



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

General Teaching Council for NI

termtalk

The Official Newsletter of the General Teaching Council FEBRUARY 05

termtalk



Welcome to our second edition of **termtalk**, which we are distributing to everyone on the Council's Register of Teachers.

Since our last edition, we have launched our Code

of Values and Professional Practice, completed two major reviews for the Department of Education and, as part of the development of Northern Ireland's first Register of Teachers, issued teacher record forms to some 25,000 teachers. Over 13,500 amended records were returned and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those teachers who helped make this process a success.

The Council is conscious of the challenges currently facing the profession as well as the accelerating pace of change, and is concerned that society, whilst acknowledging the role of teachers, is not necessarily offering appropriate levels of support. In light of this reality, we have issued a call to all the education service and to all political parties for a **Charter for Education**. The Charter document is available on our website at www.gtcni.org.uk and a shorter version is printed in the centre pages of this edition of **termtalk**.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to reassure you that the Council is making significant progress with its core task of promoting the teaching profession and informing the general public about the vitally important work undertaken by teachers.

Eddie McArdle

Eddie McArdle
Registrar, GTCNI

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First Code of Values and Professional Practice Launched



Pictured at the launch of GTCNI's Code of Values and Professional Practice for NI teachers are (l-r) GTCNI Registrar, Eddie McArdle; Education Minister, Barry Gardiner MP; and Dr Bob Rodgers, former GTCNI Chairperson.

The first Code of Values and Professional Practice for Northern Ireland teachers was launched by GTCNI in October 2004 at a special ceremony attended by the Minister for Education, Mr Barry Gardiner MP, GTCNI members, and other key representatives of the education service.

The Code makes explicit, for the first time, the teaching profession's core values and commitments and was shaped by input from Northern Ireland's teachers.

Speaking at the launch, the Minister endorsed the Code and commented on the significance of its completion.

"The launch of the Code marks an important landmark for GTCNI and the teaching profession. I believe the Code produced by GTCNI is a powerful affirmation by the profession of its commitment to the young people of Northern Ireland."

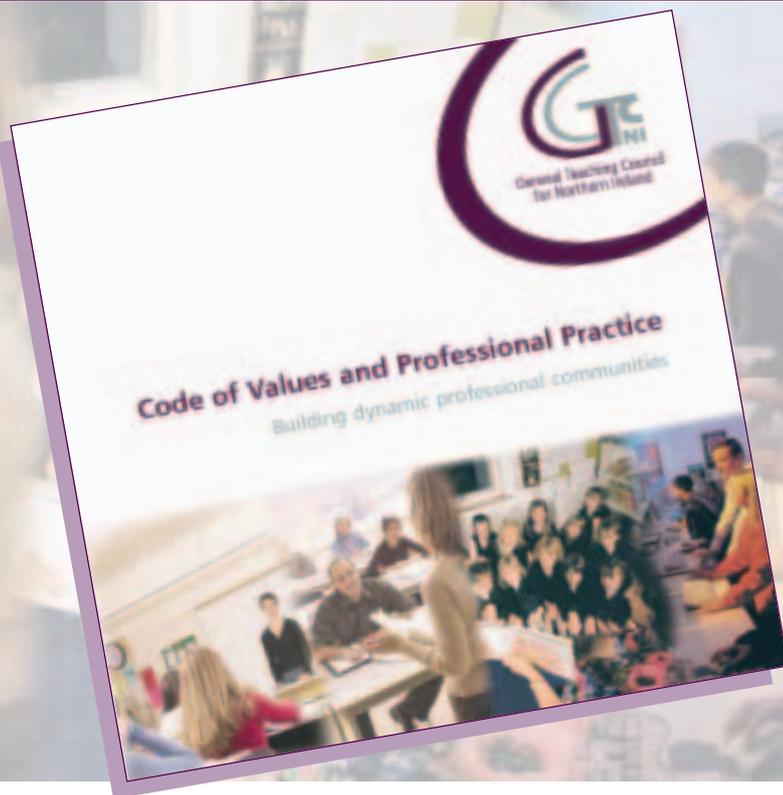
A copy of the Code of Values and Professional Practice has been distributed directly to every teacher in Northern Ireland. Overleaf, Eddie McArdle examines what the Code means for the profession.



Also at the launch were (l-r) Alastair Orr, Principal of Edward's PS in Castleterragh and GTCNI member with Yvonne McCool and Barney Ball of GTCNI.

GTCNI - a new voice for teachers

GTCNI Registrar, Eddie McArdle, reflects on the potential impact of the Code.



The Minister certainly was not overstating things when he talked of the launch of the Code of Values and Professional Practice as a landmark occasion for the Council for, in effect, the Code lies at the heart of our claim to professional standing.

It is important that we realise that at the core of the concept of professionalism, as understood by GTCNI, is the notion of values and service.

In some senses, the very concept of professionalism has become “contested ground” and indeed some argue that professionalism is a shifting, rather than a concrete, phenomenon. Most teachers simply haven’t been influenced by society’s perceptions in respect of the status of teachers and teaching. Teachers’ definition or sense of professionalism is not dependent upon sociological, political or societal perspectives. Rather, it resides within an understanding of their role as teachers and their commitment to the purposes of education.

The reality is that teachers are primarily sustained in their professionalism by a sense of idealism. In today’s world, to talk of idealism may bring a wry smile to the face of one’s audience but this simply may reflect the rise of “individualism” in the modern world

and perhaps an increasingly cynical outlook, an outlook in many ways fostered by intemperate and ill-informed comments from the popular media and politicians.

Arnold Tomkins, writing over 100 years ago, reminds us that:

“Professional spirit, in general, is the feeling of urgency produced by an ideal, in order that the ideal might realise itself.”

That notion of idealism resonates with the profession as a whole. In essence, it is what allows teachers to pursue excellence in the face of adversity, such as inadequate accommodation, resource shortages, or a dearth of central support services.

Our Code reminds us that a commitment to serve lies at the heart of professional behaviour. The notion of service is underpinned by the values that we set out in our Code. In seeking to serve we need to demonstrate a commitment to individuals whatever their needs. In the pursuit of equality we need to demonstrate a recognition and celebration of diversity, a notion that encompasses respect, tolerance and fairness. It is only if we are honest in our acceptance of these values that we can lay claim to the status of committed professionals.

This is not to say that we as teachers are “other worldly” creatures, nor is it to imply that the achievement of these lofty ideals is necessarily easy. The Council recognises that the success of the profession in living up to the Code will depend not just on the commitment of individuals but on many factors beyond the control of teachers.

Idealism prospers best in communities which are predicated upon and sustained by a common set of values and an agreed purpose. The Council would hope that its Code provides a foundation upon which professional communities may be built, creating as it does, opportunities for dialogue and reflection about the very nature of our task as teachers.

It is important to note that just as we teachers have committed ourselves to the core values of our Code, we equally expect that in our dealings with others, including parents and policy makers, these same values will be exemplified. To this end, the Council has called for the development of a Charter for Education, which makes explicit the responsibilities of all the partners in the education process, and confirms the commitment to help renew Northern Ireland’s education system.

In the Spotlight!

Dr Bob Rodgers – An Appreciation by the Registrar

Dr Bob Rodgers, GTCNI's first Chairperson, established as his initial priorities for the Council, the development of a Code of Values and Professional Practice, the creation of the first Register of Teachers, and the initiation of a programme of outreach activities embracing the Council's partners.

By November 2004, all of the above had been achieved and it was at this juncture that Dr Rodgers tendered his resignation in order that he might address other personal priorities.

As a long-term advocate for a General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland, Bob was particularly proud to be chosen as its first Chairperson. As Chair, he created and sustained within the Council a culture and ethos characterised by candid debate and respect for diversity. Under his guidance the Council established close links with sister GTCs as well as all the partners within the Northern Ireland education service.

Bob's career in education was exceptional and embraced all aspects of professional life including principalship, teacher education, school governance, chairmanship of working parties and finally, Chair of GTCNI.

It is not my intention to offer a detailed chronology of his career because, in my mind, I consider that he was always first and foremost a great teacher. Personally, I can think of no finer accolade to bestow upon him nor one that he would be happier to receive.

Paulo Freire tells us that those who teach constantly search. They search for new meanings, new understandings, new relationships, and new ways to affirm. As well as searching, great teachers are those who reflect on the purposes of education, are committed to excellence, promote dialogue, and care passionately about the welfare of others. Bob Rodgers, in addition to recognising and celebrating these attributes in the profession as a whole, personally exemplified them, and all of us who engaged with Bob in either a professional or personal capacity were enriched by that experience.

We all wish Bob well in his retirement and thank him for his leadership and vision on our behalf.



Dr Bob Rodgers who retired as GTCNI Chairperson in November 2004.



Newly elected GTCNI Chairperson, Eddie Ferguson, presenting Dr Bob Rodgers with a commemorative bowl on behalf of the Council.

The Registration Team



GTCNI Registration Team

(Back l-r): Helen Jackson, Registration Team Leader; Claire Harris, Registration Officer; (front l-r): Janet Bell, Registration Officer; and Barney Ball, Policy and Registration Manager.

Registration Update

Since the last edition of **termtalk**, the Registration Team has carried out a major data cleansing exercise. All registered teachers were sent a print-out containing some of the information held on their teacher record. They were requested to amend and update, as required, and return these changes to the Registration Team.

Over 13,500 amended records were returned and the team would like to thank all of you who have responded. In order for the Council to carry out its role as the independent, self-regulatory body for the profession in Northern Ireland, it is vitally important that the Register of Teachers contains as

accurate data as possible. The Register is a "living entity" and will require continuous updating. This can only be done with your cooperation.

As well as keeping the register of teachers up-to-date, we want it to be as complete as possible. This will help ensure that only registered teachers are employed to teach in Northern Ireland's schools.

If you are a teacher working in a grant-aided school and have not received a mailing from us please contact the Registration Team on 028 9033 3390 or e-mail info@gtcni.org.uk

Registration Fee

The Council intends to collect the first fee in April 2005. For most teachers the fee will be collected by a deduction at source, from salary. In keeping with the arrangements in place for teachers in England and Wales, the Department of Education has undertaken to make an additional allowance payment to teachers' salaries in respect of the registration fee. Full details of how the registration fee will be collected, including the amount of the fee, and how the Department's fee allowance will be paid, will be communicated to all teachers prior to the fee being deducted.

Website

The Registration Team has now developed a series of web pages covering registration issues. These can be viewed on the GTCNI website www.gtcni.org.uk along with downloadable versions of application forms and guidance notes, and a section on Frequently Asked Questions.



Ontario Visit

A delegation from the Ontario College of Teachers in Canada paid a flying visit to GTCNI headquarters recently. They were on a fact-finding mission to all of the UK General Teaching Councils to exchange ideas in relation to the Code of Values and Professional Practice.

Pictured with GTCNI Registrar, Eddie McArdle (back), are (l-r): Brian McGowan, Deputy Registrar; Doug Wilson, Registrar and CEO; and Margaret Aubé, Professional Affairs Co-ordinator of the Ontario College of Teachers.

calling for a Charter for Education

A significant part of this edition of *termtalk* has been given over to a call for a Charter for Education. Why has this been done? In short, the Council believes that following the publication of the Code of Values and Professional Practice, which makes explicit the profession's commitments, all the other parties involved in the education of our young people should, in return, make their commitments clear and acknowledge their respective responsibilities. This is particularly appropriate at a time when the broader education service is engaged in the preparation of a three year forward plan. Once commitments and responsibilities are clarified then all parties can move forward together to help build a world-class education system for Northern Ireland.

Introduction

Teaching: Society's Expectations

It has been said that the process of schooling and education is effectively an exercise in trust. Parents entrust their most precious gifts, their children, to schools and teachers in the expectation that we will cherish them, recognise their intrinsic worth and develop their talents. In doing so we, as professionals, seek to awaken in children a sense of what they might become, a realisation of their uniqueness and potential.

Parents and society rightly expect that in seeking to further develop those young people entrusted to our care, that we demonstrate a commitment to their well-being and that our endeavours are characterised by trust, respect, integrity, honesty and fairness.

Teachers and Professional Commitment

Teachers as a group have always understood the professional nature of their task and, just as importantly, the nature of the trust that underpins their work. The publication by the General Teaching Council of a Code of Values and Professional Practice is a demonstration by the

profession of its recognition of the responsibilities attendant to the processes of education and, more importantly, the readiness of the profession to assume those responsibilities. However, the processes of education are not solely the preserve of the school or teacher. Indeed, the ability of the profession to deliver, so to speak, on those responsibilities that it readily assumes is dependent, in no small way, on a variety of factors beyond the control of individual teachers.

Mutual Respect

In addition, society, policymakers and administrators must exemplify their trust in, and respect for, the profession itself. The realisation of the lofty purposes outlined above will itself require that the profession feels both valued and respected. The centrality and significance of this reality should not be underestimated. To foster in young people a sense of their own worth, it follows that teachers must also have a sense that their working lives are characterised by an ambience and culture, that not only suggests but clearly exemplifies respect, and perhaps more importantly, trust.

Reciprocal Trust

The notion of trust is complex; the process is not one-way. Effectively, trust operates as a "social glue" that binds individuals and groups together for the purposes of action. There is, of course, a tension between the notion of trust and what some refer to as "discipline by audit". It is interesting to note that, within Northern Ireland, we have witnessed over the last decade or so an erosion of what might be seen as the audit/rules driven culture which underpinned the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, with its market forces ideology and commitment to prescription of curriculum and league tables, amongst other things.

It was at this period that the notion of contractual obligations gained a pre-eminence with all of the implications that this had for the notion of professional service as a legal obligation, rather than a moral construct, predicated upon a commitment to the well-being of those pupils placed in the care of teachers and schools.

Contractual Obligation or Professional Responsibility

A distinction can be drawn between "social contracts" characterised by rules and prescription and sustained by promise of gain or threat, and "social covenants" seen to be characterised by loyalty, obligation, duty, sense of

calling for a Charter for Education

identity and reciprocity. The Council and the profession have, in the Code, identified underpinning values and obligations. This affirms and makes explicit the professional nature of teachers' work and the legitimate exercising of professional judgement. Despite all of the excesses of political interference in the early '90s teachers, and the profession as a whole, have remained committed and loyal to the notion of service.

What is thus far missing from the equation is the reciprocity mentioned above. Whilst it may be inherent in the work of individuals or bodies, there is a need for a more formal approach and a clear recognition by society and government that they too have responsibilities, if we are to create a new and meaningful social covenant, the purpose of which is to ensure that we do indeed meet the needs of our young people and society at large.

It has become something of a cliché to speak of education as being on the cusp of significant change. Indeed, we have come to see change as less of an event and more of a constant. However, the reality is that Northern Ireland is faced with a significant period of change, not least as it adapts to the impact of globalisation, the decline in manufacturing, and renewed pressures on our agri-economy resulting from EU enlargement and policy changes, not to mention the workforce mobility arising from such changes.

Allied to these broader influences are those specific to Northern Ireland arising from social or economic factors or from policy decisions. The multiplicity of factors impacting on education are too numerous to list, however, there are some that are both obvious and significant:

- **the demographic downturn;**
- **the new SENDA legislation;**
- **the new Curriculum;**
- **the Costello Report;**
- **the notion of Specialist Schools; and**
- **the impact of social change on schooling.**

It is not suggested that education should not take cognisance of emerging trends and new realities. What must be clarified, however, is what teachers, as professionals, can legitimately be expected to contribute. The reality is that over the last 20 years or so, teachers have suffered from "role overload". Society's expectations that issues such as behaviour, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and the development of a civic consciousness and social capital can, and indeed should, be primarily addressed by schools and teachers is unrealistic. What is realistic is that teachers should play a significant part in wider, strategic attempts to address such issues.

However, if we are to sustain the idealism of teachers, if we are to empower our teachers in order that they might embrace challenge and manage change, then policy makers and society need to recognise and address their responsibilities.

The Essential Passion

It has been said that to prosper in the midst of change requires that we both enjoy challenge and display courage and passion. Working in the uncertain climate found in schools today, and against a backdrop characterised by ever-changing social mores, certainly requires that teachers have a sense of purpose and a passion for their role.

However, what brings passion is a sense of mission allied to a belief that one's endeavours are both valuable and valued.



calling for a Charter for Education

It takes more than fine words from politicians and others to sustain such a belief. What is required is a demonstrable commitment to the profession.

The Council believes that a tangible manifestation of such a commitment would be the development of a Charter for Education which seeks to define our mission, articulate our responsibilities, and outline our commitment to partnership in the service of our young people.

A Charter for Education

Purposes:

- to publicly reiterate our commitment to developing a world-class education service dedicated to developing the unique gifts of all and empowering individuals to achieve their full potential;
- to articulate clearly the legitimate expectations of each of the partners within the educative process, i.e. Northern Ireland's young people, those within the professional domain, including teachers, policymakers, administrators and society at large, including parents, employers and other support agencies; and
- to outline a commitment to developing appropriate planning, funding and development processes to ensure that all those party to the process are appropriately empowered and tasked.

Elements of a Charter:

a statement reflecting:

- the core purposes of education;
- the shared responsibilities of the education service, society and families to inculcate in young people the innate and life-related value of schooling; and
- the need to develop a culture of positive partnership between, on one level, home and school and, in a wider context, between the diverse agencies whose remit impacts on the well-being and life chances of young people.

a commitment to evidence-based policy making, reflecting on:

- the Northern Ireland context;
- complementarity with other policies/initiatives;
- logistical/resource implications of implementation; and
- change management requirements.

a commitment to a policy of "costed" programmes predicated upon:

- a detailed costing of initiatives at a regional and school level;
- a commitment to ensure that initiatives, where shown to be effective, are subsumed into the mainstream as fully funded programmes;
- a commitment to afford schools an extended financial planning window of at least three years; and
- a limitation on the use of ring-fenced initiative funding at board level.

in keeping with the philosophy of lifelong learning, a commitment to the development and funding of Continuing Professional Development activities which are:

- seen as a professional entitlement;
- adequately resourced;
- structured/developmental;
- reflective of both systemic needs and needs specific to and identified by individuals and schools; and
- delivered by a variety of quality assured providers.

Conclusion

At the heart of the call for a Charter for Education is the desire to ensure that we provide the best possible educative experience and learning opportunities for Northern Ireland's young people.

In a world of constant change and with an economy facing new pressures, education offers not just a route to personal fulfilment, it also enhances our chances of gaining and sustaining a sense of economic well-being and social cohesion. In today's world, it is increasingly true to say that education is wealth.

The teaching profession has a core role to play in ensuring that Northern Ireland prospers in this new world but, as is obvious, it cannot discharge this responsibility alone. The purpose of a Charter is to bring a synergy of commitment and effort, clarity of purpose and an open acceptance of responsibilities.

The call for a Charter has been sent to all political parties, all employers, the Department of Education, the Minister for Education – Mr Barry Gardiner MP, and the diverse agencies working to support the profession in its work. The Council will continue to engage in dialogue with the education service in our efforts to see a Charter implemented.

GTCNI Reviews

The reviews of Teacher Competences and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are now nearing completion. The advisory groups have concluded their work and the Council is now in the process of compiling its final report for the Department of Education.

The advisory groups reflected the broad education community but, in keeping with the Council's commitment to giving the profession a greater role in decision-making on professional matters, practitioners and Council members were in the majority on each of the groups.

Inputs were received from all of the local partners involved in teacher

education, and a number of academic reports and GTCNI position papers were reviewed. In addition, deliberations were informed by the results of surveys undertaken by the Council and by inputs from the Scottish and Welsh GTCs.

Whilst the recommendations of the report are not finalised, broad themes have emerged with proposals including the reduction of the current competence statements from 92 to 27, the assimilation of the Council's Code of Values and Professional Practice into the proposed new competences, and the proposal that consideration be given to a guaranteed induction placement for beginning teachers.

In respect of CPD, a new Professional Development Framework with clear professional milestones is proposed, along with the introduction of an individualised programme of CPD and the development of a "virtual college" approach. The report emphasises that teachers must be given appropriate time and resources to engage in CPD activity.

The establishment of a Professional Development Framework will require consultation, time and co-ordination. The Council is committed to working with all the education service partners to ensure that professional learning and development is placed at the heart of professional practice and renewal.

Details of the report will feature on the Council's website www.gtcni.org.uk

GTCNI New Council Chair and Council Members



Mr Eddie Ferguson



Mr Malachy Doherty



Dr Leslie Caul



Dr T. Wilfred Mulryne

GTCNI wishes to welcome Mr Eddie Ferguson as the newly elected Council Chairperson. Replacing Dr Bob Rodgers, Mr Ferguson's recent employment history includes: National President (Northern Ireland, England and Wales) for the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, and Field Officer for Induction and EPD of Newly Qualified Teachers for the North Eastern Education and Library Board.

Also newly nominated are Council members Mr Malachy Doherty, Principal of Londonderry Model PS, who replaces Dr Desmond Hamilton as representative of the National Association of Head Teachers, (NAHT); Dr Leslie Caul, Director of Educational Studies/Head of Research at Stranmillis College, who replaces Professor John Gardner as the representative of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers, (UCET); and Dr T. Wilfred Mulryne, Principal of Methodist College, Belfast who replaces Dr Bob Rodgers as the representative of the Governing Bodies Association, (GBA).

The Council wishes to thank the outgoing Council members for all their hard work and dedication over the past number of years.

New Appointment



Deirdre Lavery – Finance and Administration Officer

Deirdre Lavery has recently been appointed as Finance and Administration Officer at GTCNI. She will support the Corporate Services Manager in the operation of such areas as finance, personnel, procurement, IT and facilities management.

Deirdre previously worked as Finance and Administration Manager with Play Resource Centre for seven years and as Business Support Officer with the Arts Council for Northern Ireland.

GTCNI Supports a New Online Resource for Teachers



Professor Tim Brighouse

In a world increasingly enamoured of information technology, Northern Ireland enjoys the benefits deriving from C2K's centrally managed IT

service. Through "Learning Northern Ireland" schools have access not just to libraries of online materials but to enhanced support and connectivity.

In the course of its review of CPD, to be published shortly, GTCNI examined a number of online facilities for teaching including TeachandLearn.net. Impressed by what we found we approached Professor Tim Brighouse, Chairperson of the Advisory Board for TeachandLearn.net to tell us more.

"Northern Ireland can be proud of its schools' ICT infrastructure – it's a major commitment to its teachers, and the envy

of many. But I know that teachers want to learn, and extend their expertise and knowledge more. When it comes to subject knowledge, there's a danger that you've got a degree, and you've not kept it alive and fresh. TeachandLearn.net is something that offers to subject teachers and phase teachers, a website, which is designed brilliantly for their interest and use.

The web lends itself to making the presentation and access of professional development materials much easier than it would be by any other means. I think TeachandLearn.net has tremendous potential, and because it comes from the stable of the OU and the BBC, there will be a critical mass of people that use it. One of its features is that it really is going to be interactive, so teachers will be able to contribute and will be able to get a reaction. In the end, it will be their materials, shared, that will enrich and extend the site whether it's subject, whether it's phase, whether it's whole school issues."

Launched just one year ago, TeachandLearn.net contains hundreds of units covering most curriculum areas - with new ones added regularly - each aimed at meeting the requirements of the school community. Materials include audio and video clips, interactive games and quizzes, stunning images, links to relevant websites and text files containing additional study materials. Each has been sourced, compiled and written by experts in that particular area. TeachandLearn.net is an online resource, and teachers can access the materials whenever required. It will help in the development of professional knowledge and skills, including the use of ICT resources in the classroom.

Sample materials can be previewed on www.teachandlearn.net To find out more about how to access support from TeachandLearn.net please contact GTCNI at info@gtcni.org.uk

"Keepers of Tomorrow" – DVD distributed to all schools



The Council's aim is to communicate openly and directly with all teachers. As part of this, we have now distributed to every school in Northern Ireland a copy of our DVD – "Keepers of Tomorrow". We produced this DVD to celebrate and illustrate work undertaken by professional teachers today, and the vital contribution that they make to shaping the lives and future of our young people and society as a whole.

The DVD presents the experiences of teachers from

a wide-range of schools and it has a number of potential uses:

- as a backdrop to Open Day displays or Parent Nights;
- as a catalyst for discussions on issues such as school ethos, school development planning and staff development policy; and
- as an introduction to GTCNI and its newly published Code of Values and Professional Practice.

Code of Values and Professional Practice

You should have received, direct to your home, your personal copy of the Code of Values and Professional Practice, which sets out for the first time the values and commitment underpinning the teaching profession.

The publication and dissemination of this Code is a significant step in the Council's aim to promote the fullest understanding and recognition of the role that teachers play.

Advance Diary Notice

Education Northern Ireland Conference and Exhibition

The King's Hall 13-14 October 2005

PROFESSIONAL IS

Gerry Devlin, Senior Education Officer with GTCNI, examines the professional issues currently affecting Northern Ireland's teachers.

The Primary Curriculum: a Foundation for Lifelong Learning

The Minister for Education – Barry Gardiner MP, has now accepted CCEA's advice on the proposed changes to the statutory curriculum and assessment arrangements. As all teachers know, since April 2000, CCEA has been carrying out extensive consultations with teachers, schools and the wider educational community about proposals that will now impact on teaching and learning in primary schools.

It is ironic that the changes mark a return to greater flexibility, enabling primary teachers to use their professional expertise to develop curricula appropriate for their pupils. Those of us of a certain "vintage" will recall the halcyon days when teachers were trusted sufficiently to develop their own programmes within the very broad "Primary School Guidelines". The new arrangements could be said to be a belated recognition that the profession was correct in protesting that the prescribed curriculum, which emerged from the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, seriously diminished professional autonomy.

The changes currently proposed are predicated upon the notion of lifelong learning and in some quarters this is presented as an idea whose time has come! The reality is that primary teachers have always recognised that they establish the foundation for



lifelong learning. While teachers have always recognised the centrality of lifelong learning, in today's world the concept is ever more vital.

Accelerating change is a feature of modern living and children are educated for a world characterised by volatility and globalisation. Survival in that world will require flexibility, creativity and the capacity to adapt to change. Thus the new primary curriculum puts explicit emphasis on the development of the skills and capabilities necessary for lifelong learning. However, vitally, it also gives back to teachers the opportunity to cater for the holistic development of the child.

Unfortunately, the redesigning of curricula will not, in itself, bring about change. In short, change has to be planned for, managed and facilitated. In order to fulfil our professional responsibilities, teachers also need the opportunity for career-long Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Teachers will need quality support and time to develop professional expertise and creativity.

The new curriculum will go some way to giving teachers back a sense of ownership of curriculum development and classroom practice. However, if it is to achieve its aim of promoting

lifelong learning for pupils, then teachers will also need to be given the opportunity to be lifelong learners. The professional development of individual teachers will have to be addressed and not just the systemic needs that have traditionally been the priority to the detriment of individual professional development in the past.

This will only occur within a coherent framework of CPD which offers teachers a series of developmental milestones that recognise professional expertise.

GTCNI's recent call for a Charter for Education also acknowledges that teachers have an entitlement to career-long CPD. The success of the new primary curriculum will ultimately depend on the professionalism of primary teachers.

Tomlinson: Radical Blueprint for the Future?

The recent publication of the Tomlinson report will give teachers in the secondary sector much food for thought.

In addition to calling for a diploma to eventually replace GCSEs, A-levels and vocational qualifications, the wide-ranging report also attempts to deal with issues such as:

- the comparatively high number of children who do not continue at school beyond the age of 16 (the UK has the highest dropout rate at age 16 among 28 of the worlds' most developed nations);
- the reality that many 13 to 14 year olds (particularly boys) appear to be completely disengaged from education;
- the suggestion that the very brightest pupils are not sufficiently challenged;

Teacher Support Northern Ireland

- the continuing concerns regarding the burden of GCSE coursework;
- the complaints from employers that many students lack functional arithmetic and communication skills; and
- the continuing low status of vocational education compared to academic courses.

The strength of Tomlinson's proposals is that they aim to establish a coherent curriculum and assessment regime to replace the current labyrinthine arrangements, that have evolved in an ad hoc fashion since the mid 1980s, which parents and employers struggle to understand and teachers and schools struggle to manage.

Tomlinson is also clear that he is seeking evolution not revolution and that a ten-year timeframe will be necessary for his proposals to come to fruition. He also recognises that the new arrangements will have to be fully piloted and resourced. His comments, regarding the need for adequate resources and the need to manage change sensitively, resonate with the Council's own thinking regarding a Charter for Education.

The Tomlinson proposals will have major implications for schools in Northern Ireland coming, as they do, on top of the radical curriculum changes from CCEA, not to mention the post-Costello landscape which we are all trying to understand.

Policy-makers in Northern Ireland will have to manage these significant developments very carefully to ensure schools and teachers don't become overwhelmed with change pressures.

You can find more on Tomlinson by logging onto www.14-19reform.gov.uk

For Costello you will have to wait until the advisory group reports sometime in 2005.

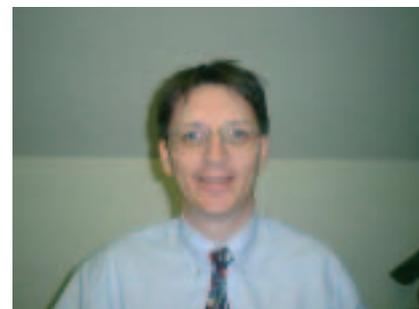
Teacher Support Northern Ireland (TSNI) is an organisation that values teachers and lecturers and recognises the essential role they play in society. It was established in January 2003 and received charitable status in October of the same year. TSNI is affiliated to Teacher Support Network (TSN), the charity dedicated to providing practical and emotional support for teachers and lecturers at all stages of their career, from training through to retirement. TSN has grown from being a small benevolent fund in England to being a dynamic international charity with network organisations in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and United States of America.

TSNI's Director, Paddy Hanna tells us more about the body.

"By listening to teachers and lecturers, and working in partnership with other education organisations such as GTCNI, unions and policy makers, TSNI aims to influence the education agenda to the benefit of teachers, young people and society as a whole. It wishes to support and develop the professional effectiveness and personal fulfilment of all teachers and lecturers.

Over the last two years, we have established a Board of Trustees and an Advisory Board, representing most of the major organisations within the education sector in Northern Ireland. The shared vision of all those involved is to provide the best possible learning experience for young people. The achievement of this vision involves many people and agencies but ultimately the personal commitment and professional effectiveness of teachers determines the quality of the learning experience.

Both groups have been involved in researching and discussing teachers' health issues with the aim of building a common understanding of the concept of well-being as it affects teachers.



*Paddy Hanna, Director,
Teacher Support Northern Ireland*

This fact-finding exercise, coupled with the experience of colleagues in England, Scotland and Wales, has helped to determine the rationale for our strategy to support teachers here.

This initial strategy, to improve the health and well-being of teachers, rests on the premise that we need to move away from the management of stress and develop comprehensive and innovative approaches to managing and improving well-being within teaching. This will involve developing a three-pronged strategy aimed at:

- improving the health and well-being of individual teachers, e.g. Teacher Support Line Northern Ireland;
- school-based initiatives aimed at improving school culture, ethos, health and well-being, e.g. the National Well-Being Programme, and establishing an Independent Mediation Service; and
- influencing education policy and strategy through the development, provision and sharing of knowledge, information and services, based on innovation, creativity and sound research.

To make this strategy happen we need your help and support."

For more information, please log on to www.teachersupport.info or email: paddy.hanna@teachersupport.info or call **02891 275929**.

Volunteering with VSO: Meeting the Challenges



VSO teacher, Lavinia Wilson, during school assembly at Palmalmal High School in Papua New Guinea

In the last issue of *termtalk*, we met Willie and Lavinia Wilson, teachers from Belfast who spent three years as volunteer teachers with VSO in Papua New Guinea.

Last time, they took us through the extensive preparations needed before embarking on a trip of this nature. Here, we find out exactly what their experience teaching in one of the world's poorest countries involved.

"Our posting was to Palmalmal High School, one of the most isolated schools in Papua New Guinea," explained Lavinia. "The school catered for around 500 students, half of whom were girls, preparing them for the equivalent of GCSEs. Most of the girls were first generation secondary students and it was encouraging to see that many rural parents were beginning to appreciate the benefits to local communities of giving their girls a chance to continue their education."

"Discipline was definitely not an issue for teachers in Papua New Guinea," said Willie, "as students were very anxious to give their best and their behaviour and attitude in the classroom reflected this."

"In our time there," he continued, "we witnessed the school's meteoric rise from bottom of the provincial schools league table to within a whisker of the top performing school in the region and that was extremely satisfying to know that we helped play a part in this achievement."

Reflecting on their memories, the Wilsons draw particular attention to the hard work and dedication of their Papuan colleagues and pupils.

"Our fellow teachers worked very hard to cross every 't' and dot every 'i' of the teaching service regulations. The students too were extremely hard-working and long-suffering in their efforts to acquire knowledge and the necessary skills to achieve their goals, while their parents struggled to grow the crops needed to earn cash to pay for their children's school fees.

Our experience in Papua New Guinea brought us so much fulfilment and enjoyment that we decided to extend our two-year placement into a third year. Even though the people of Papua were very poor by our first world standards, they had such enthusiasm for learning and were so welcoming of us into their communities that we left, not only feeling that we made a real and lasting contribution to the betterment of their lives, but that they equally had enriched ours.

VSO is definitely an experience I would recommend to any teacher in Northern Ireland because not only do you see the very real difference your contribution makes but you take so much away also in terms of experiencing life in a different country and culture."

Since the writing of this article, Willie and Lavinia Wilson have decided to re-volunteer with VSO and are currently preparing to go to Zambia. To find out more about how you can become involved with VSO contact the organisation on: 00 353 1 872 7173, visit www.vsoireland.org or email info@vsoireland.org



Pupils during a science lesson (top) and sewing class at Palmalmal High School.