

DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT ON PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES, 2000 AND PLANS FOR 2001

Local Programmes and Activities

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the Annual Report is to account to you the members representing the teachers and schools in the west Dublin area the work, programmes and activities of the education centre in the past year and to sketch out the proposed developments for the coming year. Copies are furnished to the In-Career Development, presented to those attending the AGM and available to teachers in the area and to other persons and institutions. It is a promotional document also.

The report firstly covers the local programmes and activities of the education centre followed by an account of the national programmes and projects. The management and administration of the education centre is dealt with next followed by an outline of the collaborative work with other centres and institutions. The situation regarding resources and accommodation, including the new education centre are covered next and finally the future work and developments planned and awaiting are sketched. Appendices added to bound copies of the report cover a diversity of the centre's activities and progress through the year.

INTRODUCTION

The year concluded, 2000, has been a significant year, a year of commencements and also completions:

- The building start of the new centre in mid-year;
- The setting up and launch of the new computer room;
- The dramatic rise in turnover due to the centre's project involvement;
- The completion of the centre's role in the EAO and the CSPE programmes.

This annual report, the director's tenth, will focus on these as well as report on the centre's on-going activities across a diverse range of activities and involvements.

NEW BUILDING

Previous reports have, in recent years in particular, reported on the pressure on all the centre's staff, administrative and professional because of the accommodation situation: split sites, temporary prefabricated offices, shared classrooms and a multi-use main office (for photocopying, library, reception and telephone, lamination and postage). Both the workers in and users of the centre will be thrilled with the new building that will come on stream by mid-year 2001. The notice of the AGM used a recent photograph of the building to give a glimpse of the immediate future.

The new centre will provide adequate accommodation for all staff in a pleasant working environment. Library users will have space and freedom to choose reference material. The IT facility will be self contained, spacious and newly equipped. Course participants will have comfortable facilities with up-to-date presentation in dedicated facilities and adequate parking facilities. Work stations will be available for software appraisal and internet use. Socialisation at coffee break time will be in gracious surroundings. Services (printing, binding, lamination) will be self contained. Management committees will have a meeting room. It will, moreover, be a pleasant and efficient meeting place for teachers in our area. The time scale for moving to the new building appears to be late March to Easter. It will be a timely reward to staff, users, management and national programme participants and tutors who have been patient and

understanding especially in recent years when programmes provided by the centre have greatly intensified. Photographic updates of progress have been posted onto the centre web site.

ICT ROOM

A significant addition to the work of the centre in 2000 was the ICT room. It was the result of co-operation between the VEC who provided the facility and the centre, who with PCs provided by Eircom and NCTE, that wired and equipped the room. The ICT Advisor, Fintan Keating, supervised the many aspects of getting the facility up and running with the support of the centre's ICT Committee. The Youthreach trainees had morning access to the room while the centre's courses took place in the afternoons, evenings and at weekends. Setting up this facility has been an experience that has proved valuable in planning for the centre's new facility in Clondalkin as well as being the starting point of many innovative courses itself.

TURNOVER MATTERS

When the director reported the activities on this centre's first year as a full time centre and the meeting received the report of the then treasurer for 1990/1 [reports were on a school year basis at that time] the amount of money going through the centre's accounts was just over £25,136. The accounts for 2000 will show £2,842,320 going through the centre's accounts. Such figures indicate a massive change for this centre: staffing, range and level of activities, the source of the activities, the changing role of the centre within its educational community and nationally, the responsibilities of committee and director. Staffing has gone from one person, the director, ten years ago to 85 during last year. This comprised an administrative staff of 10 and seconded staff of 75. The range of activities now include various national programmes delivered on behalf of the DES, the management of two national programmes, the Primary Curriculum Support Programme [PCSP] and *Walk Tall* Substance Misuse project [SMPP] along with the centre's local programme of in-service activities. The national programmes managed by the centre have a national brief with trainers located throughout the nation. The centre now has an ICT advisor to organise ICT in-service and support the schools in the area. This indicates the significant state investment in curriculum support. This responsibility has changed the profile and role of the centre within its educational community and increased the responsibilities of the management committee and staff. The two figures, then, indicate in summary form an exponential growth in centre activity.

COMPLETIONS

Given the changes in centre role, project administration to a significant extent, these various initiatives do not continue indefinitely. Several projects have come to an end and their completion and staff departure stages have been reached. The Civic, Social and Political Education [CSPE] concluded last summer and the seconded staff moved on: to schools, to the NCCA, to third level institutions and special projects. The Employee Assistance Scheme was unified under one management structure in Cork and the four personnel transferred to it while remaining in post in the Dublin area. Staff on programmes resigned to take up positions elsewhere, as was the case with the SMPP national co-ordinator and trainers with the PCSP. The programmes have provided teachers with opportunities for professional and career development unavailable in the Irish education system a decade ago. It is invaluable to have as many committed professionals work with and in education centres and appreciate their role, real and potential, in the system.

LOCAL PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

Whole School Programmes

The whole school planning work of the centre has diminished significantly due to the establishment of the national School Development Planning Initiatives for primary and post-primary schools. These projects work directly with schools from their headquarters in Drumcondra and Marino respectively. The director has worked with some five schools in a more tailored way than heretofore. This centre has continued its focus on whole staffs participating in computer courses and the majority of ICT courses offered are schools and whole staff based. The centre's

Totals (311)

12921 7198 4250 1378

5604 900 19330

The ICDU provided £6,752 towards the support of the education centre's Summer course costs.

There were seven ICT courses also with 73 participants. Details of these are with the general course statistics.

Autumn Programme

We repeated the very successful programme for 26 newly appointed learning support teachers. This is an induction course focussing on facilitating those just appointed to "get started" and concentrated on basic elements of the functions, role and tasks of the learning support teacher with a large element of hands-on aspects: assessing, recording, profiling, etc. and in the process of the ten weeks linking course work with school work and collegial support. It included an inter-school visitation dimension. This course was planned and implemented by Mary Coyne, Bernie Tobin and Eithne O'Shea.

A music course in collaboration with FUAIM with John Buckley was successfully offered to 35 teachers in Knocklyon.. Jill Molloy's Autumn themes (Hallowe'en, Winter and Christmas) featured in the two Art & Craft Saturday workshops at which 24 and 27 teachers attended. The Centre supported a workshop for 17 teachers in Clondalkin on art and multiculturalism organised by the Clondalkin Community Arts group. There was a national tutor training course for four centre's water safety tutors, organised by the Irish Woater Safety Association in Athlone in December.

At post-primary level we offered a programme to 19 teachers in Civic, Social and Political Education. Management committee members' expertise in this area facilitated the centre's response to the need in this new programme area: Conor Harrison, Stephen McCarthy and Máirín Wilson.

Teacher Support Groups

Four principals' support groups continued to meet [ceann dóibh do phríomh oidí i nGaelscoileanna] under the direction of Mícheál Mullarkey, on a regular basis. The programme is typically based on administrative and organisation issues, decided in advance and covers such topics as developing policy on various matters. One meeting was a combined one for the four groups: Michael Doyle, Senior Attendance Officer with Dublin Corporation spoke on the *Education (Welfare) Act 2000*. Members from the groups form part of the core organising committee of the Primary Principals Network and the founding committee of the Irish Primary Principals' Network. The organisational work of Mícheál for these groups adds significantly to their success.

The Write-a-Book project continued with robust strength; the PCSP English in-service has highlighted process approaches to writing and a large increase is expected this coming year. The numbers in 2000 were book entries from pupils 47 classes in 14 schools. Terry Hassett-Henry read and commented on each of 140 award books at the presentation in the Lucan Spa Hotel before an audience of parents, teachers and principals in April. There were two presentation sessions on the day so great were the number of winners. The majority of centre staff moves to the hotel to ensure a well organised occasion for the children. The organisational work in the centre is essential:- logging in the books, creating the pupil database, dispersing the books for assessment and collating the returns - informing award pupils with the details of the ceremony; all the while not losing any of these treasures!

The NRI is supporting the Write-a-Book project for this school year and this has facilitated the appointment of a co-ordinator, John O'Mahony. The current project is extending to post-primary schools, links up with local libraries and will explore the use of ICTs in the project and put strategies in place to deal with a significant rise in the number of participants.

ICT Activities

The centre has concluded a full year with the services of Fintan Keating, the ICT Advisor. At the outset, it must be proclaimed that this centre could never have organised, administered and developed courses, advised, supported and trained tutors, supported schools and SIP projects, set up a sophisticated, networked ICT Room, disseminated information and newsletters and supported the centre itself - and NCTE in this area - without an advisor. The growth profile in this sphere of the centre's activities has been staggering and a testament to the role of an advisor generally and to our ICT Advisor in particular.

The early part of the year was spent catching up on a backlog of courses (mostly school based) deferred by the tutor-DES dispute over terms and conditions. The meagre allocation of £28,000 for courses in 2000 was quickly allocated and utilised in the Spring, mostly on phase 1 and 2 courses; with some monies transferred from other under subscribed courses a Summer and short Autumn course programme was organised. An increasing proportion of the courses, Networking, Internet and Troubleshooting were organised in the centre's ICT Room. Word in the Autumn that a supplementary grant would be available by year's end meant that a further 54 courses were organised for the Autumn on the premise that the money would be available. Administrative assistance by Angie Grogan since the Autumn has meant that organising and record keeping has speeded up. Extra activity also adds to centre administration: reporting, accounting, etc. The supplementary amount bid for was just over £100,000 of courses. When tallies are completed it will emerge that upward towards £82,000 of ICT courses have been provided during the year. To keep this momentum up further training of tutors took place; investment in hardware for trouble shooting courses was undertaken and software was installed on the networked machines. Larry Egan has been a key person in two activities. To ensure that all schools were kept informed of course places and locations various forms of communication were used - two issues of an innovative newsletter to schools, telephone support and increasingly, as schools log on, e-mails to each schools' ICT co-ordinator or principal.

Support for schools is the second dimension to the ICT Advisor's work. Though there is never enough time the Advisor has been available to work with and support schools. This has been done also through support meetings for school ICT co-ordinators, ICT trainers and a support group for teachers interested in specific aspects of ICTs.

The ICT room is networked with profiles for various users, including the YouthReach trainees. There has been little downtime experienced. The state of the facility has been a great preparation for setting up the new facility in Clondalkin this year. The quality of networking has been facilitated by donations by 3COM of a hub facility and top of the range network cards. NCTE provided funding for a data projector, network and facility maintenance and for the development of the centre's web site. As tutors for this area are involved with INTEL's Teach to the Future project a data projector and zip drive was received.

The centre also has benefited considerably. The centre's web site has been developed. It was temporarily on the *eircom* site; we now have our own domain name and site. While the data collection for the site was a collaborative effort the tasks related to site design and installation were the ICT Advisor's. Many other services were rendered: advice on purchases, anti-virus software and support to projects.

It was with pleasure that the ICT Advisor's contract was extended. We await announcements regarding the future of NCTE and the continuation of the advisory service. There are several items in need of attention in any continuation: the Dublin West ICT advisor serves one of the largest catchment areas in the country; this disproportionate distribution needs attention; the planning context within which he works is continuously uncertain: the stream of resources starts small and unexpectedly, towards the end of the year is significantly augmented. Meetings called by NCTE are often at very short notice - to the detriment of the ICT advisor's planned schedule. ICT Advisors' collective support needs to be addressed by the association of education centres.

Mícheál Mullarkey has also been of great support to the centre and to projects (SMPP and PCSP) in various ways: advice, support, installations and focused skills training for staff on all sites.

NATIONAL PROGRAMMES

National In-service programmes are organised nationally for the department in a variety of areas primary and post-primary. Education centres, in the main, are the agencies in which the projects are located and administered. Centres are normally where the cluster in-service sessions take place. Three such projects were administered from the centre in 2000: Civic, Social and Political Education [CSPE], the Substance Misuse Prevention Programme for Primary Schools [SMPP] and the Primary Curriculum Support Programme [PCSP]. The centre facilitates also the in-service activities of national programmes administered elsewhere:- Leaving Certificate Physics and Chemistry, Junior Cycle Maths and the School Planning Initiatives for primary and post-primary schools .

Civic, Social & Political Education

The team of five regional support members led the national in-service programme through visits to schools to provide on-site support to the staff involved in the course; putting together newsletters, materials and modules (sometimes in support with other organisations) and disseminating good practice in various forums: university Higher Diploma Courses, conferences at home and abroad and in co-operative ventures with the Northern Ireland and British curriculum councils. The project concluded with a special conference in Limerick in September. The purpose of the Conference was to celebrate the successes of the team and acknowledge the various groups of teacher who supported them through the period of the project. Participants in various committees and from the pilot phase participated also. Kathleen Lynch from UCD was the keynote speaker with a response from the chief inspector. The education centre, and Yvonne Fitzgibbon in particular, provided the administrative and logistical backup for the project and for the Conference.

Substance Misuse Prevention Programme - Primary Schools

The pilot project was upgraded to a full programme under the ICDU in January 1999. As a pilot it responded to the needs identified by the Drugs Task Force in local areas. The programme is situated within the Social, Personal & Health Education [SPHE] curriculum area being developed by the NCCA. The impact of the extension of the project is that training and materials will be available widely and to all areas.

The work of this team, under its national co-ordinator Bernie Collins and from November, John Williams, involved providing one-day whole school in-service seminars to 1,616 primary schools nationally bringing the total number of schools who have voluntarily participated to 2,787. This day familiarises them with the materials and classroom strategies. The team also provide back-up support to these schools, were involved in providing twenty-seven 27-hour evening courses (with 520 teachers) and four Summer courses and in working on the materials and tutor manuals. As the vast majority of national schools have now participated voluntarily in the programme there is a shift in focus for the remaining term of the programme: school support in the designated Drug Task Force are schools and evening courses. The education centre network supported the work of the seven person team in each regional area informing schools, organising promotions meetings, administering participating schools, arranging venues and recording essential data. This centre looked after materials, equipment, communications and finances. Different staff members have dealt with this during the course of the year: Carmel Finlay, Angie Grogan and latterly Karen Maher.

Primary Curriculum Support Programme

The PCSP team, administrative, co-ordinators and trainers settled into a massive in-service programme for all primary teachers working with and in all education centres in the network. The

smoothness with which this major initiative has started up is a testament to the efforts of the central team of Áine Lawlor and Pádraig Ó Duibhir. They were joined in September by Mary McDonald and Anne O'Sullivan. They were supported by an administrative team of two for the earlier part of the year, Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Fiona Flaherty (who resigned in August) and augmented during the year with other team members, Mary Brady, Mary King and Carol Hemingway, administrator, as the workload rose in response to the increased number of trainers, seminars, subjects and accounts. Carmel Finlay took charge of accounts in June. A total of five staff provided the administrative backup by year's end. Being in a separate location to the education centre the administration of the project has been more self-contained than previous projects hosted by the centre. This will be even more so when the centre transfers to Clondalkin. In comparison to previous projects, and projects located in other education centres this involves the co-ordinator staff in more administrative responsibility than co-ordinators of other projects. The centre wishes to acknowledge this work by the co-ordinators and staff of PCSP.

The management structures for this hosted project comprises several layers. An Implementation Group representative of all the education partners agrees the major decisions. A sub-committee, the Technical Working Group, comprising partners with implementation responsibilities examine specific aspects for report to the Implementation Group. A Steering Group makes the immediate decisions and day-to-day responsibility is that of the national co-ordinators. The education centre's role is one of administrative support and financial responsibility. Specific financial guidelines, congruent with the ICDU financial guidelines and within the terms of the PCSP budget, have been agreed. The centre is also represented on selection panels.

The telephones (mobile and land) for trainers had been on a corporate basis for the first year of the project. As the number of bills mounted the management of these accounts at centre level was greater than its capacity to deal with. After careful consideration, following some delays and difficulties in transferring and closing telephone accounts it was decided to allocate each bill to individual trainers, an agreed amount to be recouped by them on a monthly basis as part of their expense and to transfer the responsibility to the PCSP office. This process is still in progress.

PCSP - Local Responsibilities

The description of the work of this centre for the national schools in its area illustrates the nature of the PCSP work in each regional area and is replicated in each education centre nation-wide. We organised, with the trainers for Gaeilge, English and Visual Arts allocated by the PCSP office, for each of these clusters: arrange dates, venues, meals, equipment and resources required. Organising means taking account of schools' availability, in clusters of approximately 25 and selecting schools on the one campus or in the same parish on the same dates. Venue and subsistence is arranged within specific budget limits and within a reasonable distance of their schools. A pilot project in primary science is running parallel to this but involving a small proportion of schools on a voluntary basis. Photocopying and stationery is done for each seminar. Bills are paid for venues, travel and incidentals for recoupment from the PCSP office. Statistics are collated from the trainers' returns to the centre and these accompany the financial returns. This task has been headed up by Yvonne Fitzgibbon and her experience and knowledge of the schools in the area is invaluable. There are 136 schools serviced by the centre and this comprises 93 clusters. In all, Yvonne organised for a total number of 4850 teacher inset sessions.

Leaving Certificate Physics and Chemistry / Junior cycle Maths

These programme are administered by the Limerick and Carrick-on-Shannon education centres and are similar in structure to other post-primary projects: regional trainers to provide seminars for post-primary subject teachers and follow-up visits to schools; the local organisation is provided by the centres. The work of these groups continued through the year.

Employee Assistance Scheme

The Employee Assistance Scheme was established as a pilot scheme in 1998 to provide a confidential support, counselling and referral service to teachers in the Dublin area for primary

and post-primary teachers on a wide variety of problems and difficulties arising both within and outside the workplace. The service, with four EAOs, is located in All Hallows, Drumcondra and Clonkeen Road, Blackrock.

The EAOs have a considerable workload of teacher clients who contact them by telephone or meet them to deal with the issues presented. They reported meeting teachers on both professional/school related matters as well as personal concerns. They enthusiastically responded also to opportunities to attend union branch and local management meetings to outline the service; they regularly visit schools, on the occasion of full-staff meetings to do the same. The service provided to schools is tailored to match the staff requirements.

An evaluation towards the end of the first phase took place early in 2000. The success of the programme was endorsed and the report recommended a unified management structure for the three pilot areas, Dublin, Cork and the west. This was implemented in September and Cork education centre became the nominated employer for the whole scheme. The four EAOs remained in their Dublin offices while management the responsibility transferred to Cork. The centre is delighted to have been associated with the scheme and looks forward to its extension nationally at a future date. We wished the Dublin officers well.

OTHER PROGRAMMES, MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

The Primary Principals Network [PPN] bases its conferences on the growing strength and number of primary principals support groups attached to education centres. The Network's sixth conference was organised by Dublin based principals and the education centre continued to provide administrative and secretarial support to the organising committee. The centre's Administrator, Deirdre Cleary, took up this task and through her knowledge and experience of conference administration was able to create a centre structure with the centre's staff to provide the back-up for this significant organisation task: dissemination and taking of bookings, arranging of supporting materials, databases, etc.

The programme details and professional aspects of the conference are in the hands of the organising committee and success has been the result of the complementary work of both centre and the committee's work. The size of the task for the centre was a test of the structures Deirdre put in place to achieve the smooth operation of the administration while at the same time ensuring that all the other aspects of the centre's work [local programme, national projects and pilots] ran as well. Success in 1998 and 1999 resulted in the PPN asking this centre to provide the administration back-up again for 2000 and for some preliminary work for the establishment of the Irish Primary Principals Network [IPPN]. The organising committee recorded their appreciation for the administrator's work on their behalf. A full-time organiser was appointed to the IPPN late in the year.

Management Committee

The management committee is central to the direction of the centre's work and receives specific recognition in section 37 of the 1998 *Education Act*. Management committee responsibilities include the operation of the centre generally, the local programmes and national projects hosted by it. Its engagement in strategic planning provides direction for all staff within the centre. Three co-options took place shortly after the AGM: Mary Byrne from Killinarden CS [on secondment to CICE], Therese Hegarty from Scoil an Chroí Ró-Naofa, Junior, Killinarden and David Irwin who was nominated by the Institute of Technology, Clondalkin.

Two events contributed significantly the workload of management committee this year: employment matters and complexity of the administrative functions for the wide range of projects and responsibilities in the centre. The regular meetings of the finance sub-committee, the ICT sub-committee's meetings and several personnel sub-committee meetings to deal with matters between full committee meetings have facilitated this increased responsibility.

Hosted projects normally have steering committees that deal with, for their specific project, the detailed direction of and decisions about their activities, including budget and personnel. The EAS was an exception and an internal centre sub-committee had been established in 1999 to deal with personnel matters arising. Its unsatisfactory management structure identified by this centre was, interestingly, identified in the EAS evaluation recommendation. In this regard the centre has joined the Small Firms Association.

PCSP on establishment was promised a management steering committee. A project group met occasionally and was concerned primarily with set up matters. In the view of the management committee it did not fulfil the expected steering group objectives. Centre staff's workload increased in support of PCSP. The requested increases in staffing necessary for year two of PCSP had to take account of the levels of responsibility involved, the workloads and equity among staff in two sites and the workload falling to the centre itself. High levels of frustration were therefore experienced as management committee found its time increasingly devoted to PCSP related matters in its employer role and the increased administrative complexity - and less to educational matters.

At a meeting with ICDU in June it was agreed that a steering group to manage PCSP, and similar to other projects, would be put in place. It was also agreed that similar rates would operate for staff salaries and conditions in each site. While the management committee was committed to a regrading for the centre's administrator achieving this within current budget was not possible without ICDU financial support. The ICDU maintained that in the forthcoming fundamental review of centres that the question of staffing, grading and conditions would be addressed. They were unwilling to accede to an additional, secretarial subvention for regrading purposes. Retrospective payments requested for increased workloads and added responsibility in PCSP and centre did not succeed. The other exceptional circumstances, split sites and workload distribution between sites was acknowledged.

Following the centre review process under Dermot Rochford that took place in 1999 the main recommendations were acted on. The main proposal was for the clarification of the role and function of the management committee, director and staff members and secondly, proposals to increase the staffing allocation/resources to reduce the workloads being experienced. The sub-committee structures in place took on the terms of reference for Staffing as well as Finance, in ICTs generally and the sub-committee established for the EAS was continued *pro tem*. These sub-committees have distributed the management committee workload; committee members generally give more time than heretofore but at alternative times to the main committee meeting. It has meant that specific management responsibilities are addressed in depth with proposals for full management committee members. It has, as was pointed out by management committee members at the June ICDU meeting, added to voluntary members workloads and usually for reasons unconnected with the local responsibility of the centre.

The second main area, staffing, has also been addressed. An accounts clerk, Carmel Finlay, was appointed to look after the accounts workload arising from the national projects administered by the centre. Main office assistance was employed, Lorraine O'Brien in the early part of the year and Anne Almack in the latter part. Specific, part-time dedicated administrative assistance, Angie Grogan, was appointed for the ICT Advisor's administration responsibilities. With adequate staffing, including an administrator, appointed to the PCSP office little carry over work fell to the main centre staff and administrator. Reviews of workloads and work schedules have resulted in re-organisation of how the centre deals with evening and weekend courses and the administration of the Write-a-Book project among others. The committee was able to ensure some recompense for this - equity between staff on both sites but unable to address administrator upgrading.

Management sub-committees

The finance committee was set up in late 1998 to oversee implementation and overseeing compliance with the financial guidelines of the DES and recommendations of the IAU. It also has responsibility for examination and preparation a financial report to committee on the centre's monthly and quarterly accounts. This involves adopting a budget for the year and examining and

monitoring expenditures against this. Discussion of and recommendations on salary and conditions has become part of the brief also. It meets on a regular basis in advance of and reports to management committee meetings. It agreed the modified financial procedures for PCSP. It recommended the payment procedures where all payments are signed in the centre and with the accompanying documentation. Membership comprises M Murphy (convenor) J O'Mahony (treasurer), C Harrison (committee) D Herron (director) and D Cleary (Administrator).

The second sub-committee is that dealing with ICTs. Its agenda comprised all matters to do with the ICT and it works with the ICT Advisor who has been in post since September 1999:

- the ICT room on site (equipping, network, maintenance)
- ICT courses and programmes, including exploration of ECDL
- centre planning for ICTs and for the new centre in Clondalkin,
- reviewing centre ICT equipment
- advising on the centre's web-site.

Along with the ICT Advisor, Fintan Keating, were committee members E Guilmartin [convenor] and J O'Mahony, the director and co-opted member, M Mullarkey. The current centre computer room is up and running, the upgrading of the library software package and its installation has taken place. Detailed planning for the IT room in the new building has taken place: equipment, furnishing and new hardware. A web-site has been designed by F Keating, the centre's web-master. This site includes information, a booking facility, the SMPP project information. The centre has acquired its own domain - dwec. The task of setting the centre up as an ECDL course provider was critically examined and in light of the existing resources and plant it was decided to postpone this until the transfer to Clondalkin had taken place.

A third, smaller, sub-committee dealt with matters arising from the management committee's role as employer. It continued to deal with its remit in regard to the employee assistance scheme and later, personnel aspects leading up to the organisation within the centre and with staff with PCSP. This sub-committee comprised M Ní Chéilleachair and S McCarthy supported by the chair, Frances Leahy.

Steering committees

The various steering committees (listed at the start of the bound report) are for the detailed direction of the work of the project or pilot for which they are responsible. They are representative in composition and the director represents the centre on them. ICDU informs the centre of membership and chair. Steering Groups now exist for all centre national programmes.

At each meeting the work of a project is reviewed and plans for each stage of the work is discussed and decided. This will also include the direction of the work of the support team seconded to the project. Each Steering Group has responsibility for its budget and for seconded personnel. Where their decisions have implications for the centre's administrative and financial responsibilities the appropriate minute of the steering meeting forms the basis of the expenditures. The finance committee monitor while management committee note these expenditures mindful that final responsibility is through the director (as accounting officer) to management committee.

The benefits are that all the detailed work rests with these steering committees rather than with the management committee as had been experienced with the EAS and to an extent with PCSP until its Steering Group was constituted in June 2000. Special thanks is due to the various national co-ordinators for their work in this regard: Áine Lawlor and Pádraig Ó Duibhir (PCSP), Bernie Collins and John Williams (SMPP) and to the members of the CSPE team who shared this responsibility in the first half of 2000.

Administration & Personnel

From the foregoing, the administrative workload devolving to the centre's administrative service is substantial. The level of co-ordination required to deal with the workload has risen significantly in the last year. There needs to be an orderly direction of the work, the use and allocation of the centre's resources and the efficient delivery of the various services to projects, local programmes, teachers as customers of the centre, etc. The flow of monies, services and equipment inward and out needs timely attention, recording, billing and payment. Monitoring of budgeted amounts depends on timely information.

Achieving this required structures and personnel. Regular staff meetings were used regularly early in the year. This allowed the various administrative demands, from the variety of centre activities, to be converted to work schedules, co-ordination of printing, posting, storage and room-use and obtaining casual assistance at times of peak demand. The task of co-ordinating this falls to Deirdre Cleary who fulfils this juggling task with calm aplomb. Yvonne Fitzgibbon, Carmel Finley, Angie Grogan and Karen Maher support this through their work on specific areas of project and programme support. Lorraine O'Brien and Anne Alamack provided additional support during the year. Additional help was always available, when needed, from Paddy Hyland, Ray Dunne and James Doyle. The centre was host to PLC and adult students on placements also: Grace Loughran,

Our bookkeeper, Marie Fitzmaurice, worked with Deirdre on accounts on two days per week. This is to facilitate the production of financial information on all aspects of accounts to Deirdre and to the finance committee.

The planning for the new centre, the expectation of dedicated resources and the nature of the new work environment have given all staff who work in the centre hope for improved communications, space, proximity of equipment, storage and an absence of clutter. This hope has enabled the to endure the constraints imposed on the existing facility: communications, constant setting up of shared rooms for centre courses and moving between buildings and, of course, toilets.

Administration, then, is about these, often, forgotten details and people. For the moment it means enduring these constraints. It deserves as much, if not more, recognition than what has been reported on earlier in the earlier sections. Their work facilitates the smooth delivery of the many centre services to teachers, schools and projects. Their contribution deserves celebration - of their commitment, care and ever friendly dedication. Mile buíochas.

Conferences and courses

Three members of committee attended the Marino organised Ethos conference in March in Saggart. The director was selected for an *Arion* trip to Santiago, Spain on teachers' centres and inservice education organised for the EU. Bernie Tobin attended the Reading Association conference in Drumcondra. The director attended an ATECI organised conference by IBEC on personnel management in August. John O'Mahony, the Write-a-Book coordinator attended the two day seminar, under the aegis of the National Reading Initiative, in Blackrock in November. Fintan Keating attended the BETT conference in London with other ICT Advisors. The director attended the ATECI conference and AGM in Tralee in November.

CALLABORATION

Education centre network

This education centre is but one of twenty-one full-time centres, three of which serve the Dublin area. One strategic task for them is the strengthening of a network of centres. One outcome is developing and sharing expertise throughout the system. With the delivery of national in-service programmes, administered through a host centre, the network facilitates efficient and effective provision for all schools and teachers. This strategic resource is the prime purpose of the DES investment in centres. The primary curriculum training initiative PCSP will make extensive use of the network in its work with all primary teachers.

The main means of developing the network is the forum of full-time directors meetings where collaborative planning and support in programming and delivery takes place. This centre participates fully in this process. The second means is participation in the affairs of the association of teachers and education centres [ATECI]. The association facilitates participation of management committees and centre staffs also. The range of issues confronting management committees has led to the use of cluster meetings for management committee personnel also. The main task for the association in the future is the planned review of education centres. With the association, this centre has shared in the drawing up of protocols in having national projects located in education centres.

The relocation of the centre to Clondalkin during 2001 has implications for the schools and areas served for the PCSP and by the ICT Advisor. At the moment and for these two initiatives schools close to Clondalkin are served by Blackrock centre. This will be a matter for discussion in the coming year.

Review of Education Centres

Centres are still awaiting the issuing of the revised *Guidelines*. A consequence of the revised guidelines will be changes to each centre's constitution. But, even before the issuing has taken place a "fundamental review of the education centre network" was announced by the DES before the Summer. This may have been planned as part of or an outcome of the Cromien report on the Department's operations, systems and staffing needs. At the time of writing the review has yet to commence.

The ATECI has also conducted, with the assistance of an external consultant a systematic examination of the staffing needs of centres. The draft report points up much of what was uncovered in our exercise: the move from a voluntary managed centre to one also necessary to the DES' schools and curriculum planning efforts has been swift; but much of the effort, time, finances, resources, responsibility, etc must be addressed and resolved at local level by the voluntary committee and its staff. The draft will propose the "strategic network" in place be adequately resourced for its responsibilities to the DES with adequate staffing.

Institutions: Slippery Rock University

The increased difficulties in placement for Slippery Rock University students last year were due in most part to the staffing situation in many schools in this area and because an increasing number of schools have had student teachers already in June/September and in March also from the Colleges of Education. With each change of school placement went the search for suitable accommodation with host families near that school. In the past this was an easy task: same schools, same host families; it didn't take a lot of time each year. The increasingly demanding nature of the enterprise occurred just as the administrative demands on the centre increased. It was decided to withdraw from the scheme as we felt unable to fulfil the expectations of our hosts in increasing challenging circumstances.

Department of Education & Science: ICDU

The assistance of the In-Career Development Unit [ICDU] is essential to the education centre's work. They ensure that flows of monies and other resources are sent in time to enable us meet our and national programme commitments. The good relationships work at various levels and the support, consideration

and attention of Ciarán Rohan, Grace Rourty, Philip Marron, Noel Doyle and Joseph O'Connor are genuinely appreciated. Ruby Morrow, Emer Egan, Paddy Bennis, and Vincent Wrynn provided the vital support at project policy and management levels that are essential to the centre achieving its remit. We wish every success to Ruby Morrow, Grace Rourty and Philip Marron in their new responsibilities.

The post-primary administration section based in Athlone supported the centre in its administrative role in relation to the employee assistance service and Ray Jordan and * were supportive and attentive in handling the minutiae arising from this charge

Universities and Colleges

The education centre has relationships with several universities. The centre is intrinsically linked to TCD's In service Division in the provision of diploma courses:- to teachers in educational management, the ICT diploma and to masters students in this area. The director has been involved in the BEd programme in TCD and Maynooth's Higher Diploma in Educational Administration. These centre links with university courses also add focus to its library and resource acquisitions.

The University of Limerick Guidance and Counselling diploma commenced during the year. Sixteen students commenced the course in late September. Management committee has supported this development with UL for the Dublin area. These programmes fit with existing programmes and projects in the centre. The course was formally launched by Professor Kieran Byrne,

Building Co-operation

There are five users of the Old Vocational School on Old Blessington Road. Co-ordination of the work, use and care of the resource takes place through House Meetings under the VEC Adult Education Officer for the area, Mr Michael McLoughlin. Pressures are experienced as the building reaches full capacity and resources (rooms, car-parking, etc) are stretched. The meetings facilitate smooth co-operation between the users. Particular strain on parking space means we have to plan afternoon activities with care. The main building is still due an examination from a Health and Safety perspective. The electricity supply to the building has had a major upgrade. We are grateful to our colleagues for this co-operation and the sharing and pooling of resources that takes place. CYS personnel under John Gregg and Greg Tierney are always helpful in different tasks; Ger Harris very co-operative and helpful. The accommodation for computing and for social occasions are made available generously by Dermot McNamee and Paula O'Hanlon in Youthreach.

Publications

The centre was involved in the preliminary work leading to the National Safety Council's publication on water, road and fire safety *Be Safe* distributed to all national schools. The initial work took place under Michael Murphy.

BUILDINGS & RESOURCES – FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

New Building

A few items need to be added to the text at the commencement of the report. The transfer date will be, in all likelihood, late April or early May. Storage space is slight and transfer will mean a drastic cull of paper and documents for transfer. The original plans for the centre were cut back slightly to achieve a significant saving and keep the building project under the £1m target. The cutbacks will become evident in some cases: number of car parking places reduced to 35; reduced landscaping; vinyl rather than ceramic tiles; no use of partitions among the main ones. The entrance to the centre will be by way of the current main Institute entrance with a spur road to connect the centre to that gate. The Belgard Road entrance is part of the Institute's plan for the future. We will, therefore, be well and prominently placed when this entrance is introduced in a few year's time. Landscaping will be put in place some weeks after we move. Agreements are being worked out with the Institute to cover security and ground maintenance.

Equipment

The existing resources (lamination, binding) are in constant demand. The opening of the computer room added to the resources available to users and the provision of courses. An asset register is maintained of all equipment both that in the centre and that with trainers working regionally. That equipment returned by departing trainers goes, in the first instance to other project programme needs, the centre's requirement or for disposal according to a procedure adopted by the centre and approved by the ICDU.

Library

The listing of the centre's library collection is facilitated by computerisation. The holdings reflect the centre's designated areas of interest, course work, language and the guidance and counselling course. The National Reading Initiative provided the centre with a £5,000 library grant and a significant stock in the area of language has been acquired. The stock at the moment is just over 1264 texts and the number of teachers registered at the moment is 246.

Future Preparation

The centre staff and management had an initial planning day in November with Maria O'Reilly and with follow ups envisaged around the time of transfer to the new centre. The main focus of the planning session is looking towards a future in the new site. Several key areas were identified for special attention in the coming months: structures to maintain communications, forward planning both for the move itself and for the various ceremonies linked to the move: official opening, identifying ourselves in our new location, and attracting teachers to the centre. In light of this move to Clondalkin the sessions were to develop opportunities for looking at various roles and responsibilities in the joint challenge facing committee and staff.

EU "Roots & Wings" Project (2001 - 2004)

Great interest was expressed in participating in this Comenius Network project. The centre agreed to participate and was part of the advance application for November 2000. The consortium was informed that it was invited to submit a full application for March 1st next. It will be September before approval is announced. The initial, planning meeting for this project is scheduled for February 1-2 2001 in Vjile, Denmark. The consortium consists of 7 institutions in 7 countries: Wales, Denmark, Sweden, Czech republic, Italy and Austria. The proposal is on two levels:

at level 1 there are the co-ordinating, supporting institutions (LEAs, University/colleges of education and, ourselves, one of two education centres) who identify, inform, recruit and co-ordinate local primary & post-primary schools to participate at the second level (see below). Once the schools are engaged, to support, advise, provide training for them and to help organise, for all participants, multi-national conferences/training and dissemination workshops. The centre's involvement is supported by Leargas (initial, planning stage) and by the Vjile teachers' centre. They will be the fund holder for the whole project.

At level 2 schools will be matched among the 7 regions to set about the tasks. The themes agreed between the matched schools are implicit in the title: roots - the local culture, environment, society, etc appropriate to the students' ages. There will be a strong ICT element: e-mail and web site. The wings element is the European dimension, the sharing and learning derived from this and the contact between teachers at conferences and in planning and execution of the project. The schools' involvement is supported through the local EU *Comenius* fund holder: for Ireland, Leargas. The outcomes for the schools are also at the pedagogical level as well as content level.

Primary Sports Initiative

This initiative was announced by the minister at the INTO Congress at Easter. It will come under the PCSP as part of the PE and SPHE programmes. The posts are for co-ordinators who will have several tasks, mainly integrating sports activities with primary PE activities in schools. The appointments will take place in 2001.

Annual plan 2001 Programmes – Primary	Time , Sessions	Season	Personnel
Art & Craft	Saturdays, x 3	Spring, Autumn	Jill Molloy
VA Workshops x 10	A'noons/evenings	Spring, Autumn	Clondalkin Comm Arts
Music	Evenings, x 4 x 2	Spring, Autumn	With <i>FUAIM</i>
L'ing Support series	Afternoons x 10	Spring	B Tobin M Coyne EO'Shea
L'ing Support, induction	Afternoons x 10	Autumn	B Tobin M Coyne EO'Shea
Eng: Oral Read Writing	A'noons/Eves x10	Spring, Autumn	E Morley + team
Whole School planning	Var options x 5	All year	Centre personnel
Primary Science	Evenings x 4 x 2	Spring, Autumn	Science trainers, ITT
Primary Drama /capacity	W/ends	Spring, Autumn	C O'Sullivan + TCD team
Induction for NQTs	Evenings x 6	Autumn	G Edge, T Hegarty
Multicultural Edn/Racism	Var options x 10	Spring, Autumn	B Cluskey, M Tanham, M Brennan
Write-a-Book	A'noons,Evenings	Spring	J O'Mahony
Water Safety	Var options	Spring, Autumn	M Murphy, IWSAssn
Principals: management	Var. options x 4	Spring, Autumn	M Mullarkey, E Doyle
PROGRAMMES: P- PRIMARY			
CSPE	Evenings x 5	Spring, Autumn	CSPE team
Subject sessions	Evenings x 10	Autumn	Subj Assns
Induction for NQTs	Evenings x 6	Autumn	
PROGRAMMES – COMMON			
Behaviour management	Var options x 5	Spring, Autumn	T Clinton, T Hegarty
Counselling Approaches	Afternoons/evens	Spring, Autumn	T Hegarty M NiChéilleachair
Bullying whole school app	Evenings X 4	Autumn	D Fitzgerald
Special Needs	Evenings x 8	Spring/Autumn	various
Support Groups			
Primary principals	Afternoons 4 x 10	Spring, Autumn	Micheál Mullarkey
Special Learning Needs	A'noons, Eves x 6	Spring, Autumn	M Wilson, M O'Brien, M Byrne

The plan outlined is drawn up, approved by committee and submitted to the ICDU for funding. This gives centres sufficient notice to implement a year's work in a methodical manner.

Last year's plan was not completed fully. Programmes were advertised but due to insufficient take up they did not proceed. The Public Lecture series was discontinued as attendance has been disappointing in the previous two years. There were difficulties organising induction courses for newly appointed teachers: almost all appointments in the area were temporary, not qualified or not filled in time to participate in a course. There was some uncertainty in regard to primary programmes that covered areas that were to be covered in the programme to accompany the revised curriculum.

The package was costed at just over £28,000 which the centre usually spent on its local programmes in recent years. This funding does not include Summer courses which are approved and part-funded differently. Neither does this include NCTE computer courses which for recognition, approval and funding have different procedures again.

Appendices' outline

Much vital information is provided in the appendices that are added to bound reports for dissemination after adoption at the AGM. Included are:

- all posters disseminated during 2000
- course / activities and attendance statistics
- table of centre growth and development
- names of management groups for each project
- current constitution
- asset register

FOCAL SCOIR

The report on centre activities above, when compared to those of previous years, shows an increase in the activities by whatever measure is adopted. The smooth operation of what has now become a small organisation depends on a clear sense of purpose and direction and on good relationships within and between the various elements. This centre is fortunate in having such good relationships which leads to efficiency and effectiveness in the service it provides to its teachers and schools, and in particular to the project teams whom they service. A committed management committee gives them the essential support and affirmation and they show a high level of interest in the centre's operation. There is also a dedicated administrative team serving this centre - I have highlighted their effort and contributions above - and it to them that my final word of thanks goes.