

DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT ON PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES, 1999 AND PLANS FOR 2000

1. Introduction

1.1 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. Few in the area can hope to know of all the work that the centre is engaged in and it is to fill that gap that care is taken to cover all our activities and achievements. Since much of the work is unseen except to the immediate users or beneficiaries this account allows for the revelation of the work of the many people whose work may well go unseen and unmentioned.

1.2 Several **important developments** occurred through the year and while they will receive attention in the appropriate paragraphs below it is well to highlight them here. The Primary Curriculum Support Programme [PCSP] was set up during the past year, is hosted by this centre and has over 40 seconded teachers working for it on a regional basis. The whole School Planning Development Initiatives [SPDI] at primary and post-primary levels were established and Leaving Certificate Physics and Chemistry is receiving particular inservice attention. The new *Guidelines for the Operation of Education Centres*, which have been agreed, are due for dissemination in 2000. In spite of expectations this time last year in relation to the new building little progress other than signing the contract with the builder occurred in 1999. The best date that we have is a commencement in late February 2000. The arrangements for a computer room in co-operation with YouthReach and Co Dublin VEC on the Clondalkin site are completed. Finally, the long-awaited appointment of ICT Advisors in each teachers' centre was achieved in September 1999.

1.3 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.

2. Programmes and Activities

The draft revised *Guidelines* highlight the centrality of the local programme work of education centres: providing training, development and support for schools, teachers and the educational community in their local catchment area and well as national programmes, a resource facility and meeting place.

2.1 LOCAL PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

2.1.1 **WHOLE SCHOOL PROGRAMMES**

The **whole school planning** work of the centre had less take-up this year compared to previous years: eight at primary level and three at post-primary involving 121 teachers at first and 150 at second level. Schools have had competing demands for their attention this year:- computer training, the revisions to the primary curriculum along with whole-school evaluation pilots at both levels and engagement with various other initiatives from relationships and sexuality education to civic, social and political education, from health promoting to substance misuse preventing schools. These initiatives differ in content and outcome but require, of a staff, developing the necessary structures and behaviours, similar staff, school and community discussion and decision making processes. The recently established School Planning Initiatives

for both levels allows for a focused service for schools. These whole school processes are encouraged and developed with and by involvement with these programmes and projects. So, many projects are enabling staffs develop many of the skills introduced to staffs by the centre's whole school planning programme.

This centre has championed the focusing on whole staffs participating in computer courses. Despite the hiatus of the earlier part of the year (when trainers were unavailable) the centre used the National Centre for Technology in Education [NCTE] funding to continue its **whole school computer courses** which had been in operation since 1994. In 1997 we offered 15 such courses. In 1998, with the additional resources and the momentum created by the establishment of NCTE the number of whole school computer courses rose to 27 involving 451 teachers. In 1999 the number only reached 21 courses/schools for 306 participants. The centre's computer tutors have been augmented by two tutors' courses.

The centre's **whole school behaviour** programme, developed from the work the teacher counsellors/support teachers in local schools and the Circle Time initiative under Bernie Collins was facilitated by Tony Clinton and was provided to one school during the year. Again, the work of other programmes, eg, the Substance Misuse/ Abuse Prevention Programmes [SMPP and SAPP], the presence of teacher counsellors/support teachers in primary schools in the area and the support of area partnerships has reduced demand for this programme.

2.1.2 SPRING PROGRAMME

Most of the centre's programme work is advertised on the termly poster (copies in the appendix) distributed to all Dublin's schools and arising from this the following courses were successfully delivered. Enid Connaghan provided a **music course** for 13 teachers of middle and senior classes that included use of pitched and unpitched instruments for improvisational music. The information programme, with the help of the Irish Learning Support Association, on **student learning difficulties** attracted a significant attendance for its four-part programme. The **Art & Craft** Saturday workshop, building on Jill Molloy's previous courses attracted 20 teachers. In collaboration with the Midwest English Teachers Association [META], we organised a multi-weekend programme in the use of **ICTs in English** the post-primary sector using the facilities of Castleknock Community College. The second part to the programme for newly appointed **learning support teachers** covered in greater depth specific areas completed in the first part: psychologist's role, reading, writing process and spelling. The ICT course on Maths Teaching in collaboration with the Irish Mathematics Teachers Association was postponed to later.

2.1.3 SUMMER PROGRAMME

Summer course programmes are usually more ambitious than the other times as the added incentive of departmental recognition of the courses exists. This Summer was also the second in which we successfully offered August courses. The accompanying table sets out all the details of last year's (non-computer) programme. The strategy of working in **collaboration** with other organisations (the National Safety Council for swimming courses, Teachers Adopting Counselling Approaches for the counselling courses, the Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland for the course on interculturalism and the local principals' support groups for the focus of this year's) has added to the range, quality and attractiveness of the courses.

Summer Courses 1999

| Course (number) | Location | Income £ | Fees £ | Rent £ | Material £ | Food £ | P&P £ | Total £ | Cost £ |
|--------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-----------|----------|------------|-----------|
|--------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-----------|----------|------------|-----------|

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| W'Safety (50) | Stewarts H | 2000 | 750 | 870 | 100 | 1000 | 221 | 2941 | 941 |
| W'Safety (30) | Stewarts H | 1100 | 500 | 870 | 60 | 720 | 221 | 2251 | 1100 |
| Art/craft (36) | Arus Cronain | 1440 | 600 | 500 | 360 | 720 | 221 | 2401 | 961 |
| Counselling (22) | Arus Cronain | 880 | 500 | 70 | 176 | 440 | 221 | 1712 | 832 |
| BiLinguals (14) | ASTI Hse | 280 | 500 | 500 | 70 | 280 | 221 | 1571 | 1291 |
| Totals (152) | | 5700 | 2750 | 3115 | 766 | 3040 | 1105 | 10879 | 5125 |

The ICDU provides £5,000 towards the support of the education centre's Summer course costs. The total costs exceeded income by £5,125. Following receipt of the ICDU monies the net cost to the education centre was £125. This deficit was small compared to that of 1998 at just over £1,600.

The continuous dilemma for education centre management committees is balancing three factors in organising for the Summer course programme: providing (i) a wide range of courses for teachers in our area, (ii) at a competitive cost and (iii) keeping personnel and other overheads low. This year, based on the experience of previous years, the centre focused on programmes that would fill or answered a specific demand, where costs were manageable and were not in competition with other providers. The INTO locally organised course for principals with up to 100 places led the centre not to proceed with its course for principals.

2.1.4 AUTUMN PROGRAMME

We repeated the very successful new programme for 26 **newly appointed remedial / learning support teachers**. This was conceived as 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 initiated, planned and implemented by Mary Coyne and Maura Sweeney (who have worked with the education centre since 1993). The follow-up, planned for the subsequent term will be highly skills based- on reading, writing, spelling and numeracy along with briefing from personnel from different agencies.

The **induction course for newly qualified teachers** [NQTs] at both levels is in its third year and was co-ordinated by Frances Leahy. This programme was oversubscribed - without advertising! Fifty-six teachers participated. Its strategy is to focus on the off-site as well as on-site aspects; the orientation provided for mentors in each of the participating schools allows for the programme to be continuous for each NQT. Newly created posts in schools with specific responsibility for induction increased the participation of senior staff members.

The autumn **Lecture series** focused on action research strategies in schools, classes and the school community and had presentations from principals, teachers, teacher aides and parents. They reported on the problem-solving strategies in use by these participants and the outcomes for their work. Attendance was significantly lower than in 1997 and 1998. Evaluation of the benefits of this activity and in locations other than the education centre will be done before this aspect of the centre's work is continued.

Enid Connaghan's **music** course was for 13 junior class teachers this term and had a significant focus on classroom instruments and permitted teachers to become familiar with commercially available improvisational music kits. The centre purchased a set of musical

instruments for this type of programme Jill Molloy's Autumn themes (Hallowe'en, Winter and Christmas) featured in the two **Art & Craft** Saturday workshops at which 48 teachers attended. Two courses for principals in **selection and interviewing** did not proceed as bookings were very low. A **primary science** course, modelled on that of the INTO and the Dún Laoire Institute of Art, Design and Technology, attracted so few participants that it did not proceed.

At post-primary level we offered programmes in conjunction with the EHB [stress management in school and Social, Personal & Health Education] and the Maths Teachers Association [computers and the teaching of mathematics]. The numbers were insufficient to run these programmes.

2.1.5 TEACHER SUPPORT GROUPS

Two existing **principals' support groups** continued to meet and two new groups [ceann dóibh do phríomh oidí i nGaelscoileanna], under the direction of Mícheál Mullarkey, on a regular basis. A target for the year was to respond to principals in small (<8 teacher) schools. We were unable to find consensus among a small group (anyway) of a day and time and postponed it. The programme is typically based on administrative and organisation issues, decided in advance and covers such topics as developing policy on various matters, eg, IT resources and planning, financial records and reporting, school planning for the revised curriculum, etc. 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 **computer users' group** meets alternatively in Presentation primary school Terenure and St Brigid's NS Castleknock. It facilitates learning, demonstrations, support, trouble-shooting and curriculum initiatives. Our thanks is due to the schools for access to this group and to the loyalty of a core number of teachers for sustaining this vital, cutting edge work.

The **Write-a-Book project** continues with robust strength; many teachers and schools continue each year and bring new staff members into the process. Each year sees some additional schools enter. The numbers this year were 692 book entries from 820 pupils, from 47 classes in 14 schools. Terry Hassett-Henry read and commented on each of 80 award books at the presentation on in the Lucan Spa Hotel before an audience of parents, teachers, principals and the local news media. There were two presentation sessions on the day so great were the number of winners. The majority of centre staff move 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! Appreciation goes to Yvonne who heads this administrative venture and the support of all hands at the critical moments.

2.1.6 EDUCATION CENTRE USERS

The centre was the venue for the 50-hour **Substance Abuse Prevention Programme** [SAPP] organised by the Marino office for post-primary teachers. The Travellers support team use the centre for meetings. The **Ringo** project organised by Blackrock education centre under Éanna Ní Lamhna, conducted one in-service seminar. For post-primary teachers a **music** education seminar was organised and with the Midwest English Teachers Association we conducted a course for **English** teachers in integrating computing and their subject. Carroll Education **exhibitions** for teachers of science and mathematics were organised late in the year.

2.2 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 are administered from this centre: 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:- Relationships and Sexuality Education [RSE], Transition Year [TY], Leaving Certificate English, Leaving Certificate Physics and Chemistry and the School Planning Initiatives for primary and post-primary schools .

2.2.1 CIVIC, SOCIAL & POLITICAL EDUCATION [CSPE]

This Junior Cycle programme was examined for the first time in 1999. The team of six regional support members under National Co-ordinator Stephen McCarthy, lead the national in-service programme through specific topics (eg the 39 day seminars on Action Project and assessment for 1,040 participants), in 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. This school year (September 1999-2000) is the final one for the project.

The education centre provides the administrative and logistical backup for the project under a steering committee representative of the project team, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], the ICDU, the DES and the centre. Ms Eileen Gray has replaced Ms Máirín Wilson who was appointed to the Learning Support Team in the Church of Ireland College of Education. Mr Stephen McCarthy was appointed as Education Officer at Senior Cycle level in the NCCA.

2.2.2 SUBSTANCE MISUSE PREVENTION PROGRAMME - PRIMARY SCHOOLS [SMPP]

The pilot project was upgraded to a full programme under the ICDU in January 1999. It is funded with £1m and is to last for two years. As a pilot it responded to the needs identified by the Drugs Task Force in local areas. It concentrated its pilot work in designated areas in Dublin and Cork and used the experience to develop teacher materials that have been printed. 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, involved providing one-day whole school in-service seminars to 953 primary schools and 7,541 teachers in all areas familiarising them with the materials and classroom strategies; providing back-up support to these schools [to 338 teachers, mainly in "circle time"], working with the home school liaison teacher, involvement in providing sixteen 30 hour evening courses (with 288 teachers) and four Summer courses and working on the materials - the *Walk Tall* materials. Three of the team are Dublin based with one each in Cork, Sligo and Waterford.

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.

2.2.3 NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION [NCTE]

This organisation, located in Dublin City University, under Jerome Morrissey is charged with implementing the many aspects of *Schools IT 2000*. Some of the objectives of this document/policy are delivered/achieved through education centres:-

- the Teaching Skills Initiative [TSI]: providing a variety of in-service training, in various strands to all teachers;
- a *Schools IT 2000* base to support schools on a regional basis through its ICT adviser in ICT planning, technical advice on it equipment purchases;
- support for the Schools Integration Project [SIP] in the catchment area
- equipping an IT teaching facility in the centre.

All of these aspirations were put in place in the year under review.

The **TSI** aspect was the visible dimension of the NCTE-education centres programme in 1999. Centres, INTO and others organised multiple courses for primary and post-primary teachers during the year. The number of courses offered in the early part of the year was handicapped by the unavailability of trainers in the first half of the year. Many schools (34 in all) and teachers (up to 100) waited until Autumn until matters were resolved and courses recommenced. The organisational and co-ordination of this work fell to the newly appointed ICT advisor, Mr Fintan Keating. The course completion details are as follows:

| Course | Number | Teachers |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Phase 1 | 13 | 174 |
| 3Phase 2 | 2 | 34 |
| SIP | 6 | 98 |
| Tutor Training | 2 | 40 |
| Totals | 23 | 346 |

With the support of the Co Dublin VEC and YouthReach in the Old Blessington Road building a **computer teaching facility** is now available in afternoons and evenings. The 15 PC facility with printers and scanner has been networked and organisational arrangements made for various user profiles put in place. Consideration of arrangements for a software library accessible to teachers has been deferred to 2000. The welcome support of 3Com and Canon will mean various enhancements coming on stream in 2000: upgraded network cards, scanner, digital camera and A3 printer.

The **ICT Advisor**, Mr Fintan Keating commenced work in September. The role is primarily a learning support one and the service of the advisor is available to all primary and post-primary schools in the catchment area. The main tasks were related to the computer courses and the ICT facility. The backlog of courses has been tackled (see above), additional trainers inducted and the ICT facility is ready for course work. One observation is worth making: the centre could not go back to its previous personnel situation and continue the quality and quantity of work in this area.

Partnership with a **third level institution** will be a responsibility of the ICT adviser. This will emerge fully and later in 2000 when the move to the new site in the Clondalkin Institute of Technology will take place. The centre has close links, also, with the In-service Division of TCD's School of Education. This unit has developed, with the Blackrock education centre, a post-graduate diploma in computers in education. The next nearest college, NUI Maynooth, has a similar diploma and is currently working closely with Kilkenny education centre. The appraisal of the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) programme will receive critical attention by the centre in 2000.

Along with schools, the education centre will have to develop a **centre ICT plan** and in anticipation of this task has established an ICT [sub-] committee. The tasks under this heading are exciting and their further development will be an exciting period for the education centre. The managing of this development will be a significant challenge to the centre; resources for it will be equally challenging. It is developmental journey whose direction is onward but at more detailed level is uncertain.

2.2.4 RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION [RSE]

This programme is administered from Drumcondra education centre. At this stage, the focus of this programme has been refocused on schools - to School Policy Teams in the main and the organisation demanded of this centre is greatly reduced. It is a more demand-led programme which means organising for groups who have identified themselves to the RSE office which then requests a locally organised event: one policy meeting where the school policy team representative of teachers, BOM and parents and two seminars for principals. This does not undervalue the initiative but indicates that it has moved to the next stage; and also that it competes with many other demands for schools' attention - some of which have been identified above in the computer section!

2.2.5 LEAVING CERTIFICATE ENGLISH [L/C English]

This project is administered through the Laois education centre and comprises an in-service support team who will organise their work along lines similar to that of CSPE (above): cluster in-service sessions; school visits; materials development and general support. It did not commence its work until December 1998. The project's work in this area during the year has been generally autonomous of the education centre.

2.2.6 TRANSITION YEAR

This project is in its final year. A TY support person works with schools in the area, organises in-service for the TY co-ordinators, visits school TY teams and works with the other TY support team. The new cycle has a smaller support team with less intensive use of the centre either as a venue for meetings or a based for the trainer. The project's work in this area during the year has been generally autonomous of the education centre.

2.2.7 MODERN LANGUAGES [PRIMARY] PROJECT

This project, based in Kildare Education Centre, commenced in the latter part of 1998. Several schools in the area are participating. The project makes use of centre accommodation for its work in this area.

2.2.8 PRIMARY CURRICULUM SUPPORT PROGRAMME [PCSP]

The long awaited revised curriculum for primary schools was completed and printed during the year. Its dissemination and accompanying in-service programme would be the largest in-service support programme organised under the ICDU. The budget would reflect the number of teachers involved (21,000), the number of curriculum areas (11), the number of education centres organising activities (30) and the number of personnel involved in the delivery of in-service (50+). It would span several years.

The management structures for this hosted project comprise 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 Project Management 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.

There were several dimensions to this centre's involvement in hosting the project and being responsible for administrative arrangements: firstly, accommod-ating and equipping the **PCSP office**. It was located off-site, in 7, St Brigid's Road, Clondalkin, as there was no space in the centre's temporary location in the Old Vocational school on Old Blessington Road. In consultation with the National Co-ordinator, Ms Áine Lawlor, the DES Building Unit and the ICDU the offices were leased and set up with sufficient capacity for the most modern communications with regional trainers in the field and the network of 20+ education centres working on the project.

The centre was involved with the **selection** of the assistant national co-ordinator (the centre's chair for most of 1999, Mr Pádraig Ó Duibhir) and the 50 regional trainers. The trainers (all serving national teachers) are seconded to work on the programme under the direction of the national co-ordinator. Their induction and training in June and September was under the national co-ordinators assisted by the inspectorate, ICDU and education officers of the NCCA.

Administrative procedures for a host of matters relating to the PCSP office, trainers and the education centres were put in place in consultation with the Programme Management Group, the co-ordinators, staff in the centre and PCSP office, the association of education centres and directors and the ICDU. This complex labyrinth of varying administrative responsibilities covers such matters as purchases, insurance, payments of various types, record and accounts keeping, communications, participant statistics, evaluations, timetables, etc. Flexibility with these varying responsibilities is critical. Already the number of trainers is set to increase in 2000, additional administrative staff to be appointed and various roles to be further clarified.

Some matters are located in the **Department** and agreed with the partners in education represented on the Implementation Group: the dissemination of the curriculum documents, the printing and dissemination of curriculum newsletters, the advertising of positions and payment, terms and conditions of the seconded trainers.

2.2.9 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.

The Dublin area is divided into three areas one for each centre, Drumcondra, Blackrock and Dublin West. Drumcondra administers the PCSP for 2,425 primary teachers, Blackrock for 1,950 and Dublin West for 1,975 teachers. Our catchment area is grouped into 87 clusters of 25 teachers in Dublin postal areas 10, 12, 15, 20, 22, 24 and the west county. We organise, with the trainers 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 choosing 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. 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.

2.2.10 LEAVING CERTIFICATE PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY

This programme is administered by the Limerick education centre and is similar in structure to the English project: regional trainers to provide seminars for post-primary schools and

the local organisation by the centre to support the work of the regional trainers. The main work of this group is scheduled to commence in 2000. The planning for it, at local level, commenced in December 1999.

2.3 PILOT PROJECTS

2.3.1 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SCHEME [EAOs]

The Employee Assistance Scheme was established as a pilot scheme, under a Monitoring Group comprising unions, management and department in 1998 to provide a **confidential** support, counselling and referral service to teachers in the Dublin city and county area and for primary and post-primary teachers on a wide variety of problems and difficulties arising both within and outside the workplace. Its aim is to assist teachers with personal and/or work related problems through evaluating and assisting them in the difficulty and structuring ways to alleviate or resolve the difficulty and provide, where appropriate, follow-up. There is no charge for this confidential service. The service, with four EAOs, is located in All Hallows, Drumcondra and Clonkeen Road, Blackrock. They deal with the full city and report 116 contacts originating in north, 67 in south and 69 in west Dublin areas.

The EAOs have a considerable workload of teacher clients who contact them by telephone [100 cases] or meet them [147 cases] to deal with the issues presented. They report meeting teachers on both professional/school related matters [51 cases] as well as personal concerns [96 cases]. 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 [51 such presentations]. The service provided to schools is tailored to match the staff requirements.

There was a resignation from the service in February last. Due to administrative difficulties at a level above the education centre the vacant post was not advertised until June nor filled until August. The resignation came at the end of a lengthy period of illness and matters preceding the resignation were contested in various forums including the Labour Court. The Labour Court recommended, having regard to the unfortunate circumstances in which the claimant's employment came to an end that some gesture by way of severance terms be offered by the centre. This, with the approval of the DES, was done.

The reports of the service (it also operates in Cork and Galway/Mayo) to the Monitoring Group indicate evidence of success. It looks forward to an evaluation that will take place in early 2000. It is anticipated that it will prove the success of the project and indicate the outlines of a permanent employee assistance scheme for all teachers.

One aspect that arose from this project is the Management Committee's role of employer. Even though this pilot project is a result of an agreement between unions, management and the department the centre management committee was the employer. Arising from their reflections on the situations that arose from this and other projects the education centre management committee (teacher members elected annually at AGM) are reluctant to be an employer for others' selected appointees. They found themselves responsible but without authority.

2.4 OTHER PROGRAMMES

The **Primary Principals Network [PPN]** bases its conferences on the growing strength and number of primary principals support groups attached to education centres. The early conferences were organised by Cork principals. This was the Network's second conference organised by Dublin based principals and it is their aspiration to organise the PPN conference for a number of years before passing on the responsibility of organisation to another location.

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 is 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 1999 resulted in the PPN asking this centre to provide the administration back-up for 2000 and for some preliminary work for the establishment of the Irish Primary Principals Network [IPPN].

3. Management and Administration

3.1 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*. [Section 37 of the act was brought into operation on 5 February 1999.] Management committee's clear view of its responsibilities, including those for local programmes, national projects and pilots for the benefit of teachers and schools facilitates the day-to-day management and administration of the centre. Its engagement in strategic planning provides this sense of direction for all within the centre.

Two events increased 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. One outcome was an increase in the number of meetings of the full committee from the annual average of nine to twelve; a doubling of the finance sub-committee meetings; a doubling of the ICT sub-committee's meetings to deal with matters related to the ICT facility, planning and the uncertainty due to the unavailability of trainers; and several personnel sub-committee meetings to review matters between full committee meetings.

The agenda of the meetings is concerned with regular reports and decisions relating to the centre's local programmes and reports on the national programmes (CSPE, SMPP, and NCTE). All hosted projects except the Employee Assistance Scheme have steering committees that deal with the detailed direction on and decisions about their activities. An internal sub-committee was established, therefore, to deal with personnel matters arising from the employee assistance scheme. The agreement to host the Primary Curriculum Support Programme increased the centre staff's workload, especially in its initial stages, and the increases in staffing for it had to be agreed within the ICPU parameters and allocated in the most efficient and effective manner possible. High levels of frustration were therefore experienced as management committee found its time increasingly devoted to matters of its employer role and the increased administrative complexity and less to educational matters.

External and legal advice was obtained to guide management committee on its role and the appropriate decisions. This process threw up for them the need for greater clarity of its role, the roles of the hosted programme's personnel, that of the department and the role of staff in serving the diverse demands on the centre given the resources that it had. Arising from this clarification would come a blueprint that would facilitate the allocation of time, personnel and resources in a manner commensurate with its responsibilities. This allocation would include also management committee time and personnel.

A strategic review was commenced, aided by Mr Dermot Rochfort, an organisational consultant. A further sub-committee meeting seven times collaborated on this review task. They examined the changing context of education centres and the workloads of committee, director and staff were analysed. The various demands of the different national projects was tabulated in light of what were the role and functions of their project management teams, co-ordinators, regional trainers and that of the centre's staff. The budgetary situation of the centre, projected into 2000 and tentatively for 2001 was identified. Two draft outcomes arose from the deliberations of management committee on the review data presented to them: proposals for the clarification of the role and function of the management committee, director and staff members and proposals to increase the staffing allocation/resources to reduce the workloads being experienced. This outcome has provided the management committee with a way forward that must be taken stage by stage. It is to be complemented this coming year with an examination of the professional development requirements in the catchment area bearing in mind the nature of the area we serve - its preponderance of areas of disadvantage.

An outline of the professional development requirements analysis has been agreed: one to work with principals' groups on this task and another to bring together representative groups of teachers, at both levels, to facilitate the task. The plan for 2000 outlined at the end of the document is a repeat of that of 1999 and will be updated in light of the emerging data.

With the increasing levels of demand on committee meeting time arising from information and computer technologies [ICTs] and from the financial budgeting, monitoring and reporting separate dedicated **sub-committees** continue their work commenced in 1998. [see below]

3.2 MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEES

The **finance** [sub-] **committee** was set up by committee in September 1998. It had a dual remit: (1) to examine and prepare a financial report to committee on the centre's monthly and quarterly accounts prepared by the accountant, Mr Eddie Dowling; (2) and to review the guidelines of the IAU and make recommendations for their implementation to each committee meeting. By April they had submitted proposals on all matters identified by the Internal Audit Unit and committee reported to the department by May 1999 on the compliance issues. Discussion and recommendations of salary matters has become part of their brief also. They meet on a regular basis in advance of committee meetings. Membership comprises M Murphy (convenor) J O'Mahony (treasurer), S McCarthy (committee) D Herron (director) and D Cleary (Administrator).

The second sub-committee is that dealing with **ICTs**. It has a larger initial agenda comprising all matters to do with the ICT and works with the ICT Advisor who has been in post since September 1999:

- ☐ the ICT room on site (set up, equipping, maintenance)
- ☐ ICT courses and programmes
- ☐ external relations with other institutions
- ☐ centre planning for ICTs,
- ☐ reviewing centre ICT equipment
- ☐ briefing for web-site
- ☐ the IT element of the architect's brief for the new building, and
- ☐ the Y2K issue.

Along with committee members (E Guilfoyle [convenor] and J O'Mahony) were the director, and co-opted member M Mullarkey. The ICT Advisor, Fintan Keating joined the committee and attended meetings as soon as he was nominated. The computer room is on target, Y2K progress reports submitted to the department and the upgrading of the library software package in hand.

A third, smaller, sub-committee dealt with matters arising from the management committee's role as direct **role of employer**. It continued to deal with its remit in regard to the employee assistance scheme. This sub-committee comprised the chair, P Ó Duibhir, vice-chair F Leahy and D Herron. Where appropriate, legal advice has been obtained and acted on.

3.3 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. ICDO informs the centre of membership and chair.

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. 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) and committee as his employer.

The benefits are that much of the detailed work rests with these steering committees rather than with the management committee.

3.4 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, including project representation were used regularly early in the year. In the latter part of the year and with the increase of projects hosted by the centre staff meetings included only staff working in the centre. 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 and Carmel Finley support also along with their specific areas in project support. They were supported in the centre's responsibilities during the year by Angie Grogan, Sharon McCormick and Nuala Clarke. . Additional support was always available, when needed, from Paddy Hyland and Philip Farrell.

Our **bookkeeper**, Marie Fitzmaurice, worked with Deirdre on accounts on two day per week. The increase to two days occurred after the Summer to take account of the additional workload. This facilitated the production of information on all aspects of accounts to Deirdre and to the finance committee to facilitate monitoring of accounts and drawing down project monies from ICDO in a timely manner.

The education centre's level of activities puts pressure on its **communication** infrastructure. The situation seven years ago was one telephone line; from 1992 to 1994 the centre managed with two lines; in 1995 we moved to four lines and in 1996, when CSPE came to the centre, we upgraded equipment to have six lines and in the last two years we have had to add three additional lines. The additional lines are stand alone lines and add efficiency for specific projects

and e-mail. For instance, bookings for the centre's computer courses use one dedicated line, PPN bookings another and they also facilitate outgoing calls thus taking pressure of the centre's main lines. However, the existing system for the six lines is not adequate for the centre's needs. It is hoped that the new education centre will have a telephone system adequate to the significant needs now present. The current position does, we are aware, try the patience of teachers and institutions trying to contact the centre, especially at the three peak times when the centre's poster is sent to schools.

Having one centre office put **great strains** on both Carmel and Yvonne. This was aggravated in the latter part of the year with the increase in workloads arising from the PCSP. It was during this latter period the Angie Grogan helped out to a considerable extent. This office has the switchboard for the main telephone lines; the users of the library (also in this office) have to be dealt with here; this is the photocopying, equipment storage and posting room. It is to this room also that teachers come to book for courses, to have material laminated or booklets bound and for many general inquiries.

Administration, then, is about these, often, forgotten details and people. It deserves as much, if not more, recognition that what has been reported on earlier. This 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. Míle buíochas.

3.5 CENTRE EVALUATION

This centre was due an evaluation in 1999. The first part consisted of the financial audit section. The latter part - that covering management, operations and programmes has not taken place yet. The centre ICDU inspector, Mr Paddy O'Dwyer transferred to the National Psychological Service [NEPS] and was replaced later in the year by Ms Ruby Morrow.

The centre's financial system received attention in 1998. Their report was issued in 1999. The Unit's task was to ensure that the financial systems put in place by management committee and their monitoring of the system were adequately robust to ensure absolute confidence. The audit team examined all the centre's systems under the broad headings. The final report came to management committee, the ICDU and the Comptroller and Auditor General.

As reported above under sub-committees the management committee finance committee completed the process of implementing the recommended practices.

3.6 REVENUE

The centre as an employer deducts according to the appropriate schedules both PAYE and PRSI on direct employees and remits the amounts deducted regularly to the Revenue Commissioners. The centre deducts both PAYE and PRSI from all teachers, tutors, facilitators and lecturers teaching [on] the centre's courses

In a draft circular sent to all centres the above position will apply to all centres.

4. Collaboration

4.1 EDUCATION CENTRE NETWORK

This education centre is but one of twenty full-time centres, three of which serve the Dublin area. There are up to nine part-time centres also. One strategic task for them is the strengthening of a network of centres. The purposes for developing the network are various. The foundations of this network go back to the beginnings of centres in the 1970s and have become more important as time goes by. One purpose is the support that a network brings in

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. Organisations such as the NCTE recognise the strategic importance of a network for its work at local level. Universities are another example of using centre network as a strategic mechanism of reaching teachers. It is anticipated the primary curriculum training initiative will make extensive use of the network its planning also.

The main means of developing the network is the forum of **full-time directors** meetings where collaborative planning may take place and where support in programming and delivery may take 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. In 1999 the association commenced cluster meetings of directors. The range of issues confronting management committees has led to the use of cluster meetings for management committee personnel also. The association hopes through this two year pilot programme of meetings to appraise management personnel of impending changes and provide a discussion platform for them.

A consequence of the revised guidelines will be changes to each centre's constitution. At the moment the *Guidelines* are being examined in the department and will be issued formally as a circular letter. Following that centres begin the process of constitution change. As an aid to centres the association has contracted for a model constitution to be drawn up, inclusive of the terms of the circular, for the use of each centre at their 2001 AGMs

With the association, this centre has shared in the drawing up of **protocols** in having national projects located in education centres. The diversity of contracts for trainers on different projects in different centres has been taken up by the teachers unions.

4.2 INSTITUTIONS

The centre had 15 young student teachers, with their supervisors Dr Jack Burtch and Dr Tom Kandl, from **Slippery Rock University** this Autumn. As before, we are grateful to the schools who accommodate them for their teaching practice in November and early December: the Sts Colmcilles in Knocklyon, the Bishops Shanahan and Galvin NSs, Presentation Primary Terenure the South Dublin Project Schools and for the first time this year, Scoil Íde and Scoil Áine in Clondalkin, Sacred Heart, Sruleen and St Attracta's, Meadowbrook - all at primary level; St MacDara's CC and Ballinteer CS and for the first time this year, Templeogue College at second level. The centre has been happy to facilitate this programme initiated by Mr Jerry Cronin, retired Co Dublin CEO. However, the difficulties experienced this year illustrate the positions in many schools. There was a drop in placements in schools because of the number of untrained teachers and because so many schools have had students teachers already in June/September and due in March from the Colleges of Education.

4.3 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & SCIENCE

The assistance of the In-Career Development Unit [ICDU] is the education centre's standby in all aspects of its work: replying to queries and clarifying matters that arise continuously. They also ensure that flows of monies and other resources are sent in time to enable us meet our commitments. The good relationships work at various levels and the support, consideration and attention of Ciarán Rohan, Grace Rourty, Philip Marron, and Joseph O'Connor are genuinely appreciated. Paddy O'Dwyer, Ruby Morrow, Paddy Bennis, Paul Doyle and his successor Vincent Wrynn provided the vital support at policy and management levels which are essential for the centre achieving its remit. We wish every success to Paddy O'Dwyer and Paul Doyle in their new responsibilities.

The post-primary administration section based in Athlone support the centre in its administrative role in relation to the employee assistance service and Pádraig Maloney and Brendan Sheehan in the early part of the year and to Ray Jordan in the latter part were supportive and attentive in handling the minutiae arising from this charge. Their support in the preparation for and attendance at the Labour Court was appreciated.

4.4 UNIVERSITIES

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

Management committee has supported the developments with University of Limerick in initiating its guidance and counselling and its health education/promotion courses in the Dublin area. These programmes fit with existing programmes and projects in the centre:- counselling, substance misuse, CSPE and health promotion. It was anticipated that a commencement as early as Autumn but no later than January 2000 would take place. No final date has been agreed for this part-time guidance course in the Dublin area.

4.5 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 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 and these 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 due an examination from a Health and Safety perspective. The electricity supply to the building is due for major upgrading. We are grateful to our colleagues for this co-operation and the sharing and pooling of resources that takes place. Personnel under John Gregg are always helpful in different tasks; accommodation for computing and for social occasions are made available generously by Dermot McNamee and Paula O'Hanlon in Youthreach.

5. Building and Resources

5.1 NEW BUILDING

The new building has been long anticipated. Last year final agreement and approval of the site location on the Institute of Technology, Clondalkin was obtained from the Governing Body. The design team had been given a tight timescale and completed drawings, achieved planning permission, had the tender documents ready on time and the contract awarded by the target date set by the department. They had hoped to have building commence by mid-year. However, the June deadline was missed and the contract the build was not signed until December 1999. Lease, title and access have been agreed by the Institute and the department and the building will commence early in 2000.

5.2 ACCOMMODATION

Reference has been made to the constraints being experienced by staff in the multiple uses of the main office. Similar constraints manifest themselves in the other accommodations as well. We have in effect a split-split-site situation: the PCSP office is on St Brigid's Road, the bulk of staff in a yard pre-fab, the main centre facilities in the main block and other employees in All Hallows and Clonkeen Road. The SMPP co-ordinator works from home. It is the proximity of a

purpose designed building that intensifies the feeling of constraint and frustration. But is also due to the intensification of demand on the existing accommodation: the appointment of a bookkeeper, the servicing of the substance misuse prevention programme, storage needs and the an IT Advisor. The development of the computer room with the Co Dublin VEC and YouthReach has been referred to already.

The education centre is grateful for the patience of its staff and many users for the constraints they have experienced.

5.3 EQUIPMENT

The amount of space available to the centre acts as a constraint to any further significant development. The existing resources (lamination, binding) are in constant demand. The opening of the new computer room added to the resources available to users and the provision of courses.

5.4 LIBRARY

The library brochure was printed for dissemination to schools, course participants and enquirers. The listing of the library collection is available in whole or in part to users and this is facilitated by computerisation. The holdings reflect the centre's areas of interest, course work and potential users. The stock at the moment is just over ___ texts and the number of teacher users at the moment is__.

6. Future Developments

6.1 ANNUAL PLAN 2000

An innovation last year was the dual process of drawing up, budgeting and submitting a local programme plan to ICDU; an amount of money would be made available to the centre based on its plan to facilitate implementation of the plan. 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. Programmes in this category included selections and interviewing for principals and primary science for teachers. 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 centre was facilitated in this by its engagement in programme strategic planning the previous year. More focused professional development analysis will be part of the planning in 2000. The proposed plan for 2000 then includes the following elements under the headings:

| Programme Area | Specific Proposals |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| special needs/learning difficulties | Remedial learning support group (Aut) Newly appointed LS teachers (Spr) Learning difficulties: literacy (Sum) Learning difficulties: numeracy (Aut) Multicultural-bilingual learners (Sum) |
| Whole School | Whole school planning: primary |

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| | Whole school planning: post primary |
| | Whole school behaviour |
| School management & administration | Principals support groups |
| | Principals courses (1) general |
| | (2) conflict management |
| | (3) Selection skills |
| | Induction primary (Aut) |
| | Induction post primary (Aut) |
| Counselling | Counselling skills (Sum) |
| | Conflict / negotiation skills (Aut) |
| | Self-esteem |
| | Classroom management |
| Curriculum | Methodologies: oral Irish (Aut) |
| | Methodologies: oral English (Aut) |
| | Assessment & evaluation (Sum) |
| Arts, SPHE | Music (Spr, Aut) |
| | Art & Craft |
| | Write-a-book |
| | Water Safety & Resuscitation |

The package was costed at just over £30,000 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.

The new management committee to be elected in 2000 will be in a position to take the information from the future programme analysis. Planning for subsequent years will be directed by that review which will be based significantly on the needs of teachers and schools in the area informed also by system changes that continue to occur. The new *Education Act* has brought greater emphasis on school plan and whole school evaluation - two areas in which this centre has particular expertise.

6.2 SPHE

The centre is becoming more involved in the many activities which will comprise this significant primary and post-primary programme: the substance misuse programmes at both levels, the teacher counsellor and self-esteem (Circle Time) initiatives, aquatics (water safety and resuscitation) with the National Safety Council and staff members on the management committee are in pivotal positions in schools which are in the Health Promoting Schools pilot project. The centre is looking to be more critically involved in these areas by working in collaboration with other institutions (eg the National Safety Council, TACA) including those who may be in a position to validate courses and programmes.

6.4 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 1999
- course / activities and attendance statistics
- stock and book listings
- table of centre growth and development
- names of management groups for each project
- current constitution
- section 37 of the *Education Act 1998*
- circular relating to PAYE and PRSI

7. 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.

Donald Herron,
Director
24 February 2000.