In Between the Lines of the Primary Language Curriculum:

Teacher Involvement in the Process of Curriculum Change

Caroline McGarry   PhD   Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

Supervised by Dr. Áine Cregan

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Abstract

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The process of curriculum change and reform can be challenging and complex. It is an area which is often neglected both in educational scholarship and contemporary debate, particularly within the Irish context. This is despite the fact that curriculum change is a fundamental aspect of curriculum development, which can have significant repercussions for the education sector. This study investigates the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum to gain an insight into a critical and contemporary period of curriculum change in Ireland. This social constructivist study adopts a case study approach to examine the perceptions and experiences of teachers during this process of dissemination. Through conducting surveys, focus groups and interviews, this study highlights teacher involvement in the process of curriculum change. This study found that although teachers were represented during the design and development of this curriculum, there was a lack of awareness surrounding the consultation which took place and the majority of teachers did not participate in this process. This study found that there was also a lack of awareness amongst teachers about the nature of this curriculum change both prior to and during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. Although the majority of participants felt that it was necessary to change the existing curriculum, there was evidence of resistance to change and uncertainty about the forthcoming changes amongst a cohort of teachers. This study also found that many principals were dissatisfied with aspects of the initial continuous professional development which they received and this study attributed a number of factors to this. Lastly, this study found that the amendment which was made to Circular 61/2015, which allowed greater time for the planned implementation process, had a positive influence on the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum and was indicative of effective communication between the external and internal stakeholders of the curriculum. This study includes a range of recommendations relating to curriculum consultations, awareness-raising, professional development, the role of principals in curriculum reforms and teacher engagement in curriculum change, which, if followed, could have a positive impact on future efforts to implement new curricula in primary schools in Ireland.

For Mickey, Annie and Johnny

The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or touched, they are felt with the heart.

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince

And above all, watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places. Those who don't believe in magic will never find it.

Roald Dahl. (The Minpins)

Since attending Mary Immaculate College as an undergraduate, I am aware that the education and training which I received there has provided me with countless opportunities. It has given me the chance to work in a job which I love, and has provided me with the skills needed to offer my students a wonderful start to their lifetime of learning. However, the greatest gift has been the wonderful friends that I have made and continue to cherish with all my heart. From Zambia to Tralee and everywhere in between, your friendship means the world to me. Thank you to Lorraine, Claire, Lisa and Gillian for the support, encouragement and love which you have always shown to me. I am so proud to have such exemplary teachers and even better friends in my life.

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Chapter 1 Introducing the Research

1.1 Introduction

This doctoral study has been designed and developed to investigate the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. The development and dissemination of this curriculum epitomises a critical moment of curriculum reform in Ireland which impacts on the primary school sector. Given the centrality of language, this curriculum change will influence the overall approach to language instruction in schools, and consequently children's general language acquisition. This curriculum change will also affect classroom planning, teaching, learning and assessment as well as whole school planning and policy development. It will also have implications for preparing teachers. Both pre-service student teachers and practising teachers will need to be familiar with this curriculum, to ensure that its principles and philosophies can become embedded into practice. Thus, this Primary Language Curriculum is a central concern for schools and teachers.

The Primary Language Curriculum was completed in February 2015. At the time of this research, this curriculum had been devised for Junior Infants to Second Class and the language curriculum for 3rd to 6th Class was still in the process of development. On the 13th of November 2015, a statement was made by the Minister of Education at the time, announcing the launch of the Primary Language Curriculum. This was an important announcement, in which the Minister publicly broadcasted the significance of this curriculum reform. It also acknowledged the pivotal role of principals and teachers in the implementation of the curriculum, and their need for support and continuous professional development during this period of change. The Minister described the curriculum as a 'significant and welcome reform of how our youngest pupils learn their language skills'. (Department of Education and Skills 2015). It was urged in the press release that 'school leaders and teachers are given the necessary Continuous Professional Development to allow them to implement the new curriculum and ensure that our young learners benefit to the maximum extent'. Indeed, the Minister concluded that 'the success of any curriculum change relies on dedicated and engaged teachers'. This press release, which has been included in full in *Appendix A,* was an important moment during this curriculum change process.

However, there is a marked distinction between curriculum change and educational reform (Eivers et al. 2004, Gleeson and Ó'Donnabhán 2009, Kelly 2009, Murphy 2004, Sugrue 2004). Educational reform cannot be achieved by producing new curriculum statements (Murphy 2004). As will become evident, issues such as communication, consultation, support, and ongoing professional development are key components of the curriculum change process. The manner in which this curriculum is disseminated to primary school teachers is therefore a paramount issue, which merits further investigation. This important premise has underpinned the overall study.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to provide an overview of the research which was undertaken as part of this study. This chapter will adopt the following structure. Firstly, it will highlight how the research problem was identified and address a void in contemporary discourse within the field of curriculum studies. Secondly, it will outline the aims and objectives of the study and the research and embedded research questions which were subsequently formulated. Thirdly, this chapter will provide an insight into the overall approach which was devised to investigate the research question and outline the methodology and data collection methods which were adopted during this process. It will then clarify some of the terminology which will be used regularly throughout the study. This chapter will conclude by providing an overview of the structure of this thesis.

This introduction aims to provide readers with a general understanding of the topic under investigation and enable them to develop an insight into the approach which was adopted. It is anticipated that this chapter will provide the clarity and transparency which is necessary for the subsequent analysis and navigation of this research.

1.2 Identifying the Research Problem

There were a number of factors which prompted this investigation into the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. Firstly, it is a contemporary topic which is relevant to the primary education system in Ireland. Indeed, the area of language is gaining greater traction within the Irish education system and within public discourse. This has stemmed from a number of factors including the decline of language standards at primary school level, despite significant reform across the education sector (Breacháin and O'Toole 2013, Department of Education and Skills 2011, Kennedy 2013, Kennedy and Shiel 2010). Such outcomes have raised a number of concerns in relation to the approach to language

instruction in the primary sector. These concerns have been reiterated in the *Primary Curriculum Review,* which identified a variety of issues in relation to the teaching and learning of languages, including the challenges experienced by teachers in the teaching of writing and oral language. It also identified a need to review teachers' understanding of and use of assessment (Department of Education and Science 2005, Department of Education and Skills 2011, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2005). In addition to this, *The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Young Children and Young People,* which was published in 2011, advocated that the curriculum should a) define clear learning outcomes for literacy and b) help teachers to understand the learning outcomes for literacy (Department of Education and Skills 2011, p.45). It concluded that the English curriculum in primary schools should be revised to clarify the learning outcomes to be expected of learners (ibid, p. 23). Such issues have prompted a revision of the overall approach to languages at primary school level and the subsequent development of the Primary Language Curriculum. The dissemination of this curriculum is a challenging task, particularly as changing the curriculum often goes against the grain of collective and cultural experiences and expectations (Looney 2001, Looney and Klenowski 2015, Rogers 2003). Given that this curriculum change will impact significantly on the overall primary education sector, it has been identified as contemporary issue worthy of investigation.

Secondly, through reviewing literature surrounding this topic, it became apparent that the field of curriculum studies is often overlooked in both educational debate and research. Indeed, curriculum studies has been identified as one of the most neglected areas of educational scholarship (Apple 2012). The ramifications for the teaching profession are not insignificant. It has been suggested, for example, that narrow interpretations of the curriculum prevent those who teach from learning how to think critically about the overall education system (Lucey and Lorsbach 2013). This consolidates the worrying argument, that educators are neglecting their professional obligation to pursue curriculum studies, arguably the only route to effective practice (Kelly 2009). In addition to this, despite the centrality of the teacher in the curriculum change process, literature suggests that there is little research conducted on the role of the teacher in curriculum and policy formulation (Bascia et al. 2014, Gleeson and Ó'Donnabhán 2009, Kelly 2009). In the hope of contributing successfully to educational scholarship, this study endeavoured to explore the involvement of the teacher in this process.

Thirdly, this gap in contemporary discourse is particularly apparent within the Irish context. According to Sugrue (2004, p.293) there are significant silences surrounding curriculum change and educational debates in the Irish context and these too deserve to be put on the agenda, as a means of generating more inclusive educational change (Sugrue 2004, p.293). In addition to this, the politics and power relations around schooling in Ireland are often invisible (Coolahan 1994, Gleeson 2000, Gleeson and Ó'Donnabhán 2009, Sugrue 2004).The lack of curriculum debate, particularly within the Irish context, undoubtedly substantiates the rationale which motivated this study and enabled the researcher to clarify the research problem. It is hoped that by examining the roles and responsibilities of the predominant stakeholders of the Primary Language Curriculum, this study will provide an insight into the process of contemporary educational change. It is envisioned that this study will contribute to the limited debate around curriculum studies and curriculum change, particularly from an Irish context.

Thus, this research has identified the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum as a contemporary and central issue which will impact significantly on the primary school sector. Through reviewing the literature and identifying an uncomfortable silence within educational debate and contemporary literature around curriculum studies and curriculum change, particularly from an Irish context, the study identified this issue as a critical research question, worthy of investigation.

1.3 Personal Motivation of Researcher

The professional background of the researcher was also a motivating factor in conducting research of this nature. Teaching in a DEIS Band 1 school, the researcher was particularly interested in the field of educational disadvantage and had previously conducted research into how children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds experience primary school differently than their more privileged peers. This research piqued a further interest into the field of Oral Language. Having trained as a literacy tutor, the researcher subsequently facilitated a number of teacher courses in their local Education Centre. Such courses focused on literacy in the Early Years sector with a particular emphasis on the potential of the Aistear framework to support the development of students' language acquisition. The researcher has also been involved in the coordination and introduction of Aistear in their own school and has worked closely with teachers and parents to ensure its successful

implementation. As a post-holder for Irish, the researcher has also gained experience in formulating school plans and policies. Such experience has facilitated the informal observation as to how colleagues have adapted to change over the last decade. The introduction of the Aistear framework, and the implementation of both commercial and noncommercial programmes such as First Steps, Jolly Phonics and Bua na Cainte are just some examples of changes which have faced teachers during this period. The Primary Language Curriculum, which was particularly relevant to the researcher's field of interest, was identified as a significant educational development which would impact significantly on the primary education sector. The dissemination of this curriculum therefore offered a prime opportunity to conduct research into the topic of teacher involvement in curriculum change.

The identification of the research focus facilitated the development of the aims and objectives of the research.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this study is to contribute to contemporary educational debate around the area of curriculum change through examining the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

To fulfil this aim, the study has formulated the following objectives. This study will endeavour to:
1. Highlight the overall process of curriculum change and dissemination
2. Identify the prominent stakeholders in the curriculum development process
3. Examine the roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders throughout the curriculum change process
4. Highlight the level of teacher involvement throughout the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum

The identification of these aims and objectives resulted in the following research and embedded research questions.

1.5 Research Question and Embedded Research Questions

How do teachers experience the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum?

<u>*Embedded Questions*</u>
1. *What level of awareness do teachers have about this curriculum change during the dissemination process?*
2. *What are teachers' experiences during the various stages of the dissemination process?*
3. *How do teachers perceive their involvement in this dissemination process?*
4. *How do teachers feel about forthcoming changes during this dissemination process?*

1.6 An Overview of the Research

This section will provide a general overview of the research process. This will outline how the literature review was conducted, the methodological approach which was adopted, the manner in which the findings were analysed and the subsequent formulation of recommendations.

<u>1.6.1 Conducting a Literature Review</u>

Having established the research and embedded research questions this study conducted an extensive analysis of current literature within the field of curriculum studies. A number of themes were examined during this process including Curriculum Design, Curriculum Assessment, Curriculum Change and Reform, Curriculum Dissemination, Professional Development and Teacher Change. Whilst this literature review provided a beneficial insight into the curriculum development and reform process, many prevailing questions were also identified. These questions were significant as they substantiated the rationale to conduct a study of this nature and shaped many aspects of the research design which framed this study.

<u>1.6.2 The Methodological Approach of the Research</u>

To investigate the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum, this research adopted a social constructivist approach. Although this will be addressed at length in subsequent chapters, for the purposes of providing a general overview of the research, it is worth noting that constructivists do not generally begin with a theory, rather they 'generate' or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning throughout the research process (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010). The researcher works from the 'bottom up' using the participants' views to build broader themes and generate a theory interconnecting the themes (Creswell and Clark 2010, p.41).

Case study was selected as the most appropriate methodological approach to investigate this issue. A single, instrumental case study was selected as the most apposite type of case for the research question under examination. Within this approach, a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue, in this instance the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, Denzin and Lincoln 2008). This case may be seen as typical of other cases, or not (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, Stake 1995, Stake 2010): however, the case is often looked at in-depth, its contexts scrutinised, its ordinary activities detailed, because this helps us pursue the external interest (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, Stake 2010). This approach facilitated an advanced understanding of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

1.6.3 Findings

Findings provided an insight into teachers' perceptions and experiences of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. The analysis of findings also enabled a number of themes to be generated in relation to the overall curriculum change process including:
• Teachers' Involvement in the Design and Development of the Primary Language Curriculum
• Teachers' Awareness of the Primary Language Curriculum
• Teachers' Perceptions of Forthcoming Changes
• Perceptions and Experiences of the Professional Development Approach
• The Role of Principals in Curriculum Reform.
This analysis process also facilitated the identification of the stakeholders of the curriculum and highlighted their roles and responsibilities during this period of curriculum change.

Thus, this research conducted an investigation into the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum from a variety of perspectives, in line with the overall research question.

1.6.4 Recommendations for Future Action, Change and Policy

As a result of such findings, this study was in a position to suggest a number of recommendations for future action, change and policy. These included recommendations for future curriculum consultations, recommendations for awareness-raising, recommendations for professional development as well as recommendations for the role of principals in future curriculum reforms. These recommendations may prove useful for future curriculum reform and change.

Throughout each stage of this research, the overall aim of contributing to educational debate around the area of curriculum change remained a paramount priority.

1.7 Clarification of Terminology

This section will present a brief clarification of key terminology which is central to the field of curriculum studies in the interests of clarity:
•Curriculum
•Curriculum Materials
•Curriculum Design
•Curriculum Change and reform
•Curriculum Dissemination
•Education Policy, and
•Curriculum Discourse

Curriculum

The complexities of defining curriculum are evident throughout much of the literature on curriculum studies. It is essential, however, that this is addressed in the introductory chapter to facilitate a thorough and broader understanding of subsequent findings throughout the remainder of the thesis. Put simply, curriculum has been described as a set of stories which have been passed on from one generation to the next (Independent

2008). The distinction between curriculum and pedagogy is also of importance. Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge whereas pedagogy defines what counts as a valid transition of knowledge (Scott 2008).

In light of the importance of defining curriculum, it is important to acknowledge the issues which often arise from adopting a facile understanding of this concept. Rudolf (1977, p.6) has argued that 'the best way to misread or understand a curriculum is from a catalogue. It is such a lifeless thing, so disembodied, so unconnected, sometimes intentionally misleading" (Apple 2012, Ball et al. 2012, Goodson 2004). It is this which often leads on to the assertion that the written curriculum is in a real sense irrelevant to practice, that the dichotomy between the espoused curriculum as written and the active curriculum as lived and experienced is complete and inevitable (Goodson 2004, p.17). In thoroughly understanding curriculum, therefore, it is imperative that the complexities of both the curriculum content and curriculum processes are acknowledged. Stenhouse defined curriculum as 'an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice' (Kelly 2009, Looney 2001, Looney and Klenowski 2015, Scott 2014, Stenhouse 1975). It involves both content and method and 'in its widest application takes account of the problem of implementation in the institutions of the educational system' (Stenhouse 1975, p.4). It is this broader understanding of curriculum which underpins this research.

Curriculum Materials

Curriculum materials are those tools, scaffolds or supports which enable educators to interpret and transmit the curriculum more effectively (Deng 2011, Drake et al. 2014, Grossman and Thompson 2004, Scott 2014, Superfine et al. 2015).These can include materials such as curriculum frameworks, curriculum programmes, textbooks, teacher-created resources and professional publications that focus on curriculum (Grossman and Thompson 2004). Curriculum materials which may be associated with the Primary Language Curriculum, for example, may include the curriculum itself, the Primary Language Toolkit, the National Assessment Guidelines, the Aistear Framework and other relevant textbooks and publications.

It is worth noting that, historically, the field has been reluctant to support, understand or focus on teachers' use of curriculum materials as there was a perception or stigma that "good" teachers have most often been viewed as those who do not use textbooks at all and instead create their own curriculum (Ball and Cohen 1999, Drake et al. 2014). However, the recent and increasing development of educative curriculum materials has provided an opportunity for a shift from prior beliefs that "good" teachers do not use curriculum materials to a conceptualisation of good teachers who use educative materials well (Drake et al. 2014). Furthermore, the focus of curriculum designers is shifting to support the teachers' capacity to enact curriculum materials - to read, understand, and adapt available curriculum materials to meet the specific needs of the students in their classroom whilst remaining faithful to the aims and objectives of the curriculum itself (Drake et al. 2014). Nonetheless, it is necessary to also acknowledge those curriculum materials which have been developed for commercial use and not always in congruence with the curriculum itself. Thus, the autonomous role of the teacher in selecting and using such materials becomes apparent.

Curriculum materials which are produced in conjunction with the Primary Language Curriculum many influence teachers' perceptions of it and this concept is therefore of importance.

Curriculum Design

Curriculum design is an integral part of the curriculum development process. Curriculum design is about all the things we want pupils to learn and about creating all the experiences that children will need in order to learn them (Kelly 2009, Scott 2013, Scott 2014). A key feature of *good* curriculum design is the ability to manage the different types of knowledge in a sequence that matches the needs of the student and the needs of the disciplinary subject (Apple 2004, Winch 2013, p.128). Paul Hirst (1965) famously identified three forms of knowledge including propositional knowledge (factual knowledge); procedural or practical knowledge and knowledge by acquaintance (knowledge with a direct object such as a place or a work of art) (Winch 2013, Scott and Sutton 2009, Moore 2006). Winch (2013, p.134) suggests that a broad understanding these forms of knowledge enables us to think about curriculum design as the management of growth of expertise within a subject in ways which recognise not only the different kinds of knowledge involved, but also their relationship.

Curriculum designers are faced with a number of important decisions. For example, they must decide what items of knowledge should be included and excluded and also decide how these should be arranged within the curriculum (Scott 2014, Scott 2013, Scott 2008). The design must also describe the arrangements to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum. Choices around how a curriculum is constructed therefore are concerned with what relations are considered to be appropriate between the contents of the curriculum, its pedagogic forms, its learning strategies and its evaluative criteria and apparatus (Scott 2014, p.15). These important decisions undoubtedly shape the overall curriculum design. There are a number of curriculum models, as will be detailed in Chapter 3, which will also greatly influence this process. As will become increasingly apparent, curriculum design is a complex and challenging process. The design of the Primary Language Curriculum will be addressed during this research.

Curriculum Change and Reform

Curriculum change is an extremely complex process. It is often seen in three, self-explanatory stages - initiation, implementation and institutionalisation (Ellsworth 2000, Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, Fogarty and Pete 2007, McBeath 1997). Fullan views every stakeholder in the educational change as a change agent (Ellsworth 2000, Fullan 2002). As will become apparent during subsequent chapters, the identification of the stakeholders of the Primary Language Curriculum is central to this research.

According to McBeath (1997, p.39) initiation consists of all the decisions and activities which occur before the change is put into place in the classroom. The initiation of an innovation requires planning an introductory awareness that establishes the context, goals, process and timeline for all who are involved (Fogarty and Pete 2007, p.9). It calls for inclusion of all stakeholders, extending invitations for them to participate, question, acknowledge concerns, and finally announce their level of commitment for change. (ibid, p. 9). Implementation involves putting the curriculum change into actual use in the classroom. Within this phase, models are introduced through sustained, job-embedded professional development that executes the innovation with integrity and provides the needed input to support the change (Fogarty and Pete 2007, p.10). It is essential that attention is given to the appropriate practice, feedback and coaching needed to ensure success. The third

stage refers to those processes and decisions which lead to the change being 'built in' as an ongoing part of the learning environment. It is concerned with establishing accountability for continued use of the innovation (Ellsworth 2000). This is undoubtedly a challenging process, particularly as the institutionalisation of change means that the initial innovation permeates every aspect of the institution becoming ingrained it its very principles, practices and policies (Fogarty and Pete 2007, p. 10).

Curriculum change is complex, and as highlighted above, Fullan perceives educational change as a long-term, interactive process in which any stage "may be in the works for years" (Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, McBeath 1997). This research will focus particularly on the initiation and implementation stages of the curriculum change. It will examine the manner in which the introductory awareness was established. It will also examine the consultation process which took place with stakeholders and how they were invited to participate in this crucial stage of curriculum change. It will also examine the professional development approach undertaken as well as principal teachers' perceptions of this approach.

Curriculum Dissemination

Curriculum dissemination is an integral component of curriculum development, which is central to this research. It is perceived as a central change strategy which brings about communication and interaction between planners and implementers and is integral for each stage of curriculum change (McBeath 1997, Rogers 2003). To ensure clarity, it is necessary to outline the distinction between dissemination and diffusion. According to McBeath (1997, p.38) in the 1960s and 1970s the terms dissemination and diffusion were used virtually interchangeably and referred to the spread of new knowledge or new techniques to those who used them (ibid. p.38). Diffusion was seen as the unplanned, spread of new ideas which typically involved a two-way communication of information, effected by an exchange of ideas between individuals (McBeath 1997, Rogers 2003) whereas dissemination indicates planned pathways to the transmission of new educational ideas and practices from their point of production to all locations of potential implementation (Rogers 2003). This is indicative of a shift from an unplanned drift to deliberate planning, from random evolution to positive engineering (Kelly 2009, p.125). Contemporary understandings of dissemination facilitate a more thorough analysis of planning, production, movement and transition which are pivotal to understanding the

overall curriculum development process. Each of these elements of dissemination will be examined at length throughout the study.

Education Policy

As will become apparent, the development of the Primary Language Curriculum has been influenced by education policy, and the context of this policy will be examined in this research.

In defining policy, it is necessary to distinguish between policy and policy artefacts. Literature advocates a broader understanding of policy rather than prior misconceptions of policy as mere artefacts (Colebatch 2011, Crowson and Hinz 2015, Vanderlinde et al. 2012). Policy artefacts refer to those visual materials and resources that document either what is to be done or reinforce and represent the policy process which has taken place (Ball et al. 2012, Vanderlinde et al. 2012). Policy, however, is a complex process involving a diverse assemblage of players both inside and outside of government (Colebatch 2011). The policy process is dynamic and encompasses choice, interaction, problematising and analysis and engages a variety of policy actors throughout each of these stages (Colebatch 2011).

It is worthwhile to highlight a major policy dilemma in education, that there are separate legitimacy imperatives at the 'policy' and at the 'practice' level of education (Cohen et al. 2007, Crowson and Hinz 2015). According to Crowson and Hinz (2015, p.183) policy makers define problems and devise solutions using the authority of the government and a current corrective paradigm for a remedy such as a core curricular choice or test-based accountability measure. However, policy makers must depend on the local practitioners to correct the identified problems, to produce compliance with the corrective directives. In essence, the dilemma prevails that 'the very people and organisations that have or are the problem are then asked to solve it (ibid, p.183). It is worth reiterating that responsibility for education policy in Ireland lies with the Minister of Education and is supported by the DES, the NCCA and Teaching Council (Kennedy 2013, p.517). In theory, education policy is centrally devised with a high level of consultation from stakeholder groups in education such as the NCCA and Teaching Council as well as the general public (ibid, p.518). Given

that education policy influences the development and dissemination of the Primary Language curriculum, this is an important consideration of this research.

<u>Curriculum Discourse</u>

Discourses are social processes formed within and by wider events, beliefs and 'epistemes' to produce common sense notions and normative ideas (Ball et al. 2012). This understanding acknowledges the effect of external events, corroborating the argument that primary discourses are set within a history of prior discourses (Veyne and Lloyd 2010). This is of significance as it provides an insight as to how discourse can often be interpreted quite differently and from a variety of perspectives. It is also necessary to briefly outline the distinctions between horizontal and vertical discourse. Horizontal discourse tends to denote 'common-sense' knowledge - common because all, potentially or actually, have access to it - and it is likely to be oral, local context dependent and specific whereas vertical discourse takes the form of a coherent, explicit and systematically principled structure which is hierarchically organised around specialised language, grammar and criteria (Bernstein 1999, p.159). The sciences, social sciences and humanities are all examples of vertical discourse. This research will examine how discourse around curriculum has evolved over the last number of decades.

1.8 Structure of Thesis

This chapter will conclude by providing an overview of the structure of this thesis.

Chapter 1 set out to provide a general introduction to this research. In doing so, it provided an insight into both the identification of the research question and the rationale which motivated an investigation into the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. It outlined the aims and objectives of the research as well as the research and embedded research questions which framed the overall study. It also provided an overview of the research which was undertaken including the methodological approach which was adopted during this process. It examined the terminology which is central to this research and which will be referred to regularly throughout this exploratory study.

Chapter 2 will examine the context which led to the development and dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. It will provide an insight into significant moments of

curriculum change during preceding educational reforms and will examine how discourse around curriculum has changed over this period. It will also address the significant factors which influenced the development of the language curriculum and provide an overview as to how it differs from its predecessor. This understanding highlights the nature of this curriculum change and provides an insight into how it will influence the primary education sector.

Chapter 3 will analyse current literature within the field of curriculum studies of most relevance to the research question. It will examine the themes of Curriculum Design, Curriculum Assessment, Curriculum Change and Reform, Curriculum Dissemination, Professional Development and Teacher Change. The analysis of this literature provides an insight into the complexities of the curriculum development process and illuminates many aspects of the research question. As will become apparent, the prevailing questions which are identified substantiate the rationale to conduct an investigation into the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum and influence the overall research design of this study.

Chapter 4 details the research design which frames this study and how it has been influenced by the preceding literature review. This chapter will examine the social constructivist paradigm which frames this research and the implications of this approach. It will outline the rationale which led to case study being selected as the most appropriate research methodology and examine the data collection methods which were utilised during this process. The limitations of this research and the role of the researcher will also be addressed.

Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings which emerged during the data collection process. As mentioned previously, this research focuses on the Initiation and Implementation Phases of curriculum change. *Chapter 5* will examine the findings which were central Initiation Phase of the curriculum change process. This chapter will analyse teachers' awareness of the Primary Language Curriculum at various stages of the dissemination process as well as their engagement with the consultation process which took place. *Chapter 6* will examine the findings in relation to the Implementation Phase of curriculum change including teachers' perceptions of forthcoming changes This chapter will also analyse the perceptions and experiences of the CPD which they received as well as the

role of principals in this curriculum reform. As will become evident from both findings chapters, this study yielded extensive findings in relation to the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Chapter 7 frames the findings in the context of preceding and prospective research. In outlines the main issues which were identified during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum and suggests a number of recommendations for future action, policy and change as well as opportunities for future research. It examines how this study has contributed to contemporary debate around curriculum change.

Chapter 8 concludes the overall thesis with a series of fictitious vignettes which have been composed by the researcher. These vignettes do not claim to represent the experience of all internal stakeholders; however enable the reader to gain an insight into the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum from the perspective of a teacher, principal and student. These vignettes encompass the overall essence of the research through highlighting the importance of curriculum change.

Chapter 2 Mapping The Context of the Primary Language Curriculum

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to examine the context which led to the development and dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. The development of the Primary Language Curriculum is an important moment of educational and curriculum reform which impacts on the primary education sector in Ireland. Given that this research aims to contribute to contemporary educational debate around the area of curriculum change, this chapter also provides an opportunity to highlight other important moments of change which have occurred in the educational landscape in Ireland over the last number of decades. This facilitates an understanding of how curriculum change has materialised in the past and how the concept of curriculum change has evolved.This chapter also provides a greater understanding of the role and responsibilities of many of the stakeholders of the Primary Language Curriculum through examining the impetus which led to their establishment.

The previous chapter highlighted a void in contemporary literature around the area of curriculum reform, particularly in the context of the Irish Education System. Bourdieu states that 'we cannot grasp the dynamics of a field if not by a synchronic analysis of its structure' and advocates a structural history which documents each successive state of the structure under examination' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.90). Sugrue (2004, p. 175) suggests that it is necessary to map the field of education, so that the dynamics of the power relations, often invisible, are more apparent and more adequately understood. This chapter will highlight many of the issues which arose during previous periods of curriculum change, particularly during the development and implementation of the 1971, 1999 and Revised 1999 Primary School Curriculum. An understanding of these issues may be beneficial during the investigation of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

This chapter will examine how Curriculum Design has evolved over the last number of decades, and how this may have influenced the design of the Primary Language Curriculum. Secondly, it will outline a curriculum timeline and in examining this timeline, significant moments of curriculum change prior to the development of the Primary Language Curriculum will be examined. Thirdly, this chapter will provide an insight into how discourse around curriculum change has changed over this period. Lastly, this

chapter will examine the factors which influenced the development of the Primary Language Curriculum and outline how it differs from its predecessor. The next chapter will analyse the current literature which exists around curriculum development. However, it is anticipated that mapping out the context of the Primary Language Curriculum in this way will provide the reader with a greater understanding and appreciation of the challenges which are often encountered during periods of curriculum change. This will be important for the investigation of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

2.2 The Evolving Nature of Curriculum Design

Curriculum Design is an important aspect of curriculum development which is necessary for curriculum change and reform to occur. As outlined in the introductory chapter, curriculum design is about all the things we want pupils to learn and about creating all the experiences that children will need in order to learn them (Kelly 2009, Scott 2013, Scott 2014).

Literature suggests that curriculum design in Ireland has undergone significant changes during the period of 1985 - 2000 (Gleeson 2000, Kelly 2009, Sugrue 2004). Sugrue (2004, p.68) highlights that curriculum planning at national level has gone from 'being a highly centralised and sometimes mysterious process within the state Department of Education' to adopting more open and participative procedures. The establishment of the Interim Curriculum and Examinations Board (CEB) in 1984, and subsequently the NCCA in 1987, marked a transfer of authority (ibid, p.68). The establishment of The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) as a statutory body on the 12th of July 2001, was particularly influential in this evolution of curriculum design. The National Council is a statutory body which must report to and advise the Minister for Education in matters relating to curriculum and assessment for early childhood education, primary and post primary schools.

The establishment of a council such as the NCCA puts Ireland in a rather notable position, for having a separate body responsible for curriculum design and development. It is worth briefly examining how other countries approach curriculum development and change. The partnership ideology which underpins the formulation and evaluation of educational policy and practice makes Ireland distinct and different from more ideologically driven top-down centralised reforms that are dominant in very visible ways in England, Australia, the US,

Canada and elsewhere (Sugrue and Gleeson 2004, p.277). Similarly, the Ministry of Education in Singapore, New Zealand and South Africa are also responsible for specifying the curriculum (Centre for Information and Reviews 2011). Recent curriculum reform in Scotland provides an example of a more innovative approach to curriculum development. It also demonstrates how their approach to curriculum design has changed to a great extent. Their Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is not prescribed by statute or regulation. Individual local authorities and head teachers are free to provide an appropriate curriculum within the advice provided by the Scottish Government in non statutory guidelines (ibid, p. 32). It has been described as a curricular model that 'seeks to combine top-down government prescription with bottom-up school-based curriculum development by teaching professionals' (Priestly 2010, p.23). Despite developing a renewed view of teachers as agents of change and relaxing curriculum prescription, this curriculum has nonetheless 'attracted criticism for its vagueness in terms of content and for a mix-and-match approach and seemingly theoretical design' (ibid, p.23).

The establishment of the NCCA greatly inhibits direct political involvement or ministerial intervention (Gleeson 2000, Sugrue 2004, Sugrue and Gleeson 2004). Therefore, unlike its predecessors, the development of the Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999) and the Primary Language Curriculum is a culmination of an extensive process of collaborative curriculum planning and design by the education partners, under the auspices of the NCCA (Department of Education and Science 2005, p.1). This is indicative of the evolving nature of curriculum design in Ireland over the last number of decades.

2.3 Curriculum Timeline
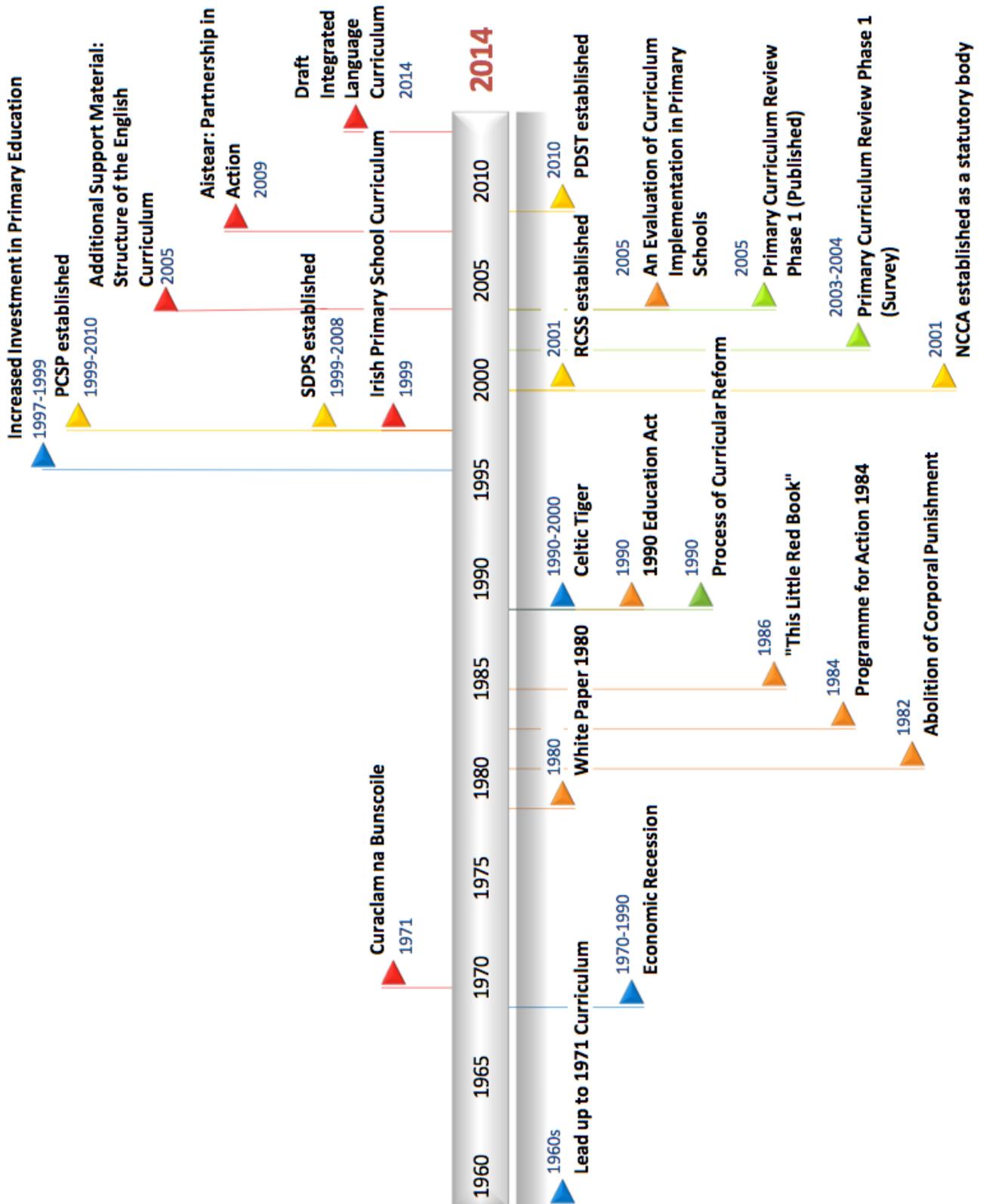
Figure 2.A

This timeline presents an overview of the events which led to the development of the Primary Language Curriculum from the 1960s to present day. It highlights (in blue) a number of crucial macro-economic episodes during this period which have impacted on many aspects of the curriculum development process. It also notes (in orange) a number of influential macro documents and publications, and lists (in yellow) a number of government agencies which were developed during this time. Curriculum documents and some support materials associated with these have also been included (in red).

2.4 Lead Up to the 1971 Curriculum: An Inherited Policy Context

The lead up to the 1971 curriculum is an interesting period of curriculum change to examine. In terms of educational reform, the 1960s has been considered a period of great change, economically, socially and culturally (Clarke 2010, p.383). Given that this study is concerned with the Primary Language Curriculum and language instruction, this is an interesting era to examine. It has been described as a paradigm shift in education policy - a 'decade of transformation that emerged following a period of inertia and insularity in Irish education' (Fleming and Harford 2014, p.635).

This radical transformation is epitomised by a major swing from the erosion of the Gaelic language and culture prior to Independence in 1922 to a major emphasis being placed on the revival and promotion of the Irish language in schools, resulting in Irish becoming the mandatory language in all infant classes (Clarke 2010, Fleming and Harford 2014, Walsh 2010). In 1948, a revised programme for infants was introduced which allowed for a half an hour of English teaching in infant classrooms per day (Walsh 2010, p.261). This provides evidence of the central role of politics in the Irish education system at the time, supporting the view that the approach to curriculum was open to political manipulation (Kelly 2009).

The decision to abolish the Primary Certificate by the Department of Education in 1967 was also of importance. A number of factors were influential in this decision. The government issued an OECD report which was published in 1965 entitled Investment in Education, which highlighted the low levels of access to secondary education and the high level of early school leavers (Walsh 2011). Throughout the 1960s, it became necessary to align the education system with the needs of the expanding economy. In *Preventing the Future,* Tom Garvin identified a dysfunctional education system as a main contributor to

Ireland's economic condition and central as to why Ireland was so poor for so long (Fleming and Harford 2014). Consequently educational thinking focused on the role of education in economic development (Clarke 2010, Fleming and Harford 2014, Kelly 2009, Sugrue 2004, Walsh 2010). Evidence of increased state responsibility, in conjunction with economic reform, continue to underscore the role of politics in the Irish education system at this time.

2.4.1 The Abolishment of the Primary Certificate

According to Madaus and Greany (1985, p.285) the abolishment of the Primary Certificate coincided with an economic boom, following the deep depression of the 1950s and early 1960s, where it became evident that an increase in the number of people entering post-primary education was necessary to meet the projected manpower needs of the new economy. The abolition of the Primary Certificate also coincided with the introduction of a scheme of free post-primary education (Walsh 2011). Most significantly, the Department, who were influenced partly by educational reforms in Great Britain, was planning a new primary school child-centered curriculum (Walsh 2011, Madaus and Greany 1985).

Madaus and Greany (1985, p.286) highlight the significance of this decision:

> The pendulum of educational policy, oiled by affluence, swung back to a child-centered philosophy of education and toppled the primary certificate examination in its wake.

Due to many of the significant curriculum reforms which took place throughout the 1960s, this can be identified as a transformative era of education which appeared to stem from a gradual decline in Nationalism.

2.4.2 Growing Public Interest in Education

This period also marked a growing public interest in the education system. It led to a more developed understanding of children and child development, where parents began to view education as a vehicle for social mobility (Clarke 2010, Fleming and Harford 2014, Kelly 2009, Sugrue 2004, Walsh 2010). Aspersions were cast over the rigid curriculum of the 1920s which gave little regard to the interests or abilities of the individual child but which placed a large emphasis on examinations (Tuairim 1962, Walsh 2010). The economic

upturn of the 1960s facilitated an increased investment in resources and facilities for schools. A variety of political, economic and attitudinal factors therefore prompted the development of the 1971 curriculum.

2.4.3 Barriers to the successful implementation of Curaclam na Bunscoile 1971

The development of the 1971 curriculum facilitated radical reform in the education system. A marked distinction between this and its predecessor was that the curriculum was viewed as an integral whole with all subjects to be taught in an integrated way rather than the previous method of compartmentalisation. This was a radical shift from the practice of the previous half-century. It placed the child in the centre of the learning experience and also necessitated the adoption of modern methodologies (Coolahan 1981, Coolahan 1994, Walsh 2010), reflecting many of the modern ideologies which emerged during the previous decade.

The economic recession of the 1970s and 1980s had a number of ramifications for the implementation of the 1971 curriculum, however, and many of the proposed schemes and resources for education were affected by budgetary contractions on social spending (Walsh 2010, p. 264). Consequently, a number of problems associated with the 1971 curriculum began to emerge. For example, it became apparent that classrooms were poorly designed for the use of new and modern methodologies such as group work, discovery learning, and shared collaboration. Other issues during this period included a high pupil-teacher ratio, a lack of in-service education and a lack of communication with parents (Walsh 2010). These issues undoubtedly impacted on the successful implementation of this reformed curriculum. It could also be perceived that there are many similarities between this era of educational reform and the climate which exists during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. The economic recession, prior to the development of the Primary Language Curriculum, has also seen a rise in pupil-teacher ratio and a cut to resources and particularly language teachers at primary school level. In light of such similarities, it will be compelling to investigate how present-day teachers will perceive and experience the overall dissemination process.

There are a number of events which took place during this period that reflect the increasing dissatisfaction of teachers in relation to this curriculum change. In 1971, the Education Committee conducted a survey and produced a report entitled "This Little Red

Book". The contents of this report reflected teachers' negative perceptions and experiences of the 1971 curriculum as it said for the first time in public that the 1971 curriculum hadn't been implemented, in any real sense (Irish National Teachers' Organisation 2005, p.103). This substantiates the argument that educational change cannot be achieved simply by producing new curriculum statements (Murphy 2004). It also highlights the importance of teacher attitude during periods of curriculum change and reform and consolidates the rationale for investigating the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

2.5 The Development of the Primary School Curriculum (1999)

The examination of how the Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999) has been developed, revised was useful for a number of reasons. Firstly, it provides an overview of the curriculum which precedes the Primary Language Curriculum and thus highlights the nature of the curriculum change facing teachers. Secondly, this era of educational reform took place during a period of rapid economic growth and this curriculum change was therefore accompanied by high levels of professional development for teachers, a significant increase in support services as well as increase resources for schools and teachers. It is interesting to examine how such supports can impact on teacher attitude to change.

The period of educational change leading up to the development and implementation of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) encompassed a different educational landscape to that of its predecessor. The passing of the Education Act (1998) was influential as it provided a legislative basis for the education system and it defined and clarified the increasing responsibilities of schools and their obligations to pupils, parents, administrators and others in the system (Irish National Teachers' Organisation 2004). The Education Act placed significant emphasis on the educational needs of all students and equality of opportunity for both students and teachers. It also highlighted the responsibility of the Minister for Education and Skills in ensuring that the curriculum is sufficient and advocates that directions are given to schools to ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum. This period also embodied a more prosperous economy. Newspaper reports at the time suggest that during the years of 1997-1999 direct funding of schools increased by over one third and that Ireland had the lowest average class sizes in history with the maximum class average of 30 (Healy 1999). Thus, it is evident that the Primary School

Curriculum (1999) was implemented in a thriving economic climate, which was very different to that of its predecessor.

2.5.1 Support Services to Accompany the Primary School Curriculum (1999)

A number of support services were also developed prior to and during the implementation of this curriculum. The Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) was established prior to the launch of the curriculum to provide advice and assistance to primary teachers in relation to the curriculum. It facilitated the professional development of whole-school staffs through in-service seminars and school-based planning (Department of Education and Science 2005). The Regional Curriculum Support Service (RCSS) was established in 2001 as a central component of this and cuiditheoirí (facilitators) were appointed to visit and advise schools in particular areas of curricular strands (Coolahan 2007, Department of Education and Science 2005, Irish National Teachers' Organisation 2005). The School Development Planning Support (SDPS) was established in 1999 to promote school development planning in primary and post-primary schools, to facilitate networking between schools and to stimulate and strengthen a culture of collaborative development planning in schools (Irish National Teachers' Organisation 2005). The Primary School Curriculum (1999) was launched and circulated to primary school teachers in September of 1999 (Department of Education and Science 2005, p.1). It is likely that the supports which were available to schools at this time influenced their perception of this curriculum change.

It is important to note that the support services which are available to schools during the dissemination and implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum differ from those of the Primary School Curriculum (1999). Given that the PDST is a stakeholder of the Primary Language Curriculum, this distinction is important. The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) was established in 2010 and involved the amalgamation and restructuring of a number of previous stand-alone services which have been listed below:

- Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS)
- Second-Level Support Service (SLSS)
- Leadership Development Service (LDS)
- School Development Planning (SDP)
- Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)

- Transition Year (TY)
- Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP)
- Reading Recovery
- Maths Recovery
- An tSeirbhís Tacaíochta Dara Leibhéal don Ghaeilge (STDL Gaeilge)
- National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) now known as PDST Technology in Education.
- Junior Cycle Physical Education, (JCPE)
- Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) support service.

According to its website (http://www.pdst.ie/about_us), 'the PDST is now the country's largest single support service offering professional learning opportunities to teachers and school leaders in a range of pedagogical, curricular and educational areas'.

2.5.2 Making Revisions to existing Primary School Curriculum (1999)

An overall review of the Irish Primary School Curriculum was initiated by the NCCA in 2003. This was conducted in two phases. The first phase of review took place from September 2003 to September 2004, which impacted significantly on the curriculum at the time and focused on the curriculum subjects of English, Visual Arts and Mathematics. This second phase of Primary Curriculum Review took place during the school year of 2006 and 2007. This focused on the subjects of Gaeilge, Science, and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). A prominent focus of this review was on teachers' and children's experiences of the English and Irish Curriculum and as such this review may have been influential in the subsequent development of the Primary Language Curriculum. A number of issues were highlighted about the manner in which both languages were being taught. For example, 14% of teachers who participated in the review reported integrating Gaeilge with everyday, classroom language (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2008, p.74). Findings and recommendations led to revisions of the overall Primary School Curriculum, and immediate revisions were made to the curricular area of English.

A number of critical findings were highlighted during this review which were particularly pertinent to the English Curriculum. For example, teachers identified three assessment challenges - time, appropriateness of assessment tools and catering for the range of children's abilities in English. Teachers identified that their greatest challenge for using the English curriculum was time, and this was followed by curriculum organisation and

developing children's oral language. Teachers also suggested there was a lack of variety of texts available to them (Irish National Teachers' Organisation 2011). Perhaps most noteworthy was the finding by inspectors in relation to the strand and strand units of the curriculum. An overview of the strands and strand units of the English and Irish Curriculum has been included in *Appendix B* for those readers who may be unfamiliar with the overall structure of the Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999). This review indicated that four out of five school teachers were using the *strand units* of oral language, reading, and writing as opposed to the *strands* as their starting points for classroom planning (Department of Education and Science 2005).

The inspectorate concluded that this illustrated a perceived difficulty for classroom teachers in the curriculum framework. It was also suggested that an alternative presentation of the English Curriculum under the strands of Oral Language, Reading and Writing would alleviate teachers' concerns and confusion and also ensure the provision of a balanced curriculum (Department of Education and Science 2005, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2005) This report also recommended that further support be provided in relation to the writing process and that detailed direction and guidance should be provided for teachers concerning the teaching, learning and assessment of spelling, phonics and grammar (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2005). The issues which were identified during this review are of importance to the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum as they may have prompted the need for a curriculum reform.

2.5.3 Restructuring of the English Primary School Curriculum (1999)

In 2005 the *Additional Support Material: Structure of the English Curriculum* was published which provided an alternative structure for the English Curriculum using the three strands of reading, writing and oral language (Department of Education and Science 2005). This was a pivotal document which led to the *Revised Primary School Curriculum 1999.* This publication endeavoured to guide teachers on the practical application of the three strands and four strand units in their classroom teaching. The PCSP and the SDPS also developed planning templates for English, in consultation with the NCCA and DES, to aid teachers' planning in the area of English.

However, it is worth highlighting that since the revision of this curriculum in 2005 - the English Curriculum has remained untouched over the last decade. This is despite the fact that Ireland has experienced constant and intense change it its education system, particularly within the area of literacy (Kennedy 2013, p.518).

2.6 The Evolving Nature of Curriculum Discourse

Having outlined a number of noteworthy educational reforms which have occurred over the last number of decades, it is interesting that discourse around curriculum has also undergone significant change and development.

Research into curriculum discourse in Ireland was conducted in 2009 - entitled *Curriculum Development as a Subversive Activity? Discourse and Ideology in the Evolution of Curriculum Policy in Ireland 1980-2005* (Granville 2009)*.* This study conducted critical discourse analysis on a wave of reports and policy documents which were published since the 1990s and examined how the discourse of curriculum has evolved through the identification of a number of patterns of language utilised in official educational statements. It highlighted that there were marked changes both in the context and substance of the discourse. Previously, the dominant discourse in relation to curriculum issues was that of syllabus and examination. More recently, however, curriculum discourse features rhetoric such as change, flexibility and consultation. Granville's (2009, p.149) research investigated the retrenchment in the treatment of change as a concept. It examines early documents' cavalier references to change and innovation to a more cautious tone in the 1990s to a defensive tone over the following decade. This is indicative of the evolutionary nature of curriculum discourse - and how concepts can develop different meanings over a period of time (ibid, p.149). As will become apparent, this research will analyse the macro documents which are relevant to the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. In light of this finding, it may be useful to identify and examine references to change during this process.

2.7 The Development of the Primary Language Curriculum

The development of the Primary Language Curriculum stemmed from a number of factors. This section will provide an insight into the impetus and context which led to its development and subsequent dissemination.

<u>2.7.1 Macro Documents which Influenced the Development of the Primary Language Curriculum</u>

During this examination of curriculum change in Ireland, a number of macro documents and research reports were deemed to be particularly influential and indicated a need for this curriculum change. These macro-documents have certainly contributed to the development of the Primary Language Curriculum.

A number of research reports underpinned the development of the Primary Language Curriculum. According to the Primary Language Curriculum (2015, p.15) two of these reports focus on oral language and literacy for children aged 3-8 years (Shiel et al. 2012, Kennedy et al. 2012) and the third report discusses an integrated language curriculum for children aged 3 - 12 years (Ó'Duibhir and Cummins 2012).

In addition to this, the <u>Primary Curriculum Review</u> which was published in 2005 (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2005), <u>Aistear: Partnership in Action</u> which was published in 2009 (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2009) and the <u>National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Among Children and Young People</u> (Department of Education and Skills 2011), which was published in 2011 were also deemed to be influential macro documents.

As highlighted previously, the *Primary Curriculum Review* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2005) was significant as it provided evidence of teachers' dissatisfaction with the existing English Primary School Curriculum (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 1999). Although the revisions which were made to this curriculum may have alleviated the issues around the use of strands and strand units, the other challenges which were identified by teachers during this review such as inadequate time to cover the curriculum and the development of children's oral language (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2005), are likely to have prevailed. Indeed this has been acknowledged in the Primary Language Curriculum which outlined that 'teachers have called for a less crowded curriculum with a greater emphasis on practice and on supporting progression in children's language learning and development (Department of Education and Skills 2015, p.6). Such issues are indicative of the need for this curriculum change.

The NCCA set up a network called the Primary School Network to work directly with schools in order to focus on many of the issues which arose from the Primary Curriculum Review. An NCCA newsletter, which was published in 2009, suggested that 'a number of schools of differing types of sizes, including those with different languages of instruction' were involved in 'developing materials on re-presentation of the language curriculum and further materials on language planning and teaching (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2009, p.15). The newsletter highlighted that teachers were 'trying out tools to help them to analyse children's stages of language development as a preparation for investigation into teaching and learning approaches' (ibid, p.15).

The *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Among Children and Young People* was also central to this curriculum change. This impacted on the primary sector and brought about a number of significant changes which were important for the development of Primary Language Curriculum. A press release by the Minister of Education in 2011 highlighted the influential nature of this document. The Minister stated, that 'this strategy sets out the road map with concrete targets and informs that will ensure our children, from early childhood to the end of second level, master these key skills' (Department of Education and Skills 2011).

In terms of literacy, this document cited the findings from a range of national and international literacy assessments including the *National Assessments of English Reading, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS),* and *OCED's Programme for International Student Assessments (PISA).* This report highlighted that 'one in ten children in Irish schools has serious difficulties with reading or writing' (Department of Education and Skills 2011, p.12). This was higher amongst children in disadvantaged schools. Assessments suggested that 'migrant students in Ireland performed less well in literacy than their native peers' (Department of Education and Skills 2011, p.65). In addition to this, it stated that:

> The literacy skills of students in Irish primary schools measured by the National Assessments of English Reading, have not improved in over thirty years despite considerable investments in reducing pupil teacher ratios, the introduction of learning support, resource teachers, the provision of better teaching materials and considerable curriculum reform (ibid, p.12).

As a result of such findings, this national strategy document advocated that primary schools place a stronger emphasis on literacy (and numeracy). Circular 56/2011 was subsequently issued to schools, which outlined that adjustments were to be made to the existing recommended timeframe for literacy and numeracy. It stated that from January 2012, all primary schools would be required to 'increase the time spent on the development of literacy skills by one hour overall for language per week'. This directive provides evidence that precedence which was given to the areas of literacy and numeracy as a result of this national strategy.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy also advocated that revisions be made to both the Irish and English curricula to clarify the learning outcomes to be expected of learners (Department of Education and Skills 2011, p.54-55). In addition to this, Aistear, which was introduced in 2009, had never been introduced in a formal context. The revision to the English and Irish Curricula would provide an opportunity to make explicit links to the Aistear framework. This was noted in the *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Among Children and Young People* which recommended that:

> the sections of the curriculum that apply to infant classes reflect more fully the principles underpinning the Aistear curriculum framework to ensure continuity between provision in ECCE settings for three to four-year olds and provision in infant classes (ibid, p.54).

Evidently, this strategy highlights the need for a curriculum change and was central to the subsequent development of the Primary Language Curriculum.

2.7.2 Societal Factors which Influenced the Development of the Primary Language Curriculum

There were also societal factors which influenced the development of the Primary Language Curriculum. As mentioned previously, since the revision of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) in 2005, Ireland has 'experienced constant and intense change in its education system' (Kennedy 2013, p.518). This change has stemmed from a rapid economic and social transformation in Ireland (Lonigan et al. 2009, O'Riain 2014). As the 'Celtic Tiger' progressed, the Irish population increased by 18.2% between the years of 1999 and 2008 (Clancy 2009). According to Clancy (2009, p.95) although historically an

ethnically homogenous society, in 2007 as many as 17 percent of people living in Ireland were born outside of the country. In 2010, a report on *Infants Growing Up in Ireland* highlighted that a total of 27% of mothers and 24% of fathers were not born in Ireland. Because of such demographic changes, language instruction and language acquisition became a much greater concern for the primary school sector.

The recession which followed this period of economic growth has been described as one of the deepest and most sustained crises in Europe and beyond (O'Riain 2014, p.1). Following the 'Celtic Tiger', Ireland has experienced more than five years of austerity and remains 'mired in an economic slump with only fleeting glimpses of economic growth' (ibid, p.1). These factors have profound implications for the educational participation and outcomes of the population as a whole (Clancy 2009, Drudy 2009, O'Riain 2014). Education has to be a key part of the solution to the economic difficulties now facing this country (Drudy 2009). This was identified in the *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Among Children and Young People* (2011, p.99) which also advocated the need for students to attain the necessary language skills 'to ensure employment and economic prosperity in the future.'

The Primary Language Curriculum acknowledges that 'the last two decades have seen significant changes in Irish society and over 200 languages as well as Cant and Irish Sign Language (ISL) being used' (National Council of Curriculum and Assessment 2015, p.6). Evidently, this economic and social turbulence has brought about huge demographic changes which necessitate the need for a curriculum reform.

This section has outlined the macro documents and societal factors which have influenced the development of the Primary Language Curriculum and have led to this important change to the primary education sector. Because this research is cognisant of the challenging and complex nature of curriculum change, it will endeavour to investigate how stakeholders perceive and experience the forthcoming changes facing them as a result of the introduction of the Primary Language Curriculum. In addition to this, whilst this section has identified many of the contributing factors which prompted the development of the Primary Language Curriculum, there are many aspects of the development process which have yet to be examined. In line with the research and embedded research questions which were outlined in the introductory chapter, this study will identify how stakeholders were involved during the various stages of both the development and dissemination of the

Primary Language Curriculum. In doing so, this study will be in a better position to contribute to contemporary educational debate around the area of curriculum change.

2.8 An Overview of the Primary Language Curriculum

Having identified many of the factors which contributed to the development of the Primary Language Curriculum, this section will provide a brief overview of this curriculum. The Primary Language Curriculum differs from Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999) for both English and Irish in several respects.

It is an integrated curriculum which means that the Primary Language Curriculum has the same structure and strands for both languages - English and Irish. This contrasts significantly with its predecessor, which presented English and Irish curriculum as two separate and distinct curricular areas. The report by Ó'Duibhir and Cummins (2012, p.28) argues that, because of this, the Primary School Curriculum fails to deal adequately with the concept of integration across languages:

> While acknowledging other forms of integration no reference is made, for example, to the acquisition of literacy skills in L1 (their first language) that might transfer to L2 (their second language). Similarly, there is no recognition given to the prior learning experiences of native Irish speakers as they engage with the curriculum for English. The Primary School Curriculum compartmentalises languages according to L1, L2 and modern languages without a common structure that would enable children to experience language learning in a more holistic way and that would enable teachers to plan learning experiences more effectively drawing on children's prior learning. It also fails to address the needs of EAL learners.

By adopting an integrated or CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach many of these limitations can be addressed. An integrated language curriculum is based on the premise that 'children transfer certain skills from their first to their second language' and that teachers 'can reinforce these skills and help children to generalise what they have learned in other languages (National Council of Curriculum and Assessment 2015, Duibhir and Cummins 2012, Little 2003). It is argued that by developing their ability to speak, read and write in Irish and English, students' ability to move fluently between languages and their ability to transfer their literacy learning from one language to the other (DES, 2011, p. 12). According to Little (2003, p.5) an integrated language curriculum rests on the argument that languages, including the mother tongue, should be taught partly in relation to one another to enable students to gradually 'develop a sense of their plurilingual identity'. In this way students can develop an understanding of what language learning

entails, so that they are able to respond with informed awareness to the language learning needs they may encounter in later life (ibid, p.5).

There is also a noteworthy structural change around the concept of content objectives, which in the Primary Language Curriculum take on the form of learning outcomes and progression continua. According to the curriculum, the use of learning outcomes shifts the focus from the teacher to the child and his/her learning (National Council of Curriculum and Assessment 2015, p.9). Instead of viewing language learning according to context, it is more productive to approach it from the point of view of the language learner (Ó'Duibhir and Cummins 2012, p.88). As well as this, it helps teachers to make professional judgements about and support children's achievement and progression across both languages (National Council of Curriculum and Assessment 2015, p.8). The use of learning outcomes also supports the recommendation of the *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Among Children and Young People* 'to define clear learning outcomes for literacy' (Department of Education and Skills 2011, p.45). Indeed, it is argued that whilst the content objectives of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) may have helped teachers to understand how the recommended methodologies were to be used, 'it also meant that the learning outcomes that should have been achieved and assessed at each stage were somewhat obscured' (ibid, p.45). There are also far fewer learning outcomes (94) than the previous content objectives (269) of the Primary School Curriculum (1999). This is an attempt to overcome the 'overcrowding' which teachers experienced previously (Department of Education and Skills 2015, p.6). For each strand, the curriculum provides a continuum (map) of significant Progression Milestones and detailed Progression Steps involved in children's language learning and development. This is indicative of a formative assessment approach as it has the potential to enable teachers to determine the learning which has taken place and to guide future teaching and learning. To ensure clarity for the reader, a sample of one such continuum has been included in *Appendix C.*

The Primary Language curriculum also provides an on-line component, in the form of a Primary Language Toolkit. This enables teachers to access support materials practice guides, podcasts, videos and photo galleries to support their use of the Primary Language Curriculum in the school's first and second language (Department of Education and Skills 2015, p.12). This toolkit also provides examples of children's language learning to help teachers 'make professional judgments about, and support children's achievement and progression across both languages' (ibid, p.8). This Support Material replaces the previous *Teacher Guidelines* of the 1999 curriculum.

Having provided an overview of the Primary Language Curriculum, it is evident that this is a huge departure from the previous English and Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999) which will have huge implications for the teaching and learning of languages at primary school level. This understanding of these fundamental differences is necessary for the succeeding investigation of its dissemination. Highlighting the nature of this curriculum change has strengthened the rationale to investigate the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the context which led to the development of the Primary Language Curriculum. This contextual understanding of the educational landscape and influential factors is important and necessary for thoroughly understanding the dissemination process. Having analysed previous episodes of curriculum change such as the development and implementation of both the 1971 and the 1999 curriculum, this chapter has also highlighted the complex challenges which are often evident during such periods.

The examination of previous episodes of implementation of new curricula has highlighted the significance of the economic climate during any period of curriculum reform and how the provision of resources and supports can influence the dissemination and implementation process. This examination has also highlighted how societal, economical and political factors which can also influence curriculum change. This understanding of the factors which can influence change will be important during the investigation of the dissemination the Primary Language Curriculum.

The analysis of the macro documents and societal factors which led to the development of the Primary Language Curriculum has also provided an insight into the nature of this important curriculum change. It will be necessary for this study to examine teachers' perceptions of this change and the factors which influence this. The next chapter will analyse the literature which is currently in existence around curriculum development to provide further insight into the curriculum dissemination process.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse the current literature on curriculum development. As outlined in the introductory chapter, this study identified the development and subsequent dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum as a critical issue which was worthy of investigation. This stemmed from a variety of issues including the paramount importance of effective language instruction at primary school level and also the tendency for curriculum studies to be neglected in educational debate and research. A prominent factor which motivated this research was also the gap or 'significant silences' in contemporary discourse surrounding curriculum change (Sugrue 2004, p. 293), particularly from an Irish perspective. Through examining the literature which is currently in existence around the field of curriculum development, this literature review aims to illuminate many aspects of the research and embedded research questions as outlined in *Section 1.4.*

Firstly, this chapter will provide a summary of the literature map which was continuously developed throughout the review. This will highlight the predominant themes and issues which emerged as well as the linkages which became apparent. This chapter will then provide an outline of the current literature surrounding each of these themes, which were deemed relevant to the overall research question and embedded research questions. As will become apparent, this literature review succeeded in continuously yielding findings which were both relevant and beneficial to the overall study and highlighted the complexities of the curriculum development and dissemination process.

3.2 Literature Map (Figure 3.A)

Organising the Curriculum
(Apple 2004, Bernstein 2000, Fitz et al, 2006, Gleeson 2000, Looney 2001)

Summative and Formative Assessment Trends
(Broadfoot and Black 2004, Clark 2015, Gleeson and O'Donnabháin 2009)

Curriculum Assessment

Classifying the Curriculum
(Bernstein 2003, Fogarty 1991, Scott 2008)

Selecting Items of Knowledge
(Kelly 2009, Moore 2006, Scott 2014, Winch 2013)

Curriculum Design

Process of Curriculum Change
(Ellsworth 2000, Fogarty and Pete 2007, Fullan 2003, McBeath 1997)

Uses of Assessment
(Kelly 2009, NCCA 2005)

Curriculum Change and Reform

Professional Development and Teacher Change
(Flyvbjerg 2001, Grimmett 2014, Guskey 2002)

Change Agents
(Ellsworth 2000, Fullan 2003, Rogers 2003)

Curriculum Development

Teacher Receptivity
(Lee et al. 2011, Lee and Yin 2005, Rogers 2003)

Teacher Change

Resistance to Change
(Guskey 2002, Richardson 2003, Terhart 2013, Zimmerman 2006)

Models of Dissemination
Havelock 1971, Kelly 2009, Rogers 2003, Schon 1971)

Curriculum Dissemination

Effective Professional Development
(Hough et al 2013, Neuman and Wright 2010, Wasik et al. 2006)

Models of Communication Flows
(Lazerfeld and Menzel 1963, Rogers 2003, Sayers 2006)

Contemporary Approaches to Professional Development
(Darling-Hammond 2006, DuFour 2004, Haas 1990, Neuman and Cunningham 2009)

Professional Development

Barriers to Dissemination
(Kelly 2009, Rogers 2003, Stenhouse 1975, Sugrue 2004)

Translation of Theory into Practice
(Flyvbjerg 2001, Hough et al. 2013, Lonnigan et al. 2009,

Tensions facing Professional Developers
Grimmett 2014, Miller and Stewart 2013, Vescio et al. 2008

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The following themes emerged and were identified as being central to the research question as to how teachers experience the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum:

1. Curriculum Design
2. Curriculum Assessment
3. Curriculum Change and Reform
4. Curriculum Dissemination
5. Professional Development
6. Teacher Change

3.3 Curriculum Design

Curriculum design is an important part of the curriculum development process. As outlined in the introductory chapter, it is about all the things we want pupils to learn and about creating all the experiences that children will need in order to learn them (Kelly 2009, Scott 2013, Scott 2014). This is an extremely complex process and curriculum designers are faced with a number of critical decisions including what items of knowledge should be included and excluded, how these should be arranged within the curriculum and the necessary arrangements which are required to ensure effectively delivery of the curriculum (Kelly 2009, Scott 2013, Scott 2014). Given the criticality of curriculum design to the overall curriculum development process, it is necessary to examine the current literature surrounding this theme. This section may provide an insight into the design of the Primary Language Curriculum and thus many aspects of the research question.

Decisions Facing Curriculum Designers

It is likely that the designers of the Primary Language Curriculum were faced with a number of decisions and questions. Scott (2008, p.141) lists a number of critical questions facing post-modern curriculum designers. The following questions have been deemed to be most relevant to the design of the Primary Language Curriculum:

1. What items of knowledge should be included and excluded?
2. What reasons can be given for their inclusion or exclusion?
3. How should those items of knowledge be arranged in a curriculum?
4. How should the curriculum be classified and framed?

<u>3.3.1 The Rationale for Inclusion or Exclusion of Items of Knowledge</u>

Although decisions around the inclusion or exclusion of items of knowledge are complex and challenging, they are central to curriculum design and development. Indeed, Scott (2008, p.19) argues that curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge.

<u>The Importance of Knowledge and the Epistemological Dilemma</u>

Such decisions necessitate that curriculum designers have an understanding of what constitutes knowledge. However, this consideration has been somewhat overlooked in the educational domain over the last number of decades. Literature suggests that over the past thirty years, both in teacher training and in research, there has been an epistemological dilemma in education (Carr 1998, Moore 2006, Scott 2013, Scott 2014). Emphasis has been placed on the processes of learning or the socio-cultural background of the learner (Moore 2006). As a result, knowledge has been sidelined in favour of knowing our knowers - propagating a radical scepticism towards knowledge (Moore 2006, p.6). These new forms of scepticism have contributed to a radical decline in debates about knowledge and truth (Carr 1998, p.xi). This perception of knowledge as arbitrary has a number of implications for curriculum and education. It is argued, for example, that this can result in knowledge blindness - with teaching becoming processual and divorced from the form of knowledge being taught; the role of teachers is then based solely on social position and unrelated to possessing knowledge (Moore 2006, p.7). When enacted as policy, it is argued that these beliefs, which fail to acknowledge the difference between everyday and educational knowledge, can result in the de-professionalisation of teaching (ibid, p.81). Understanding the importance of knowledge is therefore central to curriculum design.

<u>Forms of Knowledge</u>

Paul Hirst (1965) famously identified three forms of knowledge including propositional knowledge (factual knowledge); procedural or practical knowledge and knowledge by acquaintance (knowledge with a direct object such as a place or a work of art) (Moore 2006, Scott 2014, Scott 2008, Winch 2013). Winch (2013, p.134) suggests that a broad understanding of these forms of knowledge enables us to think about curriculum design as the management of growth of expertise within a subject in ways which recognise not only

the different kinds of knowledge involved, but also their relationship. These have greatly influenced the form which the curriculum takes and have been used as a means for dividing the curriculum into discrete subjects (Moore 2006, p.32).

Epistemic Frameworks of Curriculum Design

The epistemic frameworks of foundationalism, instrumentalism and pragmatism contribute to a coherent and comprehensive theory of curriculum and provide a reason or a set of reasons as to why a curriculum should include some items and reject others (Scoot 2008, p.15). As well as providing a justification for what constitutes legitimate or illegitimate knowledge, these epistemological frameworks also contribute to what shape and form the curriculum should take.

For example, a number of foundationalist justifications for the inclusion of items and processes of a curriculum have been developed. These are philosophical, psychological or sociological. The first justification is philosophical, in that logical delineation between domains of knowledge can be identified and curriculum frameworks are therefore logically necessary (Scott 2014, Moore 2006, Scott 2013). The second justification for inclusion of items in a curriculum and the exclusion of others is broadly psychological: individual learners have cognitive or mental capacities which are separate and act separately from other mental capacities and this therefore underpins the blueprint for the curriculum (Scott 2014, Moore 2006). The third type of foundationalist rationale is exemplified by Lawton's (1989) contention that since all societies share a common framework for dividing up their activities, this provides sufficient justification for inclusion of these discrete activities within the curriculum (Moore 2006, Scott 2014).

The instrumentalist justifications for the inclusion or exclusion of items in a curriculum rejects the rationales outlined above. According to Scott (2014, p.19), in this epistemology, any justification for the contents of a curriculum has to rest with some conception of what one is trying to achieve in the delivery of that curriculum. This implies that a set of experiences can be identified which a child is exposed to, and that these lead to the development of knowledge constructs, skills and dispositions which can be utilised by the student to lead a fulfilled life, and which allow everyone else in society to lead a fulfilled life (ibid, p.19). These has led to a variety of instrumentalist curriculum rationales being developed - including autonomous instrumentalism, critical instrumentalism and economic

instrumentalism (Scott 2014, Scott 2013, Young 2008). However, the challenge of identifying a preferred, utopian vision of society and the conditions necessary for the existence of such a society should not be underestimated (Scott 2014, Young 2008). This is why it has been suggested that instrumentalism suffers from the external fallacy wherein knowledge is treated as provisional, contingent and arbitrary and curricular knowledge is identified exclusively in terms of specific social goals (Young 2008).

A number of pragmatic rationales have been developed for the inclusion of items in a curriculum. Dewey's anti-foundationalist philosophy of pragmatism is based on practicality, usefulness and social responsibility and his vision of education as a vehicle for growth (Kadlec 2007, p.66) According to Scott (2014, p.21), a pragmatic justification for including an item in a curriculum and excluding another rests on the consequences of it becoming a part of the curriculum and on how that curriculum plays out in practice, so a judgement is made between two different items on the grounds that one is more likely to be useful that the other. It is possible to argue that an item should be included in the curriculum because it is more practically adequate, in that human practices within which it is subsumed work in a better way as a result of its inclusion (ibid, p.21). However, this approach to education is based on the democratic ideal that every member of society has the opportunity to join the learning community and learn the problem solving strategies applied to individual experience, and thereby find solutions for one's own understanding (Popkewitz 2005, p. 296). As a result it contains risks that learning may become individually isolated and independent from the understanding of others (ibid, p.297). Scott (2014, p.21) argues that it is difficult to make choices about what should be included or excluded as this involves arguing why one theory contributes to a better way of life than the other and that this better way of life is determined by preferences of people in society and substantiated through current networks of power.

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism foregrounds the social in any curriculum rationale and it is this epistemology which has framed the Primary School Curriculum (1999). It is guided by a number of key principles about knowledge and about learning and is based on an understanding that knowledge is constructed by learners and that no new ideas can be grasped without linking them to existing concepts (Beck and Kosnik 2012, Scott 2013).

This stems from Dewey's (1916) ideology that no thought or idea can possibly be conveyed as an idea from one person to another and that learners must interpret new ideas in the context of their present interests and understandings if they are to have thoughts at all (p.188). It is worth noting that from a constructivist viewpoint, the primary purpose of knowledge is to help humans function in the world, not to describe universal reality (Beck and Kosnik 2012, Dewey 1938, Rorty 1979). Other principles are that knowledge is experience-based, and a principle particularly relevant to social constructivism is that learning is social. For example, Beck and Kosnik (2012, p.12) highlight that social constructivists have explored the direct impact of language and culture on learners, an impact that often occurs without dialogue and beyond learners' conscious control (Foucault and Gordon 1980, Vygotsky et al. 1962). Social constructivists are concerned mainly with the effects and influence of the larger society on knowledge formation (Beck and Kosnik 2012, p.12). Despite such strengths, this framework tends to be generally challenged on the grounds that the issues surrounding epistemic relativism are not resolved in a satisfactory manner. Evidently, elements, but not all, of this particular framework could be utilised to provide justification for inclusion or exclusion of items in a curriculum.

The examination of the epistemic frameworks provide a reason or a set of reasons as to why some items should be included in or excluded from a curriculum. Scott (2014, p.25) argues the importance of foregrounding the social in any curriculum and concludes that elements can be taken from each of the social epistemologies to determine what should be included in or excluded from a curriculum.

Implications for this Research

Analysis of literature within this strand has highlighted the complexity of the decisions and considerations which must be made by curriculum designers. This provides evidence of the challenging nature of the curriculum development process This analysis has also provided an insight into the epistemological dilemma regarding the lack of debate as to what constitutes knowledge and how this has been sidelined in favour of the process of the learning and the socio-cultural background of the learner. This section has therefore highlighted the paramount importance of understanding the complexities of knowledge and forms of knowledge during curriculum design. It has also examined the complex process of

deciding what items of knowledge should be included or excluded in a curriculum as well as the reasons for doing so.

Such findings have a number of implications for this study and raise a number of issues regarding the design of the Primary Language Curriculum which may need to be addressed. For example, who had the autonomy for making such critical decisions? What level of involvement did external and internal stakeholders have during this process? Having examined the epistemological dilemma one wonders to what extent external and internal curriculum developers have theorised about knowledge during the design of the Language Curriculum? Given the potential ramifications of knowledge blindness for the teaching profession and the curriculum itself, this has been identified as a paramount issue which merits further investigation throughout the study.

These questions have been listed below:
• Which stakeholders were responsible for the design of the Primary Language Curriculum?
• Which stakeholders were responsible for deciding what items of knowledge be included in, or excluded from, the curriculum?
• What understanding of knowledge was demonstrated during this stage of development?

The investigation of such questions would enable the study to gain a greater insight into many aspects of the design of the Primary Language Curriculum. Evidently, such questions merit examination during this study.

3.3.2 Arranging and Organising the Curriculum

Having examined the rationale as to why certain items should be included or excluded from the curriculum, it is necessary to address another critical consideration facing curriculum developers, namely how such items should be arranged in the curriculum (Scott 2008, p.141). It is important to reiterate that items and forms of knowledge can impact on the overall form that the curriculum takes and are often used as a means for dividing the curriculum into discrete subjects (Moore 2006, p.32). It should be noted that many curriculum theorists feel that the manner in which the curriculum is arranged and how the curriculum is evaluated has taken precedence over the consideration of what should be

taught and why (Beyer and Apple 1998, Looney 2001). This has been identified as a shift towards the technical over the theoretical and it has argued that this paradigm shift has 'infected' curriculum discourse in Ireland (Beyer and Apple 1998, Gleeson 2000, Looney 2001).

According to Gleeson (2000, p.26),

> the domination of the rational technical paradigm has allowed fragmentation and discontinuity to go unchallenged, while macro curriculum issues are neglected.

This research is cognisant that this shift towards the technical is detrimental to curriculum discourse. However the manner in which the curriculum is arranged is an important aspect of curriculum design and is relevant to the research question framing this study. Therefore, the following section will examine a number of curriculum models to provide an insight into this aspect of curriculum design.

Performance and Competence Models

Bernstein identified two models of curriculum which he called performance and competence models (Scott 2008, Bernstein 2003, Bernstein 2000). The performance model originates from the behavioural objectives movement and retains its status as the dominant model today. This model emphasises marked subject boundaries, traditional forms of knowledge, explicit realisation and recognition rules for pedagogic practice and the designation and establishment of strong boundaries between different types of students (Fitz et al. 2006, McLachlan et al. 2013, Scott 2008). According to Scott (2008, p. 4), when this model is in the hands of policy makers it becomes normative and teleological; containing discourses that seem to reflect a politics that offers a break with the past. According to Fitz et al. (2006, p.6) because the focus is upon acquirers' past and future accomplishments, with strong, apparent progression and pacing, evaluation tends to focus on what was missing from their texts in terms of explicit and specific criteria of which they were made aware. As a result, texts became products of their performance to be graded and repair systems made available to those who did not meet the required standards.

A competence based curriculum, in contrast, is a curriculum based on competency standards developed by industry and enterprise, or the community (Fitz et al. 2006).

Indeed, this model has much in common with the institutional discourses of vocational education and training. A prominent distinction between both models is that within the competence model, acquirers have some control over the selection, pacing and sequencing of their curriculum (Bates 2011, Bernstein 2003, Fitz et al. 2006, Scott 2013). This is because content tends to be presented in terms of themes, projects and ranges of experience within a group of acquirers and as a result acquirers tend to have a greater measure of control (Fitz et al. 2006, p.7). This highlights yet another distinction, that the categories of discourse, space and time are weakly classified under the competence model but strongly classified under the performance model (FitzSimons 2002, p.113). There are merits to this approach. For example, freedom and autonomy for teachers and learners to develop curricula that are context and culturally specific is regarded as a necessary condition for innovative curriculum development (Byrne et al. 2013, Kelly 2009). This type of curriculum views the school as a human and social institution that is responsive to its own environment and therefore the curriculum must be permitted to develop in specific ways to fit that environment (Byrne et al. 2013, Kelly 2009).

Despite such merits, it is intriguing that the performance model remains the dominant model within the education system. Literature suggests that this could be as a result of resistance to change (Gleeson and Ó'Donnabhán 2009, Kelly 2009, Scott 2013, Sugrue 2004). Policy makers may be reluctant to move towards a competence model which is less open to accountability measures, thus creating a greater challenge for those stakeholders who can manipulate educational outcomes in order to bring about change (Scott 2008, Scott 2013). Indeed, competence models are relatively less open to public scrutiny and accountability relative to performance models as their products are more difficult to evaluate objectively (FitzSimons 2002, p.113). Scott (2008 p.5) argues that this resistance to change may also stem from what has been described as 'a false consensus on curriculum'; one which has been barely agreed and not debated and which has replaced rigorous debate about curriculum and education (Apple 2004, Apple 2013, Fish 2013, Gottesman 2016, Ota and Erricker 2013, Scott 2008, Ward and Eden 2009). In light of the argument that curriculum studies have been infected by the pursuit of the technical over the theoretical, it is evident that this may have contributed to such a false consensus (Beyer and Apple 1998, Gleeson 2000, Looney 2001). According to Gleeson (2000, p.26), this substantiates previous arguments in relation to knowledge blindness and also provides further justification for the need for increased educational debate about

knowledge and the curriculum. This strengthens the overall aim of this study to contribute to contemporary educational debate around the area of curriculum change through examining the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

3.3.3 The Shape of the Curriculum

Another decision facing curriculum designers is whether they should adopt a linear or spiral approach during the organisation of the curriculum. This influences the overall shape of the curriculum and the format or components that it will incorporate.

Curriculum-as-Product Approach

A number of influential proponents have had an impact on the curriculum as product approach. Franklin Bobbit's (1918) work *The Curriculum,* was highly influential and schools in the US began to model curricula according to principles of scientific management with the goal being educational efficiency; a factory model of education (Cullen and Hill 2013, p.18). Ralph Tyler's work in 1949, the *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction,* refined this further. Though he argued that specifying objectives was the only logical way of determining learning experiences, he did not subscribe to the view that they could be broken down into thousands of detailed educational sub-purposes, because he felt that this would unnecessarily restrict the teacher, and overwhelm their capacity to use them (Scott 2008, p.21). This linear curriculum design became known as a "cause and effect" model. Indeed, the publication of Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives - Handbook1: Cognitive Domain, was hugely influential and introduced a new dimension into this form of curriculum design with its division of objectives into three categories or 'domains' - the cognitive, the affective and psychomotor - offering even greater detail and ambitious classification of objectives in the cognitive domain (Kelly 2009, p.69). Popham (1972, p.31) was another curriculum theorist who argued that the major advantage of such objectives is that they promote increased clarity regarding educational intents. Thus, many of these theorists have been hugely influential to the curriculum-as-product movement. Indeed, as well become apparent, their work continues to impact on contemporary curriculum developments.

The curriculum-as-product model predicated on a positivist certainty, a rational and stable view of reality that lent itself to a mechanical view of learning (Cullen and Hill 2013, p.18).

Within this model, specific outcomes and behaviours are outlined and this provides curriculum developers with a simplistic and linear framework for planning. Curriculum planning, for example, consists of four dimensions; objectives, content or subject matter, methods or procedures and evaluation (Kelly 2009, Kember and McNaught 2007, McLachlan et al. 2013). It is noteworthy that the purposes of the curriculum take pride of place; content for example is selected not for its own sake but for its presumed efficacy at enabling us to achieve those purposes (Kelly 2009, p.21). Thus, within this model, aims and objectives become the central concern for the curriculum design and indeed for curriculum developers. There are a number of advantages associated with this approach. Literature suggests for example, that the use of behavioural objectives inhibits vague general statements of intent, makes assessment more precise, helps to select and structure content and specifies the types and levels of learning in particular subjects (Kelly 2009, Neary 2002, Reid 2012, Scott 2008, Scott 2013). Indeed, it is as a result of such merits that the curriculum-as-product approach became widespread in the 1960s as this model offered clarity of purpose where none previously existed. Thus, having examined the merits of the curriculum-as-product approach, it is possible to gain an insight into how this has become the prominent model in contemporary education. Nonetheless, there are a number of prevailing limitations associated with this approach which also need to be addressed.

Limitations of the Curriculum-as-Product Approach

It is necessary to highlight the many limitations of this approach for a number of reasons. Firstly, this will facilitate a more thorough understanding of the curriculum-as-process approach, on which the Revised Primary School Curriculum (1999) is based. Secondly, It may also provide a rationale as to why certain approaches were selected during the design of the Primary Language Curriculum. Thirdly, it highlights an important issue, that of political manipulation of curriculum.

Within this curriculum-as-product model, education is viewed as the mere transmission of knowledge (Daniels et al. 2012, Kelly 2009, Scott 2008). This conservative view of education has implications for the perception of the learner as passive and receptive, as opposed to an active learner with individual learning styles. The idea of the school as an agency of knowledge transmission raises the question of 'what knowledge?' and in

particular 'what is the knowledge that is the schools' responsibility to transmit?' Kelly (2009, p.64) argues that within this approach the curriculum runs the risk of becoming largely instrumental and open to political manipulation. In other words, schooling becomes a strategy for increasing productivity and students are viewed as mandatory utensils, necessary to ensure its success. This is what has led economists to envision the school as a 'black box' where one must measure the input before students enter the schools and then measure the outputs when "adults enter the labour force" (Apple 2004, p.25). Another limitation is that complex learning outcomes may be neglected at the expense of the more trivial, because it is easier to describe the latter (Scott 2008, Scott 2013). This runs the risk of narrowing the curriculum and particular curriculum areas.

Narrowing the curriculum is a concern as it can lead to an atomistic view of learning, whereby students only need to focus on parts of a topic often failing to interrelate or integrate the learning (Apple 2004, Scott 2014). Another limitation is undoubtedly that an emphasis on learning objectives may hinder the benefits of spontaneous and autonomous learning which could otherwise occur (Daniels et al. 2012, Kelly 2009, Neary 2002, Scott 2008). This stems from the premise that this model is shaped by accountability measures. Literature suggests that within this model, if something cannot be measured, it should not be part of the learning process (Cullen and Hill 2013, p.11). Again, this runs the risk of narrowing curriculum areas and restricting the overall education system. Evidently, there are a number of limitations associated with this approach, and this may have influenced decisions in relation to the organisation of the Primary Language Curriculum.

The Irish Primary School Curriculum Design

This section will briefly outline three design elements of the Revised Primary School Curriculum (1999). This is important as it may influence the organisation and design of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Firstly, as previously outlined, the Irish Primary School Curriculum adopts a constructivist approach to the curriculum, which refers to how reality can be known and therefore how that knowledge can be reflected in the construction of the curriculum (Scott 2008, p.136). This approach also acknowledges that knowledge is local and specific and rejects universalising thought and global narratives (ibid, p.137). In terms of the design of this curriculum, designers must not only decide what items of knowledge should be included

and excluded but also decide how these should be arranged within the curriculum to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum (ibid, p.141). The design must also describe these arrangements. Such decisions are central to the overall design process and will also be important during the design of the Primary Language Curriculum,

Secondly, the Revised Primary School Curriculum (1999) adopts a spiral approach. Rather than viewing learning as linear, it is viewed as a reciprocal activity and social process; a spiral curriculum designed around recurring and evolving ideas (Bruner, Piaget, Dewey). Ideas may be introduced to a student when they enter school and these are continuously developed as the child progresses through the primary school cycle. Having previously outlined the paramount importance of forms of knowledge, it is worth noting that within the process model a discipline is not perceived as a series of singular knowledge elements to be consumed by the learner, but a body of knowledge with its own logical structure (Scott 2008). This prevents the unnecessary narrowing of a discipline area, which was previously identified as a pivotal concern of the product model. However, discourse suggests that this process approach to curriculum is better suited to some curricular areas than others, depending on whether an area is in a divergent rather than in a convergent field (Scott 2008, Cullen and Hill 2013). Stenhouse believes that the humanities, for example, require a hermeneutic process of understanding, as meaning resides not in the object of knowledge but in the process of interpretation (Scott 2008, p.39). This is particularly relevant to the Primary Language Curriculum and decisions in relation to its organisation may need to reflect on this.

Thirdly, having acknowledged the paramount importance of how the learner is perceived within the curriculum design, it is imperative to note that the student is perceived as an active and individual learner as opposed to a passive learner. A prominent feature of the Revised Primary School Curriculum (1999) is that it aims to recognise the uniqueness and potential of each child (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 1999, p.6).

In conclusion, analysis of this strand has yielded a number of relevant findings in relation to the curriculum as product and curriculum as process models. This analysis has also highlighted an important issue, that the shift towards the technical in curriculum discourse has resulted in macro curriculum issues being neglected. This provides evidence of a void

in contemporary discourse, and calls attention to the importance of contributing to debate on curriculum theory.

<u>Implications for this Research</u>

Literature surrounding the arrangement and organisation of curricula has been useful in providing an insight into this important element of curriculum design and thus the overall curriculum development process. However, the analysis of this strand of curriculum design raises a number of questions in relation to the design of the Primary Language Curriculum. For example:

• What level of debate or discussion surrounded the arrangement and organisation of this curriculum?

• Who participated in this debate and to what extent?

• Did the debate focus on technical or theoretical aspects of curriculum development?

• Who made decisions in relation to the arrangement and organisation of the Primary Language Curriculum?

• What level of consideration was given to the design of its predecessor during the organisation of the Primary Language Curriculum?

• Does the Primary Language Curriculum coincide with or contradict the design elements of the 1999 Primary School Curriculum such as the spiral approach to learning?

These questions have been identified as notable voids in research and may need to be investigated during this study.

<u>3.3.4 Classifying and Framing the Curriculum</u>

The curriculum design process is also concerned with classifying and framing the curriculum. A curriculum may be understood as either strongly or weakly classified and as either strongly or weakly framed (Scott 2008, p.76). This is a prominent principle of the work of Bernstein who defines a strongly classified curriculum as having clearly delineated domains of knowledge with strong boundaries between them, and a weakly classified curriculum as having weak boundaries between the different knowledge domains (Bernstein 2003). A strongly framed curriculum is defined as a programme of study in which teacher and student have limited control over the selection of items and the way it is organised in respect of the pedagogical relationship (Bernstein 2003, Scott 2014, Scott 2008). A weakly framed curriculum is characterised by greater control by teacher and

student over the selection of content, the way it is organised and its pacing (Bernstein 2003, Scott 2014, Scott 2008).

The concept of teacher autonomy will be addressed later in the chapter; however, it is evident that the classification and framing of a curriculum will influence the level of autonomy held by teacher. Autonomous teachers are regarded as "thinkers who make many decisions that create the curriculum in classrooms", whereas teachers without autonomy play the role of "rather passive people who implement the curriculum (McCutcheon 1997, Morgado and Sousa 2010). If the curriculum design is weakly classified and framed, teachers will have greater autonomy and vice versa.

During the previous examination of the organisation of the curriculum, reference was made to the **lack of debate** surrounding curriculum theory which has led to a false consensus on curriculum (Apple 2004, Apple 2013, Fish 2013, Gottesman 2016, Ota and Erricker 2013, Scott 2008, Ward and Eden 2009). According to Ota and Erricker (2013, p.52) the 'false consensus that we all agree on the basic goals of education' gives the impression that everyone is compliant, that monitoring is inoffensive and that resistance is futile. Scott (2008, p.5) argues that

> this consensus operates at all levels of the education system, and can be expressed in terms of a number of propositions; traditional knowledge forms and strong insulations between them need to be preserved; each of these knowledge forms can be expressed in terms of lower- and higher-level domains and the latter have to be taught before the former and sequenced correctly; certain groups of children are better able to access the curriculum than other children, and thus a differentiated curriculum is necessary to meet the needs of all school learners; the teacher's role is to impart this body of knowledge in the most efficient and effective way, and thus their brief can concern itself not with the ends to which education is directed, but only with the means for its efficient delivery; and the school's role is to deliver a public service that meets the targets set for it by governments.

This is particularly true for the classification and framing of curriculum, as Bernstein (2003, p.23) argues that strong boundaries and clear insulations can be said to characterise this consensus (Scott 2008, p.5):

> Punctuations are written by power relations that establish, as the order of things, distinct subjects through distinct voices. Indeed, insulation is the means whereby the cultural is transformed into the natural, the contingent into the necessary, the past into the present, the present into the future (Bernstein 2003, p.23).

Having highlighted the lack of debate around curriculum theory and the ramifications of this false consensus, the importance of contributing to contemporary debate within the field of curriculum studies becomes increasingly apparent. This substantiates the overall aim of conducting a study of this nature.

As with all curricula, the classification and framing of the Primary Language Curriculum is an important issue. As detailed in the previous chapter, the Primary Language Curriculum is distinct from its predecessor as it provides a unique approach for English and Irish language instruction in an integrated manner. Fogarty (1991) identifies ten models of curriculum integration which range from strongly classified and strongly framed to weakly classified and weakly framed (Fogarty 1991, Scott 2008, p.77), as follows:

1) A fragmented curriculum

2) A connected curriculum

3) A nested curriculum

4) A sequenced curriculum

5) A shared curriculum

6) A webbed curriculum

7) A threaded curriculum

8) An integrated curriculum

9) An immersed curriculum

10) A networked approach to curriculum planning

Within the integrated curriculum model, on which the Primary Language Curriculum is based, disciplinary boundaries begin to dissolve, as teachers work in interdisciplinary teams to plan units round overlapping concepts and themes (Fogarty 1991, Scott 2008, Scott 2013).

Implications for this Research

The examination of this strand has raised a number of issues regarding the design of the Primary Language Curriculum, and in particular the classification and framing of it. A number of questions have been identified which may need to be addressed in this study:

1. What was the rationale which led to the classification and framing of the Primary Language Curriculum?

2. What are teachers' perceptions of the classification and framing of the Primary Language Curriculum?
3. To what extent was this issue debated during the consultation process?
4. How do teachers perceive their level of autonomy during this process?

3.4 Curriculum Assessment

Curriculum assessment is an important consideration during curriculum development. Given that curriculum drives instruction and assessment methods (Clark 2015, Clark 2014, Scottish Government 2013, Victoria State Government 2009), it is apparent that this theme is closely linked to other strands such as curriculum design, curriculum change, and curriculum dissemination. In terms of curriculum discourse and debate, assessment has occupied centre stage in education reform over the last decade (Looney and Klenowski 2015, Shavelson et al. 2015). The growth in assessment activity as a political and policy tool and its consequent prominence as a public issue has led researchers to describe this period as 'the assessment era' (Braun 2016). An overview of this theme is therefore necessary to gain a thorough understanding of the process of curriculum development.

This section will analyse literature on curriculum assessment. Assessment is very relevant to the development of the Primary Language Curriculum, which advocates a different approach to that of its predecessors. As was highlighted in *Chapter 2,* the curriculum outlines a set of learning outcomes (94) and also provides a continuum (map) of significant Progression Milestones and detailed Progression Steps involved in children's language learning and development to enable teachers to determine the learning which has taken place and to guide future teaching and learning. This is a departure from the previous content objectives (269) which were outlined in Primary School Curriculum (1999). This important distinction may influence teachers' perceptions of the curriculum and therefore their overall experience of the dissemination process.

The Distinction between Curriculum Evaluation and Curriculum Assessment

It is necessary to firstly outline the distinction between assessment and evaluation. In practice these terms are often used interchangeably; however there is an important distinction between them, which should not be overlooked. Evaluation refers to the process by which a judgement is made about the worth or merit of a particular initiative

(Kelly 2009, Melrose 2015). Evaluation also addresses whether those interpreting the assessment information understand it and are aware of its limitations (Stobart 2010). Assessment, however, is about building a picture over time about a child's progress and/or achievement in learning across the curriculum (Assessment. 2007, p.7). It refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers - and by their students in assessing themselves - that provide information about such progress (Braun 2016, Scott et al. 2016).

3.4.1 Various Uses of Assessment

Kelly (2009, p.151) argues that assessment has a number of different uses, and these have been summarised in *Table 3.I* below. It is worth noting that a great deal of assessment research literature centers on improving the methodologies of well-established assessment techniques, rather than questioning either the validity of the approach itself or its suitability for the purpose in question (Braun 2016, Broadfoot and Black 2004, Clark 2015, Havnes et al. 2007, Shewbridge et al. 2014).

| *Table 3.I* Various Uses of Assessment ||
Who benefits?	Use of Assessment?
1. Educationally	Can be used as a means of quality control to maintain and raise standards.
2. Administratively	Can be used to select pupils for different types and levels of schooling - 'gate-keeping' function.
3. Politically	Can be used as a mechanism for changing and controlling the curriculum.

Table 3.1 Kelly (2009, p.151)

1. Assessment can have an educational purpose and be used as a means of quality control to maintain and raise standards (Black and William 1998, Braun 2016, Irons 2008, Kelly 2009). Research suggests that the effective use of formative assessment can significantly improve standards (Black and William 1998, Kelly 2009, Shavelson et al. 2008, Weedon et al. 2008).

2. Assessment can also have a practical and administrative function and can be used to select pupils for different types and levels of schooling (Kelly 2009). The Leaving Certificate Examination and CAO application process are prime examples of this.

Assessment can also be used as a diagnostic device to highlight learning difficulties which a pupil may have (Kelly 2009, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2007).

3. Assessment can also have a political purpose (Havnes et al. 2007, Kelly 2009, Shavelson et al. 2008). Within this assessment era, assessment can be used a powerful mechanism for changing and controlling the curriculum (Kelly 2009). Assessment has become a major policy lever for improving education through comparisons between schools against standards (Shavelson et al. 2008, p.296). Havenes et al. (2007, p.29) describes this lever as mediating the relationships between educational priorities and the accountability concerns advocated by political authorities. The potential of assessment to act as a policy lever stems from the manner in which assessment serves as a communicative device between the world of education and that of the wider society (Broadfoot and Black 2004, p.9). This spectrum of communication ranges from the formal to informal and can include high-stakes public examinations, national monitoring, individual job interviews and school reports (ibid, p.9). Summative assessment outcomes tend to be the focus of public debates in relation to education, particularly within the political arena (Sugrue and Gleeson 2004, Kelly 2009). However, it should be noted that summative assessment data can be unreliable and lead to skewed or inaccurate conclusions if not interpreted or utilised in a valid manner (Knight 2002). According to Havnes et al. (2007, p.59), the rationale for assessment approaches are often rooted in politics and not in education and in the ongoing discourse educationalists have had difficulties making themselves heard (Havnes et al. 2007, p.59). This provides evidence of another gap in curriculum discourse. This could also be perceived as a further example of the false consensus on curriculum theory which gives the impression that everyone is compliant with monitoring and accountability (Ota and Erricker 2013, p. 52). Political authorities can exert power on educational practice through assessment policies, and these policies overrule the teachers' own priorities concerning what is important to teach (Havnes et al. 2007, p.30). An OECD review which was conducted in 2013 revealed that there was a limited use of innovative assessment approaches and prominence of traditional knowledge and skills test (Shewbridge et al. 2014, p.165). The lack of debate around the purpose and validity of assessment in curriculum may have contributed to such assessment trends in education.

3.4.2 Summative and Formative Assessment Trends in Curriculum Development and Discourse

There has been a distinct shift in emphasis away from summative assessment and towards formative assessment at the turn of the last century (Andrade and Cizek 2010, Braun 2016, Black and William 1998, Havenes et al. 2011, Irons 2008, Kelly 2009, NCCA 2007).

It is necessary to highlight the distinction between summative and formative assessment:

- <u>Summative assessment</u> generally involves assessing a student's learning at the end of given period and emphasis tends to be on measuring a child's cumulative progress towards curriculum objectives (Black and William 1998, NCCA 2007). Summative assessment procedures include written or oral questioning, end of term tests or projects, course grades and standardised assessments.

- <u>Formative assessment</u> takes place on a continuous basis. It is conducted by the teacher with the intent of informing the teacher and students as to the gap between what students know and can do and what they are expected to know and be able to do with immediate and informative feedback (Shavelson et al. 2008, p.300). Formative assessment procedures include either written or oral feedback, self-assessment, observation and portfolios (NCCA 2007, Shavelson et al. 2008).

Although both terms are often labelled or described as <u>assessment of</u> and <u>assessment for</u> learning, such terminology refers only to the purpose for which the assessment is carried out rather than the function it actually serves (Black 2015, Harrison 2005, Lee and William 2003).

The shift towards formative assessment has contributed towards a new understanding of assessment in the education sector. As highlighted above, the Primary Language Curriculum advocates a formative assessment approach through the use of the progression milestones and continuum map. This approach may have been influenced by contemporary assessment trends.

3.4.3 What,Why, When and How do we assess?

Clarke (2015, p.100) addresses the important questions of what, why, when and how we assess when utilising a formative assessment approach? Each of these questions is important during the curriculum development process and may have been posed during the design of the Primary Language Curriculum. These have been briefly summarised in *Figure 3.B* below:

Figure 3.B What, Why, When and How do we Assess?

What do we assess?

Knowledge and understanding, skills, abilities and capabilities

Good learning inside and beyond school

Why do we assess?

Facilitates high quality interaction and feedback which makes students' tacit knowledge visible as evidence that may be used to close the gap between a student's current level of understanding and the desired level of knowledge required to meet standards

When do we assess?

1) as part of ongoing learning and teaching (synchronous feedback)

2) periodically (from time to time) (asynchronous feedback)

3) at transitions

How do we assess?

1) Methods which prepare students for productive pair and group work, self-assessment

2) methods of evidence gathering

Figure 3.B Clark (2015, p.100)

3.4.4 Challenges Associated with Formative Assessment

There are a number of challenges associated with formative assessment. Given that many of the changes to curriculum assessment which were incorporated into the Primary Language Curriculum are based on a formative assessment approach, it is important to acknowledge these. Adopting formative assessment practices is difficult because it involves a change in the way in which teachers relate to their students and the ways in which they behave in the classroom (Clark 2015, p.171). The development of relevant and rich formative assessment requires a substantial investment in teacher time for development, administration and feedback on the assessments (Andrade and Cizek 2010). Another challenge is that formative assessment requires a considerable investment in time - to plan and conduct the activity, and to interpret the assessment to inform and refine the next instructional steps for teachers and learners (Andrade and Cizek 2010, Broadfoot and Black 2004, Irons 2008, Weeden et al. 2002).

The analysis of Curriculum Assessment has enabled the study to gain an insight into many of the decisions facing curriculum developers in relation to assessment. It has also highlighted contemporary assessment trends in the education sector. A number of issues were identified during this process. For example, there is a lack of debate surrounding the appropriate and valid use of assessment approaches, which can often be used for political rather than educational purposes. As a result, many decisions surrounding assessment can occur outside the education area and stem from political motives. In addition to this, despite trends towards formative assessment approaches, adopting formative assessment practices can be challenging for teachers. These challenges also need to be raised in contemporary debates to ensure that these are addressed and overcome.

Implications for this Research

Curriculum Assessment is an important component of the Primary Language Curriculum, and the following questions therefore merit investigation during this study:
1. How do teachers perceive the assessment approach which is advocated in association with the Primary Language Curriculum?
2. How do teachers feel they will adapt to the forthcoming changes and challenges associated with a new assessment approach?

3. What aspects of assessment were addressed during the consultation process and debates prior to the development of the Primary Language Curriculum?
4. Who was involved in decisions regarding the Primary Language Curriculum assessment approach?

3.5 Curriculum Change and Reform

The theme of Curriculum Change and Reform emerged as a central component of curriculum development. Having previously examined the complexities of Curriculum Design and Curriculum Assessment, analysis of this strand was particularly useful in identifying the process of change and reform which took place during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. It also facilitated an understanding of the various roles and responsibilities of stakeholders during this process.

Fullan's model of educational change offers a simple model for understanding a complex process of curriculum change (Fogarty and Pete 2007). This model views every stakeholder in the educational change process as a change agent (Ellsworth 2000). This perception is important and ensures that there is potential for true and meaningful change through building coalitions with other change agents both within one's own group and across groups (Ellsworth 2000, Fogarty and Pete 2007, Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, Fullan 2003). It is worth noting that curriculum change cannot be achieved simply by producing new curriculum statements (Murphy 2004). The teacher's role is central to any attempt at curriculum change and or development (Kelly 2009, p.17). Analysis of this theme will provide an outline of the stages of curriculum change, an examination of the interactive factors affecting implementation as well as the challenges inhibiting curriculum change and reform. This section will conclude by examining the implications for the Primary Language Curriculum.

3.5.1 Stages of Curriculum Change and Reform

The change process is often seen in three almost self-explanatory stages, as illustrated in *Figure 3.C* below (McBeath 1997, Ellsworth 2000, Fogarty and Pete 2007, Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991). Literature stresses the broadness and interconnectivity of each of these stages; it is not a linear process but one where numerous factors operate at each

phase, feeding back and altering decisions made at previous stages (Fullan 1999, Fullan and Miles 1992, Fullan 2003):

Figure 3.C The Three 'I's: Initiate, Implement, Institutionalise
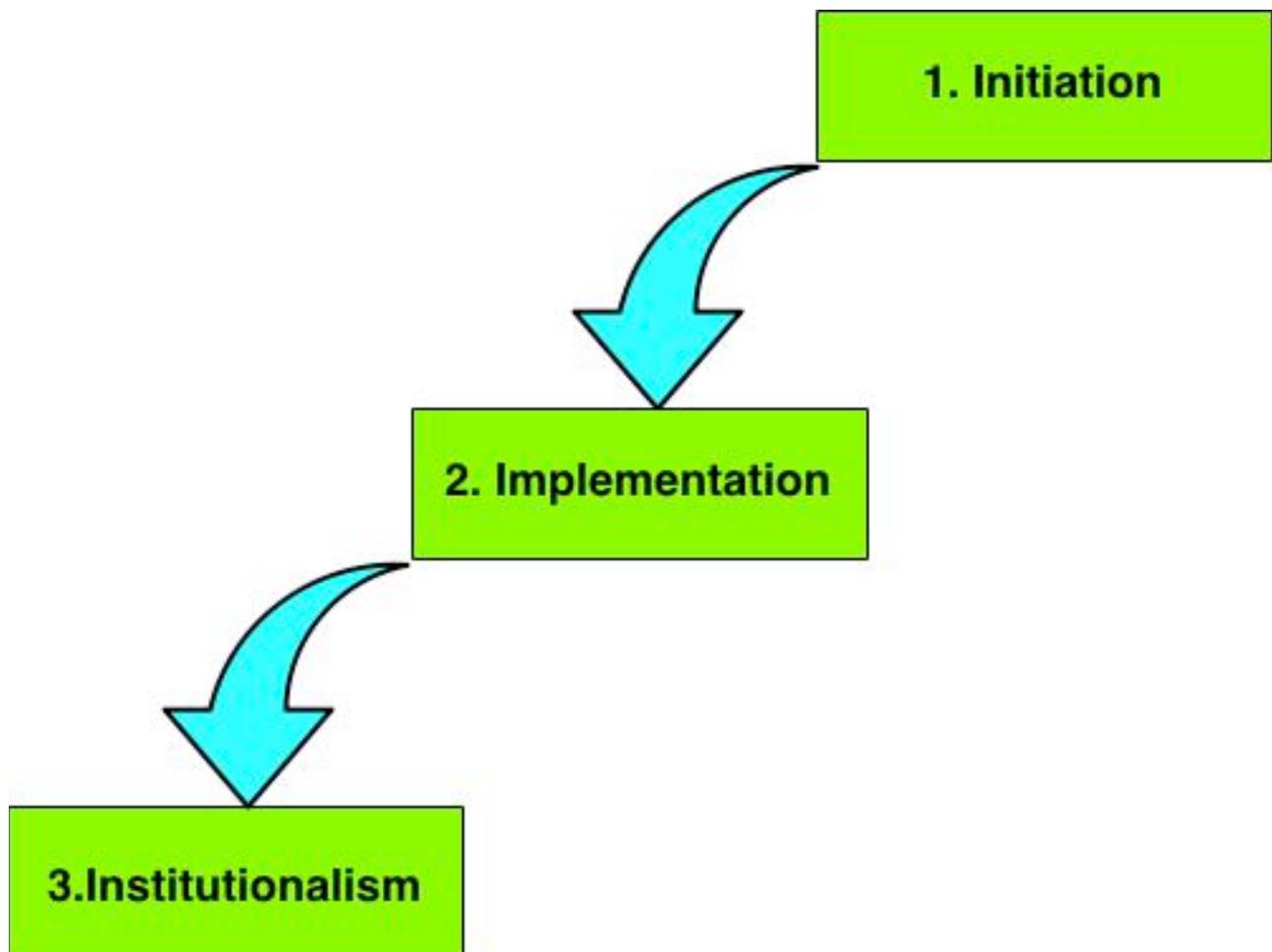
Figure 3.C *Adapted from Fullan (1999), Fullan and Miles (1992), Fullan (2003)*

3.5.2 Initiation

The initiation phase is an essential aspect of curriculum reform. It is particularly relevant to the study as the initiation of the Primary Language Curriculum is a fundamental part of the dissemination process under review. According to McBeath (1997, p.39) initiation consists of all the decisions and activities which occur before the change is put into place in the classroom.

The initiation of an innovation requires planning an introductory awareness that establishes the context, goals, process and timeline for all who are involved (Fogarty and Pete 2007, p.9). Building awareness is an important aspect of the Initiation Phase of curriculum change. According to Rogers (2003, p.173), there are three types of knowledge about how an innovation works:

1. Awareness knowledge is the information that an innovation exists

2. How-to-knowledge is the information necessary to use an innovation properly

3. Principles knowledge is the information dealing with the functioning principles underlying how an innovation works

It is interesting that most change agents tend to concentrate their efforts on creating awareness-knowledge, rather than on the how-to stage, arguably the most essential knowledge for those beginning to implement an initiative (Rogers 2003, p.173). Change agents must often deal with problems of information overload. By understanding the needs of the clients, a change agent can selectively transmit only information that is relevant (Rogers 2003, p.369) The Initiation Phase also calls for inclusion of all stakeholders, extending invitations for them to participate, question, acknowledge concerns, and finally announce their level of commitment for change (Fogarty and Pete 2007, p.9).

In terms of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum, it will be interesting to investigate where change agents focus their efforts during the Initiation Phase of reform and what they deem to be the most relevant information. This study will endeavour to examine whether emphasis is placed on awareness knowledge in relation to the existence of the Primary Language Curriculum, on how-to-knowledge in relation to the implementation of this curriculum in practice, or on the principles knowledge of the philosophies and principles which underpin the curriculum.

3.5.3 Implementation

Implementation involves putting the curriculum change into actual use in the classroom. Within this phase, models are introduced through sustained, job-embedded professional development that executes the innovation with integrity and provides the needed input to support the change (Fogarty and Pete 2007, p.10). It is essential that attention is given to the appropriate practice, feedback and coaching needed to ensure success.

Fullan has devised a list of interactive factors which affect implementation and these have been organised into three general categories as outlined in *Table 3.II* below; Characteristics of Change, Local Characteristics and External Factors (Fullan 2002).

Table 3.II Interactive Factors Affecting Implementation

Interactive Factors Affecting Implementation		
Characteristics of Change	**Local Factors**	**External Factors**
1. Need 2. Clarity 3. Complexity 4. Quality/Practicality	5. District 6. Community 7. Principal 8. Teacher	9. Government and other agencies

Table 3.II Adapted from Fullan (2002)

This list has been deemed relevant to the research question, particularly in light of the argument that a weakness or a lack of readiness in any one of them, in any educational setting, or in any new innovation will have repercussions on how effectively the change is being handled and how teachers are coping with it (Fogarty and Pete 2007, p.11). Given the importance of this issue, consideration should be given to each of these factors during the development, dissemination and implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum, particularly as failure to do so could be identified as a potential barrier to educational change (ibid, p.11). However, it should be acknowledged that the strongest influences on curriculum reform agendas tend to be external ones (McBeath 1997, p.14). The most obvious of these are advocacy from central administrators, new policy and funds and external change agents - emanating from government and other agencies (ibid, p.14). As a result, these tend to have a powerful influence on the nature and tone of the innovation. In practice, it is alarming that these external factors tend be given greater precedence than other characteristics and local factors, which are often overlooked by central administrators and curriculum developers. In light of the findings that each of the above factors impacts on successful educational change, these will need to be examined during the research study.

3.5.4 Institutionalisation

The third stage refers to those processes and decisions which lead to the change being 'built in' as an ongoing part of the learning environment. It is concerned with establishing accountability for the continued use of the innovation (Ellsworth 2000). This is a challenging process, particularly as the institutionalisation of change means that the initial innovation permeates every aspect of the institution becoming ingrained in its very principles, practices and policies (Fogarty and Pete 2007, p.10). This is a complex and challenging process and substantiates why Fullan perceives educational change as a long-term interactive process in which any stage "may be in the works for years" (Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, McBeath 1997).

3.5.5 Change Agents of the Primary Language Curriculum

Every stakeholder in the educational change process has been described as a change agent (Ellsworth 2000, Fullan 2003). One main role of the change agent is to facilitate the flow of innovations, to ensure that the innovation, development or in this instance the curriculum reaches the correct audience (Rogers 2003, p.173).

Rogers (2003, p.369) outlines the seven roles which can be identified for the change agent in the process of introducing an innovation, as follows:

1. To develop a need for change

The change agent seeks out alternative solutions to existing problems and may assure clients that they are capable of confronting these problems through acknowledging need for change.

2. To establish an information exchange relationship

Once the need for change is accepted, the change agent must establish rapport with those clients.

3. To diagnose problems

The change agent is responsible for viewing the existing situation in order to diagnose problems of existing approach

4. To create an intent to change in the client

The change agent seeks to motivate their interests in the innovation and explores the various avenues for them to achieve their goals

5. To translate an intent into action

Based on the recommendations, a change agent seeks to influence their clients' behaviour

6. To stabilise adoption and prevent discontinuance

The change agent tries to stabilise the new behaviour through reinforcing messages to those who have adopted new behaviours

7. To achieve a terminal relationship

The change agent seeks to shift the clients from a position of reliance on the change agent to one of self-reliance

As well as this, there are certain factors which influence change agent success (Rogers 2003, p.373). These include

• Change Agent Effort

• Client Orientation and

• Compatibility with Clients' Needs

• Change Agent Empathy

Critique of this discourse has facilitated the identification of the change agents of the Primary Language Curriculum. It has also encouraged the researcher to investigate the level of influence which those change agents have demonstrated to date. According to a report on sustainability, stakeholders in education can be organised into two groups; internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are those who work within the school system on a daily basis and have a vested interest in the successful running of any given programme, initiative or system (RMC Research Corporartion 2009, p.5). External stakeholders are those outside the day-to-day work of the schools who have a strong interest in school outcomes (ibid, p.5). This substantiates previous findings in relation to local and external factors which influence the implementation of an innovation.

Analysis of the literature surrounding this theme has illuminated many aspects of curriculum change and reform process. It has also highlighted the interactive factors which influence this process and the role of the various change agents during periods of educational change. This is central to the overall research question.

Implications for this Research

Analysis of this theme has illuminated many aspects of the curriculum change process so far. This study will focus predominantly on the Initiation Phase of curriculum reform and the

beginning of the Implementation Phase. A number of prevailing questions have been identified during this section of the literature review which require further examination during this research study, as follows:

1. What efforts were made to include internal stakeholders in the Initiation Phase of curriculum change in association with the Primary Language Curriculum?

2. What level of engagement did internal stakeholders demonstrate during this phase?

3. What interactive factors were influential during the reform of the Primary Language Curriculum?

4. Who are the change agents of the Primary Language Curriculum and what was the extent of their role in this curriculum reform?

Addressing such questions would be beneficial to the overall research and would enhance the overall understanding of the research question.

3.6 Curriculum Dissemination

The theme of Curriculum Dissemination is critical to the overall field of curriculum development. It is perceived as a central change strategy which brings about communication and interaction between planners and implementers and is integral to each stage of curriculum change (Logue 2010, Margerum 2011, Rogers 2003, Tidd 2010) According to McBeath (1997, p.38) in the 1960s and 1970s the terms dissemination and diffusion were used virtually interchangeably and referred to the spread of new knowledge or new techniques to those who used them. <u>Diffusion</u> was seen as the spontaneous, unplanned, spread of new ideas which typically involved a two-way communication of information, effected by an exchange of ideas between individuals (McBeath 1997, Rogers 2003).

In contrast, <u>dissemination</u> indicates planned, directed and managed pathways of the transmission of new educational ideas and practices from their point of production to all locations of potential implementation (Logue 2010, Rogers 2003). This is indicative of a shift from an unplanned drift to deliberate planning, from random evolution to positive engineering (Kelly 2009, p.125). Interest in dissemination sharpened in the 1970s when it became evident that, in spite of a large investment of time, money and ideas poured into innovative curriculum development, very little significant change had occurred in education institutions (Fullan 1993, McBeath 1997, Rogers 2003, Tidd 2010).

Current understandings of dissemination facilitate a more thorough analysis of planning, production, movement and transition which are necessary for understanding the overall curriculum development process. This is a central concern of the research study.

3.6.1 Centralised and Decentralised Models of Dissemination

It is necessary to provide an overview of both centralised and decentralised models of dissemination. This is particularly relevant as many problems for programmes or initiatives have arisen from the models of dissemination which have been adopted (Kelly 2009, Rogers 2003). It is also important to firstly acknowledge a limitation, that much of the research around dissemination stems from spheres other then education and this has given rise to criticisms from within the education sector (Kelly 2009, p.126). However, given the centrality of models of dissemination to the overall research question, and given that they provide an insight into understanding problems of disseminating educational innovation, they were deemed to be particularly beneficial in exploring many aspects of the research question. This also strengthens the rationale for conducting a study into this important topic, which is often neglected in educational research.

For several decades the classical dissemination model has dominated the thinking of scholars, policy makers, and change agencies (Rogers 2003, p.394). In this model, which is relatively centralised, the innovation originates from some expert source and this source then disseminates the innovation as a uniform package to potential adopters who accept or reject the innovation (ibid, p.395). However, this model was challenged and criticised by Schon (1971) because of its assumption that innovations should originate from a centralised, expert source and then diffuse to others. It fails to capture the complexity of relatively decentralised systems in which innovations originate from numerous local sources and evolve as they disseminate via horizontal networks (Logue 2010, Margerum 2011, Rogers 2003, Tidd 2010). Centralised diffusion systems are based on a more linear, one-way model of communication; and dissemination flows from the top down, from experts to users. Decentralised diffusion systems more closely follow a convergence model of communication, in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding (Logue 2010, Margerum 2011, Rogers 2003, Tidd 2010). In recent years, scholars have come to realise that dissemination ranges on a continuum and in reality is usually some hybrid combination of certain

elements of a centralised and of a decentralised system (Logue 2010, Margerum 2011, Rogers 2003, Tidd 2010).

Schon (1971) and Havelock (1971) Models of Dissemination.

Two major attempts have been made to identify different models of dissemination - those by Schon (1971) and Havelock (1971) (Carl 2009, Havelock et al. 1971, Kelly 2009, Rogers 2003, Schon 1971). These offer a base for understanding the problems of disseminating educational innovations (Kelly 2009, p.126). It is not unreasonable to perceive Schon's models as different versions of what is fundamentally a centre-periphery approach and Havelock's models as an attempt to take us beyond the notion that dissemination must always assume a one-way, centre-to-periphery process (ibid, p.127). In light of the complexity of this issue, and to highlight the distinctions between each a number of diagrams have been designed and adapted by the researcher to highlight the various approaches to dissemination.

Figure 3.D Schon's (1971) Models of Dissemination

Schon's Models of Dissemination
A Centre Periphery Approach

1. Centre-Periphery Model

Centre
Innovation is planned and prepared in detail

Process of dissemination is one way: from centre out to consumers on periphery

2. Proliferation of Centres Model

Primary Centre
Specialises in training, deployment, support, monitoring and management

Secondary Centre
Extending the reach and efficiency of the primary centre

Secondary Centre
Supporting and extending work of central development team

3. Shifting Centres Model

No established Message

Survival Prone

Absence of Established Centre

Centres rise and fall around new ideas and leaders

Self-Transformation

Figure 3.D *Adapted from Carl (2009), Havelock et al. (1971), Kelly (2009), Rogers (2003) and Schon (1971)*

As is evident from *Figure 3.D,* Schon identified three models of dissemination:

1. Centre-Periphery Model

The Centre-Periphery Model assumes that the process of dissemination must be centrally controlled and managed and that the innovation is planned and prepared in detail prior to its dissemination. The process of that dissemination is one way - from the centre out to the consumer (Kelly 2009, p.127). In addition to this, the effectiveness of this approach depends on several factors including the strength of the central resources as well as the number of points on the periphery that are to be reached (ibid, p.127).

2. Proliferation of Centres Model

This model is adapted in response to the first model. The distribution of information now comes from both primary and secondary centres, which have been created to extend both the reach and the efficiency of the primary centre. As is evident from *Figure 3.D,* the creation of secondary centres impacts significantly on the role of the primary centre which now specialises in training, deployment, support, monitoring and management (Carl 2009). It is noteworthy that the adoption of this kind of model represents an acknowledgement that attention has been given to the process of dissemination itself and not just the details of the innovation to be disseminated (Kelly 2009, p.127). Indeed, findings suggest that this model has been associated with the revision of the Junior Cert Physical Education (JCPE) syllabus. For example, within the first stage of dissemination a copy of the revised JCPE syllabus was sent from the DES to the principal of every post-primary school in Ireland and the in-school distribution of the syllabus was at the discretion of the school and particularly the principal (Halbert and Phail 2010).

3. Shifting Centres Model

As is evident from *Figure 3.D,* there are a number of noteworthy distinctions between this model and the previous models outlined. The absence of an established centre, for example is a critical consideration. The process for dissemination is totally reversed in this model and problems arising in the classroom are sent through to to the central authority, from which proposals and advice may develop (Carl 2009). According to Kelly (2009, p.127), this model was posited to explain the spread, witnessed in recent years, of ideas such as those of civil rights, black power, disarmament and student activism; in

other words changes of values and attitudes of a more subtle and less deliberate kind. It is also a model which appears to be more successful at explaining how unplanned diffusion occurs rather than offering a strategy for planned dissemination (ibid, p.127).

Figure 3.E Havelock's (1971) Models of Dissemination

Havelock's Models of Dissemination

1. Research Development and Diffusion (R, D & D) Model

Innovation developed to resolve that problem

Developer identifies problem

Passive recipient of the innovation developed

2. Social Interaction (SI) Model

Target System: Success or Failure will hinge on the channels of communication

Needs of consumer determined by central planner

Key to the adoption and implementation of the innovation is the social climate of the receiving body

3. Problem Solving (PS) Model

Process of innovation initiated by consumer Mutual Collaboration

Problem identified by consumer

External Support Agent: Outside help recruited by consumer

Figure 3.E *Adapted from Carl (2009), Havelock et al. (1971), Kelly (2009), Rogers (2003) and Schon (1971)*

As is evident from *Figure 3.E,* Havelock identified three models of dissemination:

1. Research, Development and Diffusion (R, D&D) Model

With this particular model, the developer identifies a problem and subsequently develops an innovation to resolve that problem. Discourse suggests that this model has many affinities with Schon's Centre-Periphery Approach (Kelly 2009, p.127). Indeed, dissemination within this model is also a one-way process whereby the consumer ore receiver assumes a passive role. This model is relevant to the research study, particularly as it is a 'target system' and is regarded as the model to be adopted when large scale curriculum change is the aim (Kelly 2009, p.128).

2. Social Interaction (SI) Model

As is evident from *Figure 3.E,* the SI Model is also a form of centre-periphery model as the process of dissemination takes place from the centre out to the periphery. Similar to the R,D&D model, the central planner identifies the problem and interprets the needs of the consumer. However, this model recognises that the key to adoption and implementation of the innovation is the social climate of the receiving body and also that that the success or failure will hinge on the channels of communication there (Kelly 2009, p.128). Like the Proliferation of Centres Model, this is somewhat superior to the R, D&D Model as a result of greater attention to the overall dissemination process.

3. Problem-Solving (PS) Model

As is evident from *Figure 3.E,* there is a distinct shift away from Havelock's previous Centre-Periphery Models. Within the PS Model, the problem is identified by the consumer and the innovation is also initiated by him or her - the process of recruiting outside help (Kelly 2009, p.128). As is denoted by the two way arrow within the diagram above, this is not perceived as a one-way process but instead a process of mutual collaboration. Indeed, this process is personalised to the point whereby it has been argued that it is not a model of dissemination at all, but rather a model for school-based curriculum development (ibid, p.128).

Evidently, this section has provided a general overview of both centralised and decentralised dissemination strategies, which is central to the research question.

Implications for this Research

Such discourse has a number of implications for this study. In terms of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum, it may be necessary to examine whether this educational reform is popular or deemed necessary by teachers and those in the education sector. In addition to this, it may be possible to identify whether this curriculum change is disseminated in a centralised (Centre-to-Periphery) or decentralised manner or if a hybrid dissemination approach is adopted. Given the potential problems that can arise from the model of dissemination which is adopted, this could be beneficial in illuminating the overall dissemination process.

3.6.2 Strengths and Limitations of Centralised and Decentralised Approaches to Dissemination

Having outlined the centralised and decentralised models of dissemination above, it is necessary to examine the perceived strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. As will become apparent, numerous problems have been associated with the Central-Periphery or Centralised approach, which are not apparent within the Decentralised approach to dissemination. The identification of such limitations therefore provides a greater insight into why decentralised approaches to dissemination tend to be commended within dissemination literature. This examination may be beneficial during the investigation of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Problems associated with the Centre-Periphery Approach to Dissemination

Kelly (2009, p.128) identifies a number of inadequacies within the centralised or centre-periphery approach to dissemination. Potential problems include a gap between policy and practice, the failure to take prober account of social interaction theory and the use of Power-Coercive Theories. The gap between policy and practice has been identified as a central problem of curriculum development and indeed the advancement of education itself (Kelly 2009, Rogers 2003, Stenhouse 1975). According to Kelly (2009, p.129) there is a wide gap between the idea of a project held by central planners and the reality of its implementation as it can be difficult to get across to teachers the concept of the project as well as the theoretical considerations underlying it, in such a way that these can be

translated effectively into practice. This can result in the loss of credibility for the project, a rejection of the principles behind it and an inadequate understanding of the initiative (Kelly 2009, p.129). Another potential problem is the failure to take proper account of social interaction theory (Kelly 2009, Rogers 2003). As illustrated in *Figure 3.E,* an integral component of dissemination is determining the social climate of the recipients and preparing the channels of communication accordingly. Failure to do so can result in the teacher becoming a largely passive recipient of the project - restricting the overall flow of innovation (Kelly 2009, p.130). Power-coercive strategies can be seen as an attempt to impose new ideas and approaches to curriculum on teachers by enforcement (Kelly 2009, Rogers 2003, Sugrue 2004) and this has been identified as an inadequacy of centralised approaches to dissemination. This can be seen as an extension to the previous argument, in that there is also a lack of consideration of the social interaction theory. Kelly (2009, p. 130) highlights the distinction between the teachers themselves identifying the need for change and the enforcement of the initiative from an outside agency or from within the school such as a powerful and strong-willed principal. The examination of such inadequacies provides further evidence of the complex and challenging nature of the dissemination process. Such inadequacies facilitate a greater understanding of the advantages which are often associated with a decentralised approach to dissemination.

Advantages of a Decentralised Dissemination Approach

Rogers (2003, p.398) outlines the numerous advantages of a decentralised dissemination approach. Firstly, innovations disseminated in this manner are likely to fit more closely with users' needs and problems. Secondly, users feel a sense of control over this approach as they participate in making key decisions, such as which of their perceived problems most need attention, which innovations best meet their needs, how to seek information about an innovation and how to modify an innovation as they implement it in a particular setting. Thirdly, given that this decentralised dissemination approach is driven by user motivation to seek an innovation, this approach may be more cost efficient. Lastly, user self-reliance is generally encouraged in this approach. However, despite such advantages, it should be noted that decentralised dissemination systems are not always the most appropriate. For example, sometimes a national government wants an innovation disseminated, and although the government may deem it to be a high national priority, it may not be popular with people and may not be what they want; recycling or water reservation measures

might be an example of this (Rogers 2003, p.399). In such instances, such an innovation will not simply disseminate, and certain elements of centralised and decentralised dissemination systems may need to be combined to form a hybrid dissemination approach (Kelly 2009, Rogers 2003).

Thus, this section has highlighted a number of issues in relation to both centralised and decentralised approaches to dissemination. These issues may be applicable during the investigation of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. Communication is another facet of dissemination which will be relevant to this research.

3.6.3 Communication during the Process of Dissemination

Communication and interaction between planners and implementers is an important aspect of dissemination. Communication may be broadly defined as "a negotiation and exchange of meaning, in which messages, people, cultures and 'reality' interact so as to enable meaning to be produced or understanding to occur" (O'Sullivan 1983, Sayers 2006). Communication may also be described as a three-part process by which participants (1) transmit and (2) receive information using one or more of a range of channels or media and (3) make sense of the message or messages embedded in the information (Sayers 2006, p.3). It is particularly important to examine *who* relays messages and to *whom* and how this understanding is enhanced through the concepts of homophily and heterophily. Homophily is the degree to which a pair of individuals who communicate are similar; such as beliefs, education and socioeconomic status (Rogers 2003, p.305). Communication tends to be more effective because source and receiver share common meanings, beliefs and mutual understanding. Heterophily is the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are different in certain attributes - this requires more effort to make communication effective as communication between dissimilar individuals may cause cognitive dissonance because messages are inconsistent with existing beliefs and can lead to misinterpretations and unheeded messages (ibid, p.306). In terms of the flow of communication during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum, it may be necessary to examine whether there is a homophilous or heterophilous relationship between external and internal stakeholders and to investigate how this impacts on the overall levels of communication.

The analysis of literature on Curriculum Dissemination has been central to this research, given the focus of the research question. Professional Development is also a very relevant theme to examine as the provision of professional development will influence teacher's perceptions of the curriculum and thus their overall experience of the dissemination process.

3.6 Professional Development

The professional development accompanying the introduction of the Primary Language curriculum impacts on both the dissemination and implementation of that curriculum. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, a press release in February 2015 highlighted the Minister's 'commitment that school leaders and teachers are given the necessary Continuous Professional Development to allow them to implement the new curriculum and ensure that young learners benefit to the maximum extent' (Department of Education and Skills 2015). There is growing evidence which suggests that teacher quality matters and what teachers actually do in the classroom affects student achievement (Hough et al. 2013). Effective teachers of early language and literacy must bring a substantial knowledge base, reflecting an understanding of child development, and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to shape appropriate learning experiences that are engaging to children (Neuman and Cunningham 2009). Literacy instruction is a complex process. High quality literacy instruction features systematic and explicit, direct instruction that teaches children about the code-based characteristics of written language, to include both phonological and print structures. It features a relatively teacher-directed approach to ensure that language instruction is systematic and explicit (Justice et al. 2008). It also demands faculty in recognising and being able to act on the complex interactions, opportunities and constraints that may exist among multiple goals being pursued for students and the instructional activities at a teachers' command to use (Fountas and Pinnell 2006, Hough et al. 2013). Effective teachers should also be able to integrate their assessments of their students' literacy abilities, their theoretical knowledge about oral, reading and writing processes, and their knowledge of effective instructional strategies in order to make the moment-to-moment decisions that build towards long-term, high quality instruction (Fountas and Pinnell 2006, Hough et al. 2013). This indicates that teachers need a high level of support to become effective in developing the language and literacy skills of their students. Many teachers lack deep knowledge about language (Hammond and Macken-Horarik 2001, Hill-Jackson and Lewis 2012, Jones et al. 2008, Pollatsek and

Treiman 2015, Stevens et al. 2009, Taylor et al. 2014) and this presents a major obstacle to the implementation of linguistically informed pedagogies.

Professional development to facilitate the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum is challenging and complex. For example, external stakeholders must acknowledge the centrality of professional development to the successful implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. They must also identify the most effective professional development model and approach and subsequently implement this on a national level. This is particularly relevant to the dissemination of the curriculum as the provision of professional development has impacted on teachers' perceptions of the curriculum.

This section is presented as follows: firstly, it will clarify some of the terminology which is particularly relevant to the analysis of this theme. Secondly, this section will highlight the tensions which often exist between traditional and contemporary approaches to professional development. Thirdly, it will examine the features and principles of effective professional development and examine many of the barriers which often inhibit the effective translation of theory into practice within this field. Lastly, this section will outline a number of contemporary approaches to professional development. The implications for the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum will be explored.

3.6.1 Clarification of Terminology

Professional Development

Professional development has been defined as any activity that increases the skills, knowledge or understanding of teachers and their effectiveness in schools (Day 1999, Grimmett 2014, Neuman and Cunningham 2009). Literature suggests that most definitions of professional development stress its main purpose as being the acquisition of subject or content knowledge and teaching skills (Day 1999, Grimmett 2014). In terms of language, for example, professional development may be defined as that which contains both content and pedagogical knowledge to support the ability of teachers to apply literacy knowledge in practice (Neuman and Cunningham 2009). For some, however, this definition does not encapsulate many important aspects of professional development such as teacher professional growth.

Teacher professional growth is defined as a change in beliefs, attitudes and values of a teacher (Wang et al. 2014). There is some uncertainty as to the whether teacher professional growth influences teaching practice which leads to an improvement in student outcomes, or whether an improvement in student outcomes influences teacher professional growth and then a change in teaching practice. Some literature suggests that teachers' knowledge of, beliefs about, and attitudes towards an effective instructional method impact on teachers' practices and students' outcomes. Other literature may suggest an opposite direction where teachers' beliefs and attitudes are likely to change as a result of significant changes in students' outcomes and teachers' practices (Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002, Guskey 1986, Wang et al. 2014). Day's (1999, p.4) broader definition of professional development encapsulates this important aspect of professional growth and how it affects student achievement:

> Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities that are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual group or school and which contribute, through these, to the quality of education, in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning, and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives. (Day 1999, p.4, Grimmett 2014, NCCA 2007)

It is this definition of professional development which acknowledges the importance of teacher professional growth and its impact on student achievement, which has framed this section of the literature review.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Continuous professional development is an ongoing process of education, training, learning and activities which is:

•taking place in either external or work-based settings

•engaged in by qualified, educational professionals

•aimed mainly at promoting learning and the development of professional knowledge, skills and values,

•a means of helping to decide and implement values in teaching and learning behaviour so that teachers can educate their students more effectively, thus achieving an agreed

balance between individual, school and national needs (Bolam et al. 2005, Grimmett 2014).

3.6.2 Traditional Approaches to Professional Development

Traditional approaches to the professional development of teachers tend to consist of top-down, short-term or one-day inservice days, workshops or seminars and are often conducted outside of the school setting (Dikilitaş 2015, LeTendre and Wiseman 2015, Welch et al. 2016). These one-time or short-term training sessions are often given to large numbers of participants who are expected to obtain knowledge and skills which can be faithfully transferred to the classroom (Welch et al. 2016, p.201). However, literature suggests that traditional approaches to professional development wherein teachers and passive and individual receivers of training is often ineffective (Dikilitaş 2015, LeTendre and Wiseman 2015, Welch et al. 2016). Research has found that traditional approaches to professional development fail to produce substantive or sustained changes in teachers' practice (Dikilitaş 2015). According to LeTendre and Wiseman (2015, p.90), the school contexts that teachers work in are an important aspect of teacher learning and when the professional development workshop or seminar is divorced from teachers' day-to-day teaching and their work contexts, this approach does not lead to changes in teachers' beliefs and practices. Ball and Cohern (1999, p.3) describe this form of teacher professional development as "intellectually superficial, disconnected from deep issues of curriculum and learning; fragmented and noncumulative" (Dikilitaş 2015, p.92). In fact, a review of professional development studies conducted by Joyce and Showers (2002) revealed a meagre 5-10% level of transfer of practices from traditional forms of professional development to classrooms (Joyce et al. 2002, Welch et al. 2016). Despite such inadequacies, there are numerous challenges associated with adopting a more contemporary approach to professional development. The subsequent examination of the tensions between both approaches will provide a greater insight into such challenges.

3.6.3 Tensions between Traditional and Contemporary Approaches to Professional Development

The terms of professional development and professional learning are often used interchangeably throughout literature within this field. The term professional learning began to appear in the mid to late 1980s and was frequently cited in seminal works in the

professional literature in the 1990s (Grimmett 2014). Discourse suggests that this learning focus derives from the general paradigm of learning as ongoing, socially situated and actively constructed (Grimmett 2014, Putnam and Borko 2000, Webster-Wright 2009). It is this paradigm swing which has led to a change of focus from professional development as something done to teachers by outside 'experts' to professional learning as something done with and/or by a teacher in response to their pedagogical needs and concerns (Grimmett 2014, Loughran et al. 2008). This distinction highlights the dichotomy between traditional and contemporary models of professional development.

As will become apparent, many contemporary professional development models such as coaching and professional learning communities reflect this understanding of professional learning. Traditional models of professional development, however, tend to focus on providing teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to be "better" educators (Vescio et al. 2008). Based on the premise that knowledge and expertise is best generated by university researchers or experts, these traditional models tend to be grounded in the assumption that the purpose of professional development is to convey to teachers "knowledge FOR practice" - a knowledge which is usually advocated as a prescription of better teaching (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999, Vescio et al. 2008). In contrast, reform or contemporary models require that professional development models no longer are solely top-down mandates; teachers need to be involved in the learning process, not merely recipients of knowledge from a presenter (Easton 2008, Miller and Stewart 2013). Effective professional development provides teachers with input into the learning topic, an active role in the engagement of ideas and a network of colleagues to both challenge and support their thinking - a form of professional development which stands in stark contrast with the traditional model of stand-and-deliver (Miller and Stewart 2013). Thus, it is evident that there is a notable distinction between the conceptualisation of teachers as passive recipients and that of teachers as professional learners. It is this distinction which separates traditional and contemporary models.

However, as will become apparent, there are also a number of practical challenges in implementing a contemporary approach to professional development. Firstly, such approaches require a major commitment from teachers (Atteberry and Bryk 2011, Fang et al. 2014). The success of many contemporary approaches is incumbent on teachers' commitment to the schools' improvement strategy, for example. Such approaches would

require teachers to commit to more time, reflection and input. This level of commitment is undoubtedly influenced by the climate of the school or profession at the time which could have repercussions for teachers' motivation levels. These models require supportive learning and teaching communities in schools (Fang et al. 2014). Secondly, a supportive school environment has been identified as being key to teacher' active engagement in many of these contemporary models (Berg et al 2015). The influence of the school organisational context is undoubtedly complex, however, and should not be underestimated. It encompasses a number of factors such as the exercise of formal leadership, the social control mechanisms over teachers' work, relational trust across the informal social organisation as well as organised norms (Atteberry and Bryk 2011). Each of these factors contributes to the level of support provided by the school and thus impacts on the effectiveness of the professional development provided. Thirdly, there may not be an adequate level of financial resources to provide such forms of professional development which tend to be more costly (Atteberry and Bryk 2011, Fang et al. 2014). Lastly, contextual hindrances include teacher resistance to new practices (Atteberry and Bryk 2011, p. 374). Teachers tend to be greatly influenced by their previous schooling experiences and the context in which they were taught (Fang et al. 2014, p. 83). In order for new forms of professional development to be effectively introduced, teachers must be willing to try a new approach (Atteberry and Bryk 2011, p.374).

This tension between traditional and contemporary approaches to professional development is important. It is relevant to the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum as professional developers are faced with a number of choices in relation to the most appropriate and effective model of CPD. This tension will need to be addressed during the study.

3.6.4 Features and Principles of Effective Professional Development

Contemporary literature is consistent as to what constitutes effective professional development for teachers, regardless of the approach or model which is adopted.
Firstly, effective professional development should provide clear and explicit information to teachers and be ongoing and intensive to afford teachers the opportunity to process this information and integrate it into their classroom practice (Wasik et al. 2006). The importance of ongoing and sustained professional development is echoed through contemporary discourse in this field (Flyvbjerg 2006, Grimmett 2014, Hough et al. 2013,

Mashburn et al. 2010, Miller and Stewart 2013, Wasik et al. 2006). Sustained professional development has been defined as lasting for at least 12 weeks (Cordingley et al. 2004). Arguments for this level of sustained professional development suggest that few effects are engendered by professional development initiatives involving less that 14 hours of support, and the greatest effects were apparent for programmes including about 50 hours of guidance (Wasik and Hindman 2011, Yoon et al. 2007). It should be highlighted that it is difficult to determine how much professional development is necessary to yield desired results (Kennedy 2013, p.25). Indeed, Kennedy's (1998) review of the literature on effective science and mathematics professional development found differential effects of time for the particular subject area - concentrated intensive contact time was more effective for mathematics, whereas distributed time was more effective for mathematics (Kennedy 1998, Kennedy 2013). Nonetheless, it is evident that sustainability of professional development is key to teachers' growth and that there is a positive association between the amount of hours of professional development experience and the teachers employing inquiry-based teaching practices (Cordingley et al. 2004, Wang et al. 2014). The assumption that sustained professional development runs the risk of a loss to teaching time should be challenged. It stems from a conceptualisation of professional development as the mere transmission of knowledge or information.

Secondly, effective professional development should involve many opportunities for teachers to be given feedback in the context of one's own practice (Neuman and Wright 2010, p.64). This requires teachers to be both reflective and open to new practices with the overriding goal of improving instruction for young children (ibid, p.65). A high level of teacher reflection becomes an integral component of effective professional development (Flyvbjerg 2001, Grimmett 2014, Hough et al. 2013, Mashburn et al. 2010, Miller and Stewart 2013, Wasik et al. 2006).

Thirdly, literature advocates that professional development is job embedded; and is situated within the school context to ensure a high level of reflective and inquiry based practice (Flyvbjerg 2001, Grimmett 2014, Hough et al. 2013, Mashburn et al. 2010, Miller and Stewart 2013, Wasik et al. 2006). Professional development must equip teachers so that they know what to do, why it should work but also how to gauge the effectiveness of their practices (Ingersoll and Krakik 2004, Joyce et al. 2002, Wasik and Hindman 2011).

This high level of reflection embedded into on-site practice provides a further rationale for providing sustained professional development which can provide teachers with adequate time to reflect on their own practice, set goals and self-evaluate their teaching (Cordingley et al. 2004, Wang et al. 2014). Effective professional development should encourage high levels of constructive reflection and take place in practitioners own work-setting: their classroom or school.

The following list provides an overview of the features of effective professional development. It stems from a publication on *The Seven Principles of Highly Effective Professional Learning* (The Department of Education and Training 2005)*.

Professional development should be:
1) ongoing and sustained (not episodic and fragmented)
2) job embedded and on-site, embedded in teacher practice and fully integrated into the operations of the system
3) collaborative and reflective; involving reflection and feedback to allow teachers to actively construct and transform their knowledge, beliefs and skills
4) empowering by acknowledging teachers as professionals with existing knowledge and skills to share
5) inquiry-based and focused on improving student outcomes (not just individual teacher needs)
6) instill and encourage individual and collective responsibility at all levels of the system
7) based on current research theory; evidence-based and data-driven to guide improvement and to measure impact (The Department of Education and Training 2005).

It should be noted that despite universal agreement as to what constitutes best practice, implementing professional development is still challenging. Subsequent sections will examine many of the barriers which inhibit the effective translation of theory into practice.

3.6.5 Contemporary Approaches to Professional Development

This section will outline a number of contemporary approaches to professional development. Having previously examined the limitations of traditional or top-down approaches, it is necessary provide an insight into the alternative approaches which can

also be utilised during the training of teachers. Given that professional developers must make a number of decisions in relation to the CPD approach which will be adopted to support the Primary Language Curriculum, this has been deemed to be particularly relevant to the research question.

<u>Coaching Individual Teachers</u>

Coaching is a form of professional development which involves ongoing classroom modelling, supportive critiques of practice, and specific observations (Neuman and Cunningham 2009, Shanklin 2006). It involves a collaborative relationship between an expert and a practitioner, who may have been working in the field for many years, to develop specific knowledge and skills related to instructional practice (Neuman and Cunningham 2009). Contemporary discourse highlights the benefits of coaching over more traditional models of professional development (Clandinin 2009, Fang et al. 2014, Love 2010, Miller and Stewart 2013, Neuman and Cunningham 2009, Neuman and Wright 2010, Russo 2004, Schwartz et al. 2003, Walpole and Blamey 2008, Walpole and McKenna 2004). Advocates for coaching have claimed that it is clearly grounded in the elements of effective professional development (Joyce and Showers 1983, Miller and Stewart 2013, Russo 2004, Schwartz et al. 2003, Walpole and McKenna 2004). According to Miller and Stewart (2013, p.219), this approach works because the heart of professional development lies in the ability to empower teachers to continue learning from others and perfect their craft in the classroom as this is the only place where authentic transformation can take place.

The benefits of coaching, particularly for language instruction, are continuously cited by experts in the field of professional development (Clandinin 2009, Fang et al. 2014, Love 2010, Miller and Stewart 2013, Neuman and Cunningham 2009, Neuman and Wright 2010). In general, a major appeal of coaching is the opportunity to tailor information and guidance to a teacher's knowledge, skills and specific classroom circumstances (Powell and Diamond 2013). It offers teachers an opportunity to draw on new knowledge as a resource in their daily teaching practices rather than as something to be force fed (Clandinin 2009, Fang et al. 2014). This model recognises the individuals within the teaching profession and caters to their unique learning styles. It facilitates building from teachers' own knowledge, beliefs and practices with respect to the context, and also allows differentiated feedback which is important for the professional development of

teachers (Bergh et al. 2015). It also addresses the knowledge gap between best practices in language instruction and common practices in the classroom (Miller and Stewart 2013, p.291). By using content-specific coaching, the most effective elements of professional development can be used to increase teacher knowledge and support research-based language practices (Miller and Stewart 2013, p.291). It can also play an important role in assisting teachers in the difficult work of teaching all students to be competent and successful readers and writers (ibid, p.297). Having previously noted the importance of identifying the links between professional development and student outcomes, it is worth noting that reading coaches have been found to have a positive impact on teacher instructional practices across content areas and on various student literacy outcomes (Neuman and Cunningham 2009, p.538).

Coaching has also been deemed to be extremely effective in the early childhood sector. Research suggests that early childhood caregivers engaged in higher quality literacy practices when preschool specialists worked alongside them, demonstrating modelling and providing support to teachers (ibid, p.538). Consequently, coaching in addition to course work has been deemed to be a promising quality investment for teachers in early childhood education.

Given the positive links between coaching and language instruction, improved student literacy outcomes and the early childhood sector, this approach may be examined as a potential professional development approach during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Individual Coaching in Practice

Neuman and Cunningham (2009, p.543) outline a diagnostic model of coaching that focuses on helping participants apply research-based strategies to improve child outcomes in language and literacy.

This model of coaching incorporates the following elements:
• On-site: Successful coaching meet teachers "where they are" in their practice settings to help providers learn through modelling and demonstrating practices (Poglinco and Bach 2004, Neuman and Cunningham 2009).

- Balanced and sustained: Coaches involve teachers in ongoing continuing education rather than just a temporary infusion or rapid-fire string of professional development activities (Darling-Hammond 2006, Guiney 2001, Neuman and Cunningham 2009, Speck 2002).

- Facilitative of reflection: Effective coaches observe, listen and support instructional practices that improve child outcomes; they do not dictate "the right answer" (Guiney 2001, Harwell-Kee 1999).

- Highly interactive: Coaches establish rapport, build trust, and engender mutual respect among practitioners and interact extensively to benefit children's outcomes (Herll and O'Drobinak 2004).

- Corrective Feedback: Coaches provide descriptive, not evaluative or judgemental feedback based on observable events in settings to enable practitioners to engage in collaborative problem solving for improving practice (Gallacher 1997, Schreiber 1990).

- Prioritises: Coaches assist teachers in identifying priorities and developing action plans for improving children's language and literacy practices (Herll and O'Drobinak 2004, Neuman and Cunningham 2009).

Appendix D provides an overview of how such a model might operate if adopted as a professional development approach.

The Community Coaching Cohort or Team Coaching Model

The Community Coaching Cohort Model focuses on coaching teams of teachers, rather than individual teachers. This provides an alternative approach to circumvent the issue of individual teachers viewing the coaching as a threat to their competency (Miller and Stewart 2013). Coaching teams of teachers helps to overcome the fear that may be experienced by individual teachers. It works because the heart of professional development lies in the ability to empower teachers to continue learning from others and perfect their craft in the classroom, as the only place where authentic transformation can take place (Miller and Stewart 2013, p.297). The Community Coaching Cohort Model includes a nine-week cycle, during which teams of teachers work with a literacy coach to analyse, reflect and improve their literacy instruction, as is reflected in the following overview (Miller and Stewart 2013, p.293). *Appendix D* provides an overview of the form

which a Community Cohort Model might take if adopted during teacher professional development.

There are three elements which are necessary for successful coaching to occur. Whilst these refer to successful coaching in general, such requisites are also applicable to coaching for language instruction. The first is that the role of the coach is clearly defined (Buly et al. 2006, Miller and Stewart 2013, Mraz et al. 2008, Walpole and Blamey 2008). Both the role of the coach and the protocol of subsequent coaching is clearly defined, prior to implementation (Miller and Stewart 2013). The second key to successful coaching is using knowledgeable and qualified coaches, particularly knowledgeable in coaching techniques. In individual coaching, the role of the trainer is essential. He or she should be able to give feedback tailored to the concerns, practices and learning characteristics of each individual teacher (Bergh et al. 2015). However, coaches in the community coaching model do not address problems with teachers' instruction of a specific program or method. Instead coaches focus on what teachers are doing well and how they can build on these strengths in other areas. This mental stance enables coaches to focus on teachers' needs and build on generative practices (Miller and Stewart 2013, p.296). Given that the qualifications and experiences that coaches bring to work has a significant impact on their ability to implement the model successfully, it is imperative that coaches have advanced degrees in language instruction, many years of experience teaching and, both formal and informal training on effective and coaching techniques (Miller and Stewart 2013). The third element is that the coach maintains a neutral and supportive coaching stance.

Barriers to Individual and Team Coaching

Despite the numerous advantages, it is necessary to acknowledge the barriers to coaching. Firstly, it is <u>time consuming</u>. Having outlined a framework for both individual and team coaching, it is evident that coaching is far more time consuming that more traditional approaches. Model developers have estimated that this approach requires eight hours and 20 minutes of non-student time (when the teacher is not with his or her students) (Knight 2010, Miles and Huberman 1994). Given that this model is based on the premise of sustained professional development, it is worth noting that this process takes place over a number of months to ensure effective practice. Secondly, it is an <u>expensive</u> approach. There is no cost analysis available from an Irish perspective, however, international research suggests that it is far more expensive than traditional approaches. The coach's

salary is the highest cost of instructional coaching, and other costs include professional development of the coaches as well as resources such as laptops and materials (Knight 2010, Miles and Huberman 1994). Thirdly, having previously highlighted the integral role of the coach, the challenge becomes finding a coach with extensive teaching experience, a thorough understanding of the coaching process and with the necessary qualifications (Bergh et al. 2015). Other barriers might include teachers' willingness to participate in and engage with this approach, particularly given the time consuming and innovative nature, very distinct from more traditional models.

Professional Learning Communities

A professional learning community has been defined as a community with the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professions in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing student learning (Bolam et al. 2005, p.145). According to literature within this field, the extent to which teachers absorb externally produced 'expert' knowledge depends on complex factors such as the context of teaching, the opportunities for sustained professional development and the presence or absence of like-minded professional communities (Fang et al. 2014, Love 2010).

An epistemic community is made up of a diverse range of academic and professional experts, who are allied on the basis of four unifying characteristics (Haas 1990, p.3):

1. a shared set of normative and principled beliefs which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of community members;

2. *shared causal beliefs which are derived from their analysis of practices leading or contributing to a central set of problems in their domain and which then serve as the basis for elucidating the multiple linkages between possible policy actions and desired outcomes;*

3. *shared notions of validity, i.e. intersubjective, internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in the domain of their expertise; and*

4. a common policy enterprise, or a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed, presumably out of the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence.

The premise of an epistemic community is that its members take responsibility for the community's learning through negotiating their ideas and persisting in knowledge advancement (Wang et al. 2014).

Professional Learning Communities are based on a premise from the business sector regarding the capacity of organisations to learn. Modified to fit the world of education, the concept of a learning organisation became that of a learning community that would strive to develop collaborative work cultures for teachers (Thompson et al. 2004, Vescio et al. 2008). There is no universal definition of a Professional Learning Community; however there appears to be a broad international consensus that it suggests a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning oriented, growth-promoting way, operating a collective enterprise (Ray Bolam et al. 2005).

The *INTO Discussion Document and Proceedings of the Consultative Conference on Education 2010* provides a broad overview as to what is meant by learning communities, from an educational perspective.

> A group of people who share common visions, values and beliefs and who are actively engaged in learning together may be described as a community of learners. Teachers working collaboratively to enhance curriculum, assessment, teaching strategies and pupils' learning may be described as a learning community. Learning communities comprise individuals with diverse expertise and knowledge. This diversity is valued and through collaboration, drawn out, shared and used to solve school-based problems. Learning communities foster openness, dialogue, inquiry, risk-taking, and trust. A professional learning community of learners is where teachers and principals seek and share learning and act on what they learn (INTO 2010, p.12).

The model of Professional Learning Communities is grounded in two assumptions:
1. That knowledge is situated in the day-to-day lived experiences of teachers and best understood through critical reflection with others who share the same experience (Buysse et al. 2003).
2. That actively engaging teachers in Professional Learning Communities will increase their professional knowledge and will enhance student learning (Vescio et al. 2008).

Having previously examined the individual and collective nature of the teaching profession, it is important to note that this model strives to achieve a collective professional growth.

There are five essential characteristics of professional learning communities (Newmann 1996, Vescio et al. 2008):

• Shared values and norms must be developed with regard to such issues as the groups' collective 'views about children and children's ability to learn'

• A clear and consistent focus on student learning - this is a shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning

• Reflective dialogue that leads to 'extensive and continuing conversation among teachers about curriculum, instruction and student development'

• Deprivatising practice to make teaching public

• Focusing on collaboration

Professional Learning Communities in Practice

DuFour (2004) argues that there are three big ideas that represent the core principals of Professional Learning Communities. These principles should guide schools' efforts to sustain the professional learning community model until it becomes deeply embedded in the school. These big ideas provide an insight into how this approach can work in practice.

Leadership and Professional Learning Communities

Leadership is an essential aspect of professional learning communities. Given that the principal is described as the 'nerve centre' of school improvement (Fullan 2006), it is understandable that they would have a pivotal, if not prominent, role in creating a learning community and learning culture. King (2016, p.582) highlights three key features of how principals can support teachers' engagement with and sustainability of new practices: alignment between teachers' and principals' values; creating organisational capacity for change; and empowering teachers to create collaborative learning cultures and PLCs. School culture influences readiness for change (Fullan et al. 1992), and effective leadership is therefore important. The principal's role in this approach is multifaceted and they have a number of responsibilities.

Firstly, they have a responsibility in creating a learning culture (Stoll et al. 2006). This task is undoubtedly complex. A culture which enhances learning; balances all stakeholders' interests; focuses on people rather than systems; makes people believe they can change their own environment; makes time for learning, takes a holistic approach to problems; encourages open communication; believes in teamwork; and has approachable leaders (Schulman 1997). However, principals can only create conditions fostering commitment to the collective good. They cannot ensure that it will happen (Stoll et al. 2006).

Secondly, a central task educational leadership is fostering learning at all levels in students and in adults, focusing on promoting professional learning as fundamental to the change process (Stoll et al. 2006). There are a number of processes which can be used to create and develop professional learning communities, both inside and outside of schools:

1. formal professional development opportunities
2. work-based and incidental learning opportunities
3. self-evaluation and inquiry as a learning source
4. from individual learning to collective learning: transfer of learning and creating of knowledge.

Thirdly, inquiry-minded leadership may be significant in promoting reflective inquiry, which is necessary for school improvement. Three interconnected modes of inquiry minded leadership have been distinguished (Stoll et al. 2006):

• promoting research and evaluation across the school, in departments and by individual classroom teachers
• adopting a more systematic approach to collecting, analysing and using data and evidence in the course of ongoing work; for examine students' examination results, value-added data and external school inspection reports
• seeking out and using relevant and practical research, generated and produced by external researchers

Lastly, the emotional intelligence or the 'human side' is an important part of effective leadership (Day 2000). This is because bringing about educational change is extremely complex and involves dealing with fears about change (Stoll et al. 2006).

Evidently, the principal has a pivotal role in fostering professional learning communities. Such findings also highlight the paramount role of the principal in supporting change.

These responsibilities are also applicable to the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum and may therefore need to be examined during this study. The provision of support to principals is another important aspect of the dissemination process; and therefore merits further investigation.

<u>Potential Barriers to Professional Learning Communities</u>

There are a number of factors which have been deemed to either help or hinder the creation and development of effective Professional Learning Communities (Bolam et al. 2005).

a) *Individual's Orientation to Change:* The notion of Professional Learning Community implies a positive contribution by its members, and therefore individual motivation and commitment to the community is likely to be key for learning communities (Bolam et al. 2005).

b) Effectiveness of this approach depends on a unified commitment from members, loyalty to and identification with the team, fostered through a balance between respecting individual differences and collegiality.

c) *Group dynamics:* As previously noted, the principal has a key role in fostering cooperative and collaborative schools. However, depending on group dynamics and possible contradictory beliefs within the group, the principal may have to find constructive ways of mediating such issues (Bolam et al. 2005).

d) *School context influences:* The school's context has an impact on teacher learning. Such influential factors include:

- <u>school size</u> (the larger the school, the more numerous the staff, and the more difficult it may be to engender strong identification among all staff with being members of a single community)

- <u>phase</u> (Change is more complex in secondary schools where members of departments have a stronger sense of belonging to a departmental community that a whole school community 2)

- <u>location</u> (The location of the school can be an important factor in relation to the links it is able to make with external partners)

- <u>particular mix of students</u> (The social mix of the school influences how a school functions, largely because of the commutative effort of the peer group process of how the students relate to and act as a group)

e) *External influences:* External influences such as community and policy decisions also impact on the developing and sustaining of an effective Professional Learning Community.

3.6.6 Translation of Theory into Practice in the field of Professional Development

There are a number of barriers or challenges which inhibit the translation of theory into practice in the field of professional development. Despite the contemporary literature which advocates effective practice, what is known to be effective is not always what is practiced (Hattie and Timperley 2007). These challenges are relevant to the professional development linked to the Primary Language Curriculum and may therefore be useful during the subsequent analysis of the dissemination process.

The process of learning development for teachers is undoubtedly complex. Flyvbjerg (2001, p.11) elaborates on five developmental levels in the learning process for novice to expert:

1) rule-based thinking
2) logically based action
3) procedural knowledge
4) intuition and knowledge which involves identifying problems, setting goals and formulating plans
5) assessment and theoretical understanding and knowledge of effective instructional strategies (Hough et al. 2013b, Flyvbjerg 2001).

The challenge facing stakeholders is to develop an approach which can support teachers in their journey from novice to expert, in the field of literacy and more specifically in the Primary Language Curriculum.

There is also need for further research into the field of professional development. According to Lonigan et al. (2009, p. 34), we know what we need to do in theory but we do not yet know enough about how to make it happen effectively on a large scale basis. The knowledge gap which exists, therefore, is not so much knowing what professional development looks like. It is about knowing how to get it rooted in the instructional structure of schools, connecting the ideal prescriptions of the consensus model with the real models of large scale accountability (Grimmett 2014). This void has been identified as a critical barrier to the effective translation of theory into practice. Contemporary discourse

argues that given the size of the investment in professional development and the dependence of education reform on providing high-quality professional development, the knowledge base of effective practices needs to be strengthened (Neuman and Wright 2010, Zaslow and Martinez-Beck 2006). There is a need for further research into this aspect of professional learning - research into how to make reform or contemporary approaches work in practice (Flyvbjerg 2001, Grimmett 2014, Hough et al. 2013a, Mashburn et al. 2010, Miller and Stewart 2013, Wasik et al. 2006, Zaslow and Martinez-Beck 2006). In addition to this, there is not yet consensus about the link between professional development and student outcomes and particularly what practices in professional development contribute most to student learning (Hough et al. 2013, p.452, Lonigan et al. 2009).

Evidently, there are a number of barriers which have the potential to inhibit the effective translation of theory into practice. A number of voids in research within the field of professional development have been identified. These include research into how effective professional development can become embedded into practice on a large scale basis and a lack of consensus in relation the links between practice in professional development and student outcomes. This knowledge gap has been identified as an opportunity for future research in the concluding chapters of this thesis.

The analysis of Professional Development has highlighted a number of issues which may need to be addressed in the context of the Primary Language Curriculum. Having outlined the tension which exists between traditional and contemporary approaches to professional development and the challenges which are often associated with both, it will be worth investigating how such tensions are mediated during the curriculum reform. This analysis has also highlighted the complexity of language instruction and the implications for the provision of professional development, accompanying the Primary Language Curriculum.

Implications for this Research

Having examined the theme of Professional Development and having outlined a number of contemporary approaches to professional development, it is necessary to examine the implications for the CPD designed for the rollout of the Primary Language Curriculum. Analysis of the literature has raised a number of critical questions:

1. Which stakeholders were involved in designing and providing CPD during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum?
2. What CPD model was adopted?
3. What was the rationale for adopting the CPD approach?
4. How do principals and teachers perceive the CPD which is provided during the dissemination of the Primary Language curriculum?
5. How do principals perceive their role in leading and supporting change surrounding the Primary Language Curriculum?

3.7 Teacher Change

Teacher Change emerged as another theme which is central to curriculum reform. It is linked to professional development. The concept of how teachers change their pedagogies and practices has been addressed extensively in literature over the last twenty years, particularly in relation to how teachers cope with changes due to school reform (Baker-Doyle and Gustavson 2016, Elmore 1987, Fullan and Miles 1992, Hargreaves 1998 , McLaughlin and Talbert 2003, Sarason 1993). According to Baker-Doyle and Gustavson (2016, p.54) many of these studies have identified tensions between administrators and educators and resistance to reform by teachers to change imposed from above.

Teacher Receptivity

Teacher receptivity can be seen as teachers' general disposition to proposed reform, including positive attitudes and behavioural attention (Lee et al. 2011, Lee and Yin 2005). Existing research has consistently shown that teacher receptivity could be crucial in shaping the success and failure of curriculum change (Lee et al. 2011, Lee and Yin 2005).

3.7.1 Resistance to Change

Another issue which needs to be addressed is that of teacher change. Some literature suggests that teachers don't like to change (Guskey 2002, Richardson 2003, Terhart 2013, Zimmerman 2006).The phenomenon of how teachers deal with change has been traditionally labelled 'resistance to reforms', 'structural conservatism' and 'inflexibility' (Terhart 2013). Given that teachers' willingness to change is central to the effectiveness of reform models (Atteberry and Bryk 2011), this could have a number of

repercussions for the field of professional development. Resistance to change or reform has implications for professional learning; it has been suggested that many teacher professional development programmes fail because they do not take into account two crucial factors:

1) what motivates teachers to engage in professional development, and

2) the process by which change in teachers typically occurs (Guskey 1986, Guskey 2002)

Perhaps this issue provides an insight into why many teachers revert to more traditional methods of teaching (Atteberry and Bryk 2011), or the way they, themselves, were taught.

Resistance to change needs to be investigated from an educational perspective. Much of the research around resistance to change is based on the private sector, where it is of importance for profit-making companies, firms and corporations. Terhart (2013, p.488) suggests that this explains why originally economic and business-based concepts and strategies of change management ignore the importance of pedagogy but have nonetheless been transferred to pedagogical institutions and processes. Despite this limitation, they provides an insight into this complex issue.

Phases of Resistance to Change

Resistance to change, in general, can be triggered and manifested in different phases; argument, operation and effect (Terhart 2013, p.488).

•Within the **argument phase**, professionals doubt whether there is a need to change in the first place. Innovations and change processes can trigger feelings of insecurity and are regarded as an attack on professional competence and identity (Guskey 2002, Terhart 2013, Zimmerman 2006).

•Within the **operations phase**, professionals question how procedures may be implemented and find their way into practice. This is particularly the case when the changes, ideas, processes or procedures are proclaimed by organisational leaders and are to be implemented by those on lower work levels. This leads to further uncertainty and change (Zimmerman 2006).

•Within the **effect phase**, employees question how they will personally benefit in and through the process. What and how do they gain in position and identity during the change process or is there any direct or symbolic gratification?

This provides an insight into the overall process of resistance to change, albeit from a business and not necessarily an educational perspective. Nonetheless, it could be a useful tool in exploring and analysing findings from this study - identifying the specific phases where principals and teachers demonstrate either a willingness to or a resistance to change. Such findings are also beneficial to administrators, principals and professional developers. The first step in overcoming resistance to change in schools is the ability to determine who is resisting change and why (Duke 2004, Zimmerman 2006). This process involves recognising teachers' attitudes and behaviours within the context of the social norms of their schools (Kennedy and Kennedy 2002, Zimmerman 2006). Therefore, the study has deemed this process to be relevant to the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

3.7.2 Teachers' Arguments against Change

In the summer of 2005, a survey was conducted with about 13,000 principals and teachers in schools in the German Bundesland Northerhine-Westphalia in relation to Lerstandserherbungen (school performance tests). This study concluded that educational change, especially when directed towards a change in teaching practice always has a strong, emotional side and touches the feelings of professional identity of all participants. (Hargreaves 1998 , Kelchtermans 2005, Kelchtermans et al. 2009, Terhart 2013, Zimmerman 2006).   It highlighted the arguments which teachers put forward to protect themselves against a change in practices (Terhart 2013):

- The 'No Time!' Argument - the view that the working day is filled to the brim and teachers do not think it is possible to engage with the new in light of such daily practices.
- The 'I am innocent!' Argument - practitioners feel there is no need to change ones' own practices; problems exist but other people, groups, the system or society are responsible.
- The 'Burnt Child!' Argument - past reforms have brought nothing despite a lot of time and energy being invested by many.
- The 'Two Worlds!' Argument - reforms are developed in the boardrooms of administrators, quality managers or educational researchers, but teachers work in a

completely different world. They are the ones 'in the firing line' or 'in the trenches' and a lot of the things concocted by the higher instances do not work in practice.

- The 'Biographical!' Argument - It is now the turn for younger colleagues to take over as older ones have had our share of having to experiment with new-fangled ideas. It is of no importance or value to us anymore.

- The 'Lack of Personal Benefit!' Argument - There is nothing in it for teachers, only more work.

It will be important to examine whether such arguments are consistent with the reactions of teachers and principals in relation to changes which will occur during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Barriers to Change

Zimmerman (2006) identifies five barriers to both individual and organisational change, many of which are consistent with the above arguments put forward by teachers.

1) The first barrier is a **failure to recognise the need for change**; unless teachers understand the need for change in their schools, their interest in maintaining the status quo will undoubtedly take precedence over their willingness to accept change (Zimmerman 2006).

2) The second barrier is **habit**; rather than working on developing new skills or strategies, it is simply easier to continue teaching in the same ways (Greenberg 2002, Zimmerman 2006).

3) The third barrier to change i**s previously unsuccessful efforts at change**; which could leave teachers extremely wary about accepting further attempts. This supports the 'Burnt Child!' Argument put forward by teachers (Terhart 2013, Zimmerman 2006).

4) A fourth barrier to change is **fear of the unknown** (Fullan 2002, Greenberg 2002)**.** Disrupting teachers' well established professional and instructional patterns could jeopardise their sense of security from doing things in familiar ways.

5) A fifth barrier to change is that teachers might feel **threatened** by the prospect of change. The change could be a threat to their expertise and proven abilities, a threat to their power relationships (particularly to those with long-established

decision-making responsibilities, threats to social relationships (to teachers who have formed strong friendships with their colleagues), or a threat to resource allocations brought about by these changes (Fullan 2002, Greenberg 2002).

These barriers provide an insight into the process of change resistance. These findings are relevant, particularly for implementers, designers or managers of the system. Terhart (2013, p.495) argues that in order to learn constructively from this permanent experience of widespread reform resistance among teachers, we have to liberate ourselves from a moral and politically tainted negative attitude towards reform reluctance and unwillingness among teachers. We need to understand their attitude as being completely normal, which may even have good sides (Gitlin and Margonis 1995, Terhart 2013). Terhart (2013, p.495) concludes by posing a very thought-provoking question: Why should teachers engage in reforms that respond to problems that they either do not have or feel responsible for, or which do not relate to the problems they really have in their work?

Given the importance of this issue, the study may need to identify potential resistance and barriers to change in relation to the dissemination of the Primary Language curriculum.

Overcoming Resistance to Change

This understanding of resistance to reform or change is of importance for those in leadership capacity.

Interestingly,　many barriers to change are lessened when several factors are present (Baker-Doyle and Gustavson 2016); curriculum autonomy and curriculum ownership (Coburn 2001, Datnow 2000, Little 1995), leadership roles for teachers (and/or shared leadership) (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1995, Fullan 1996, Lieberman and Miller 1999, Spillane and Healey 2010), an authentic culture of collaboration (Hargreaves and Dawe 1990, Little 2002, Penuel et al. 2012) and "third spaces" for collaboration among diverse stakeholders (Martin et al. 2011, Zeichner 2010). According to Zimmerman (2006) gaining knowledge of impediments to change and understanding why some teachers resist change is not sufficient to promote teachers' change readiness (p.241). However, there are a number of leadership strategies which can support and promote change. These include developing a supportive culture, involving teachers' sense of efficacy and promoting teachers' change readiness (Zimmerman 2006, p.241). Such strategies could

be beneficial to principals, who are critical change agents in the reform process. A supportive environment is necessary for change to happen, so that teachers do not feel so stressed that they revert to their former instructional strategies and methods (Goleman et al. 2002, Zimmerman 2006). As previously outlined, contemporary approaches to professional development may foster such a supportive and collaborative dynamic amongst teaching staff.

3.7.3 The Recalcitrance Model of Change

The recalcitrance model of change assumes that somebody outside the classroom claims to know what teachers are doing (Richardson 2003). This coincides with more traditional, 'top-down' models and the assumption that knowledge which has been generated by university researchers is advocated as a prescription for better teaching (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999, Vescio et al. 2008). Despite a wide variety of influential factors, when teachers don't implement changes or apply expert knowledge, as advocated, the assumption is made that teachers don't like to change (Guskey 2002, Richardson 2003, Terhart 2013, Zimmerman 2006). Having examined the process of resistance to change and the barriers to change, it is evident that teacher's unwillingness to change is a much more complex issue.

Unwillingness to change may be also as a result of ineffective or unsuccessful professional development approaches. There is a convincing counterargument that teachers change all the time; whether it be in the organisation of their classrooms, their selection of activities and texts or in the ordering of various teaching topics (Richardson 2003, p.403). The challenge facing professional developers is to try to operate within a naturalistic sense of teacher change - to determine the ways in which teachers make their decisions to change and to provide input and help when they do so (Richardson 2003). As was identified during the previous analysis of Professional Development, this inquiry approach is grounded in contemporary approaches to professional learning such as coaching and professional learning communities. Professional development approaches may need to give greater consideration to the process by which change typically occurs in teachers (Guskey 1986, Guskey 2002), in order to provide effective professional development.

Teacher empowerment has been described a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and resolve their own problems (Lee et al. 2011, Rinehart et al. 1998, p.635). It is also related to the increased involvement of teachers in school decision making (Rice and Schneider 1994, Sweetland and Hoy 2000) and is therefore usually assumed to facilitate change (Hornstein 2006). There are mixed findings in relation to the impact of teacher empowerment on teacher practice. Some studies have found that teacher empowerment can enhance teachers' job satisfaction (Rinehart and Short 1994), organisational commitment (Somech 2005), sense of professionalism and self-esteem which in turn results in improved teacher performance and effective implementation of school reform (Dee et al. 2003, Lee et al. 2011). However, other studies have found a negative relationship between teacher empowerment and school climate (Short and Rinehart 1993). It has also been suggested that participation in decision-making, a factor of teacher empowerment can have a negative effect on teachers' general efficacy and no effect on their individual efficacy (Lee et al. 2011). Despite the conflicting research on this issue, it will be worthwhile to examine how teachers perceive their level of empowerment in the development of this curriculum. The study may be in an position to identify the potential links between teacher empowerment and teachers' attitude towards the Primary Language Curriculum.

3.7.5 Curricular Autonomy

Autonomy is another important issue which could impact on teachers' perception of the Primary Language Curriculum and indeed their overall attitude towards forthcoming changes.

To thoroughly understand autonomy, it is necessary to outline the distinction between professional and personal autonomy. Professional autonomy implies that individuals control the terms and content of their work and related issues, based on their professional knowledge and moral and ethical principles (Molander and Terum 2008, Solwi 2015). It is important to acknowledge, however, that autonomy is also related to self-governance (Cribb and Gerwitz 2007) and one's capacity to develop, safeguard and justify one's knowledge base (Solwi 2015). Autonomy should therefore be understood as a connection between both professional and personal elements (Conway and Murphy 2013). It is also

necessary to highlight the difference between individual and collective autonomy. Individual autonomy can be broadly understood as a person exercising a high degree of control over issues directly connected to his or her daily activities (Frostenson 2012, Ingersoll 2003), whereas collective autonomy typically refers to how an organisation or union controls individuals' work and professionalism. According to Solwi (2015) this distinction relates to how teachers' work takes place within their schools and depends on the curriculum requirements and other legal regulations. This indicates why strong leadership and the establishment of organisational legitimacy have become increasingly important. **Autonomy can therefore be viewed as a continuum where the performative and individual aspects of teachers work are related to the organisational and collective aspects of their profession** (Mausethagen 2013)**.**

If educational policies contradict the values and knowledge of teachers, this can create tensions and result in teachers emphasising the importance of maintaining control over classroom practices and their knowledge base and these tensions can also result in teachers' lack of involvement in local development initiatives (Solwi 2015). For example, existing research suggests teacher autonomy has been reduced, particularly over the last two decades as a result of assessment and accountability policies (Mausethagen 2013, Solwi 2015). This is because accountability pressure reduces teacher autonomy and typically leads to more standardisation and micromanagement of teaching (Evetts 2008, Jeffrey 2002, Locke et al. 2005, Solwi 2015).

Morgado (2003) outlines the distinction between curricular autonomy, individual teacher autonomy and school autonomy. According to (Morgado 2003, p.371) <u>curricular autonomy</u> is the degree or power given to individuals or groups - especially individual teachers or the governing body of schools - in determining what students will learn. Autonomous teachers are regarded as "thinkers who make many decisions that create the curriculum in classrooms", whereas teachers without autonomy play the role of "rather passive people who implement the curriculum (McCutcheon 1997, Morgado 2003). The school's autonomy becomes effective through an increase in the power of its governing bodies as decision-makers in different domains (administrative, pedagogical, curricular, cultural) and through the transfer of resources from other levels of the administration (Barroso 2006, p. 23-24). Curricular autonomy entails teachers' power to make decisions related to the process of curriculum development by defining their own priorities and by adapting the

national curriculum to the students' characteristics and needs and addressing topics which they feel are particularly relevant to and important for their students (Morgado 2003).

However, curricular autonomy is also influenced by other factors. According to Hopmann (2003, p.460) there are two dominating patterns of curriculum; product control and process control. Each has a different set of vocabulary for constructing expectations towards teachers and their responsibilities (Hopmann 2003). The first pattern is a product-centred system of external outcomes; within this framework external control of student outcomes in the main instrument of control. The No Child Left Behind Act in America provides a prime example of this, as teachers' curricular autonomy is driven by accountability and standardisation measures. The second pattern is the continental licensing or Didactic system which has weak control over the educational process and almost no external influence over educational outcomes. Different outcomes are allowed depending on local teacher groups and schools as long as they are in accordance with the national curriculum (Hopmann 2003, Solwi 2015). The use of Didactic in teaching (the art or study of teaching) implies a considerable amount of teacher autonomy (Gundem and Hopmann 1998, Hopmann 2003, Solwi 2015). Teachers training in Ireland, therefore, are operating in a Didactic system, which theoretically boasts greater 'pedagogical freedom' and teacher autonomy.

Evidently, teacher autonomy and curricular autonomy are quite challenging and complex concepts. However, literature on this topic raises a number of questions in relation to the autonomy of teachers during the development of the Primary Language Curriculum:

1. How do teachers perceive their level of autonomy during the development of the Primary Language Curriculum?
2. What factors have impacted on their autonomy during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum?

3.7.6 Professional Development and Teacher Change

There are a number of factors which motivate teachers to pursue professional development. As previously noted, the first is the prospect of improving student outcomes (Grimmett 2014, Flyvbjerg 2006, Miller and Stewart 2013). Most teachers define this success in terms of their pupil's behaviours and activities rather than in terms of themselves or other criteria (Guskey 1986, Guskey 2002, Harootunlan and Yargard 1980).

Teachers hope to gain specific, concrete and practical ideas that relate directly to the day-to-day operation of their classrooms (Fullan and Miles 1992). If this need is not addressed, professional development programmes are unlikely to be successful. Professional development programmes which fail to respond to the motivation of teachers is a notable factor as to why such programmes fail (Guskey 2002). Another reason they fail is that they fail to consider the process of teacher change. According to Guskey (2002, p.382), professional development leaders often attempt to change teachers' beliefs about certain aspects of teaching or the desirability of particular curriculum or instructional innovation. They presume that such changes in teachers' attitudes and beliefs will lead to specific changes in their classroom behaviours and practices, which in turn will result in improved student learning as is evident from *Figure 3.F*.

Figure 3.F The Effect of Professional Development on Teacher Change: A Linear Perspective
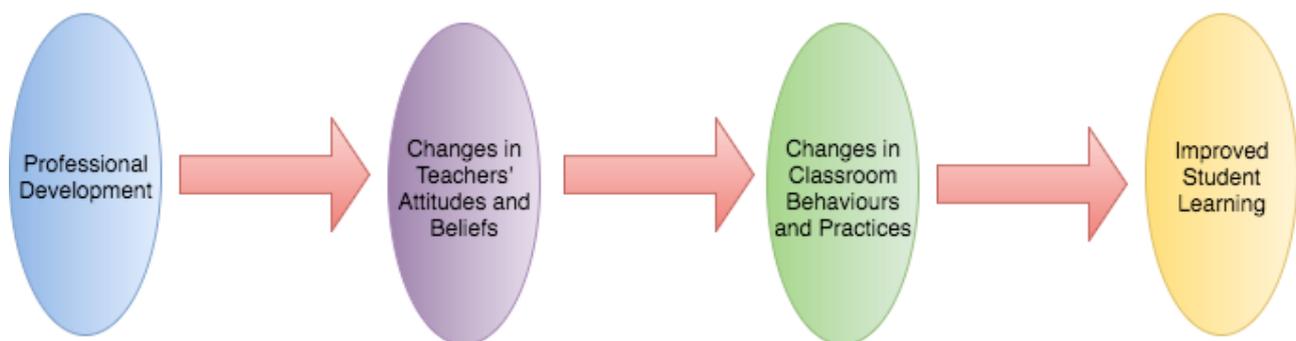
Figure 3.F *Adapted from Guskey (2002)*

More recent research on teacher change suggests that the assumptions of this model may be inaccurate when considering professional development programmes, particularly for experienced teachers (Guskey 2002, Guskey and Huberman 1995, Huberman and Crandall 1983, Huberman and Miles 2002). Guskey presents an alternative model of teacher change, as is evident from Figure *3.G.*

Figure 3.G The Effect of Professional Development of Teacher Change: A Cyclical Perspective
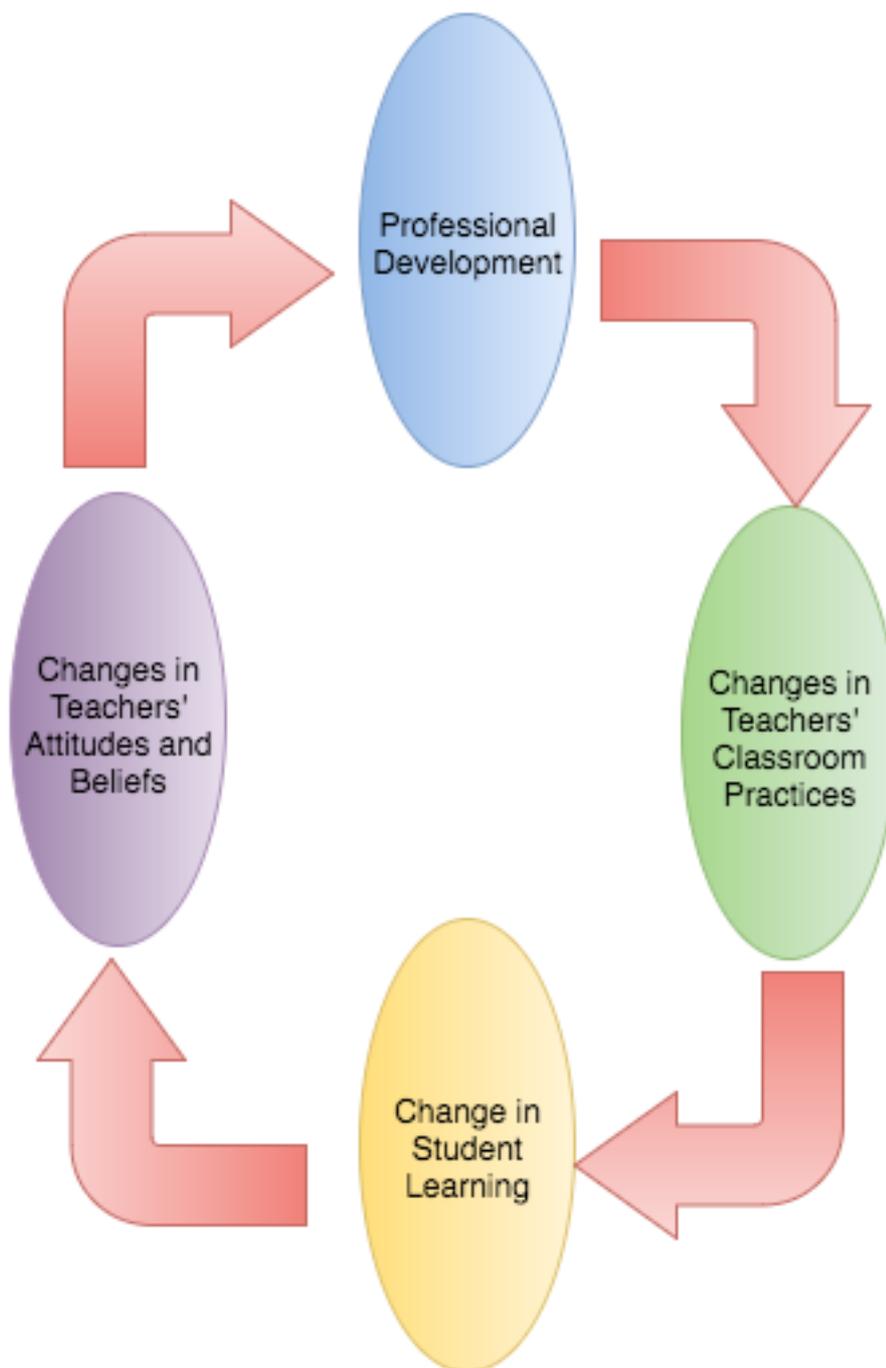
Figure 3.G *Adapted from Guskey (2002), Guskey and Huberman (1995), Huberman and Crandall (1983), Huberman and Miles (2002)*

This has a number of implications for professional development should Guskey's (2002) model be assumed accurate. Professional development programmes based on the previous assumption that change in attitudes and beliefs come first (as in *Figure 3.F*), are typically designed to gain acceptance, commitment and enthusiasm from teachers and school administrators before the implementation of new practices or strategies (Guskey

2002, p.383). However, given that a change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs tends to derive from classroom experience and enhanced student outcomes, then this practice of gaining acceptance, commitment and enthusiasm is often ineffective.

Implications for Professional Development

There are a number implications for professional development should the latter model be assumed accurate (Guskey 2002):

1) It is necessary to recognise that change is a gradual and often a difficult process for teachers. (This is based on the premise that any change which holds great promise for increasing teachers' competence and enhancing student learning is likely to require extra work, especially at first. The requirement of extra energy and time can significantly add to teachers' workload, even when release time is provided) (Guskey 2002. p.386).

2) It is necessary to provide continued follow-up support and pressure (Guskey 2002). This substantiates previous findings in relation to the paramount importance of sustained professional development and links to effective practice and professional growth (Flyvbjerg 2001, Grimmett 2014, Hough et al. 2013b, Mashburn et al. 2010, Miller and Stewart 2013, Neuman and Wright 2010, Wasik et al. 2006).

3) It is necessary to ensure that teachers receive regular feedback on student learning progress (Guskey 2002). Having previously highlighted the links between teacher motivation and student outcomes and indeed the influence of student outcomes on teacher attitudes and beliefs, it is evident that this factor needs to be acknowledged to ensure effective professional development.

This raises a number of critical questions in relation to the model of teacher change which is adopted to support the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. This will need to be explored during the study.

Teacher Change and Implications for this Study

This section has examined the literature around Teacher Change. It has outlined the process of resistance to change and highlighted many of the arguments put forward by

teachers to protect themselves from change. It has listed barriers to change and examined the recalcitrant model of teacher changes. It has examined the process of teacher change and its implications for professional developers. These findings have highlighted many aspects of the curriculum reform process, and thus the overall research question. A number of questions have also arisen regarding the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum and these may need to be addressed in this study:

• Are there particular phases where teachers and principals demonstrate a willingness or reluctance to change during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum?

• Have the external stakeholders examined the potential barriers to change? If so, what strategies have been put in place to overcome these during the professional development of teachers and principals?

• Has this curriculum gained the acceptance and support of teachers?

3.8 Conclusion

This extensive review has examined the current literature which exists on curriculum development. This was to gain an insight into the research question about the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. Analysis of this literature provided an insight into the field of curriculum development, which facilitated the identification and examination of contemporary trends and issues in the education sector, particularly in relation to curriculum dissemination. As a result, this literature review was in a position to contribute to contemporary debate around the area of curriculum change and reform. This was a central aim of the study. However, after developing a greater understanding of this issue and highlighting many aspects of the research question, a number of prevailing questions were identified in relation to the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. These prevailing questions were identified as voids in research and will be summarised below. Such voids strengthened the overall rationale to conduct a study of this nature and to investigate teachers' perceptions of the Primary Language Curriculum.

The analysis of literature on <u>Curriculum Design</u> has highlighted the complex and challenging decisions facing curriculum developers. These critical decisions can include deciding what items of knowledge should be included in or excluded from a curriculum, how the curriculum should be arranged, what shape the curriculum should take and how it should be classified and framed. Such findings provide an insight into many factors which were considered during the design of the Primary Language Curriculum. However, the

level of teacher involvement during this process remains unclear. This research will endeavour to investigate which stakeholders were involved in the decision making process which took place during the design of the Primary Language Curriculum. It will also examine the discussion and debate which took place in relation to these design elements and which stakeholders participated in this debate.

The analysis of literature on Curriculum Assessment highlighted a number of issues in relation to contemporary assessment trends in education. These included the various uses of assessment and how many decisions surrounding assessment are made in the political arena rather than in the education sector. It also examined the shift towards formative assessment and the challenges which face teachers as a result. Again, there is some uncertainty regarding which stakeholders were involved in decisions about the assessment approach which was devised for the Primary Language Curriculum and this research may be in a position to gain an insight into this. In examining teachers' perceptions of the Primary Language Curriculum, this research may also be in a position to investigate how this assessment approach is perceived by teachers and how they feel they will overcome the challenges which are associated with it.

Analysing literature on Curriculum Change and Reform was particularly useful in highlighting the complex and challenging nature of curriculum change as well as the stages which are involved in curriculum change and reform. This research will identify the change agents of the Primary Language Curriculum and endeavour to outline their roles and responsibilities during this period of curriculum reform. It will also investigate what efforts were made to include internal stakeholders during the Initiation Phase of curriculum reform and their level of engagement in this process.

The analysis of literature on Curriculum Dissemination provided an insight into issues surrounding both the centralised and decentralised models of dissemination and the importance of communication during this process. This is central to the research which will investigate teachers' experiences in the process of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

The analysis of literature of Professional Development was also insightful during this review. It highlighted important issues such as the tension which exists between traditional

and contemporary approaches to professional development and the challenges which are associated with both. It also provided an insight into some of the barriers which can inhibit the translation of theory into practice in the field of professional development. To thoroughly examine the process of curriculum change during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum, this research will examine the professional development which was provided during this period and which stakeholders were involved in the design and provision of this. It will also investigate principals' and teachers' perceptions of this approach and how principals perceive their role in leading and supporting change during this process.

Analysis of literature on <u>Teacher Change</u> provided an insight into important issues such as resistance to change amongst teachers and the importance of teacher empowerment during periods of curriculum reform. This analysis also examined how professional development can influence teachers' receptivity to change. Such issues are relevant to this research, which will examine teachers' perceptions of forthcoming changes and whether this curriculum has gained the acceptance and support of teachers during its dissemination. It will also examine the factors which may have impacted on teachers' level of autonomy during the dissemination process.

The subsequent chapter will outline how these questions, issues and findings have greatly influenced the overall research design which was formulated to investigate this research problem. Evidently, curriculum studies is a critical area which needs to be elevated in educational debate and continuously addressed and examined, both in research and in practice. Through conducting a literature review and subsequently further research, this study has made a valuable and integral contribution to this pivotal field of education.

Chapter 4 Methodology Chapter

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an insight into the methodological approach which was adopted to investigate the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. Curriculum dissemination is a complex process. As outlined in the previous chapters, curriculum dissemination is a central change strategy that brings about communication and interaction between planners and implementers and which is integral for each stage of curriculum change and reform (Fullan 1993, Gleeson 2000, Kelly 2009, McBeath 1997). It encompasses the planned pathways of the transmission of new educational ideas and practices from their point of production to all locations of potential implementation (Rogers 2003). Given the complexity of this subject matter, it was important for this study to select an appropriate data gathering methodology in order to build an understanding of the research question. As previously highlighted, the overall research question is concerned with how teachers experience the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. The embedded research questions endeavour to investigate the level of awareness amongst teachers about this curriculum change, teachers experiences during the various stages of the dissemination, their perceptions of their involvement in this dissemination as well as their perceptions of the forthcoming changes over this period. The predominant aim of this study is to make a valuable contribution to contemporary educational debate around the area of curriculum change through examining the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. This research design has therefore been carefully planned and deliberated to ensure that this topic can be investigated. It is anticipated that the identification of issues during this process of curriculum dissemination will enable the study to make a number of recommendations in relation to curriculum development and dissemination. Such recommendations may be useful during future periods of curriculum change and would therefore offer a beneficial contribution to the field of curriculum studies.

As will be outlined in this chapter, this study adopted a case study approach to examine the research question.

> 'The grand experience here is contemplating research - not so much handling data which is important, but thinking through a study from beginning to end'
>
> (Stake 2010, p.3)

This position taken by Robert Stake has greatly influenced this research design and overall study. This sentiment stems from Stake's innate dissatisfaction with contemporary research trends and his concern that social science has been insufficiently helpful to human problem solving and that its intent to generalise has contributed too little to fixing what is not working (Flyvbjerg 2001, Stake 2010). It highlights how the inclination to focus more on the product of the research, rather than the research process itself can obscure the overall essence of the inquiry. This sentiment therefore emphasises the importance of planning on being open to new ways of interpretation (Stake 2010).

This chapter will describe how the literature review has influenced many aspects of this research design. It will then outline the rationale which led to Case Study being selected as the most appropriate methodology to examine this topic and examine the strengths of this approach. As will become apparent, there are a number of steps involved in conducting a case study including the examination of the appropriateness of a case study approach, the identification of the case, deciding on the data collection methods, the subsequent analysis of data and the interpretation and reporting of such data (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Stake 1995, Stake 2010). This chapter will provide an overview as to how this research design navigated each of these steps. This chapter will then address the complex role of the researcher throughout the research and analysis process, and how many perceived limitations have been addressed. Lastly, this chapter will conclude by reflecting how the research design has impacted on the overall study.

4.2 Factors which Influenced the Research Design

There were a number of factors which influenced the research design of this study. These include the macro and micro concerns which have been outlined in the introductory chapter and the identification of the internal and external stakeholders and the phases of curriculum reform during the literature review. As these factors provide an insight into the context of this research design and how this methodology chapter corresponds with the rest of the thesis, it is useful to address them here.

4.2.1 Macro and Micro Concerns of this Study

The introductory chapter has outlined the rationale which motivated a study of this nature and the research and embedded research questions which were subsequently developed.

To ensure clarity for the reader it is useful to reiterate the macro and micro concerns of the study. A macro concern of this study is the overall curriculum dissemination process in Ireland. Micro concerns include teachers' awareness about this curriculum change, their experiences during the various stages the dissemination process, their perceptions of their involvement and their reactions to forthcoming changes.

Having identified the research questions, this study conducted an extensive literature review into the field of curriculum studies. This analysis of contemporary literature found the themes of Curriculum Design, Curriculum Assessment, Curriculum Change and Reform, Curriculum Dissemination, Professional Development and Teacher Change to be most relevant to this study. While analysis of these themes provided an insight into many aspects of the curriculum development and dissemination process a number of prevailing questions were identified in relation to the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum, which influenced the methodology of this study. The research design was subsequently developed to investigate these questions. Following the literature review, the involvement of teachers during the process of curriculum change became the predominant focus of this research. An investigation into the level of teacher involvement during the process of curriculum design and the manner in which stakeholders engaged in the decision making process was also necessary. Interviews, focus groups and surveys were subsequently designed to investigate these issues. To examine teachers' perceptions of forthcoming changes during the dissemination of this curriculum, a number of teacher surveys were incorporated into the research design. The research design also set out to examine the professional development which was provided during the implementation of this curriculum change, principal teachers' perceptions of this approach to professional development and their role in leading and supporting change during this process. This led to the development of principal surveys and interviews.

The following sections will provide further examples as to how the literature review has influenced the development of this research design.

4.2.2 Identifying Internal and External Stakeholders in the Primary Language Curriculum

The literature review highlighted the importance of identifying both the internal and external stakeholders of the Primary Language Curriculum. Given their significance to the

development and dissemination of the curriculum, in order to gain an insight into the overall dissemination process, it became evident that each of these stakeholders should be contacted and invited to participate in this study. As outlined in *Chapter 1 (Section 1. 3),* the identification of the roles and responsibilities of external stakeholders was one of the objectives of this study. Another objective of this study was to highlight the perceptions and experiences of the internal stakeholders in relation to their level of involvement and engagement in the overall dissemination process. In addition to this, although the research question focuses on teachers' experiences of the dissemination process, the involvement of both internal and external stakeholders provides a broader insight into this process and also inhibits any potential bias which might otherwise occur. As will become apparent, many of these stakeholders became central participants of this research.

As highlighted during the literature review, internal stakeholders are those who work within the school system on a daily basis and have a vested interest in the successful running of any given programme, initiative or system whereas external stakeholders are those outside the day to day work of the schools who have a strong interest in school outcomes (RMC Research Corporation 2009, p.5). The internal stakeholders of the Primary Language Curriculum, therefore, include students, parents, teachers, principals, the community, voluntary organisations and boards of management within schools. External stakeholders are those outside the day-to-day work of the schools who have a strong interest in school outcomes (ibid, p.5). These include teacher groups such as the INTO and Teaching Council, principal groups such as the IPPN, the inspectorate, the Department of Education and Skills and the PDST.

This identification of these stakeholders was significant as it influenced subsequent decisions in relation to the participants of the study. For example, this research design was formulated to facilitate the inclusion of internal stakeholders such as teachers and principals. These have been highlighted in blue in *Figure 4.A* below. In addition to this, this design invited external stakeholders to participate including a representative from the NCCA, INTO and PDST, as highlighted in purple. The inclusion of both internal and external stakeholders was extremely beneficial to the research and provided a unique insight into both the development and dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

4.2.3 Identifying the Phases of Curriculum Reform

The literature review was also central in identifying the phases of curriculum reform and this became a key consideration during the formulation of this research design. It became apparent that there are three phases of curriculum reform - initiation, implementation and institutional phases (Fogarty and Pete 2007). Theoretically, the Initiation Phase of curriculum reform involves planning an introductory awareness that establishes the context, goals, process and timeline for all involved; and extending invitations for all stakeholders to participate, question, acknowledge concerns and announce their level of commitment for change (Ellsworth 2000, Fogarty and Pete 2007, Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, McBeath 1997). The Implementation Phase of educational or curriculum change involves putting the curriculum change into actual use in the classroom. The identification of the phases of curriculum reform during the literature review, greatly influenced the research design which was subsequently developed to focus specifically on the Initiation Phase and the beginning of the Implementation Phase, both very important aspects of curriculum change process. These phases also coincided with the overall timeline of the study, which has been included below.

Figure 4.A Timeline for Data Collection

Figure 4.A

July 2015 — October 2015 — January 2016 — April 2016 — July 2016 — October 2016

Survey of Teachers (CASE STUDY SCHOOL)
May–Jun 2015
In relation to their awareness about language developments

Interview with NCCA
November 2015

Survey of Teachers (nationwide)
November 2015
In relation to their perceptions/awareness of language curriculum

Interview with INTO
January 2016

Survey of Principals (nationwide)
February 2016
In relation to the consultation and professional development process

Interview with Principal (CASE STUDY SCHOOL)
May 2016
In relation to the information seminar

Focus Group with Teachers (CASE STUDY SCHOOL)
Jun 2016

Survey of Teachers (CASE STUDY SCHOOL)
Jun 2016
(Prior to inservice day) in relation to what they hoped to gain from inservice day

Inservice Day (CASE STUDY SCHOOL)
Jun 2016
Facilitated by Principal

Survey of Teachers (CASE STUDY SCHOOL)
Jun 2016
(Following inservice day) in relation to what they gained from inservice day

Interview with PDST
July 2016

Data Collection

4.3 An Overview of the Social Constructivist Paradigm Framing this Research

The social constructivist paradigm framed this research design. Social constructivism maintains that human development is socially situated and that knowledge is constructed through interaction with others (McKinley 2015). This study is concerned with the social interaction of internal and external stakeholders during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. It is also concerned with the implications of these social interactions on this curriculum change process. These concerns provide the rationale for adopting a social constructivist paradigm.

According to Robson (2002, p.27) there are many labels to describe this type of research but 'constructivism' is helpful because it flags a basic tenet of the approach, namely that reality is socially constructed. It is commonly referred to as "interpretive" or "naturalistic" research. Unlike objectivism found in the positivist stance, constructivists claim that truth is relative and dependent on one's perspective (Crotty 1998, Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Denzin and Lincoln 2011, Robson 2002). Creswell (2007, p.20) highlights that, in this perspective, individuals seek out an understanding of the world in which they live and work.

The concept of constructing knowledge and truth is certainly complex. It is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty 1998, p. 42). Writers like Merlau-Ponty have pointed out that the world and objects in the world are indeterminate; although they may be filled with potential meaning, their actual meaning emerges only when consciousness engages with them (Crotty 1998, p.43). This has a number of implications for social constructivist research. Firstly, given that meanings are varied and multiple, the researcher must look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas (Creswell 2007, p.20). Secondly, although meaning cannot be described simply as "objective", by the same token it cannot be described simply as "subjective" (Crotty 1998). Constructivists claim that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one's perspective (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Crotty 1998, Denzin and Lincoln 2011). However, although constructivists recognise the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, they do not reject outright some notion of objectivity (Baxter and Jack 2008). This substantiates the understanding that

objectivity and subjectivity need to be brought together and held together firmly (Crotty 1998, p.44).

It is important to examine how this premise translates into research practice and therefore how it has influenced the research design. The researcher, for example, must acknowledge that a certain relativism is in order (Crotty 1998, p.64). Research should recognise that different people may well inhabit quite different worlds and that their different worlds constitute for them diverse ways of knowing, distinguishable sets of meanings and separate realties (ibid, p.64). In the words of Anais Nin, we don't see things as they are, we see things as we are (Nin 1961).

The social constructivist paradigm had a number of implications for the research philosophies and framework which shaped the overall research design. These have been outlined below.

4.3.1 The Axiological Philosophy of the Research

The social constructivist paradigm influenced the axiological philosophy which framed the research design. The understanding that multiple realities exist meant that this research had to strike the delicate balance between reflecting multiple participants' values whilst also acknowledging that the stance of the researcher shapes the interpretation of the study (Creswell 2007, p.21). It is important for a social constructivist study to acknowledge that the stance of the researcher undoubtedly shaped the interpretation of the study (ibid, p.21). This research design acknowledges that the researcher's knowledge is always partial; the researcher's personality (shaped by their unique mix of race, class, gender, nationality. sexuality and other identifiers) as well as location and time will influence how the world is viewed and interpreted (Mullings 1999). As will become apparent, to inhibit the inaccurate portrayal or interpretation of the various participants, the researcher would seek to clarify whether the perceptions and experiences of participants were being depicted correctly, where necessary.

4.3.2 The Rhetorical Philosophy of the Research

The social constructivist paradigm also determined the overall rhetoric of the study. This was based on the understanding that meanings are varied and multiple and the implication

that the researcher must look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas (Creswell 2007, p.20). Because of this, it was favourable to reflect findings through the voice of the participants, and use direct citations where possible to ensure validity. This ensured that the understandings and experiences of both the internal and external stakeholders of the Primary Language curriculum were reflected in a balanced manner.

4.3.3 The Ontological Philosophy of the Research

The social constructivist paradigm also influenced the ontological philosophy framing the study. Given that multiple realities exist, the researcher had to reflect these various realities in an objective fashion. Social constructivism acknowledges that truth is socially constructed. As a result, it is advocated that social constructivist research takes account of multiple perspectives. It is suggested that this can be a good way of maintaining the complexity of the debated topic (Jorgensen et al. 2002). This was particularly relevant to the study which was undertaken, particularly given the complexity of the topic and the various roles and responsibilities of both the internal and external stakeholders.

The selection of an adequate research methodology was also influenced by this paradigm, which had to incorporate the philosophies of the social constructivist approach.

4.4 Selecting an Appropriate Research Methodology

The selection of the most appropriate research methodology was a huge consideration during the formulation of this research design. Case study was selected as the most appropriate research methodology to investigate the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. In order to ensure the appropriateness of this approach, however, a number of alternative methodologies were also examined.

For example, a phenomenological approach was also identified as a potential approach to investigate this research question. This describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell 2007, Robson 2002). Phenomenological studies enable the researcher to identify what the participants' experience is like as well as allowing them to understand and describe what happens to them from their own point of view (Creswell 2007, Robson 2002). Therefore, this approach

may have been beneficial in gaining an insight into teachers' perspectives of the dissemination process and indeed the experiences of predominant stakeholders. However, during the selection process, the researcher had reservations that some of the complexities of the dissemination process might be lost, that critical moments of the dissemination process might remain uncovered, should they be deemed insignificant by the participants.

Case study, however, facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources (Baxter and Jack 2008). This ensured that the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum was not explored through one lens but rather a variety of lenses which allows for the multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter and Jack 2008). It also facilitates the use of other data collection methods such as document analysis. Given that documents such as circulars have been central to the communication process, this was deemed important to the overall research design. In addition to this, according to Hinkel (2005, p.23) case studies focus on context, change over time and specific groups; therefore when researchers want to understand how a group functions in the real world over a significant period of time, a case study approach may be the best way to go about it. Based on this premise, given that this study aims to understand the experiences of a group of teachers over the course of curriculum change, case study was deemed to be an effective and appropriate approach. Thus, given the potential to investigate the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum through a variety of lenses, a case study approach, which could facilitate a broad examination of this critical issue, was particularly appealing.

4.4.1 Definitions of Case Study

There are multiple definitions for describing case study. According to Creswell (2007, p.73) case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system. The two main methodologists that guide case study methodology are Robert Stake and Robert Yin, both of whom base their approach on a constructivist paradigm.

Yin (2009, p.13) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident This particular definition

establishes some proposed features of the notion of a case - a phenomenon in a real-life context, and one in which the notion of boundaries may be somewhat blurred (Hinkel 2005, p.23)

Stake (2008, p.134) describes a case in the following terms:

-a functioning specific

-a bounded system

-an integrated system

Stake's definition describes a case as being functioning specific - that is a programme, event, activity, process, individual, group of individuals or organisation. It is bounded by time, activity, or place and it is an integrated system of structured, coherent, patterned behaviour, a collection of related elements constituting a 'self' (Stake 2010).

In his book *The Art of Case Study Research* - Stake (1995, p.2) outlines it explicitly:

> The case could be a child. It could be a classroom of children or a particular mobilisation of professionals to study a childhood condition. The case is one among others. In any given study, we will concentrate on the one. The time we spend concentrating on the one may be a day, or a year, but while we do concentrate, we are engaged in case study.

4.4.2 Origins of Case Study

To fully understand the origins of case study, it is necessary to examine the evolution of ethnography. Ethnography literally means a description of people (Angrosino 2007, Creswell 2007, Denzin and Lincoln 2008).The ethnographic approach to the study of human groups began with anthropologists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who were convinced that the armchair speculation of earlier social philosophies were inadequate for understanding the way real people actually lived (Angrosino 2007). They came to the conclusion that a scholar could only truly encounter the dynamics of the lived human experience in the field. One form of ethnographic research was developed in Britain (and with others in the British empire) and later the Commonwealth such as Australia and India. According to Angrossino (2007, p.2), it reflected their fieldwork in areas then still under colonial control, societies such as those in Africa or the Pacific that seemed to be preserved in their traditional forms. Colonial encounter, as is now known, drastically changes many of those societies but a hundred years ago, these were viewed

as being relatively untouched by the outside. The British therefore emphasised a study of enduring institutions of society. That approach subsequently became known as social anthropology. The two most influential anthropologists of the British school were A.R. Radcliffe - Brown and Malinowski (Angrosino 2007, Bromley and Carter 2001, Davies 2008, Green and Bloome 1997). In contrast, anthropologists in the United States were interested in studying native American people, whose traditional ways of life had by then already been drastically altered, if not completely destroyed. The US anthropologists could not assume that native people lived in the context of social institutions that represented their indigenous condition. If culture could not be found in those institutions, then it would have to be constructed through the historical memory of the survivors (Angrosino 2007). The most influential American anthropologist was Fraz Boas, who trained a whole generation of American scholars. Beginning in the 1920s, sociologists at the University of Chicago adopted the anthropologists ethnographic field research methods to the study of social groups in 'modern' communities in the United States. The influence of this 'Chicago school' ultimately affected such fields as education, business, public health nursing and mass communication (Angrosino 2007, Creswell 2007).

According to Creswell (2007), Hamel, Dufour and Fortis (1993) trace the modern social science case studies through anthropology and sociology:
-French sociologist LePlay's study of families
-Case Studies of the University of Chicago Department of Sociology from the 1920s and 30s through the 1950s
-Malinowski's study of Trobriand Islands

In his book on case study research, Swanborn (2010, p.21) describes the traditions of case study succinctly using Bronfenbrenner's model, as outlined in *Figure 4.B* below:

Figure 4.B Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory
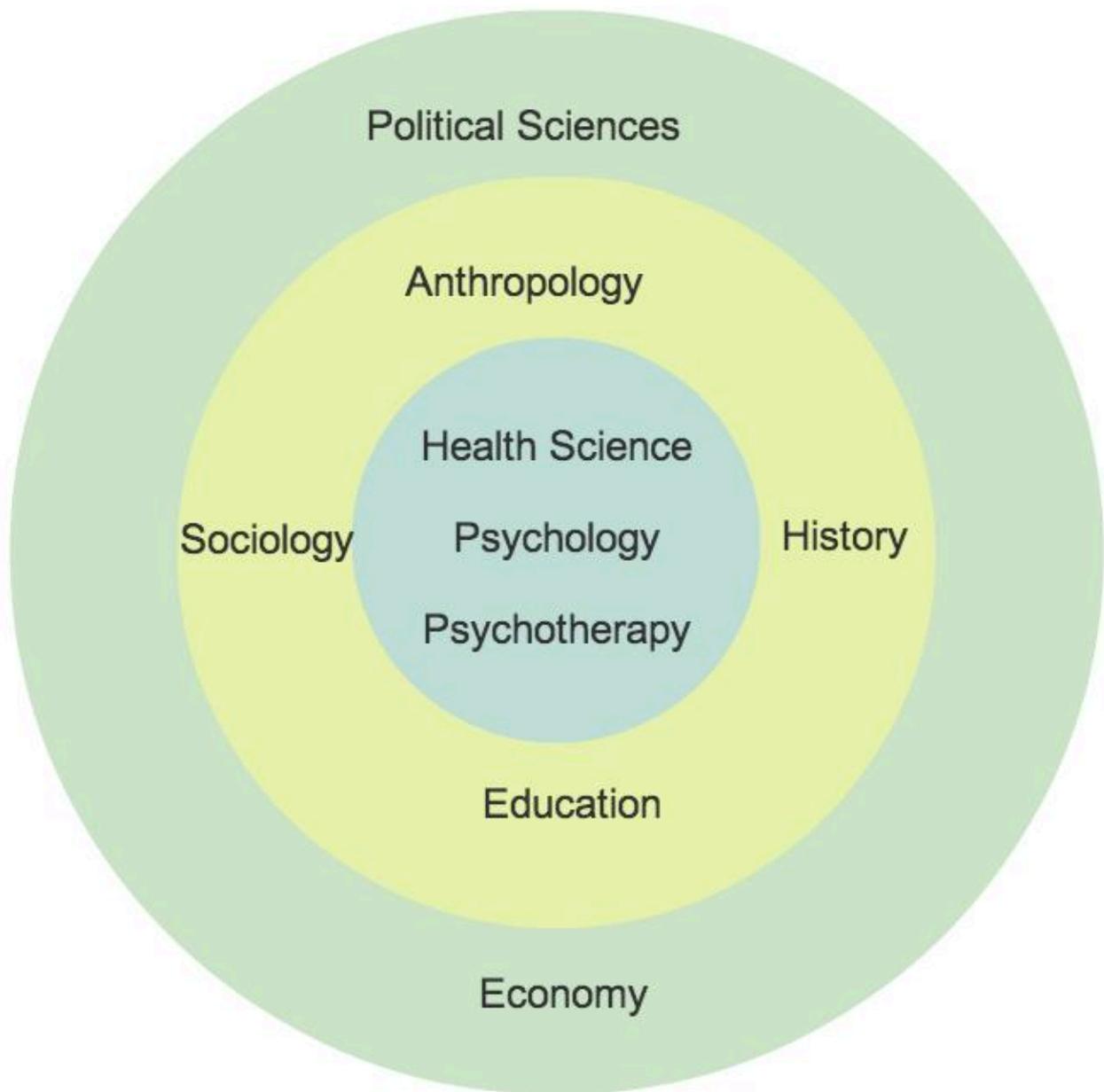
Figure 4.B *(Swanburn, (2010, p.21)*

Within the micro level, which includes the health sciences psychology and psychotherapy, a strong tradition exists which aims at the healing of the patient or helping that client. In earlier times, many of these studies lacked a firm methodological framework but nowadays most of them are more disciplined in striving for comparable data and in the general goal of understanding an illness and finding an adequate treatment. At the meso level, which this research is concerned with, disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, education, as well as the administrations and organisational sciences use the label 'case studies' in research with an emphasis on detailed description and understanding and

explanation of a social process of phenomenon (Swanborn 2010). At the macro level, the political sciences and parts of economy apply the label 'case studies' mostly to those research projects that try to uncover those research relationships between causes and effects using a small number of units, mostly nation-states (Swanborn 2010). This perspective has been helpful in developing an understanding of how case study originated.

4.5 Conducting a Qualitative Case Study

Literature outlines each the steps involved in conducting a case study (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Stake 1995b, Stake 2010), as follows:

1. Examining the appropriateness of a case study approach
2. The identification of the case
3. Data Collection/Methodological Tools
4. Analysis of Emergent Data
5. Interpreting and Reporting Emergent Data

These stages have been particularly beneficial in contemplating this study from beginning to end and thus have been central to the overall research design. Consequently, these stages will provide an overall framework for the subsequent sections of this research design.

4.5.1 Examining the appropriateness of a case study approach

The first step in conducting a case study is identifying whether case study is applicable to the study in question. *Section 4.4* above has provided an overview of why case study was selected as the most appropriate research approach. During the examination of the appropriateness of a case study approach, some discourse on case study research was particularly influential. The following points provide further rationale as to why case study is most applicable to the research question.

A case study design should be considered when
a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions
b) the behaviour of those involved in the study cannot be manipulated (Yin 2003).

These factors are consistent with the study and therefore consolidated the use of the case study approach.

In addition to this, Creswell's (2007, p.78-79) Lateral Perspective Table, which is included in *Appendix E,* was also helpful in highlighting the appropriateness of the case study approach. This provides a lateral perspective of various research approaches and highlighted the appropriateness of adopting a case study approach. For example, the focus of this study is to develop an in-depth description and analysis of a case - in this instance - the dissemination of the Primary Language curriculum. Having previously highlighted the silences surrounding curriculum change and educational debates within the Irish context, it is evident that this research question is best suited to a case study approach. The discipline background is also applicable, given that the study was designed to examine an event; the <u>event</u> of the dissemination of the language curriculum. Lastly, to provide an in-depth understanding of this topic, this table advocated that multiple sources of data be collected and analysed through the selections of themes and cross-case themes. Although Creswell's (2007) lateral perspective table is beneficial, it should be acknowledged that the use of such a framework, unaccompanied, could run the risk of being deductive. Nonetheless, it was beneficial during the examination of most appropriate research approaches and in consolidating the use of the case study approach.

Boundaries of the Case

Lastly, a case study is a good approach which the inquirer has a **clearly identifiable case** with **boundaries** and seeks to provided an **in-depth understanding of the case** (Stake 1995). Stake's (1995) definition highlighted two important issues during the examination of the appropriateness of case study research approaches. This section will outline the boundaries of the case and the following section will address how the case was identified.

Discourse on case study research indicates that there is some contention in relation to placing boundaries of a case (Hinkel 2005, Merriam 1998). Hinkel (2005, p.23) highlights that in Yin's (2009) definition of case study the notion of boundaries between phenomenon and case are somewhat blurred; whereas Stake's (1995) definition refers to an integrated system. This indicates some contention in relation to what are the boundaries of a case (Hinkel 2005, p.23). According to Merriam (1998, p.27), if the phenomenon you are

studying is not intrinsically bounded, it is not a case. However, if the case study draws the boundaries too rigidly, it may oversimplify and isolate the case (Hinkel 2005). To safeguard against becoming deductive, researchers are encouraged to journal their thoughts and decisions and discuss them with other researchers to determine if their thinking has become too driven by the framework (Creswell 2007). In light of this, a reflective journal was utilised during the data collection phase of this research.

Despite this contention, it is important to also acknowledge the advantages which stem from placing boundaries on a case. For example, defining boundaries inhibits a common limitation of the case study approach - collecting overwhelming amounts of data that require management and analysis (Baxter and Jack 2008, Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Denzin and Lincoln 2008, Stake 1995, Yin 2003). It also hinders the tendency for researchers to attempt to answer a question that is too broad on a topic that has too many questions for one study (Baxter and Jack 2008). Placing boundaries on the case has been beneficial during this research as it has ensured that that the research remained focused on the research question; the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Baxter (2008) suggests that there are numerous ways of placing boundaries on a case including
a) time and place
b) time and activity
c) definition and context (Baxter and Jack 2008, Creswell 2007, Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Stake 1995, Stake 2010)

Section 4.2 highlighted how the identification of phases of curriculum reform during the literature review was helpful in placing boundaries on the case, which subsequently focused on the Initiation and Implementation Phases of the curriculum reform. The timeline, in *Figure 4.A,* above, outlines the various boundaries which were placed on the case, particularly the boundaries of time and activity. As is evident from the timeline, the data collection took place between May 2015 and June 2016 and activities or methodologies included document analysis, interviews, focus groups, surveys and structured observations. The formulation of this timeline during the research design, highlighted that this study had a clearly identifiable case with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the dissemination of the language curriculum. This consolidates the appropriateness of choosing a case study approach.

Evidently, case study is a highly applicable and appropriate approach to investigate the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

4.5.2 The Identification of the Case

The second step in conducting a qualitative case study concerns the identification of a case or cases. Previous chapters have outlined the rationale which motivated an investigation into the research question of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. This stemmed from numerous factors including the importance of language instruction at primary school level, the tendency for curriculum studies to be neglected in contemporary research, and the significant silences surrounding curriculum change. An examination into the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum provided an opportunity to examine a crucial moment of curriculum change in Ireland. In investigating this question, this study hoped to yield findings which would be beneficial to the field of curriculum studies and in particularly to future curriculum developments in Ireland. The identification of the case was concerned with determining the most appropriate type of case study to investigate this research question.

Researchers must identify their cases and consider what type of case study is most promising (Stake 1995, Stake 2010). This became a very important aspect of the research design process. Stake (1995, p.243) describes the selection of cases to study as the most unique aspect of case study. Because case studies require the case to be identified, understanding the critical phenomena may depend on choosing the case well (Patton 1990, Yin 2003). Nothing is more important than making a proper selection of cases; the case should be selected to represent some population of cases, the phenomenon of interest in the case represents the case generally and thus the case provides an opportunity to study the phenomena (Stake 1995, Stake 2006, Stake 2010). In light of such findings, the selection of the case became a critical consideration for the subsequent study, as is outlined hereunder. For example, the phenomenon being investigated here is the overall process of curriculum change. The dissemination of the primary language curriculum represents or provides an insight into this issue. This study was subsequently formulated to investigate teachers' involvement in the curriculum change process. It therefore represents a sample of the population, teachers in the case study school. These findings may or may not represent other teachers outside of the case study school.

Nonetheless, it represents some population of cases. Evidently, the identification of this case was a significant consideration during this research design. Having identified the case, it is necessary to investigate the various types of case study.

<u>Types of Case Study</u>

Creswell (2007, p. 74) identifies three variations of case study in terms of intent:

•single instrumental case study

•collective case study

•intrinsic case study.

Within the <u>single, instrumental </u>case study, the research focuses on an issue or concern and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue (Creswell 2007). A particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or for refinement of theory. The case is of secondary interest - it plays a supportive role facilitating our understanding of something else (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Denzin and Lincoln 2008, Robson 2002). For example, the examination of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum provides an insight into the overall curriculum change and reform process. The case - in this instance - the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum - is often looked at in-depth, its contents scrutinised, its ordinary activities detailed, because this helps us pursue the external interest (Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

In a <u>collective</u> or multiple case study, the one issue or concern is again selected but the researcher selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue (Creswell 2007).

An <u>intrinsic</u> case study is undertaken because one wants a better understanding of this particular case (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). According to Creswell (2007, p.74) within an intrinsic case study, the focus is on the case itself because the case presents an unusual or unique situation. The researcher temporarily subordinates other curiosities so that the case may reveal its story (Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

Having examined the various types of case study, the single instrumental case study was selected as the most promising approach given its potential to provide an insight into the overall curriculum dissemination process and the external and internal stakeholders involved. However, in selecting a single, instrumental case study the epistemological

question which must be examined is 'What can be learned from the single case' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005)? However, Stake (2005, p.455) argues that it is the reader, and not the researcher who determines what is of value and explains how this knowledge transfer works:

> Case researchers will pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationships - and fail to pass along others. They know that the reader, too, will add and subtract, invent and shape-reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it...more likely to be personally useful.

The epistemology of the particular has also been considered by a number of prominent researchers including Donald Campbell (1975), David Hamilton (1980), Stephen Kemmis (1980) and Robert Yin (2003, 2008, 2010), who argue that we can learn both propositional and experiential knowledge.

Therefore, it was anticipated that through adopting an instrumental case study, this research had the potential to yield both propositional and experiential knowledge as to how a group of internal stakeholders perceived the experience of the initial stages of curriculum reform. Such findings would be valuable to the field of curriculum studies and allow a number of recommendations to be made in relation to future curriculum reforms in Ireland.

4.5.3 Data Collection

> All researchers have great privilege and obligation: the privilege to pay attention to what they consider worthy of attention and the obligation to make conclusions drawn from those choices meaningful to colleagues and clients (Stake 1995, p.49).

The third stage in conducting a case study is the data collection phase. Qualitative case study facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources to allow the multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter and Jack 2008). These data collection forms can include interviews, observations, documents and physical artefacts (Creswell 2007, Stake 1995, Yin 2003). This data collection process was designed to generate the highest quality of evidence and thus gain a unique insight into the dissemination of the language curriculum. Quality of evidence in social and educational fields is a personal matter as much as a statistical matter (Stake 1995). It should not be thought that evidence-based research depends mainly on

measurement; rather evidence-based research should enable people to attain a deeper conviction of how the thing works and what to do about it (Stake 2010, p.123). This reinstates the importance on focusing on the research process rather than the product of research.

Figure 4.C below provides an overview of the data collection methods which were utilised to provide an in-depth understanding of this case. In an effort to triangulate, the multiple method approach was adopted. This establishes validity and prevents the exclusive reliance on one method (Cohen et al. 2007, Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Flick 2009, McKernan 1991, Robson 2002).

Figure 4.C Triangulation of Data
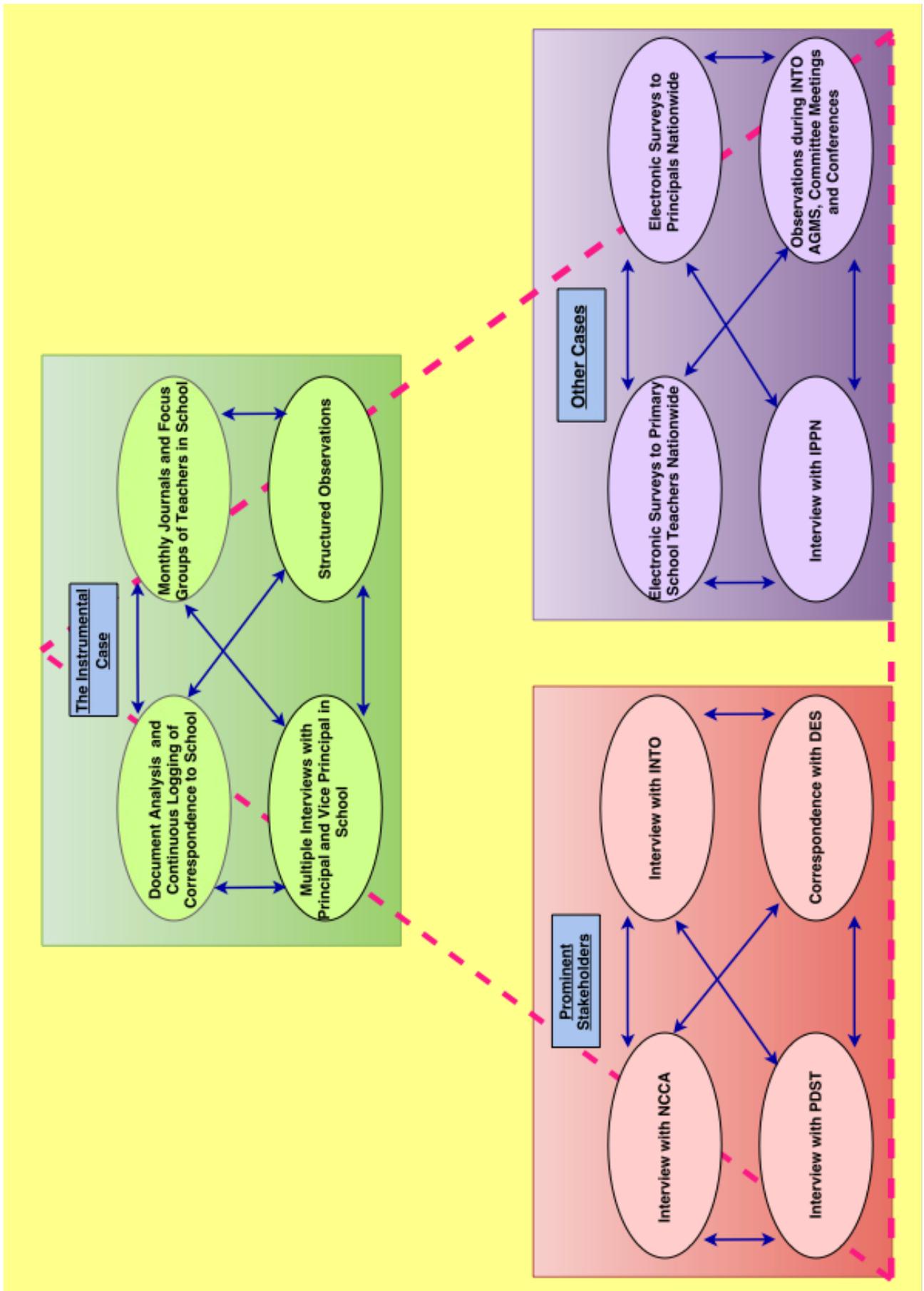
Figure 4.C

As noted in *Section 4.2,* the identification of external and internal stakeholders of the Primary Language Curriculum was a key moment of the research design as it enabled the participants of the study, to be determined. As is evident from *Figure 4.C,* the following methodologies were predominantly utilised to investigate the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum, from a variety of perspectives:

• Interviews

• Focus Groups

• Surveys/Electronic Surveys

Participants of the Study and Method of Sampling which was Utilised

Before providing a more detailed insight into the data collection process, it is necessary to outline the method of sampling which was adopted during this research, which was another important decision during the data collection phase of research. This study adopted a purposeful sampling strategy. The principle of selection in purposive sampling is the researcher's judgement as to typicality or interest (Robson 2002, p.265)*.* This approach enabled the researcher to select individuals because they could purposefully inform an understanding of the research question under investigation (Creswell 2007, p. 125). However, it required the researcher to think critically about the parameters of the population being studied and to seek out participants who would best illustrate this issue (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, Oliver 2010, Silverman 2010).

The external stakeholders were selected in the following manner. The researcher contacted the head offices of the NCCA, INTO, PDST and DES and provided an overview of the research topic. The head offices then recommended a representative of their organisation who would have significant expertise and acumen in this area, who were subsequently contacted by the researcher and invited to participate in the study. Although the DES representative refused to participate, the NCCA, INTO, and PDST representatives were extremely knowledgeable in all relevant curriculum developments and were therefore deemed to be highly helpful during the investigation of this topic. Internal stakeholders such as principals and teachers were selected as follows. Having contacted the IPPN in relation to this research, they agreed to post a link to the principals' survey in one of their monthly electronic newsletters which was distributed to all principals and deputy principals, nationwide. Principals and deputy principals who were willing to participate in the study were therefore in a position to respond. Similarly, an alumni group

of a teacher training college also distributed an electronic link to the teacher survey to many of their graduates and those willing to participate were also in a position to respond.

In terms of the instrumental case study school, it is worth providing a general overview of this setting, whilst still ensuring its anonymity. The case study school in question is classified as an urban DEIS Band 1 Primary School. It is situated in the centre of a large social housing development. It has a two-classroom ASD unit with 2 ASD teachers. At the time of the study the school had approximately 308 students, including 24 EAL students from African and Eastern European countries. The school has an administrative principal and 24 teachers. The researcher invited all teaching members of staff to participate in each of the surveys. A focus group was also conducted with 6 teachers of the case study school. In line with the purposive sampling strategy, the teachers who were invited to participate were selected based on who could best provide an insight into this topic and who were particularly experienced with language instruction at the various class levels. These included a purposeful blend of mainstream, learning support and resource teachers.

The utilisation of the purposeful sampling strategy ensured that a sample of the most appropriate external and internal stakeholders participated in the study. *Section 5.2.2* in the subsequent chapter will provide a detailed overview of the sample and backgrounds of each of these participants. As will become apparent, this strategy in addition to the data collection methods which were adopted, helped to generate findings which were most relevant to the research question and the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Semi-Structured Interviews with External and Internal Stakeholders

Semi-structured Interviews were conducted during the data collection phase of research. Semi-structured interviews have predetermined questions, but the order and wording can be modified based on the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate (Robson 2002, p.270). Flick (2009, p.3) argues that the general relevance of this approach is that the different types of questions allow the researchers to deal more explicitly with the presuppositions they bring to the interviewee. Given the axiological philosophy which stems from the social constructivist approach, this was an important consideration during the formulation of this research design.

There are numerous advantages to using semi-structured interviews in qualitative research (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Flick 2009, Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Firstly, it is a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out. Secondly, asking people directly about what is going is is an obvious short cut in seeking out research questions (Robson 2002, p. 272). Given the objective of this study to identify the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, this approach was deemed to be particularly appropriate. However, despite the potential to yield rich and illuminating data, a disadvantage of interview is that biases can be difficult to rule out (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Flick 2009, Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Holstein and Gubrium 1995, p. 3) offer a solution to overcome this limitation:

> The corrective is simple: if the interviewer merely asks the questions properly, the respondent will emit the desired information.

This consolidates the importance of preparing carefully for each interview. Based on the advice of Robson (2002, p.275) long, leading or biased questions were avoided. Each of the interviews were piloted in a informal fashion prior to the interview taking place with a number of colleagues..This resulted in a number of changes being made to the sequence of some of the questions. All interviews were later transcribed for subsequent analysis. This high level of preparation is one of the time-consuming aspects of conducting interviews, which has been consistently identified as a significant limitation throughout discourse on this approach (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Flick 2009, Holstein and Gubrium 1995, Robson 2002).

Semi-structured interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate approach to gain an insight into the roles and responsibilities of the external stakeholders of the curriculum. As mentioned previously, this study attained an interview with a representative from the NCCA, INTO and PDST. The Department of Education and Skills declined to participate in the study since the rollout of the curriculum was in the initial stages and it was felt that it was too soon to comment on the process. This has been identified as a limitation in Chapter 7 of the thesis. Nonetheless, the interviews with the other external stakeholders generated findings which were important in the exploration of the curriculum change process. Each of these interviews lasted between 1hr - 1hr 30 minutes and were conducted in a setting which was the most convenient for the interviewee. As is evident from the timelines in *Figure 4.A*, the interview with the NCCA representative took place in

November 2015, the interview with the INTO representative took place in January 2016 and the interview with the PDST took place in July 2016. These interviews were scheduled to ensure convenience for each of the interviewees. The questions which formed the basis of these interview have been included in *Appendix F.*

A semi-structured interview was also conducted with the principal of the case study school in May 2016. This interview lasted approximately 40 minutes and the questions which were asked have been included in *Appendix G.*

<u>Surveying Teachers in relation to the Dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum</u>

Surveys were used regularly during this data collection stage of research. There are numerous advantages to using surveys in qualitative research, and many of these were deemed to be particularly applicable to the research and embedded questions of this study. For example, according to Creswell (2007, p.233) surveys provide a relatively simple and straightforward approach to the study of attitudes, values, beliefs and motives. Given that this study endeavoured to highlight the various attitudes and perceptions of teachers at different stages of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum, this was particularly applicable. This substantiates the argument that survey questions should be designed to help achieve the goals of the research and in particular the research questions (Creswell 2007, p. 241, Creswell and Clark 2010, Denzin and Lincoln 2008, Flick 2009). In addition to this, the questionnaire can be used to gather data from a large number of geographically-dispersed respondents (Oliver 2010, p.110). Thus, the surveys yielded large amounts of data and also supported the instrumental case study approach by facilitating triangulation of data.

Teachers of the case study school participated in a number of surveys over the course of this data collection period. 12 teachers participated in these surveys including a range of mainstream, learning support and resource teachers. The first survey was conducted in May to June of 2015. This survey provided an insight into their level of awareness about developments surrounding the language curriculum and their level of involvement at this point. This survey has been included in *Appendix H.* An electronic survey was then distributed to teachers outside of the case study school in November 2015. Fifty teachers participated in this survey. All surveys were pre-tested, prior to administration. As advocated by Robson (2002, p.254) this pre-testing took place over a number of stages.

The draft surveys were initially pre-tested informally amongst a few friends and family members. This resulted in a clarification to the wording of some of the survey questions. A formal pre-testing then took place amongst a group of five colleagues. This process enabled the researcher to determine that the surveys were clear, manageable and beneficial to the study.

The use of surveys as part of this study enabled the researcher to establish whether the experiences and perceptions of the teachers in the case study school were consistent or not with teachers in other schools. This survey has been included in *Appendix I*. In June 2016, the teachers of the case study school were surveyed twice again, as is evident from *Appendix J* both before and after they received inservice in relation to the Primary Language Curriculum. This enabled the researcher to determine how teachers' levels of awareness and involvement had developed over the Initiation and Implementation Phases of Curriculum Reform.

Surveying Principals and Deputy Principals about their Perceptions of the CPD Approach

Principals were also surveyed in 2016 in relation to their perceptions of the CPD which was provided during the beginning of the Implementation Phase of the Primary Language Curriculum Reform. Having contacted the IPPN in relation to this survey, they posted a link to the survey in one of their electronic surveys which they distribute to each principal and deputy principal, on a monthly basis. 93 principals responded to this survey. 17 of these surveys were incomplete, with only one or two answers completed. Some of these surveys may have been abandoned due to technical difficulties and it is possible that respondents may have tried on another occasion to respond to the survey. To avoid potentially conflating the data, such incomplete surveys were thus discounted from the final analysis. The analysis of the completed surveys enabled the researcher to determine principals' experiences of the CPD which they had received to date, their perceptions of the Primary Language Curriculum and their confidence in disseminating the necessary information to their staff. It also enabled the study to determine whether the experiences and perceptions of the principal in the case study school were unique or not. This survey has been included in *Appendix K*.

<u>Focus Group with Participants from Case Study School</u>

Focus groups were also utilised during this data collection phase. A focus group interview is an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic (Flick 2009, Patton 2002). According to Kitsinger and Barbour (1999, p.126) focus groups are useful for studying organisational change as they enable a detailed study of social interaction, during which changes in attitudes and understanding can be observed, even as they are constructed. Given that this research is investigating curriculum change, this is particularly advantageous. There is also evidence that focus groups have considerable potential to raise consciousness and empower participants (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Johnson 1996, Robson 2002). During the literature review, it became evident that curriculum studies are often neglected in educational debates. This influenced the decision to conduct focus groups. Because many teachers may be inexperienced in discussing this topic, focus groups, which have the potential to empower participants when discussing an unfamiliar topic, were deemed to be appropriate. Focus groups were also deemed applicable to the social constructivist paradigm which frames this study and recognises that participants have multiple values and perspectives. It is advantageous therefore that focus groups enable researchers to examine people's different perspectives as they operate within a social network (Kitsinger and Barbour 1999, p.5). In addition to this, another advantage of conducting focus groups is that the group can become a tool for reconstructing individual opinions more appropriately. (Flick 2009, p.172) For these reasons, this research design made use of the focus group methodology.

Having piloted the questions, a focus group was conducted with 6 teachers of the case study school in June 2016. This focus group lasted one hour and enabled the researcher to capture their perceptions and understanding of the Primary Language Curriculum, having attended the in-service. The questions which were addressed during this focus group have been outlined in *Appendix L.*

<u>Triangulation</u>

Figure 4.C also highlights the triangulation which took place. Triangulation is typically seen as a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings (Golafshani 2003), as it prevents the over-reliance on one method (Cohen et al. 2007, Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Flick 2009, McKernan 1991, Robson 2002).

Triangulation has generally been considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). During the data collection phase of this research, it was deemed to be a useful and beneficial strategy for this instrumental case study. As is evident from the diagram above, the perceptions and experiences of the case study school were investigated through the use of surveys, focus groups and interviews. The perceptions and experiences of participants in other 'other cases' and other schools were also investigated through similar methods. This enabled the researcher to determine whether the perceptions and experiences of the participants in the instrumental case were unique to that setting or not. Interviewing the external stakeholders of the curriculum also acted as a form of triangulation as it enabled the study to develop a further insight into the curriculum change process from different perspectives. This triangulation therefore helped to illuminate many aspects of the research question.

However, it should be noted that this research design was also cognisant of the argument that no observations or interpretations are perfectly repeatable, that triangulation can serve only to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Flick 2009). Whilst comparison is a powerful conceptual mechanism, it runs the risk of fixing attention upon the few attributes being compared and obscuring other aspects of the case (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Flick 2009). Therefore, whilst triangulation was utilised during the data collection phase through adopting a multiple method approach, the interpretation and analysis of data endeavoured to avoid unnecessary and unhelpful comparisons, loosing sight of the overall case.

4.5.4 Data Analysis

The analysis process was influenced by the words of Arthur Schopenhauer (1818), who noted that the task is not so much to see what no one yet has seen but to think what nobody yet has thought about what everyone sees (Stake 1995). According to Yin (2009, p. 127) the analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies. In contemplating the data analysis which would guide this research, this research design was cognisant of the dangers associated with case study analysis - that when each data source is treated independently and the findings reported separately, this can lead to a fragmented analysis of the case (Baxter and Jack 2008). Rather, the researcher should ensure that the data converge in an attempt to understand

the overall case, not the various parts of the case, or the contributing factors that influence the case (Baxter and Jack 2008, Yin 2003, Yin 2009).

The first and most preferred strategy is to follow the theoretical propositions that led to the case study (Yin 2003, p. 130, Yin 2009). The original objectives and design of the case study tend to be based on such propositions, which in turn reflect a set of research questions, reviews of the literature and new hypotheses (Yin 2009, p.130). This was evident within this research. For example, the original objectives of the case study, as outlined in Chapter 1 led to a set of research questions being formulated. As is evident from Chapter 3, these research questions guided the literature review which outlined the implications for the research. The research design was subsequently formulated to address these implications and refined questions. There are numerous reasons for following the theoretical propositions that led to the case study during the data analysis phase of research (Baxter and Jack 2008, Yin 2003). Firstly, this practice leads to a focus analysis when the temptation to analyse data that are outside the scope of the research questions is present (Baxter and Jack 2008, Yin 2003, Yin 2009). Secondly, exploring rival propositions is an attempt to provide an alternative explanation of a phenomenon. Thirdly, by engaging in this iterative process the confidence in the findings is increased as the number of propositions and rival propositions are addressed and accepted or rejected (Baxter and Jack 2008, Yin 2003, Yin 2009). These propositions help to organise the entire case study and to define alternative explanations to be examined (Yin 2003, p.131). In contemplating this form of data analysis, it was felt that this process of allowing theoretical propositions to guide the study, supports the overall understanding of fully contemplating research from beginning to end and is therefore in congruence with the overall essence of the design.

All of the data was analysed using the constant comparison method. Constant comparison is defined as the process of constantly comparing instances of data that you have labelled as signifying or belonging to a particular category with other instances of the same category to see these categories fit and workable (Urquhart 2013, p.63). Making comparisons between data codes and categories advances conceptual understanding because of the need to expose analytic properties to rigorous scrutiny (Charmaz 2006, Urquhart 2013). In practice, this process involved physically cutting units of data from interviews, surveys and focus groups and grouping accordingly. No analysis software was used during this phase and, although time consuming, this manual analysis enabled the

researcher to gain an insight into the overall case, whilst remaining true to the boundaries and focus of the case.

4.5.5 Interpretation and Reporting of Data

During the interpretative phase of research, the researcher reports the meaning that comes from learning about the issue of the case. Qualitative research depends on planning but one thing researchers have to plan especially well is to be open to new ways of interpreting things and being able to sketch the case out for the reader (Stake 1995). Despite the challenges associated with reporting a case study, the case study researcher has a responsibility to do so in a coherent manner. According to Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 555), although it is difficult to report the findings in a concise manner, it is still the researcher's responsibility to convert a complex phenomenon into a format that is readily understood by the reader. The goal of the report is to describe the study in a comprehensive manner which enables the reader to feel as if they have been an active participant in the research and can determine whether or not the study findings could be applied to their own situation (ibid, p.555).

According to Merriam (1998, p.193), there is no standard format for reporting case study research. Indeed, given that some case studies generate theory, some are simply descriptions of cases and others are more analytical in nature, it is understandable that the overall intent of the case study undoubtedly shapes the larger structure of the written narrative. According to Yin (2003, p.141), the typical case study report is a lengthy narrative and can be linear, comparative, chronological, theory-building, suspense, or un-sequenced. Stake (2000, p.436) argues that a case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry - namely the report. Having previously highlighted the benefits of following the theoretical propositions that led to the case study (Yin 2003, Yin 2009), this is also a useful strategy during the interpretation and reporting of the case study. Returning to these propositions inhibits the risk of including any irrelevant data which is superfluous to the research question (Baxter and Jack 2008, p.555).

The interpretation and reporting of this case study involved referring back to the original propositions. It was also influenced by the rhetorical philosophy of this study, which stemmed from the social constructivist paradigm. To reflect the understanding that meanings are varied and multiple (Creswell 2007, p. 20), where possible each proposition

was examined, addressed and subsequently reported through the voice of the participants - both the external and internal stakeholders of the curriculum. This resulted in an extensive report which reflected the varied understandings, perceptions and experiences of the participants in a balanced manner. In addition to this, the thesis concluded its report with a series of fictitious vignettes written from the perspectives of the internal stakeholders; a teacher, principal and student. Vignettes are stories which provide concrete examples of people and their behaviours and often highlight selected parts or snapshots of the real world (Barter and Renold 2000, p.310). Whilst acknowledging that such vignettes were shaped by the researcher's values and understanding and do not represent the experience for all internal stakeholders, it was felt that this thesis would benefit from this device. As will become apparent, the vignettes enable the reader to gain a thorough understanding of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum from a number of perspectives and to get a feel for the time and place of the study (Creswell 2007, p.196).

4.5.6 Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher was a central concern of this research design. This is particularly important for the case study approach, which shows an intense interest in personal views and circumstances (Creswell and Clark 2010, Creswell 2007, Denzin and Lincoln 2008). In contemplating the role of the researcher for this research, this design was influenced by Blaikie (2007), Denzin and Lincon (2004, 2008) and Stake (1995).

Denzin and Lincoln (2004, p.2) present an image of the researcher as the bricoleur - somebody who is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks and is knowledgable about many interpretative paradigms (including constructivism) that can be brought to any particular problem. Bricolage research can therefore be considered a critical, multi-perspectival, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to inquiry (Rogers 2012, p.1). However, a very different understanding of bricoleur is presented in *The Savage by Lévi Strauss* (Lévi-Strauss 1966). In this text, the bricoleur is not someone who is able to perform a whole range of specialist functions or even to employ unconventional methods. Rather, it is the notion of a person that makes something new out of a range of materials that had previously made up something different (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, Lévi-Strauss 1966, Stake 1995) When this metaphor is used within

qualitative research, it signifies approaches that examine phenomena from multiple and sometimes competing, theoretical and methodological perspectives (Rogers 2012, p.1). This notion of the researcher as bricoleur highlights the researcher's need to pay sustained attention to the objects of research (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Stake 1995, Stake 2010). This premise supports the argument put forward by Stake (2005) that the task is not so much to see what no one yet has seen, but to think what nobody yet has thought about what everyone sees (Schopenhauer 1851). The researcher was greatly influenced by this understanding of the role of the researcher during all stages of this study.

Throughout this study, the researcher was also faced with a choice to maintain a 'professional' distance from the research participants or become thoroughly immersed in their social world (Blaikie 2007). The role of the researcher can range from complete membership of the group being studied (an insider) to complete stranger (an outsider) (Adler and Adler 1994, Unluer 2012). Given that the researcher was working in the case study setting and teaching alongside many participants, in this study, particularly within the single case setting, the researcher is an insider. This also enabled the study to respect the axiological philosophy of the research - the understanding that the values of the researcher will shape the overall study. However, the concept of the researcher as an insider brings with it a number of challenges. The greatest concern that people have on the outside is that it will be self-serving, self-protecting, promotional, advocating the home point of view (Stake 1995). However, in light of the fact that this research design was utilising a single, instrumental case study and was also examining other cases to substantiate or refute the data, this risk was deemed to be seriously diminished. In addition to this, the topic under investigation - curriculum dissemination - was somewhat neutral. As a result participants tended to give frank and open disclosures about their perceptions and experiences, in surveys, interviews and focus groups. Participants were also guaranteed anonymity during the reporting of the case study, which encouraged open responses.

4.5.7 Ethical Protocol during the Data Collection Process

Ethical clearance was requested and granted prior to the commencement of data collection. This ethical clearance has been included in *Appendix M*. Robson (2002, p.174) listed a number of strategies for dealing with threats to validity and these were helpful in

ensuring a high level of ethical protocol during the data collection process. The following steps were taken to minimise any possible risks.

Storage and Treatment of Data

All data was collected and stored in a safe and secure manner with names changed to ensure anonymity. Data were stored for the duration of the data collection period, and was destroyed immediately after analysis. All computer files were stored on the researcher's own laptop which was password encrypted. The researcher had sole custody of the data during the data collection period. The principal and board of management of the case study school were provided with a general summary of the findings following the overall analysis, but did not have access to the raw data.

Treatment of Participants and Research Settings

- Permission was sought from the relevant Boards of Management, principals, teachers, and participants prior to the study taking place.
- Because aspects of this study took place in a primary school, these surveys, interviews and focus groups were conducted and completed after school hours, when the students had gone home. The location within the school was at the discretion of the participant(s) who chose the most confidential and comfortable environment for them.
- Participants were encouraged to complete a consent form prior to participation to ensure full disclosure and to clarify their roles within the study. This ensured that if participants felt the need to leave the study at any stage, they were in a position to do so. This was made clear to them on completion of the consent form and at various stages of the study. No participants opted to leave this study over the course of this research.
- The confidentiality of all participants and schools was preserved during all stages of the data collection period, analysis and write up. Names were changed during the transcribing process to ensure the highest level of anonymity.
- Member checking involves returning to respondents and presenting material such as transcripts, accounts, and interpretations to them (Robson 2002, p.175). This can be useful in guarding against researcher bias. Although participants were invited to review and amend transcripts to reduce errors, they did not express a wish to do so. Clarification was regularly sought by the researcher during various interviews and focus groups to inhibit researcher bias.

4.6 Addressing the Potential Limitations of this Case Study

A number of possible limitations were identified during the formulation of this research design. These included the scope of this case study and generalisation. The manner in which these have been addressed will be outlined below.

4.6.1 The Scope of this Case Study

The scope of this case study was examined at length prior to commencing this research. As mentioned previously, one of the pitfalls associated with case study is the tendency for researchers to attempt to answer a question that is too broad and subsequently collect overwhelming amounts of data that require extensive management and analysis (Baxter and Jack 2008). Consequently, this was identified as a potential limitation from the beginning. Utilising the methodological approach and methodologies which have been outlined above, the data collection of this research took place between May 2015 and June 2016. This provided an insight into many important aspects of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum including the consultation which was conducted with teachers, the initial awareness raising strategies and the provision of the initial professional development. It also investigated the beginning of the implementation of this curriculum change. This enabled the approach to CPD to be examined as well as an important change which was made to the planned implementation of the curriculum. As mentioned previously, both of these phases were identified as critical moments in the curriculum reform and were therefore deemed worthy of investigation. However, this research was cognisant of the argument that educational change is a long-term interactive process in which any stage "may be in the works for years" (Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, McBeath 1997). Through outlining the scope of the case study, this research acknowledges that whilst it is investigating an important moment in the curriculum change process, due to the timeline of this study some aspects of this reform were outside the remit of this research.

4.6.2 Generalisation

Generalisation has been identified as a significant limitation of the case study approach. It is important to note that generating naturalistic generalisations is an important part of case

study research as they can highlight what people can learn from the case whether for themselves or to apply to a population of cases (Yin 2003).

However, Stake (2005) warns that:

> *To generalise is to be an idiot. To particularise is the lone distinction of merit. General knowledges are those that idiots possess.*

Damage occurs when the commitment to generalise or create theory runs so strong that the researcher's attention is drawn away from features important for understanding the case itself (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Denzin and Lincoln 2008, Robson 2002). Case study methodology has suffered somewhat because it has sometimes been presented by people who have a less regard for the study of the particular (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Yin 2003). In his book *Making Social Science Matter* Flyverberg claimed that social science has been insufficiently helpful to human problem solving (Flyvbjerg 2001, Stake 1995). Case researchers seek out both what is common and what is particular about the case but the end result regularly presents something unique (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). This consolidates previous arguments about the value of studying the particular. The particularity of the case might include:

1) the nature of the case

2) the historical background

3) the physical setting

4) other contexts, including economic, political, legal and aesthetic

5) other cases through which the case is recognised

6) those informants through who the case can be known

Thus these warnings about generalisation have undoubtedly shaped the interpretation and reporting of the case study. As advocated by Stake (2008), the researcher endeavoured to assure the reader that the purpose of the study has not been to attain generalisation but to add situational examples to the reader's experience. In addition to this, as will become apparent in the subsequent chapters, this study continuously highlights the uniqueness of the instrumental case study setting. This has helped to inhibit unnecessary generalisations during the reporting of the case.

4.7 Conclusion

The dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum has been identified as a critical and momentous juncture of curriculum change for the primary education sector. This study has identified the potential of conducting a thorough investigation into this process, in the hope of illuminating teachers' involvement in the process of curriculum change and reform. This would therefore fulfill the aim of the study and offer a valuable contribution to contemporary discourse on curriculum change. Given the importance of this issue, it was essential that the research design was contemplated and planned in a highly conscientious manner, to provide an insight into this significant research question.

This chapter has provided a detailed overview of the methodological approach which was adopted to investigate the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. Being aware and cognisant of the importance of 'thinking through a study from beginning to end' (Stake 2010, p.3), this chapter has endeavoured to map out each stage of the research process for the reader in a very clear and coherent manner. A detailed rationale has been provided for utilising a single case study method, framed by a social constructivist approach. Similarly, the methodological tools which were utilised during the study such as semi-structured interviews, surveys and interviews have been outlined and examined to highlight how this important issue can be investigated in a robust manner.

As will become apparent, this rigorous research design has contributed to the overall merit of this study which has yielded beneficial findings in relation to the dissemination process as a result. It has been argued throughout this chapter that qualitative case study can facilitate the exploration of a phenomenon and allow the multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter and Jack 2008). The subsequent chapters will illustrate this by reporting and analysing the overall case. *Chapter 5* will provide an overview of many issues which were identified during the Initiation Phase of the Primary Language Curriculum reform, whereas *Chapter 6* will address the issues which were identified during the Implementation Phase of reform. It is anticipated that the value of this research design will become increasingly apparent for the reader during the remaining chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 5 - The Initial Process of Curriculum Reform

5.1 Introduction

The following chapters, *Chapter 5 and Chapter 6*, will outline the overall findings which emerged following analysis of the data. As was indicated in the previous chapter, the identification of the Phases of Curriculum Reform within the literature review influenced the research design. Due to the timeline of this research, this design was subsequently formulated to investigate the Initiation and Implementation Phases of curriculum reform. This also influenced the manner in which the findings were reported. Given the extensive data which were collected, these findings have been organised into two separate chapters, according to such phases.

Curriculum change and reform evolves in three distinct stages; initiation, implementation and institutionalisation (Ellsworth 2000, Fogarty and Pete 2007, Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, McBeath 1997). Literature stresses the breadth and interconnectivity of each of these stages and that numerous factors operate at each phase, feeding back and altering decisions made during previous stages (Fullan 1999, Fullan and Miles 1992, Fullan 2003). Initiation consists of all the decisions and activities which occur before the change is put into place in the classroom (McBeath 1997, p.39). As highlighted in the literature review, the initiation of an innovation requires planning an introductory awareness that establishes the context, goals, process and timeline for all who are involved (Fogarty and Pete 2007, p.9). It calls for inclusion of all stakeholders, extending invitations for them to participate, question and acknowledge concerns and finally announce the level of commitment for change (ibid, p.9). This chapter will report the findings which emerged in relation to the initial aspects of the reform process including the design and development of the Primary Language Curriculum, the consultation process which took place and teacher awareness about this curriculum change. The next chapter will then report the findings which were relevant to the later stages of the reform process including teachers' receptivity to change, the provision of professional development and amendments which were made to the reform process.

<u>5.1.1 Identifying the Stakeholders of the Curriculum</u>

The predominant aim of this study was to contribute to contemporary educational debate around the area of curriculum change through examining the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. Prior to presenting the findings it is worthwhile clarifying a number of issues around this topic. The process of curriculum change and reform is complex, as highlighted within the literature review. It is a long-term interactive process which "may be in the work for many years" (Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, p.48). It involves groups of stakeholders in education - internal and external. As outlined in *Chapter 4 (Section 4.1.3),* the identification of both internal and external stakeholders of the Primary Language Curriculum was central to this research as it determined the participants of this research. It is worth reiterating that the internal stakeholders of this curriculum include students, parents, teachers, principals, the community, voluntary organisations and boards of management within schools. External stakeholders include teacher groups such as the INTO, Teaching Council, principal groups such as the IPPN, the inspectorate, the NCCA, the Government and specifically the Department of Education and Skills. As per the aims and objectives set out in *Chapter 1 (See Section 1.4),* this study endeavoured to identify the roles and responsibilities of the external stakeholders during this time. This study also endeavoured to highlight the perceptions and experiences of the internal stakeholders, the teachers and principals, in relation to their level of involvement in and engagement with the overall dissemination process. This chapter will highlight the perceptions and experiences of both internal and external stakeholders during this crucial period of change in the Irish Primary Education System.

<u>5.1.2 Structure of this Chapter</u>

This study has stemmed from a social constructivist approach which has a number of implications for the interpretation and representation of the data. The study recognises that within this approach meanings are varied and multiple and that the researcher looks for the complexity of views rather than one narrow interpretation (Creswell 2007, p. 20). Given that multiple realities exist, the researcher has to reflect these various subjective realities in an impartial fashion (Chase 2005, Creswell 2007, Crotty 1998, Gough 2013, Moustakas 2004). Thus, much of the data which will be presented will be outlined from the participants' perspectives and direct quotes used to capture the essence of the issues. It is recognised that whilst the data represents perceptions and experiences of the majority of

the participants, no claims beyond those who participated in the study can be made. Nonetheless, such data, giving voice to stakeholders at the core of the curriculum dissemination process, provides a unique and worthwhile insight into the perceptions of many primary school teachers and principal teachers.

Having conducted a review of a range of available literature on the curriculum development and dissemination process, a number of key questions were identified within the context of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. Many of these were extensions of the initial embedded questions. This strengthened the rationale for conducting a study of this nature and shaped the overall research design. The analysis which took place involved the examination of these theoretical questions, as they emerged, within the data. According to Yin (2003, p.130) this is an example of theoretical orientation guiding case study analysis and is the first and most preferred analytical strategy. Thus, this strategy has also shaped the overall structure of the next chapter.

In this chapter, the data generated in this study will be presented as follows:

•The Design and Development of the Primary Language Curriculum

•Consulting Teachers about the Primary Language Curriculum

•Raising Awareness about the Primary Language Curriculum

5.2 Data Collection

The previous methodology chapter has examined the social constructivist paradigm which framed the case study approach as well as the rationale which led to the utilisation of the various data collection methods (*Chapter 4, Section 4.5.3*). These include surveys with the teachers of the case study school, and surveys with teachers and principals outside of the case study school. In addition to this, interviews were conducted with external stakeholders including a representative from the NCCA, INTO and PDST. Interviews were also conducted with the principal of the case study school. A number of focus groups were also conducted with the teachers of the case study school. As will become apparent, this approach to data collection yielded extensive findings in relation to the curriculum change process, and particularly the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. To ensure clarity for the reader, as they navigate this chapter, these methods have been outlined below.

The findings will be coded according to the various sources of data as follows:

Code	Data Collection Method	Time of Data Collection
A	Survey of Teachers in Case Study School	May - June 2015
B	Interview with of NCCA Representative	November 2015
C	Survey of External Teachers (outside of the Case Study School)	November 2015
D	Interview with INTO representative	January 2016
E	Survey of External Principals (outside of the Case Study School)	February 2016
F	Interview with Principal of Case Study School	May 2016
G	Survey of Teachers of Case Study School prior to their Inservice Day which they received	May 2016
H	Survey of Teachers in Case Study School having attended their Inservice Day	June 2016
I	Interview with PDST representative	June 2016
J	Focus Group with 6 teachers from Case Study School	June 2016

5.2.2 Participants within the Data Collection Methods

A. Survey of Teachers in Case Study School

The profile of the case study school (at the time of the study) is included below:

Total Number of Teachers	24
Mainstream Teachers	14
ASD Teachers	2
Resource Teachers	5
Total Number of Pupils	308
Total Number of EAL Pupils	24 (12 from African Countries, 12 from Eastern European Countries)

12 teachers participated in the survey in May-June 2015.

B. Interview with a representative from the NCCA

C. Survey of Teachers Nationwide

Teaching Positions of Respondents

- Teaching Principal
- Mainstream Teacher
- Learning Support Teacher
- Resource Teacher

4%
68%
14%
14%
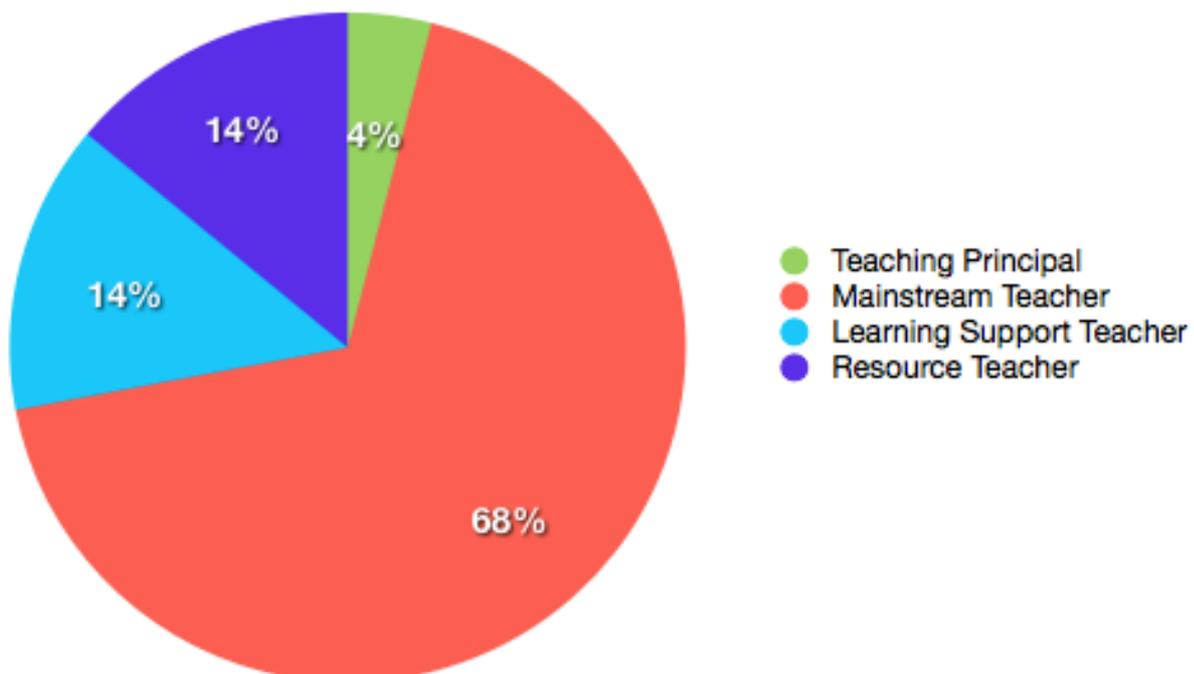
Schools in which Respondents are Teaching

- Mainstream School
- Mainstream School with Special Classes
- Gaelscoil
- DEIS
- Special School
- Educate Together/DEIS
- Mainstream with ASD Unit
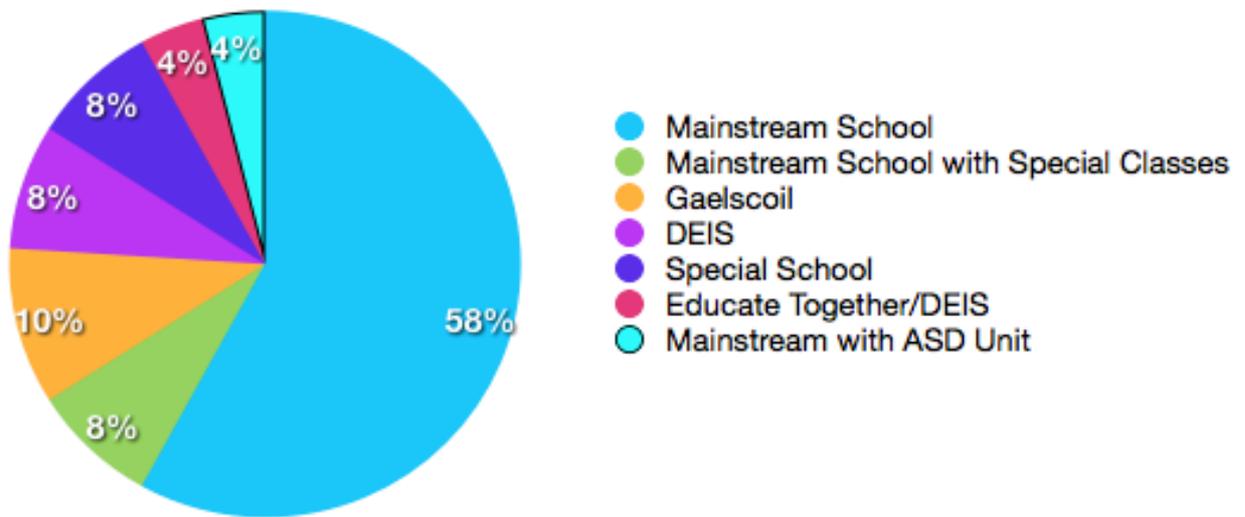
Total Number of Respondents: 50

Class type of mainstream teachers and teaching principals

- Single Class
- Multigrade Class
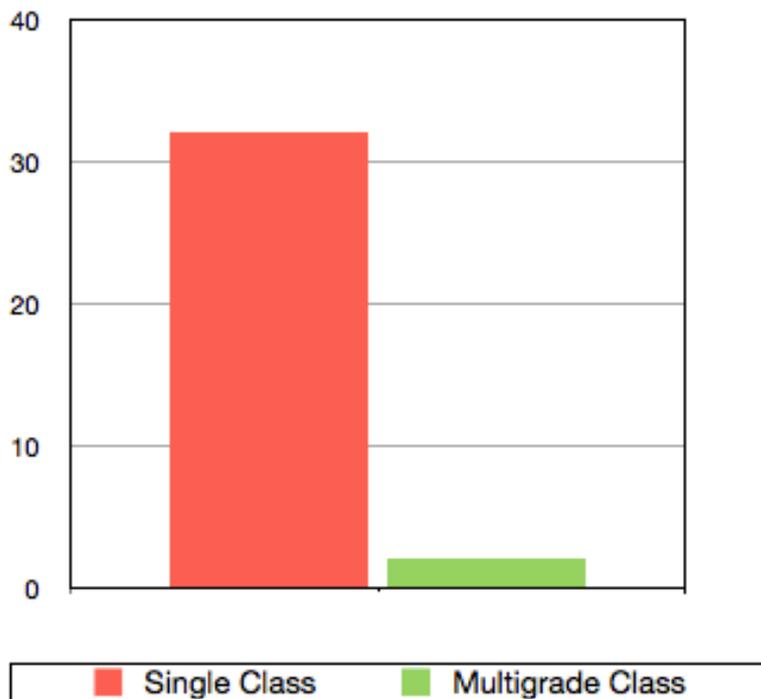
E. Survey of Principals Nationwide

Response Rate:	93
- Incomplete Surveys	17
Total Surveys Analysed	76

Position of Questionnaire Respondents

Legend:
- Deputy Principals
- Administrative Principals
- Teaching Principals

School Type of Principals and Deputy Principals
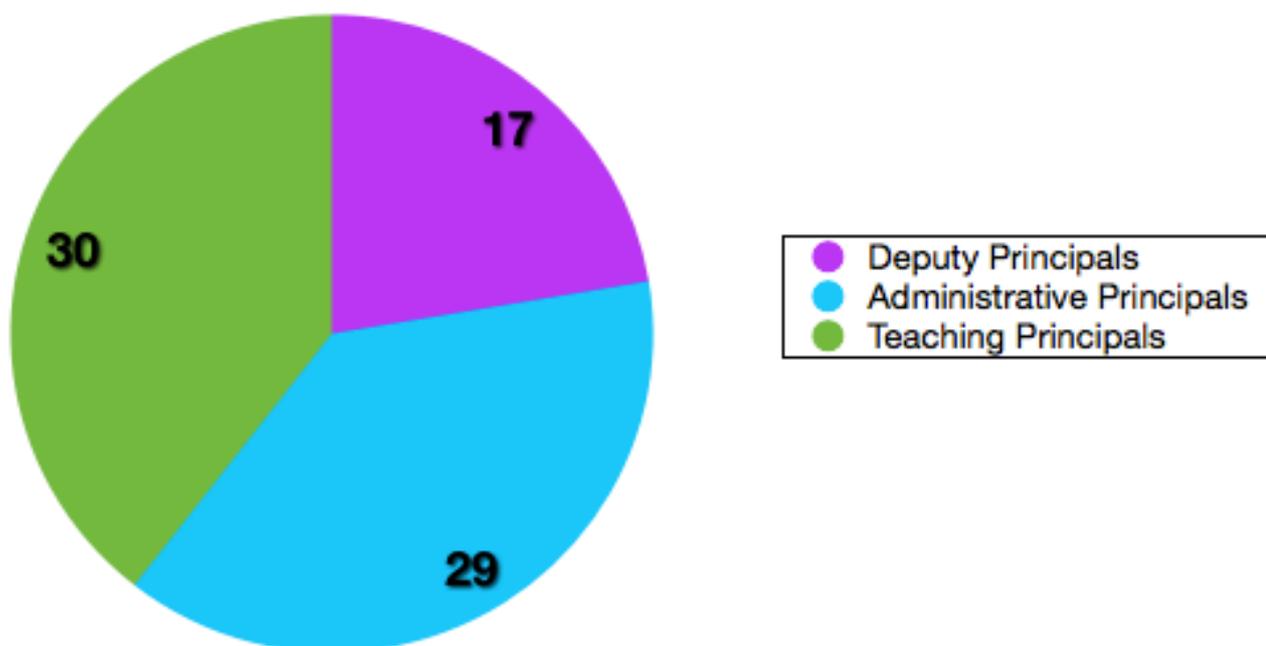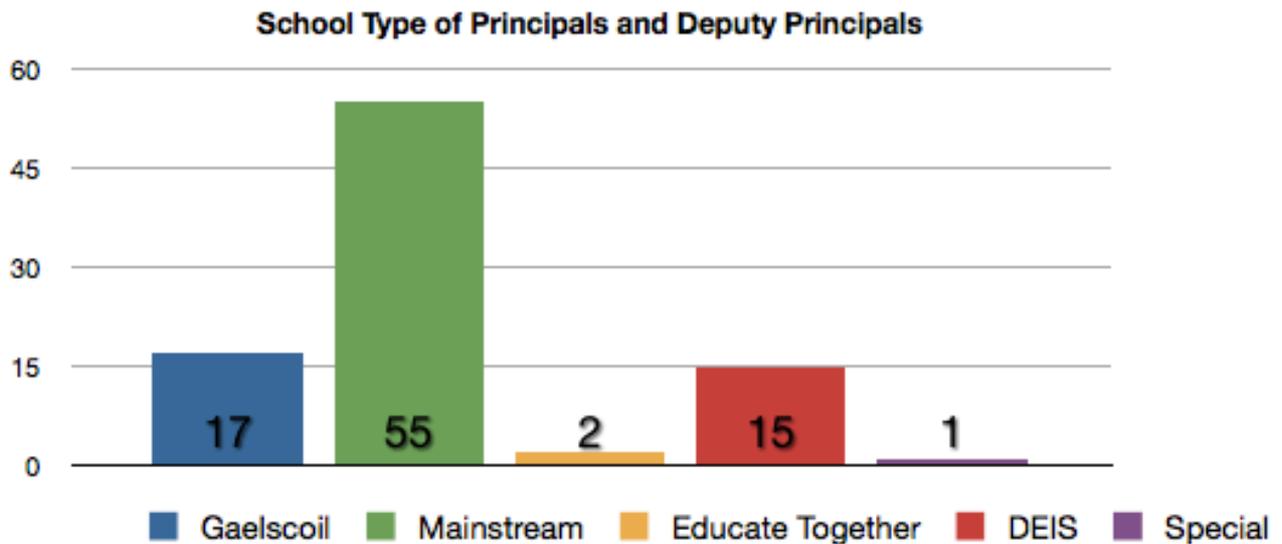
F. Interview with Principal of Case Study School

G. Survey of teachers in Case Study School Prior to Inservice

12 participants participated in this survey.

H. Survey of teachers in Case Study School Following Inservice

12 participants participated in this survey.

I. Interview with a PDST representative

J. Focus Group with teachers in Case Study School

These included a purposeful blend of 6 mainstream, learning support and resource teachers.

5.3 What was the role of the various stakeholders during the design and development of the Primary Language Curriculum?

The literature review has highlighted the complex and challenging nature of curriculum design and development. It has provided an insight into the important decisions which must be made and how these influence the overall curriculum. *Chapter 2* has outlined the manner in which the Primary Language Curriculum differs substantially from its predecessor and it is evident that many critical decisions must have been made during its design and development of this curriculum. However, a number of prevailing questions were identified regarding this process, particularly in relation to the level of teacher involvement and engagement at this time and the debate and discussion which took place.

The interviews with both the INTO and NCCA representatives provided a clear insight into the level of teacher involvement during the design and development phase of the Primary Language Curriculum. The following groups and bodies were identified as being included, involved and responsible for the design and development of the Primary Language Curriculum:

• Language Development Group (NCCA)

• Cluster of Network Schools

• Education Committee (INTO)

• Advisory Group

• Input from the Department of Education and Skills.

Language Development Group (NCCA)

According to the <u>INTO representative</u>:

Most of the work would have been done by the Language Development Group. It was the staff at the NCCA who prepared the drafts and then these were discussed at the Language Development Group. The Language Development Group had quite a few teachers around the table so that was an opportunity for teachers who were in classrooms to input into the language curriculum.

There were 3 other teachers who are members of the INTO education committee who are also on that group.

Different management bodies would have a member each, the National Parents' Council would have a representative but organisations such as the PDST have a member on the

Language Development Group and of course that's another teacher. There were 4 teachers on it, more than any other stakeholder group.

Cluster of Network Schools

In addition to the representative structures, the NCCA work with schools directly so that teachers on the ground have an input and they have an opportunity to look at what the NCCA is developing, to make comments and observations. They actually got to try things out in schools and provide the samples that are included in the NCCA's website as some of the support materials for the curriculum. (INTO representative)

The NCCA representative provided an overview of how consultations with the network schools work in practice:

If the teacher has been using it (the curriculum) or trying it out in classrooms or sitting around with progression continua, we would generally have an afternoon session with the school and they give us feedback or we'll talk to them about what it is they learned...or they'll present to us and that can be interesting: we'll let them present the language curriculum back to us so the people who are involved in the drafting and maybe some of the primary inspectorate will be in the audience and the teachers who worked with the curriculum will say here's how we think it's working for us, and the idea isn't to see 'Are they getting it right?' The idea goes back to are they using it in a way that will help student learning.

In one case, I sat in and they had taken five of these continua and they said 'we're going to find an example of students' work that matches these and see, are we there, can we find examples of students' work and actually we found examples of student's work that were further on (much further on) in the progression and we realised that we were underestimating the students so they had used it, we thought, very effectively.

They'll give us feedback. In an Irish medium school, early feedback we got was the progression is too short, you're not pushing them far enough because we've been teaching through the medium of Irish and ditto in the Gaeltacht schools as well so that's the kind of thing, bit of a presentation, bit of engagement, bit of chat.

When the NCCA representative was asked how these network schools were selected, an overview of this process was provided:

What we tend to do is look for a cluster of schools, very often it's things like geography will count, so they might be closer together. They might be schools we've worked with in the past. And they are willing to give it a go. We will always try and get a number of schools that represent different kind of language contexts, so we'll have the Irish medium, we'll have a school in the Gaeltacht, we'll have a DEIS school, we'll have a school with a high amount of diversity and a school with monolingualism just English schools as well so we try and get diversity and teachers who are willing to engage with us and sometimes these are teachers that we know or the principals have rung and said look if you're looking for schools, we'd be interested in doing it.

<u>Education Committee (INTO)</u>

The <u>INTO representative</u> provided an insight into the role of the education committee involved in the design and development process:

Our Education Committee would have a representative from every district - 16 teachers, all in schools and they had the opportunity to give feedback to the NCCA on some of the emergent developments.

The INTO would have had meetings and conversations with the NCCA about what was coming, in that we would have invited a representative from the NCCA to talk to our Education Committee about the developments. That was another form of consultation because the deputy CEO was able to throw out the ideas and get the feedback from the teachers around the table.

The <u>INTO representative</u> felt that much of the feedback which they provided, was taken on board by the NCCA:

The Education Committee members - their view is that the NCCA does listen and it takes on board the feedback and tries to incorporate it.

<u>Advisory Group</u>

There is also an advisory group that the NCCA consulted with and this committee would have had members on it who were experts in language - people who had done the research at the academic level on language learning. (INTO representative)

<u>Input from the Department of Education and Skills</u>

The <u>NCCA representative</u> described the role of the Department of Education and Skills during the design and development process:

The Department is on all our representative structures, it's on our council, it's on our committees and our groups so they are always up to date on what's happening and during the research phase and the consultation and deliberation phase they will be feeding in all the inspectors reports... the inspector's reports form a huge part, they can tell us what's happening in schools.

According to the <u>INTO representative</u> this level of involvement from the Department of Education and Skills is a marked difference from the design and development of the Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999) and is very important:

There is an argument that in developing curriculum you need more than just the practitioners' experience because you need to understand where the government might be coming from in terms of the overall values of the system, priorities and the system and where that fits into the picture, so it's important to always have that balance.

The <u>NCCA representative</u> clarified their role as an 'advisory body' and that:

...the department has to accept and approve what we do and they have accepted and approved the new Primary Language Curriculum.

<u>5.3.1 What level of involvement did teachers have during this process?</u>

Such findings provide an insight the involvement of both external and internal stakeholders during the design and development of the Primary Language Curriculum. The NCCA, INTO and DES had a purposeful role during this phase of curriculum change and reform. The Language Development Group was identified as having a central role and as having done '*most of the work'.* This group sought advice from the advisory group to prepare drafts of this curriculum. The INTO Education Committee provided feedback to the NCCA based on this draft.

This insight provides ample evidence of teacher involvement during this critical phase of curriculum reform. The representation of teachers on the Language Development Group and Education Committee is also commendable. However, as was the case during the design and development of the Primary SchoolCurriculum (1999), it should be acknowledged that some of these teacher representatives are affiliated with external stakeholder groups as is evident from the following comment by the INTO representative: '*Organisations such as the PDST have a member on the language development group and of course that's another teacher.'*
According to Sugrue (2004, p.176):

> Each of the players on the NCCA committees and NCCA staff bring a particular capital to the table. However, what they bring to the table is shaped by the structure of the field and their positioning with it. Consequently. the players or agents cannot be divorced by the organisation or structures in the field to which they have allegiance or affiliation.

Therefore, such affiliations may mean that the argument that there were '*more teachers than any other stakeholder group' (INTO representative)* is somewhat overstated.

Nonetheless, the representation of teachers on the Language Development Group and Education Committee has been identified as a strength of this process. The manner in which the NCCA worked closely with a cluster of network schools also suggests that teacher involvement was important during this process. Findings indicate that these schools had an opportunity to '*try it (the curriculum) out in classrooms.'* These schools subsequently provided valuable feedback to the NCCA and changes were made to the curriculum as a result. The NCCA representative highlighted the importance of the '*early feedback that the progression was too short'.* Whilst, it could be argued that the selection of network schools which tends to be influenced by '*geography'* could result in feedback from only a small section of the country, it still provides evidence that teachers on the ground had input during this phase. In addition to this, the Education Committee, which included teachers from each district, provided further evidence of the NCCA listening to what teachers have to say. '*Their view is that the NCCA does listen and it take on board the feedback and tries to incorporate it.'* (INTO representative)

Such findings indicate that efforts were made by the NCCA and INTO to include teachers during the design and development process. The consultation process which took place provides further evidence of efforts to engage with teachers during the initial stages of curriculum change and reform. As will become apparent, the investigation into this process also gives an indication as to the level of debate and discussion which took place amongst teachers in relation to the Primary Language Curriculum.

5.4 How were teachers consulted about the Primary Language Curriculum?

The NCCA conducted a consultation in the Spring of 2014 which invited all stakeholders to respond to the initial draft of the Primary Language Curriculum. This was an important element of the Initiation Phase of curriculum reform in which all stakeholders were in a position to provide feedback on the design and development of the curriculum. Given that this consultation awarded all stakeholders the opportunity to view and access the Primary Language Curriculum for the first time, albeit in draft form, it could also be argued this consultation process had a role in raising awareness about this curriculum.

This process involved posting a draft of the Primary Language Curriculum on the NCCA website and inviting teachers to participate in a twenty minute survey based on the draft. On the website, teachers were also encouraged to email their views on the curriculum to

the NCCA, should they wish. According to the NCCA, a postcard was sent out to each school informing them about the Primary Language Curriculum Consultation. In addition to this, information was posted on the NCCA website in relation to the consultation process. According to the INTO, they posted information about the consultation in their electronic newsletter and on the INTO website.

5.4.1 How did teachers participate in and respond to the consultation process?

The overall response rate to and engagement with this consultation process was '*somewhere over a thousand',* according to the NCCA representative.

The survey of teachers outside of the case study school indicates that only 4% of the participants of this survey participated in the consultation process.

Figure 5.A Overall Response Rate to Consultation Process
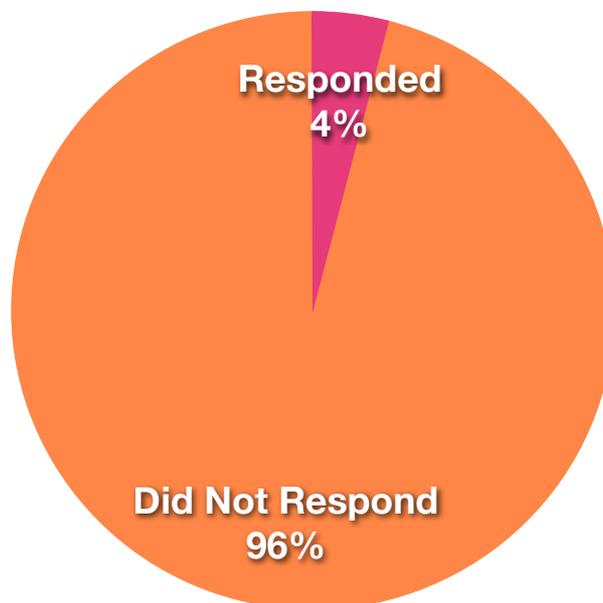
Given that 96% of participants did not engage with this consultation, and that only 1000 of teachers responded in total, this study acknowledges that there was a very low response rate to this consultation.

5.4.2 How did external stakeholders perceive the response to the consultation process?

The interviews with the external stakeholders provide an insight into their perceptions of this consultation process.

The NCCA representative perceived the response rate as *'pretty good'*. This was because primary teachers did not have experience in engaging in such forms of consultation. It was the *'first time that this type of consultation had taken place'* and consequently, this consultation process '*was very new*' to teachers. The following comments provide evidence of this perception.

This was the first time we sent out a draft Language Curriculum for teachers to say: "what do you think of it? give us your feedback.." so it was very new. So I think all in all, we got somewhere around 1000, a little over a thousand respondents. That was pretty good. There are a lot more primary teachers out there but we didn't get a huge engagement with it.

All in all, I think it wasn't bad for a first time out on a consultation. I think that as we develop the move away from the 99, people will become more aware and in tune to the fact, that there is a draft out there and there is a need to respond.

The NCCA representative felt optimistic that as primary school teachers gain more experience in this form of consultation their engagement with the NCCA should improve. Secondary school teachers were cited as having more experience in these processes and as a result tended to engage more effectively.

Post-primary teachers are used to drafts for consultation. I think primary teachers will build up that tradition of engagement over time. Now I suspect that by the time the consultation on mathematics arrives, teachers will realise 'Oh, they really are changing the curriculum so I better have my say. They'll have seen the ERB (Education about Religion and Beliefs) and Ethics change and I think Mathematics will be more successful. So on the post-primary side of the house, we have an established track record of engaging with teachers."

The NCCA representative also perceived that the primary teachers were happy to allow the *'experts'* to make decisions in relation to this curriculum:

Ok the consultation wasn't that big, people were kind of going 'ok you're the experts - go ahead.' The draft even.. there wasn't a huge amount of comments on the draft... and that's our experience with primary teachers - when you're consulting on something established, they wait until they see the final version and then they kind of get all excited about, how will I do this and how will it work?

The <u>INTO representative</u> acknowledged that *'a thousand out of 30,000 teachers is certainly not many'* . However the representative indicated that although many teachers may have been too busy to respond, it is still a worthwhile process:

I don't think you can make teachers engage in a consultation if they don't have time or they're busy, but at the same time - those who do, actually appreciate being consulted on the curriculum.

The <u>INTO representative</u> clarified the difference between the structure of teaching at primary and post-primary level and provided an insight into why secondary teachers engage in consultations to a greater extent:

The structure of teaching is different at primary and post-primary and I think at post-primary level some of the subject associations have a role in consultations and a lot of teachers are members of a subject association - if you're an English teacher, you're a member of an English teaching subject association, so there can be more of a focus because you only have to focus on one subject. Primary teachers have to focus on the whole curriculum and primary teachers are going non-stop all day and primary teachers don't have free periods. There probably is some truth in the fact that primary teachers are not as used to an NCCA type of consultation.

<u>5.4.3 What level of awareness did teachers have about the consultation process?</u>

The analysis of responses from the external teacher surveys suggest that a lack of awareness was a key factor which inhibited their engagement with the consultation process. This has been identified as a critical factor which inhibited their participation in the consultation. Survey responses suggest that86%of respondents did not realise a consultation process was taking place.

Figure 5.B Respondents' Awareness of the Consultation Process
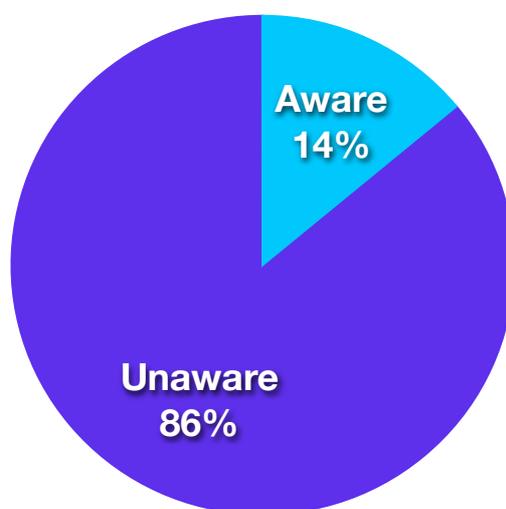
During the <u>teacher survey</u> the respondents were asked how they became aware of the consultation process which took place. Findings suggest that respondents who were aware of the consultation found out informally and through attending or participating in various courses. This question was only shown to the 7 respondents who were aware of it. Their responses were as follows:

•*Through attending a course in Mary I*
•*Heard through friends*
•*Through the INTO (2 respondents mentioned this)*
•*Through a Summer CPD Course*
•*Through an Aistear Course*

Analysis of the <u>principal surveys</u> indicate that many principals also perceived that there was a lack of awareness surrounding this consultation process. The following principal responses indicate this perception:

I feel it is being introduced without proper consultation with teachers and principals.

Displayed lack of consultation with schools and principals.

Very disappointed with NCCA. We as teachers should have been consulted.

The INTO representative acknowledged that there may have been a lack of awareness surrounding the consultation process. This representative also acknowledged the INTO's role in raising awareness and the challenge of getting messages out to teachers:

They (the NCCA) did the postcards for the ERB and Ethics (the consultation on the proposed curriculum for Education about Religion and Beliefs and Ethics), but for the language curriculum - they didn't have the same awareness raising, but they would have worked through us a lot. At the same time, that doesn't mean every teacher gets the message - so we're always open to suggestions from teachers if there's a better way in terms of getting information out to teachers or to encourage teachers to participate in consultations because their views are crucial in terms of developing curriculum.

Social media can be very effective in spreading a message that there is a consultation. We would have used our electronic newsletter and we would have had a note on our web. But again, not every teacher signed up to our newsletter though the numbers signed up are increasing every time. And a notice on our web, but then not every teacher would check the INTO website all the time but there are probably more teachers that check it than would the NCCA website or the Department of Education Website. So we often put a notice up, even if it is on the NCCA website or on the Department of Education website, we'd put a note on our own - even putting the link on it. And we could possibly do that better, in terms of making sure the links get out there. (INTO representative)

The PDST representative also acknowledged that there was a lack of awareness about the consultation process amongst teachers:

The fact that there was a lack of awareness around the consultation process doesn't surprise me at all and we meet teachers the whole time and part of our presentation is about.. you know you were involved in this consultation process... and we're getting stony faces.

There was a lack of awareness around it. I mean teachers have to take responsibility for trying to keep up to speed with things but there was definitely a lack of awareness around this.

However, although there was a lack of awareness surrounding this consultation, the analysis of the external teacher survey responses indicate that approximately 71% of the small number who were aware that a consultation process was taking place, still did not engage with it. These respondents did not provide an explanation for this.

Figure 5.C Response Rate (Based on those who were aware of the Consultation Process)
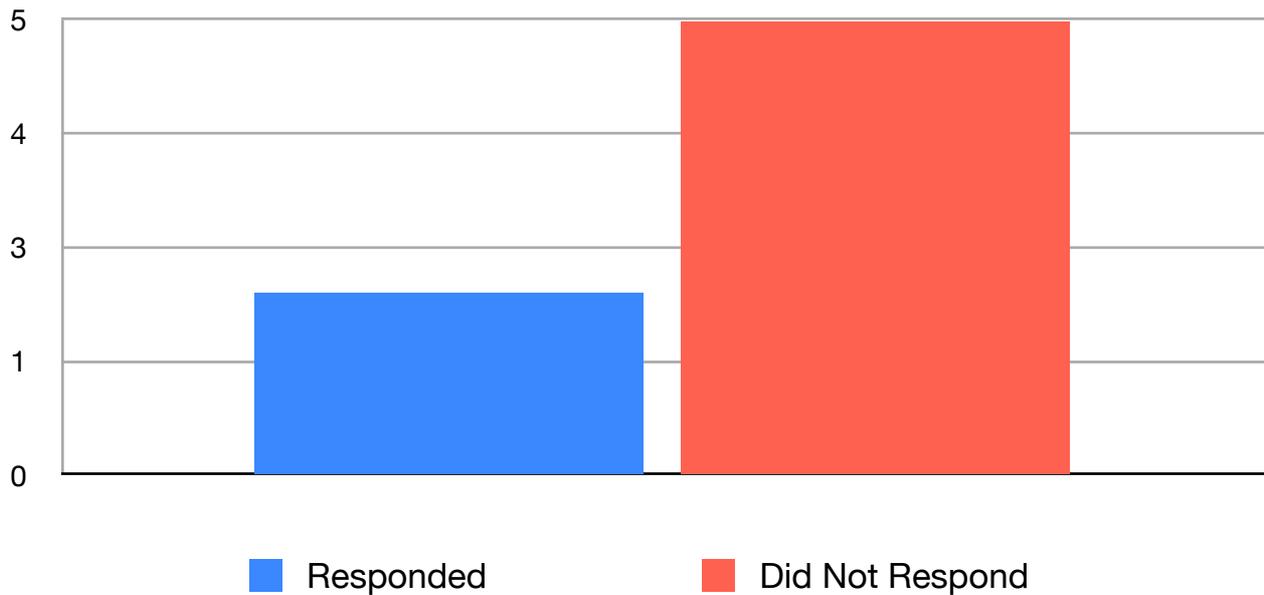
5.4.4 Teachers' Use of the NCCA Website

Posting information on the NCCA website was a prominent strategy for informing teachers that the consultation process was taking place. The survey of external teachers provided an overview of the manner in which teachers use the NCCA website. Such findings are beneficial as they facilitate an examination of the effectiveness of this approach for informing teachers about consultations and developments.

Findings from the teacher survey suggest that although 80% of participants have logged onto the NCCA website at some point, many of these teachers did not access this website on a regular basis. 20% of participants had never logged onto the NCCA website

How many respondents have previously logged onto the NCCA Website?
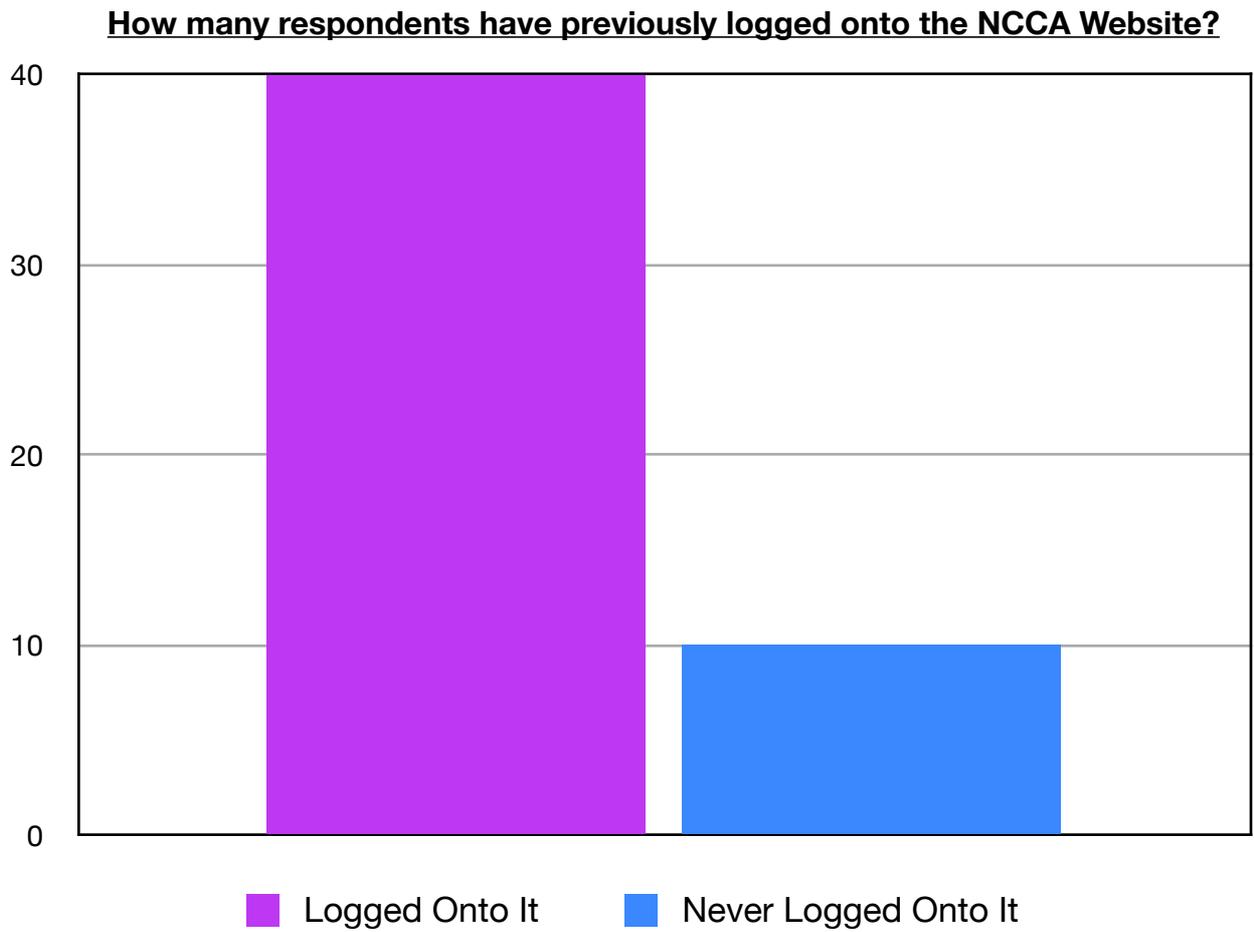
The majority of respondents indicated that the logged onto the NCCA website less than once a month.

Figure 5.E How often do respondents log onto the NCCA Website?
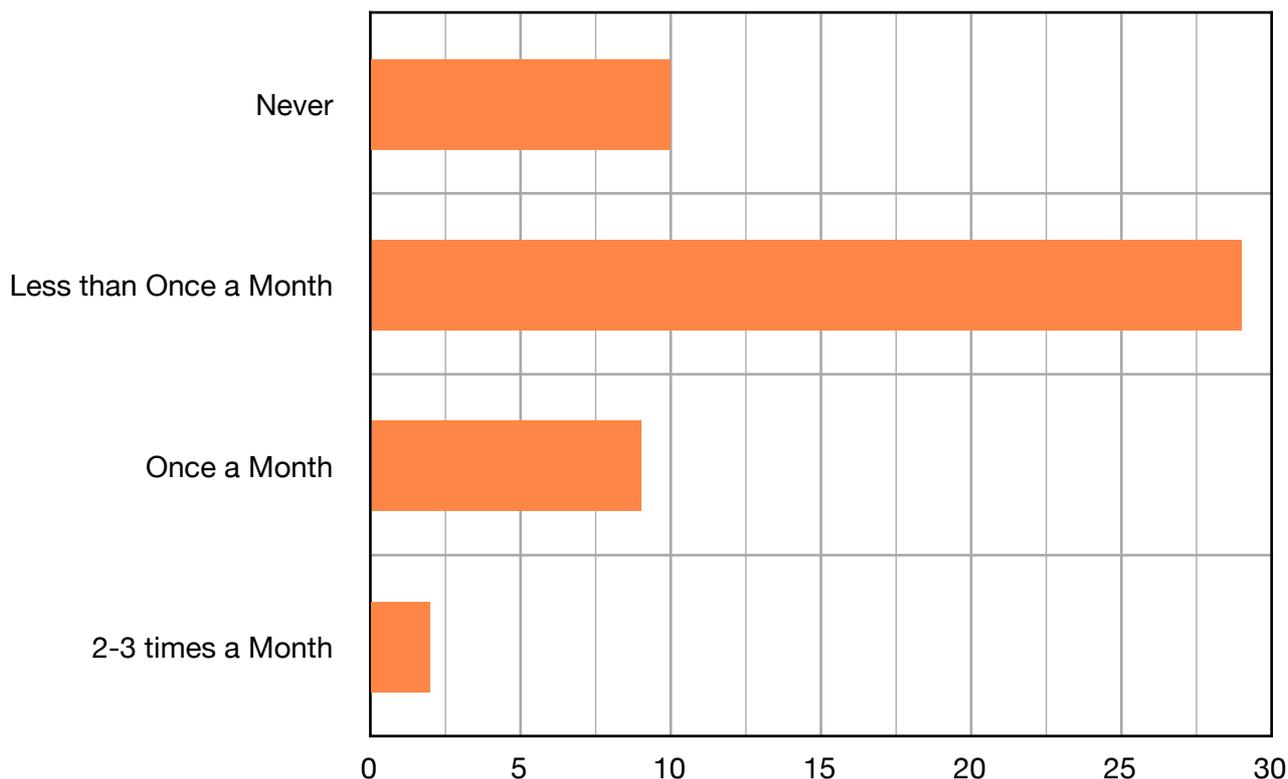
Findings suggest that those teachers who did gain access to the website did so, not to develop an insight into curriculum developments but, to access other resources and tools. Respondents were asked what they have used the NCCA website for. Responses indicated that teachers use the NCCA website for:

•Gaining access to curriculum for mild learning difficulties

•Finding out General Information

•Looking up changes, updates and recommendations

•Finding out about new developments

•Downloading Report templates

•Downloading 6th Class Passports

•Researching 'Tips for parents'

•Planning purposes

•Look and listen to videos and podcasts

•Help with planning for children with SEN

•Checking the curriculum

•Checking assessment strategies

•Gaining access to Aistear resources

•New ideas

•Help with School Self Evaluation

•General Reference

•Curriculum Glance Cards

•Helpful hints and practical suggestions for parents and teachers.

In this survey, teachers were asked to comment on the approach of posting information about the consultation on the NCCA website. Responses indicate that there was a sense that this was not the most effective method for disseminating information:

Well considering I and many of my colleagues are not aware of this, then I would say not very effective..

Seriously? It's not that easy a website to use and anyway that's not the way to pass information on to teachers..

Not very effective if we are unfamiliar with the change pending. But change like this should not merely be put on a website and teachers expected to implement it.

There has been a lack of communication between the NCCA and teachers on this matter.

Some respondents suggested that if the NCCA website is to be used as a method for disseminating information, additional measures would also need to be put in place:

For those who use it, it will be somewhat effective, however I assume it will require a 'click' from the teacher. If a teacher is on the site to do something else, I'm not sure how likely they will be to engage. Emailing information via the Principal/Office will also be required, as a minimum measure in the earlier stages of information dissemination.

Fine. If I had been informed then I would have looked at it.

It would need to be highlighted by school leaders to become more effective, teachers can be overloaded eg we look at SESS. PDST, Department of Education, Scoilnet and many many other sites to prepare lessons so a new curriculum needs to be effectively highlighted..

It is useful but does not replace an experienced practitioner disseminating information.

Yes, it would be good as a resource but it will not be enough. Full in-service for all teachers in my view is the correct most comprehensive way forward.

One teacher made a useful suggestion in relation to summarising information for teachers:

Having received this survey I went on to the NCCA website to seek information on the proposed curriculum. While there is information available there, it is in the form of quite a substantial document. A synopsis would be more suitable of the main vital components in order to update teachers. As previously stated, we have so many other draws on our time as it is between long-term planning, prep for each day, teaching etc..

During a <u>focus group with teachers from the case study school</u>, one teacher admitted being unaware of a consultation but argued that *'maybe it was our own fault that we didn't know about it being on the website'*

5.4.5 Possible Factors Which Influenced Teachers' Engagement with the Consultation Process

The study identified a number of possible factors as to why the majority of internal stakeholders did not engage with the consultation process:

Factor 1: Primary school teachers are inexperienced with consultation processes (Perception of the NCCA representative)

Factor 2: Teachers were happy to allow "the experts" to make the decisions in relation to the development of the language curriculum (Perception of NCCA representative)

Factor 3: Primary school teachers did not have the time to participate in the consultation process (Perception of the INTO representative)

Factor 4: There was a lack of awareness surrounding the consultation process (86% of participants in the teacher survey were unaware that a consultation process took place. This was also the perception of many principals and indeed the PDST representative)

Factor 5: Posting information about the consultation process to the NCCA website was insufficient. The majority of teachers do not use this website regularly (less than once a month) and when they do, it is to access a particular resource.

<u>5.4.6 Strengths and Limitations of the Consultation Process</u>

Conducting a consultation with teachers nationwide is an extremely complex and challenging process. This was an onerous task, for which the NCCA had responsibility. This consultation process was a critical element of the Initiation Phase of curriculum reform, a phase which theoretically encouraged the involvement of all stakeholders and an important part of awareness raising. This section will examine the strengths and limitations of this important process.

The consultation on the Primary Language Curriculum, which was organised by the NCCA has been identified as a positive attempt to encourage teacher involvement in curriculum development. Whilst teachers were represented on the Language Development Group, Educational Committee and through the cluster of Network Schools, this consultation, which was open to all teachers provided an additional opportunity for teachers to provide feedback, nationwide. The premise of this consultation has therefore been identified as a strength. However, there was a poor response (approximately 3% overall) to this consultation and the majority of internal stakeholders did not engage with it. This lack of engagement which stemmed from a variety of possible factors, listed above, has been identified as a significant limitation, which has a number of implications for the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Findings suggest that there was a lack of awareness surrounding this consultation process. This was evident from the survey responses from external teachers and external principals was consolidated by both the INTO and PDST representatives. The finding that 86% of participants in the teacher survey were unaware that a consultation process was taking place encapsulates this issue. Based on this finding, one can assume that a huge number of participants *could not* participate in the consultation as they were not aware that a consultation was taking place. This lack of awareness has been identified as an inhibiting factor to the consultation, one which has limited the opportunity for teachers to provide feedback on their perceptions of the curriculum. The INTO representative acknowledge the responsibility of the INTO in raising awareness about the consultation process and indicated that the NCCA 'worked through' the INTO a lot. However the lack of awareness which surrounded this consultation indicated that their approach to awareness raising about the consultation was ineffective. The INTO representative suggested that they *'could possibly do better'* in that regard. In light of the data which has emerged, this

study suggests that the INTO representative is justified in making such a statement. Similarly, efforts which were made by the NCCA to raise awareness about the consultation appear to have been unproductive. There was no evidence of a postcard having any impact on teachers' and principals' awareness of the consultation process. This study has identified that the majority of participants access the NCCA website less than once a month and when they do so it is to gain access to a particular resource and not for current curriculum development updates. In light of this, the NCCA website may not be the most effective channel of communication to teachers. Evidently both the INTO and NCCA may need to reflect on their method of communication to teachers to ensure that there are higher levels of awareness surrounding future curriculum consultations.

It is necessary to highlight that many participants who were aware of the consultation process, still failed to engage with it. The finding that only 4% out of the 14% of the participants who were aware engaged with the consultation process needs exploration. Their responses did not provide a reasons for this and the small number involved here makes it difficult to speculate with any degree of certainty as to why they may not have responded. Perhaps this finding consolidates the perception of the NCCA representatives that teachers were happy to leave such developments to the remit of the curriculum developers. Perhaps their inexperience with consultation processes inhibited their involvement. It could be argued that their lack of participation stemmed from a lack of interest in the curriculum development process. However, given the high level of participants who were unaware that a consultation was taking place, it is arguable that the majority of teachers were not in a position to even make a decision to engage with the consultation or not. The assumption which was made by the NCCA representative that teachers were happy to leave it to the *'experts'* is open to question. Whilst, this research acknowledges that the effective involvement of teachers requires a willingness to participate on their part, it is evident that teachers could be supported and encouraged to a greater extent during future curriculum consultations.

Analysis of this data indicates a lack of teacher engagement with this consultation process. This could have repercussions for their receptivity towards this curriculum change and may also influence their overall perception of the Primary Language Curriculum. Existing research indicates that teacher receptivity is crucial in shaping the success or failure of curriculum change (Lee et al. 2011, Lee and Yin 2005), particularly as many studies have

identified clear tensions between administrators and educators and resistance to reform by teachers to change imposed from above (Baker-Doyle and Gustavson 2016, p.54). Lack of involvement in this consultation may impact on levels of teacher empowerment, whereby teachers develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and resolve their own problems (Lee et al. 2011, Rinehart et al. 1998). Given that teacher empowerment is usually assumed to be necessary in order to facilitate change (Hornstein 2006), this may have ramifications for the successful dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. The poor participation of teachers in the consultation process may result in tensions during this important period of curriculum change and reform. Consequently, the consultation process has been identified as a potential obstacle to the effective dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

5.5 What strategies were adopted to raise awareness about the Primary Language Curriculum?

Awareness raising is an important aspect of the Initiation Phase of curriculum reform. As highlighted previously, this generally involves an introductory awareness that establishes the context, goals, process and timeline for all involved (Ellsworth 2000, Fogarty and Pete 2007, Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, McBeath 1997). The investigation of teacher awareness about the Primary Language Curriculum has been identified as an embedded research question, worthy of investigation. Analysis of literature on Curriculum Change and Reform resulted in a number of additional questions being raised. For example, this study endeavoured to examine external stakeholders' overall approach to awareness raising and to identify whether emphasis was placed on awareness knowledge, how-to-knowledge or principles knowledge. The investigation into the consultation process above provided an insight into the low levels of awareness which teachers had in relation to the consultation which took place. This section, however, will investigate teachers' awareness of the Primary Language Curriculum, in general, at different stages of the dissemination process. This provides a further insight into the level of teacher involvement during this period of curriculum change and reform.

This study identified the predominant methods of information raising which were utilised by external stakeholders during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum to inform internal stakeholders about this curriculum change. The awareness raising strategies which were utilised in by the NCCA included sending postcards to schools

nationwide, posting information on the NCCA website, and the use of social media. The INTO communicated information via the INTouch magazine, INTO website and INTO electronic newsletter. The PDST provided information during information seminars information about the Primary Language Curriculum developments were also available on the PDST website. The Department of Education and Skills posted news bulletins related to the Primary Language Curriculum on their website. *Appendix N* provides an example of information which was posted in the INTouch Magazine: Issue No. 158, in January/ February 2016. Many of these methods of information raising which were utilised indicate that brief and direct messages were conveyed. This would suggest that external stakeholders concentrated their efforts on awareness-knowledge - the information that an innovation exists. In this instance, it appears that they focused on informing teachers that a curriculum change was happening in the form of a Primary Language Curriculum.

5.5.1 What level of awareness did teachers demonstrate about this curriculum change?

The survey which was completed by teachers in the case study school in May and June 2015 indicates that at this point of the dissemination process 63% of participants had no awareness that a curriculum change was happening, 37% had some awareness that a curriculum change was happening, and 0% of respondents were identified as having a high level of awareness.

Figure 5.F Teachers' Awareness about Curriculum Change
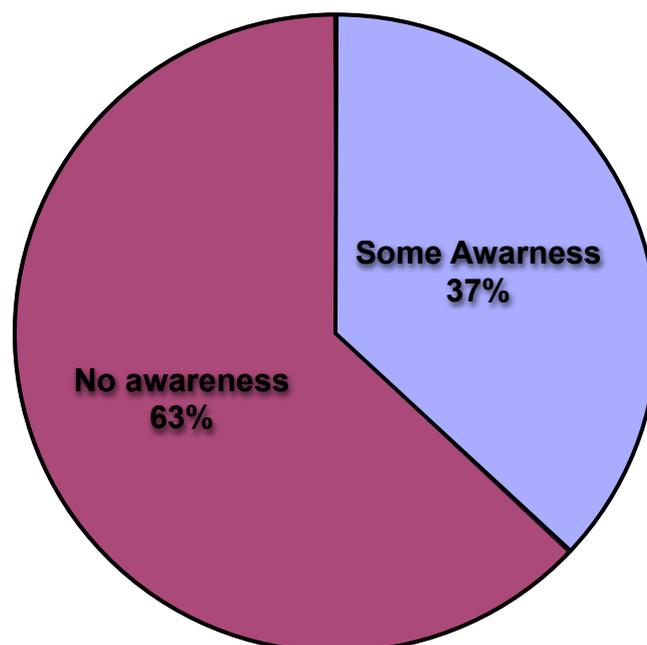
The following statements, which were responses to Questions 1 and 2 of this survey suggest low levels of awareness of curriculum developments:

I am unaware of any new developments.

I wasn't aware there actually was or is going to be a new curriculum.

I am not aware of an integrated language curriculum!

I'm aware that there is going to be a new approach to the teaching of English and Gaeilge but I have very little information on the details.

Awareness of developments has been through word of mouth, rather than direct contact with the Department of Education.

This low level of awareness was substantiated by <u>external teachers outside of the case study school</u> who completed the survey in November 2015. Findings indicate that, at this point, 64% of participants had no awareness of any curriculum developments.

Figure 5.G Respondents' Awareness of Primary Language Curriculum
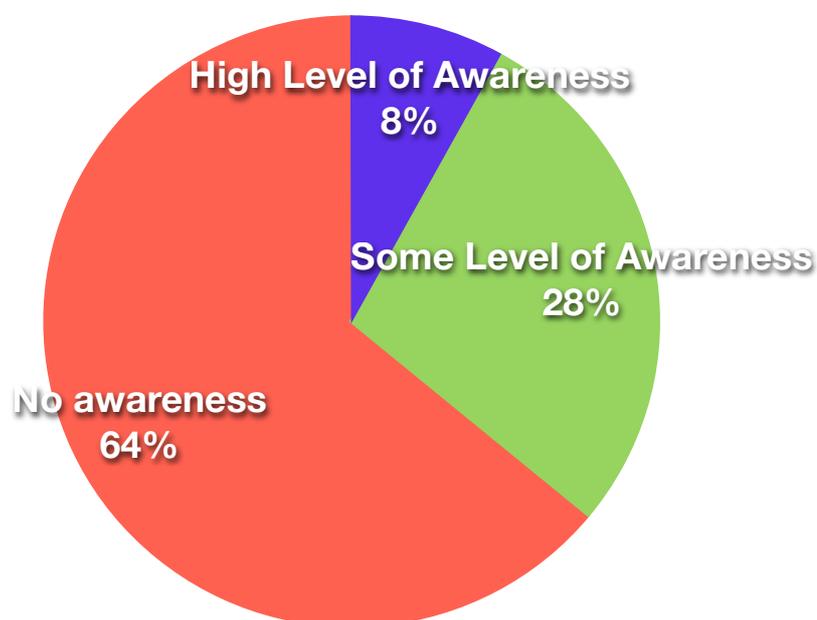
These results were generated from Question 10 and Question 11 of the questionnaire:

10. Can you comment on your awareness of developments in the language curriculum?

11. In terms of what you know about the forthcoming curriculum, what are your thoughts?

High Level of Awareness

Responses which made reference to the structure of the curriculum, the links between Irish and English, and the online accessibility were deemed to have a high level of awareness.

I am aware that they are making the English curriculum easier to access and use for planning i.e. Reducing objectives or making it less complicated. I believe the English and Irish curriculum are going to be a lot more similar in content and structure."

Some Level of Awareness

Responses which indicated that the respondents had heard that changes were happening but did not know what the changes were and were unable to provide any other information were deemed to have some level of awareness:

I'm aware that there is going to be a new approach to the teaching of English and Gaeilge but I have very little information on the details.

No awareness

Respondents who indicated that they had not heard that a new curriculum was being developed were deemed to have no awareness of the imminent curriculum change:

I have discussed this with my principal since and with colleagues. Nobody is aware of the forthcoming curriculum.

I am surprised that I haven't heard about this new curriculum of any changes that are upcoming. I'm not sure if the fault lies with me or if the information about it has not been circulated.

Additional Comments which indicate lack of awareness included:

I am shocked there has been so little information circulating about a new language curriculum. Surely the NCCA should have allowed more input from teachers and carried out extensive research before progressing with a new curriculum.

The lack of information being circulated on this proposed change is upsetting.

In addition to a general lack of awareness surrounding the curriculum, teachers reported that they were not aware of any teacher or school involvement in the development of the curriculum. 49 out of 50 respondents were not aware of any teacher/school involvement.

1 respondent noted that his/her school was involved in the *Pilot Programme for Allocating Teaching Resources for Students with Special Educational Needs.* This respondent indicated that their school's feedback from that pilot programme could impact on such developments.

Many of the responses from the principals' surveys also indicated that there was a lack of awareness amongst their teaching staff. This triangulates with teacher responses.

To date, staff generally are not au fait with any aspect of the language curriculum.

Displayed lack of insight into the already over burdened schools - displayed lack of consultation with schools and principals.

I feel that I know very little about the new curriculum - just what I've heard incidentally. I need to sit down and read the documentation to familiarise myself with it.

I feel it is being introduced without proper consultation with teachers and principals.

Very disappointed with NCCA. We as teachers should have been consulted.

5.5.2 How did external stakeholders perceive the level of awareness amongst teachers about this curriculum change?

The study identified the perceptions of external stakeholders in relation to teachers' awareness of the Primary Language Curriculum. Each of the external stakeholder representatives acknowledged that teachers demonstrated a lack of awareness about this curriculum change

In June 2016, the <u>PDST representative</u> acknowledged that there was still a lack of awareness amongst teachers in relation to the curriculum:

I have to say there was a lack of awareness around this curriculum. There's STILL a lack of awareness.

We find ourselves in PDST being the first port of call for this curriculum... which is totally not the way it should be. There was no semblance of a formal PR process around this and that's not the NCCA's responsibility but there was a lack of awareness around this curriculum.

This lack of awareness was also acknowledged by the <u>INTO representative</u>:.

Teachers are only beginning to realise an integrated language curriculum is coming...

We did look for an initial phase of information and awareness raising because we were conscious that teachers mightn't know this is coming...

This interview also acknowledged the challenges associated with raising awareness around developments.

It's very difficult, I think, to get a message out to teachers - because teachers are very busy. Their focus from day to day is what they're doing in their classrooms. They are not always aware of the broader developments in education. (INTO representative)

Teachers are so busy on their day to day work - that they don't always register that some developments are happening until it does happen.

The <u>NCCA representative</u> was unsurprised that that there was a lack of awareness surrounding these developments.

That wouldn't be unusual. If you're not in the zone, it will pass right over your head.

Teachers are busy people. A significant majority of them wouldn't know - until it's arriving in my classroom I don't give it headspace, that is the case.

The <u>NCCA representative</u> also acknowledged that many teachers would not become aware of the development until it was officially disseminated in the form of a circular. They

also indicated that teachers have a responsibility to keep up to date with developments themselves, to be '*in the zone*', to '*pay attention*'

If you were a teacher in a classroom, who was just teaching in a normal way, who was just teaching the 1999 curriculum, not involved in Aistear, not going to INTO meetings, not reading anything in INTouch - and there are teachers like that - you wouldn't even know it was happening. There are teachers out there, who are going to get a circular - it's going to be pinned up in the staffroom saying now the integrated language curriculum is required from 20 whatever year and you are going to start with Oral Language and they're going to say - what is this? so you will have teachers out there who don't know and that's not unusual, you know we can't grab you by the scruff of the neck and go 'Pay Attention' and you know in some ways that goes out there and then you depend on the word of mouth of teachers, we actually then, when it goes live, will be depending on all these stakeholders to spread the word. (NCCA Representative)

<u>Summary of Findings in Relation to Teachers' Awareness</u>

This study concludes that teachers demonstrated a lack of awareness about the Primary Language Curriculum during this period of curriculum change. The following findings substantiate this proposition:

•In May/June 2015 63% of teachers in the case study school demonstrated <u>no </u>awareness of a curriculum change

•In November 2015 64% of teachers outside of the case study school demonstrated <u>no</u> awareness about developments surrounding the language curriculum

•In January 2016, the INTO representative acknowledged that many teachers were only beginning to realise that a new curriculum was coming.

•In February 2016, many principal surveys suggested that a lack of awareness amongst teachers was still evident

•In June, 2016, the PDST representative indicated that there was still a lack of awareness surrounding the curriculum

5.5.3 Factors which Influenced Teacher Awareness about the Curriculum Change

This study investigated the level of teacher awareness about curriculum change and the Primary Language Curriculum. It identified the strategies which were adopted by each of the external stakeholders to inform teachers about this curriculum reform. As was outlined during the literature review (*See Chapter 3, Section 3.5.2*), there are three types of knowledge about how an innovation works - awareness knowledge, how-to-knowledge and principles knowledge (Rogers 2003, p.173). An awareness raising campaign tends to typically communicate either one central message or a suite of related subsidiary messages (Sayers 2006, p.16). Based on the strategies which were adopted during the Initiation Phase of curriculum reform, this study concluded that external stakeholders tended to concentrate their efforts on raising awareness knowledge, communicating a central message to the internal stakeholders that this curriculum change was happening in the form of a Primary Language Curriculum.

Findings indicate that internal stakeholders demonstrated a lack of awareness about the Primary Language Curriculum and forthcoming changes during many periods of the reform process, both at the beginning and later stages of this study. This finding raises questions about the overall dissemination process and the possible ramifications for the implementation of this curriculum should be acknowledged. For example, given the importance of awareness raising, it is plausible that, at the time of the study, internal stakeholders were unaware of the context which led to the development of the primary language curriculum, the goals which the curriculum endeavours to reach, the overall process of the dissemination itself and indeed the proposed timeline for dissemination and implementation. Given that a fear of the unknown, has been identified as a barrier to both individual and organisational change (Baker-Doyle and Gustavson 2016, Sarason 1993, Zimmerman 2006), this lack of awareness could be identified as a limitation during this period of curriculum reform. Teachers' lack of awareness during this phase could provide evidence of the inadequate involvement of teachers during the dissemination process. Their levels of curriculum ownership, autonomy and empowerment may also have been threatened due to this.

This lack of awareness is indicative of an ineffective approach or inadequate communication between external and internal stakeholders. Although information was

provided by the NCCA, INTO, PDST and DES, these findings suggest that the necessary information did not reach the teachers on the ground. The channels of communication between external and internal stakeholders and the approach to awareness raising has proven to be ineffective in this instance. It is necessary to address the possible factors which contributed to the lack of awareness amongst teachers, as outlined above the approach to awareness raising and the responsibility of teachers to keep up to date with developments.

Firstly, the approach to awareness raising which took place was dependent on teachers actively seeking information from a variety of sources. This did not happen on a wide scale. Having previously highlighted teachers' use of the NCCA website, it is apparent that teachers visit the website to gain access to specific resources. Teachers, therefore, do not utilise the website seeking information about upcoming developments. It is plausible, although not confirmed within the remit of this study, that teachers use the INTO, PDST and DES websites in a similar vein. One teacher made a valuable suggestion in relation to this method of posting information about developments on the NCCA website: *"For those who use it, it will be somewhat effective* (for disseminating information about curriculum developments), *however I assume that it will require a 'click' from the teacher. If a teacher is on the site to do something else, I'm not sure how likely they will be to engage. Emailing information via the Principal/Office will also be required, as a minimum measure in the earlier stages of information dissemination."* Another teacher highlighted that time pressures can sometimes inhibit their ability to seek out information and furthermore suggested that relevant information be summarised for ease of access.

Secondly, findings suggest that there is some disparity in how the roles and responsibilities of the internal stakeholders are perceived by external stakeholders. Comments which were made by the NCCA representative seem to suggest that the onus is completely on teachers to keep up to date with curriculum developments. However, although the comments which were made by the PDST and INTO representatives also reflect the responsibility of teachers, they also acknowledge that more could be done to communicate information to teachers.

If you're not in the zone, it will pass right over your head. (NCCA representative)

We find ourselves in PDST being the first port of call for this curriculum... which is totally not the way it should be. There was no semblance of a formal PR process around this and that's not the NCCA's responsibility but there was a very, there was a lack of awareness around this curriculum. (PDST representative)

We did look for an initial phase of information and awareness raising because we were conscious that teachers mightn't know this is coming (INTO representative)

In contrast, many teacher responses would indicate that teachers' perceive that the responsibility rests with the external stakeholders:

The lack of information being circulated on this proposed change is upsetting.

Very disappointed with NCCA. We as teachers should have been consulted.

This lack of agreement about the roles and responsibilities of teachers amongst the external stakeholders and between the external and internal stakeholders may have been an inhibiting factor during the communication of vital information to teachers.

It is possible that teachers' lack of awareness about this curriculum change stems from a lack of interest in this area, as suggested by the NCCA representative.*'You will have teachers out there who don't know and that's not unusual, you know we can't grab you by the scruff of the neck and go "Pay Attention".'* This perception would consolidate the arguments that curriculum studies are one of the most neglected areas of educational scholarship (Apple 2012) and that educators are neglecting their professional obligation to pursue curriculum studies, arguably these only route to effective practice (Kelly 2009). This perception, however, does not exonerate such poor levels of teacher awareness during many stages of this dissemination process. In light of such findings, it is evident that the approach which was used to raise awareness has been unsuccessful. It is likely therefore that both interested and disinterested teachers did not receive the necessary information about this important curriculum change. This would indicate that the channels of communication between external and internal stakeholders need to be examined and improved.

5.6 Conclusion

This study has conducted an investigation into the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum in an effort to contribute to contemporary debate on curriculum change. This chapter has analysed the findings which were most relevant to the Initiation Phase of curriculum change, The Initiation Phase. Through analysing these findings a number of issues have been identified in relation to the curriculum design and development process, the consultation process, and the awareness raising approach. Such issues provide an insight into the field of curriculum development in Ireland, and are summarised below.

Findings in this study reveal that efforts were made by external stakeholders to include teachers during the design and development of the Primary Language Curriculum. Teachers were represented on a number of development groups and committees and although some of these may have been affiliated with external stakeholder groups, findings suggest that teacher input was evident during this process. Although the manner in which the network schools were selected has been queried, the efforts which were made by the NCCA to obtain teacher feedback in this manner has been commended.

Findings in this study identified the consultation with teachers as a positive attempt by the NCCA to gain an insight into teacher perceptions and to involve them in the curriculum development process. However, the lack of teacher engagement with this process indicates that this approach was unsuccessful in this regard. There was a lack of awareness surrounding this consultation which precluded the participation of many teachers.

Lastly, this study found that there was a lack of teacher awareness about this curriculum change during many important stages of this reform process. The communication between external and internal stakeholders has proven to be ineffective. The implications for teachers' levels of curriculum ownership, autonomy and empowerment have also been addressed.

Such issues highlight many of the challenges which have been encountered during this period of curriculum change. *Chapter 7* will outline a number of recommendations, which may be valuable during future curriculum reforms. The next chapter will analyse the findings which emerged in relation to the Implementation Phase of curriculum reform.

Chapter 6 Beginning to Implement the Curriculum Change

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse the findings which emerged in relation to the Implementation Phase of curriculum change. The preceding chapter has provided an insight into the initial process of curriculum change, including the design and development of the Primary Language Curriculum, the consultation with teachers and the approach which was adopted to raise awareness about the curriculum change. This chapter will further explore findings in relation to the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum through investigating the implementation of this important change. This will facilitate an exploration of teacher involvement during the curriculum change process.

6.1.1 The Implementation Phase of the Curriculum Change

The Implementation Phase of curriculum change involves putting the curriculum change into actual use in the classroom. This is an important aspect of the educational change process because according to Fogarty and Pete (2007, p.10) models are introduced through sustained, job-embedded professional development that executes the innovation with integrity and provides the needed input to support the change. There are numerous factors which affect implementation (Fullan 2002) and a weakness or lack of readiness in any one of them will have repercussions for how effectively the change is being handled (Fogarty and Pete 2007). It should also be acknowledged that the strongest influences on curriculum reform tend to be external, including advocacy from central administrators, new policy and funding and external change agents - emanating from government and other agencies (McBeath 1997, p.14). Such findings are important for the subsequent analysis of the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum.

This study was in a position to generate data in order to analyse the initial stages of the implementation process of the Primary Language Curriculum. Many important aspects of the Implementation Phase were investigated including teacher receptivity to change, the initial Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and changes which were made to the planned implementation process. Findings facilitate an examination of the curriculum reform process with particular reference to the perspective of the teacher.

6.1.2 Structure of this Chapter

This chapter will take on the following structure. Firstly, it will analyse the data which emerged in relation to teacher change and teacher engagement in the process of change. It will examine findings generated about teachers' perceptions of the forthcoming changes as a result of the introduction of the Primary Language Curriculum and investigate how external stakeholders' perceived how teachers would cope with forthcoming changes. It will also address data which explores the potential barriers to the curriculum change process as perceived by both external and internal stakeholders. Although teacher change is an important issue during all stages of curriculum reform, given the links between teacher change and professional development, the findings which emerged were most relevant to the Implementation Phase of curriculum change. Secondly, this chapter will then analyse the data which emerged in relation to the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of principals and teachers. Due to the timeline and remit of this study, these findings are in relation to the very first phase of CPD, which involved a half day information seminar and a full day of inservice which was available to principal teachers. It will investigate principals' initial perceptions of this approach to CPD and of their role in the curriculum reform process. Thirdly, this chapter will examine an important revision which was made to the planned dissemination and implementation process. This revision came in the form of an amendment and clarification to Circular 61/2015. This revision impacted on the overall curriculum change process and had implications for the Implementation Phase of this curriculum reform. This section will provide an overview of this revision and examine how it was received by both external and internal stakeholders. Lastly, this chapter will conclude by highlighting many of the issues which emerged during the analysis process.

6.2 Teacher Change and the Primary Language Curriculum

As was highlighted in the literature review, the concept of teacher change is central to curriculum reform and consequently it was an important factor to consider in the context of the Primary Language Curriculum reform. It is worth reiterating that teacher change is the concept of how teachers change their pedagogies and cope with changes due to reform (Baker-Doyle and Gustavson 2016, Elmore 1987, Fullan and Miles 1992, Hargreaves 1998 , McLachlan et al. 2013, Sarason 1993). Teachers' willingness to change is central to the effectiveness of curriculum reform (Atteberry and Bryk 2011). Having examined the manner in which the Primary Language Curriculum differs from its predecessor (*See Chapter 2, Section 2.7*), it is evident that for this reform to be effective, teachers must be willing to make changes to their practices. During the analysis of literature on this topic, a number of issues became apparent. These included the perceived resistance to change amongst teachers, the importance of teacher empowerment and how professional development can influence teachers' receptivity to change. This study will examine how teachers reacted the forthcoming changes facing teachers as a result of the introduction of the Primary Language Curriculum.It will also examine the factors which may have impacted on teachers' autonomy during this period of curriculum change. The manner in which teachers perceive and react to the forthcoming changes is particularly relevant to the research question.

6.2.1 What were teachers' perceptions of the need for this curriculum change?

The survey which was conducted with teachers from the case study school in May and June of 2015 indicated that 57% of participants felt that it was necessary to change the existing curriculum (Primary School Curriculum 1999). 43% of participants were unsure as to whether it was necessary to change this curriculum. None of the participants responded that it was unnecessary to change the curriculum. This survey took place after the consultation process and prior to professional development.

The following comments from teachers present an insight into perceptions of why it was thought necessary to change the existing curriculum:

With an ever-changing multicultural society, it is important to provide for the needs of all children, especially in terms of oral language.

Yes, I don't think the Gaeilge curriculum is particularly successful and I also feel English is such a huge topic that a more integrated approach across the whole curriculum will enable teachers to cover all strands.

Yes, too much to cover in the curriculum at the moment.

Some of the <u>uncertainty</u> amongst teachers may have stemmed from teachers' lack of awareness about the forthcoming curriculum:

Change is always good but as yet I don't know what the changes are to say whether it is a positive thing or not.

The survey which was conducted with <u>teachers outside of the case study school </u>indicated that 66% of respondents felt it was necessary to change the curriculum. 20% of respondents were unsure as to whether it was necessary to change the curriculum and 14% of respondents felt it was unnecessary to change the curriculum.

Figure 6.A <u>Respondents' Perceptions about Changing the Primary School Curriculum (1999)</u>
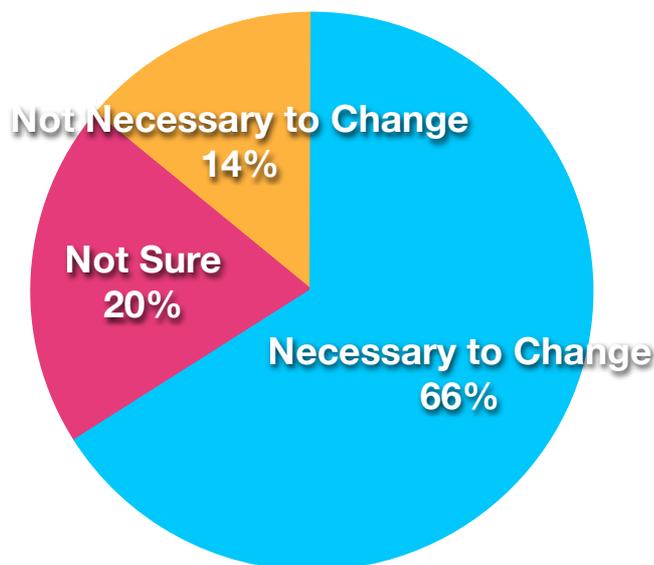
The following comments indicate teachers' perceptions of why <u>it was necessary to change</u> the Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999):

The English curriculum is very overloaded and needs to be condensed. Language and the teaching of language is a very broad area and any way to make it easier to implement would benefit teachers and pupils.

Change is good as long as research can justify the changes. Teaching often involves doing and reviewing approaches and methodologies and is a positive approach to effective teaching.

Yes I think the change is necessary as the curriculum should be a working document as society and our culture changes so quickly within a decade. Teaching strategies can become outdated with such a period.

Yes, there is too much doubling up done on grammar. Language needs a fresh approach and it needs to be more child-centred. Many children in our classes already possess the skills of multi-languages. Languages need to be live and they need to flow.

Absolutely, the curriculum should change in line with societal change to equip children with useful, realistic skills.

It would be useful to make it more achievable for students.

While I do feel that the pupils are given great opportunities to further develop their literacy skills at present I feel that the actual planning side and terminology could be simplified and made much more accessible.

I am not aware of the changes to the language curriculum but am delighted that there will be changes as there is just too many strand units. And they complicated what should be pretty straight forward.

Yes I feel the whole curriculum needs to be overhauled. The '99 curriculum was implemented with little or no resources and was dumbed down. Furthermore there is not enough time to complete all the subjects.

The current curriculum has been in place for the last ten years and needs to be changed, for that reason as well as the fact that I feel the current curriculum is overloaded and very wordy.

Yes, outdated and too much in it, objectives need to be more achievable.

I think the changes will benefit the students.

It's been nearly 15 years since introduction of last curriculum things need to be updated n revised to keep up with the changing education system.

The following comments provide an insight into teachers' <u>uncertainty</u> about changing the existing curriculum:

Doesn't need huge change, needs to clear up the allocation of time being given to literacy at the expense of SESE, teachers will need some advice on how to ensure SESE time is given a literacy focus as we were trained to avoid making an SESE lesson into a literacy lesson.

The present curriculum has served pupils and teachers well over the years. The recent changes with regard to implementing explicit teaching of strategies: Eg: Building Bridges Programme, have added to this. I feel that any changes would have to be positive and worthwhile with a clear purpose.

Again some of this <u>uncertainty</u> appears to stem from a lack of teacher awareness about the forthcoming changes:

I don't know enough about this new curriculum to comment.

I have no idea what is going to change.

I didn't realise there would be any changes until I saw this survey.

The following comments provide an insight into why teachers <u>did not feel it was necessary to change </u> the existing curriculum.

Because we did so well in the improvement of literacy that they want to mess with that improvement now!!!

No I think the last curriculum is extremely progressive, child-centred and has a holistic approach to learning. I'd say it's more the application of the curriculum. Too textbook depended and too much paper work.

I don't think so. With years of experience, I feel we should stick with the tried and trusted and not add to further confusion to the busy lives of teachers.

Not drastically, no. There can too many "changes" of approach and methodology sometimes. Often one "good idea" just replaces an old "good idea" although I do think it's important to constantly evaluate current/best practice.

<u>6.2.2 How did external stakeholders perceive teachers would react to this curriculum change?</u>

The <u>NCCA representative</u> perceived that some teachers, particularly Aistear tutors or those teachers with experience of Aistear will adapt more easily to changes. Aistear is a curriculum framework for the early years' sector: birth to six years. (See *Appendix O* for more detail on this.) Teachers teaching in junior classes may have more experience with this curriculum framework than those teaching in senior classes.

We have a hunch that those teachers who are working from an Aistear mindset, in the infant classes, who are already familiar with Aistear, who are already familiar with the principles behind Aistear .... will look at the Primary Language Curriculum and see it as absolutely fitting in with what they're doing - so that they will see all the progressions as what they are supposed to be seen as, such as support for planning, helping me as a teacher to design appropriate learning, helping me as a teacher to evaluate student progress. We have a concern that teachers who have NO engagement with Aistear, who are coming out of a 1999 curriculum mindset will see it differently. (NCCA representative)

The <u>NCCA representative</u> also highlighted the importance of curriculum change.

I think it is important because as one of your respondents said 'Things Change' and you do need to keep the curriculum refreshed and you do need to keep responding to new ideas, research as it comes out. I love the definition of curriculum that it's the set of stories that one generation chooses to tell the next, so on that basis you kind of constantly need to refresh it.

The interview with the <u>INTO representative</u> indicates the perception that many teachers will adapt well to the subsequent changes as a result of the learning outcomes:

Well I would be optimistic that over time the Primary Language Curriculum will be well received by teachers. It will look very different to what teachers are used to in the '99 curriculum in that it doesn't have content objectives, it has learning outcomes. The benefit of learning outcomes is that it makes it clearer for teachers what the children are expected to learn and that was one of the criticisms of the '99 curriculum - that it wasn't always very clear what a child was expected to learn in the way that the curriculum was laid out. So I think that will help teachers in terms of having the learning outcomes.

The <u>PDST representative</u> perceived that teachers may find forthcoming changes challenging at first but felt that many teachers would adapt well.

To be honest I don't know how they (teachers) are going to adapt. Ideally I would say that it will be challenging at first but the more they interact with it...

6.2.3 Potential Barriers to the Curriculum Change and Reform Process

The <u>NCCA representative</u> perceived that those teachers with little no experience of the Aistear framework, may be 'less enthusiastic' about the forthcoming changes.

So that's a concern - that the Aistear tutors will take it and run with it and those who haven't had exposure to Aistear, certainly will be more, well how shall we put it positively?... less enthusiastic.

The <u>INTO representative</u> also acknowledged that the current climate of the teaching profession could impact significantly on the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum and subsequently teachers' attitude to change.

I wouldn't underestimate the issue of the current climate in any implementation process - it doesn't matter how good or how perfect the curriculum is or how well you design the implementation process. If the climate is negative, it's going to impact.

In terms of how well teachers will receive it, there are two dimensions to that. Teachers, in that 7 or 8 years since the beginning of the recession, have had a lots of expectations of them in a context when there own salaries have been hit and resources have been hit. So that is affecting the climate that's out there - there's no doubt about that, and yet more demands are being made of teachers in relation to the educational system. For example, the school self-evaluation, which will be the main one but also in small ways … teachers are engaged in more paper work. For example if you are applying for resources for special needs - it involves doing up a report and if you are participating in any initiative, there is an element of additional paperwork/documentation required. They may be small in themselves, but when you add them all together, it's a lot.

The <u>PDST representative</u> perceived that a cohort of teachers may not be willing to implement the forthcoming changes:

I think some teachers will adapt to it like they always do, incredibly diligently and will go out of their way to try and understand it and work incredibly hard to implement the structure that's there ... other teachers just might not.

The <u>principal of the case study school</u> perceived that this change could take some time to become embedded into practice:

I feel we'll adapt. We will. But it's going to take five or six years to become embedded.

Many responses from the survey which was conducted with teachers outside of the case study school highlighted the importance of professional development for teacher change. The inadequate provision of professional development could be a potential barrier to this change:

I'm not concerned, once we are given adequate inservice provision and information.

My only concern is that the proper training might not be given.

Summary of Findings in Relation to Teacher Change

- 66% of teachers outside of the case study school and 57% of teachers within the case study school felt that it was necessary to change the existing curriculum.
- 14% of teachers outside of the case study school and 0% of teachers within the case study school felt that it was unnecessary to make changes to the existing curriculum.
- 20% of teachers outside of the case study school and 43% of teachers within the case study school were unsure as to whether it is necessary to make changes to the existing curriculum.
- The NCCA representative perceived that many teachers would react positively to the forthcoming changes, particularly those teachers with experience of the Aistear framework. This representative also acknowledged the need to continuously refresh and change the curriculum.
- The INTO representative perceived that the learning outcomes of the Primary Language Curriculum may make teaching and learning clearer for teachers and students.
- The PDST representative was uncertain as to how teachers would cope with the forthcoming changes.
- Teachers expressed a concern that inadequate professional development might inhibit the curriculum change process.
- The principal of the case study school perceived that the school would cope well with forthcoming changes; however acknowledged that this change may take time to become embedded into practice.
- The potential barriers to change which were identified by the external stakeholders of the curriculum include inexperience with the Aistear framework, the overall climate of the teaching profession and an unwillingness to change by a cohort of teachers.

6.2.4 The Implications of Teacher Change on the Implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum

Having outlined the findings which emerged in relation to teacher change it is important to examine the potential implications for the Primary Language Curriculum.

Acknowledging the Need for Change

The findings indicate that more participants felt that it was necessary to change the present curriculum than those who did not. Given that teachers' willingness to change is central to the effectiveness of curriculum reform, this could be identified as a positive finding. Teachers' perceptions of a need for change stemmed from a number of factors including the changing society, previous curriculum overload and the perception that the previous curriculum is now outdated:

Yes I think the change is necessary as the curriculum should be a working document as society and our culture changes so quickly within a decade. Teaching strategies can become outdated with such a period.

The current curriculum has been in place for the last ten years and needs to be changed, for that reason as well as the fact that I feel the current curriculum is overloaded and very wordy.

Having examined the context which led to the development of the Primary Language Curriculum (*See Chapter 2, Section 2.6*), it is evident that this understanding is in line with the overall rationale for this curriculum change. Thus it could be argued that agreement about this need to change from both external and internal stakeholders is a positive finding for the process of this curriculum reform. In addition to this, many participants who felt it was necessary to change the curriculum cited the potential benefits for their students:

It would be useful to make it more achievable for students.

Absolutely, the curriculum should change in line with societal change to equip children with useful, realistic skills.

This consolidates the argument that most teachers define their success in terms of their pupils' behaviours and activities rather in terms of themselves or other criteria (Guskey

1986, Guskey 2002, Harootunlan and Yargard 1980). It also has implications for the professional development, given that improving student outcomes is a key motivating factor for teachers pursuing professional development (Grimmett 2014, Flyvbjerg 2006, Miller and Stewart 2013). In addition to this, the finding that the majority of respondents identified the need to change the existing curriculum could refute the argument that teachers don't like to change (Guskey 2002, Richardson 2003, Terhart 2013, Zimmerman 2006). Perhaps the traditional phenomenon of teachers' 'resistance to reforms', 'structural conservatism' and 'inflexibility' (Terhart 2013) is not applicable with the context of the Primary Language Curriculum reform.

Reluctance to Change Existing Curriculum

A sizable proportion (14%) of teachers outside of the case study school felt that it was unnecessary to change the existing curriculum. This is an important finding which has implications for both external stakeholders and principals during the reform of the Primary Language Curriculum. Literature suggests that educational change, especially when directed towards a change in teaching practice has a strong emotional side, which touches the feelings of professional identity of teachers (Hargreaves 1998 , Kelchtermans 2005, Kelchtermans et al. 2009, Terhart 2013, Zimmerman 2006). This consolidates the argument that teachers might perceive the change as being a threat to their expertise and proven abilities (Fullan 2002, Greenberg 2002). Terhart (2013, p.488) outlines many of the arguments put forward by teachers to protect themselves from a change in practices. Two of these arguments were identified during the analysis of teachers' responses, as follows:

-The 'No Time!' Argument - the view that the working day is filled to the brim and teachers do not think it is possible to engage with the new in light of such daily practices

One teacher perceived that this curriculum change could add *'further confusion to the busy lives of teachers'.*

-The 'I am innocent!' Argument - practitioners feel there is no need to change ones' own practices; problems exist but other people, groups, the system or society are responsible.

With years of experience, I feel we should stick with the tried and trusted.....

Because we did so well in the improvement of literacy that they want to mess with that improvement now!!!

The finding that some level of resistance to change is in existence amongst the teaching population may need to be addressed by external stakeholders and principals during this curriculum reform process. In theory, a supportive environment is necessary for change to happen so that teachers do not feel so stressed that they revert to their former instructional strategies and methods (Goleman et al. 2002, Zimmerman 2006). Developing a supportive culture, involving teachers' self of efficacy and prompting promoting teachers' strategies are some of the leadership strategies which support and promote change (Zimmerman 2006, p.291). However, despite what is advocated as best practice during periods of change, there are numerous challenges associated with supporting teachers in this way during periods of curriculum reform. The role of principals in this period of curriculum reform will be examined later in this chapter and this will investigate principals' willingness to take on, what they perceive to be, additional duties. Evidently, this reluctance to change may have ramifications for the effective implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Uncertainty about Forthcoming Changes

Despite the positive finding that more teachers acknowledge the need to change the existing curriculum than those who do not, it is necessary to acknowledge that a sizable proportion of teachers (20% of teachers outside of the case study school and 43% of teachers within the case study school) were unsure as to whether changes should be made to the existing curriculum. Some of this uncertainty stemmed from a lack of awareness about what the forthcoming changes would entail. This uncertainty may have skewed some of the findings in relation to teacher change. The following comments highlight this issue:

I don't know enough about this new curriculum to comment.

I have no idea what is going to change.

I didn't realise there would be any changes until I saw this survey.

Surveying teachers at a later stage of the curriculum change process when awareness levels are higher may depict a different representation of teacher receptivity to change. In addition to this, resistance to change can be triggered and manifested in different phases of the curriculum reform process (Terhart 2013, Zimmerman 2006). Thus as will become

apparent in *Chapter 7*, the monitoring of teacher change during later stages of the Primary Language Curriculum reform has been identified as an opportunity for further research within the field of curriculum studies.

Potential Barriers to Teacher Change

Findings have also provided an insight into how both external and internal stakeholders perceived the potential barriers to change. External stakeholders identified a number of potential barriers which could inhibit the teacher change process. These included a lack of experience with Aistear (perception of the NCCA representative), a negative climate amongst the teaching profession as a result of significant cutbacks to the education sector (perception of the INTO representative), and an unwillingness to change amongst a cohort of teachers (perception of the PDST representative). Despite the acknowledgement of such potential barriers, the manner in which external stakeholders endeavoured to overcome such issues did not become apparent over the course of this research.

In addition to this, it is necessary to highlight the disparity between how external and internal stakeholders perceived the barriers to teacher change. In contrast to the perceptions of external stakeholders above, teachers acknowledged that the CPD which they received could be an area of concern:

I'm not concerned (about forthcoming change) once we are given adequate inservice and inservice provision information.

My only concern is that the proper training might not be given.

This provides evidence of how professional development can influence teacher change and the overall curriculum change process. This consolidates the importance that adequate professional development is provided over the duration of this curriculum change process.

Evidently, analysis of this theme has provided a further insight into many of the challenges which can occur during periods of curriculum change and reform. This is central to the overall research question. *Chapter 7* will outline a number of recommendations which may be useful in supporting teachers' receptivity to change during future periods of curriculum change. Given the links between professional development and teacher change, the subsequent analysis of Professional Development will continue to highlight the importance of this issue.

6.3 Professional Development during the Implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum

The analysis of contemporary literature on Professional Development has provided an insight into the importance of this CPD during the Implementation Phase of curriculum reform. A number of issues were identified during this literature review including the tensions between traditional and contemporary models of CPD and the challenges associated with both. Barriers to the effective provision of CPD were also examined.

In light of the centrality of CPD during the Implementation Phase of curriculum reform, this study investigated the approach to CPD which was adopted during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. It examined principals' perceptions and experiences of this approach to CPD. It also addressed principals' perceptions of their role in this curriculum change. The survey which was conducted with principals outside of the case study school and the interview which was conducted with external stakeholders were particularly insightful in generating findings most relevant to the theme of Professional Development. Circular 61/2015 was a critical document which detailed important information about the CPD approach. It is important to acknowledge that due to the timeline of this research there are many other planned aspects to the professional development which had not yet occurred during the period of data collection. As such, this study cannot comment on their effectiveness. Nonetheless, as will become apparent, this study yielded findings which provide a unique insight into the initial provision of CPD during the Implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum and which may be useful as further CPD is planned into the future.

<u>6.3.1 How were internal stakeholders informed about the CPD Approach?</u>

This section will outline the planned CPD approach which will be provided during the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum and examine how internal stakeholders were informed about this. This provides an insight into the communication between external and internal stakeholders during the Implementation Phase of reform.

<u>Press Release</u>

As previously highlighted in Chapter 1, a press release in November 2015 outlined the support of the Department of Education and Skills for the Primary Language Curriculum (*See Appendix A*). This press release was important as it explicitly outlined a commitment that school leaders and teachers would be given the necessary continuous professional development to implement the curriculum. In addition, this press release provided evidence of an understanding of the influence of professional learning on student outcomes, as it suggested that the provision of the necessary professional development would 'ensure that young learners benefit to the maximum extent'.

<u>Circular 61/2015</u>

Following this press release in November 2015, Circular 61/2015 was issued from the Department of Education and Skills to all principals, teachers, and the Boards of Management of all primary schools and special schools nationwide. This circular was pivotal to the initial dissemination of information in relation to the Primary Language Curriculum. It outlined to schools that there was a forthcoming language curriculum which had been developed by the NCCA. This circular also provided a general and broad overview of the new primary language curriculum under the following headings:
•Learning Outcomes
•Progression Continua
•Support Material
•Examples
Each section consisted of between two to six sentences on each of these issues.

This was an important document which indicated the level of professional development which would be provided to support principals and teachers in the implementation of the language curriculum:

Continuing professional development (CPD) to support principals and teachers in the implementation of the new curriculum will be made available through the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

In line with the phased implementation approach, a three-year CPD framework is planned as follows:-

Year 1 November 2015 to June 2016
Familiarisation with the curriculum and initial preparation for schools, introduction to and planning for teaching and learning using the learning outcomes and the progression continua of the oral language strand.

This will involve:
a) a half-day seminar for school Principals (facilitated by the PDST), followed by a half-day school closure for whole-staff CPD through use of on-line supports and
b) one subsequent full-day seminar for school Principals and one other teacher (facilitated by PDST), followed by a half-day school closure for whole-staff CPD through use of on-line supports.

Year 2 School-year 2016/17
Support for implementation and enablement - Oral Language

This will involve one full-day school closure for whole-staff CPD (facilitated by PDST), combined with ongoing elective support for schools from a suite of CPD models.

Year 3 School-year 2017/18
Support for implementation and enablement - Reading and Writing.

This will involve one full-day school closure for whole-staff CPD (facilitated by PDST), combined with ongoing elective support for schools from a suite of CPD models.

In addition, PDST will continue to support schools on an ongoing based by providing a suite of elective CPD models which schools and their teachers can choose from, based on their individual needs and contexts. These include workshops, classroom modelling, summer courses, as well as website resources and publications.

Circular 61/2015 was an important document in disseminating information to principals and teachers in relation to the CPD which would be provided to principals and teachers.

<u>6.3.2 What was the role of external Stakeholders in the development and provision of CPD?</u>

The <u>NCCA representative</u> described the role of the NCCA in the development of the CPD approach, indicating that their collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills, PDST and the Primary Inspectorate was being *'pretty seamless':*

When the CPD for primary teachers is being prepared we'd be working with the Department and the CPD providers (PDST) in designing that inservice so I would say there is a very close relationship. I would say as this evolved, the primary inspectorate were very key in feeding into the evolution. It's pretty seamless I have to say. They work pretty closely with us and because they are going into classes and working with schools doing WSEs they'll be able to tell us fairly quickly whether it's appearing in classrooms or not - they're certainly able to tell us that Aistear is appearing in classes so they'll be able to tell us how this is appearing as well.

The <u>PDST representative</u> suggested that there were *'quite defined lines'* between the role of the PDST and the NCCA:

Well we don't have a role in curriculum development. There are quite defined lines between the NCCA and their role and our role (PDST). Our role is curriculum dissemination. Our role is providing training to teachers, the CPD that they need in order to use this curriculum.

Our role is very much - we are CPD providers and NCCA they are curriculum developers. It's quite a defined line.

The <u>NCCA representative</u> outlined the rationale which led to the development of the cascade approach to CPD. As outlined within the literature review, the cascade model involves training a relatively small number of teachers (principals in this case) on a particular topic and these principals and teachers are expected to train other groups (Griffin 1999, McDevitt 1998, Ono and Ferreira 2010, Wedell 2005).

You basically first get to gatekeepers ... the school leaders play a pivotal role in it and then I guess the idea is we're gradually releasing the responsibility. So the principals are given the information seminar, then a principal and one other member of staff and then they facilitate these in-school closure days. It's not envisioned that they train their staff in this because the staff then get whole staff training next year and the year after. So you start with the principal and then you gradually move out. (PDST representative)

The INTO representative suggested that this approach to CPD was initially supported by the INTO:

The principal teachers were invited to a seminar. And the INTO supported that, that's a good idea - start with the principals, they are responsible for leading teaching and learning in their own schools. And that was the objective generally for having that initial seminar for principal teachers.

It should be noted that the PDST representative was not involved during the design of this approach and was therefore unable to fully clarify the reasons as to why the cascade model was selected. However, a number of factors were attributed to this method being adopted - budgetary constraints from the DES, a lack of personnel within the PDST and the implications which often arise from school closures. When asked whether finance had influenced the CPD approach the PDST representative responded as follows:

I'm sure. I wasn't there at the time. I'm sure it's EVERYTHING. I'm sure that's a huge consideration because school closures have huge implications. School closures are never taken lightly by any means. They have huge implications for the teachers, for the children, for the parents... and it comes down to cash. Developing communities of practice and things and that's what down the line for this inservice or this framework obviously, communities of practice...getting teachers together to explore this themselves based on their own context. Asking questions about it, sharing ideas.. that's brilliant, that's what you want but that takes a huge amount of man power to organise. We don't have the personnel. We would need a team of something like 200 advisors to facilitate that sort of inservice so I guess... what they call the cascade model of inservice, which is what we did with one principal and then one other member of staff, and seminar delivery... that model of inservice.

We know it's not the most effective model - you only retain what is 20% of what you go and attend whereas you retain 80% if you actually go and do it with somebody but just feasibly we would love to be setting up meeting practices all over the country to explore this stuff but we are working within a system which has budget constraints and you can only fulfil what you can fulfil in that story.

6.3.3 What are principals' perceptions of their CPD needs?

The survey which was conducted with principals outside of the case study school enabled this study to identify their perceived requirements in relation to the CPD.

Principals were asked to respond to the following question:

Please indicate your CPD needs in order to support you and the staff in your school in implementing the oral language strand of the language curriculum in September 2016.

Responses indicate that principals' CPD needs include:

-An **external** facilitator to provide the continuous professional development to **all staff**
-More training, coaching and greater support over a **sustained** period of time both before, during and after implementation of language curriculum
-In-school inservice for the whole staff with school closure
-In-class support
-Lessons modelled for teachers with opportunities for staff to try lessons and report back with further questions
-Concrete materials and resources to be made available to schools and staff
-Greater support in the area of planning including templates examples of weekly planning and cúntasaí míosúila
-On-line support including Youtube videos, webinars, templates etc.
-Summer courses on the language curriculum to be made available -Reinstatement of middle management to schools
-Smaller class sizes
-Additional funding
-Many principals suggested that schools could cluster for the CPD

The following comments were provided by principals during this survey:

Online support. Dedicated website with useful templates/examples for planning. It will be the most challenging area of implementation.

Particular support for the implementation of the curriculum in the multi-grade class.

Guidance on how it is structured, how to plan for, record and assess the learning under the new curriculum. Examples. Resources required to properly implement.

In-school inservice such as that led by PDST for First Steps. This included lessons modelled for teachers with opportunities for staff to try lessons and then report back with further questions.

Before implementation: whole school/cluster inservice day, with a largely practical emphasis, backed up with CPD for the staff who will be implementing the new curriculum first. During and after implementation: continued CPD for those teachers in Oral language/ gradually linking to the reading standard so on. Teachers need CPD after implementation to assess/question and clarify their delivery of the new curriculum.

Full training. Support after implementation.

We need a PDST facilitator to come to the school for the delivery of the new language programme to our whole staff. We would need visits for in-class support for the phased implementation of the new language programme. Resources need to be available for the whole staff to pursue whilst PDST facilitators are in the school. We would need whole school support on a phased basis until the new language curriculum is bedded down.

A lot more support and time. Real people from PDST the experts to facilitate all the staff and train us in the new methodologies, assessment of same etc. Online tutorials, podcasts, time. All schools need time to plan, examine, discuss the new curriculum... a couple of half days won't do the trick.

To be in a position to see the curriculum document would be a great starting point. After that, sessions in Education Centres with the opportunity to hear about, discuss and see practical examples of how the objectives can be met and lessons organised. Summer courses in summer 2016 focusing on this new strand of a new curriculum Sample yearly and short term plans for all class levels from Junior Infants to Second Class. Specific advise and support about how the new curriculum will impact upon the learning and teaching in special educational settings i.e. Learning Support, Resource, Speech and Language class.

Proper face to face training as in other professions. We deserve decent training especially in the integrated aspect of the curriculum. I have no idea what this means. Need to see some materials.

Whole staff training immediately - Bringing one staff member to in service will leave me little choice on teacher/class allocation for September.

Ongoing whole staff training required. Could a week course not be run in July and then again in August solely on the language curriculum and allow EPV approval so that a large cohort of teachers could be confident and comfortable with the language curriculum before implementing it. If this were run, I feel that all my staff would attend and therefore it would be easier to implement.

6.3.4 What are principals' perceptions of the initial information seminar?

Principals were invited to attend an initial information seminar. This entailed a half day (2 hour) information-raising seminar facilitated by the PDST in their local education centres. The objectives of this information seminar were as follows:

• to provide a broad description of the new curriculum and its content
• to outline the expectations for implementation and the professional development supports which will be made available to schools

The survey which was conducted with <u>external principals</u> yielded findings in relation to their initial perceptions of this seminar, the first element of professional development.
The majority of principals (64%) felt that the information seminar <u>did not</u> achieve its objectives.

Figure 6.B Principals' Perceptions of how Information Seminar succeeded in Fulfilling its Objectives

Did the seminar achieve these objectives?
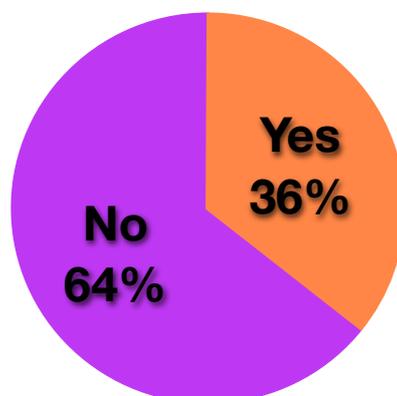
Participants who responded to the principal survey were asked to outline what they gained from the seminar. The following comments provide an insight into the high level of dissatisfaction, frustration and anger which was felt by principals following the initial information seminars:

A dreadful awareness that the people who do not understand how schools and teachers work are gaining more and more control over the education system.

Frustration, confusion and a desire to be nearer retiring age. I'm not being cynical

Loads:
1. *Affirmed that all principals present felt equally mesmerised by the content and equally mesmerised by the content and manner of dissemination of these changes.*
2. *My queries were reflected by others - why are we so hell bent on dumbing down what was was a fine curriculum - apparently to accommodate SEN and EAL, as opposed to having the latter aspire to median to higher standards of able students.*
3. *The overall feeling among ALL principals that the paper exercise of tracking individual pupils was tantamount to forensics on each child, merely fulfilling the paper trail exercise and has nothing to do with raising standards.*

It's a joke - the manner in which this has been introduced is half-baked and has had no thought put into it.

It should be noted that many of the comments which were made by principals who perceived that the seminar did in fact achieve it's objectives, were still negative in nature:

I said it was successful in giving a broad outline of the way ahead it was not particularly energising so at this distance (2 months or so) the strengths have not left any particular impression.

A sense that there was further change afoot that is heading in the general direction of 'tick boxing' or other forms of martial administration. I left with the feeling that the incremental growth of initiatives is eroding professional confidence and autonomy.

This finding was substantiated by the PDST representative who described the overall atmosphere as being 'highly contentious'. Much of the feedback which the PDST received was 'overwhelmingly negative.'

All the sessions before Christmas were just dominated by concerns, dominated by stressed principals, you know searching for questions which unfortunately the PDST couldn't answer because we don't have any control over an awful lot of those sort of things.

The following comments which were made by principals were deemed to be positive:

It was a visual presentation.

It provided a basic overview of Primary Language Curriculum.

The new curricular was broadly explained in terms of structure and how to facilitate it within mainstream schools.

It gave a good overview

6.3.5 How do principals perceive their role in this curriculum change?

Principals were asked, during the principal survey, how confident they felt about disseminating the information which they received to their staff. Survey results were as follows:

How confident do you feel about disseminating this information to your staff?
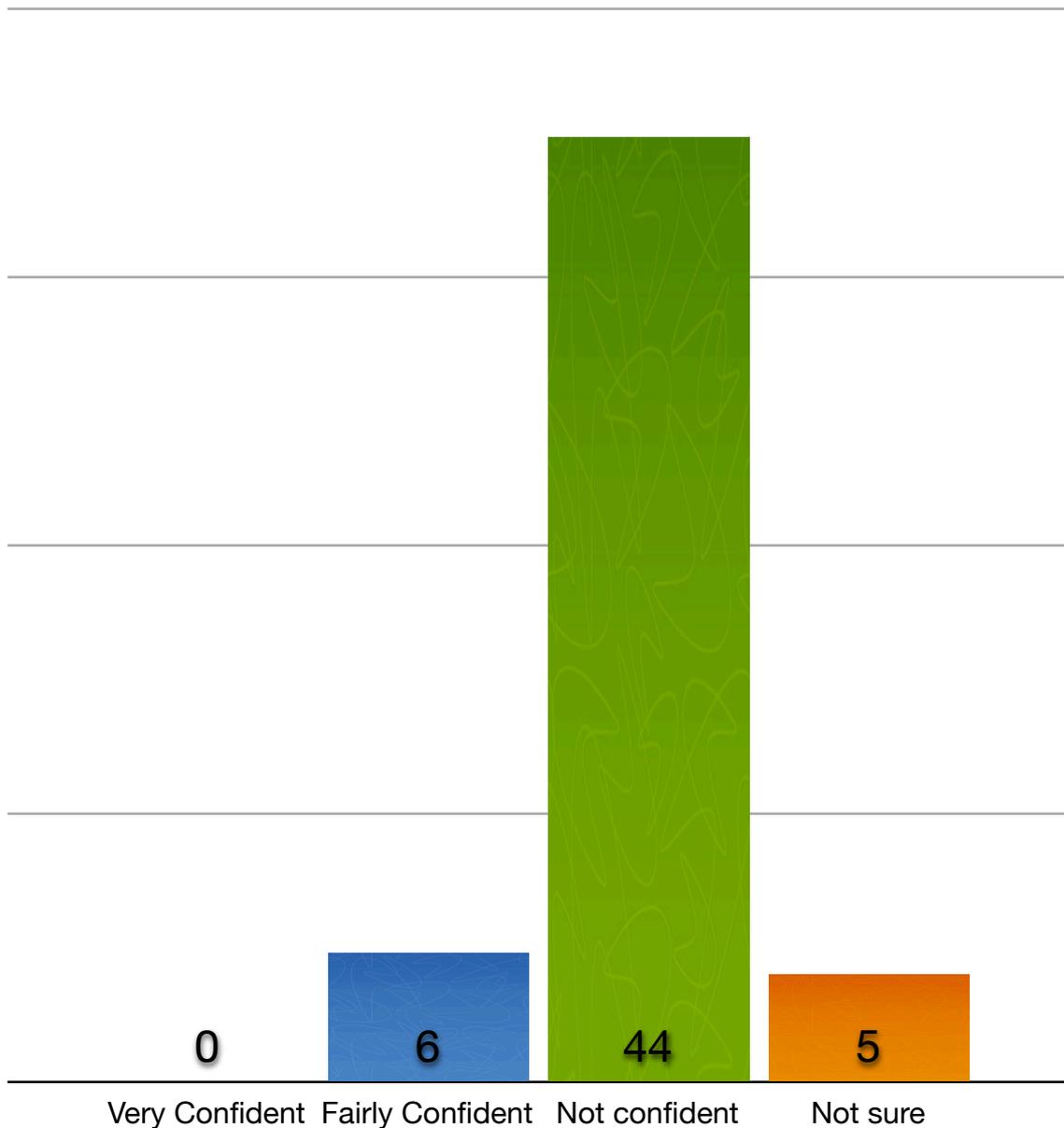
79% of respondents reported that they were **NOT CONFIDENT** about disseminating this information to their staff.

10% of respondents reported that they were **FAIRLY CONFIDENT** about disseminating this information to their staff.

9% of respondents reported that they were **NOT SURE** about disseminating this information to their staff.

0% of respondents reported that they were **VERY CONFIDENT** about disseminating this information to their staff.

Their perception was that this task would add to their ever-growing workload and that they themselves had not received adequate CPD on this topic.

When asked: What did you gain from this seminar? - One principal replied:

An increased level of frustration with the ill-conceived, badly thought out 'requests' being made of principals with no support or preparation. A greater workload. A higher level of guilt and a feeling of failure because now there is obviously something that needs to be done and I don't know how to do it. We have the NCCA and PDST but, again, principals are expected to prepare and communicate a curriculum change and then drive it within the school while not being given the support or skills to do it. WE HAVEN'T EVEN RECEIVED HARD COPIES OF THE CURRICULUM. (The capitals were used by the respondent.)

Other comments highlighting principals' frustration include:

I, as principal, cannot be expected to carry out in-service with only a half day of poor training. More cost cutting exercises by the DES. Let the PDST do all the training - in the same way as the new curriculum was taught to us all. Training for only the principal and one teacher is totally inadequate and will result in a poor implementation of a new curriculum.

The CPD should be provided by the PDST or the DES. I HAVE NOT ENOUGH KNOWLEDGE OR MATERIAL TO DO THIS. (The capitals were used by the respondent.)

I was very annoyed to have to return to school and repeat "I don't know" in response to valid questions. Why must something that is so obviously not prepared at all be implemented so fast?

It's far too much to expect one person to relay the information to staff - this didn't work for the link teachers for SSE.

Allow principals to lead teaching and learning. Allow the NCCA and PDST to perform their roles properly.

This idea is underfunded. Principals should not be asked to provide CPD to their staff. We have become messenger boys for the DES.

Looks like principals will be replacing PDST staff.

Very little that could be transferred to staff without having some time preparing the ground in advance.

A very big headache as to how we are expected to mentor staff in the curriculum since I don't understand it myself!

Teaching principals do not have time to deliver the message to all our staff that was supposed to be delivered to us in that half day - and where does the preparation time come from?

If all the responsibility for delivering this curriculum is to fall on principals - then I think I am glad I can view the exit gate.

I fear that the new developments will be watered down by the current model of one member of staff disseminating all the information. It would perhaps be better to have it led by someone with more experience.

Not good enough to land it all in the lap of the principals to spread the word, with the help of a webinar.

I have not received enough training. I do not now what is required of the teachers. I'm not convinced of the need for such a change in a time of overloaded curriculum so if I'm not convinced, how can I convince my staff.

Workload

The following responses indicate that principals feel this will add to their workload:

Give me posts of responsibility and stop overloading me. I can't take anymore. The seminar was crazy.

Once again, the PDST and others are out of touch with the impossible workload already in schools.

A headache and a feeling that more and more work is being piled on to principals.

Crazy time to be trying this with schools and school leaders already under enormous pressure and overload

More work being landed on my desk, yet again. One thing, after another. Very hard - when trying to teach a class as well.

Reaffirmation that teaching principals and staff are over burdened and no one is listening. The curriculum is merely a pencil pushing concept to look attractive to the department.

The seminar displayed a lack of insight into the already over burdened schools.

It is not fair to impose this on overworked teachers in schools that are hugely underfunded and resourced.

I feel that teachers are overloaded with curriculum work already.

Far too much being thrown at principals at the moment. Much is unclear.

A sense of being overwhelmed by everything thrown at principals despite depletion of resources.

Far too much expected especially with SSE. Will result in nothing been done properly.

Teaching principals don't have time for this. Is it going to actually benefit the children?

It is a disgrace that there is no distinction between workload of a administrative principal and a teaching principal in the infant room.

Work overload. A lot of work already done on SSE.

More paper work, just getting to terms with the 1999 curriculum.

Staff are stressed out with SSE/SIP/notes etc on top of their preparation, parent meetings and corrections. We need a seminar that focuses on working smart.

These findings were also reflected by the <u>principal of the case study school</u>:

When asked: How confident do you feel in disseminating this information to the staff? - the response was as follows:

Not very, to be honest! Not in June!! I mean even if I disseminate it delightfully to the staff I'm not entirely certain how well it's going to be taken in. People are tired at this point of the year and whatever you tell them now - teach them or tell them - it's going to be gone by September. And the Department have categorically said No to holding off and coming back on the 31st of August and giving the training day then and using it as Croke Park or something. They said No. It has to be done by the end of this school year or we lose the opportunity to do it. So I just think that's really short sighted. It does seem a bit ridiculous.

I don't have time at this time of the year to be going though the book, learning it off, pretty much. And there are going to be questions thrown at me that I'm not going to be able to answer. So I mean - is there somebody that you can contact? I mean it would have been nice if there was someone you could ask or something seeing as they are so into their webinars so that if there was a question from staff that you couldn't answer, that you could fire it at them.

<u>6.3.6 How do external stakeholders perceive the role of principals in this curriculum change?</u>

The INTO representative acknowledged that *'principals are responsible for leading teaching and learning in their own schools'*.

The interview with PDST representative also highlighted the responsibility of principals to lead curriculum reform in their own schools. This interview also provided an insight into the factors which inhibit their fulfilment of this particular role, the predominant factor being that "*they don't have the time"*.

"I think it should be part of their remit to facilitate that sort of exploration. I just think they lead curriculum. Ask any research on principals and their time dedicated to curriculum and time dedicated to other stuff and curriculum is non-existent in principal's day-to-day task and there's something fundamentally wrong with that, right? They are leading curriculum in

their schools and they are spending far more of their time worrying about a drip or a leak in one of the classrooms or whatever. They are overloaded with all this stuff... and you talk to any principal and I have spoken to many of them in my own seminar delivery over the years and they love the curriculum stuff. They'd love to spend more of their time on it, they just don't have the time. (PDST representative)

6.3.7 Factors which Influenced Principals' Perceptions of this Information Seminar

A number of common issues were identified during the analysis of the principals' surveys. As these factors may have influenced principals' perceptions of this information seminar, it is important to outline them here.

Factor 1:

Principals felt that the information seminar was rushed and that they did not have enough time to gain an understanding of the curriculum:

The following responses from the principals' surveys collaborate this finding:

I feel that there was too much presented at one time.

Too much information in too short a time frame. The seminar was held just before Christmas when we were extremely busy. This course should be held before the school year starts in order to allow for planning.

Too much discussion time and objections raised to it to get time with content.

The seminar was poorly delivered, rushed and totally inadequate.

Gave a good synopsis of curriculum. However, would need to go back over detail a number of times as difficult to process first time. Was a little daunted with progression etc.

15 minutes to view the curriculum document. (The respondent gained) a sense of worry about the content and lack of information on the shape of teacher fortnightly planning or cúntas míosúil report.

First of all, I couldn't get a sub and therefore missed the beginning of the presentation but even so there wasn't enough time to really get an idea of the content.

Factor 2:

The curriculum materials and resources were not yet available at the time of these information seminars.

Another significant issue was that the necessary curriculum materials and resources were not yet available at the time of these information seminars. The principals had not yet gained access to it. The PDST facilitators had no hard copy of the curriculum to show the principals during the seminars. This is despite the fact that *Circular 61/2015* outlined that 'a hard copy of the curriculum for each teacher would be sent to schools early in 2016.

Circular 61/2015 stated that 'A hard copy of the curriculum for each teacher will be sent to schools early in 2016. Teachers will also receive a USB key containing an extensive sample of the support material and examples published online. The curriculum itself will also be available online. A full suite of all materials will be available at www.ncca.ie by the end of 2015.

Findings from the principal surveys indicate that in March 2016, concrete materials still had not been forwarded on to many schools:

There were no materials available as the curriculum document was not available. It was a waste of two hours teaching time as it should not have been presented to principals until it was ready. Likewise, some of the IT resources were also unavailable at the time so it was like trying to sell a car which had yet to be built.

The session with the PDST simply informed us that the curriculum was being rolled out. We were not furnished with anything more than that information to bring back to the teachers in our schools. There were no curriculum books available for the session. To date, there are still no curriculum books available. PDST felt this was adequate in terms of preparing schools for the changes ahead. Principals and schools do not share this view.

Materials and resources were not available. What was available was not all relevant to the area we were meant to be focusing on.

No hard copies available. A very disappointing afternoon.

Very very very poor materials used = 3 photocopied pages. Impossible to give feedback to colleagues based on this day.

There were no resource materials available. I felt it was introduced prematurely.

Facilitators had to give in-service with incomplete resources.

The fact that we couldn't take it away to study didn't help.

It's a disgrace that the support material still has not been forwarded to schools.

No USB sticks or hard copies of programme in schools to date.

We have not yet received our curriculum documents. There is no point in having an information session for teachers until they come. I cannot understand the delay.

No delivery of USB for teachers yet, have learned that again 'Only fools rush in'... Will be in no hurry to implement it.

When asked what they gained from this seminar, the following responses highlighted this issue:

A new curriculum was coming our way in September but the teachers will not be in a position to see the curriculum documents until the third term of this academic school year.

An understanding that this curriculum 'as yet unseen', will be available for us to look up on a website ... or webinar!!

The <u>INTO representative</u> acknowledged this as being a significant issue which inhibited the professional development process.

The principals were in the unfortunate position that the curriculum hadn't been launched at the time they had been invited to the seminars. Therefore, they couldn't see the curriculum. The on-line curriculum wasn't launched until September, which was I suppose the downside of starting the seminars before the materials were available. And therefore they didn't feel equipped to therefore lead a discussion in their staff rooms about the revised curriculum and what was coming next.

The <u>PDST representative</u> also acknowledged this as being a huge issue for their facilitators.

I mean they didn't have the books ready in time. There were all these ancillary issues which were leaving us..The PDST were left wide open.

In terms of dissemination of curricula having the books is a FUNDAMENTAL.

Factor 3:

There was a low morale amongst principals and teachers at the time of dissemination.

One principal acknowledged that that:

Morale was never as low as it is now. If there is not a reasonable approach to it, it will be met with huge opposition and will never get off the ground

The <u>INTO representative</u> confirmed that there was a low morale amongst the teaching profession and that this low morale had stemmed from a variety of factors. (*See section 6.2.4).*

Factor 4:

Principals perceived that the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum was an example of initiative overload.

This was indicated by the <u>PDST representative</u>:

There was a huge amount of other things that were coming on board. Initiative overload came back very strongly in the feedback. I mean there were other things like Droichead and that being introduced which impacted hugely on the introduction of the Primary Language Curriculum.

This perception of initiative overload also evident throughout the <u>principals' survey</u> responses:

A sense of 'here we go again, another initiative'.

The very strong impression that we will once again be persecuted by initiatives with little chance to really integrate the work already started during our school self evaluation.

There were wheels spinning in the Department but traction on the ground is unsure. Most principals there were expressing signs of 'initiative overload'.

Also what area can we spend less time on if we're to introduce this. We're already under immense pressure for time.

It appears that the DES have yet again rushed into another initiative without thinking it through.

Factor 5:

Principals perceived that the dissemination and implementation of this curriculum was underfunded.

This became evident throughout many of their responses:

This idea is underfunded.

(Class size) Oral language requires time. If each child in a class of 30 were to speak for just two minutes a day, that would take up an hour. Pressurised, overloaded curriculum and large classes are the greatest impediments to effective teaching of oral language.

New language curriculum has many merits but if these are to be achieved It must be resourced (info/CPD/time) properly.

I feel the programme is being done 'on the cheap'. It's very disheartening.

Will schools be allocated appropriate funding to support the implementation of the new language curriculum?

The <u>PDST representative</u> acknowledged that they are *"working within a system which has budget restraints and you can only fulfil what you can fulfil"*

It should be acknowledged that some of the frustration expressed by principals stemmed from factors which were beyond the remit of the PDST, as is evident from factors 4 and 5. This may have contributed to the sense of pity which the following principals expressed for the PDST facilitators:

I gained very little from the seminar and felt sorry for the facilitators from the PDST who had to give the seminar.

Unfair to send out young PDST staff without proper information or materials. Any questions were answered with 'we don't know'.

Through no fault of her own the facilitator did not have the information necessary.

I feel that the facilitator was unsure of the key messages for the delivery of the seminar. She was unable to answer questions put to her by the attendees. The messages were too complicated and lacked clarity. This was not the fault of the facilitator. She was not adequately trained or sufficiently familiar with the curriculum content.

The facilitators did not even seem aware of the British similarities. And there was an attitude of "Don't shoot the messenger". The NCCA should have been there.

The facilitators were unsure even themselves what was involved and what the implementation would look like.

The presenter was very unsure of what information to give us, and she constantly apologised for this.

The facilitator appeared embarrassed about the material she was trying to deliver.

Facilitators weren't fully confident about the curriculum material. It all seems very rushed.

Key Findings in Relation to Professional Development

Having examined the findings relevant to professional development during the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum, this section will summarise the key findings:

• Circular 61/2015 was an important document which indicated the level of professional development which would be available to principals and teachers to support the implementation of the primary language curriculum.

• The NCCA, PDST, INTO, DES and Inspectorate all had an involvement in the preparation of the CPD, according to the NCCA representative.

• The PDST representative perceived that the PDST had the predominant role in the provision of professional development, however were operating under budgetary constraints.

• The approach to professional development which was provided during the initial implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum was based on the cascade model of teacher training.

• There was a significant disparity between what principals perceived to be their CPD needs and the CPD which was provided during the initial implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum.

• The majority of principals who participated in the survey (64%) felt that the initial information seminar did not achieve its objectives.

• The majority of these principals (79%) did not feel confident about disseminating the information which they received to the rest of their staff. They also perceived that this would add significantly to their workload.

• At the time of this study, principals were very dissatisfied with the overall professional development approach during the initial implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. This dissatisfaction stemmed from a number of factors:

1. Principals felt that the initial information seminar was rushed and that they did not have enough time to gain an understanding of the curriculum.

2. The curriculum materials and resources were not yet available at the time of these information seminars.

3. There was a low moral amongst principals and teachers at the time of dissemination.

4. Principals perceived the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum to be an example of initiative overload

5. Principals perceived that the dissemination and implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum was underfunded.

<u>6.3.8 Strengths and Limitations of the CPD Approach for the Primary Language Curriculum</u>

The planned CPD is a concern of this study, particularly as the CPD approach impacts on both the dissemination and implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. As was highlighted during the literature review, CPD can influence teacher change (Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002, Guskey 2002, Wang et al. 2014) and teachers' willingness to change is necessary for effective curriculum reform to occur. It also provides an opportunity to disseminate the necessary information to the internal stakeholders. As acknowledged previously, due to the timeline and remit of this study, there were many aspects of the CPD approach which had not yet occurred and this study was not in a position to comment on their effectiveness. However, having previously identified contemporary literature on the features of effective CPD, this section will examine the strengths and limitations of the CPD approach which was investigated over the course of this research.

This analysis will examine the manner in which the cascade model of teacher professional development was carried out and the time frame and setting of the CPD. It will also investigate how principals' CPD needs have been met and their role in this curriculum reform. Lastly, this analysis will address the involvement of stakeholders during the planning of the approach to CPD.

<u>Adopting The Cascade Model of Teacher Professional Development</u>

The cascade model of teacher professional development was adopted during the initial Implementation Phase of the Primary Language Curriculum. It is important to examine the effectiveness of this model and the manner in which it was being utilised during this period of curriculum reform.

The NCCA and INTO representatives described the rationale for this approach to CPD:

You basically first get to gatekeepers.. the school leaders play a pivotal role in it and then I guess the idea is we're gradually releasing the responsibility. (NCCA representative)

The INTO supported that, that's a good idea - start with the principals, they are responsible for leading teaching and learning in their own schools. And that was the objective generally for having that initial seminar for principal teachers. (INTO representative)

It is evident that both the NCCA and INTO representatives perceived the principal as having an important role in the curriculum change process. This perception is entirely justified, particularly as the principal has been described as the 'nerve centre' of school improvement in literature on CPD (Fullan 2006, Fullan 2002, Terhart 2013). Acknowledging principals and teachers as professionals with existing knowledge and skills to share can be empowering, and this has been identified as a feature of effective professional development (Grimmett 2014, Miller and Stewart 2013). It could be argued that many aspects of this model do acknowledge teachers and principals as professionals. For example, principals and the appointed teachers have a significant role in disseminating information to their staff, following information seminars and with on-line supports. This could be indicative of the paradigm swing, which was previously noted, in relation to a change of focus from professional development as something done to teachers by outside 'experts' to professional learning as something done with and/or by a teacher in response to their pedagogical needs and concerns (Loughran et al. 2008, Grimmett 2014).

However, the cascade model for professional development of teachers has been widely refuted as being ineffective (Griffin 1999, Guskey 2002, McDevitt 1998, Ono and Ferreira 2010). As highlighted in the literature review, when the intended message is transmitted to the next level, the chances of crucial information being misinterpreted is high and it can fail to prepare officials or school-based teachers for the complexity involved in implementing the new curriculum (Griffin 1999, Guskey 2002, McDevitt 1998, Ono and Ferreira 2010). The finding that 79% of principals did not feel confident in disseminating the information which they received to the rest of their staff highlights principals' concerns about this aspect of the cascade model:

The new development will be watered down by the current model of one member of staff disseminating all the information. It would be better to have it led by someone with more experience.

Another principal acknowledged that *they had gained a "very big headache as to how we are expected to mentor staff in the curriculum since I don't understand it myself".*

In light of the longstanding discussions of the apparent ineffectiveness of the use of this model (Hayes 2000, Wedell 2005), one might question the rationale which led to this approach being utilised during the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. However, this approach is the most cost-effective model of teacher professional development (Gilpin 1997, Hayes 2000, Ono and Ferreira 2010). Indeed, many principals

perceived this as being a critical issue and the overall idea as being *"underfunded"*. It is possible that the cost-effective nature of this approach was a motivating factor in the planning of this CPD. This may have also contributed to principals' negative perceptions of the CPD which they had received at the time of the study.

Despite the well known limitations of the cascade model, the following strategy can be put into place to maximise the success of this approach. Expertise should be diffused through the system as widely as possible, not concentrated at the top (Hayes 2000). This did not appear to be the case at the beginning of the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum as the majority of teachers received inservice which was facilitated by their principal rather than a PDST facilitator. Given that a prime cause of failure is the concentration of expertise at the topmost levels of cascade (Hayes 2000), this has been identified as a concern. However, it is necessary to note that, according to Circular 61/2015 teachers are due to receive inservice which is directly facilitated by the PDST during Year 2 and Year 3 of the CPD approach. This indicates some attempt to diffuse expertise through the system during the later stages of the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Examining the Time Frame and Setting of the CPD Approach

Literature recommends that effective professional development should be ongoing and sustained, not episodic and fragmented (Miller and Stewart 2013, Flyvbjerg 2001, Grimmett 2014). The planned time for teachers to engage in professional learning is 3 and a half days over the course of 3 years - approximately 21 hours of formal continuous professional development over 3 years or 7 hours of formal continuous professional development over 1 year. Given that literature suggests that few effects are gained by professional development initiatives involving less that 14 hours of support and that the greatest affect is apparent for programmes which include about 50 hours of guidance (Wasik et al. 2006, Yoon et al. 2007), this could have ramifications for the implementation of this curriculum. This may have also contributed to principals' perceptions that the CPD which they had received was 'rushed' and that 'too much presented at one time'. One principal commented that 'a couple of half days won't do the trick'.

Principals perceived that they needed:

more training, coaching and greater support over a sustained period of time both before, during and after implementation of the language curriculum.

This need for greater support available over a continuous period of time was cited by the majority of principals. The concept of balanced and sustained professional development, rather than just a temporary infusion of rapid-fire string of professional development activities (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1995, Guiney 2001, Newmann 1996, Speck 2002)is central to effective CPD. The time which has been allocated to this CPD has therefore been identified as a concern for the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum and one which could have ramifications for the effective reform of the Primary Language Curriculum

In addition to this, the overall timing of the CPD during Year 1 of the implementation process has resulted in a number of issues. Findings suggest that the information seminars were held before many of the necessary curriculum materials and resources were available to principals and schools. One principal compared this to 'trying to sell a car which had yet to be built'. As outlined in *Section 6.3.7,* not having access to the necessary curriculum materials and resources may have contributed to principals' frustration and dissatisfaction with the CPD which they received. It is likely that this is also why principals perceived the approach to CPD as being 'rushed'. There were also issues in relation to the timing of the school closures. The principal of the case study school acknowledged concerns about facilitating this inservice in June

People are tired at this point of the year and whatever you tell them now - teach them or tell them - it's going to be gone by September.

Despite principals' requests to postpone this inservice until the beginning of the following school year, it appears that there was little flexibility in this regard.

The Department have categorically said 'No' to holding off and coming back on the 31st of August and giving the training day then and using it as Croke Park or something. They said No. It has to be done by the end of this school year or we lose the opportunity to do it. So I just think that's really short sighted.

Thus, the timing of the CPD has been identified as a limitation of this approach. It could be argued that this issue also provides evidence of a lack of consultation with principals

during the implementation of this curriculum. Having previously examined the danger of resistance to reform as a result of change imposed from above (Baker-Doyle and Gustavson 2016, p.54), this lack of agreement between external and internal stakeholders could have ramifications for the overall curriculum change process.

Contemporary literature also recommends that effective professional development is job-embedded and on-site (Miller and Stewart 2013, Grimmett 2014, Neuman and Wright 2010, Wasik and Hindman 2011). Discourse suggests that for professional development to be effective, teachers should be equipped so that they know what to do, why it should work and also how to gauge the effectiveness of their practices (Joyce and Showers 1983, Wasik et al. 2006, Ingersoll and Krakik 2004). By arranging for professional development which is on-site, teachers have an opportunity to set goals and self-evaluate their teaching (Cordingley et al. 2004, Wang et al. 2014), under the guidance of the professional developer or another colleague. According to Circular 61/2015 the planned professional development approach will take place in a number of settings including local Education centres and the schools of the teachers. This provides evidence of on-site CPD during the implementation of this curriculum. Circular 61/2015 also suggests that 'the PDST will continue to support schools on an ongoing based by providing a suite of elective CPD models including workshops, classroom modelling, summer courses, as well as website resources and publications'. The incorporation of strategies such as classroom modelling indicates that many aspects of this CPD are job-embedded. In addition to this, it could be argued that the manner in which school closures were granted to facilitate the inservice of teachers during the first year of CPD, resulted in minimal inconvenience for teachers. Thus, the manner in which many aspects of this approach plan to provide opportunities for CPD which is job-embedded and on-site has been identified as a strength.

However, it should be acknowledged that there was little evidence of on-site, job-embedded professional development during the initial implementation which was investigated as part of this study. While aspects of this CPD during this crucial introductory period took place in school settings, this was without the support of an external facilitator. Moreover, in light of the school closures and absent pupils, it could be suggested the CPD which was available at this stage was not fully job-embedded or embedded in teacher practice, as advocated by literature within this field (Grimmett 2014). Thus, it could be argued this inhibited real-time opportunities for teachers to gauge the effectiveness of their

practice and to get teachers on side for the implementation of the curriculum. This has been identified as a limitation.

Having outlined the CPD needs of principals in relation to the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum, it is evident that there was a significant disparity between how principals perceived their CPD needs and the CPD which was available to them during the initial implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. Evidently, the cascade model of CPD which was adopted does not cater for many of these needs including the sustained professional development of all staff, facilitated by an external representative of the PDST. This disparity may have implications for the overall process of curriculum change.

The Role of Principals in Curriculum Reform

This CPD approach is predicated on principals having an active role in curriculum reform and a willingness to disseminate the necessary information to their staff. As mentioned above, recognising principals as professionals can be empowering and this can contribute to effective professional development (Grimmett 2014, Miller and Stewart 2013).

However this study has identified a disparity in relation to how the role and responsibilities of the principal were perceived by both external and internal stakeholders. For example, the INTO representative acknowledged that 'principals are responsible for teaching and learning in their own schools'. The PDST representative also perceived that 'it should be part of their remit to facilitate that sort of curriculum exploration'. However, findings from this study suggest that principals resented having to take on this position as part of the CPD for the Primary Language Curriculum and feel that the CPD should be the responsibility of external stakeholders:

Allow principals to lead teaching and learning. Allow the NCCA and PDST to perform their roles properly.

This idea is underfunded. Principals should not be asked to provide CPD to their staff. We have become messenger boys for the DES.

Looks like principals will be replacing PDST staff.

An increased level of frustration with the ill-conceived, badly thought out 'requests' being made of principals with no support or preparation. A greater workload. A higher level of guilt and a feeling of failure because now there is obviously something that needs to be done and I don't know how to do it. We have the NCCA and PDST but, again, principals are expected to prepare and communicate a curriculum change and then drive it within the school while not being given the support or skills to do it.

Findings suggest that this issue may have contributed to the 'highly contentious' atmosphere of these seminars which the PDST representative described. Principals perceived that their role in this reform would add to their already significant workload. Previous discussions on the negative climate amongst the teaching profession have indicated that the workload of principals and teachers have increased as a result of initiatives such as Droichead and School-Self Evaluation. This workload has also been exacerbated by ongoing cuts of resources and the moratorium which has been placed on posts of responsibility which has curtailed their middle management teams. This became evident through many of the principals' responses:

This is a crazy time to be trying this with schools and school leaders already under enormous pressure and overload.

It is not fair to impose this on overworked teachers in schools that are hugely underfunded and resourced.

Give me posts of responsibility and stop overloading me. I can't take anymore. The seminar was crazy.

Once again, the PDST and others are out of touch with the impossible workload already in schools.

It is important to acknowledge the work of the PDST in preparing online supports and materials, to facilitate the whole-staff CPD in Year 1 of the implementation process, as promised in Circular 61/2015. A sample of these materials has been included in *Appendix P*. There was no evidence generated in relation to principals' perceptions of these support materials over the course of this research. However, it is possible that these materials may have alleviated some of the fears expressed by principals that their role in this curriculum reform would add significantly to their workload. In light of this, the availability of support materials could be perceived as a positive step towards meeting the needs of principals during this period of curriculum reform. Despite this, having previously highlighted the importance of acknowledging principals and teachers as professionals with existing knowledge and skills to share, it could be suggested that some of the content provided in

these materials undermines the professionalism and integrity of the teaching staff. For example, whilst the Book Walk Script, may have saved principals some preparation time, the first two lines which read 'Open your books on pages 6 and 7. This is the Introductory Section' may seem somewhat unnecessary. It could be argued the first question of the suggested on-line scavenger hunt for teachers, which asks teachers to 'identify the colour of the uniforms that the children are wearing on the still in the video on the home page' could be disempowering for teachers. Nonetheless, the availability of such materials has been identified as a positive step towards alleviating the workload of principals during this period of curriculum change.

Stakeholders' Involvement in the Planning and Delivery of the CPD

Although the PDST representative was not in a position to comment on the involvement of other stakeholders during the planning and preparation of the CPD, the interview with the NCCA representative suggests that the NCCA, DES, Inspectorate and PDST had some involvement in the preparation of the CPD during the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. The NCCA representative described the collaboration with the DES, Inspectorate and PDST 'when the CPD for primary teachers was being prepared' as 'pretty seamless' and also acknowledged that this was 'a very close relationship'. Hayes (2000, p. 138) advocates that a cross-section of stakeholders must be involved in the preparation of training materials for the effective professional development of teachers (Hayes 2000, Zhao et al. 2015).In light of this, this representation of external stakeholders during the preparation of CPD during the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum has been identified as a strength by this study.

However, *Section 6.2.7* has outlined a number of factors which may have influenced principals' perceptions of the overall approach to CPD. It could be argued that many of these factors have stemmed from tensions between the external stakeholders during the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. This raises questions about the *'very close relationship'* between the external stakeholders during the preparation of the CPD.

The finding that the curriculum materials and resources were not yet available at the time of these information seminars provides an example of a possible tension between stakeholders. Findings seem to suggest that the PDST facilitators were not equipped with the necessary information, resources or materials during the initial information seminars.

This raises questions over the manner in which the PDST facilitators were prepared. However, it could also be indicative of a lack communication between the NCCA, DES and the PDST during the Implementation Phase of the Primary Language Curriculum. Principals' responses suggest that PDST facilitators were unable to address many of their concerns in relation to the curriculum development process. There was a perception amongst the principals that the PDST facilitators had not been given the necessary information to deliver these seminars and this contributed to a sense of pity amongst principals for the facilitators.

I feel that the facilitator was unsure of the key messages for the delivery of the seminar. She was unable to answer questions put to her by the attendees. The messages were too complicated and lacked clarity. This was not the fault of the facilitator. She was not adequately trained or sufficiently familiar with the curriculum content.

Unfair to send out young PDST staff without proper information or materials. Any questions were answered with 'we don't know'.

The PDST representative acknowledged that this issue caused challenges for the facilitators:

The books weren't ready in time. There were all these ancillary issues which were leaving us. The PDST were left wide open.

This study cannot speculate where responsibility for this lies, but it provides evidence of some tension between stakeholder groups during this important period.

In addition to this, many principals perceived that the development of the CPD approach was inhibited by budgetary constraints - presumably stemming from the DES. This could indicate further tensions between the external stakeholders during the preparation and provision of CPD. As previously noted, the cascade approach of teacher professional development is one of the most cost-effective methods (Griffin 1999, Guskey 2002, McDevitt 1998, Ono and Ferreira 2010), and it therefore tends to be favoured by developing countries. However, this 'economic' approach has been identified as a factor which has impacted on principals' perceptions of the CPD which they had received, and one principal described this issue as being 'very disheartening'. The PDST representative acknowledged the challenges of providing CPD in light of such constraints:

We know it's not the most effective... but we are working under budget constraints as we can only fulfil what we can fulfil in that story.

Asking questions about it, sharing ideas ... that's brilliant, that's what you want but that takes a huge amount of man power to organise. We don't have the personnel. We would need a team of something like 200 advisors to facilitate that sort of inservice..

Thus, it could be argued that some of the challenges which were experienced by the PDST and NCCA during the preparation and provision of CPD may have stemmed from budgetary issues, imposed by the DES. This might consolidate the argument that the strongest influences on curriculum reform tend to be external ones including advocacy from central administrators, new policy and funding and external change agents - emanating from government and other agencies (McBeath 1997, p. 14).

Lastly, given that teachers' willingness to change is necessary for curriculum reform to occur, further tension is evident from the INTO ballot for industrial action which took place on the 29th of February. This suggests that there was a tension between the INTO (acting on behalf of the teachers) and the DES during the initial implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. The INTO directive advised schools to continue with the familiarisation of the Primary Language Curriculum but not to cooperate in any formal way with the school evaluation in doing so. This directive conflicts with previous instructions made by the Department in CIrcular 61/2015 and may have added to increasing levels of confusion and negativity surrounding the Primary Language Curriculum.

Thus, this section has acknowledged the involvement of a cross-section of stakeholders in the preparation of the CPD as a strength of this approach. However, a number of possible tensions between stakeholders have become apparent throughout the examination of this CPD. Thus, although a cross-section of stakeholders may have been involved in the preparation of the CPD, the benefits of this were not always evident to principals during these seminars. Such tensions and issues may have influenced principal teachers' overall perception and experience of the CPD which they received. This could have ramifications for the effective dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum.

This study has analysed the findings which emerged in relation to the CPD which was provided during the initial implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. This has given a further insight into the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. This analysis has also highlighted many of the challenges which were experienced by both internal and external stakeholders during this stage of the curriculum change and reform process. This has enabled a number of recommendations to be made in relation to the CPD. These have been outlined in *Chapter 7*, and may be useful during future periods of curriculum change. The next section will examine the clarification which was made to Circular 61/2015 and the potential implications for the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum.

6.4 Clarification to Circular 61/2015 during the Implementation Phase of Reform

Circular 61/2015 has been identified as an important macro document during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. *Section 6.3.1* has provided an overview of the information which was provided in this circular. A critical moment during the Implementation Phase of the Primary Language Curriculum reform occurred in February 2016, when a clarification was made to Circular 61/2015. At this point, a letter was issued to schools making a number of clarifications to Circular 61/2015. This had a number of implications for the implementation process.

Firstly, it provided schools with the discretion of combining both half-days into one full day school closure, to be taken during the current school year, for the purpose of whole-staff discussion through use of online supports and materials which had been prepared by the PDST.

Secondly, the letter also clarified what was meant by the term 'to begin to be implemented"-i.e.: the ongoing familiarisation with the language curriculum and activities related to planning and initial use of the curriculum and its support.

It stated that:

Implementation is likely to involve ongoing familiarisation with the language curriculum and activities related to planning and initial use of the language curriculum and its support materials. For example, schools might begin to plan for teaching and learning using the

learning outcomes, the profession continua, or a combination of both. They might also begin to explore the practice guides and incorporate them into their planning for oral language. Such engagement with the curriculum and its support materials will inform teaching and learning in the target strands for English and Irish.

Lastly, this circular letter provided detail on the new phased implementation of this curriculum. The original implementation dates were delayed to slow down the overall implementation process:

School Year 2016/17 There will be an initial emphasis on the Oral Language/Teanga ó Bhéal strand. From September 2016, this strand will begin to be implemented for infants to second class.

School Year 2017/18 From September 2017 the Reading/Léitheoireacht and Writing/ Scríbhneoireacht strands will begin to be implemented for infants to second class alongside the oral language strand.

School Year 2018/19 From September 2018, there will be full implementation of all strands for infants to second class.

School Year 2019/20 From September 2019, implementation of Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile for third to sixth class will begin.

6.4.1 What role did external stakeholders have in the clarification of Circular 61/2015?

The interviews which were conducted with the PDST and INTO representatives
enabled this study to identify the role of external stakeholders in this clarification process.

Findings suggest that the PDST called for a clarification to this circular as a result of the feedback which they had received. The PDST representative also acknowledged the role of the NCCA in facilitating this process:

We asked for that clarification. That clarification came directly from the feedback that we would have given because there was huge confusion as to when they were to start implementing. So they (principals and teachers) were initially told they had to begin implementing this September whereas we asked.. because it came back hugely from

principals.. don't make us start implementing until we've had whole staff CPD. So the original circular was just so stark and it was just so unequivocal as circulars are - it's like this is it. These are the rules and you have to abide by them. Now in the clarification - we asked 'please clarify when they are to begin what does 'begin to implement' mean? There was other stuff around the clarification element, like they'd provide Frequently Asked Questions.. that was there. Also on the back of that and sort of related to the clarification was the video that Anne Looney and Harold Hislop put together for us. This was put together by the NCCA clarifying various things around the curriculum itself so all those things which were all response of this very very contentious thing that we had to feel before Christmas.

The <u>INTO representative</u> perceived that the INTO also had a role in deferring the timeline for the implementation of the curriculum:

What we have asked to date, is just that the process be slowed down just a little, so that teachers will have the time and space to start exploring the curriculum, engaging with the curriculum materials, before there's any expectation that they have to be implementing it in their classrooms.

We have already asked for a slower process and to defer implementation dates, not to stop the process but to allow the time for teachers to engage with the materials, with the professional development before there are any expectations of implementation in classrooms. Now teachers of course can start implementing it and start using it but in terms of having an official expectation from a particular date - to defer that - and allow teachers the time to engage with it, to come familiar with it and to become comfortable with it.

The <u>INTO representative</u> also acknowledged that many of the requests, which were made by the INTO, were met. This was noted as being a very positive development:

We looked for phased in and we got a 3 year phased in - which I think is very positive that the system did respond to that and they responded by giving the whole school professional development days.

The <u>PDST representative</u> acknowledged that this clarification had a positive influence on subsequent seminars.

The clarification letter hugely helped. The Anne Looney and Harold Hislop video helped us hugely I can say that without a shadow of a doubt and any of my advisors will say the same thing. It helped.

<u>6.4.2 What are internal stakeholders' perceptions of this clarification?</u>

This study identified evidence of this clarification having an impact on the implementation process. Findings suggest that this clarification impacted on some of the later information seminars which were provided to principals, which took place after this clarification letter had been issued.

Findings suggest that this clarification resulted in some level of confusion throughout the seminars. It is suspected that these principals attended seminars during the process of clarification but just prior to the changes being made:

The following comments were made by principals and provide evidence of this confusion:

It was quite clear that nothing was certain, following principals' reactions/input prior to Christmas. So much money and time invested, I thought, and it is now 'all up in the air' - Are they making it up as they go along OR letting it loose on the principal population in an unfinished state in order to elicit direction as to where they should really be going?

Attended a 'mop-up' session in January. All information was qualified with 'everything has gone back to the drawing board' and 'don't shoot the messenger!

Too complicated. Another premature launch before everything is ready.

While the presenter was excellent, arrangements for in school in-service were changing and we were advised to hold off delivering in-service to our staff.

Facilitator was good even though there was a change as to what was happening as the proposed language curriculum was amended and roll out time was also under review before we got started.

There were numerous positive comments provided about this clarification, which suggests that it had a positive impact on principals' perceptions of the overall approach to CPD. The following encouraging responses were provided by principals in relation to this clarification:

Thankfully it seems that some of the concerns are expressed at the meeting seemed to have been taken on board.

I learned about the thinking behind the change/adjusting of the curriculum. I felt teachers' misgivings about the shortcomings of the previous curriculum were listened to and addressed.

I like the sound of the new curriculum, it would appear to be more user friendly with clearer objectives. Putting both languages together and highlighting what languages have in

common is also more effective and I would think more supportive in teaching and learning both and other languages.

I like the reduction in objectives. I believe the focus for us as a staff next year will be to examine and become familiar with the objectives and not to confuse or alarm ourselves with the progression steps. Common sense must prevail.

The <u>principal of the case study school</u> acknowledged and confirmed that the second information seminar provided clarity for those in attendance:

The PDST facilitator started off by answering any of the general questions that had come up at the previous half day that the principals had gone to. Then just a general overview. Now she did it really well, she did it as gaeilge and she kind of switched between the two but in a really really nice, easy to follow way.

She had an information presentation just answering the general questions that people would have in relation to the inspection of the new curriculum.

To be honest it was nice to have the questions that we had answered. Now she did a very good job, she did her very very best to answer those.

6.4.3 The Implications of this Clarification on the Curriculum Change Process

The clarification which was made to Circular 61/2015 was a crucial moment in the dissemination process which impacted on the overall Primary Language Curriculum reform. Findings suggest that both the INTO and PDST had a role in asking for this amendment and clarification.

This amendment is indicative of effective communication between the PDST, DES, NCCA, INTO and principals at this point of the dissemination process. The feedback which was provided by principals during the initial information seminars was effectively addressed by external stakeholders in order to bring about this change. This effective communication provides evidence of a powerful agreement between the external stakeholders which had a positive influence on the curriculum change process. This clarification also consolidates the argument that curriculum change is not a linear process but one where numerous factors operate at each phase, feeding back and altering decisions made at previous stages (Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991). Although this amendment resulted in some initial confusion, it is evident that principals reacted positively to this. The principals' perception that previous concerns 'seem to have been taken on board' is an encouraging finding.

However, the very need for this clarification may raise questions in relation to the effectiveness of circulars as a mode of communication during periods of curriculum reform. The PDST representative described the information which was provided in the initial Circular 61/2015 as 'stark' and 'unequivocal'. The perception that 'these are the rules and you have to abide by them' may be justified. In light of the argument that change imposed from above can result in a resistance to reform amongst teachers, (Baker-Doyle and Gustavson 2016, p.54), this could be a potential issue for the curriculum change process. Circular 61/2015 has been identified as a macro document which communicated critical information to internal stakeholders about the development and dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum, the 'stark' manner in which the information was communicated may have contributed to the negativity which was evident during this Implementation Phase. This mode of communication may need to be examined during future periods of curriculum reform.

Lastly, whilst this clarification has been welcomed by internal stakeholders, it is important to reiterate that institutionalisation of curriculum change is a complex and long-term process. It requires the initial innovation, in this instance the Primary Language Curriculum, to permeate each aspect of the institution until it becomes ingrained in its very principles, practice and policies (Fogarty and Pete 2007, p.10). In light of the challenges which have been identified during both the Initiation and Implementation Phases of this reform, it is evident that ongoing implementation should endeavour to maintain such effective communication between external and internal stakeholders. This could be important to the overall process of curriculum change and reform.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the findings which emerged in relation to the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. This provided a unique insight into this important phase of the curriculum change and reform process. A number of issues have been identified during this analysis in relation to teacher change, the CPD, and a change to the planned implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. As the identification of such issues has given a unique insight into the dissemination process and the complex nature of curriculum change, these will be summarised below.

This study identified an agreement between external and internal stakeholders in relation to the need to change the existing curriculum. In light of the importance of teacher receptivity to change, this may have a positive impact on the curriculum change process. However a number of issues emerged which may need to be addressed during this period of reform. A significant cohort of teachers expressed an uncertainty or a reluctance to change the existing curriculum. This issue may need to be addressed by external stakeholders, as this could suggest that additional supports may be required to facilitate teacher change. Moreover, a number of potential barriers to teacher change have been identified by external and internal stakeholders. External stakeholders acknowledged their concerns about some teachers' lack of experience with the Aistear framework and the climate of the teaching profession. Some teachers were worried that they would not receive adequate professional development to implement a Language Curriculum. Given the ramifications for the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum, these potential barriers may need to be overcome during the later stages of this reform.

This study identified a number of strengths and evidence of good practice during the analysis of the planned CPD approach. However, a number of issues also emerged which could have implications for the overall process of curriculum change and reform. There was a disparity between principals' perceptions of their CPD needs and the CPD which they received as part of the cascade model of teacher training. Moreover, this approach required principals to have an active role in the CPD for their staff. Principals did not feel equipped to take on this responsibility and felt that this would add to their workload. Although the involvement of a cross-section of stakeholders during the preparation of the CPD was commended, a number of possible tensions between external stakeholders became evident during the provision of this CPD. These tensions may have impacted on principals overall perceptions and experience of the CPD which they received.

The clarification which was made to Circular 61/2015 has been identified as a positive development which provides evidence of effective communication and strong agreement between external stakeholders. This had a positive impact on the Implementation Phase of curriculum reform. However, the manner in which circulars were utilised to disseminate critical information about this important change may have contributed to some of the negativity amongst principals which was identified during this phase. Thus, this has been

identified as an important issue which may need to be addressed by external stakeholders.

In conclusion, this study aimed to contribute to contemporary educational debate around the area of curriculum change by examining the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. As is evident from the findings which were analysed in *Chapters 5* and *6* this study gained a unique insight into many aspects of this important period of curriculum change. In examining the case of the dissemination of the curriculum, this study has generated findings regarding the planning, production, movements and transitions which occurred during this process. In response to the issues which were identified during the investigation of this topic, the next chapter will outline a number of recommendations which may be useful during future periods of curriculum change.

Chapter 7 Concluding the Study

7.1 Introduction

The predominant aim of this study was to contribute to contemporary educational debate around the area of curriculum change through examining the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. As outlined in *Chapter 1,* the rationale which motivated this study stemmed from a number of factors. Firstly, this curriculum encompasses an innovative approach to language instruction at primary level. In light of this and the particular importance of language development in the primary classroom, it is important that every measure possible is undertaken to disseminate the curriculum as effectively as possible and to ensure its successful implementation. Given that the challenge of changing a curriculum often goes against the grain of collective and cultural experiences and expectations (Looney 2001, Rogers 1997) this is no small task. Secondly, the field of curriculum studies is often overlooked in educational debate and research and has been identified as one of the most neglected areas of educational scholarship (Apple 2012). Thirdly, there are significant silences surrounding curriculum change in the Irish context which need to be highlighted in educational debates to generate a more inclusive approach to curriculum change (Sugrue 2004, p.293). Curriculum change is a central change strategy (Fullan 1993, Gleeson 2000, Kelly 2009, McBeath 1997) and thus the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum offered a prime opportunity to examine a crucial moment of curriculum change in Ireland.

To capture the complexities of the dissemination process, this study adopted a social constructivist approach which facilitated the identification of the various perspectives and multiple realities of participants (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Denzin and Lincoln 2008, Flick 2009). As outlined in *Chapter 4,* the case study method was applied to ensure that the dissemination could be explored through a variety of lenses to allow multiple facets to be revealed and understood (Baxter and Jack 2008). The instrumental case study method was especially relevant in this context. In examining the perceptions and experiences of the dissemination process of teachers in the case study school, the study was in a position to advance its understanding of the overall process of curriculum reform and its implications for practice. Within this approach this case may or may not be seen as typical of other cases (Stake 1995); however having conducted surveys with teachers and principals outside of this setting it became evident that many of these experiences were evident on a larger scale. Whilst this study acknowledges the limitations

and danger of unfounded generalisation (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Yin 2003), this study has highlighted the perceptions and experiences of a proportion of teachers at this time of educational change. In doing so, this study sought to investigate how teachers experience the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. It endeavoured to examine teachers' level of awareness about this curriculum change and their experiences during the various stages of the dissemination process. In addition to this, this study set out to analyse teachers' perceptions of their involvement in this curriculum change and their feelings about forthcoming changes facing them as a result of the introduction of the Primary Language Curriculum.

This chapter will present a conclusion to the study by framing findings in the context of preceding and prospective research. To do so, this chapter will adopt the following format. Firstly, this chapter will provide a summary of the key findings and their implications for the field of curriculum studies. It will then outline the relationship between this study and previous research. Secondly, it will then outline the limitations of the research and the challenges that were encountered during this period. Thirdly, this chapter will highlight the main issues which were identified during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum and outline a number of recommendations for future action, policy and change, as well as opportunities for future research. Lastly, this chapter will conclude by examining how this study has contributed to the overall field of curriculum studies.

7.2 Summary of Findings

The previous chapters have outlined the findings of this research in response to the research and embedded research questions. These findings were analysed in the context of current literature to identify the implications for teacher involvement during the process of curriculum change. This section will summarise the key issues which were identified during the investigation of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. These key issues prompted the subsequent recommendations which were formulated to enhance future practice in the field of curriculum studies.

• This study identified the role of both external and internal stakeholders during the design and development of the Primary Language Curriculum. It acknowledged that teachers were represented on a number of groups and committees and that this cohort of teachers were in a position to participate in important decision making processes in

relation to the overall design and development of this curriculum and the efforts which were made by the NCCA and INTO include teachers in this manner were commended.

- The NCCA conducted a consultation in the Spring of 2014 and this was identified as a positive attempt to consult internal stakeholders about the Primary Language Curriculum. However, the overall response rate to this consultation was extremely low with approximately only 3% of teachers nationwide participating in this consultation. A number of factors were attributed to this poor response rate. The NCCA representative perceived that primary school teachers are inexperienced in these forms of consultations and that they were happy to allow the 'experts' to make decisions about the Primary Language Curriculum. The INTO representative perceived that teachers did not have the time to participate in this form of consultation. However, the perceptions of both stakeholder representatives are somewhat questionable and cannot fully account for such low levels of engagement amongst the teaching profession. This study found that there was a lack of awareness amongst teachers about this consultation process and this lack of awareness inhibited the involvement of teachers during the design and development of this curriculum. This has been identified as a critical issue which may have impacted on teacher receptivity to change and levels of teacher empowerment during this period of reform. This poor response rate and lack of awareness amongst teachers casts aspersions on the overall approach to this consultation, as well as the method of communication between the external and internal stakeholders at this time. Given the importance of this issue, this chapter will outline a number of recommendations which may be beneficial during future curriculum consultations.

- This study found that there was also a lack of awareness amongst teachers that a curriculum change was happening. Evidence of this lack of awareness amongst teachers became apparent both prior to and during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. A number of factors were attributed to this lack of awareness including ineffective communication between external and internal stakeholders and a disparity in how the roles and responsibilities of teachers are perceived by external and internal stakeholders. In light of the potential ramifications for teachers' levels of curriculum ownership, autonomy and empowerment, the strategies which were utilised by external stakeholders may need to be examined. This chapter will outline a number of alternative approaches which could be adopted during future periods of curriculum change to inform teachers that a curriculum change is happening in a more effective manner.

- This study also found that the majority of teachers who participated in this study recognised the need to change the existing Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999). Given the importance of teacher receptivity to change, this was identified as an important precursor to the effective implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. However, this study also found that a sizable cohort (14%) of teachers outside of the case study school felt that it was unnecessary to change the existing curriculum and that there was a level of uncertainty amongst teachers about the forthcoming changes. Given the ramifications of resistance to change on curriculum reform, this study concluded that it would be important to address the needs of this sizable cohort of teachers who are not in favour of this curriculum change during all stages of the dissemination process and acknowledged the potential of the professional development of teachers to overcome this issue.

- This study investigated the approach to CPD and identified that a cascade model of professional development was utilised during the initial implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. This study found that each of the external stakeholders had a role in the development of this approach and this collaboration was identified as a strength during this phase of reform. However, a number of issues became apparent which may have impacted on the overall dissemination process and on how the Primary Language Curriculum was perceived by internal stakeholders. For example, this study identified a disparity between principals' perceptions of their CPD needs and the CPD which was provided to them. There was an overwhelmingly negative response to the initial information seminars which were provided by the PDST. Much of this negativity stemmed from dissatisfaction amongst principals in relation to their role in this curriculum change, which required them to facilitate inservice to their staff and disseminate the information which they had received to them. The majority of principal teachers did not feel confident in disseminating this information and felt that this would add to their already significant workload. There was a disparity between how external and internal stakeholders perceived the role of principals in this curriculum reform. Whilst principals felt that this was outside of their remit and that external stakeholders should be fully responsible for providing CPD, external stakeholders perceived that principals have a responsibility in leading teaching and learning and that this involves curriculum exploration.

- This study found that other factors also contributed to principals' negative perceptions of the information seminars. For example, principals found that the information seminars were rushed and that the necessary curriculum materials and resources were not available to them. There was also a low morale amongst principals and teachers at the

time of the seminars and principals perceived that their introduction to the Primary Language Curriculum was underfunded and an example of initiative overload. This investigation into the CPD which was provided at the time of the data collection enabled the study to identify the strengths and limitations of this approach to CPD. In light of the importance of CPD during the process of curriculum change, such findings are of importance. This chapter will outline a number of recommendations in relation to CPD which may inhibit the reoccurrence of these issues during future periods of curriculum change. Having identified a low morale amongst the teaching profession, a number of recommendations will also be made in an effort to alleviate this issue during future reforms.

- Lastly, this study found that the NCCA, INTO and PDST had a role in asking for the clarification which was made to Circular 61/2015. This clarification was found to have been welcomed by teachers and principals and had a positive impact on their perception of the Primary Language Curriculum. This clarification was therefore identified as a crucial moment in the dissemination process which was indicative of effective communication between external and internal stakeholders. However, the very need for this clarification may call into question the effectiveness of circulars in disseminating such critical information to schools about forthcoming curriculum reforms. This finding substantiates the need for this chapter to provide recommendations about the approach to awareness raising during future periods of curriculum change and reform.

7.3 Relationship with Previous Research

The area of curriculum studies is often overlooked in educational research (Apple 2012). This became evident throughout the literature review which endeavoured to investigate the research question and develop an insight into this field. As is evident from *Chapter 3*, this review identified many voids in contemporary literature, particularly from an Irish context, and thus a number of prevailing questions remained. These voids instigated the research process which was formulated to investigate the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. The findings which emerged in this study offer an opportunity to bridge such voids and to generate debate about the process of contemporary curriculum change in Ireland.Having analysed the findings, and identified their implications for teacher involvement in the process of curriculum change, it is necessary to contextualise this research and to frame it in relation to other research.

A.V. Kelly's (2009) *The Curriculum* was an influential text during this research, which illuminated many theoretical philosophies and pragmatic perspectives central to the process of curriculum development. This was particularly insightful in informing the literature review as it highlights the philosophical and political dimensions of curriculum as well as the implications for schools and societies. Kelly's examination focuses predominantly on the political control of the curriculum in England and Wales and the continuous failure to consult internal stakeholders. However the curriculum development process in Ireland is particularly distinct in this regard. The establishment of a council such as the NCCA puts Ireland in a unique position for having a separate body responsible for curriculum design and development. The partnership ideology which underpins the formulation and evaluation of educational policy and practice is distinct and significantly different from more ideologically driven, top-down centralised reforms that are dominant in very visible ways in England and Wales (Sugrue and Gleeson 2004, p. 277). This study provides an insight into the role and responsibilities of the NCCA. Furthermore it examines the implications of having a council such as the NCCA and how this manifests in terms of teacher involvement and engagement during periods of curriculum reform.

Ciaran Sugrue's (2004) *Curriculum and Ideology* was also very insightful. His research investigates curriculum reform in Ireland during the development and implementation of the 1999 Primary School Curriculum. This highlights the politics and power relations around schooling in Ireland at this critical period of curriculum reform. Ciaran Sugrue's text provides a compelling insight into the impetus which led to the formulation of the 1999 curriculum and also outlined the involvement of external and internal stakeholders during this period.

This research is somewhat distinct for a number of reasons. Firstly, there have been 15 years between the formulation of the first draft of the Primary Language Curriculum in 2014 and its predecessor. The Primary Language Curriculum is quite distinctive as it advocates an innovative approach for teaching English and Irish in an integrated manner. This research provides a unique insight into this concurrent curriculum development. Secondly, the Primary Language Curriculum is being introduced during a period of economic recovery.The teaching profession in Ireland has encountered numerous cutbacks to resources and take-home pay, a reduction in the number of teachers, and increased class sizes over the last decade. This period has also seen increased accountability measures being introduced, including the introduction of Whole School

Evaluations and School Self Evaluations and a requirement to report standardised test results to the Department of Education and Skills and to parents. There is also a significant disparity between the pay scales of newly qualified teachers and their more experienced colleagues. This research has captured teachers' perspectives and experiences of the dissemination of the Language Curriculum, giving teachers voice in the course of the dissemination of an innovative approach to language instruction during a tumultuous period in the educational domain.

7.4 Limitations of Research

It is necessary to outline the limitations of this research to ensure that the findings are not overstated or misrepresented. This section will outline limitations which were encountered during the data collection period and also reiterate some of the limitations associated with the case study approach, which was adopted.

7.4.1 Limitations During Data Collection

One of the objectives of this research was to highlight the roles and responsibilities of significant external stakeholders during the dissemination process. Interviews with representatives from the NCCA, INTO and PDST were held as part of the data collection process. Each of these interviews was informative, insightful and beneficial during the investigation of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. Each perspective provided an insight into the remit of the agency and also highlighted the challenges and barriers encountered during this process. However, the DES declined a request to be interviewed during the study. Consequently, it was not possible to comment on the full extent of their role during this period. Although the other external stakeholders inferred many aspects of the workload of the DES, having not interviewed them, this study could not highlight their perspective of this. Moreover, the teacher and principal surveys generated many questions in relation to the budgetary constraints surrounding this dissemination process. Similarly, despite the significance and relevance of this issue, this research could not gain a thorough understanding of this. Thus, failure to interview a representative of the DES has been identified as a limitation of this data collection process.

This study endeavoured to highlight the process of curriculum change. As is evident from *Chapters 5 and 6,* the findings provided a clear insight into this process. However, it is important to acknowledge that educational change is a long-term interactive process which 'may be in the works for many years' (Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, McBeath 1997). The initiation phase is an important aspect of curriculum change and this research yielded beneficial findings about this phase. This research also gained an insight into the initial implementation phase and the introductory provision of professional development. Despite this, there are many aspects of curriculum change - particularly the Implementation and Institution phases - which, due to the timeline of the study, could not analysed during this research. In addition to this, it is important to note that attitudes towards change - both receptive and resistant - often fluctuate. This study captured the attitudes and perspectives of participants at the time of data collection. However, it is important to reiterate that resistance to change can be triggered and manifested in different phases (Terhart 2013, Zimmerman 2006). Conducting a survey at a later point of the study may therefore generate contradictory data. Thus, the timeframe of the research understandably confined some of the data in relation to this curriculum change and this has been identified as a limitation of research.

Lastly, as outlined in *Chapter 4,* this study utilised a purposive sampling strategy, which is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam 2015, p.77). A limitation of this approach is that this strategy can be prone to researcher bias and involve 'a deliberate hunt for negative' (Merriam 2015, Miles and Huberman 1994) However, the 'logic and power of qualitative purposive sampling derives from the emphasis on an in-depth understanding of specific cases' (Patton 1990, p.169). It is also important to note that the goal of purposeful sampling is not to obtain a large and representative sample, the goal is to select persons, places, or things that can provide the richest and most detailed information to help answer the research question (Lodico et al. 2006, p.134). It is this rationale which motivated the purposive sampling strategy which was adopted during this case study.

7.4.2 Limitations Associated with the Case Study Approach

There are a number of limitations associated with the case study approach, as have been highlighted in *Chapter 4.* Having conducted the study it is useful to reflect on the

researcher's experiences of these to ensure the validity and rigour of this case study research.

Generalisation is regularly associated with the case study approach (Creswell 2007, Creswell and Clark 2010, Dasgutpa 2015, Denzin and Lincoln 2008, Gerring 2004, Stake 1995). Damage occurs if the commitment to generalise runs so strong that the researcher's attention is drawn away from features which are important for understanding the case itself (Baxter and Jack 2008, Denzin and Lincoln 2008, Stake 1995, Stake 2010). Through selecting an instrumental case - a primary school in an urban disadvantaged area - this study could focus on the predominant issue of illuminating teachers perspectives and experience of this dissemination process. Conducting surveys with teachers and principals outside of this setting facilitated triangulation and enabled the researcher to determine whether the case was unique or not, thus circumventing unnecessary generalisation.

For example, 63% of teachers in the case study school demonstrated no awareness of developments surrounding the language curriculum. The survey of external teachers outside of the case study school indicated that 64% of participants also demonstrated no awareness. Teachers' lack of awareness was also cited by a number of external stakeholders and principals. In light of this triangulation, this study was able to justify that there was a lack of awareness surrounding the curriculum amongst some of the teaching profession at this time. This generalisation was therefore supported by robust data. However, there were some instances where findings in the case study school were unique and in these instances no generalisations were made. For example, although 43% of participants from the case study school were not sure as to whether it was necessary to change the 1999 Primary School Curriculum - 0% of participants perceived that it was unnecessary to change the curriculum. This provides interesting data about openness and receptivity to change. However, 14% of participants outside of the case study school perceived it was unnecessary to change the previous curriculum. This disparity may have been influenced by the time frame of both surveys, particularly as resistance to change can occur at any stage of the curriculum reform (Terhart 2013, p. 488). Nonetheless, although this provides useful information in relation to the attitude towards change in the case study school, this study was determined not to make unfounded generalisations and thus presented these findings separately. Thus, although the risk of unnecessary generalisations became a challenging aspect of the analysis, through utilising extensive

triangulation and analysing data in a thorough and conscientious manner, generalisation was inhibited.

Another limitation associated with case study research is that researchers have a tendency to collect overwhelming amounts of data that require extensive management and analysis. To circumvent this, this research formulated a data collection timeline, as was outlined in *Chapter 4.* However, during the period of data collection, these boundaries became somewhat blurred. This study focused on the initiation phase of curriculum design which encompasses awareness raising, consultations and involvement of stakeholders. During the study it became apparent that a predominant aim of the initial professional development was to raise awareness about the language curriculum. Given this overlap, this aspect of the dissemination was deemed relevant to the research which adapted the initial timeline to include this integral element. This generated insightful and beneficial data about the dissemination process and yielded additional findings in relation to the beginning of the Implementation Phase of curriculum reform. Although, in this instance, this was beneficial in providing an insight into the research question, this study acknowledges that ambiguous boundaries can create challenges during case study research.

7.4.3 Challenges Encountered During Research

A number of challenges were encountered during the research which were somewhat challenging during the collection of data. These were outside the control of the study, however were testing nonetheless.

For example, as was outlined in *Chapter 5,* an amendment was made to Circular 61/2015. This amendment resulted in a change to the timeline of the overall dissemination. This also resulted in changes as to how principals were to facilitate the CPD in their schools. Many principals who attended after February (post amendment) were advised to 'hold off delivering information to staff' by PDST facilitators. This change to the circular occurred in February, at the same time that principals were receiving initial professional development. Although this circular was inevitably welcomed by principals and indeed the PDST and INTO, findings indicate that there was confusion surrounding these changes at the time. This confusion may have influenced how the principals perceived the CPD which was available to them. Principals who attended at a later point, when such confusion had been alleviated, indicated a more positive perspective and experience of this CPD. To ensure

that this amendment did not skew the overall findings, the researcher had to reorganise the surveys and identify whether they had been completed by principals before, during and after such changes were made and analyse accordingly. This was an extremely time consuming process which could not have been circumvented.

Another challenge which was encountered during research stemmed from the INTO ballot which took place on the 29th of February, 2016. As was outlined previously, this directive advises schools to continue with the familiarisation of the language curriculum but not to cooperate with the familiarisation with the school self evaluation while doing so. During focus groups and interviews in the case study school it became increasingly apparent that there was some confusion surrounding this directive. A number of teachers acknowledged that they misunderstood that this ballot was about not cooperating during the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. Thus, this issue needed to be continuously clarified to ensure that the perceptions of teachers and principals were not influenced by this misconception. This was a challenge during key aspects of the data collection period.

This chapter has outlined a number of limitations and challenges which were identified during the study. Despite this, this study generated insightful findings about the dissemination process. The subsequent section will provide a number of recommendations to enhance future practice in the field of curriculum development.

7.5 Recommendations for Future Action, Change and Policy

Based on the above issues, this study has made a number of recommendations to overcome their reoccurrence and to contribute to the field of curriculum studies. These recommendations will offer suggestions in relation to future action, necessary changes and policy development. These recommendations are relevant to both external and internal stakeholders.

7.5.1 Recommendations for Future Curriculum Consultations

Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand

Confucius, circa 350 BC

Curriculum consultations are an integral aspect of curriculum reform which theoretically facilitate the involvement of all stakeholders and also raise awareness about curriculum developments (Fullan 2002, McBeath 1997). Teachers have the responsibility of ensuring their pupils can access the curriculum sufficiently and thus their contribution is important. Given the poor response rate and engagement with this process, action needs to be taken to encourage greater engagement during future consultations.

A number of factors were attributed to this poor engagement by both external and internal stakeholders during the study. For example, the NCCA representative perceived that primary school teachers are inexperienced with these forms of consultations. Based on this premise, teachers may need greater support or assistance during future consultations. Perhaps it may be worthwhile for an NCCA representative to facilitate this process. Lack of confidence could be alleviated if each school was encouraged to work together to create an aggregate response to curriculum drafts. The NCCA representative also perceived that teachers are happy to leave decisions in relation to curriculum development to the 'experts'. This perception needs to be challenged as it could be indicative of a system where teachers perceive that their feedback is not valued during the development process. The paramount importance of teachers' experience needs to be highlighted prior to future consultations. Greater efforts could be made to include teachers in a much more meaningful manner. The study recommends that external stakeholders place a greater emphasis on communicating the importance and value of teacher feedback to the process of curriculum development and provide evidence of how such feedback can have a positive impact on student learning.

The INTO representative perceived lack of time as a possible factor which may have inhibited teachers' engagement with the consultation process. In light of the low morale amongst the teaching profession at this time, it is plausible that teachers may not be receptive to reading a draft curriculum and subsequently responding outside of school hours. It is important to reiterate that the teaching profession have encountered numerous cutbacks, yet are also facing greater accountability measures during this period. This may inhibit teachers' good will to give even more of their free time. To overcome this issue, in the future, teachers need greater opportunities and incentives to engage in such consultations. A half-day school closure to facilitate their involvement may be beneficial. Perhaps curriculum consultations could be incorporated into schools' allocation of Croke Park hours. Whilst policy could be adapted to make such consultations compulsory, this

study perceives that this could be disempowering for teachers. Future consultations may require careful consideration to provide teachers with greater time and opportunities to engage. This would also highlight the importance of teacher feedback during the curriculum development process.

Lack of awareness surrounding the language curriculum consultation was perceived as a predominant factor which inhibited the engagement of internal stakeholders. The method of awareness-raising around curriculum consultations process may require further examination. This study recommends that future consultations explore the possibility of engaging in higher levels of PR and endeavour to communicate more effectively with teachers to inform them and include them in this important process.

Chess and Purcell (1999) provide useful advice for those who design public involvement processes, as follows:

1. Begin participation early and invest in advance planning
2. Adapt traditional participatory forms (e.g. precinct committees) to meet desired process and outcomes goals, and involve experts from outside agencies to provide technical assistance
3. Include a mix of participatory methods such as community advisory committees for sustained interactions, workshops to develop options, polls to involve larger numbers of people
4. Collect feedback on the public participation effort so you can demonstrate that it 'worked' (Chess and Purcell 1999)

These could be considered prior to future curriculum consultations.

7.5.2 Recommendations for Awareness-Raising

The concept of awareness-raising is quite broad. According to Sayers (2006, p.10) to raise awareness of something is to promote its visibility and credibility within a community or society. It is also to inform and educate people about a topic or issue with the intention of influencing their attitudes, behaviours and beliefs towards the achievement of a defined purpose or goal (Sayers 2006, p.11). A well planned and thoughtfully presented awareness-raising campaign is arguably one of the most efficient and effective means of

communicating information about a particular topic or issue to a large and geographically-dispersed body of people (Chess and Purcell 1999, Robinson 2012, Sayers 2006).

Strategies to raise awareness about the developments surrounding the Primary Language Curriculum included sending postcards to schools nationwide, posting information on the NCCA website, and using social media. Information was also provided by the INTO via the INTouch magazine and INTO website and INTO electronic newsletter. Information was also provided by the PDST during information seminars and information about developments were also available on the PDST website. The Department of Education and Skills also posted a number of news bulletins related to the language curriculum. Despite such strategies, this study identified that internal stakeholders demonstrated a lack of awareness during the initiation phase of curriculum reform. This indicates that the awareness raising campaign which was adopted in association with the Primary Language Curriculum may need examination.

Sayers (2006, p.16) outlines that an awareness raising campaign will typically communicate either one central message or a suite of related subsidiary messages (usually no more than five) that are linked by a common theme. Moreover, the central message or themed messages are communicated to a selected target audience or range of audiences using different approaches and techniques described in a document called a communication strategy or communication plan. (ibid, p.16) There are four key components which should be defined and described in this plan:
1. Message
2. Audience
3. Strategy
4. Timing

Sayers (2006, p.17) outlines a number of common approaches and techniques for raising public awareness. These have been refined and circumscribed to those which could be utilised during future curriculum consultations, as follows:
• Personal communication with community members through public meetings, presentations, workshops and informal social events
• Static and travelling exhibitions and displays
• Printed materials for example, brochures, billboards, cartoons, comics, pamphlets, posters, and resource books

- Audiovisual resources - podcasts, videos, CDs and DVDs
- Websites, email discussion lists and Web Logs (blogs)
- Mass media interviews and articles in newspapers, magazines and electronic publications accessible via the Internet
- Mass media interviews and news items on radio and television
- Public Relations (PR)
- Political advocacy and lobbying

However, it is important to note that providing information about curriculum developments may not necessarily lead to teachers thinking critically about curricula. Similarly, providing greater information about consultations, may not necessarily ensure that teachers engage with or participate in such processes. Les Robinson's 'Seven Doors' approach to social marketing cautions against the assumption that successfully providing information through awareness-raising will automatically result in lasting behavioural changes (Sayers 2006, Robinson 2012)

Robinson's solution is to identify seven steps to social change:
1. Knowledge - knowing there is a problem
2. Desire - imagining a different problem
3. Skills - knowing what to do to achieve that future
4. Optimism - confidence or belief in success
5. Facilitation - resources and support infrastructure
6. Stimulation - a compelling stimulus that promotes action
7. Reinforcement - regular communications that reinforce the original message or messages (Sayers 2006, Robinson 2012)

This has been encapsulated in *Figure 7.A* below:

Figure 7.A *Robinson (2012)*

Robinson identifies each step as an obstacle that has to be overcoming using appropriate communication and education strategies: He visualises each step or obstacle as a door that must be opened in the context of awareness-raising to achieve lasting social change (Sayers 2006, Robinson 2012).

Figure 7.B Robinson's Seven Doors to Overcoming Obstacles

Figure 7.B *Robinson (2012)*

This study recommends that the paths of communication between external stakeholders and teachers could be examined and addressed during future curriculum reforms. It is inadequate that many teachers receive such critical information on a secondhand basis. Future curriculum reforms could endeavour to increase the PR surrounding this fundamental periods of curriculum change and consider many of the strategies or considerations outlined above.

7.5.3 Recommendations for Professional Development

This study has identified both the strengths and limitations of the CPD approach which was adopted during the dissemination of the language curriculum. The literature review has outlined the features of effective professional development. CPD should be ongoing and sustained; it should be job-embedded and on-site; it should be enquiry based and also based on current research theory (Grimmett 2014, Miller and Stewart 2013, Neuman and Wright 2010, Wasik and Hindman 2011). It became evident during the analysis of data that many aspects of the CPD approach conflict with that which has been advocated as best practice. Many of these limitations stem from the cascade approach which has been widely refuted as being ineffective (Griffin 1999, Guskey 2002, McDevitt 1998, Ono and Ferreira 2010). The literature review has outlined a number of alternative approaches to professional development including coaching and professional learning communities. Given the advantages of these approaches, particularly to the area of language instruction (Clandinin 2009, Fang et al. 2014, Love 2010, Miller and Stewart 2013, Neuman and Cunningham 2009, Neuman and Wright 2010), this research advocates that these approaches or aspects of these approaches be considered during the subsequent planning of professional development. However, international research indicates that these approaches are far more expensive than the cost-efficient cascading model of teacher training (Gilpin 1997, Ono and Ferreira 2010).Perhaps greater funding needs to be allocated to this integral aspect of curriculum reform.

Failing this, Hayes (2000, p.18) outlines that it is not the cascade model per se which is the problem but the manner in which it is implemented. There are a number of criteria which a cascade training programme should take into account for it be successful:
• the method of conducting the training must be experiential and reflective rather than transmissive

- the training must be open to reinterpretation, rigid adherence to prescribed ways of working should not be expected
- expertise must be diffused through the system as widely as possible, not concentrated at the top
- a cross-section of stakeholders must be involved in the preparation of training materials
- decentralisation of responsibilities within the cascade structure is desirable

In addition to this, there are a number of strategies which could be utilised to maximise the chances of cascade aims reaching and being implemented in classrooms, For example, cascade programmes need to try to ensure that the content, process and organisation of the proposed training will equip the maximum number of trainees with skills appropriate to the achievement of the project (Wedell 2005). Planners also need to check whether the subject classroom context to which trainees will be returning will be supportive of their attempts to try out their new skills in practice (Wedell 2005). This research recommends that these criteria be considered, to enhance the future professional development of teachers during periods of curriculum change. Moreover, in light of the disparity which was identified in relation to how principals perceive their CPD needs and the CPD which was available to them, this study recommends greater consultation between external and internal stakeholders in relation to the overall professional development process. This consolidates previous recommendations for more meaningful engagement and involvement of teachers and principals in the overall curriculum change process.

7.5.4 Recommendations for the Role of Principals in Future Curriculum Reforms

The study has highlighted that the CPD approach which is being utilised is dependent on principals having an important role in curriculum reform and a willingness to disseminate critical information to their staff. The professional development model has been commended for being empowering through acknowledging principals as professionals with existing knowledge and skills to share (Miller and Stewart 2013, Grimmett 2014). However, given that the majority of principals do not feel confident in disseminating this information the role of the principal, which requires them to disseminate this information, may need to be examined during future reforms. Principals' responses indicate their frustration with this model as they perceive it will add to their ever-increasing workload. They have acknowledged that they do not have the time to be taking on the additional duties which are required of them during the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. This

provides further evidence of the importance of consulting with principals in relation to their CPD needs. To enhance future practice, their role in professional development may need examination and additional supports may be necessary to alleviate the pressures which are facing them.

Principals' responses are indicative of high levels of frustration, exhaustion, work saturation and stress. An IPPN survey was conducted in 2005 to determine principals' perceptions of their workload. This survey generated similar findings in relation to principals' workload and also revealed disturbing descriptions of stress levels, resultant ill-health and pleas for radical action (IPPN 2005, p.1). It is thought provoking that, despite such findings, little has been done in the last 11 years to alleviate such pressures. Indeed, many initiatives such as Droichead and School Self Evaluations seem to be adding to this workload. Moreover, the moratorium on middle management posts has been unhelpful in this regard. The IPPN survey indicated that principals expressed a strong desire to be relieved of time consuming, administrative functions so that they can meaningfully address their role as instructional leaders and influencers of teaching and learning in their schools, to return to their core business of teaching and learning (IPPN 2005). Therefore, aside from curriculum reform, the findings which this research yielded in relation to principals' workload also substantiates that this excessive workload remains a potential barrier to the manner in which principals can lead teaching and learning in schools and engage in curriculum exploration.

The IPPN survey advocated a number of strategies to reduce the workload of teaching principals (IPPN 2005). Many of these are still not in place. This study wishes to restate them to consolidate the importance of this issue.
These strategies include
• The appointment of a permanent supply teacher, within a defined cluster of schools to release principals on a rotational basis for a minimum one day per week
• A major reduction of the threshold for the appointment of administrative principals

The following strategies were advocated for administrative principals (IPPN 2005) and are still not in place:
• Non class contact time for Deputy Principals

- The appointment of professional school governors to attend to non-educational management functions and responsibilities
- Release time for middle management posts.

Thus, it is evident that both administrative and teaching principals may require an increase in supports, resources or additional personnel to ensure adequate focus can be given to teaching and learning in schools. Such strategies may also result in a greater willingness to take on the additional responsibilities which are necessary for curriculum reform to occur.

7.5.5 Future Climate of the Teaching Profession in Ireland

This study has yielded findings which are indicative of a low morale amongst the teaching profession at this juncture. This became evident during the analysis of teacher and principal responses which continuously highlight their frustration, dissatisfaction and anxiety about the proposed changes associated with the language curriculum. This low morale and negative climate has more than likely stemmed from the continuous cutbacks to their take-home pay through inhibiting allowances (such as their qualification and supervision allowances) and through increased taxation. In addition to this, increased accountability measures such as the introduction of Whole School Evaluation, School Self Evaluation and additional Croke Park hours have resulted in an increased workload for the majority of teachers, despite receiving less pay. Cutbacks to resources, teaching posts, increased class numbers and the pay inequality which exists for newly qualified teachers may have also contributed to this climate.

In terms of curriculum reform, it may be unfair to expect teachers to engage or participate in the additional duties which are associated with disseminations, including consultations and the additional time which is required of them to become accustomed with new curricula. In light of this, it may be possible that many teachers do not have the time, space or inclination to engage in curriculum developments. Perhaps given this poor climate, the timing of future initiatives should be given greater attention. Enhancing working conditions, by addressing some of the issues highlighted above, may have a positive influence on teachers' attitude towards educational changes and their willingness to adopt curriculum changes into practice.

7.5.6 Teachers' Responsibility to Engage in Curriculum Reforms

It is necessary to highlight that, despite the poor climate which exists among the teaching profession at present, teachers have a responsibility to think critically about curriculum. This study has identified numerous issues in relation to how external stakeholders have communicated with teachers during the initiation phase of curriculum reform. The lack of awareness amongst the teaching profession highlights that it may be necessary for all external stakeholders to examine the awareness raising strategies and improve these paths of communication. However, it is important not to overlook that teachers have a responsibility to engage in curriculum reforms. Kelly (2009, p.10) argues that educators are neglecting their personal obligation to pursue curriculum studies, arguably the only route to effective practice. Narrow interpretations of the curriculum prevent those who teach from learning how to think critically about the overall education system (Lucey and Lorsbach 2013). As was outlined in the introductory chapter, when the concept of curriculum is misunderstood as a catalogue rather than a process it can become disembodied and irrelevant to practice, and can result in a dichotomy between the espoused curriculum as written and the active curriculum as lived and experienced (Goodson 2004, Pinar 2012, Stenhouse 1975). This consolidates the importance of the involvement and participation of teachers during periods of curriculum change.

Communication is an integral aspect of awareness raising, and indeed consultations with teachers. Communication may be broadly defined as "a negotiation and exchange of meaning, in which messages, people-in cultures and 'reality' interact so as to enable meaning to be produced or understanding to occur" (O'Sullivan 1983, Sayers 2006). Communication may also be described as a three-part process by which participants (1) transmit and (2) receive information using one or more of a range of channels or media and (3) make sense of the message or messages embedded in the information (Sayers 2006, p.3). In order for teachers to be heard, it is imperative that they speak - and engage in this process of communication. Lack of awareness was a significant issue during the dissemination of the language curriculum and the majority of participants were not aware that a consultation process was taking place. However, it is necessary to reiterate that the majority of participants who were aware still did not participate in this consultation process.

Teacher Education colleges may need to consider the possibility of putting a greater emphasis on curriculum studies, which is a critical aspect of teaching. Teachers may then be in a better position to think critically about curriculum, and provide their necessary feedback during future consultation processes.

7.6 Opportunities for Future Research

This study has continuously highlighted the paramount importance of pursuing curriculum studies. It has also identified numerous voids in the literature surrounding this topic, particularly from an Irish perspective, and has advocated the necessity for further research into the field of curriculum development. In highlighting the limitations of this study, a number of opportunities for future research have been identified.

A limitation of this study was that the DES did not agree to participate. Given that the DES is one of the external stakeholders of the Primary Language Curriculum, a thorough examination of their role and responsibilities would be beneficial to this field. Highlighting their perspectives of the dissemination of the language curriculum would provide an alternative insight into this process. It would also offer them an opportunity to respond to the claims which were made by the other external and internal stakeholders in relation to their role in this dissemination. The budget is an extremely import facet of the dissemination process and gaining an insight into this area would make for constructive research. An investigation into how parents and students perceived the curriculum development and dissemination process could also provide an alternative perspective.

Having previously highlighted that curriculum change is a long-term process (Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, McBeath 1997), a re-examination of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum at a later stage may be beneficial for a number of reasons. Firstly, given that resistance to change can be triggered and manifested in different phases (Terhart 2013, Zimmerman 2006), future research could ascertain how this has transpired throughout this process. Surveying teachers at a later stage could illuminate such findings. Secondly, this study gained beneficial findings about teachers' and principals' perspectives of the initial CPD which they received. However, it would be worthwhile generating data about their perspective of the CPD which will available them during the later stages of this reform.Thirdly, an investigation into how the curriculum becomes embedded into practice

during the Institutionalisation Phase of curriculum reform may be of value to the field of curriculum development.

This study generated substantial qualitative data, which provided an insight into the dissemination process. However, there are opportunities to approach this research process from a quantitative perspective. Quantifiable data could include how the age bracket or teaching experience of participants impacted on their perspective of curriculum reform. It would also be useful to gain an insight into how these factors influence teachers and principals' CPD needs or receptivity to change.

Thus, in identifying opportunities for future research, this study is hopeful that future researchers may be persuaded to contribute to this important field of curriculum studies.

7.7 Contribution to Research

This study contributed to contemporary educational debate around the area of curriculum change by designing, conducting and analysing the case of the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. Whilst this research has yielded extensive and compelling data, the following areas have been deemed to be particularly advantageous to the field of curriculum development.

Firstly, this study conducted an extensive analysis of literature within the field of curriculum development. This analysis provided an insight into the themes of Curriculum Design, Curriculum Change, Curriculum Dissemination, Curriculum Assessment and Professional Development. As is evident from the literature review, many voids were identified in contemporary discourse around the area of curriculum change, particularly within the Irish context. This prompted the formulation of the research design which endeavoured to bridge that gap.

Secondly, this study has continuously highlighted the paramount importance of thinking critically about the area of curriculum studies. By taking part in this study, responding to surveys, conversing in focus groups and providing feedback during interviews, participants were reflecting and thinking about this critical area. In addition to this, findings suggest that many of the data collection methods generated discourse around the field of

dissemination. The following comments provide evidence of prompted discussions or investigations into this topic:

I and many of my colleagues were not aware...

Having received this survey, I went onto the NCCA website to seek information on the proposed curriculum...

Given that this research gave rise to discussions and has piqued interest in this field, this has been identified as a worthwhile contribution.

Lastly, this study has provided an insight into a crucial moment in curriculum development, change and dissemination in Ireland. It has highlighted the primitive perspectives and experiences of both external and internal stakeholders during this critical period. It is envisioned that these findings could be informative and beneficial for future curriculum developments, such as the subsequent strands of the Primary Language Curriculum, the forthcoming Maths Curriculum and the ERB and Ethics Curriculum. Having outlined valuable findings and recommendations, this research may have a positive influence on the overall field of curriculum studies.

7.8 Summary

This research has developed and examined a rigorous case of how teachers perceived and experienced the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum. This case was instrumental in providing an insight into teacher involvement in the process of curriculum change in contemporary Ireland. Having conducted extensive research, generated compelling data and meticulously observing this case over a number of years, this study has composed a series of fictitious vignettes to highlight some of the imperative lessons which this research has to offer.

It is important to reiterate that such vignettes were shaped by the researcher's values and understanding of this research and do not represent the experience for all internal stakeholders. Nonetheless, vignettes may enable the reader to get a feel for the time and place of the study (Creswell 2007, p.196). They provide an insight into the dissemination of the Primary Language Curriculum from a number of perspectives and highlight how this important critical change has impacted on the primary education sector. These vignettes attempt highlight the case of many teachers and principals and draw attention to the unclear fate of how this curriculum reform will become embedded into practice Thus, it

seems only fitting that penultimate chapter of this thesis will conclude this study with these vignettes.

Chapter 8 Vignettes

Throughout this study curriculum has been described as 'a set of stories passed on from one generation to the next' (Independent 2008). The irony has not gone unnoticed by the researcher that these vignettes weave together to tell their own story. A story of a teacher, principal and child. A story of critical messages whispered and unheard, shouted and ignored, crucial messages lost in a complex maze of systemic processes. But the main story cannot be written yet, their words cannot be read. It is the story of every child who sits in our classrooms. It is the story of how they speak, how they listen and how they learn. This is their story and it is up to us, as teachers, to help them find it.

8.1 Vignette 1 - The Teacher (Miss Murphy)

Miss Murphy steps out of her car and examines the contents of her boot with a sense of trepidation. A stack of copies, stacked neatly from the night before, have escaped from their Tesco Bag for Life home, and have now been scattered into every corner of her boot. A bundle of magazines, four cardboard egg boxes and a number of toilet rolls are also visible amongst the teacher's handbag and well-used lunch box. These materials have the potential to make for a very enjoyable but lively art lesson and she is already questioning her selection of lesson plan in the cold light of the morning sun. Next comes the balancing act of making it to her classroom in one trip. If she's lucky, a student might happen to pass and kindly offer their assistance. They might do so out of pure goodness. They might simply do it because they would sell their soul for the possibility of praise, a sticker, or, if they're really lucky, a milseán.

It is when she reaches her desk that Miss Murphy notices that the agenda for the afternoon's Croke Park meeting has already been typed up and passed around to every teacher. Her eyes glance down at the sheet. On it, a list of typical and reoccurring topics which will be mentioned during the afternoon's meeting.

Dates of upcoming sports events and matches will be discussed.

Details of upcoming parent teacher meetings.

Third on the list, is something which catches her eye:

"Discussion about the new Primary Language Curriculum".

Immediately questions begin to surface - 'What language curriculum?', 'What language?' - accompanied by a sense of panic: 'What did I miss?', 'Was this discussed in my absence?' 'Should I know about this?'

Popping her head into the classroom next door confirms that her confusion is echoed along the corridor. There are a number of teachers gathered there, taking hurried sips from their morning cup of coffee. One teacher questions whether it is about teaching French or Spanish at primary level... soon the panic subsides into the comfort that Miss Murphy knows no more or no less than the other teachers. Somebody rolls their eyes and sighs 'Haven't we enough to be doing?' Another laughs that Seán can barely tell you the difference between a banana or an orange in English, what hope has the poor child in Spanish? The morning chatter is interrupted by a piercing bell, and the teachers immediately disperse to collect their classes from the various corners of the playground yard.

Miss Murphy's thoughts are immediately interrupted by the lively chatter of her smiling students who have started to giggle and glance quizzically at the cardboard egg boxes stacked on her desk. All thoughts of the enigmatic Language Curriculum are left outside with the gentle closing of her classroom door.

8.2 Vignette 2 - The Principal (Mrs. O'Sullivan)

Glancing at her watch and the handful of notes sprawled across the length of her desk, Mrs. O'Sullivan wonders whether she'll manage to fit in a cup of coffee into her afternoon schedule. The phone is humming in the adjacent office, as it has been all morning, and she takes a moment to guess who the surprise caller might be... A disgruntled parent? A concerned social worker? An educational psychologist? An architect? Or an eager, chirpy, young teacher looking for just a minute of Mrs. O'Sullivan's time to tell her what a wonderful addition she would make to the staff, if there was any possibility of subbing over the next few weeks? At least the subsequent meeting with her teachers would offer a few minutes reprieve from the incessant phone calls and the sound of her own calm, collected and highly professional phone voice as she endeavors to appease and negotiate with whomever is on the other end. She gathers up the relevant papers and pushes the other notes into some order on the other side of her desk. Mrs. O'Sullivan mouths to her secretary that she has her mobile phone with her, should an urgent call need to be transferred. The secretary nods and smiles in response, the handset balanced skillfully between her ear and her shoulder as she types a letter with her free hand and finishes counting money with the other. Most of their days are spent communicating in this way, their very own form of sign language, over the din of the office work. Thankfully the enthusiastic secretary became fluent very quickly and is as adept at lipreading as she is effective at multitasking.

The teachers are already in situ when Mrs. O'Sullivan reaches the room. The chatting quietens to hurried whispers and she notices their slightly slouched postures, stifled yawns and tired, polite smiles as she moves to her place in the front of the room. She is not so removed from the classroom to recognise, that however loud and relentless the office duties are, they often pale in comparison to the day-to-day challenges and issues facing teachers as they greet their overcrowded classes. It is only when a situation escalates quite severely that Mrs. O'Sullivan is called to the scene of the crime but still she is highly aware of both the behavioural and learning challenges encountered by each of these teachers on a daily basis. It is that thought which leads to the genuine smile of both sympathy and appreciation, which forms on her face as she commences the meeting.

As the circulars are passed around the semi-circle of teachers facing her, Mrs. O'Sullivan feels a shift in the room as they all begin to read quietly to themselves. She notices their

furrowed brows, confused glances and sinking shoulders. The questions erupt frantically, interrupting the silence. She begins fielding questions, the heat rising on the back of her neck as she does so: 'What does this mean for us?', 'Do we have to change our plans?', 'Do we have to change our books?', 'Are we getting training in this?', 'Why weren't we consulted?' Mrs. O'Sullivan knows that they are disappointed with her vague and ambiguous answers - many of which are qualified with 'Maybe I'll know after this seminar...?'. After what feels like an eternity, she makes an executive decision to terminate the meeting. She glances at her watch, fixes a strained smile upon her face and announces - 'Let's not worry too much about this until the time comes'.

8.3 Vignette 3 - The Child (Conor)

Conor bounces into the yard, sporting his brand new Thomas the Tank Engine schoolbag proudly on his back. He is very excited. A new teacher! A boy teacher!! Miss Murphy was his teacher in Junior Infants and she was nice and very funny. She always sang funny songs and she was kind and she had these cool pirate plasters if you fell. Still though, a boy teacher!!

Victoria skipped over to him. 'You like to play with me?' She sometimes talks funny like that... but at least she talks. When Victoria first came to school, it was after their Christmas concert, it was even after Santa came... she didn't say anything at all! Miss Murphy said 'Boys and girls - this is Victoria and she comes all the way from Poland'. But all she did was sit in the corner of the yard by herself. Conor didn't think she liked playtimes very much. Sometimes she cried and then Miss Murphy would hold her hand and let her walk around the yard with her. Conor's mammy said that maybe she was scared but there's nothing really scary about their yard so that didn't make sense to Conor. Victoria came to Conor's birthday party and he had a cake with a Tyrannosaurus Rex on it, but not a scary Tyrannosaurus Rex, a nice one. Conor can't remember the day Victoria stopped crying at playtimes... but she did. Then she started talking. Now she doesn't stop talking. Miss Murphy always calls her a chitter-chatter-box in a funny voice. She says 'Victoria, you painted a lovely picture but you truly are a chitter-chatter-box' in a nice way and everybody laughs because that was funny what Miss Murphy said. Even Victoria laughs. Miss Murphy is very funny!

Conor and Victoria were just beginning to tire of chasing each other through the jungle of children who had began to gather in the playground, when the bell rang. They ran to their line just as their classroom door opened. Their new teacher looked down at their smiling, nervous and excited faces... and gave a huge wave and broad smile in return. Conor wondered briefly whether he had pirate plasters too. The teacher closed the door behind them as they shuffled into their desks and seats. A deafening silence filled the room for half a minute, a silence that would probably never occur again over the course of the next school year. Twenty four sets of eyes stared up at their new teacher with a sense of nervous anticipation.

On his desk, underneath a folder and bunch of multicoloured, laminated flashcards... was a white, red and navy book filled with words the children couldn't read yet and lots of pages which could be folded out, only by the teacher's hand. Conor took no notice of it. Little did he realise that that book could shape the next year of his school life, and that only the man that owned it would determine how.

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Appendix A

13 November, 2015 - New language curriculum for youngest primary school children announced

Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O'Sullivan has approved a new language curriculum for primary schools.

The new curriculum will see the same structure applied to both English and Irish for the first time. It will focus on the development of oral language, reading and writing skills. The new curriculum is specifically designed for young children in junior infants through to 2nd class.

According to Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O'Sullivan, "This is a very significant and welcome reform of how our youngest pupils learn their language skills. For the first time, there will be no distinction in how the teaching and learning in English and Irish are approached as languages. The new curriculum establishes very clear learning outcomes and development milestones for our young children through both languages."

From September 2016, the focus will be on the implementation of the oral language strand, with the following year seeing the focus on the new reading and writing strands as they are brought on stream. By September 2018 all strands of the new curriculum will be taught to our young children in junior infants to 2nd classes.

A new curriculum for children in 3rd through to 6th class is currently in preparation, and this will be introduced in September 2019.

"This is significant reform and it is vital that school leaders and teachers are given the necessary Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to allow them to implement the new curriculum and ensure that our young learners benefit to the maximum extent. To facilitate this important professional development schools will close for one additional day in each of the next three school years. While this may prove inconvenient for some parents the long-term benefits of bedding down the new language curriculum are immense. The success of any curriculum change relies on dedicated, engaged teachers. It is important that they receive the CPD necessary to deliver this new language curriculum to our young children."

Ends.

Appendix B

Primary School Curriculum (1999): Overview Wall-Chart

English	Gaeilge (T2)*	Mathematics

ORAL LANGUAGE
• Receptiveness to language
• Competence and confidence in using language
• Developing cognitive abilities through language
• Emotional and imaginative development through language
 	
READING
• Receptiveness to language
• Competence and confidence in using language
• Developing cognitive abilities through language
• Emotional and imaginative development through language
 	
WRITING
• Receptiveness to language
• Competence and confidence in using language
• Developing cognitive abilities through language
• Emotional and imaginative development through language
	ÉISTEACHT
	• Ag cothú spéise go neamhfhoirmiúil sa teagasc
	• Ag tuiscint teanga
	
	LABHAIRT
	• Ag cothú spéise go neamhfhoirmiúil sa teagasc
	• Ag úsáid teanga
	
	LÉITHEOIREACHT
	• Ag cothú spéise
	• Ag tuiscint teanga
	• Ag úsáid teanga
	
	SCRÍBHNEOIREACHT
	• Ag cothú spéise
	• Ag úsáid teanga
	
	Na téamaí
	• Mé féin
	• Sa bhaile
	• An scoil
	• Bia
	• An teilifís
	• Siopadóireacht
	• Caitheamh Aimsire
	• Éadaí
	• An Aimsir
	• Ócáidí speisialta
	
	Catagóirí Feidhmeanna
	• Caidreamh sóisialta a dhéanamh
	• Soiléiriú a lorg i gcomhrá
	• Dul i gcion ar dhuine nó ar dhaoine eile
	• Dearcadh a léiriú agus a lorg
	• Eolas a thabhairt agus a lorg
	• Struchtúr a chur ar chomhrá
	
	* T2 = Scoileanna ina bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar dhara teanga
		EARLY MATHEMATICAL ACTIVITIES
		• Classifying
		• Matching
		• Comparing
		• Ordering
		
		NUMBER
		• Counting and Numeration
		• Comparing and Ordering
		• Analysis of Number
		  Combining, Partitioning, Numeration
		• Place Value
		• Operations
		  Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, Division
		• Fractions
		• Decimals and Percentages
		• Number theory
		
		ALGEBRA
		• Extending and using patterns
		• Number patterns and sequences
		• Number sentences
		• Directed numbers
		• Rules and properties
		• Variables
		• Equations
		
		SHAPE AND SPACE
		• Spatial Awareness
		• 2-D Shapes
		• 3-D Shapes
		• Symmetry
		• Lines and Angles
		
		MEASURES
		• Length
		• Weight
		• Capacity
		• Time
		• Money
		• Area
		
		DATA
		• Recognising and interpreting data
		• Representing and interpreting data
		• Chance
		
		Skills
		• Applying and problem-solving
		• Communicating and expressing
		• Integrating and connecting
		• Reasoning
		• Implementing
		• Understanding and Recalling

Colour coding for entry point of specific content: Infants First and Second Third and Fourth Fifth and Sixth

1

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Appendix C

Reading: Progression Continuum

Using the continuum: There are three Progression Continua - oral language, reading and writing. Each continuum consists of eight milestones (a-h), which describe, in broad terms, children's language learning and development for stages 1 and 2, using an arrow for each stage. Most children will have reached Milestone a before beginning Junior Infants. Milestone h is intended to support high-achieving children in second class. Some children may fall outside of the range shown by the arrows for stages 1 and 2. Using the Progression Continuum, teachers can identify the milestones children are at and plan the next steps in

children's language learning journeys. Each milestone has a number of Progression Steps which recognise children's achievements and support teachers' planning. The steps describe what children's learning and development looks and sounds like as they move along the continuum towards achieving the Learning Outcomes. The Examples of children's work (in print, audio and video) illustrate what children's language learning and development looks and sounds like at each of the milestones. In this way, the Progression Continua and Examples enable teachers to support children with a wide range of abilities across a range of contexts.

Collaboratively and independently the child listens to, reads and engages with familiar and unfamiliar texts** in a variety of genres◊. The child uses prior knowledge and previous experience to make sense of and interpret text. As the child progresses, the texts** will increase in complexity of reading vocabulary and content. To develop fluency, the child engages with texts** at his/her instructional and independent reading level. To identify where a child is at on the reading continuum it is useful for the child to be engaging with texts at his/her instructional reading level.

2. Progression Milestones - Reading

Stage 1 ▢ Stage 2 ▢

a The child has fun playing with books and joining in with nursery rhymes. He/she enjoys looking at, listening to and handling books and indicates favourites. The child associates some meaning with pictures and familiar logos, signs, letters and words. He/she sequences familiar stories or personal experiences using objects, marks or mimes to focus on 2-3 key points or events.

b The child shows reading behaviours in play scenarios and enjoys listening and responding to stories and poems, taking part in nursery rhymes, and playing with language in riddles and jokes. He/she understands that print carries messages and that text** tells the same story each time it is read. The child recognises some personal and familiar words and some familiar letters. He/she uses new words and phrases read aloud and modelled by the teacher in his/her emergent reading.

c The child begins to associate letters with sounds and identifies some high frequency words. He/she draws on personal experience, knowledge and memory when sharing in the 'reading' of a text** either alone or with others, and retells familiar stories accurately. The child visualises while listening to a story or informational text** read aloud, shares responses and discusses with others. He/she understands some basic conventions of print and recognises rhyming words.

d The child uses book-handling skills and identifies more conventions of print. He/she sounds and names all letters of the alphabet. Begins to identify and segment some sounds in words, recognises some common letter patterns and generates rhyming words. The child reads a range of high-frequency and CVC words and uses some contextual as well as pictorial cues to aid comprehension. He/she modifies predictions based on new information and shows understanding through discussion of texts** read.

e The child enjoys listening to, reading and exploring text** showing knowledge of the structure of a range of narrative and procedural text** genres◊. He/she understands messages conveyed in illustrations and uses sight words, rhyming words, syllables, common letter patterns and text** independently using full-stops to punctuate. He/she begins to monitor comprehension, asks questions about texts** and offers some reasons for predictions. With help, the child locates key points in informational texts** using a graphic organiser.

f The child enjoys choosing and exploring texts** for specific purposes and generates and responds to questions on a range of text** genres◊ providing justifications for responses. He/she reads a range of words with digraphs, letter patterns and syllables and uses prior knowledge, contextual cues, some punctuation and adds some intonation while reading aloud. The child locates key information using text** features such as table of contents and sub-headings, and begins to use dictionaries for word meanings. He/she discusses miscomprehension in text.

g The child enjoys a range of genres◊ and reads for specific purposes, justifying preferences and opinions. He/she uses a range of comprehension strategies and text** features such as indexes to help understand texts, locate key information and disregard unnecessary detail, and cites specific evidence in text** to support a viewpoint. The child uses a range of word identification strategies and knowledge of synonyms, homonyms, antonyms, affixes and root words to understand unfamiliar words.

h The child enjoys a wide range of genres◊ and reads detailed texts** at their independent level for a range of purposes. He/she uses letter/sound sequences, digraphs, root words, syllables, silent letters, prefixes and suffixes to identify, read and comprehend a wide range of unfamiliar words. The child explores the author's intent in text** and comprehends text** by using a repertoire of comprehension strategies more flexibly and with increasingly complex texts. He/she focuses on language features, imagery and reading vocabulary and recognises that individuals can interpret text** differently. He/she uses a range of text** features such as bold face, glossaries, electronic menus and icons to locate key detail efficiently.

Appendix D

Community Coaching Cohort Model Overview

The literacy coach:
- Works with a cohort of 4-8 teachers
- Facilitates the group for a 9-week cycle
- Meets with each cohort member individually at least once during each phase

The cohort members:
- Have coverage during coaching time
- Receive recertification points at the end of the cycle
- Evaluate the coaching experience

#1	Week 1: Inquiry	Week 2: Research	Week 3: Lesson Development
P H A S E	One day (1 hr)	One day (1 hr)	One day (1 hr)
	Discuss inquiry study as a process of analyzing student data, participants' questions, research related to these questions, and options for application.	Share research that addresses the inquiry topic and provide graphic organizers to record the group's thinking.	Develop two-three lessons that will be implemented in a teacher's classroom during the next week by the coach.

#2	Week 4: Modeling & Debriefing	Week 5: Mid-Cycle Reflection	Week 6: Research
P H A S E	Two - Three days (1 hr p/day)	One day (1 hr)	One day (1 hr)
	Observe lessons in the selected classroom (30-45 min) and debrief about student engagement during the lesson, how the inquiry topic was modeled, and objectives for the next lesson (15 min).	Complete the *Mid-Cycle Community Coaching Reflection Form* and discuss as a group what has been learned so far and what support is still needed.	Share research that addresses the inquiry topic and provide graphic organizers to record the group's thinking.

#3	Week 7: Lesson Development	Week 8: Modeling & Debriefing	Week 9: Final Reflection
P H A S E	One day (1 hr)	Two - Three days (1 hr p/day)	One day (1 hr)
	Develop two-three lessons that will be implemented in a teacher's classroom during the next week by the coach.	Observe lessons in the selected classroom (30-45 min) and debrief about student engagement during the lesson, how the inquiry topic was modeled, and objectives for the next lesson (15 min).	Complete the *Summative Community Coaching Reflection Form* and celebrate the group's learning.

Note: Some weeks in the cycle can be condensed or completed together at one meeting. Times given in parenthesis are an approximation.

Appendix E

Creswell's (2007, p.78-79) Lateral Perspective Table

Characteristics	Narrative Research	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Ethnography	Case Study
Focus	Exploring the life of the individual	Understanding the essence of the experience	Developing a theory grounded in data from the field	Describing and interpreting a culture-sharing group	Developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases
Type of Problem Best Suited for Design	Needing to tell stories of individual experiences	Needing to Describe the essence of a lived phenomenon	Grounding a theory in the views of participants	Describing and interpreting the shared patterns of culture of a group	Providing an in-depth understanding of a case or cases
Discipline Background	Drawing from the humanities including anthropology, literature, history, psychology and sociology	Studying several individuals that have shared the experience	Studying a process, action, or interaction involving many individuals	Studying a group that shares the same culture	Studying an event, a program, an activity, more than one individual
Data Collection Forms	Using primarily interviews and documents	Using primarily interviews with individuals, although documents, observations, and art may also be considered	Using Primary interviews with 20-60 individuals	Using primarily observations and interviews, but perhaps collecting other sources during extended time in field	Using multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, documents, artifacts

Characteristics	Narrative Research	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Ethnography	Case Study
Data Analysis Strategies	Analysing data for stories, "restorying" stories, developing themes, often using a chronology	Analysing data for significant statements, meaning units, textural and structural description, description of the "essence"	Analysing data through open coding, axial coding, selective-coding	Analysing data through description of the culture-sharing group; themes about the group	Analysing data through description of the case and themes of the case as well as cross-case themes
Written Report	Developing a narrative about the stories of an individual's life	Describing the essence of the experience	Generating a theory illustrate in figure	Describing how a culture-sharing group works	Developing a detailed analysis of one or more cases

Characteristics	Narrative Research	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Ethnography	Case Study
General Structure of Study	•Introduction (problem, questions) •Research procedures (a narrative, significance of individual, collection, analysis outcomes) •Report of stories •Individuals theorise about their lives •Narrative segments identified •Patterns of meaning identified (events, processes, epiphanies, themes) •Summary	•Introduction (problem, questions) •Research procedures (a phenomenology and philosophical assumptions, data collection, analysis, outcomes) •Significant statements •Meanings of statements •Themes of meanings •Exhaustive description of phenomenon	•Introduction (problem, questions) •Research procedures (grounded theory, data analysis, outcomes) •Open coding •Axial coding •Selective coding and theoretical propositions and models •Discussions of theory and contrasts with extant literature	•Introduction (problem, questions) •Research procedures (ethnography, data collection, analysis outcomes) •Description of culture •Analysis of cultural themes •Interpretation, lessons learned, questions raises	•Entry vignette •Introduction (problem, questions, case study, data collection, analysis, outcomes) •Description of the case.cases and its/ their context •Development of issues •Detail about selected issues •Assertions •Closing vignette

Appendix F
<u>Questions which were posed to the NCCA representative</u>

1. Can you talk a little about the context which provided the impetus for the revision of the English Curriculum?

2. What steps were taken to inform the process?

3. Who was involved at the various stages of this process?

4. How did you keep each of the stakeholders informed during the various stages?

5. How were the network schools selected? How many DEIS schools are involved in this scheme?

6. I see that you had a session in Laurel Hill recently to negotiate and discuss the primary curriculum. Could you talk me through what happens during one of those sessions?

7. How effective has the consultation process been with teachers, on the ground, to date? How do you envision teachers' reactions to the integrated language curriculum?

8. Do you anticipate that in-service will be made available to teachers?

9. Can you provide an insight into the relationship between the NCCA and the DES during the development and rolling out of this curriculum? What are the strengths and weakness of this relationship and are there any ways this could be enhanced?

10. Lastly, how do you envision the dissemination and implementation of this curriculum going forward? Do you predict any delays in relation to the timeline of this curriculum?

11. Have you anticipated any potential barriers which may inhibit the implementation of this curriculum?

12. Could you talk briefly about how you feel the NCCA has evolved since its establishment in 2001?

13. The NCCA has a critical role in advising the Minister in matters relating to the curriculum and assessment. Could you talk me through the logistics of this consultation process? How often do you meet, how is the advice developed and communicated?

14. How does the NCCA ensure that each sector receives adequate and fair 'air time' during this consultation process?

15. Could you provided an overview of the process of curriculum development in Ireland and in particular how and why curriculum development in general is needed?

16. What factors do you see as being particularly important in the process of curriculum development?

17. A recent article written by Michael Fordham suggested that although politicians have an important role in relation to budget, resources and accountability - in terms of curriculum

development there should be no political involvement. Kelly (2009) suggests that our approach to curriculum is open to political manipulation. In your article 'Curriculum as Policy....' you also spoke about policy archeology. My question to you is, what are your thoughts on the role of politics in contemporary curriculum development in Ireland?

18. Would you be able to recommend any publications on the curriculum development and dissemination process in Ireland?

<u>Questions which were posed to the INTO representative</u>

1. The Primary Language Curriculum is a very pivotal development which will impact significantly on Irish primary schools nationwide. How do you envision that this curriculum change will be received by teachers and schools? What is the initial reaction or feedback from teachers so far?

2. In your opinion, how effective has the consultation process been with teachers, on the ground, to date?

3. My questionnaire findings suggest that INTO were pivotal in disseminating information in relation to the integrated language curriculum. 86% of respondents were unaware of the consultation process which took place. The 14% who had some level of awareness cited the INTO or various summer courses for bringing this development to their attention. Can you talk me through why the dissemination of information surrounding the curriculum was a priority for your organisation and why it is of such importance?

4. What tools or strategies did you use to disseminate this information? In your experience what is the most effective way of disseminating critical information to teachers

5. Can you talk a little about the INTO's role throughout the development of the integrated language curriculum? At what stage did the INTO become aware of this development? What level of involvement did the INTO have throughout the development phase?

6. Can you provide an insight into the relationship between the INTO and the NCCA during the development and rolling out of this curriculum? How often did meetings take place and what form did they take?

7. I came across a number of very interesting articles on politics and power relations around schooling in Ireland by Ciaran Sugrue and Jim Gleeson. These questioned the whole concept of a partnership based on representation as it suggests that this tends to create a dialogue of sectoral interest rather than a more open-ended discussion about educational experiences. Based on your experience, do you feel that the dialogue

around the new curriculum has been hindered at any stage due to such power struggles?

8. Furthermore, when analysing the development of the revised 1999 curriculum, Sugrue suggested that key players in the INTO came to occupy gate-keeping roles in the NCCA committee structure. Would you see that as being the case in relation to the integrated language curriculum? Do you know how many representatives from the INTO are involved in the NCCA committee at present?

9. Fullan (1991) and Cuban (1993) indicate that dissemination of documentation is only a beginning and not the final phase of reform. How do you envision the implementation of the integrated language curriculum going forward?

10. Are you aware of how professional support will be provided to teachers and what form it will take?

11. Have you anticipated any potential barriers which may inhibit the implementation of this curriculum?

12. Are you aware of any delays to the timeline of the implementation of the integrated language curriculum?

13. Lastly, would you be able to suggest any articles, readings or books around curriculum dissemination which may be relevant to the study?

Questions which were posed to the PDST representative

1. Could you describe the role of the PDST in the development and dissemination of the language curriculum?

2. What are your thoughts on the consultation process which took place?

3. Could you talk me through the professional development model which was utilised? What was the rationale behind this approach? Were alternative, cascading models considered?

4. My principal spoke very highlight of the PDST facilitator who managed the information seminar which she attended in the Teacher Centre. Could you talk me through the training which the PDST received? (Who trained them?)

5. What were the greatest challenges experienced by the PDST facilitators?

6. What feedback did they receive from principals and deputy principals during these seminars?

7. The findings from the principal surveys suggest that there was a lot of confusion surrounding the clarification to Circular 61/2015. Could you describe this?

8. There are a number of NQTs, teachers on maternity leave, substitute teachers who did not receive any level of in-service to date. Could you clarify whether there will be an opportunity for these teachers to avail of this in-service at a later point?What form will it take?

9. How do you envision the professional development for the remainder of the language curriculum?

10. What are your thoughts on the strengths/limitations of the language curriculum?

11. How do you think teachers will adapt to the changes of the language curriculum?

Appendix G

<u>Questions which were posed to the Principal of Case Study School</u>

1. Could you talk me through the in-service you received in relation the language curriculum?
2. In general what are your thoughts on the language curriculum, having attended the inservice?
3. What did you gain from the inservice which was provided?
4. Can you identify the strengths or limitations of this CPD approach?
5. How confident do you feel in disseminating this information to the staff?
6. Can you talk me through the steps you will need to take in preparing for the whole staff CPD?
7. What supports are available to you during this process?
8. How do you feel our school will adapt to subsequent changes?
9. What supports do you feel our school might benefit from during this phase to ensure successful implementation of the curriculum?

Appendix H

<u>Survey to Teachers of Case Study School</u>

1.Can you comment on your awareness of developments in the language curriculum?

2.In terms of what you know about the forthcoming curriculum, what are your thoughts about it?

3.Do you know how it is similar to or different from the existing curriculum?

4.Are you aware of teacher/school involvement in the development of this curriculum?

5.Why do you think this curriculum change is happening?

6.Do you think it is necessary to change the curriculum. Why?

7.Can you comment on the strengths/weaknesses of the proposed curriculum?

8.As far as you are aware, are you concerned about implementing the curriculum.?Why?

1.

Appendix I

<u>Survey to External Teachers</u>

<u>Some Facts About You</u>

1. Gender Male/Female

2. What is your current teaching position? Principal/Mainstream teacher/ Learning Support Teacher/Resource Teacher

3. If mainstream teacher, are you teaching in a single grade or multigrade class?

4. How long have you been teaching? 0-5 years/ 5-10 years/10-15 years/Over 15 years

<u>Some Questions about the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Website</u>

5. Are you aware of the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment **(NCCA**) website? Yes/No

6. If yes, have you logged onto it? Yes/No

7. If yes, how often do you log onto it? Once a week/More than once a week/Once a month/More than once a month/Once a year/More than once a year

8. If yes, what have you used this resource for? (Space for response)

<u>Some Questions about the forthcoming Integrated Language Curriculum</u>

9. Can you comment on your awareness of developments in the language curriculum? (Space for response)

10. In terms of what you know about the forthcoming curriculum, what are your thoughts on it? (Space for response)

11. Do you know how it is similar to or different from the existing curriculum? (Space for response)

12. Are you aware of teacher/school involvement in the development of this curriculum? (Space for response)

13. Why do you this curriculum change is happening? (Space for response)

14. Do you think it is necessary to change the curriculum? Why/Why not? (Space for response)

15. Can you comment on the strengths/weaknesses of the proposed curriculum? (Space for response)

16. As far as you are aware, are you concerned about implementing the curriculum? Why/Why not? (Space for response)

Some Questions about the Consultation Process of the Integrated Language Curriculum

17. How effective do you think the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (**NCCA)** website is as a method for disseminating information in relation to the forthcoming integrated language curriculum? (Space for response)

18. Where you aware of the consultation process which took place to gather teacher's opinions of the forthcoming integrated language curriculum? (Space for response)

19. If yes, how did you become aware of this? (Space for response)

20. If yes, did you respond? Yes/No

Conclusion

21. Please feel free to comment on any of the issues which have been raised throughout this survey. (Space for Response)

Appendix J

<u>Survey to Teachers of Case Study School Prior to Inservice Day</u>

1. Could you provide an insight into your current level of awareness about developments in relation to the language curriculum?

2. What do you expect to gain from our inservice day?

3. What supports (if any) do you think our school might benefit from during the implementation of this curriculum?

4. Any additional comment?

Survey to Teachers of Case Study School Having Attended the Inservice Day
Q1. Based on our previous survey, I have compiled a list of what teachers hoped to gain from our inservice day. Please select the options which you feel are applicable. (You can select multiple options. You can also select None of the Above.)

I gained:

- ☐ a clear insight into the developments around the language curriculum
- ☐ an understanding of best practice in language teaching and learning in other countries
- ☐ an understanding of the various learning outcomes in the language curriculum
- ☐ an understanding as to how this primary language curriculum will benefit my students
- ☐ an opportunity to map out across this school how we will approach oral language development
- ☐ concrete guidance for teaching oral language in a DEIS school
- ☐ knowledge of how the curriculum will work in my classroom
- ☐ an understanding of the difference between what we are doing now and what we are supposed to be teaching in September
- ☐ practical examples of what we are supposed to be teaching
- ☐ access to methodologies or strategies to further develop children's oral language skills on top of what we already do
- ☐ useful activities that can be used during pair work or group work in my classroom
- ☐ an insight into the CONTENT of the language curriculum
- ☐ an insight into the STRUCTURE of the language curriculum
- ☐ an understanding of how these learning outcomes may be achieved
- ☐ an understanding of how to navigate the curriculum documents (online/hard copy)
- ☐ none of the above

Q.2. Please comment on any other observations you made during the inservice day:

Appendix K

Survey to Principals (outside of the Case Study School

Q1 What is your current principal position?

☒ Administrative Principal (1)

☒ Teaching Principal (2)

☒ Acting Principal (3)

☒ Deputy Principal (4)

Q2 Please describe the type of school you are currently working in. Eg: DEIS, Educate Together, Gaelscoil, Mainstream, Special.

Q3 Did you attend the Information Seminar for School Principals, facilitated by the PDST, in relation to the integrated language curriculum?

☒ Yes (1)

☒ No (2)

Answer If No Is Selected

Q4 Please note why you did not attend the seminar.

Answer If Yes Is Selected

Q4 The seminar objectives were:-to provide a broad description of the new curriculum and its content-to outline the expectations for implementation and the professional development supports which will be made available to schoolsDo you feel the seminar was successful in achieving these objectives?

☒ Yes (1)

☒ No (2)

Answer If No Is Selected

Q5 Why not?

Answer If Yes Is Selected

Q5 Please briefly describe the strengths of this seminar.

Q6 Can you indicate what you gained from this seminar?

Q7 Having attended the seminar, how confident do you feel about disseminating this information to the staff in your school?

☒ Very Confident (1)

☒ Fairly confident (2)

☒ Not confident (3)

☒ Not sure (4)

Q7 Please indicate your CPD needs in order to support you and the staff in your school in implementing the oral language strand of the language curriculum in September 2016.

Q8 Please feel free to provide any other comment in relation to the seminar or general developments surrounding the language curriculum.

Appendix L

<u>Questions which were addressed during the focus group</u>
1. Could you give me an insight as to where you first heard about the language curriculum?

2. How have you been kept abreast of any developments in relation to the curriculum?

3. Could you describe your level of involvement in the development/consultation process?

4. Having attended the in-service day, can you comment on how you felt about this form of CPD?

5. How confident do you feel about beginning to implement this curriculum in September 2016?

6. In general what are your thoughts on the curriculum?

Appendix M

Ethical Clearance

For Office Use Only Application Reference Number:	A15-042

Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee
MIREC-4: MIREC Chair Decision Form

1	Title of Research Project

Teachers' perceptions and experiences of the dissemination of the integrated language curriculum: a case study of a Band Deis 1 Primary School

2	Applicant	
Name		Caroline McGarry
Department / Centre / Other		Faculty of Education
Position		Postgraduate Student (Structured PhD in Education)

3	Decision of MIREC Chair	
	Ethical clearance through MIREC is required	
	Ethical clearance through MIREC is not required and therefore the researcher need take no further action in this regard	
✔	Ethical clearance is required and granted. Referral to MIREC is not necessary	
	Ethical clearance is required but the full MIREC process is not. Ethical clearance is therefore granted if required for external funding applications and the researcher need take no further action in this regard.	
	Insufficient information provided by applicant / Amendments required	

4	Reason(s) for Decision

The application satisfies MIREC requirements.

5	Declaration	
Name (Print)		**Áine Lawlor**
		MIREC Chair
Signature		*Áine Lawlor*
		MIREC Chair
Date		**21st October 2015**

Appendix N

Extract from INTouch Magazine Issue No. 158, in January/February 2016.

New language curriculum

The new language curriculum for junior infants to second class is now on line at http://curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Language. An information video is also available. The hard copy version will be available in the coming months.

The NCCA developed the language curriculum in response to teachers' views of the current curriculum in English and Irish. It reflects the most up to date research on young children's language learning, the philosophy of Aistear, the early years' curriculum framework and the literacy and numeracy strategy.

The INTO demanded a phased introduction of the revised language curriculum including awareness raising and whole school professional development.

Principal teachers have been invited to an information seminar on the revised language curriculum and a second seminar is planned for spring.

Whole school professional development facilitated by school closures is planned for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

See Circular 61/2015 for more details.

Appendix O

The following is an extract from the Aistear framework:

Purpose of Aistear

Aistear is the **curriculum framework** for children from **birth to six years** in Ireland. It provides information for adults to help them plan for and provide enjoyable and challenging learning experiences, so that all children can grow and develop as **competent and confident learners** within loving relationships with others. *Aistear* describes the types of learning (dispositions, values and attitudes, skills, knowledge, and understanding) that are important for children in their early years, and offers ideas and suggestions as to how this learning might be nurtured. The Framework also provides guidelines on supporting children's learning through partnerships with parents, interactions, play, and assessment.

In supporting children's early learning and development *Aistear*

- identifies what and how children should learn, and describes the types of experiences that can support this

- makes connections in children's learning throughout the early childhood years and as they move from one setting to another

- supports parents as their children's primary educators during early childhood, and promotes effective partnerships between parents and practitioners

- complements and extends existing curriculums and materials

- informs practice across a range of settings, disciplines and professions, and encourages interdisciplinary work.

Appendix P

PDST Materials Provided to Principals to Support School Closure

Suggested In-School Exploration Timetable
Full Day School Closure

PDST
Professional Development | An tSeirbhís um Fhorbairt
Service for Teachers | Ghairmiúil do Mhúinteoirí

Option A (3 x 1 ½ hour sessions)

Time	Exploration Activity	Goal
1 Hour 30 Minutes	Webinar	That participants will be introduced to the Primary Language Curriculum and will become familiar with the content, rationale and aims of the Primary Language Curriculum before exploring the documents.
30 Minutes	Exploring the Documents	That participants will become familiar with the structure of the Primary Language Curriculum Documents and to facilitate teachers in starting to engage with this curriculum.
40 Minutes	Practice Guide Activity	That participants will be able to explore a range of practice guides, evaluate them and provide feedback to their colleagues.
20 Minutes	Scavenger Hunt	That teachers will be able to familiarize themselves with the location of various aspects of the online version of the curriculum, in an engaging way.
30 Minutes	Four Components of the Primary Language Curriculum.	That participants will be able to locate and review each of the four components of the Primary Language Curriculum, both online and in hard copy.
15 Minutes	Scavenger Hunt	That teachers will be able to familiarize themselves with the location of various aspects of the online version of the curriculum, in an engaging way.
30 Minutes	Book Walk	That participants will be enabled to identify aspects of the new curriculum that they already have in their current practice and be familiar with the main facets of the Primary Language Curriculum books.

PDST
Professional Development | An tSeirbhís um Fhorbairt
Service for Teachers | Ghairmiúil do Mhúinteoirí

Support for the Primary Language Curriculum
Tacaíocht le haghaidh Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile

Exploration Task: Book Walk Script

Suggested Time: 30 minutes

Goal: At the end of this activity, the staff will:

1. Be able to identify aspects of the new curriculum that they already have in their current practice
2. Be familiar with the main facets of the Primary Language Curriculum books

A member/members of staff will be asked to act as reporter and take notes of the feedback at the end of the session.

The list of these pages would be written on a flip-chart or board.

Introduction..	**Page 6/7.**
Rationale...	**Page 20**
Aims..	**Pages 26/27**
Strands and elements............................	**Page 30**
Planning, teaching and assessing...........	**Page 38**
Children's second language learning...	**Page 41.**
Section 6.1...	**Pages 51-57.**
Section 6.2...	**Pages 63,67,71,77,85,93.**

[The headings represent the chapters of the book].

The Principal will lead the staff through the book walk by naming the pages for the staff to attend to.

Open your books on **pages 6 and 7.** This is the **INTRODUCTION** section. This outlines the new curriculum and explains the language contexts for English medium and Irish medium schools. Take a few minutes to read these and put a tab on these pages. Now open **page 20.** This page explains the importance of integration of language and the **transfer of skills** from the first language to the second. Put a tab on it and read through it for a couple of minutes. On **pages 26 and 27,** the **three aims** of the new curriculum are set out under their respective headings. Read through them for a few minutes and tab these pages. We will move next to the chapter called **STRANDS AND ELEMENTS.** Open **page 30** and put a tab on it. There are three elements. An element describes essential language learning. The graphic on the page shows how the elements are interdependent. The next chapter in the book is called **PLANNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSING FOR LEARNING.** Open **page 38** and tab this page. The 4 components of the curriculum are pictured on this page with descriptions beside each. This chapter helps teachers to support children's language learning through the process of planning, teaching and assessing in both Irish and English. You will need to take a while to read through this. Place a tab on **page 41** and read it. These are the main points from the NCCA Research Report written by Pádraig Ó Duibhir and Jim Cummins.

Section 6 of the book details the Learning Outcomes, Progression Milestones and Progression Steps. The Learning Outcomes are on **Pages 51-53** for English and **55-57** for Irish. Tab these pages, they will be used very often. Take some time to read through them. The next part of this section describes the **PROGRESSION CONTINUA** which show progression in the three language contexts. The fold out pages are: **63, 67, 71, 77, 85, 93.** Tab these fold-out pages for English and Irish, you will refer to them very often. Take some time to glance through them for familiarisation.

Note to Principal: Depending on the size of the staff, discussion can take place in a whole group or in small groups. A record can be taken by the person assigned.

Online Scavenger Hunt

Suggested Self Exploration Guide for Teachers

PDST
Professional Development | An tSeirbhís um Fhorbairt
Service for Teachers | Ghairmiúil do Mhúinteoirí

Suggested Time: 20 minutes

Goal: To allow teachers to familiarise themselves with the location of various aspects of the online version of the Curriculum, in an engaging way.

Go to the Primary Language Curriculum Online.

www.curriculumonline.ie

What colour uniforms are the children wearing on the still from the Introduction Video (home page)?	
What are the titles of the 4 components on the blue graphic?	
Click the "Learning Outcomes" component. Use the filter for English- Stage 1- Oral Language ("Apply Filter"); what is Learning Outcome number 4?	
Click Stage 2- Irish-Reading ("Apply Filter"); Cad é Toradh Foghlama uimhir a 10?	
Click on "Language:Home" at the top left of the page. This brings you back to the components. Click on "Progression Continua". Use the filter for English- Stage 2- Reading ("Apply Filter"). What is the last sentence of "Milestone f"?	
Click on "Language:Home" at the top left of the page. This brings you back to the components. Click on "Support Material for Teachers". Scroll down, click on Reading, and find "Promoting Children's Comprehension". Click the green link, and find the names of the authors of this Practice Guide on the bottom of p. 6.	
Click on "Language:Home" at the top left of the page. This brings you back to the components. Click on "Examples of children's language". Use the filter for English- Writing ("Apply Filter"). Click on Milestone e, example 1. What day of the week does it refer to?	
Click on "Language:Home" at the top left of the page. Now click on "Leagan Gaeilge" at the top right-hand corner of the page. Look at the components graphic. Cad é an Gaeilge ar "Progression continua"?	
Cliceáil ar "Torthaí Foghlama". Úsáid an scagaire do Céim 1 agus 2-Gaeilge- teanga ó bhéal. Cad is brí leis an íocón seo?	
Cliceáil ar "Teanga: Baile" thuas ag barr an leathanaigh ar chlé. Cén leabhar eile ón NCCA atá luaite ar an leathanach seo?	

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Support for the Primary Language Curriculum
Tacaíocht le haghaidh Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile

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