

MESA-REDONDA

Três exemplos europeus de organização do ensino primário

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Excelentíssimo Senhor Presidente do Conselho Nacional de Educação, excelentíssimas autoridades educativas, professores, professoras, senhoras e senhores.

Antes de começar a minha exposição queria agradecer ao Conselho Nacional de Educação e em especial ao seu Secretário-geral, o excelentíssimo Senhor Dr. Manuel Miguéns, por ter sido convidada a participar neste Seminário sobre Educação.

É para mim um grande prazer e uma grande honra estar hoje aqui e poder partilhar convosco experiências que, espero, sirvam para um enriquecimento mútuo.

Como estamos no quadro do ensino na Europa, achei conveniente começar com um mapa de forma a situar o meu país (Espanha), a minha região (Extremadura), e as suas duas províncias (Cáceres e Badajoz) para, em seguida, me centrar na província de Badajoz, em cuja capital está a minha escola, o Colégio Público San Fernando.

A Educação Primária, dos 6 aos 12 anos de idade, na comunidade autónoma de Extremadura, está dividida em três ciclos. O 1.º ciclo compreende dois anos (1.º e 2.º anos), dos 6 aos 7 anos de idade. O 2.º ciclo (3.º e 4.º anos) vai dos 8 aos 9 anos e o 3.º ciclo (5.º e 6.º anos) dos 10 aos 11 anos de idade. Quando os alunos terminam têm 12 anos.

¹ Colégio Público San Fernando – Badajoz (Espanha)

Quanto às matérias do currículo, temos: Conhecimento do Meio, Educação Artística (Música, Artes Plásticas e Dramatização), Educação Física e Educação para a Cidadania – que é novo e deverá começar em 2010, Matemática, Religião ou Atenção Educativa, Língua e Literatura Castelhanas e Idioma Estrangeiro (Inglês e Português). A minha escola foi a primeira a introduzir a Língua Portuguesa desde a infantil (a partir dos 3 anos de idade) até ao 6.º ano da Primária (sendo que no 3.º ciclo é a segunda língua estrangeira).

O horário semanal para a Educação Primária que aqui se apresenta é o horário oficial, mas o facto de termos introduzido a Língua Portuguesa no nosso currículo obrigou-nos a fazer algumas modificações.

Matérias do currículo e respectiva distribuição horária semanal

Áreas	1.º ciclo	2.º ciclo	3.º ciclo	
	1.º e 2.º anos	3.º e 4.º anos	5.º ano	6.º ano
Conhecimento do Meio	4 (5-1)	3 (4-1)	3 (4-1)	3 (4-1)
Educação Artística:				
Música	1	1	1	1
Plástica	1,5	2	1,5 (2-0,5)	1,5 (2-0,5)
Educação Física	2	3	2,5 (3-0,5)	2,5 (3-0,5)
Educação para a Cidadania (a partir de 2010)				2
Língua e Literatura Castelhanas	5	4	4	4
Idioma Estrangeiro:				
Inglês	2	3	3	3
Língua Portuguesa	1	1	2	2
Matemática	4,5	4	4	4
Religião ou Atenção Educativa	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5
Recreio	2,5	2,5	2,5	2,5
TOTAL	25	25	25	25

Nota: A redução assinalada entre parêntesis destina-se a permitir oferecer um segundo idioma estrangeiro (Língua Portuguesa)

Os professores ainda ficam na escola mais cinco horas para os trabalhos de programação e reuniões, nomeadamente com os pais.

O tempo total de trabalho dos professores é de trinta horas semanais.

Damos também uma atenção especial às áreas instrumentais:

- em desdobramento com a área de Educação Física, o professor tutor trabalha a Língua e a Matemática com um menor número de alunos;
- com reforço de um outro professor do ciclo dentro da aula, em Língua e Matemática, no momento em que os alunos desse professor estão a ter aula de Idioma Estrangeiro, Música ou Religião;
- destinando um mínimo de meia hora por dia à leitura.

Para os alunos com dificuldades de aprendizagem existem três linhas de apoio destinadas a:

- Alunos com necessidades educativas especiais:

São atendidos por uma Equipa de Atenção à Diversidade, orientada por um psicopedagogo do Centro. Uma vez estudadas as características dos alunos, estes são orientados para trabalhar com o professor especialista em Audição e Linguagem, com o professor de Pedagogia Terapêutica ou com o professor especialista em Educação Compensatória.

- Alunos com desfasamento de aprendizagem inferior a 2 anos:

São atendidos directamente pelo(a) tutor(a) e eventualmente também por um professor do mesmo ciclo.

- Alunos com desfasamento de aprendizagem de 2 ou mais anos relativamente ao ano em que estão escolarizados:

São atendidos pelo professor especialista em Educação Compensatória.

O professor especialista em Educação Compensatória trabalha com alunos imigrantes ou refugiados que desconhecem a Língua Castelhana ou cujo nível de compreensão e expressão não lhes permite seguir o currículo de forma correcta. Alguns imigrantes ou refugiados apresentam dois ou mais anos de desnível entre o seu nível curricular e o ano em que se encontram escolarizados, devido à sua incorporação tardia no nosso sistema educativo. O professor especialista em Educação Compensatória trabalha também com os alunos que apresentam dois ou mais anos de desfasamento entre o seu nível curricular e o ano em que se encontram escolarizados, quando isso é devido à pertença a uma minoria étnica ou cultural, em situação de desvantagem social, ou a outros grupos socialmente desfavorecidos.

O professor de Pedagogia Terapêutica trabalha com alunos com transtorno generalizado do desenvolvimento, défice motor, cromossomopatia, deficiência mental, deficiência visual ou auditiva, atraso do desenvolvimento ou dificuldade de aprendizagem.

O especialista da Audição e Linguagem trabalha, normalmente, com os alunos que têm deficiência mental, deficiência auditiva, transtorno específico da linguagem, atraso de linguagem, transtorno generalizado do desenvolvimento, paralisia cerebral infantil, dificuldades de linguagem de natureza ambiental, dificuldades da fala ou atraso e transtorno da fala.

Por vezes, há alunos que têm de ser apoiados por dois ou três especialistas, dependendo das características e dificuldades que apresentam.

As actividades extracurriculares realizam-se entre as 16 e as 18 horas, são de carácter facultativo e de dois tipos:

- A. Actividades Formativas Complementares promovidas pela Junta Regional: informática, artesanato, patinagem, basquetebol, ginástica rítmica, reforço de Língua e Matemática;

B. Actividades promovidas pela Fundação Municipal de Desportos: xadrez, dança, futebol.

Cada aluno poderá ter o seguinte número de professores:

- professor(a) tutor(a);
- professores especialistas (Inglês, Português, Música, Ed. Física, Religião);
- professores de Atenção à Diversidade (para os alunos que necessitarem);
- Professores/monitores das actividades extra-escolares (opcionais).

As aulas decorrem das 9 às 14 horas, com um intervalo de meia hora das 12.00 às 12.30, de segunda a sexta. O trabalho diário dos alunos distribui-se por 3 períodos (de 1 hora cada), seguidos de mais dois (de 45 minutos cada), depois do intervalo. Dentro dos três primeiros estão normalmente as áreas instrumentais.

A transição entre ciclos escolares decorre da avaliação que é feita no segundo ano de cada um deles. Os alunos que obtêm aprovação transitam, os que reprovam repetem esse ano, sendo que os alunos só podem repetir uma vez ao longo da escolaridade primária, mesmo que reprovem na avaliação dos ciclos seguintes.

Your excellency, Professor Pedrosa, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for inviting me to your beautiful country to present the Finnish view on elementary, comprehensive education.

Climate does make a difference on many things. Finland has a very long winter and so Finland is not playing football now in the European Championship tournament. Because of the long winter the football season is very short – from May to September –, then comes the snow and covers the fields. In fact, if I remember right it was Portugal that stopped Finland from getting to the tournament. But it's ok, we have never got there and Portugal with Deco and Ronaldo is now a big favourite.

But Finland has done very well in the PISA research. I like to say that Finland is the World Champion in education, because every time this research has been carried out, Finland has been the best.

A long, dark and cold winter is very suitable for studying and perhaps Finnish people have got used to getting everything the hard way.

My school, Matti Lohen Koulu, has pupils from pre-school to grade 9 and sometimes grade 10, which is a voluntary year for those students who want to improve their final grades. The number of lessons per week varies from 20 (grades 1-2) to 26 (grades 5-6) and 30 (grades 7-9).

¹ Comprehensive school Matti Lohen Koulu – Rautalampi (Finlândia)

Finland offers a free school lunch to all pupils and has done so for 60 years. You can't concentrate on working if you are hungry. Teachers supervise the eating, teaching them manners and also eat free of charge.

As I said earlier the climate does make a change. We have very long summer holidays – 2 and a half months, because the summer nights are light, the sun never sets in northern Finland and it's fairly warm outside. We think it is better to take care of the education in winter when in the north it is dark all the time and in central Finland, where I come from, it is kind of twilight, the sun can occasionally come up for two, three hours. The temperature drops even to -30 degrees Centigrade. We have a week's holiday in October, one and a half weeks at Christmas and one for skiing in March.

The lessons last 45 minutes and then there is a break of 10 to 15 minutes when pupils go out to play something to spend their extra energy and to get ready to sit for another 45 minutes and to concentrate on learning.

The number of lessons per week

<i>Subject / grade</i>	<i>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</i>	
<i>Finnish</i>	<i>7 7 6 6 5 5 3 3 3</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>English</i>	<i>0 0 2 2 2 2 2 3 3</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Maths</i>	<i>3 3 4 4 4 4 3 3 4</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Biology</i>	<i>2 2 2 3 2 1 2 2 3</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Physics</i>	<i>0 0 0 0 1 1 2 3 2</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Health</i>	<i>0 0 0 0 0 1 1 1</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Religion</i>	<i>1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 1</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>History</i>	<i>0 0 0 0 2 2 2 3 2</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Music</i>	<i>1 1 1 1 2 2 1 0 0</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Arts</i>	<i>2 2 2 2 2 2 3 0 0</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Crafts</i>	<i>2 2 2 2 2 2 3 0 0</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>PE</i>	<i>2 2 3 3 3 3 2 2 2</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Home ec.</i>	<i>0 0 0 0 0 0 3 0 0</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Optional</i>	<i>0 0 0 0 0 0 1 6 6</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Counselling</i>	<i>0 0 0 0 0 0 ½ ½ 1</i>	<i>2</i>

Together 20-30 lessons / week

Half of the pupils come to school by bus or by taxi paid by the state/council. They come to school at 8.30 and go home at 12.30. If both parents are at work, they can go to our “afternoon club” as we call it. It costs 3 euros and includes a snack in the school dining room at half past one.

All pupils are tested for possible learning problems when they are at pre-school. It is done by the special education teachers and the pupils are sent to a specialist depending on the kind of problems they have. All the students with a serious problem get a HOJKS, *e.g.* a personal program for educational arrangement. We no longer talk about special education pupils, we talk about pupils with individualized learning plans. This plan is done together with the parents; they have to accept the plan with their signature. If they don’t want it, the education board will accept it anyway and then it will be followed anyhow. Usually the program is made easier in certain subjects like Swedish, English and Maths.

These HOJKS-pupils usually get a school assistant to help the teacher with these kids. He or she will then sit next to the pupil at least in maths and mother tongue. If a pupil has got the HOJKS plan because of lack of concentration, there is a school assistant all the time. Last autumn there was one such case; in spring the assistant was needed much less with him.

The idea is of course to deal with the learning problems as early as possible. If this is not done and the pupil drops out of a subject or most academic subjects, he or she will have a very long and winding road to go before finishing the school. He will lose his motivation to study. Sooner or later he will start finding other ways to spend his time and there will be discipline problems. The devil will find work for idle hands.

Remedial teaching is also offered by the teacher. It means sitting alone with the teacher and repeating the matters the pupil had found difficult. This is of course offered if the pupil has been ill for several days and the teacher wants to make sure the pupil keeps up with the rest of the class.

Too few extra-curricular activities are offered to pupils. At the moment there is only floor ball and some crafts, but now the Minister of Education promised more money for this activity. We applied for money for ten new clubs for the next term. We'll see what happens.

It is very seldom that a pupil repeats a year. We have a group that talks about these students. This group, called the Student Welfare Group, consists of the head teacher, guidance counsellor, school nurse and the special education teachers. If they think it is best for the pupil to repeat a year, they will contact the parents and negotiate about the matter. Normally, there's one or two cases annually.

We have had this inclusion principle for a few years now. It means that a pupil has the right to go to the nearest school no matter what his or her problems are. At the moment there is one pupil who cannot come to our school because he's so heavily handicapped, sitting in a wheel chair and so on.

Teachers in Finland are very highly trained, 5-6 years of studying and a master's degree. So the teacher should be able to cope with class alone. If there is one pupil with problems, e.g. in maths, the teacher will get a school assistant to help her. If there are many such students, the special education teacher comes and takes them to her class and teaches them in a small group.

Not everything can be learned within the classroom walls. There are seven themes that must be taught in some way, even if they don't exist as school subjects.

Special themes without a lesson:

1. Growth as a person
2. Cultural identity and internationalism
3. Media skills and communication
4. Entrepreneurship
5. Responsibility for the environment, well-being, and a sustainable future
6. Safety and traffic
7. Technology and the individual
8. Fishing (our own)

Then we have our own theme, fishing, because Rautalampi is situated in the Finnish Lake District.

Opening Remarks

My name is Peadar Cremin. I am the President of Mary Immaculate College in Limerick, in Ireland.

At the outset, I would like to say “muito obrigado” to the President, to the Chairperson, and also to Manuel I. Miguéns for the very kind invitation to come and to speak with you. For me, it is an honour as well as a very great pleasure to be invited to speak in Portugal.

Firstly, I will say a little bit about myself, because the chair has requested this. I began my career as a primary teacher, teaching children aged 6 to 12. Subsequently, I took up a lecturing post at Mary Immaculate College, a college that produces up to 40% of Ireland’s primary teachers. Here I taught Social and Environmental Studies. From this, I became quite engaged in the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), being involved in the formulation and drafting of the current curriculum for primary schools in Ireland. On behalf of the NCCA, I have brought some gifts which I will give to the President for your Council. These include twenty five copies of a DVD, part of which I will show you soon. I have also brought copies of the support materials that our Curriculum Council uses for public relations and for informing parents about the work of the NCCA.

¹ Mary Immaculate College, in Limerick, Ireland

I am a member of the Teaching Council in Ireland where I represent the colleges of teacher education for the primary sector. Our Teaching Council, which was established in 2006, governs who comes into the profession, what the codes of practice of the profession are and decides who may register as a teacher in Ireland.

Lastly, I should mention that I have done a considerable amount of international work, primarily in Europe and Africa. This has included many links with colleagues here in Portugal, so that I am reasonably familiar with the workings of the Portuguese system of education.

The Irish Educational Context

(At this stage, the presenter played a five-minute segment of a DVD entitled “The What, Why and How of children’s learning in primary school” to introduce the primary curriculum in Ireland and to show how it is implemented at school level.)²

In Ireland, the primary school is eight years long. In theory, the first two years are optional, but in fact almost everybody goes through two years of Infant Education (typically ages 4 to 6) before entering Grade 1. The state does not have a separate pre-school system for children under 4 years of age, so the pre-school system in Ireland is partly built into the primary school. Every primary school accepts children from the day when they are four years of age. There is private provision of pre-school care which is very expensive, so once a parent sends their children to the primary school, money can be saved by the parent immediately. Primary education typically continues to the age of 12 (Grade 6) when children automatically progress to the post-primary sector.

² National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, “The What, Why and How of children’s learning in primary school” (Dublin: 2006).

In Ireland, teachers have high status and this has an impact on those who select teaching as a career. There is a common examination at the end of second level education for those who wish to go on to university. All of the results from this state-administered examination go into one computer. To get into primary teaching a student must be among those with the highest grades. University level students who choose a career in primary teaching are normally in the top 10% of students nationally. Many of those coming into primary teaching have perfect scores which means that they could have selected medicine, law, engineering or any other programme of study, but they have chosen to be primary teachers. This has been true for many years and, viewed from an international perspective, makes the Irish educational scene quite unusual.

The Irish Curriculum for Primary Schools

“The term curriculum encompasses the content, structure and processes of teaching and learning which the school provides in accordance with its educational objectives and values.” (White Paper On Education 1995)

In Ireland, there is a national curriculum which has been gradually introduced to schools since its publication in 1999. It is an extensive document, setting out a syllabus and offering guidelines to teachers on every aspect of the curriculum that is to be taught in the primary school (other than religious education). It is published as a box of twenty five books, but is also available as a compact disk and on the internet.³

³ <http://www.ncca.ie/eng/index.asp?docID=121>

Figure 1

Language		
Gaeilge	English	
Mathematics		
Social, environmental and scientific education		
History	Geography	Science
Arts education		
Visual arts	Music	Drama
Physical education		
Social, personal and health education		
Religious education		

As indicated by the largest bands in Figure 1, there are seven broad curricular areas of which six are controlled by the state. Separately, there is provision for the inclusion of Religious Education (dependent on the religious orientation of the school, this aspect is controlled by the various church authorities. There are a small number of non-denominational schools where the religion component is replaced by a more general, ethical curriculum). Curriculum in Ireland is controlled by the state, even though the state does not normally own or manage the school. (In Ireland, there are only a very small number of private schools where curriculum is not controlled in this way.)

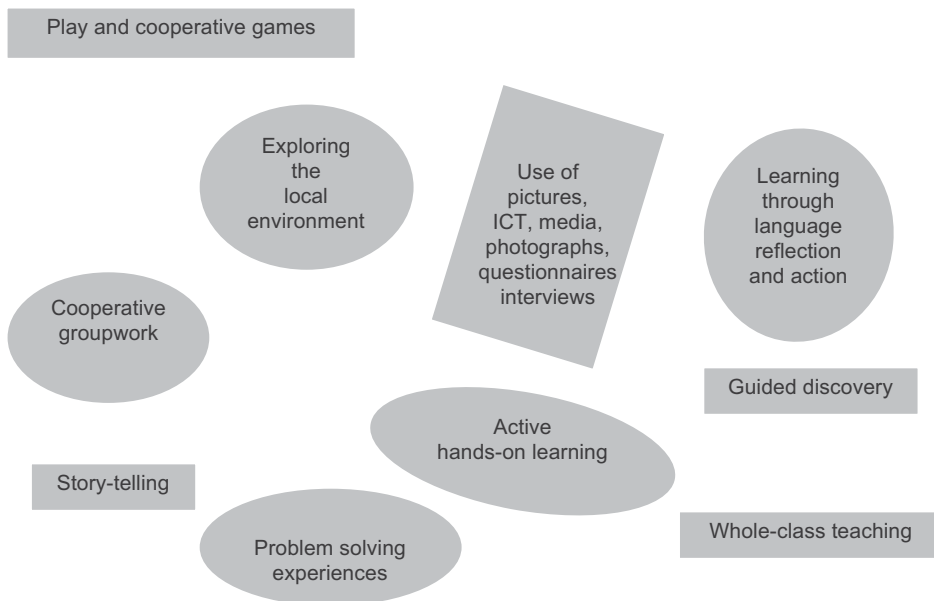
The following components make up the published curriculum for Irish primary schools:

- Curriculum overview
- Curriculum statement in each subject
- Teacher guidelines for each subject
- Support booklets
- Information and communications technology
- Language across the curriculum
- Parental guidelines
- Special education

There is a specific statement for each one of the subjects, as well as guidelines for each subject. There is a lot of support material both for

teachers and for parents. There are separate guidelines on Special Education and again all of that material is available on the web. The DVD you have been watching is also available on the web. What's interesting about the curriculum from a teaching perspective is how it is delivered. In other words, what pedagogic approaches are valued and promoted? Figure 2 sets out some of the core methodologies.

Figure 2



Firstly, there is an emphasis on the local environment, as well as an emphasis on hands-on learning. The children are doing and are learning by doing. There is an emphasis on “guided discovery”, together with a lot of use of tactile and pictorial materials, information and communication technologies, and so on. There is some whole class teaching. In the past, there was a great deal of whole class teaching, but now there is a far greater emphasis on group activity and cooperative learning. There is a great deal of collaborative work and especially cooperative games, storytelling, and cooperative problem solving. One of the key ideas is that even though we have the separate subjects which I have identified

in Figure 1, as far as possible teachers are encouraged to work in themes, so that learning is perceived as a holistic experience. The teacher can choose to take a theme and keep it going for a week, or a month, every afternoon or every morning. How the theme is followed and how the teacher explores it with the class or grade-level, is decided by the individual class teacher.

The Elements of each Subject Component in the Irish Primary Curriculum

Each of the individual curricular areas in the Irish Primary Curriculum is presented under the following headings:

- Introduction
- Aims
- Broad objectives
- Overview Tables
- Content
- Concepts and Skills Development
- Guidance on selection of content
- Assessment statement

Each subject has its own specific aims and broad objectives as well as specific content, but each subject has very specific skills which should be developed through that subject. Each subject also has an assessment statement setting out how that subject is best assessed. The intention is that teachers conduct their own assessments.

How the Curriculum Is Delivered

In Ireland, there are four levels of primary education (including two years of Infant Education, as described above). After Infant Education, there are two years in the junior classes (Grades 1 and 2), two years in the middle classes (Grades 3 and 4) and two years in the senior classes (Grades 5 and 6), with automatic progression through the grades. There

is no retention and any pupils retained are not counted for the purpose of determining staff numbers. This acts as a disincentive to retention within the school. Occasionally, if a child is really having a problem and wants to stay back for a further year that is possible, but actually children are encouraged always to move on with their class. This is supported by the fact that the learning programme for each child is individualised and learning support and resource teachers are available to help deliver an appropriate learning programme for each learner. Education is compulsory in Ireland from six to sixteen years. There are no examinations to be passed and so there is no reason for not letting a child progress through the primary school. Increasingly, in recent years, children with various disabilities which give rise to physical or intellectual learning challenges are progressing with their peer group, except in the case of those with severe learning challenges. The policy of mainstreaming these pupils into the primary school has had considerable parental support.

Parents are free to decide when a child is ready for school, and parents are free to send a child to any school of their choice. It is not necessary to send a child to the nearest school or to a school in the district. Parents who work in a town or city may choose to bring their children to an urban school. Likewise a parent who prefers to do so may take a child to a rural school, subject to there being space in the school.

Each class or grade at the primary level has an individual class teacher who is responsible for the work of the class. In urban schools, the pupils are typically within a single age level, but in smaller rural schools a teacher may be teaching children in up to four or five age cohorts.

The Principal Teacher allocates teaching duties and classes. Within the context of an overall school plan, prepared by the Principal Teacher or Head, each individual teacher decides what he or she is going to teach at the class (grade) level. The various books of the curriculum are not a specification of what the teacher must do. They are a menu to give ideas and to suggest to the teacher what they can do. The teacher is

responsible, within these parameters, for preparing an annual plan and for making fortnightly, weekly and daily plans, setting out the learning goals, activities and content of their programme of work.

While teachers very often stay on after school, on a voluntary basis, to engage in sports or other activities, there is no extra curricular activity within the school (as this is understood in the Portuguese system). There is a large industry outside the formal education system through which parents send their children, after school, to swimming, to learn music, to take speech and drama, etc., but all of these activities are paid for by the parents. Poorer parents usually don't have the money for many of these activities. However, some schools in poorer areas manage to raise money so they can make these kinds of activities available to children, but that is on a voluntary basis.

Time Allocation in the Primary School in Ireland

The length of the school year in Ireland is one hundred and eighty three days. In the past, it was one hundred and eighty nine days, but in order to allow for teacher in-service, it was reduced to one hundred and eighty three days in the teaching year.

While guidelines are provided (as set out in Table 1 and Table 2) in regard to the daily routine, the school and the class teacher have discretion about allocating time in the Irish primary school. Officially, there are twenty eight hours of school time throughout the primary school with the exception of the infant classes where the guidelines show twenty three hours of school time.

Table 1

Suggested Minimum Weekly Time Framework

Curriculum Areas	One Week		One Week (Infant Education)	
	Hours	Minutes	Hours	Minutes
Secular Instruction				
Language :				
L1	4	00	3	00
L2	3	30	2	30
Mathematics	3	00	2	15
Social and Environmental Education	3	00	2	15
Social, Personal and Health Education	0	30	0	30
Physical Education	1	00	1	00
Arts Education	3	00	2	30
Discretionary Curriculum Time	2	00	1	00
Total Secular Instruction	20	00	15	00

Table 2

Suggested Minimum Weekly Time Framework

Activity	One Week		One Week	
	Hours	Minutes	Hours	Minutes
Religious Education (typically)	2	30	2	30
Assembly time	1	40	1	40
Roll Call	0	50	0	50
Breaks	0	50	0	50
Recreation (typically)	2	30	2	30
Total	28	20	23	20

Table 3 – Typical Timetable (Grade II)

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9.00 9.40	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths
9.40 10.35	English	English	English	English	English
11.00 11.45	Irish	Irish	Irish	P.E.	Irish
11.45 12.30	Music	Writing		Irish	Oral Language
13.00 13.45	SPHE	P.E.	SESE	SESE	SESE
13.45 14.30	SESE	Oral Language	Art	Drama	Recreation Time
14.30 14.40	Discretionary Time		Discretionary Time		Discretionary Time

Table 3 presents a typical timetable, as followed by a teacher in the second grade. Some teachers follow a similar pattern every day so that the pupils are familiar with the structure of the day's work, while other teachers make every day very varied and deliberately blur the boundaries between the various subject elements as they bring the children through more integrated and holistic activities.

Class Size

Irish primary class sizes are among the largest in Europe. Nationally, the staffing schedule is structured to ensure that all primary schools operate to an average mainstream class size of 27 pupils but this average means that many pupils are taught in classes considerably larger. Traditionally the schools did not have good facilities, and traditionally the schools had even larger classes. This is always a matter of conflict between the teacher unions and government with promises in regard to improvements in class sizes regularly being included as part of the programme for government when new governments are being formed.

Types of Teacher

Whereas many years ago there were only Principal Teachers and Class Teachers, in recent decades there has been growing specialization and an increasing diversity within the teaching force in Ireland. Currently, within the Irish primary sector, these types of teaching post exist:

- Principal Teacher
- Class Teacher
- Learning Support Teacher/Resource Teachers
- Special Needs Assistants
- Language Support Teacher
- Resource Teacher for Travellers
- Visiting Teacher for Travellers
- Home-School-Community Liaison
- Visiting Teacher Service for Children and Young People with a Hearing or Visual Impairment

Where a teacher recognises that a child has special needs, the class teacher will decide on the appropriate action and learning programme. This may require the support of another profession, most often the learning support teacher. In recent years, there has been an enormous growth in Ireland in the number of learning support and resource teachers, as the system adapts to meeting the needs of individual learners, especially those with special needs. Learning support teachers are qualified teachers. Sometimes they take the children to a separate room with specialist materials. Alternatively, they come into the classroom and work, either with a child or with a little group of children. How they are deployed during the day, is a matter for themselves, the class teachers and the principal teacher. In recent years, there has also been a big growth in special needs assistants. These are people who are not qualified as teachers but who are employed to care for and to help support a child who has some particular difficulty.

In recent years, there has been a significant level of immigration into Ireland. When pupils come from other countries, they may have little or no English and so the school needs to support them in learning English before they are able to learn in other curricular areas. For example, in one small town in Ireland, as many as 30% of the population is Brazilian and so a significant proportion of the pupils in the local school are Portuguese-speaking. Where schools have two such children, they are given a language support teacher for some time to help the children to learn English.

There are many other examples of such specialist support. In Ireland, there is a group called “travellers”, similar in their lifestyle to the Gypsies or the Romanies who are more common in mainland Europe. Because they did not have a tradition of schooling, many members of this community were quite resistant to formal education and rarely managed to complete even primary education in the past. This led to the appointment of visiting teachers of the travellers who go to the homes of traveller pupils. As many travellers live at the side of the road or in mobile homes, the visiting teacher will go to them. Where possible, traveller pupils are brought to the school; sometimes the visiting teacher even brings them to the school. Likewise, in recent years, especially in areas of disadvantage, the Irish government has put a lot of resources into developing home, school, and community liaison. This means that a teacher is freed up in the school on a full-time basis to develop a web of relationships, particularly with the parents of disadvantaged children.

Another type of visiting teacher is the one who works with learners who may have a visual or hearing impairment. The role of the visiting teacher is to support the children, parents/guardians, teachers and other professionals involved with the child. Each visiting teacher is responsible for a particular region and is allocated a caseload of pupils. The nature and frequency of visitation will depend on a range of factors, including the age of the child, the severity of the child’s impairment, his/her educational placement and the pupil’s individual learning needs.

Visiting teachers are provided and paid for by the Ministry of Education to support children with impairments until they get to third level. As increasing numbers of students with diverse impairments and learning challenges gain entry to third level, this sector has also been challenged to put the supports in place to enable such students to achieve to the full of their potential.

Assessment

The issue of assessment has received increased attention in Ireland in recent decades. At primary level, a lot of the assessment is informal, because the teacher is constantly monitoring and assessing the learning capabilities and learning patterns of the pupils. Increasingly, informal observation is being supplemented by a range of assessment tools including teacher-designed tests and tasks, project work and portfolios across the curriculum. Tests, which have been standardised nationally in areas such as English Reading or Mathematics, are being used increasingly.

The Ministry of Education in Ireland (known as the Department of Education and Science) has now decided to make testing obligatory at Grade 2 and Grade 5 so that the parents can have a formal feedback on how the child is doing on the basis of standardised tests. In part because of the power of teachers' unions in Ireland, it is illegal to publish the results of school tests, as this led to the creation of league tables and comparisons between one school and another.

For the purposes of assessment, many different kinds of test are used, all of which are accepted as having different functions. The kinds of test in use include:

- Assessment for Learning (Formative)
- Assessment of Learning (Summative)
- Class work

- Curriculum Profiles
 - Diagnostic Tests
 - Process Portfolios/Journals
 - Standardised Tests
 - Student Self/Peer Evaluation
 - Teacher Observation

While such approaches as the teachers' observation remain crucial, there are increasing efforts to encourage children to learn to evaluate their own performance, and to keep portfolios and records which can then be shared with the parents when they come to visit the school.

Treatment of Pupils with General Learning Difficulties

Pupils who have learning difficulties are generally classified, in Ireland, at one of three levels: severe and profound difficulty, moderate difficulty or mild difficulty. Three types of educational setting are now in use: special schools, special classes and mainstream school classes. In the past, the children who had either moderate or severe profound levels of difficulty were generally sent from the primary school to specialist schools. For a number of years now, Ireland has embraced the doctrine of inclusion. Increasingly, support is being given to children in their own classroom in the mainstream class. Even when children have very severe or profound difficulties, their parents will sometimes choose to send such children to their local primary school. This may be because they want them to be friends with the local children and they want them to have friends to play with. If such pupils are sent to a school that is twenty kilometres away, they are much less likely to make friends locally. Increasingly, pupils who suffer from specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, are being identified in our primary schools, with the support of the Ministry's National Education Psychological Service and supports are being put in place to assist such students to overcome their specific learning challenges. Further information and

guidelines on these issues are available at a website run by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment⁴.

Although this is a less usual alternative, some home tuition is available for children with a significant medical condition which is likely to cause major disruption to their attendance at school on a continuing basis. Such tuition is also available, as an interim measure, for children awaiting an appropriate educational placement, as well as being available to children with autistic spectrum disorder, requiring early educational intervention.

Other Professions

A National Educational Psychological Service has been established in recent years to offer support to schools in addressing the challenges arising from special needs, both in identifying the conditions from which children may suffer and in advising appropriate responses, interventions or therapies. The Service also provides some professional development programmes for teachers. Once an assessment has been done, there is an entitlement to support by law. This was not the case in the past with the result that many parents felt compelled to go to the law courts claiming the rights of their children to have their educational challenges addressed. Much of the support comes from the statutory Health Service Executive, such as support for speech and language therapy, occupational therapy or indeed in the provision of psychological services or counselling for children who have difficulties.

The Salary of the Mainstream Teacher

The lowest point on the salary scale for a qualified teacher in Ireland is € 34,058 (on 1 March 2008) rising to a salary of € 61,816 after 25 years. However, relatively few teachers remain on this scale as there are a broad range of additional allowances which are given either for

⁴ cf. http://www.ncca.ie/SEN/ncca_launch.htm

further qualifications or for undertaking additional duties. The current allowances include those for a Masters-level qualification (€ 5,000+) or in Special Education (€ 2,500). Promotional posts include those such as Assistant Principal (€ 8,750) and Principal (€ 9,500-€ 30,500). Teachers may also seek to provide supervision at break times (37 hours, annually comes to € 1,789, calculated on the basis of € 49,11 per hour as of 1 March 2008).

Functions of Mainstream Teacher

In all schools where there are more than eight teachers, the principalship is a full-time post. Where there are fewer than eight teachers, typically in the rural areas, the principal is also teaching, sometimes teaching all day every day. Such principals may be allocated a small amount of free time to enable them to conduct their duties as principal.

Typically, the mainstream class teacher is responsible for his/her pupils from 9:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon. Normally, this teacher teaches every subject, including religious education. In the larger schools, the mainstream teacher has a single class. A teacher may continue to teach a particular class level for a number of years, but most schools encourage teachers to move about and to change the grade levels they are teaching every few years so that they do not become over-specialist. In smaller rural schools, this cannot happen, because many of our rural schools are two or three teacher schools. In the two-teacher school, each of the two teachers will normally teach four grades and so there is little scope for movement within the school.

I will finish by reminding you of the words of one of our famous Irish poets, W. B. Yeats, who said “Education is not about the filling of a pale or a bucket, it is about the lighting of a fire”. I hope that is what you are doing in your classroom and I wish you well in that activity.

Thank you for your level of attention. *Muito obrigado.*

Debate

Uma participante – Gostaria de perguntar a todos, embora tivéssemos visto que em alguns casos estão previstas soluções de melhoria e até retenções voluntárias, se com a adoção do sistema de transição automática se têm notado algumas consequências na transição para o nível seguinte. Isto é, se dos doze anos em diante se conseguiu uma normalidade na transição para o nível seguinte, ou se os alunos chegam com dificuldades acumuladas que exigem depois cuidados muito especiais.

Uma participante – Na sequência da questão anterior, que também é uma preocupação minha, eu perguntava se as crianças que tiverem níveis de desempenho diferentes no final do ensino primário, em virtude de nunca ter havido retenções, seguem percursos escolares diferentes, quer ao nível das escolas, quer dos graus que essas escolas oferecem, como acontece na Alemanha.

Peadar Cremin – I begin by saying all children are different and every individual is different. And if we value difference and individuality, our education should try to meet the needs of every individual at whatever point they are. In the past when we did mostly class teaching, we tried to make children be less of an individual and more of somebody who fitted and progressed at the rate of that class.

For a long time now I think we used group work but increasingly we're coming to the level of what I would call individualised instruction. That is, the child is getting a form and a level of instruction that is appropriate to that child's capability and capacity to learn.

When children then automatically progress by year, because of their age, there will be differences. And it's very interesting for me because I'm a primary teacher. I'm very positive about primary teaching. Primary teachers, because they have a full degree in education, learn how to deal with difficulty.

With my colleagues from second level education I would be more cautious, because when children go to second level education, the teachers they meet do not have the same level of preparation in dealing with educational methodologies or in dealing with individual difference, because they are mostly subject specialists. They want to give the knowledge and they expect you to learn it at the rate they give it.

So, when these children now progress from primary, where they have had a good service in supporting them to learn at their own rate and pace, of course there are problems in the second level. Teachers are finding teaching much more difficult, much more stressful, because they are having children who in the past would never come to a secondary school. They would have been pushed somewhere else. But now they're going on to a 2nd level and in fact they're also going to the 3rd level.

If I can give an example, many of you will know the problem of dyslexia. Now, somebody with dyslexia gets support at primary education. Then he/she goes to the 2nd level. Even when they do written state examinations with us at the age of 15 (which is the first written state examination everybody does), they get support for the examination. Maybe they get extra time. Maybe they get somebody who helps them to write the answers to the papers. We call this "accommodations". They are given an accommodation. The idea is to try to help them succeed.

We have had a big national debate that goes on. Should their certificate at the end be marked to say "this is somebody who got a lot of support" or do they have the right to say, "why should everybody know about my disability?"

In my institution in recent years, for example, there is a man of 50 who has come for a number of years to talk to the teachers about the problem of dyslexia because he had dyslexia and it didn't prevent him from becoming the manager of one of the biggest cement factories, one of the biggest industries in our city.

He could never read, so when he would go down the factory floor with his newspaper, he would meet somebody and he would say, “Excuse me, I left my glasses in my office”. He would know from the picture a letter from headquarters, which needed to be answered. So, he would say, “Would you mind reading that to me because I don't want to go upstairs to get my glasses again?” And because he has always chose different people over 25 years, nobody ever discovered he could not read.

When we discovered, we brought him to tell the teachers how children who are dyslexic can hide it from the teacher.

This guy eventually came and did a degree. We had to give a lot of support, because initially he couldn't read and write. He did learn to read and he did learn to write, but with great difficulty, but he was given the support to do his degree. And he was so happy because for the first time in his life he could succeed in education. He had always thought, “I am a complete failure and what if people knew about this?”. And he was so excited to do so well at the university level that he convinced his daughter, with quite a good job in design, to give up her job and to come into university and to study for her degree because she had the same problem of dyslexia.

So, we have two happy customers who in the past would have been complete educational failures and who now have completed their degrees. And that is the challenge that has begun to hit the teachers in secondary schools. Nowadays this is also starting to be a challenge for people at the university, because there is a view that... You all know the Special Olympics. There is a view that if you have a child that has Down syndrome, not only should they have primary education, but they should also have secondary education. Why not 3rd level education? Should they not be given support? We know they will never be Astro-Physicians, but should they not be supported to go to university like all their friends are doing?

Tauno Herranen – Did you know the king of Sweden has dyslexia too? So, you can be in high places with dyslexia. In our school it's a bit

different since we don't have primary and secondary, we have only one school where they stay until they are 16. So we know them very, very well. We know the students very well when they are 16.

But then we have this Student Welfare Group in our school. It includes the head teacher, three special teachers, the school nurse, a guidance counsellor, and me. We meet every week and talk about these students who have problems, and then we decide. Well, decide is not the proper word. We recommend a person perhaps to repeat a year, if we think it's good for him or her. And then we recommend it to the parents. Only then s/he can repeat a year, but it's not very often that a student repeats a year. It's not often done because we can always give him or her the personal plan for studying, make some things easier and in that way encourage him or her to go on studying.

Joaquina Maeso – Penso que terá ficado claro que na minha escola damos uma especial importância aos alunos com necessidades educativas especiais (ACNEES). Temos um programa muito extenso e muito estudado para tratar estes alunos, mas temos quase quatrocentos alunos no total, entre os quais alunos com paralisia cerebral e autistas, entre outras deficiências. Temos sempre uma equipa na escola disposta a trabalhar com eles muito individualmente. Dependendo da característica do aluno, este sai ou não da aula. Às vezes vai à aula do especialista em Audição e Linguagem, está sozinho com ele para trabalhar em exercícios especiais. Outras vezes, o mesmo especialista trabalha com ele na aula para facilitar a integração do aluno no grupo.

O Orientador acompanha de muito perto o seguimento destes alunos, para que eles tenham sucesso e para que as deficiências sejam minoradas.

Afonso Pereira – Uma das minhas preocupações enquanto professor prende-se com a formação inicial dos professores portugueses. Em tempos idos, tínhamos o Magistério Primário, que preparava os professores para o 1.º ciclo do ensino básico. Depois, apareceram as Escolas Superiores de Educação, onde agora se formam os professores.

Mas aquilo que me preocupa são os professores licenciados para o 1.º ciclo com especialidade na área da Música, da Educação Física ou das Ciências para o 2.º ciclo que, quando o Conselho Executivo distribui o serviço, com alguma frequência, dizem ao Presidente: “Por favor não me atribua uma turma do 1.º ano porque eu não estou suficientemente preparado.” Portanto, não estão preparados para esse importante ciclo que é a primeira pedra no percurso escolar do aluno.

Eu pergunto aos nossos ilustres convidados como é desenvolvida a formação do professor do 1.º ciclo do ensino básico, nos respectivos países, que a meu ver é o mais importante de todos os professores.

Helena Santos (Federação Nacional dos Sindicatos da Educação)
– Gostaria de colocar uma primeira questão que se prende essencialmente com as crianças com necessidades educativas especiais integradas nas escolas.

Gostava de saber se, nos países em presença, quando falam de necessidades educativas especiais, se referem a alunos que apesar dessas dificuldades fazem aquisições cognitivas ao nível da Língua, das Ciências, da Matemática, ou se se referem a alunos com necessidades educativas especiais decorrentes de deficiências profundas, mas incluídos em classes de ensino regular.

Perguntava também se, nos três países em presença, os alunos com deficiências profundas estão na escola pública, se frequentam classes normais ou classes especiais e quanto tempo permanecem na escola diariamente.

Relativamente a Espanha, gostaria de perceber se têm actividades diferenciadas para que os alunos deficientes profundos permaneçam na escola do ensino regular e em que espaços são realizadas.

Eu pude perceber que há diferenças entre todos os países ao nível do número de alunos por turma, dos salários, da carga curricular, do ambiente, etc. Por isso, gostava de apelar ao Conselho Nacional de

Educação para que fizesse uma reflexão muito séria e muito cuidada sobre o que se passa com os apoios ao professor responsável pela turma nestes países. Eles têm trinta ou dezoito alunos, mas qualquer um deles tem uma organização de apoios exemplar.

Nós vamos exactamente no sentido contrário. Nós estamos a retirar apoio a quem precisa. E penso que todos nós, professores, temos uma responsabilidade acrescida nisto. Temos de apelar às instituições para que percebam que vamos no caminho errado. Nós não podemos ter qualidade na educação, nem incluir alunos com dificuldades, se não tivermos uma rede de suporte familiar, de suporte social e de suporte ao professor.

Joaquina Maeso – Nós temos vinte e cinco alunos em cada turma e os alunos com necessidades educativas especiais estão totalmente integrados na classe. Eles fazem as mesmas tarefas que os outros. No entanto, às vezes, o especialista de Audição e Linguagem ou o especialista de Pedagogia Terapêutica entram na aula para ajudar a fazer alguns exercícios, desde que não seja necessário que esses alunos saiam da sala para trabalhar directamente com o especialista noutro espaço. Mas o mais importante é integrar estes alunos na turma. Isto é o que pretendemos e o que procuramos sempre. Às vezes é preciso levá-los para fora, mas tenta-se sempre trabalhar com eles na sala.

O apoio a alunos com necessidades educativas especiais ou com um desfasamento inferior a dois anos não é, necessariamente, dado por especialistas em Educação Especial, também pode ser dado por professores do mesmo ciclo, dentro da aula do tutor.

Os alunos com dois anos de desnível, assim como os alunos com paralisia cerebral, ficam na aula com o tutor, onde são apoiados pelo especialista. Sempre que os exercícios específicos não podem ser feitos na aula, estes alunos recebem apoio noutro espaço.

Peadar Cremin – Ten years ago I was very familiar with teacher education in Portugal, but clearly it has changed a lot in that period of

time, so I can simply talk from my experience now. We have, I think, very deliberately maintained the *College of education* sector, even though we have linked it with the universities for our students to be able to get either a three- or a four-year teaching qualification.

We would like to get to the level reached by Finland where all teachers begin with a Master's degree, but we would also like to do that in a way that maintains our current practice: when you decide to be a teacher in Ireland as an 18 or 19 year old, after a short period of about three months in the College, you go to a school to undertake a school placement.

We would not like something like the American system where you do a liberal arts degree first and later you decide to become a teacher. We prefer to expose people to teaching from a very early stage.

But I do want to say I think initial teacher education is only initial teacher education. Once upon a time, in the past, initial teacher education was enough. Now, no matter what you do, no matter whether it is three or four years (as in Ireland) or five or six years (as in some of the countries like Czech Republic or Finland), it still isn't going to be enough. Now, you must also define appropriate provision for continuing professional development for your teaching force, because so much is changing so rapidly that to have teachers who depend on what they learned on College ten or fifteen years ago doesn't do anymore. New understandings of the challenges and the difficulties like dyslexia and autism are emerging by the year, so your teachers need to be upgraded.

I mentioned earlier I'm at the Teaching Council. One of the things the Teaching Council in Ireland has done is to develop what is called a code of professional practice, a code of professional behaviour, which all teachers are supposed to follow as doctors follow the Hippocratic oath. When you asked the question, I went to look for it, and it says, "The teacher is a lifelong learner. Teachers believe that professional development is a lifelong process. It is most effective when it is imbedded with practice. Continuous professional development is both

a right and a responsibility and should be supported by policy and resources at local, regional, and national level”.

However, for the first year they are teaching fulltime we're developing a national system for induction, so that the young teachers are supported to really learn at this stage. This is seen as critical. So now we have initial teacher education followed by a well-developed system of induction and then followed by continuous professional development.

In recent years, for example, we introduced the curriculum as I mentioned before. To introduce it, hundreds of teachers were taken out of their classroom and then grouped into teams that went into schools to support teachers in becoming familiar with the curriculum and in implementing it. We did so because when we introduced a new curriculum 25 years ago many people said the curriculum failed.

It's like growing a little plant. You put it in the soil but if you don't water it, watch it and nurture it, it will fail to grow. So, to make curricular change, you have to do very extensive professional development with your teachers. And we've been doing that in a comprehensive way, so now I think we are just beginning.

We're not happy and if this discussion would happen with teachers in Ireland, I think many people would be critical and ask, “Are we doing enough?” But we have made quite considerable progress in ensuring that teaching becomes a continuum. And I suspect that in the future the Teaching Council will actually reach a point, which says continuous professional development is mandatory: to keep your licence as a teacher you will have to gain credits, so many credits every five years. I think that kind of thinking is beginning to take root.

Tauno Herranen – In Finland after a student has come through the basic education, he or she will go to upper secondary school – the sixth form in England might be the right word or senior high school in America – for three years, studying the same subjects for three more years.

Then at the age of 19 he or she gets a white cap and is called a student. You don't have the same system so it's a bit hard to describe.

Then he or she will try to get to university, and to become a teacher is a very hard job also in Finland because too many people send their application to the university to become a teacher. So, those who get in are really skilled people. They stay there for five or six years, first studying the theory of teaching, educational sciences. They can also take Music, specialise in Music or Physical Education or something like that.

And then he or she will have to spend a year in a training school, teaching kids supervised by an older teacher of the same area. That's how it goes.

And after that, he or she will have a master's degree and get a kind of a driving licence to become a teacher and go to a school where he or she will get a tutor to help, a colleague to help him or her in the early years.

But of course he's best learning when he's teaching the kids with others. And so he or she will become a good teacher. That's our system.

Joaquina Maeso – No caso de Espanha e da Comunidade de Extremadura, quando eu acabei, há vinte e nove anos, inicialmente a formação do professorado era de três anos, agora vai ser de quatro anos. Depois, os professores que quisessem podiam fazer algumas especialidades, embora fosse totalmente voluntário. Saíamos com uma especialidade, mas se queríamos aprender mais, éramos nós próprios que tínhamos de nos formar e pagar as aulas.

Mais tarde, a Junta de Extremadura criou muitos cursos para aperfeiçoar o professorado, sobretudo nas novas tecnologias e nas novas metodologias de trabalho. Mas para continuar estudos de forma a obter a licenciatura ou para aprender outras línguas é sempre o professor que, voluntariamente, deve procurar maneiras de conseguir ajuda e subsídios. Eu acho que na nossa profissão é necessário estar sempre actualizado

porque estamos sempre a mudar. As novas gerações de professores estão a fazer isso, continuam a estudar. Hoje, mais de 10% dos professores das escolas são licenciados.

Jorge Ferreira – Eu gostaria de saber se na vossa organização do trabalho escolar existe algum tipo de parceria com os pais para a definição e planificação das actividades das áreas curriculares e em que moldes funciona.

Uma participante – Em primeiro lugar, diria que foi extremamente gratificante ouvir a colega de Badajoz dizer que na sua escola a primeira língua estrangeira que os alunos estudam é o Português, não enquanto actividade extra-escolar ou extracurricular, mas sim dentro do currículo.

E a esse propósito perguntaria se isso foi uma decisão da escola, da cidade de Badajoz, por razões óbvias que têm a ver com a proximidade, ou se foi uma decisão da própria Junta de Extremadura. Isto porque, em Portugal, a disciplina que os alunos começam a estudar, nas Actividades de Enriquecimento Curricular, é o Inglês e não há opção.

Queria também perguntar ao colega da Irlanda se existe alguma investigação sobre a atribuição de serviço aos professores. Ou seja, o mesmo professor deve acompanhar o aluno do 1.º ao 6.º ou do 1.º ao 4.º ano, ou será preferível mudar de professor em cada dois anos? O que é que na Irlanda concluíram sobre esta questão?

Uma participante (Agrupamento de Escolas Dom Fernando) – Nos últimos anos tem havido uma preocupação dos docentes no sentido de envolver os encarregados de educação nas actividades da escola, quer nas actividades lúdicas, quer nas actividades relacionadas com a Matemática e com a Língua Portuguesa. No entanto, verificamos que há sempre um pequeno grupo de pais que não conseguimos agarrar, que não conseguimos trazer à escola. Esses pais estão ausentes nessas actividades, nas reuniões de turma e também nas reuniões de entrega de avaliações.

O que eu queria perguntar é se nos vossos países têm alguma fórmula especial para agarrar este tipo de pais, para que eles participem na educação, valorizem o trabalho dos seus filhos e, de certa forma, comecem a compreender melhor o trabalho dos professores e dos filhos dentro da sala de aula.

Ana Maria Bettencourt (Conselho Nacional de Educação) – Uma vez que à medida que se progride nos anos de escolaridade aparecem outros professores que ajudam o titular da turma ou que são especializados em determinadas áreas, como se desenvolve o trabalho colaborativo entre professores e como é feita a coordenação do mesmo?

Mostraram-nos o dia de escolaridade dos alunos, mas como é a jornada de trabalho dos professores? Distribui-se por que tarefas? Qual é o tempo para o trabalho colaborativo, para a formação, para o trabalho individual com os alunos?

Joaquina Maeso – A introdução da Língua Portuguesa no currículo é uma decisão da escola. Nós fizemos dois caminhos:

O primeiro caminho foi há seis anos quando tínhamos uma percentagem bastante alta de alunos lusodescendentes e solicitámos à embaixada portuguesa, através da Unidade de Programas Educativos (UPE) da nossa província, uma professora de Língua e Cultura Portuguesas de origem portuguesa, e tivemos uma resposta favorável. Essa professora dá aulas de Língua e Cultura Portuguesas desde o pré-escolar até ao 6.º ano de escolaridade.

O segundo foi quando a Junta de Extremadura nos deu a oportunidade de escolher entre a Língua Portuguesa e a Língua Francesa para Segunda Língua Estrangeira, no 3.º ciclo de Educação Primária. Então, a escola pensou que para os nossos alunos era muito mais interessante a aprendizagem da Língua Portuguesa, porque estávamos muito perto daqui, tínhamos muitos alunos lusodescendentes e também porque os nossos alunos quando vão trabalhar é o domínio da Língua Portuguesa que procuram. Então abordámos essa questão com os

professores e com os pais e decidimos solicitar a Língua Portuguesa como Segunda Língua Estrangeira.

Isto para dizer que a decisão da escola foi facilitada, primeiro pela Embaixada Portuguesa e depois pela Junta de Extremadura.

Tauno Herranen – From Finland I would like to answer the question about the parents. They can of course give their comments on the curriculum and extracurricular activities. They have the Parents/Teachers Association (PTA). They get the curriculum and they can read it and comment on it later. And of course this curriculum is then approved by the school board, and the school boards are chosen politically.

About the question of parents not coming to the meetings, I'd say we have a system where every teacher who gets a new class, a new group, has to phone the parents and ask them to come to school. Of course the student also has to be with them, and he or she is given a paper to be filled in at home.

And that's how we learn to know the parents better. We have a half-an-hour discussion between the teacher and the parents and the pupil is also there. That's the Finnish way.

Peadar Cremin – First of all, in Ireland every school must have a Parent Council with representation in the school board. The parents elect their representatives to the school board but they also have a Parent Council. Yet, Parent Councils are not encouraged by the teachers to make educational decisions, as in Denmark where the parents have to be consulted before the teacher decides the program to be taught. This is not legislated for in Ireland because teachers, as I said, have more power in that regard.

However, teachers must meet the parents regularly, because this is one of their salary agreements. And there is always time, a day now and again, to put aside for meetings with parents.

Somebody asked the question about the parents who never participate, and I think there is no magic solution in any country that I have been in. There are always those parents whom you cannot get. However, what we have done is home/school/community liaison. And this means that one teacher is dedicated fulltime, not having teaching duties for a year, to try to work closely with the parents. They must focus on the ones that never come to a meeting, that never get involved, that never support... These teachers may go to their homes – and parents don't particularly want to have a teacher coming to their homes – or they try to set up very novel activities like hairdressing classes or cookery classes, anything that gets these parents to come in. And even making that very big effort, I think there are still some parents who never get to see the school.

In many schools, especially in our disadvantaged areas, we now have a parents' room where there is always tea or coffee available. This is an attempt to make the point that parents are welcome to the school. So there is a very big effort to make a bridge to try to reach those parents, but I think there will always be parents who choose to leave it to the school and not to be involved.

And I'm not sure that you indeed have the right to force every parent. Although it is their responsibility, I'm not sure I know of any way I can make parents take it.

The other question that was asked was about coordination and who is responsible for the learning process. The mainstream class teacher is ultimately responsible for the learning of any child. So, the mainstream class teacher must liaise with a learning resource teacher or a learning support teacher, whether it's a therapist or a special needs assistant. They are the specialists but they take their instructions from and consult very closely with the mainstream class teacher.

With regard to tasks, somebody asked about the research in Ireland on teaching tasks. Maybe I should divide this into two, because if you are a teacher who gets a special allowance for the task, that task more or less

permanently remains your task, unless you decide to give it up or, as happens every four or five years, the principal will conduct a revue of the tasks within the school, and may decide to change.

It's like the Prime Minister with the Cabinet, the principal may decide, "I'm giving new responsibilities to you, I'm taking some of your responsibilities and giving them to this person but instead you must do these other tasks."

The reality is, the schools have the freedom, that is, ultimately the principal has the freedom to decide when to move teachers from one class to another.

Joaquina Maeso – Eu queria responder à colega sobre a participação dos pais na escola. Eu acho que é um problema generalizado. Normalmente, temos os conselhos escolares, temos a associação de pais e as relações são boas, mas os participantes são em número mínimo. O problema coloca-se quando queremos estar perto dos pais, quando fazemos reuniões e tudo isso. Na minha escola temos também, tal como na Irlanda, um dia por semana para que cada pai que o desejar possa falar com o professor tutor.

Para além disso, fazemos actividades lúdicas que sejam atractivas para eles, por exemplo, nas festas de Natal ou de Carnaval. É curioso porque os pais respondem melhor a este tipo de actividades. Vão para a festa e como depois há sempre um almoço ou algo semelhante, isso é uma oportunidade para estar perto deles.

Também organizamos uma Escola de Pais, o que para eles é um tema interessante. No final há sempre um pequeno-almoço ou um café, alguma coisa para aproveitar e falar com eles de problemas e não só. Temos a experiência de que isso dá bons resultados.

Fazemos, ainda, convívios festivos, sobretudo no final do ano. Este ano já tivemos um e eu acho que 90% dos pais estiveram lá. É claro que aproveitamos também para que os alunos façam jogos, pequenas

actividades de teatro, essas coisas a que os pais gostam de assistir, e no intervalo falamos de tudo. Mas é verdade que quando fazemos as reuniões de trimestre e de semestre temos a participação de, pelo menos, metade dos pais que deveriam estar.

Uma participante – Gostaria de saber se nas escolas destes países existem manuais escolares, se são obrigatórios, se os professores têm liberdade para os escolher e se há manuais específicos para cada uma das matérias curriculares.

Caso sejam obrigatórios, quem é que os escolhe, o conjunto dos professores de uma escola ou cada professor individualmente? E, por último, quem concebe os manuais? São professores, são profissionais de outras áreas próximas da educação?

Peadar Cremin – First of all, in Ireland there are maybe five commercial publishing companies who publish schoolbooks, and they do it at different times. Of course, they come out when there is a new program, a new curriculum... There will be a lot of new books at that time. Usually it takes two or three years for them to get organised to have new books.

The person who chooses the schoolbooks is the teacher. However, if you're choosing something like a Mathematics tests book, you have to consult with your colleagues, because you can't use one book for Grade 2 and there's a different book by a different publisher for Grade 3. So, there has to be school coherence about the series that is chosen. And that means that school will go with one publisher. After a number of years, sometimes teachers grow tired of a book and they want to change, but they must remember there is an expense for parents because in Ireland the parents pay for the schoolbooks. Poor parents get an allowance; they get a grant so that the books are paid for, for those who are poorer, which is, I think, maybe between a third and half of the parents, they have school books paid for them.

But you don't change too frequently because if you are a parent and you have three children, the book you bought for one of them will be useful for his sister, who will give it to her younger brother. So, if we don't make frequent changes, the books can go on from year to year. In the case of parents whose children have to pay for their books, very often schools organize their own school lending scheme: they take a grant and they buy a set of books and they give them on loan to the children and collect them at the end of the year, assuming they haven't been badly torn or damaged.

With regard to the other question you asked, "Who writes the books?", the answer is "Teachers, people like me". I have written textbooks for History, Geography, Science. Very often they're quite experienced teachers, sometimes the books are written by teams of teachers who make a proposal to a national company and if they like it, over a number of years you will write a textbook.

So, they're not written by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry must generally approve all books for use in schools but once the book is in conformity with the curriculum, the Ministry is usually happy with it.

Tauno Herranen – Again the Finnish system is kind of like Ireland's. We also have some five publishers, the teachers form groups and they write textbooks, they are always done by Finnish teachers. And often this material includes some tips for the teachers, some extra material and all that kind of thing, and the school pays for the books. They are always free for the pupils and often consist of a textbook and an exercise book. Pupils can always keep their exercise books because they are already full; they're no good for the next generation. But the textbooks may sometimes be collected away when they move to the second class.

I think the Finnish textbooks are very good and the teachers can choose them themselves. Not even I have a look at a book that they have chosen. They do it in groups, and of course they don't change every year,

they keep the same book for a few years, then leave it. Who wants to teach the same book more than five years? I wouldn't.

Joaquina Maeso – Na comunidade de Extremadura é o mesmo. Há várias editoras e são os professores do ciclo que escolhem os livros. Dentro de cada ciclo os livros têm de ser da mesma editora. Se os livros são fungíveis, podem mudar todos os anos. Os livros não fungíveis ficam, no mínimo, quatro anos, enquanto os cadernos de exercícios podem mudar.

A comunidade de Extremadura, através de bolsas de estudo, proporciona que os livros sejam gratuitos mas, infelizmente, ainda não o são para todos os alunos. Este ano vai começar um método diferente em que as escolas pedem as bolsas de estudos e são elas que, com o dinheiro que recebem, compram os livros para os alunos que têm necessidades económicas, mediante um sistema de empréstimo.

Na comunidade de Extremadura, as famílias numerosas, independentemente dos meios económicos, têm sempre os livros gratuitos, assim como quase todas as outras, mesmo que não solicitem estas bolsas, porque normalmente há alunos, famílias, que não pensam que vai chegar o início do curso e que é preciso comprar os livros e então não pedem as ajudas. Nestes casos, a escola faz um esforço e dá também a esses alunos. Não há nenhum aluno que não tenha livros, pelo menos na minha escola. Eu sei que nas outras escolas também é assim. Até ao ano passado, a Junta dava dinheiro aos pais para comprar os livros, mas havia pais que gastavam o dinheiro noutras coisas e no início do ano não tinham livros. Por isso, este ano, a Junta pensou que era melhor a escola comprar os livros e emprestá-los aos alunos.