I would like to outline and describe the culture and some of the guiding principles that informed the work of the School and Curriculum Development (SCD) Initiative. This initiative was instigated and directed by personnel in the Education Department, National University of Ireland, Maynooth and funded by the Department of Education and Science. The initiative engaged with twenty (20) second level schools in Counties Carlow and Kildare during the period 1995-2001. It focused on promoting the role of the principal as a curriculum leader and on realising the implementation of new syllabi in a number of subject areas. This focus was influenced by the policy developments articulated in the Governments White Paper on Education: Charting our Education Future (1995) which outlines a comprehensive programme for change in Irish education.

The National Context:

The publication of the White Paper culminated a remarkable process of debates and discussions on national education policy. Notable in this regard has been The National Education Convention that took place in October 1993. Its proceedings and outcomes greatly influenced the programme for change outlined in the White Paper. The convention discussions included a focus on the role of the school principal, particularly at a time of change in the area of curriculum, teaching and learning. This role essentially invites the principal to focus more on educational as distinct from administrative issues. In doing so, principals are challenged to be critically informed about new curriculum developments being proposed and to enable their implementation in the school by giving positive and practical supports to teachers. There are new roles and tasks being presented to principals in this new emerging situation. Accordingly, at the outset of the SCD initiative, principals and deputy principals were invited, through a structured questionnaire format, to indicate what specific aspects of this role they wished the initiative to focus on. They were invited to prioritise a number of areas considered relevant to the role of curriculum leadership in the school. Their choices influenced the focus subsequently taken with them in their workshops. I will say more about this later in the paper.

The subjects focused on in the initiative included, Irish, English, Mathematics, German, Business, Accounting, and Science. The syllabi changes in these subjects were placing an increasing emphasis on active and experiential learning and the development of thinking skills and problem solving skills. In Junior Certificate

Science for example teachers are advised that “*the method of teaching must allow the student to learn through active participation in both practical and experimental work... There should be an emphasis on the thought processes of science as well as the knowledge content.*” Equally in Junior Certificate History it is noted that “*one of the special features of this course is the way in which it emphasises the methods of historical enquiry as well as the content of history.*” (cf. Junior Certificate: *Guidelines for Teachers*).

The intention in these statements, and similar statements from other revised course syllabi is to have students **participate** in the subject, and to promote **student-centred** learning activities. There are significant implications here for the role of the teacher in the teaching-learning interactions in the classroom. In addition, there are implications for how learning formats are, or ought to be, organised in school and provided for with respect to time, teaching materials, and teacher skills and competencies, to mention but a few. There are, in addition, serious implications with respect to the kinds of knowledge such approaches focus on. Student participation in subject knowledge, in the sense being discussed here, focuses on *how* that subject knowledge is acquired through student engagement in inquiry processes in addition to knowing *what* the subject content is. There is a significant shift of emphasis here that has implications for, for example, student assessment formats among other things. In a context where national examinations determine entrance to third level education this is both a complex and sensitive issue for teachers as well as parents, and others.

Taking all such consequences into consideration the business of effecting successful implementation of these new syllabi is a complex undertaking. Sensitivity has to be had to the range of audiences one has to consider, and how these audiences are or should be engaged in the implementation of new proposals for teaching and learning.

As has been the approach in the SCD initiative personnel in the schools chose the subject areas that the initiative would focus on. Their decision was influenced by syllabi developments that were occurring at both the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate levels. Accordingly, while the national context provided *legitimacy* for this focus it was important to engage in a process that allowed for local engagement in the selection process thereby facilitating a process of *ownership* of the initiative to commence. *Legitimacy* of the focus taken and *ownership* of that focus among the participants, are significant elements in the process of implementation.

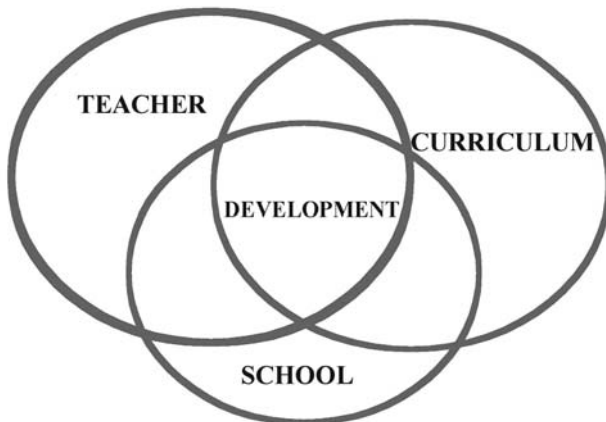
SCD: Focus and Culture:

This dual focus on classroom issues and on school leadership issues has been a distinctive feature in our initiative’s work. The *successful* implementation of a new

style of school leadership that includes the promotion of new teaching styles in the classroom would require changes in both *school structures and school cultures*. We know, for example that attempts to effect new teaching and learning in schools greatly depends on new professional collaborative relations being developed between teachers in the school, and between teachers and their school principal. It also requires shifts in existing organisational and administrative arrangements in schools. Schools wishing to seriously implement new syllabi proposals and new forms of leadership have to address serious questions. These include, for example, what values of teaching and learning inform how time is managed and organised in schools? What assumptions inform how teaching and learning practices are practised? What understanding of learning informs the way a timetable is constructed?

These are important questions to address because the professional development of the teacher is intimately linked to the quality of his/her school environment. This quality is determined by the degree to which its personnel develop procedures for monitoring student and teacher learning. It has been the ultimate thesis of the SCD initiative that in schools attention must shift explicitly to how curriculum development and teacher development fit into long-term institutional purposes of schools. Those of us in education are challenged to identify strategies and operations to effect this shift. A key element in this strategy, as understood in our work, is the development of professional collaboration between teacher and teacher and between teachers and their principals.

From the outset the challenge that the initiative embraced was that of curriculum and school development. The SCD logo captures the transactional relationship we believe exists between *Curriculum Development* ↔ *Teacher Development* ↔ *School Development*.



In a sense, curriculum development without teacher development is an empty exercise and neither can meaningfully occur in the absence of school development. A key guiding principle in the initiative accordingly has been that *school structures and systems are significant elements in either supporting or hindering curriculum and teacher development efforts*. Developing a school's structures and systems requires ongoing collaborative efforts by its principal and staff to take account of the culture of learning that is perceived to be desirable in the school in light of new national curriculum proposals. This is a challenging undertaking and accordingly, it was believed that *national proposals for curriculum and school development need local implementation supports that are sensitive to school contexts and that enable frequent personal contacts with school personnel*.

The significance of personal contacts is noted in the literature on change. For example, Ernest House in '**The Politics of Educational Innovation**' noted that

Personal contact is seen as a basic element of educational change. Inducing change in the behaviour of a number of persons requires, in effect, establishing a new social system. The number of face-to-face contacts required to maintain a social system is high and if we choose to induce such a system directly, the great number of necessary personal contacts requires astronomical sums of money and personal involvement. It is not surprising that large-scale change programmes have been resplendent failures.... Newsletters and conference methods are relatively ineffective. Anything that impedes personal contact impedes the diffusion of innovation and impedes invention.Direct personal contacts are the medium through which innovations must flow. Innovation diffusion is directly proportional to the number, frequency, depth, and duration of such contacts...

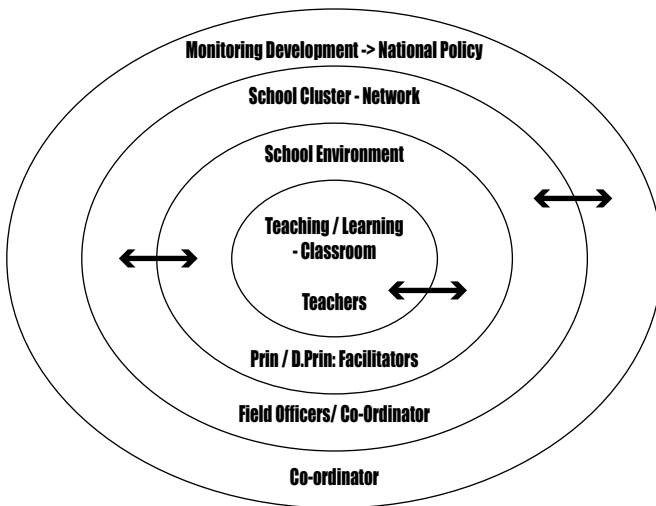
The style of interaction or the *culture* of SCD has been characterised by close *personal contacts* with school personnel. Frequent reviews of what we were doing, how workshops proceeded, how school based seminars went, what people believed useful to look at, were focused on and discussed by Field Officers on their frequent visits to schools and by the Co-ordinator on his visits to schools. The message of professional collaboration was also the medium used in our work. Engaging in monitoring activities has been an important element. Providing feedback to each other on our work has been a source of support and provided a stimulus for further action and analysis. Our work was characterised by a series of discussions, surveys, reviews, and inviting responses to proposed actions on areas of development.

We had cognisance of the workload of teachers. There has been an appreciation of the research that indicates, 'if you give some time to teachers you will get generous time in. Successful implementation requires sensitivity to teachers' contexts. Time for facilitators was negotiated, for example 20 hours over the year, so that they

could work at a pace and style appropriate to their own school's response to the SCD objectives. Cluster based workshops were held, at times within school time and at times outside of school time; negotiations with principals were engaged in to seek priority time for SCD school based seminars and all that these entailed. In all of this sensitivity was displayed to the multiplicity of demands being made on schools.

Inter-linking domains: teacher/classroom, school, and school clusters, national system.

Our work proceeded in the knowledge that teachers work in classrooms which are a sub-system of the school system. To realise good practice in the classroom the teacher requires a supportive school system. Likewise, local systems of support, in the form of colleagues from adjoining schools in the cluster, provide opportunities for developments both at classroom and school levels. And monitoring the activities that are occurring in these local cluster systems of schools yields data that can inform the work of policy makers at national level. The following diagram illustrates the inter-linking domains:



I will discuss each domain indicating the principles of procedure that influenced the activity within each one.

Teachers: Teaching-Learning:

At the core of the initiative, and at the centre of the inter-linking domains, has been the focus on *teaching and learning*. The key focus in the initiative has been seeking ways of enriching teaching and learning processes. This is evident in the vision that informed the initiative, to which I will return presently.

Specifically, the concern has been with seeking ways of encouraging and facilitating teachers to review their teaching practices and to broaden their teaching repertoires. There were a number of procedures we used to realise this that will be referred to in the course of this paper. A key element was the series of subject-based workshops in the subject areas selected by the schools. These workshops were organised on a cluster basis. Teachers from schools within their sub-cluster attended the workshops in their own subject area. Sub-clusters comprised, on average, 5 schools thus ensuring the numbers at workshops were kept to a manageable working size. Meaningful workshops could be realised with 16-20 teacher participants. In doing so, however, the challenge has been to ensure that these workshops would be ***practical, relevant, and give promise of positive teacher and student outcomes.*** These are important features in implementation processes, as research indicates, and I believe that we have been largely successful in realising this, as is evidenced in the papers in this collection from our two Field Officers. In effecting practical and relevant workshops one had to consider, among others things, the importance of such workshops reflecting what the teacher requires for his/her classroom. Materials considered suitable for teacher use and for student use in the classroom were circulated. Discussions on their appropriateness in the classroom having regard for class size, ability levels, time, and examination demands, were held in the course of the workshops. The time span between workshops was also considered important considering that teachers were requested to give feedback on their use of teaching materials circulated. Accordingly, workshops were spaced at about 3/4 week intervals

Subject based workshops were an attempt to bring the classroom into sharp focus. However, it should also be pointed out that the initiative only proposed having four (4) workshops during any one school year. Pressure of time on schools would not allow for more. Moreover, while four workshops were held during each school year only two (initially), then three, were held within school time. Evaluation reviews of the initiative indicate that these workshops were regarded, almost by everyone engaged in them, as being very successful. They did make an impact, modest but real, on how teachers approached teaching the syllabus. The papers in this collection from the Field Officers testify to this.

I believe a factor that helped achieve such a positive outcome was the supports provided to facilitators as leaders of these workshops. Prior to their leading workshops they received a series of preparation workshops themselves. These focused on materials and methods considered appropriate in the new syllabi. They also had some sessions on working with adults in learning groups. In addition, when the subject workshops were in progress the facilitators, as a group met with the Co-ordinator and Field Officers to review their workshops and to provide support and guidance to each other in preparation for upcoming workshops. Building up a sense

of team and a sense of ownership to the objectives of the initiative was always considered an important feature in our work. Doing so with facilitators as 'teacher leaders' was particularly important and proved to have been worthwhile, particularly when they moved into their 'teacher leader' role in the school. The evidence from our reviews from principals, teachers, and facilitators themselves confirms as much. It was believed that *local models of good teaching practice are significant in effecting an initiative's legitimacy, credibility, and status*. Our facilitators provided this.

School Environment:

The domain of the classroom within which teaching and learning is being enacted is located within the domain of the school as an institution. What it is possible to focus on in the teaching and learning in the classroom is to some extent, at least, influenced by the *quality* of the school environment. The environment has to do with not only structures and procedures such as time-tabling, teaching materials and other resources available for teaching. It has also to do with the quality and nature of adult relationships within the school. As Roland Barth (2001) has noted, "*I learned over and over again that the relationship among the adults in the schoolhouse has more impact on the quality and the character of the school than any other factor*".

He notes that among adult relationships in schools, that between teachers and principals is decisive. He has found no characteristic of a good school more pervasive than healthy teacher-principal relationships, and no characteristic of a troubled school more common than troubled, embattled, or antiseptic administrator-teacher relationships. From the outset of this initiative it was felt that developing professional relationships between principal and staff would be an important feature of our work.

Principals in the initiative were requested to prioritise areas for workshop topics under the general theme of 'School Leadership and Quality Learning'. The topics identified by them included *strategies for working together as a team, developing a staff collegial climate, developing a team of teachers to review and develop the school curriculum, realising ways of delegating to, and involving staff in decision-making*. The sessions conducted around these topics were highly participative.

These workshops were regarded in a positive light. However, and more importantly, evidence from the review forms from principals and teachers and facilitators indicate that significant developments occurred in the style, frequency and purpose of principal-staff relationships during the course of the six years of the initiative. The presentations from the two principals included in this collection will clearly verify this. We have attempted to realise another principle of procedure of the

initiative, viz., *that school principals require meaningful supports in order that they too can respond constructively and creatively to national proposals for school and curriculum development*. These supports have come in the form not only of ideas for procedures in developing working professional relationships with staff, but staff members themselves as supports for principals in this work. Facilitators were key supports for principals in this regard.

The work in the initiative commenced with the principals and deputy principals. As key people in their schools, building a relationship with them was vital. Having workshops on areas of need agreed on by them, and in which they were actively engaged in the issues, provided a good ground for the kinds of principal-staff engagement that were subsequently sought as the initiative unfolded.

The Principals' support and participation in shaping the focus and structures in the initiative was vital. For example, during the Spring of 1996 subject areas were chosen by schools' staffs following on discussion led by each school principal in their own school. Following on the subject selection principals assisted me, as Co-ordinator, to identify personnel willing and capable of acting in the role of facilitator. While I made the final selection of facilitators I could not have done so without the support of the principals. The message here, however, was that this initiative is about them, about school personnel having more engagement in and responsibility for shaping the solutions to current issues. Principals are critically significant people in these implementation processes. They are in a position to exert a certain influences on how timetables are constructed in the school, how time is utilised, what areas are deemed priority areas, what issues need to be discussed, and what procedures to use for addressing these issues at school level.

At the same time principals require help in engaging with staff in the context of effecting developments in the school. The role of the facilitator included that of leading subject-based workshops *as well as* working as a 'teacher leader' in the school. This invited them to liaise with their principal in providing and supporting systems in the school for effecting developments of teaching and learning. In realising this role facilitators were requested to collaborate with their subject colleagues in the school and, in addition with colleagues in other subject areas. Among the criteria used in selecting facilitators was that they have a '*legitimacy with their school peers*' in the sense that they would be acknowledged as '*good practitioners*' in their own subject area. It was also expected that they would have a '*facility to work with colleagues within the school on teaching and learning practices*'. There is overwhelming evidence from various sources of data to indicate that the vast majority of facilitators achieved a high level of success in promoting closer collaborative work among teachers, and between teachers and principals in their respective schools. This has been a significant feature of the initiative. The

papers from our Principals and Field Officers presented in this collection give further examples of such developments.

Through such professional collaborative activities within the school one has been seeking to effect a situation whereby *the school could provide a meaningful context for the professional development of the teacher*. This has been a fundamental principle informing the initiative. As the Co-ordinator of the initiative my belief was that a key to *improving schools from within* lies in improving the professional interactions among teachers, and between teachers and their school principal. Barth (1990) has made a telling observation in this regard:

...if the capacity of teachers and principals to enrich rather than diminish each other's lives and work is to be realised... the school principal must assume more of the burden of protecting the best interests of teachers and liberating more of the constructive power of which teachers are capable. In addition, each teacher will have to assume more ownership for the best interests of the school - including other teachers, other teachers' pupils, and the principals.

(Barth, p. 28)

The initiative was essentially about seeking ways of releasing the energies which professional personnel in our schools have towards their work and stimulating them to improve the quality of their own practices and, as a result, the learning of their students. While the initiative has been concerned to enrich the learning of students it has done so *through seeking ways of improving the quality of understanding teachers have of their classroom practices and through improving the quality of their professional relationships with each other*. The vision of the initiative has been *the development of a system of interactive professionalism in and across the schools whose purpose is the promotion of the school as a learning community*.

Specifically, the initiative has been about developing a school environment in which teachers practice some self-reflection on their teaching and learning practices, having the support of their colleagues, and supported by the principal. That principals do so by purposefully seeking and creating opportunities for teachers to plan, work together, monitor and evaluate developments in their teaching. The desired outcome of such developments being that classroom practices are enriched in the sense that students are performing and achieving in a wider range of competencies and skills.

The *purpose* of SCD has been about enabling an *inner-capacity* within each school to engage in processes of *self-review* and *self-evaluation*, particularly in relation to teaching and learning processes in their school. Within such a professional climate

significant school and curriculum development can occur. This vision and purpose has guided our various cluster workshops, the school-based seminars, principals' tasks, the facilitators' role, field officers' school visits, and the co-ordinator's guidance.

Clusters:

At the commencement of the initiative our workshops and seminars were cluster-based. We had two *major* clusters: Carlow and Kildare, with two sub-clusters within each. Each sub-cluster had c. 5 schools. Administering a cluster of schools that are closely located geographically to each other enables a sensitivity to local school practices and needs. It enabled an easy blending into day-to-day school activities without serious disruption to school practices. One was respectful of the values that informed and permeated existing school procedures. Having sensitivity to the “*maintenance needs of individuals and groups*” while at the same time facilitating and stimulating them to change through “*processes of incremental and decremental fits and starts*” (Fullan,1992) is a balance that must be achieved in successful change processes. Working in small clusters enabled close personal contacts that helped build a sense of purpose and commitment to the vision of what we were about. Thus the concept of cluster was a principled as well as an administrative strategy in SCD. We looked to the cluster and the potential richness within it as our primary source for enabling developments. While outside supports were sought there was no shifting of the burden of responsibility to these supports expecting them to resolve the issues that schools were confronting in their development work. Processes of school and curriculum development should enable people to learn how to deal with their own issues, and this we sought to do. There are challenges in this, not least the challenge of a “shift of mind” from believing that there must be an individual, or an individual outside agency responsible for solving the problems, to a perspective which suggests that everyone shares responsibility for addressing problems, including teachers and school principals.

Just as our strategy of promoting collaborative cultures within the school was an attempt to draw on local expertise in addressing their own issues, clusters were seen as a means of encouraging school staffs to look beyond their own context to energise them for their own settings. It was believed that ***teacher collaboration within schools can be stimulated, in the first instance, through teacher collaboration across schools in a particular geographical cluster.*** The evidence suggests that this has been an effective way to promote developments in schools. This was assisted by visits to the schools by the Field Officers who further encouraged and supported the facilitators in their work at school level. The two major clusters, Carlow and Kildare areas, each had a Field Officer. The Field Officers were, importantly, practising teachers from within their own cluster who were seconded for c.140 hours between late September and late February each year.

Their role has been acknowledged as providing excellent support for facilitators and in keeping the focus of the initiative to the forefront of principals and teachers minds. Their knowledge of the local terrain and their sensitivity of the idiosyncratic political realities that permeate each school played no small part in their successful working with facilitators and other staff members on promoting the initiative's objectives.

The close engagement people had with each other in the developments gave them a sense of contributing to what was happening and a sense of being engaged in something that they experienced as being worthwhile. The initiative was perceived in a positive light by many engaged in it. Proceeding in the context of small clusters has been a big bonus in our initiative's work. Personnel within the initiative acknowledge this as is reported in my **Interim Reports: Towards Enabling Curriculum Leadership and School Culture Change**, (1997), and *Developing Supportive Teaching Environments*, (2000). It is also acknowledged in the External Evaluator's Report: *Underpinning Good Learning*, (1999)

External Supports: Linking Local to National and vice versa.

The final domain or dimension in the work of the initiative was working with a wider audience beyond the local audience. *In essence, this initiative was seeking ways of implementing national policy at local level.* It was acknowledged from the outset that the procedures used in this initiative would be of interest to the Department of Education and Science, and in particular personnel in the In-Career Development Unit. This Unit funded the initiative and it had a representative on its Steering Group. This Steering Group also included the two C.E.O's whose schools were involved in the initiative, representatives of the school principals, teacher representation and personnel from Education Department, National University of Ireland, Maynooth. The various documents prepared by me as Co-ordinator were presented to the Steering Group for discussion and guidance. In this way a constant monitoring and assessing of our developments took place. We believed that *"successful implementation requires the careful monitoring of effects of what is taking place and in light of these, to modify or alter or abandon proposed activities.* (Louis and Miles, 1990)

Personnel in the In-Career Development Unit were, accordingly, kept informed of our implementation strategies. The two autumn 2001 seminars that have been organised in consultation with Department of Education and Science officials, and with officials from the N.C.C.A., and with officials from national support teams is a further effort to disseminate our findings. These have been designed to provide information to personnel who are now working as external co-ordinators in a supportive role for schools in the areas of school and curriculum development. In addition, we have been conscious of the need to communicate our procedures and

outcomes to these personnel as a way of encouraging on-going developments between our SCD schools and the work of these various teams.

Part of the remit in this initiative has been developing and building up relationships between various elements in the local school system. These include teacher-teacher relationships, teacher-principals relationships, secondary-vocational school relationships, and school-university relationships. I believe that we have achieved some developments in this regard and in doing so the initiative's work has provided some important insights on *principles of procedure* for school and curriculum development for dissemination among personnel working at national level. While many agencies were involved in this initiative the support from the University has been significant. The role of University personnel as external co-ordinators or support has, as with any support agency coming from outside the schools, to be carefully conceived and executed.

External co-ordinators for curriculum and school developments are a necessary requirement in the work of school and curriculum development. Principals and teachers will readily acknowledge this. However, the work of an *external co-ordinator is one whereby they can help develop with school personnel proposals and procedures that are both organisationally practical and politically sensitive to the local, and national, context*. It is not the role of an external co-ordinator to work with schools in *adopting* national policies at local level but rather in *adapting* them to local circumstances. External co-ordinators have to come to understand the culture of each school setting. This requires a degree of sensitivity to local school contexts. It demands, as already noted, frequent personal contacts. Such close interaction between external and internal personnel allows the co-ordinator to exert, on the one hand, a certain *pressure* on school personnel to adhere to their commitments to initiative's objectives, while on the other, providing meaningful *supports* in order for schools to do so. Other contributions to these proceedings outline in more detail what these supports have been in our SCD work. Suffice to note here that we were acutely aware of Fullan's observation viz., "*pressure without support leads to resistance and alienation; support without pressure leads to drift or waste of resources.*" (Fullan, 1992).

The exercise of *pressure and support* requires subtle judgements made by those leading implementation processes, based on practical experiences and understanding of what was or could occur in schools. The process is one of *evolutionary planning*, and an external co-ordinator is well placed to guide such a process. But it requires close on-going work on the ground in the schools. It includes obtaining critical reactions from school personnel to proposals. It demands being pro-active on emerging issues. I have, for example, met with Principals and facilitators and worked with them on SCD activities and the school and teachers

issues surrounding them. Their observations on possible ways of addressing these issues has been sought and followed through. We have, accordingly, *sought to obtain an agreed clarity, among SCD personnel, on what we were about and why, and how we were attempting to achieve our purposes*. In engaging in this process of *evolutionary planning* one is effectively engaging in democratic and collaborative procedures. These are not just good management procedures. They are necessary to ensure that what is being attempted holds promise of practical and relevant outcomes for teachers in their day to day work in the classroom.

In Conclusion:

The style of interaction in our initiative reflects what it is we have been encouraging teachers and principals to do, viz. to develop professional collaborative processes in their schools with a view to enriching their teaching and learning practices and systems. *Getting teachers to focus critically on their teaching and learning practices is, as I have clearly experienced in the course of this initiative, a non-linear, circuitous and difficult undertaking*. This is so, not because teachers are intrinsically problematic but because the situation in which they are in is itself a highly problematic one. Supports are required for teachers that address not only *professional-technical* issues but also that address issues of *teacher fear and uncertainty* at a time of change. People need each other's knowledge to solve problems. Collaborative learning, accordingly, is not just nice but *necessary* for teacher survival in today's classrooms. This interdependence promotes an atmosphere of joint responsibility, mutual respect, and a sense of personal and group identity. External personnel have a key role to play in assisting schools in the promotion of such a culture in the school and in a manner that enables an empowering process of development to occur for teachers and principals.

The structures that the initiative developed and the culture of relationships it sought to promote between the various agencies and personnel contained the vision of the initiative. Working together, sharing ideas, understanding each other's problems, and jointly seeking solutions creates a good learning environment. If principals and teachers as professionals have grown during the lifetime of this initiative, and there is evidence to indicate that they have, then students will be, with them, major recipients of this process.

References

Barth, R. (1990): *Improving School from Within: Teachers, Parents and Principals can make the Difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Barth, R. (2001): *Learning by Heart*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Callan, J. (1997): *Towards Enabling Curriculum Leadership and School Culture Change*. Interim Report SCD, Education Department, National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

Callan, J. (2000): *Developing Supportive Teaching Environments*. Interim Report SCD, Education Department, National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

Charting our Education Future (1995). Government White Paper.

Fullan, M. (1992): *Successful School Improvement*. Buckingham, Open University Press.

House, E. (1974): *The Politics of Educational Innovation*. Berkeley, CA, McCuthan.

Louis, K. & Miles, M.B. (1990): *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why*. New York, Teachers College Press.

Woods, M. (1999): *Underpinning Good Learning: External Evaluation Report SCD*, National University of Ireland Maynooth.

SCD - CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AS SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT: CURRICULUM AS A WEDGE IN SCHOOL PLANNING.

John Curtis - Principal Knockbeg College.

Caitlín Mhic Cárthaigh - Príomhoide Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach.

Jim Callan, SCD Co-ordinator, NUIM.

A 'Grounded' Initiative:

The School and Curriculum Development initiative was 'grounded' in two senses. In the first sense it focused at the heart of what schooling is all about, viz. the teaching and learning in the classroom, its quality and its development. Secondly, it was not a top-down approach to curriculum development but rather it focused on what teachers are currently doing in school. The initiative focused, with principals and teachers, on reviewing and renewing their current practices. Accordingly, it was not a Board of Management or Trustee initiative. Its purpose was injected by what was happening on the ground in schools and in classrooms. It deals with “where all things start” in the school, teaching and learning: their purpose, their styles, and their effectiveness.

This grounded nature of the initiative was also sensitive to the existing workloads of teachers and principals. One did not, and indeed could not, prescribe participation in the initiative. People were invited to consider its potential for developing school and curriculum areas and in light of this to participate on a voluntary basis. This voluntary nature of the initiative had given it a certain dynamic and, as with focusing on curriculum and working with staff, it too was a crucial element in effecting the movement towards the various developments schools subsequently addressed.

Understanding Curriculum and its Development:

The focus on teaching and learning challenged us to reflect on what a definition of curriculum might be and what working on curriculum development might entail. In the course of the initiative we, as professionals, began to appreciate more, than perhaps previously, that teaching, learning and curriculum issues radiate out to include so many aspects of school life. Teaching and learning is at the hub of school life. Focusing on this core activity in the school many schools began a process of re-examining, in addition to subject teaching in the classroom, their practices in such areas as:

- ◆ mixed ability teaching,
- ◆ homework and study skills
- ◆ subject choice
- ◆ discipline and learning environment

in a new, and perhaps more progressive, way. This brought people into areas of school planning, only now it was curriculum based. As we perceive it, a critical aspect was that *curriculum review led to school planning, and not vice-versa*. We will say more about this presently.

Curriculum Development ⇔ School Development:

In the course of the initiative we incorporated in a constructive and developmental way activities relating to school development planning. It was always within the remit of the initiative to effect changes at school level believing that the organic unit for change is the school and not just the individual teacher or the individual curriculum programme. The initiative's logo implies as much, viz. Curriculum Development ⇔ Teacher Development ⇔ School development. The inclusion of workshops for principals and deputy principals as well as teachers and the role of the facilitator as 'school leader' as well as 'subject leader' reflect in concrete ways this orientation. What was impressive, however, was the fact that the initiative moved into this dimension on the direction and stimulus of some of our principals. For the principals it was a natural progression to develop what we were doing in our initiative to what was being promoted in the nationally sponsored initiative on school development planning (SDP). In light of SCD work, however, this development was based on school issues that related directly to classroom matters and teachers were focused on these issues.

A key observation from the Principal's Reviews has been that of the *significant place of curriculum, teaching and learning in any school development process*. There is evidence from the review data that indicates that principals have obtained a heightened awareness and a more critical understanding of what is involved in curriculum development. This is an important and significant outcome of our work and one that we should not ignore. Specifically, it has been acknowledged by principals that school structures and systems have to be altered if schools are to respond meaningfully to the current national directives for curriculum change. This involves re-organising staff duties. It requires a positive response to the "*allocation of dedicated time both for planning and discussion*." It requires that school policies are reviewed, in particular those relating to subject choice, class organisation, and staff attitudes and perceptions that inform school policy in relation to student ability and achievement. The benefits to principals in engaging in school policy review that have as a central focus, teaching and learning matters is well summed up by a principal. He noted that this engagement has "*ensured my own awareness and understanding of what is involved in curriculum development*", and by extension school development.

Principals are more critically aware of issues such as *teacher morale, levels of teacher and student motivation, parent support*, to mention some, as requiring attention in the process of school and curriculum development. There is a widening

of the concept of curriculum beyond that of 'subject knowledge'. The following extracts from principals' responses capture the new understanding of curriculum development and its intrinsic relationship to school development. These reflect many similar responses from principals:

The initiative has encouraged me to enable and support school and curriculum development activities, thus, enhancing our teaching and learning. We have reviewed many school policies and I feel that our school has benefited greatly from this. The preparation involved in such work has ensured my own awareness and understanding of curriculum development. It has assumed a different level of importance. I feel I have been able to increase the level of interaction with staff in relation to teaching and learning issues and thus have effected a wider staff involvement in shaping and developing new school policies. SCD has made me more aware of what is involved in curriculum development in my school.

and

I regard 'curriculum' as the sum total of all that happens within the school that contributes in any way to the holistic development of the student. This would not have been the view of some staff members in the early stages of SCD but it is one that developed over time.

and

There is a greater awareness among the staff of the need to evaluate more frequently what we do as a school in creating a better teaching and learning environment. Through our involvement in SCD, we have reviewed and made changes to discipline procedures, subject choices at First Year level, mixed ability teaching, early school leavers programme, and attendance and punctuality. Each of these impacts daily on the life of the school and not only promotes a more effective system in terms of organisation but create a more effective teaching and learning environment.

and

Throughout the nineties, schools have been given many opportunities to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom and especially SCD. All of those compliment each other, each seems to focus on a different aspect. Looking to myself, I am more organised, I have developed skills that help me get the best from staff members in a pleasant way, I feel freer to look for and expect high standards and I have more confidence in my personal ability to do a good job. Much of this has come from the interaction that has taken place over those years.

The focus we have had on teaching approaches, appropriate teaching materials, student study skills, school homework policy, and the rationale and procedures used by schools with regard to subject choice and selection, had provided a curriculum focus in the interactions and communications between staff members within and across schools. Field officers, facilitators, principals, and the co-ordinator have all been deployed to encourage this focus in school matters. This central focus meant that we were looking at the school through the prism of curriculum development. In doing so it persuaded staff to look at the school differently than they might hitherto have done. Issues such as discipline and the day-to-day mechanics of running a school could be re-appraised with reference to their contribution to enhancing the quality and nature of the learning interactions between teacher and pupil in the classroom.

In the course of the initiative the subject areas for focus were selected following on discussions with school personnel. These we used as *points of leverage* in our approach to school and curriculum development. Facilitators were selected within the framework of subject areas. They, in turn, led subject based seminars. Principals were encouraged to liaise with facilitators at school level and to seek ways of providing supports in the school planning that would address the subject teaching needs of teachers in their work in the classroom. In doing so, we were encouraging principals to review the means their schools use to address its central purpose, viz. the promotion of student learning.

Moreover, starting from the classroom concerns of teachers and with those issues that directly flow from them meant that school planning in SCD schools was based on practical concerns and concrete day-to-day needs. Developing school plans in this way can potentially effect a more significant and meaningful outcome to this process than one whose initial target is a general [philosophical] statement –or a mission statement – that can be either vague and/or irrelevant to the practical day-to-day activities that teachers and principals engage in. The initiative was driven by the need to be relevant and productive to these everyday activities. That is not to say that it lacked a purpose or a vision. It was driven by the desire to enrich the work of principals and teachers in a way that would deepen their understanding of these activities as they sought to change and develop them. Our processes were monitored and discussions took place that led to new understandings and clarity of purpose. Following on Fullan, the slogan, '*ready, fire, aim*', was apt. Aims and visions were clarified as we proceeded in our activities. Monitoring of these activities through visits by the field officers and the Co-ordinator to schools and the various meetings that were held to review our progress and map future developments was considered an important feature in our work. An understanding of what is involved in developing curriculum in a school, how to proceed with respect to its style and pace of progress, was deepened through active engagement on its tasks.

Developing a Supportive School Environment:

The culture of relationships developed in SCD, and the structures it put in place for principals and teachers, was informed with the view that teachers cannot create good learning contexts unless suitable conditions exist in the school for them. Planning for developments in the school must include the development of various systems that enable the transmission of the curriculum like, for example, teaching resources, time-tabling arrangements, student assessment procedures, all of which impact on the work of teachers in the classroom. School development and curriculum development are, we believed, inextricably inter-linked.

This understanding of curriculum development presented a series of challenges to school principals and staff members. It challenged principals to give a priority to arranging meetings with staff to discuss curriculum and teaching and learning matters. It also invited principals to review their role in the curriculum development process, and to review their tasks and how these are delegated to facilitators in conducting surveys on learning needs and teaching issues in the school. In the broadening concept of what is entailed in curriculum development there was the challenge presented to principals to assist in a certain confidence building with staff members to lead certain developments in the school. Moving teachers out of the 'comfort zone' and from habitual ways of doing things is part and parcel of seeking to effect curriculum change in the school. Perhaps then, one of the biggest factors here has been helping people to have a confidence in leading new developments and, in addition, in encouraging people to be open to new ways of doing things. This requires a supportive environment and the principal, with other school leaders, has a key role in helping to build this.

A factor that ensured this wider engagement by staff, as has been already referred to, was that the starting point was their subject area. Placing developments within the context of addressing subject developments and related teaching issues such as, resources for mixed ability teaching, supports for student discipline procedures, reviewing the rationale and procedures for subject choice, generated an energy among staff members to participate in what were, for them, 'meaningful' developments. Dealing with curriculum issues in a subject-based manner gave teachers an opportunity to gain new ideas and to share materials. Teachers had an interest in engaging in such sharing as they can, and did, contribute to an enhancement of their work in the classroom. But this also challenged the leadership in the school to encourage and facilitate these exchanges between teachers.

The developments that were occurring in the schools along the lines indicated here represent a breaking away from a situation in which too much in school is dependent on principals cajoling and prompting teachers into work they do not necessarily see as part of their remit. What has been experienced in this initiative,

and as is evidenced in the other papers in this collection is a wider involvement of teachers in school related development issues, that is issues which go beyond but relate to classroom issues. This is overwhelmingly acknowledged in the responses in the Review Forms. This is a significant development. As one principal noted:

More teachers now think in terms of the need for change as opposed to waiting for the Principal to initiate the change.

The initiative enabled and encouraged teachers to take part in planning and development work in the school that traditionally they would not have seen as part of their role. They have been consulted and brought into the process in a *voluntary way* and have had ownership of what followed. This has helped effect a culture change to a more collaborative approach to planning in the school. The end result is *greater involvement* among all those concerned and a more open and supportive environment to ideas for change. (cf. the paper from Paul Tyrrell and Seamus Mullooly and Jim Callan).

What we believe is of significance in our work, accordingly, is the growth of understanding that principals experienced with regard to *their role in developing the curriculum* in their schools. Over recent years what has been of concern to second level principals generally in our education system is exactly now do they realise the role of 'curriculum focused' leader. There is a view that they have to have a professional knowledge of the various subjects/programmes in their school and/or that this role necessarily involves them in visiting classrooms for monitoring purposes in order to assist them in judging the extent of curriculum development occurring in their schools. While such features in this role *may be* desirable they are not necessary. What we have experienced as being critically important, however, is that principals engage with staff in order to *enrich and increase professional communications between them*. That is, the purpose of these interactions is to help them understand the needs of the teachers and to ascertain from them the supports required to further promote the subject in the classroom and in the school generally. Skills and competencies in building professional interactions are at a premium in this role of curriculum focused leadership. Our data from facilitators and teachers indicate as much. Teachers appreciate the interest and support from their principals to their efforts to enrich their classroom practices. Principals and Deputy Principals need to exhibit, as an analysis of our data reveals,

- (i) leadership: in particular a capacity to engage in meaningful consultative processes with members of their staff;
- (ii) curriculum analytic skills, i.e. an ability to analyse with staff members their schools curriculum needs and to effect a curriculum design which relates to these needs;

- (iii) management skills, an ability to set practical targets having respect for the real situation in the school: its resources with respect to time, finance, materials, and personnel.

This role extends the role of the principal from being primarily a school administrator to that of a school leader of educational programmes. This has implications for the kind and range of supports and resources principals require for realising this professional role.

In SCD, the role of the facilitator in this process has been crucial. Through the work of the facilitator in their mediating role (cf. Dave Barron's and Mary Teahan's papers), it meant that the process of development in the school was more of a whole school initiative and less of a management or principal initiative. Their role in the school created a novel dynamic in this regard. Initially working very much in the context of their subject areas this role was then expanded into one of effecting developments within their own school. They were key role players in working and liaising with their principal, on the one hand, and with staff colleagues on the other. As subject teachers they interacted initially with their subject colleagues and as time progressed they encouraged links with other subject personnel in the school. Their starting point in all of these interactions was on teaching and learning matters. Developing from this they helped identify teaching needs in the school, conducting surveys and other inquiries for staff members. In doing so they achieved a staff focus and renewed interest in teaching and learning issues among the staff. They also, through their growing professional collaboration with their principal, ensured that the principal was kept informed on the teaching needs of the staff in the various subject areas. As one principal noted:

SCD has helped me realise the importance of whole staff involvement and it has improved both my own awareness and that of staff for curriculum development.

What is noticeable during the period of the initiative and as is evidenced in the responses from Principals, facilitators, and teachers is a narrowing of the professional gap between principals and staff at school level. This has been one of our objectives in this initiative and it has been realised in those schools that have seriously responded to the initiative's supports. These responses include, for example, utilising the Field Officers visits to schools, the creative and constructive use of the facilitators at school level, linking the work from cluster seminars into ongoing school activities and on to school-based seminars. These were perceived as practical but very useful supports for schools. The use of them effected a development towards building up more professional interactions between principal and staff and staff member with staff member.

University – School Links: The role of an outside agency:

The fact that an outside agency, i.e. personnel from the University (N.U.I.M) and personnel on the SCD Steering Committee has had a central involvement in directing the initiative has been of *significance*. Guidance from outside professionals who work closely with school personnel in the provision of ideas, an understanding of change processes, sharing of responsibilities, ensured that the work had been maintained in a serious and systematic way. The systems and structures proposed to the schools for the initiative meant that all involved had access to varying and enriching viewpoints from colleagues within, across, and outside school. The advantages of this context have been noted particularly in the case of the professional development experienced by the facilitators and the field officers in the course of the initiative.

In addition, from a principal's perspective, it was helpful that the stimulus to move developments forward in the school were not coming solely from them. Consequently, they were not targeted as the people solely responsible either for creating the ideas for the way forward or for being solely responsible for doing so. While acknowledging a responsibility for promoting change in school it was helpful to have outside agencies support them in this task, to guide and encourage, and at times to place gentle pressure on their efforts in doing so. The initiative did provide opportunities for principals and deputy principals to learn about how to handle change processes in their own school. They interacted with fellow principals at various seminars and meetings held within the initiative's activities. These provided opportunities for discussing issues and ways of responding to them. The momentum established by university personnel through setting up workshops for them and members of their staffs meant that the locus for development was coming from a number of sources. Thus responsibility and accountability for what was happening was not solely related directly to school management. Moreover, the knowledge and understanding of the change process and in particular processes of implementation that outside personnel brought to the initiative did give a legitimacy and status to the initiative in schools. What has been important in this regard has been the fact that the role of the university personnel while insistent and persistent has not been intrusive. As noted by the Co-ordinator in his own paper in this collection, seeking the right kind of working relationships between personnel inside the school and personnel outside the school is of critical importance. The culture of relationships established in this initiative in this regard suggests a style for school development planning processes that might have a broader appeal at national level.

Equally, and related to this role has been the ways in which our principals have worked with the facilitators. Where principals and facilitators met frequently there is evidence that indicates that such meetings provided good opportunities for the principal to come to know more about the teaching and curriculum needs of

teachers, what their thinking was on issues relating to these matters, and how these could be addressed. More details on the effectiveness of these working relationships are presented in the next paper.

STAFF INVOLVEMENT AND SCHOOL AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT :

STAFF INVOLVEMENT AND SCHOOL AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PLANNING.

J Paul Tyrrell, Principal, Cross and Passion Secondary School Kilcullen
Seamus Mullooly, Principal, Patrician Secondary School, Newbridge.
Jim Callan, SCD Co-ordinator, NUIM.

The central theme of this paper is how SCD promoted and encouraged the role of staff involvement in the area of School and Curriculum Development. In essence this initiative effected such involvement in a number of different ways. These include:

- ◆ a series of workshops on instructional leadership for principals and deputy principals.
- ◆ cluster based subject workshops for teachers that were designed, organised and facilitated by teachers from the participating SCD schools.
- ◆ cluster based topic seminars
- ◆ school based seminars and
- ◆ the work of the Facilitators within the school supported by Field Officers and the Co-ordinator.

Other papers in this collection focus on developments such as subject based workshops, school based seminars, and the work of the facilitator from the perspective of the teacher and facilitator. Here, however we wish to focus on some of the above from the perspective of the principal. In particular the significance of the workshops for principals and deputy principals and the developing professional collaboration between the principal and the facilitator at school level and its significance in effecting staff involvement in school and curriculum development.

Before doing so, however, we would like to focus on one or two key elements that informed this initiative and pervaded its activities during its lifetime.

Professional Collaboration: A key element

Central to the realisation of the vision of SCD as presented in overview paper in this collection by Jim Callan the SCD Co-ordinator, was the key task of assisting principals and deputy principals to *develop professional collaboration within and, to some extent, across schools*. This orientation was informed by the research that indicates the importance and significance of effecting and developing *professional*

collaboration between principals and teachers in bringing about improvements in teaching and learning for the development of schools as learning communities. The SCD Initiative acknowledged this by placing professional collaboration as a central theme in its work. This permeated the various relationships it sought to address and develop. It sought to enrich existing relationships between principal and staff, and between staff and staff at school level. It also sought to effect such developments across schools and across other sectors in the education system, e.g. relationships between school personnel and university personnel. Specifically, there was sensitivity to addressing:

- ◆ Principals/deputy principals
- ◆ Subject personnel with subject personnel
- ◆ Facilitators with facilitators
- ◆ Facilitators with principals
- ◆ Facilitators with field officers
- ◆ Field officers with co-ordinator and
- ◆ SCD Co-ordinator with principals.

In the context of national curriculum initiatives SCD promoted professional collaboration in all of these domains. It commenced by providing opportunities for principals and deputy principals to work constructively in developing systems within their respective schools that would support staff collaboration and new staff roles. Central to this process, it was believed, is the need to develop a greater degree of openness to new ideas on and review of existing school and classroom practices by principals/deputy principals and staff members. In essence, what was considered essential was the development of a supportive professional environment that would enable developments in systems, such as for example, timetabling, resources, areas of responsibility, that would facilitate developments of the work of teachers in the classroom and in their planning for this work. How effective a school is in achieving this will depend, it was believed, not only on the calibre and commitment of individuals entrusted with the task but also on their willingness to work together for the good of the school in general and its learning in particular. Building such a supportive environment has been a key element in our work. Such an environment is one where people feel valued and their contributions are recognised. In his SCD Interim Report (1997), for example, Jim Callan noted:

A climate of support for teachers which enriches their working environment is a necessary pre-condition for teachers when one is attempting to delegate responsibilities, and the implied new role which this has for teachers.

Fundamental to the creation of a supportive environment is the existence of open

professional relationships within a school. Principals and Deputy Principals have a key part to play in creating such a school context. An environment that is *open and supportive* is one that enables teachers to take certain risks and attempt new approaches in their classroom practices. We know from the research that change brings a certain fear, anxiety and even a sense of loss among teachers. In this context teachers require support and understanding and it is to principals and other senior personnel schools look to for this. In particular, one must respect the work that teachers are currently doing while at the same time inviting them to review, with a view to developing, their own practices and the learning environment in the school generally. If the relationships and supports so established are practical, concrete, and authentic, they will generate among staff members a willingness to become an agent of change within the school. To effect this principal-staff relationships require authentic dialogue whereby each is sensitive to each others' needs.

Having regard to the importance of relationships the initiative constantly placed an emphasis on personal contacts with all involved. These were achieved through regular school visits by initiative personnel, and meetings with principals and facilitators. Discussions and review meetings were a feature of our work. In other words, the initiative recognised that school and curriculum development was more than a technical matter governed by adjustments to subject content. It involves taking cognisance of the quality of relationships between the professional, students and parents in the school setting.

Principal/Deputy Principal Workshops: Towards creating a supportive school environment

The initiative commenced with workshops for principals and deputy principals. As stated in the Co-ordinator's Interim Report (1997), concerning these workshops:

The focus has been on developing among principals an appreciation of the role that they can play in the provision of a healthy learning environment that would encourage and sustain among staff members a critical responsive approach to new curriculum and new syllabi.

These workshops, then, were about capturing the focus of principals and deputy principals to work closely with their staff on issues of curriculum, teaching and learning to a greater degree than they might otherwise have been doing in schools. In preparing for the workshops, principals and deputy principals prioritised the areas for workshop focus from a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire, circulated to all principals and deputy principals during the summer of 1995, presented a number of areas related to the work of an instructional leader. The responses to the questionnaire give a clear indication of the willingness of principals and deputy principals to engage in a process which sought to develop their

professional capacity in creating and developing a collaborative culture within their school for the purpose of school and curriculum development and planning. They areas selected for focus included:

- ◆ Reviewing the role of the principal/deputy principal;
- ◆ Towards developing a job description for principal/deputy principal
- ◆ Delegation and team building;
- ◆ Time management
- ◆ Reviewing posts of responsibility with curriculum duties;
- ◆ Processes of curriculum needs analysis;
- ◆ Processes of Curriculum planning.

Taking cognisance of this the workshops were focused on developing skills and competencies which would assist principals and deputy principals in the development of a healthy supportive teaching environment. In this regard these workshops had a focus on the ‘people management’ aspect of curriculum leadership rather than on the technical features associated with curriculum implementation (cf. SCD Co-ordinator’s Interim Report, 1997).

This was never going to be a simple undertaking. Within the context of addressing what was effectively the principal’s role in school and curriculum development were a number of issues that would provide some concern. These included, for example, the level of support that existed for school management, the role definition around the work of principals and deputy principals and the demarcation lines between teachers and management. These represent elements of the ‘systemic structure’ which are part and parcel of the school environment within which principals and deputy principals work. Again as noted in the Interim Report (1997)

The role of school principal is embedded in cultural norms and power relationships over a long number of years... [It] is largely an administrative role requiring little by way of analyses of needs, planning for school or staff development.

Those who are keen to implement new curriculum and school developments must respect existing traditions and the roles and the practices associated with them. In this context the workshops provided opportunities for principals and deputy principals together to explore the topics outlined above. In particular to review the nature and scope of their work, to examine the demands and challenges in their existing practices and to explore ways of addressing a form of curriculum leadership with staff members.

There is evidence from the evaluation review carried out with principals that these

workshops did enable a more enriched understanding of what is involved in effecting curriculum development in the school and gave guidelines in ways that they could engage in and provide support for such development. They did inspire a confidence in their ability to lead and manage change and they created a willingness to give issues of curriculum, teaching, and learning a higher priority in the agendas of their schools. The workshops were, in effect, the initial stimuli in promoting and encouraging a change mindset among principals and deputy principals about how to lead through greater delegation among staff and to create a collaborative culture through sharing and working closer together. And they did so in a context which stressed the importance of each principal and deputy principal recognising the opportunities within their own school for effecting developments while at the same time encouraging them to identify and address the constraints for such developments.

Arising from the workshops, principals and deputy principals realised the potential of *shared leadership*. The workshops were succeeded by a number of other developments. These included subject based workshops for teachers in subject areas that were undergoing developments at national level, the selection of facilitators who worked closely with principals, topic based seminars, and school-based seminars. However, while these developments did complement the aims of the workshops for principals, i.e. enabling more collaborative work at school level on teaching and learning, their effectiveness did depend on the goodwill of principals to play their part in actively supporting and promoting the work at school level. Thus the discussions and analyses critically engaged in at the principals' and deputy principals' workshops provided good foundation for their positive response to subsequent developments in the initiative. The data collected from the SCD review work, engaged in towards the end of the initiative, indicates that staff members *are* more actively involved in decisions that impact on their work. And they have acknowledged that there is now, to a degree not previously experienced, a shared sense of purpose permeating their work in the school.

Following on the workshops some of the principals and deputy principals developed a different perspective on their role as leaders and on the nature of the organisations that they were leading. These perspectives enabled them to promote greater levels of staff involvement in addressing school wide issues. However, another practical support in this regard was the work of the facilitator whose role as teacher leader in liaison with the principal will be referred to later in this paper.

Effecting Ownership

In conjunction with choosing the workshop themes the principals and deputy principals were also involved in the decisions concerning the structure and execution of the workshops. This involved deciding on the duration, location and

timing of the workshops. In this regard SCD was promoting from the beginning the message of consensus decision-making among principals, deputy principals and the initiative. Therefore the workshops as well as endeavouring to develop professional collaboration were also involving principals and deputy principals in decision making within the initiative, thereby effecting an ownership among them as to what was happening. Such professional collaboration later permeated the subject workshops, the cluster topic seminars and the school based seminars. A sense of ownership is a vital element in creating a supportive environment. If there is no opportunity to contribute or a contribution is not valued then the very basis for a supportive environment is undermined.

Therefore in the initial contacts with principals and deputy principals it was essential that they were not being directed only. There was also the need for them to understand that they were also being asked to contribute and reflect on what they believed would be necessary to foster professional collaboration as part of a supportive school environment. The message was, from the outset, about opening up and sharing. In taking this approach, the workshops also became a support for principals and deputy principals. In their structure and organisation they were participative with a focus on practical issues. They engaged principals and deputy principals in developing collaboration between themselves and with other school leaders across schools. Some principals have positively commented on this feature of the workshops,

An opportunity to communicate with other principals within the context of:

a particular forum, which was dedicated to dealing with specific and relevant topics to the job I am doing.

Introduced opportunities for principals and deputy principals to meet and share and work together in a business and social context.

In this regard these first workshops in their organisation, operation and delivery characterised the style of interaction or culture that was to become the hallmark of SCD. That is, personal contacts with school personnel. The significance of this approach cannot be overestimated. It is focused on building relationships where trust is the key element, which is needed for genuine empowerment to occur. Central to this development was the need for open communication between all parties concerned. Within the context of these workshops new opportunities were created for principals and deputy principals to meet and talk about issues which concerned them. These were occasions when the formal communication hierarchy gave way to more open forms of discussions. Principals, deputy principals, and workshop leaders from the University interacted through activity-centred tasks on

practical and real issues that principals confront or could confront at times of change in their schools.

This culture of personal interaction, as noted earlier, has been acknowledged within the literature as an important element in effecting successful implementation of new ideas. In support of this Fullan (2000) states:

People learn new patterns of behaviour primarily through their interactions with others not through front–end training designs. (p.68)

This assertion is supported by an observation from a principal,

At the beginning I was very sceptical of the theory element. However I feel they (workshops) made me think about what I was doing and almost subconsciously I changed

Another principal acknowledged the need for such interactions when asked why he decided to participate in the initiative:

Because I believe that principals and deputies had much to learn from each other; that the structures being put in place to enable the project were beneficial in themselves; that there was a need to learn from each other and to learn together.

Commencing with these workshops for principals and deputy principals proved to be an important first step in paving the way for stimulating senior school personnel to the idea and practice of staff involvement in school and curriculum development.

Staff Development: The role of SCD

The focus with principals and deputy principals on 'people management' issues represented only one aspect of the task of effecting a sharper and more consistent focus on teaching and learning issues in the school. There was also the task of developing professional collaboration between teachers. While the work with principals was a necessary feature in this it was not a sufficient one. There was a belief, as is evident in the overall structure and processes of the initiative designed by the Co-ordinator, that professional collaboration and changing the cultural mindset of teachers to effect this was not achievable in the traditional manner in which inservice had been provided. That is, it was considered that attending inservice one-day workshops or disparate course not systemically related to the work of the school would not sufficiently address this matter. While these would address individual teacher skills and knowledge they would not address a range of

school issues that influence whether these skills and knowledge are ever realised. What the initiative was attempting to create were supportive environments within each school for the promotion and exploration of enriched teaching and learning processes. The organic unit for change, as SCD perspective had it, was the school through the work of individuals within it. Using national curriculum developments as its leverage its focus for development was the school. The following piece from Hewton (1988) captures a key perspective that pervaded our work:

Why school focused? Because it moves professional development from being something 'in addition' to a part of the life of every teacher and every school. It recognises the specialised needs of each member of staff and their professional potential in contributing to developmental activities.... It provides a useful forum for curriculum continuity and innovation across traditional subject boundaries and it involves all staff in the development of the school as well as sharing responsibility for their development (p.90)

With this in mind the schools participating in the initiative were grouped into clusters. It was in the context of these clusters, using subject - based workshops, that the initial staff development took place as part of SCD. As the initiative developed the subject -based workshops evolved, with the assistance of the principals and facilitators and guidance from other initiative personnel, into school-based workshops. The nature and modus operandi of these workshops are dealt with comprehensively in another paper in this collection. Suffice to note here, however, that an emphasis was placed on ensuring relevance and continuity between cluster workshops and school workshops. That is, each setting, cluster and school involving principals and teachers was to be used productively for generating ideas and approaches for effecting school and curriculum development. This approach heralded a new perspective on, and concerted approach to, staff development that saw its primary aim as increasing the quality of pupil learning through the development of staff potential

As with the principals and deputy principals the task of addressing the cultural mindset of teachers was not going to be easy. In attempting this there was a need to understand and appreciate that there exists a culture of beliefs among teachers concerning their role and its practice. Therefore any attempt at 'redoing' and 'rethinking' (Fullan) in these areas required serious consideration about the implementation process to be used. The initiative was mindful of a number of constraints to the development of professional collaborative cultures. Teacher culture, as noted by Callan (1998) in his paper: '*Principal-Staff Relationships: A critical elements in developing school curricula and teacher culture*' is highly individualistic whereby teachers work in isolation in the pursuit of covering their

courses. Their concerns are primarily for the success of their students in upcoming examinations. Developments, whether for their own cultural school setting, or for their work in the classroom are evaluated with reference to their relevance to this task.

A key to helping a process of opening up discussions and development activities at school level in a non-threatening but supportive manner was the initiative's strategy of the role of the facilitator at school level. The facilitator was not only to lead subject workshops at cluster level but also, and significantly, to act as a teacher leader for implementing the aims of SCD at school level. The role of the facilitator is presented in the Co-ordinator's Interim Report (1997):

Key elements in assisting the further promotion and development of an interactive teacher culture in the school will be the work of the facilitators... The facilitators brief includes not only the leading of workshops. It also invites them to promote with their subject colleagues in the school and with other colleagues in other subject areas, the work of the initiative. And to liaise with principals/vice principals in seeking ways of providing and supporting enabling systems in the school for the work of the initiative.

It was important to select personnel whom staff could relate and address material to, which had meaning and relevance to their daily working life in the school. Underpinning this approach was the core belief that all forms of effective learning takes place in environments where people feel they can relate and interact in a non-threatening manner with the personnel and the content.

To achieve the above it was essential that serious thought be given to selecting the facilitators. The following criteria for selecting facilitators was put forward by the Co-ordinator to principals.

Competency – in order to lead workshops they need to be competent teachers in their subject areas.

Commitment – they needed to be committed to enhancing the teaching and learning environment of their school

Legitimacy – they needed credibility with their teaching colleagues.

Principals were requested to assist the Co-ordinator in identifying potential candidates. In seeking these qualities we were looking for school personnel who had the ability to become the driving force of the initiative at school level. In this role it

was expected that facilitators would assist their schools in the development of *their school's response* to the issues being addressed. The input of principals and deputy principals into this process was significant for three reasons;

- (i) it re-enforced further the inclusive culture, which SCD was promulgating in decision making.
- (ii) it was intended that Facilitators would be link personnel between principals/deputy principals and other staff members.
- (iii) they were to be key personnel in assisting in the creation of two essential elements of the Initiative: professional collaboration and a supportive school environment within the school.

In taking this approach it was hoped to effect significant movement towards effecting greater professional collaboration between teachers within their own schools and, as a means of doing so, across other school within the cluster. Facilitators, as is evident from our various data banks developed during the life of the initiative, and as is noted in other papers in this collection, became key personnel in assisting schools to develop the capacity and ability of their staff. These capacities represent the wealth of expertise, talent and creative abilities, which in many instances are left untapped or undiscovered within staff. Through their interaction with staff they began to effect an emerging reflective school environment due to the on-going interaction with staff on school survey work, reviews, and their planning and organisation of school based seminars.

Principals-Facilitators: An important axis for effecting school development.

The role of the facilitator in the school provided each principal with opportunities for conceiving of and developing meaningful activities for the development work of the school. In this regard they became the catalyst or change agents who created the link between the initiative's vision and assisting their schools in generating a school response to national policies at a local level. The latter was achieved through their involvement with the variety of personnel attached to the initiative and through the many roles they undertook within the initiative. A number of these roles have been dealt with comprehensively in Dave Barron's paper.

In their role as change agents facilitators operated most effectively on two levels; working with their teaching colleagues and working with their principals /deputy principals. Here we wish to focus on the facilitator's role in working with their principals/deputy principals.

Bringing together principals/deputy principals and facilitators within the context of

the initiative was the initial step in bridging the cultural and traditional differences, which, either real or perceived, existed between principals and teachers. Callan (1998) in his paper on principal-staff relationships has stated:

While common areas for discussion include discipline, school rules, procedures for handling misdemeanours, and other administrative matters, nonetheless one can sense a deep uncertainty, and at times even a fear, in a principal about engaging in discussions with staff *members* on matters relating to teaching and curriculum issues in the school, or in relation to an individual teacher's own plans for the development of their subject in the school.

The challenge was, and is, the development of professional style interactions between principal and staff. Specifically, to develop communications that focus in a systematic and developmental way on teaching and learning and curriculum issues. Accordingly, what facilitators set out to achieve, through their communication with their principals/deputy principals, was to draw closer the needs of the school with the needs of the teachers. In doing this the facilitators aim was to bring about the possibility of a more enriched teaching and learning environment for the pupils of their school through greater level of staff involvement. Key to achieving this was the promotion and encouragement of relational contact they effected between principals/deputy principals and teachers. This nurturing of "relational capacities" (Buber) made some provision for more sustainable change at school level.

It was this particular role of developing and promoting interpersonal contacts on a curricular level within their staff, which placed the facilitators at the heart of the SCD Initiative. In this role they were the primary change agents for a number of developments within their schools. They became 'facilitators' in the true sense of the word.

In effect what was being realised in our initiative through the collaborative work between principals, facilitators and teachers was a model of professional development succinctly articulated by Sergiovanni:

In professional development models, the teacher's capacities, needs and interests are central. Teachers are actively involved in contributing data and information, solving problems, and analysing. Principals are involved as colleagues. Together, principals and teachers work to develop a common purpose themed to the improvement of teaching and learning. Together, principals and teachers work to build a learning and inquiring community. (p. 146)

In effect new sets of relationships were emerging. These included teacher/teacher professional relationships and new forms of 'authority' relationships between

principal and teacher (cf. Callan, 1998). It should be noted, however, that facilitators were themselves supported at the individual and cluster level throughout the initiative. The quality of their engagement as identified with respect to both their own individual capacity to take on the role and their willingness to do so was effected by the fact that they were committed to the initiative. This commitment was there not least because the initiative's purpose was clear, on-going supports were provided for them, and a sense of status was conferred on the role as the initiative gained momentum. They were part of a process that was team building and they contributed enormously to it. The opportunities provided to them to meet and review their work, the honorarium provided to them, the time allowed to them to focus on the work, and the supports which they received both from within their own school and from personnel outside all contributed to their effective role.

Broadening the principal's focus: from administering to leading

It has to be noted that in this work of facilitators principals themselves were 'challenged' to foster the role of facilitators. Specifically, to allow for scope to facilitators to pursue ideas and activities, to give support to them, to meet with them on a regular basis to identify and plan activities of development and review exercises. There was, accordingly, some adjusting to be made on the part of principals. They too had to delicately handle change relationships between themselves and facilitators and between themselves and other members of staff as they delegated work to and supported the work of facilitators. But this, as we have experienced in the initiative and as noted by principals, has paid off. This is borne out by the comments of principals on the significance of the facilitators' role:

They have led and liased with staff and have achieved more at times than management might have.

Through their efforts staff were more willing to consider issues outside their subject area.

In achieving such an *influential* level of connection with their teaching colleagues facilitators were a vital support for their principals/deputy principals. This was of immense importance when one considers the dichotomy that exists between being a principal and being a manager. As a principal one is expected to lead the educational development of the school and as a manager one is expected to administer the school. Unfortunately, the balance between these roles has become distorted, with the main emphasis being on administration. On a daily basis many principals/deputy principals, because of the predominance of administrative functions of their role and lack of an effective middle management structure for the purpose of delegation, find very little time to focus on the core areas of their role as educational leaders such as:

- ◆ curriculum development
- ◆ teacher development

- ◆ developing learning communities
- ◆ shaping a vision for their school.

One of the more positive outcomes of principals/deputy principals' interaction with their facilitators was it created a base which enabled them to find time to focus on their role as instructional leaders. The facilitators assisted principals/deputy principals to redress the balance in favour of principalship. Principals/deputy principals, through their involvement with the SCD initiative, had to create time within their schedule to address the curricular issues that were emerging from the initiative. Having regular meetings with facilitators and delegating work to them while remaining close to this work has had positive effects on their own professional development. For example, when reporting on their close working relationship with facilitators some principals have observed:

It assisted me to become much clearer in my thinking on curricular issues. This arose because of the weekly scheduled meetings I was 'forced' to prepare agenda items for discussion.

With two of the facilitators I encouraged further study and research at University level and facilitated them on the timetable. This in turn has helped the school as the people concerned have brought new research ideas and teaching techniques to the staff room. It also enabled me to bounce ideas and proposals with these people thereby broadening my own ideas and indeed forcing me to respect some of my more 'risky schemes'.

The closer professional connection between the principal and deputy principal and their role as instructional leaders was achieved through regular meetings between the principal, primarily, and facilitator(s). These meetings, as reported in principals' responses, focused on the following issues:

- ◆ encouraging optimum participation by subject teachers in workshops
- ◆ identifying areas of work and reviewing plans on a regular basis
- ◆ monitoring and planning school seminars, workshops and ongoing developments
- ◆ providing opportunities to listen to staff concerns around curricular issues
- ◆ shaping a whole school approach to school curriculum development and by implication school planning.

Each of the above were important elements in developing a supportive school environment. They effected the emergence of a 'school response' to new proposals for school and curriculum development. This 'school response', that is encouraging

schools to *develop their own school response* to the various ideas and activities emerging from the initiative, was considered to be the vital element in our work. It was important that schools, in other words, would develop their own *inner capacity* to respond to new proposals. In achieving this schools were adapting the content and rationale of the initiative within the context of their own schools thereby rejecting the 'one-size-fits-all' approach adopted in some development literature. This SCD 'school sensitive' approach further promoted greater staff involvement within schools

Arising from this greater staff involvement and the more focused approach to school development principals in their responses were very fulsome in their praise of their facilitators. This is evidenced by the following comments:

As principal the interaction with the facilitators has been an invaluable support to me. Their willingness to involve themselves in the negotiation process with their colleagues has greatly contributed to a more receptive response to curricular and planning initiatives.

Problems and ideas shared and good understanding has resulted with the focus on curriculum and learning and school planning is more clearly understood. I have stronger more enriched staff members. Their specific training, expertise and professional growth has been a real help in the school.

Emerging areas of responsibility within the school

This professional interaction between the principal/deputy principal and facilitators along with creating a greater level of staff involvement has spawned concrete changes to the way schools address their development. It has become evident that principals/deputy principals now see the need for someone who has a particular focus on the concept of school curriculum development as defined in the context of the SCD Initiative. This is particularly noticeable in the following comments by principals:

It is the experience in our school that the facilitators are now at the forefront in the generation of ideas in respect of curricular initiatives.

They will remain as the nucleus on the staff who will engage in and lead further aspects of school planning.

It has underlined the notion that the principal need not always drive the impetus for change.

This is even more evident when principals were asked about how they saw the role of the facilitator by way of developing new ideas/structures in their schools in the future.

The idea of 'facilitator' as used in SCD influenced my thinking in how I would consider roles/duties of post holders and the ways of developing new ideas and structures in the school.

In this respect the significance of the contribution, which facilitators have made to the development of supportive school environments and professional collaboration within their schools is recognised by the fact that even though the SCD initiative is finished schools are still using the model of SCD to promote school development. This does require, however, the willingness and capacity of school principals to continue to value this role and its focus on curriculum, teaching and learning. This too is a challenging undertaking for school principals who work in a context of competing demands on a myriad of issues.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on the elements within the SCD initiative that enabled staff involvement in school and curriculum development. It has emphasised the significance of its focus on professional collaboration through its own culture of supporting constantly the work of teachers in schools. This support included meaningful workshops for principals and deputy principals as well as workshops for teachers. It also included the strategy of linking cluster-based workshops to school based workshops and vice-versa. In addition, there has been the role of facilitators as change agents who also were supported by their own principals and by the guidance and encouragement of the field officers and the Co-ordinator.

All of these supports have been highlighted by principals as being significant for their schools in their work of school and curriculum development. Significantly, they have noted the importance of these supports in their school development planning activities. The SCD Initiative in its approach to school development planning used the medium of curriculum development activities as necessary and desirable to effect developments among staff and in other school procedures. This was achieved through effecting wider staff involvement in this planning primarily through the mediation work with principals/deputy principals and facilitators. The rationale underpinning this approach was the belief that we needed to start by engaging school personnel in areas that had meaning for them. Teaching in classroom is a critical area of meaning for teachers. Facilitators, as teachers themselves knew this and through their developing professional interactions with senior school personnel they were able to effect meaningful school activities that had a bearing on classroom practices. Principals and teachers responded to these developments. As one principal noted:

School and curriculum development has assumed a different level of importance. Wider staff involvement in shaping and developing new school policies have been achieved.

While much has been done much more remains to be done.

References

Callan, J. (1997): *Towards Enabling Curriculum Leadership and School Culture Change: School and Curriculum Development Initiative: Its rationale and developments*. Interim Report, Education Department, National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

Callan, J. (1998): 'Principal-Staff Relationships: A Critical Element in Developing School Curricula and Teacher Culture'. European Secondary Heads Association (ESHA), Conference Handbook.

Fullan, M. (2000): *Change Forces – Probing the Depths of Educational Reform*. Falmer Press.

Hewton, E. (1988). *School Focused Staff Development: Guidelines for Staff Development*. Lewes, Falmer Press.

Murphy, D. (1988): *Martin Buber's Philosophy of Education*. Irish Academic Press.

Sergiovanni, T.J. (1996): *Leadership for the Schoolhouse*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

THE EFFECT OF SCD ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

*Mary Teahan,
SCD Field Officer/Facilitator
Holy Family, Newbridge.*

The purpose of this article is to describe some of the work that occurred in the School and Curriculum Development (SCD) initiative with specific reference to the work of the cluster based subject workshops and their impact on teaching and learning. It will also describe some of the developments that occurred within schools arising from these cluster workshops.

In May 2001, each Facilitator completed a comprehensive report both on his/her work in SCD. In addition, they discussed and recorded the views of teacher colleagues in their school on various aspects of the SCD initiative. The observations contained here have been obtained from the reports then compiled by the facilitators arising from this work. Accordingly, this presentation represents not only our own views and experiences in SCD but also those of our colleagues from Counties Carlow and Kildare. I would like to thank my fellow Facilitators, Ann Mc Fadden (Newbridge College), Kathleen Cotter (Cross and Passion, Kilcullen) and Patricia O'Brien (St. Conleth's, Newbridge), for their contribution to this article.

At the outset I would like to define some terms used in our initiative, and roles engaged in by some of its participants. Following on that, I will describe and briefly comment on those activities that occurred during the first phase of the initiative, i.e. SCD I, with particular emphasis on the cluster workshops and their impact on teachers. I will focus on emerging developments within schools following on the work with principals and teachers and which were focused on during the second stage of the initiative, viz. SCD II. The areas of activity that schools focused on during this later stage in the initiative, and which benefited their own school development planning activity, will be identified and briefly commented on.

Terms and Definitions

- SCD
- Field Officer
- Facilitator
- Cluster

School and Curriculum Development.

The aim of the SCD initiative was to implement national policy at local level. Its focus was on curriculum, teaching and learning processes in the classroom as well as addressing various systems in the school that would enable developments in these

areas. The initiative was a partnership between 20 schools in Counties Carlow and Kildare and the Education Department, NUIM, and was funded by the Department of Education and Science. Within the schools, the initiative was commonly known as the '*Maynooth Initiative*', which indicated the influence of the Education Department, NUIM, as represented by Jim Callan, SCD Co-ordinator.

Field Officers :

There were two Field Officers involved in the initiative - 1 per county. Dave Barron (Carlow) and I (Kildare) have acted both as Facilitators and as Field Officers during the lifetime of this initiative. Jim Callan has already referred to the role of the Field Officer in his paper. However, I would like to emphasize that I found that one of the chief functions of the Field Officer was not only to provide support and information for Facilitators in schools, but also to provide *links* between schools. Information and details of projects were often brought from one school to another via the Field Officer. The regular visits of the Field Officer to the schools were vital in giving support to Facilitators and principals and in creating a focus for the work.

Facilitators:

These were the agents of change within their schools. The focus of their work was in facilitating subject workshops and school planning seminars. They also liaised with staff colleagues and school management in planning and running SCD school-based seminars in the later stages of the initiative.

Clusters:

Two geographical clusters were created in Counties Carlow and Kildare covering 20 schools in total with two minor clusters operating within these counties. The rationale of using clusters has been outlined in the paper by the Co-ordinator.

SCD 1: 1995/99

SCD 1 extended from 1995 to 1999. The work of the Facilitators during this period of the initiative will be identified and described under the following headings:

- 1995/96: Workshops for Principals/Deputy-Principals
- 1996: Training workshops for Facilitators in NUIM
- 1996/98: Seven cluster subject workshops and one in-school planning workshop

The initiative commenced in Autumn 1995. During 1995/96 work in the initiative was designed to work closely with Principals and Deputy-Principals. In early 1996, those Principals who were being encouraged to engage in SCD work at school level

in turn encouraged subject teachers within their schools to apply for the positions of Facilitators. Facilitators were then selected in those subject areas the initiative would focus on. Attention was paid to having at least one facilitator in each school. The majority of schools had two facilitators, one or two had three while there were two that had no facilitator.

In April 1996, eight training workshops were organised by the Co-ordinator and were held in the Education Department, NUIM. Six of the workshops were subject-based. Innovators in the area of subject teaching methods gave these workshops. These leaders suggested topics and approaches to the facilitators for their cluster based subject workshops, which were to be held between 1996 and 1998. In addition, two workshops on facilitation skills, which focused on adult learning in small groups, were also provided. Personnel from NUIM led these.

Without this level of training, the Facilitators would never have had the confidence or the skills to facilitate workshops for their colleagues.

Subject Workshops

There were three main stages in running each workshop:

- (i) preparation for the workshop,
- (ii) facilitation of the workshop and
- (iii) a subsequent review meeting .

The Maths workshops in Co. Kildare are being used here as a specific example.

(i) Preparation of the Workshop:

In preparing for workshops facilitators were encouraged to meet with their facilitator subject partner to plan their workshops. In doing so they were also encouraged to get some indications from subject colleagues on topics and issues they would consider helpful for the workshops. In the case of the Maths workshops there were two minor clusters within the large cluster of Kildare. Each minor cluster for Maths had two facilitators. Each Tuesday, the four Facilitators met after school for two to three hours and prepared for the workshop. This preparation schedule commenced four weeks prior to each workshop. As one of those Facilitators, I clearly remember the discussions, the laughs and the non-judgemental criticism of the proposed presentations. We acted as critical friends. Initially, we prepared and provided most of the content but, as the workshops continued, other participants prepared and presented topics. While the core content was the same for both workshops, individual presentations differed in response to the needs of the different schools. In general, the content was designed to support both the teacher and the student in the classroom. We were also sensitive to the needs and the culture of individual schools within each cluster.

(ii) The Workshops:

Workshops were held in schools. On some occasions workshops were held within school time, i.e. the schools within the cluster closed for the afternoon to allow the teachers in the targeted subject areas to attend the workshops. On other occasions they were held in the evening. Getting the balance right between 'within school-time' workshops and 'out of school time' workshop was important. On all occasions, however, the workshops were held on school premises.

In the case of the Kildare cluster, Mathematics workshops in the two minor clusters held parallel sessions, i.e. held in the same location at the same time. This enabled valuable contacts to be made by maths teachers with each other, before, during break times, and immediately after the workshops. A lot of very valuable informal work was conducted during these breaks. Workshops lasted two hours and we knew it was really working, when on one occasion, two of the Facilitators were asked to stay on after 4.00 p.m. to finish a presentation. We shared methodologies and resources. Because workshops were small, 8 – 20, all participants actively engaged in the work. Because of the size of the workshops and the on-going nature of the work, teachers became quite committed to the group. For example, one avid football fan even missed the first half of an Ireland soccer match to attend an evening workshop! Teachers began to open up and discuss the problems encountered in the classroom and also began to share solutions.

(iii) Review:

Joint meetings between the Facilitators, Field Officers, and Co-ordinator took place, usually within a week after each workshop. The purpose of these meetings was to share experiences facilitators had in conducting their workshops. In particular, to discuss issues which they may have encountered, to share the procedures they used and which they felt were successful, and to give support and encouragement, as well as some practical information and guidance to fellow facilitators in their planning for up-coming workshops. This was considered an important exercise in building a sense of team among the facilitators. All Facilitators felt that this was a vital part of the work. The review meetings provided practical supports and they helped eliminate feelings of isolation.

Professional Development:

The subject workshops have proven to be very successful in the professional development of the facilitators and for the development of teachers in their subject teaching areas. This has been acknowledged by many who participated in the initiative.

Facilitators developed professionally by preparing and running workshops. They gained confidence, not only from their own participation in the workshops, but also

by preparing and running workshops for their own colleagues. As a former Maths Facilitator, I clearly remember the level of preparation and anxiety experienced by all Facilitators prior to the first workshop. To face a class of young students is one thing, but to facilitate a workshop for one's own colleagues is very daunting. I can honestly say we all changed and developed as a result of that experience.

The effects of the workshops on participating teachers have been positive. Teachers used their own ideas and shared these ideas with their subject colleagues. Because the workshops were continuous over a two-year period it enabled teachers to try out something in the classroom, to report back to the group at the next meeting and then, perhaps, modify practice and try the idea again. The non-judgemental atmosphere in the workshops encouraged informal monitoring of the teacher's work in the classroom. Commitment to the group was reflected in attendance and level of contribution. Some of the teachers' comments confirmed our opinions of the work.

“I gained more confidence as a teacher”

“I felt I had something to offer”

“Overload of ideas... no time to consider, apply or review”

“Subject clusters were excellent for sharing examples of good practice”

“Subject workshops allowed for the development of a strong teachers' network”

All of the above comments were taken from the responses to questionnaires given to teachers and Facilitators. These comments are only a small sample of those documented but they are representative of the overall tone of the reports.

We, as Facilitators and teachers, felt that changed practices occurred in the classroom as a result of teachers' engagement in these workshops. Clearly, this type of development occurred only in some classrooms and only to a limited extent in some of those classrooms but we firmly believe change had started. Curriculum development occurred as a result of activities designed to effect the professional development of the teacher in his/her classroom practices. They developed professionally by participating and in contributing to workshops. They gained confidence in their teaching methods and were less afraid to try something new in the classroom even if it was not always a total success.

People often refer to teachers' *comfort zones* to explain the lack of development in teaching methods. While comfort zones do exist, we believe many teachers are prepared to try something new if they believe, firstly, that it will be beneficial to the student and, secondly if they can do it in a supportive and collaborative

environment. We believe this type of environment was provided by the subject workshops.

However a key constraint in the teaching environment is time. Every teacher and facilitator in his or her reviews of the SCD work has identified this. Time was always an issue for teachers. The limited time negotiated and provided to Facilitators (20 hours per year), and to teachers in the form of workshops during school time, was vital for the work of the initiative. But we have to recognise that further time must be provided if we honestly hope that teachers will engage in more active teaching methods as is currently being promoted in various syllabi and programme reforms for schools. These developments will require, moreover, more professional collaboration between teachers in order for them to plan and monitor their work in the classroom. Such professional activities cannot be added on to the existing workload of teachers. Overload is one of the chief causes of teacher burnout.

One of the planned subject workshops was changed to an in-school planning workshop in response to a demand from school personnel. This planning workshop was on the theme of Curriculum Development. Flexibility was one of the hallmarks of SCD.

Effect of the Workshops on the School

The focus in the initiative was not just on subject areas but linked to their development by teachers in their classroom practices the focus was also on effecting developments within the school as a learning community. We can identify three areas in particular where such developments can be noted.

- ◆ Creation of Subject Departments
- ◆ Resources developed and shared
- ◆ Cross-Curricular links

Some schools already had subject departments. Where this was the case these were rejuvenated through the work of the initiative. However, in many cases, new subject departments were created as this was seen as a way in which subject teachers could focus on their subject's needs and its development within the school. Meetings of subject personnel now focussed on teaching methods, teaching resources, rather than on administration issues. In some schools, these meetings were used as a forum to allow the Facilitator to report back on the current work of SCD.

Resources and resource areas were created within schools. Arising from the workshops, teachers became more aware of seeking out resources and developing banks of resources for the use of teachers across subject areas. These were shared

formally and informally between subject colleagues both within the school and between cluster schools. This proved to be a very effective way of increasing collegiality between teachers in the same or related subject areas. In addition, in some schools related subject areas such as Maths, Science and Business teachers began to talk about common approaches to teaching certain topics. They also, in some subject areas in some schools, organised common house examinations. The level of interaction between teachers in relation to subject teaching noticeably increased in the schools.

Teachers' comments on this aspect of the work were very encouraging. Teachers noted for example, that

“Students have benefited from teachers sharing ideas and resources”

“Teachers involved in SCD have brought their shared experiences and their new-found knowledge into their classrooms”

“SCD has led to more discussion between teacher groups and more co-operation between subject teachers”

“SCD has also been the catalyst for subject teacher meetings – now much more focused, numerous and meaningful”

Linking SCD I and SCD II

During the school year 1998/99, i.e. in the final year SCD I, workshops on curriculum development moved back into individual schools. Two in-school workshops were held during the academic year 1998/99. These workshops were not subject-based but the emphasis in all workshops was on curriculum development in the school and its relationship with school development processes. The Co-ordinator, Jim Callan, the Field Officers and a twice-yearly newsletter maintained contact between schools. Regular school visits by the Field Officers were continued. These were vital in this year.

The following areas were targeted by the schools during this time:

- ◆ Homework Issues and Study Skills
- ◆ Development of First Year Common Programmes, Resources and Methodologies
- ◆ First Year Subject Choices
- ◆ The Less Academic Student/ Introduction of New Programmes
- ◆ Cross-Curricular Subject Links
- ◆ Common Teaching Methods and Testing across Year Groups
- ◆ Development of School Plan

Homework policies were developed in some schools. Study skills programmes were devised by teachers and shared with other teachers in some schools. Teachers became more conscious of the need to assist students in this area of schoolwork. In addition, parents were brought on board to support their children in this area of school life.

In two schools, common programmes were developed for all subject areas in First Year. Common teaching methods and resources were identified in these programmes. These proved very useful when students were re-grouped at the end of First Year. By then all students in the new grouping had already been exposed to a common programme.

Schools within the clusters began to compare and exchange their methods of offering subject choices to First Year students. In some cases schools developed policies or changed previous policies on First Year subject choices.

A number of schools addressed the problem of the less academic student. In some cases, schools adopted new programmes, such as the LCA, as a result of this work. The limited, but valuable time allocated to the Facilitator and to the school was often used to research these new programmes. The communications and contacts that had been established between schools in the clusters proved invaluable at this time. SCD provided the time, support and links with other schools that made the introduction of new courses easier. The facilitators sought guidance from fellow facilitators in schools that had already introduced these programmes. Professional collaboration across schools was realised in such activities.

Some schools used their workshops to have cross-curricular subject meetings. For example, Modern language teachers met and shared approaches to language teaching. Related subject teachers such as Maths, Science, Computing and Business met as a group to discuss common approaches to teaching common topics. Common testing across all year groups in a number of subject areas occurred in some schools.

Some schools used the workshops to develop school plans in which curriculum development became a central theme.

All of these areas were perceived, in one way or another, to impact on the quality of teaching and learning in the work of the teacher in the classroom. It seemed to the leaders of the initiative that in order to get teachers to focus on their teaching and learning processes in the classroom it would necessitate a focus on a number of issues that impact on teaching and learning processes. The teaching in the classroom is not unrelated to other matters that surround the teachers work in school. These too, it was appreciated, had also to be addressed.

SCD II: 1999-2001

During the final year of SCD I, and in response to requests from senior school personnel and the Facilitators, it was agreed to seek an extension of the work that the initiative had embarked on. Accordingly, a new proposal was prepared by the Co-ordinator in collaboration with personnel from both major clusters. This proposal in essence focused on developing existing work that was occurring in the schools, as outlined above. It also had regard to some of the national issues considered important for schools to attend to. The proposal was forwarded to, and subsequently discussed with, personnel in the Department of Education and Science. An extension of two years was granted to the initiative.

The focus was placed on areas as mixed-ability teaching, subject choice, and student achievements, all in the context of enriching the processes of teaching and learning in the classroom. In addition, a structural change was also requested by the Co-ordinator. He requested that a Steering Group comprising of administrators, field Officers (teachers), D.E.S. personnel, and NUIM personnel, replace the existing Steering Committee that had ceased at the completion of SCD I. This group would assume responsibility of directing and leading the initiative. Jim Callan remained on the Steering Group as the Research and Development Officer.

Specifically, the following four main areas of development were requested by the schools and then formed the basis of a 'contract' between SCD and the schools.

- ◆ Activities associated with subject choice
- ◆ Mixed-ability teaching
- ◆ Monitoring and addressing levels of student achievement
- ◆ Promoting a disciplined and learning environment

These areas are key aspects of the process of teaching and learning and impact on the work of the teacher in the classroom. As such, they were considered as legitimate areas for development in the SCD initiative. Depending on need and circumstances, schools could adopt all or some of the areas in the contract. How individual schools responded to enriching their own teaching and learning environments was, it was believed, something for each school and its personnel to determine. Developing each school's own inner capacity to identify its needs was a key perspective in the work of SCD.

In 1999/2000, four cluster seminars were held on each of these areas. Schools sent representatives to these workshops according to the areas that they were working on in their schools. The majority of schools, interestingly, focused on the areas: mixed ability teaching and promoting a disciplined and learning environment. In-school

workshops to plan strategies on how to apply these new ideas were then held in individual schools. As with all our cluster based work schools were encouraged to link what they found useful in these various workshops to school related activities. The school-based seminars provided concrete opportunities for reviewing the extent to which they were doing so.

In the final year of the initiative, 2000/2001, mixed-ability teaching became the main focus of the work within the schools. This emphasis was in response to requests from school personnel for additional help in approaches to and resources for mixed-ability teaching. Cluster workshops on approaches to mixed-ability teaching in Maths, English, Irish, Science and Business were held in early September and late October. In doing so, the initiative had returned to focus directly on its core area, viz. the enrichment of teaching and learning in the classroom. Once again, for example, groups of local teachers met to exchange their ideas on teaching approaches and resources only now it was focused specifically on the processes of mixed ability teaching. In addition, they also brought with them experiences of exchanging practices with their peers from earlier workshops and from colleague interactions within their school. These practices showed promise of further providing a real opportunity for developments in classroom practices but other teacher issues at national level constrained work in this regard.

Conclusion:

SCD offered the teachers of Counties Carlow and Kildare an opportunity to examine their classroom practices and approaches to teaching. This was done in a supportive and non-judgemental atmosphere, which in turn helped participants to change teaching methods and, in some cases, to create more active learning opportunities in their classrooms. It also enabled local teachers to network and thus to share resources, not alone within, but also between schools. Finally, it enabled teachers to become more confident in their own ability and thus to become less fearful of change.

In conclusion, I am certain that the majority of the teachers whose voices I have attempted to articulate here today, and in the Principal's session in NUIM, would join with me in asking those who have the say to not let the good things of SCD fade away.

SCD INITIATIVE: VOICES FROM 'THE BOILER HOUSE'.

Dave Barron

SCD Field Officer./Facilitator

St. Mary's, C.B.S. Carlow

My task here is to tell the SCD story from the perspectives of the teachers in the classrooms and the facilitators in the schools. In other words, to tell the story using the voices from the 'boiler-house' of the education system. As with other papers in this collection the story is based on the review data from the schools, and from our experience of SCD. It is, therefore, grounded in the authentic voices from the schools. I wish to acknowledge the input of Denise Lennon-Hennessy (Carlow VEC) and Bernard Cashman (St. Mary's College, Knockbeg) in reviewing the data and in preparing this story.

If this SCD story can be imagined as a book, there are five chapters to be narrated:

- 1) Why teachers engaged with SCD;
- 2) The areas and degree of Engagement;
- 3) The key role of the local facilitator;
- 4) The benefits for schools;
- 5) The challenges encountered and faced by SCD in the schools.

CHAPTER ONE: STAFF INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

In reviewing the SCD initiative teachers and facilitators were asked why they became involved in the initiative. Their responses can be divided into four main areas:

1. Curriculum and Professional Development

Many teachers became involved for professional development reasons: to learn more about issues such as mixed ability teaching, homework, study skills, discipline, new methods in their subjects. Some saw it as a new venture into the primary purpose of school – to reflect on practice and to improve the teaching and learning processes in the school, for the benefit of the students. This positive voice was strong, i.e. frequent, despite this being a time of low morale among the teaching force.

2. School Development Planning:

Several responses indicated that the initiative was undertaken by schools to help with School Planning, including curriculum development.

3. Coping and Survival

Some teachers admitted they engaged because they wished to seek help in their daily work, they thought it a good idea to link with other local schools and to

collaborate with local teachers, to search for new solutions to common problems and issues. There was a sense of recognition that teachers and schools need to change professional practices to cope and to survive.

4. Negative Responses

Finally, there were some teachers who expressed cynicism and were reluctant to step outside their 'comfort zone'. Such teachers were the ones who replied when asked why they got involved responded, '*it was a staff decision, I was expected to be involved*', or '*Don't know*', or '*it was the principal's decision*'.

CHAPTER TWO: AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

When teachers were asked to list what areas the school had discussed and acted on during the SCD initiative a wide range of areas were identified. These include the following:

- ◆ Discipline, Attendance, Punctuality;
- ◆ Improving the work ethic, needs of weaker pupils;
- ◆ Study skills, Homework, Induction (students and teachers);
- ◆ Role of parents, Home – school liaison, School and Community links;
- ◆ Subject clusters, Adult education, Assessment;
- ◆ Subject choice, Library Development;
- ◆ Time-tabling, Subject departments;
- ◆ Mixed ability teaching, Sharing resources, Cross-curriculum development;
- ◆ ICT integration in subject teaching, New ideas and methods in subject teaching.

The full list is presented here to illustrate that there is a wide range of issues that impact either directly or indirectly on classroom practices. These range from structural issues such as time-tabling, to quality of learning issues such as study skills, to support issues such as home-school liaison. The view that the quality of teaching and learning has to do only with methods of teaching in the classroom is narrow and limited. Our initiative was sensitive to the wider contextual factors that impact on what the teacher and student do in the classroom. Accordingly, we encouraged schools to work with the factors and issues that they felt best enabled an enrichment of their own learning environment in the school. This perspective is contained in one of the SCD principles referred to in Jim Callan's paper, *the prospects for successful implementation are greater when there is an agreed clarity among those involved, on what is being attempted, on its need, and on the appropriateness of the strategies being used*. This is a challenging task for schools. In addressing it, as noted in Jim's paper, *proposals for curriculum and school*

development need local implementation supports that are sensitive to school contexts and that enable frequent personal contacts with school personnel.

In our initiative we believed that when addressing classroom structures and procedures one has to acknowledge the values that inform existing practices in a school. In one SCD school staff identified the issue of streaming or mixed ability classes as one of concern for school development. A discussion took place at a staff meeting on the pros and cons of each setting. A sub-committee was organised to further investigate the matter. External input was sought through the SCD cluster workshop and from a guest speaker who visited the school and spoke on the matter. In light of these activities a draft was prepared by the sub-committee and presented to the staff. A school policy was then formulated following on staff discussion and approval. It was implemented through a task group of teachers who volunteered to test methods of mixed-ability teaching in their classrooms, to meet with each other frequently to evaluate and report back regularly to the full staff on progress made. This is an example of an SCD process in action in relation to a school addressing the issue of streaming as against mixed ability classes. Improvements in classroom work requires collaborative and deliberative processes among staff and between staff and principal.

In effecting the realisation of national curriculum policy at local school level the initiative, accordingly, came to appreciate, and as noted in Co-ordinator's paper, that *getting teachers to focus on teaching and learning processes in the classroom is a non-linear, circuitous and complex undertaking. The journey confronts individual, institutional, political and cultural issues.* The review data and our experiences confirm this principle. There was much engagement on matters of school policy, and on matters of school organisation. There was also some engagement with teaching and learning issues that impacted more directly on classroom pedagogy. Nevertheless at the end of the initiative we were only at the top of the street that leads to teachers sharing and discussing classroom practices with each other in a structured and regular way. A similar point is made in the Co-ordinator's Interim Report: *Developing Supportive Teaching Environments* (2000, cf. pages 7-8 and page 19.)

There is evidence that some impact was made at individual teacher level, and some at the level of teacher interaction. There is evidence in our data that shows this to be the case and a development welcomed by teachers if one is to judge from their reactions. However, where such discussions have taken place, typically they are informal, and not part of a structured, formal, time-tabled process. It is to be hoped, however, that over time the movement through policy and organisational issues, and through more specific teaching and learning issues will continue into deeper analysis of classroom practices, the 'boiler room' of the whole process. Having addressed a number of contextual matters, SCD revisited this area last year (2000-2001). Unfortunately, however, due to a national dispute between the Government and Teacher Unions this development work had to cease.

CHAPTER THREE: KEY ROLE OF SCHOOL FACILITATORS

The initiative depended on a complex network of personnel resources, including NUIM, DES, VECs, Principals (and DPs), Field Officers and the teachers who engaged in many sub-committees in the SCD schools. However, a key element in the whole process was the role played by the school facilitators.

The facilitators were chosen for their level of commitment and enthusiasm to help promote change, they were respected among peers, and they were teachers with recognised pedagogical abilities. As noted in other papers in this collection they were supported by preparation workshops, many review meetings, Field Officer visits, Principals, and a structure that gave them some time, as well as payment for their work. The roles implemented by the facilitators were multi-faceted and complex, reflecting the complexity of school contexts. These roles included:

Mediator:

They liaised with the Principal and/or Deputy Principal as they organised meetings in their schools. This required the facilitators to prepare agendas for staff meetings on SCD issues, organise groups for staff discussion on teaching and learning matters, invite guest speakers, prepare agendas and items for staff days and teacher workshops. As one teacher expressed it, the facilitators '*created a safe forum in which members of staff could openly air their ideas and views*'.

Motivator

Principals and teachers alike admit that the facilitators became the focus and driving force of SCD within their schools. Principals relied on them to 'carry the message' to staff members, a task which they were admirably able to do considering their credibility with other staff members as another staff member.

Delegator

They delegated tasks to various members of staff to enhance the work undertaken, and supported the staff as the work progressed. Facilitators grew into the role of teacher-leader in the school, particularly on matters relating to teaching and learning.

Evaluator

With the staff and Principal and Deputy Principal they helped prioritised the school needs, and set an agenda for actions. They constantly reviewed and evaluated the work being done, using the school-based seminars as occasions for taking stock in this regard. In this way, "*the facilitator helped to keep everyone focused on the tasks*".

Reporter

They attended regular meetings with other facilitators, Field Officers and the Co-ordinator to report on and compare the work being done. In light of these meetings

they regularly reported on progress at all levels of the initiative to their own staff with written and/or verbal reports.

Benefits for Facilitators

As a result of their SCD work, the facilitators reported personal professional benefits. They acknowledge an increase in their own self-confidence as professional teachers. Specifically, an enhancement of their own pedagogy and improved management skills at classroom and school levels. They have become more aware of the school as a political setting and they have refined their skills in dealing with it accordingly. They have experienced an increase in their own engagement in school development work and have been more involved in school development planning.

Benefits for Schools from Local Facilitators

The significance of having local school facilitators has been recognised by principals and teachers. Teachers, for example, have identified the following benefits for schools:

the local facilitator knows the internal politics of the school, knows the school and its unique needs;

is known to and approachable for other staff members;

helps to ease communication between Principal and Deputy and staff which helps create an open climate and a 'safe' environment for staff members to speak.

In addition, Facilitators at school level ensured that SCD matters stayed on the school agenda, encouraged more enthusiasm for the work, organised regular meetings, enhanced communication about teaching and learning issues, and promoted a more open climate. Under these conditions, the middle-management structures in schools were enhanced and many changes were initiated.

CHAPTER FOUR: BENEFITS TO SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS FROM SCD

This initiative has provided schools the opportunity to evaluate, assess and develop school policies in relation to school organisation, school development, and curriculum planning and teaching methodologies. Some of the consequences of this can now be identified.

With regard to School Development Planning, teachers reported increased collaboration between colleagues which enabled a greater sense of openness to emerge in their discussions on their teaching. They reported they were more inclined to voice opinions and to be listened to. In addition, there was a feeling of

greater ownership in relation to school wide developments: there was more engagement from more people. All of this resulted in enhanced middle-management structures in the schools.

In staff – management school relations the teachers and facilitators reported more recognition of each side’s constraints, and a greater sense of collegiality. There was recognition of the vital importance of support for teachers from management, and management in turn being responsive to the staff’s teaching needs.

One of the more important developments reported from the initiative was in the area of schools responding to their local needs through their own resources, especially through the expertise and collective wisdom of the teachers. The feedback from the schools mentioned the fact that schools were *‘realising their potential to use their own resources’*, and *‘to deal with their own concerns’*. Tapping into the collective wisdom and creativity of the staff they appear to be developing an *‘inner capacity’* to address school issues without an unhealthy reliance on *‘outside supports’*. There is, accordingly, a recognition, to quote from some of the teacher responses, that *‘the teacher is the most valuable resource available to the school’*, and *‘we control our own destiny more’* and, *‘there is need for external supports, but the internal supports and commitments are most important’*.

As is evidence in the observations from teachers cited in Mary Teahan's paper, the strategy of using clusters for subject workshops was regarded as excellent for sharing models of good practice. These were regarded as significant forums to share ideas, and for boosting morale and easing the feeling of teacher isolation. Local networks of schools and of subject teachers now exist. Several teachers reported they were *“much more aware of the systems and strategies used for delivering the programmes”*. This corroborates a further SCD principle, *teacher collaboration within schools can be stimulated, in the first instance, through teacher collaboration across schools in a particular geographical cluster*.

With regard to the general benefits of the facilitators and field officers to schools, it was noted that they provided an energy and support in addition to helping to maintain a focus on curriculum related issues. They also gave validity to SCD in the school, particularly when linked to the status of a third level institution, namely, Education Department, NUIM.

The review data indicated clearly that considerable professional development among participating teachers had accrued. Some spoke of *‘doors being opened’*. It was reported that teachers talked more to each other on curriculum matters, both formally and informally, there was more teamwork and group work, and there was greater readiness among teachers to share ideas and materials, *“my first time in years to evaluate and reflect on practice”*. This led to improved staff relationships and an *“improved school life”*. Teachers were less narrow in their approach to their teaching and more open to change.

CHAPTER FIVE: CHALLENGES THAT HAD TO BE FACED

School personnel indicated that the developments implied in the work in SCD meant that they had to address and confront a number of issues. Time is possibly the single biggest obstacle in the promotion of professional development in our schools. Time is needed for regular meetings to promote dialogue and communication, thereby engaging more staff, and affirming good practice. It is also needed to explore new ideas and methods in teaching practice as well as to prepare classes. New initiatives in the school have to be monitored and evaluated which require teacher time. The teacher's professional engagement in the school goes beyond class teaching. Recognition of this has to be reflected on teachers' timetables. Time is a commodity that is very, very scarce in our schools.

Organisational difficulties and scarcity of resource materials were also reported as challenges to be met in the schools. In addition, school organisational factors such as the size and location of classrooms, the numbers in a class, inadequate secretarial support for teachers, were also acknowledged as factors that have to be encountered and addressed if meaningful developments are to occur in our classrooms. The initiative was sensitive to these issues and, accordingly, recognised that the pace and style of change in any school is to some extent dependent on the degree of organisational constraints it experiences. School personnel acknowledged these constraints. Ways of dealing with them were suggested by personnel working in and around the initiative.

Teachers also complained about an education system that is too examination orientated, leading to exam coaching rather than teaching. They also experienced work overload in light of many new programmes coming in on an already overloaded curriculum. Teachers reported fatigue in their work and lacking an energy to engage in new developments.

In addition to these structural issues, teacher attitude also presents challenges to those seeking to promote change in our schools. In some instances there was teacher resistance to the initiative. Teachers exhibited defensive and isolationist attitudes; they were reluctant to change from their 'comfort zone'. There was a noticeable loss of interest in the initiative's activities among some teachers when school meetings were held after school hours. Cynicism and negativity were also reported, and the present conflict between the Government and Teacher Union has decreased the opportunities for teachers to take increased responsibility for initiating change in their own schools. The voices clearly showed that teachers need recognition, affirmation and remuneration for the additional work involved in development activities.

Students also increasingly present new challenges to new developments. The review data from facilitators and teachers clearly indicate this. Many students carry an apathetic attitude towards schoolwork, many do part-time work and have little interest in or energy for their work in school. The schools are also facing more social

problems carried into the schoolroom by the students with consequential discipline problems for teachers and for students.

The feedback from the schools also showed recognition of the importance of management in supporting teachers in their work in the schools. The comment made by one respondent signals the voices of many other when it was noted that: *“the attitude and support of the Principal, Deputy Principal and middle management is vital”*. Among the specific supports mentioned was provision of time for the facilitator and time for teacher meetings. Dedicated leadership and intelligent delegation, it is believed, is required to sustain collaboration and reflection. An acknowledgement and public recognition of teachers’ hard work and dedication to curriculum development is also considered an important element in the process of successful implementation of new developments in the classroom. The voices also warned of the potential danger if the administrative concerns of management override teaching and learning concerns.

SCD: A Template For The Future?

The success of SCD, as outlined by the principals at the Maynooth seminar and here in Portlaoise today, is because of sensitivity to these issues. This was displayed in the initiative's initial conception of the tasks involved in effecting developments in schools. The issues were reflected in the culture of relationships that permeated the initiative and through the guiding principles that informed the style and pace of development. These are outlined and discussed in the Co-ordinator's paper. It was a dynamic initiative in which its participants were committed to the development of our schools as places of learning.

SCD negotiated time for facilitators and time for workshops both within the schools and at cluster level. This enabled school personnel to engage in planning and reviewing activities. In doing so we experienced a generous response from those committed to the objectives of the initiative. We realised the adage, *‘give time and you will get a lot back’*.

SCD provided a structured opportunity that enabled teachers to explore together issues of teaching and learning, with a view to promoting the school as a place of learning, the ultimate purpose of which was the benefit of the students.

The initiative also provided a support structure and local facilitators who were better positioned to promote change at local level. The principle of addressing local needs at local level encouraged more engagement. Successes encouraged and enabled teachers to engage more with developmental work in their schools. The successful actions generated more confidence and more mutual understanding and support between management and staffs. The principle, *supports should enable an empowering process of development to emerge for teachers and principals*, was

realised. The link of NUIM, the DES, the clusters and the schools enabled this development.

The SCD initiative facilitated and enabled change within the school. The opportunity was given to people to voice their concerns, in a 'safe' forum, about the teaching and learning of their subjects within the school. Some of these concerns were then dealt with by groups of staff. Therefore teachers felt that this initiative had provided a safe forum for these concerns to be raised and provided a vehicle for helping to deal with them. This led to many of these concerns above being addressed, in local schools, but other issues, such as overloaded syllabi, must be addressed at national level.

