

A Study into Current Practice and Potential Models for the Effective Teaching of Personal Development at Key Stage 3 in the Northern Ireland Curriculum

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1. Executive summary

- 1.1 A qualitative, ethnographic study focusing on Personal Development (PD) at Key Stage 3 in five post-Primary schools is described.
- 1.2 The aim of the study is to identify current best practice and future training needs in this pastoral area of the curriculum.
- 1.3 The study identifies the components of best practice in PD at Key Stage 3 and the resultant training implications for this curriculum area.
- 1.4 Participant schools were selected for inclusion in the study as a result of collaboration with Field Officers in each of the five Education and Library Board areas.
- 1.5 Five *best practice* schools were identified with respect to PD work, in accordance with prescribed criteria.
- 1.6 In the study, *best practice* is illuminated through a combination of data collection processes comprising semi-structured individual interviews with adults who represent key players within schools and the wider education field (n=49), nine focus group sessions with 56 pupils and ten classroom observations involving 212 pupils.
- 1.7 Access to a specific programme of personal development is being considered as a statutory entitlement for all young people, with up to 5% of timetabled time to be a feature of the school curriculum.

Best practice in sample schools is typified by:

- 1.8 Enthusiastic principals with a vision who were prepared to *walk the talk*, to be strong advocates for young people and to create schools which take a child-centred, caring ethos reflecting the values and approaches associated with PD and in which people respect one another.
- 1.9 Principals who feel that PD provides an invaluable forum where independent thought and experience are valued.....perhaps the *only* place where pupils can talk about certain things and be heard.
- 1.10 A genuine commitment on the part of all teachers, not just PD teachers, to the importance and value of PD principles, practices and the holistic development of pupils.
- 1.11 PD themes focusing on relevant pupil life issues and encouraging the development of emotional intelligence.

- 1.12 Value placed on consulting with pupils, coupled with teachers' relationship skills in finding out pupils' views and trying to accommodate age-specific needs.
- 1.13 PD coordinators who are seen as champions of this subject and who are supportive, knowledgeable and interpersonally skilled.
- 1.14 PD coordinators who have a good overview of what each year group does and what approaches teachers are using.
- 1.15 PD teachers who are actually suited to the role; who like children, are interested in them and who possess a range of important core attributes such as empathy, warmth, respect for pupils, creativity, imagination, sensitivity towards pupils' needs, enthusiasm, openness and a sense of humour.
- 1.16 Teachers who are able to create a positive learning environment in which pupils' confidence and sense of safety and trust in the teacher and the process can flourish.
- 1.17 Teachers who use creative active learning strategies.
- 1.18 Teachers who are perceived by pupils as open, an ally, a confidante, humorous, genuinely interested in them and as a source of affirmation.
- 1.19 A strong relationship between the form teacher and the class.
- 1.20 Carefully prepared PD resources materials (booklets; worksheets etc.) and a clear structure for each PD period.
- 1.21 A philosophy which places a high premium on the *process* of the lesson and teachers who are willing and able to show flexibility and spontaneity in responding to pupils' needs in the live moment.
- 1.22 Schools where special efforts are made to help boys to engage with PD in a meaningful way which helps them to move beyond stereotypical male defensiveness/veneer of coping well with life situations.
- 1.23 PD sessions which are timetabled in the middle of the day rather than first or last period.
- 1.24 Good communication and regular meetings within the PD team.

A summary of recommendations contained within the report is as follows:

- 1.25 Careful selection of PD teachers is essential and appropriate recruitment and selection arrangements should be formulated.
- 1.26 Duties associated with the dual role of Form teacher and PD teacher need to be separated out so that administrative tasks do

- not interrupt and undermine the potential value of PD sessions themselves.
- 1.27 PD sessions should take place in rooms that are conducive to informal teaching and learning methods.
 - 1.28 PD class sizes should be smaller than full class numbers approaching thirty pupils.
 - 1.29 Within ongoing timetabling constraints, consideration should be given to optimising the potential of PD by identifying more favourable slots during the school day.
 - 1.30 Effective, systematic, support for teachers undertaking PD work should be provided to ensure not only professional development and growing competence but also personal support and encouragement regarding what is a demanding role.
 - 1.31 Within schools, opportunities should be taken to reinforce the whole-school commitment to the ethos of PD through staff meetings, staff development sessions, INSET and team briefings.
 - 1.32 There should be more widespread use of external agencies and ELBs should have a role in planning strategically in partnership with a range of relevant providers in the community.
 - 1.33 Goals, content, processes and methodology within the agreed PD framework should be standardised, to ensure that this important curriculum area does not develop in a piecemeal fashion with significant variations in quality.
 - 1.34 A systematic approach should be developed to enable teachers, schools and the ETI to evaluate appropriately the impact of PD programmes on pupils, with careful consideration of what count as indicators in this area of the curriculum.
 - 1.35 The Department of Education and ELBs should monitor closely emergent trends towards statutory regulation of caring roles in the community in terms of how these developments potentially impact on PD and pastoral work in schools.
 - 1.36 Through the development of appropriate training, PD teachers need to acquire and develop a sufficiently strong knowledge base to enable them to discharge effectively their responsibilities within PD.
 - 1.37 Through training, PD teachers also need to acquire, develop and hone a range of key skills which will support pupils' learning and enable the potential of PD to be maximised in the school setting, which include groupwork, facilitation skills and creative and expressive approaches.

- 1.38 PD teachers should also have the opportunity, within a suitable training programme, to explore and examine *themselves* with regard to feelings, issues, defences, motivation and attitudes.
- 1.39 A working group should be established to devise an appropriate training programme or course for potential and/or fledgling PD teachers as a means of building up the knowledge, skills, personal development and the overall competence of PD teachers in the coming period. The development of specialist CPD courses should also be on the agenda.
- 1.40 CCEA should work more closely and consult with teacher education organizations, the ELBs and relevant outside agencies to ensure a co-ordinated approach to training and development.
- 1.41 Additional resources will need to be identified by the Department of Education to support the introduction of recommendations contained within this report.

2. Background and rationale for the study

Chapter content

A qualitative, ethnographic study focusing on Personal Development (PD) at Key Stage 3 in five post-Primary schools is described. The aim of the study is to identify current best practice and future training needs in this pastoral area of the curriculum. The background to the development of PD, previously referred to as Personal and Social Education (PSE), is presented, alongside the rationale for the study. Whilst much has been written about the theory of PD, few studies have examined what happens in reality within schools through direct observation of classroom activities and in-depth discussions with Principals, PD teachers etc. The main strength of the present study is that these approaches have been incorporated into the research design.

The study is conceptualised as an in-depth, qualitative, ethnographic study of current best practice in the delivery of Personal Development (PD) with Key Stage 3 (KS3) pupils in five post-primary schools, with a view to identifying key characteristics of effectiveness regarding:

- essential classroom features
- teacher characteristics and competence
- organisational dynamics.

Drawing on the data, recommendations for effective classroom practice in Northern Ireland are presented, together with an elaboration of potential training models for the development of PD.

The CCEA Northern Ireland Curriculum Review: *Proposals for Changes to the Northern Ireland Curriculum Framework* (Phase 1 consultation, 2000) stated that there should be a specific programme for Personal Development as a statutory entitlement for all young people from Key Stages 1 to 4, with a proposed 5% proportion of timetable allocation. This is currently under review according to *A new approach to Curriculum and Assessment* (April 2002) since, although there was general acceptance for the area of Personal Development (along with

Citizenship and Employability), a major concern is being expressed over how additional time can be found for a curricular area such as this.

For some time in Northern Ireland, the terminology used to describe this aspect of pupils' learning has been *Personal and Social Education* (PSE), and more recently, *Personal Social and Health Education* (PSHE). Current documentation seems to have pared the term to *Personal Development* (PD) which is the descriptor used within the body of this report. In general PD is aimed at promoting the personal and social development of children and young people through structured, planned programmes, extra-curricular activities and tutorial work supported by such activities as cross-curricular themes. The specific dimension of interest in this study is the classroom-based PD programmes which are delivered within what has generally come to be known as the pastoral curriculum in schools. Best (1999:3) one of the contemporary commentators on the 'pastoral dimension' in the United Kingdom explains that the emphasis in the pastoral curriculum espouses "the all-round development of the child as a person" where they can acquire, in a more complete way, powers of reasoning, feeling and acting sensibly. Pring (1984:15) believes this can be achieved through PSE because its inclusion in the curriculum forces us to "attend to certain features of being a person which can so easily get lost in the more utilitarian aims of the educational system".

The Times Educational Supplement (25 June 1999) outlined the results of a Mental Health Foundation report indicating that one in five young people were suffering from disorders such as anxiety, depression and psychosis and suggested this was due to the narrow focus of the government's attempt to raise standards. Many educationalists, such as Dowling (2000:63) advocate that people's emotional lives are critical factors in their success in life and that children and young people are no exception to this. In order to achieve emotional health "children

need to be able to experience and be able to express a range of emotions in their own way through a broad curriculum.”

The goals of PSE have been more implicit than explicit at both Primary and Secondary level education in the UK generally and in Northern Ireland in particular. Due to the holistic nature and organisation of the primary school curriculum with the proliferation in use of pedagogical processes such as Circle Time (Mosley, 1996, 2001), the goals of PD have been perhaps more articulate and transparent than in post-primary schooling. Despite its popularity with teachers, however, there have been few published studies investigating the impact or effectiveness of such developments and pedagogical processes in the delivery of PE at Primary level.

Notwithstanding this, PSE in Northern Ireland post-primary schools has had a slightly longer tradition than in primary schools. In various guises and under differing nomenclature (e.g. social education, health education, Active Tutorial Work, Life skills, Form Tutor periods etc), PSE has been present through the ‘pastoral curriculum’ since the mid to late 1970’s (Blackburn, 1975, Hamblin, 1978, Button, 1980). Until recently, despite the commitment in principle to the development of PSE, its growth in post-primary schools in Northern Ireland could be described as largely local and restricted in origin. Thus, PSE has mainly developed in individual schools, acting essentially on their own professional initiative. Anecdotally, this appears to have culminated in unevenness in provision in terms of classroom delivery and pupil experience, leading to an evident gap in many instances between theory and practice. In recent years, attention to this dimension in schools has increased due to the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) extending their areas of focused inspection to include pastoral care inducing the pastoral curriculum and child protection. Additionally, recent research (Leitch & Kilpatrick, 1999; Save the Children 2000) demonstrates that much good practice pertains at

school and classroom level in terms of the social and emotional development of children delivered through PSE.

'Best' practice, although a contentious concept is the focus of much current educational research and development. It has been variously defined as *'the continuous process of learning, feedback, reflection and analysis of what works (and does not work) and why'* (Unaid: www.unaids.org/bestpractice). 'Best Practice' in classroom practice has rarely been investigated intensively. It is an elusive concept and yet is considered that, where it can be identified, it provides good modelling and an inspiration to teachers and others involved in common endeavours of educational improvement. Given the intensification of values and challenges inherent in the CCEA proposals for the extension of PD, the analysis and dissemination of identified current 'best practice' is considered to be a platform for the future development of a framework for this area and should form the foundations of any necessary developments in support and training.

Key Stage 3 is a critical phase in children's schooling (CCEA, 2001) and one in which, if pupils are personally and meaningfully emotionally engaged, is considered to reinforce later schooling. If skilfully delivered, the nature of learning in PD would underpin a proper appreciation of Citizenship and would also contribute directly to four of the six Key Skills identified in the National Curriculum.

Moreover, the current curricular proposals are timely, given the significant, developments in the wider field of multiple intelligence (Gardner, 1999) and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996), both of which provide an essential platform of understanding for enabling children's full academic development and social well-being. Thus, in the future it is critical that all schools are encouraged (through appropriate guidelines, training of staff and support) to conceptualise

and incorporate the approaches necessary for the delivery of meaningful, comprehensive PD programmes to pupils.

Key points

- Past descriptors such as *Personal and Social Education* and *Personal, Social and Health Education* are being overtaken by the more recent terminology *Personal Development* (PD) advocated by the new curriculum proposals (CCEA).
- Education in schools needs to focus on the holistic development of pupils including emotional health.
- There have been few published studies which investigate the effectiveness of PD in schools.
- Goals of PSE in the past have tended to be implicit rather than explicit and PD has typically developed within individual schools acting on their own initiative rather than in a coordinated way.
- More recently, greater attention to PD has been paid in schools, prompted at least in part by the Inspectorate's developing focus on the pastoral dimension of schooling.
- Access to a specific programme of personal development is now likely to be a statutory entitlement for all young people, with increases in timetabled time to be a feature of the school curriculum.
- The current study seeks to explore issues of *best practice* within PD, examining essential classroom features, teacher characteristics and competences and organisational dynamics.

3. Theoretical framework

Chapter content

The study is theoretically contextualised within two main strands of existing literature and research, namely personal and social education within schooling and also personal development literature in the fields of counselling and psychology. Reference is made to the influential thinking of Goleman (1996) regarding emotional intelligence and Gardner (1999) on multiple intelligence, both of which have clear relevance and application to schools' work in the area of personal education.

The theoretical framework of the study is supported by two main strands of literature and research which underpin the empirical work, namely the literature on personal and social education in schooling and also personal development research in the fields of counselling and psychology. The potential relationship between these two strands is examined, with a view to informing the elaboration of models for the training, development and support of good classroom practice.

3.1 Literature review on Personal and Social Education in Schooling

In the United Kingdom, personal and social education (or PSE) in secondary schools (see HMI, 1979) has received political support since the 1970's and more recently this has extended explicitly to primary schools. Although it is now accepted as an established feature of the curriculum, it is rarely viewed as coherent; frequently delivered fearfully by teachers and often criticised as being an 'instrument of social control' (White, 1989).

Early, seminal work by a range of authors challenged the basis of PSE in schools (eg: Best, Jarvis & Ribbins, 1980; Pring, 1984; Hargreaves et al, 1988; White, op.cit) whilst more recent critiques are found in Lang (1998), Best (1999, 2003), Carr (2000) and Popovic (2002).

In his comprehensive view of UK based research on pastoral care and personal and social education, Best (2003) identified that over fifty articles, published in the journal *Pastoral Care in Education* during its nineteen years, have focused on the broad area of the pastoral curriculum. These studies were found to reflect the various historical developments in the pastoral curriculum in the UK over this period. Early on, many were concerned with tutorial programmes but in more recent years the range of topics under study is broader. Most report teacher-led action-research in classrooms in which needs are identified, programmes developed and then evaluated. Few concern the systematic study of classroom-based personal and social education programmes. One pertinent to the current study was a survey of personal and social education courses undertaken by HMI in 20 secondary schools in England and Wales in 1986/7. They found that there were great variations in provision and the content of syllabi seemed to depend on the interests of those charged with designing the programmes. There was a lack of cross-year planning leading to repetition of some topics and neglect of others and little reference to other subjects or aspects of the curriculum. While the research status of inspection data is at least questionable, there is little evidence of research which can inform us of the effectiveness and appropriate focus of curriculum approaches in this area. One pertinent study, perhaps, is that of Newton and Harwood (1993) who observed 126 lessons across the disciplines for six 'tracked' year 7 pupils in three secondary schools and found that there was little evidence of 'active learning strategies' associated with active tutorial work or PSE. Formal teaching styles prevailed.

In many educationalists' minds recently, however, the thinking of Goleman (op.cit) on *emotional intelligence*, Gardner (1985; 1999) on *multiple intelligences* and Radford (2002) on *educating the emotions* have all had considerable impact on reinforcing the value and

importance of developing *inter*-personal and *intra*-personal intelligence in young people and PD classes have been proposed as the main arenas for this, with 'active-progressive' methods being advocated to support learning across these domains.

3.2 Analysis of Personal Development literature in the fields of counselling and psychology

The constructs of *personal development* and *personal growth* have a much longer history within the fields of psychology (and latterly counselling) than in education. The meanings attributed to personal development can be explored through a number of different schools of counselling and psychology.

Two specific, contrasting counselling approaches are analysed here in terms of their underpinning philosophies of human nature and behaviour, the ways in which each perceive 'personal growth' or 'emotional intelligence' to become limited and the precepts necessary for facilitating personal growth and development. These approaches are:

Rogers

Rogers' (1942, 1961) *person centred* framework fundamentally recognises that when certain facilitative conditions are met, the innate ability and potential of the individual is released to enable them to regulate their behaviour in constructive ways, to learn from their own experience, identify problems, move towards and arrive at solutions within a context of individual growth, development and self-actualisation.

Jackins

In contrast to Rogers, Jackins' (1965) *re-evaluation* approach argues that intelligent functioning becomes occluded by early experiences of hurt in people's lives, which accumulate and are then compounded by

subsequent emotionally painful experiences. According to Jackins, the resultant diminished functioning can be reversed by engaging in a process of emotional and intellectual recovery. The thinking behind this approach is presently evident in Moseley's (1996, 2001) *Circle Time* techniques in use within the classroom.

These are two among a range of insightful, theoretical approaches to offer interesting frameworks not only for reflecting on the outcomes of the present research but also to underpin the development of appropriate training models in order to enable teachers to deliver the PD area of the curriculum effectively.

Key points

- The empirical work within the present study is underpinned by two main strands from the literature, namely personal and social education within schooling and also psychology and counselling theory.
- Seminal work originating in the 1980's and more recent writings provide a critique of PD as a curriculum area.
- The relationship between PD and Goleman's work on emotional intelligence and Gardner's on multiple intelligence is articulated.
- Person-centred theory (Rogers) has considerable relevance to the area of PD, as does Jackins' re-evaluation framework which emphasises the importance of engaging in activities which help people to re-emerge from past hurts and emotional upsets.
- Both the above theories, amongst a range, could provide the basis of a training framework to underpin PD work in schools in the coming period.

4. Research Study

Chapter content

The key research questions, research design and methodology are elaborated here. The study seeks to identify the components of best practice in PD at Key Stage 3 and the resultant training implications for this curriculum area. Participant schools were selected for inclusion in the study as a result of collaboration with Field Officers in each of the five Education and Library Board areas. In the study, *best practice* is illuminated through a combination of data collection processes comprising semi-structured individual interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, not only with pupils but also with adults who represent key players within schools and the wider education field.

4.1 Research Questions

The research question underpinning the present study is as follows:

Is it possible to identify in post-primary schools in Northern Ireland existing 'best' classroom practice in Personal Education (PE) and, where this is determined to exist, to observe, identify and analyse the essential elements of such practice in order to develop fundamental precepts and models for the support, development and training of the new proposals for PE ?

The research evaluates existing means of delivering PE through addressing the following research aims:

- 4.1.1 To observe, identify and analyse what, in terms of current practice, are the essential features and challenges (at whole school, principal, PE co-ordinator, teacher, classroom and pupil levels) of delivering this area of the curriculum effectively at KS3;
- 4.1.2 To extrapolate from identified current 'best' classroom practice, pupil and teacher experience, what will be essential to deliver a revised and enhanced curriculum for personal education as proposed by CCEA and what will be necessary in terms of school support and teacher training and development.

4.2 Research Design

The goal of this study is the illumination of existing practice in 'natural' settings:

'Illuminative evaluation' is described as an 'anthropological' research model ...(which).. attempts to measure educational products by means of intensive study of the programme as a whole: its operations, achievements and difficulties. The programme is not examined in isolation but in its context.'

(Herbert, 1992: 35/36).

There were seven steps in the data collection process:

- Interviews with five Education and Library Board Officers on the theme of *best practice* in PD;
- Interviews focusing on their perceptions of PD with a range of twelve educationalists, youth workers, advisors, and youth charities in Northern Ireland where PD work with young people is carried out;
- Identification of sample schools and negotiation of access;
- Pilot study in one school;
- Exploratory discussions with Principals and PD co-ordinators and preparatory meetings with PD teachers willing to be observed;
- Data collection interviews with key personnel including Principals, PD co-ordinators, pastoral staff and PD teachers;
- Classroom observations, focus groups and follow-up discussions with PD class teachers.

4.3 Methodology and data collection methods

4.3.1 Introduction

The central research focus demands the identification of teachers' practices and perceptions of their role in delivering PD, management views and the feedback of pupils who are experiencing taught PD. Sources of data range from educationalists, principals, PD co-ordinators, classroom teachers, pupils' perspectives, and classroom observations, supplemented by curriculum materials and documentary guidelines issued to schools.

Data collection methods were primarily semi-structured interviews supported by classroom observations (see Appendices 5 and 6), pupil focus groups and documentary analysis of curricular and guideline materials for PD. Data arising from these methods are predictably of large volume, comprising interview/observation recordings and notes and thus analysing the data necessitated the use of qualitative reduction methods and interpretive analysis. In essence, these methods are thematic, structured on the main concerns of the research including aspects of PD, pedagogy, teacher perception and pupil experience.

Table 1: Showing data collection methods across sample schools

Data type	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
Interview with Principal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interview with PD Co-ordinator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interview with PD teacher(s)	1 (+ 2 Year Heads)	1	2	2	2

Classroom Observations	Yr 8 Yr 10	Yr 8 Yr 10	Yr 9 Yr 10	Yr 8 Yr 9	Yr 8 Yr 9
Focus group(s) with pupils	1	2	2	2	2

4.3.2 Interviews

Interviews across all categories of participants (external personnel, school principals, PD co-ordinators, PD teachers and pupils) covered similar themes related to the main aims of the study viz. essential features, hallmarks of success and attitudes towards taught PD, anticipated future directions and training needs. Nevertheless individual semi-structured interviews were created for each participant grouping (see Appendices 5 and 6).

- PD teachers
- PD Co-ordinators
- Principals
- External personnel

4.3.3 Focus groups

Focus groups comprised small sub-groups of pupils arising from a number of the classes observed. These pupils were identified by the schools with the request that there should be no more than eight pupils in any one focus group and that those selected be as representative as possible in terms of gender, ability, race, attitude to PD etc. In total, nine focus groups constituting fifty-six KS3 pupils were carried out.

4.3.4 Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were used to examine the teaching style, dynamics of interaction, pupil contribution, emotional climate,

handling of sensitive topics and pupil evaluations as well as teacher reflection on PD classes.

Two classroom observations were carried out in each of the case study schools. By agreement with the PD co-ordinator and PD teacher, the schools identified which classes would be viewed. Suitability of the timetable allied to the need for the study to have observations of PD classes across KS3 were taken into account.

Observed classes included single-sex male and co-educational groupings; some were streamed and some were mixed ability groupings, depending on the school type and philosophy. Class sizes ranged from the smallest at sixteen pupils to the largest at twenty-seven pupils with the mode being twenty pupils. PD classes were taught by KS3 Form Teachers who also, in five cases, taught them for another main curriculum subject elsewhere in the timetable.

Observations were carried out in all instances by the same female researcher who used a classroom observation schedule and the lessons were unobtrusively taped (by agreement) using a digital tape-recorder. A number of steps were taken by the observer to limit any intrusiveness and to minimise as far as possible observer impact on the classroom process. These steps were

- a pre-meeting with the PD classroom teacher which included a discussion of the code of conduct adopted by the observer and research team (see Appendix 3), including issues of privilege, boundaries, confidentiality, validity.
- a brief introduction to the pupils before the class began (see Appendix 4) .
- taking up an inconspicuous place in the PD classroom but one which still afforded a clear view of the activities.

- a debrief with the teacher after the class to obtain the teacher's assessment of the lesson and to receive any observer feedback if requested.

4.3.5 Documentary Analysis

In a supplementary fashion, documentary analysis of curricular and guideline materials for PD was also used to examine the main elements and expectations within PD delivery (e.g. knowledge, skills, personal development, communication, emotional literacy etc).

The issues arising from all the above data were then subject to a thematic analysis using data reduction techniques.

4.4 Sampling and samples

A small-scale sample of schools from the population of post-primary schools in Northern Ireland was identified for in-depth investigation. The sample of schools was selected against 'best practice' criteria (see Appendix 1) derived from an analysis of interview data obtained from a range of educationalists in the field with expertise or responsibility for PD, including primarily the five ELB Field Officers who have specific 'hands-on' responsibility for this curricular area. In addition, the criteria were endorsed by two focus groups of KS3 teachers. Each ELB officer was requested to undertake a ranking task against the criteria thus making recommendations of individual schools from their ELB constituency for consideration.

Alongside 'best practice' criteria, the research team applied additional variables in selecting the final shortlist. These included ELB area, school and management type and urban/rural location, including schools in the NTSN category.

Although these additional variables were important in terms of representativeness, the main selection criterion for sample schools was

'identified best practice'. The choice of schools was made from a shortlist of ten schools compiled at the end of the development phase of the study. Schools from the shortlist were rated against the criteria and the top five schools were then selected for inclusion in the study. The preliminary stages are set out in table.

Table 2 Sample selection steps

Sample selection process
<p>Step 1: an analysis of the purposes and meaning of personal education for 2002 and beyond from key stakeholders in the area of PD;</p> <p>Step 2: development of criteria for "best practice" in this curriculum area as defined through data from interviews with ELB Field Officers and others who hold current responsibility for this area of the pastoral curriculum; this included recommendations of a preliminary shortlist of schools by each of the ELB officers against their own best practice criteria;</p> <p>Step 3: two focus groups of KS3 teachers with responsibility for delivering personal education in a broad range of post-primary schools in order to confirm the characteristics of good practice and the projected training and support needs from a user group;</p> <p>Step 4: the identification of a shortlist of five sample schools for the in-depth study from the amalgam list of 'best practice' schools, according to identified best practice and ancillary criteria with five matched alternates identified in case of withdrawal.</p>

One school selected in the initial sample refused the invitation to participate and the next school representing an equivalent school-type

was inserted as the alternate. As a consequence, this resulted in one ELB having no representation and another having two schools in the final sample.

Table 3: Final sample of 'best practice' schools for taught PD

'Best Practice' Schools	ELB Area	School Type	Gender
School A	WELB	Maintained Secondary	Co-educational
School B	SELB	Voluntary Grammar	Single-sex male
School C	BELB	Integrated	Co-educational
School D	NEELB	Controlled Secondary	Co-educational
School E	WELB	Controlled Grammar	Co-educational

4.5 External Personnel

Relevant educationalists (ELB Field Officers, CCEA staff, DE officials) and outside agencies (e.g. voluntary sector charities) involved in the area of personal and relationship education were informed of the nature of the study and invited to participate through letter and follow-up telephone conversation. In total seventeen people were interviewed focusing on the key issues of

- Level of understanding of the purposes and meaning of PD;
- Features of effective delivery and 'best practice', including essential teacher qualities;
- Views on training for PD

Table 4: Breakdown of interviews with key external personnel related to PD

Type	ELB Officers	Diocesan Advisor	CCEA	Statutory support	Voluntary support	Other
Number of interviewees	5	1	2	2	6	1

4.6 Access to schools

Regarding sample schools access was negotiated via letters of invitation (see Appendix 2) that were sent to the school Principals and followed up with telephone contact. On obtaining initial agreement to participate, discussions on the requirements of the study took place with key staff in the school prior to the study proper and permission sought to observe classes and talk to pupils directly involved in the study. At this stage, Principals were also provided with copies of all interview schedules for consideration. An explicit code of research practice was drawn up and discussed with each individual PD teacher (see Appendix 3) to be observed.

Key points

- Close liaison with five key Education and Library Board Officers took place.
- 5 *best practice* schools were identified with respect to PD work, in accordance with prescribed criteria.
- 17 Semi-structured interviews took place with key adult stakeholders in the area of PD.
- 20 semi-structured interviews took place with key professionals working in the five schools in the sample (Principals; PD teachers/co-coordinator etc.).
- 9 focus group sessions were held with a total of 56 Key Stage 3 pupils.
- 10 classroom observations of PD lessons were carried out (n=212 pupils).
- Curriculum documents and guideline materials were examined in relation to PD.

5. Classroom observations

Chapter content

Across the five sample schools, ten classroom PD lessons were observed, involving ten teachers and a large number of pupils (n=212). This Chapter describes notable features of these PD lessons in relation to aspects such as lesson structure and content; classroom environment and atmosphere; streaming and needs across year groups; teaching and learning processes, emotional dimensions and also teachers' qualities and behaviour.

5.1 Introduction

One of the main strengths of the research design is its in-depth nature with the in-built opportunity to identify and observe classroom processes in detail as they happen. This has been a rare opportunity in education such that while much is written about the theory of PD, there is little in the way of exemplification and understanding of what actually happens in these micro-contexts.

In total, ten KS3 PD lessons were observed, two in each school. Four classroom observations were carried out with Year 8, three with Year 9 and three with Year 10. PD topic areas being addressed in the observed classes ranged across such topics as bullying, role models, self awareness, assertiveness, emotions and moods, relationships and sexuality, debriefing on exams, road safety, and joy riding.

Out of the ten lessons observed, five of them (50%) were considered to have content which was largely focused on emotional or life issues which were a more direct stimulus to pupil personal experience and emotional development pupils (Self Awareness; Relationships and Sexuality; Friendship patterns; Assertiveness and Aggressiveness and Emotions and Moods), four were on matters more of social concern (Road Safety, Bullying and Joy-Riding and Justice) where the crucial concern was to ensure that pupils absorbed clear messages about personal safety and understood necessary procedures, with any

personal or emotional development being more indirect or implicit. One of the lessons had content which was significantly more school-focused (Achievement and Study Skills) but retained the indirect potential for this to be personally and emotionally relevant to the pupils.

Table 5: Pupils observed in PD classroom lessons and pupil focus groups

		School A		School B		School C		School D		School E		Σ Pupils Obs
		Class Obs	Focus Group	Class Obs	Focus Group	Class Obs	Focus Group	Class Obs	Focus Group	Class Obs	Focus Group	
Yr. 8	Boys	10	3	23	6	-	-	8	3	9	4	50
	Girls	17	3	-	-	-	-	12	3	12	2	41
Yr. 9	Boys	-	-	-	-	4	3	8	3	14	3	26
	Girls	-	-	-	-	12	3	8	3	6	3	26
Yr. 10	Boys	12	-	25	8	9	3	-	-	-	-	46
	Girls	11	-	-	-	12	3	-	-	-	-	23
Σ Boys		22		48		13		16		23		122
Σ Girls		28		0		24		20		18		90

Table 6: PD topics in observed classes by KS3 year group

Sample School	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
A	Road Safety		Self Awareness
B	Relationships & Sexuality		Assertiveness & Aggressiveness

C		Bullying (verbal)	Joy-Riding & Justice
D	Bullying (verbal)	Emotions & Moods	
E	Achievement & Study Skills	Friendship patterns	

In total, these classes involved nine different teachers (eight female and one male) whose main subject areas included English (2), French, Art and Design, Home Economics, Maths, Science, Geography and RE. The sample of PD teachers ranged in age from those in their early 20s (one being just two years out of training) to those in their early 50s, with the mode being teachers in the thirty year bracket.

5.2 Notable Features arising from PD Classroom Observations

5.2.1 PD Curriculum

PD lessons observed were all examples arising from an ongoing PD curriculum, developed and co-ordinated by the PD co-ordinator within the various schools. In every instance, year groups had PD booklets produced by the schools, which contained a series of exercises and tasks under the various PD themes to be discussed throughout the academic year. Each pupil had their own PD booklet (individually coloured and notated in some instances) and these were held centrally by the PD teacher. PD booklets were the primary determinant of *the content* and in some cases *the process* of the PD classes observed.

5.2.2 Lesson Structure and Pattern

PD classroom practice typically comprised one 35-40 minute period. Only one school ran PD classes timetabled for a double, one-hour period. Although a number of the observed teachers demonstrated a variety of imaginative approaches within their PD lesson, there was a generic-type pattern evident across the lessons, irrespective of school type or pupil ability level. The pattern, as in many typical subject lessons, is loosely structured into three elements related to *beginning*, *middle* and *end* stages. For the purposes of exemplifying the pattern, these stages will be considered under the following headings:

- Opening and introduction
- Development of learning
- Summary and closure

Opening and introduction

All teachers opened the PD lessons by referring to what the class had been doing during the previous PD session together, thus aiming to orientate the pupils and help them make a link between what had been covered and what was to be addressed in the present session. This introduction was usually paralleled by a designated pupil or pupils distributing PD booklets to the class while the class settled with a task related to the topic area being introduced. This segment of the lesson usually took on average about five to ten minutes. In over 50% of the classes observed, the start of the lesson proper was delayed by approximately six minutes due to a variety of factors which related either to form teachers' administrative duties and/or pupils arriving late.

Development of learning

At this point, the class tended to form into groups or pairs to identify ideas on a worksheet or, write in or read from their PD booklets. The teacher would move around the groupings, interacting, offering guidance and affirming the individuals and groups as they worked. At

the end of the task the teacher gathered feedback and, in some cases stimulated a wider level of class discussion and/or comment about what pupils had thought or written. Variations to this structure and methodology involved the use of video snippets, paper and pencil exercises, personal reflection, designing a game, problem-solving, use of photographs, case study discussion and role play. In the double PD lessons, there was time for a variety of tasks to be developed, though following a fairly similar pattern of interaction. On average, close pupil attention to the content and process of the PD lessons tended to be no more than twenty minutes (within the thirty-five minute lesson period) or forty-five minutes (out of the double one-hour period).

Summary and Closure

“Unfortunately, our time is nearly up, let’s just summarise....”

The best examples of lesson closure ended with a reinforcement of the main learning points, whilst the least successful endings were those where time ran out and the pupils shuffled out the classroom door, leaving a ragged finish to the lesson.

Lesson endings usually took between two to three minutes and were perhaps the least satisfactory element of the classes observed. Typically, there was little planning evident to include a summary and proper closure to what in some instances were personal and emotive topics. This was largely due to the very tight time pressure that PD teachers were under and their desire to maximise the use of time to engage as meaningfully as possible with pupils.

5.3 Classroom Environment

The majority of PD classes observed in the case study schools were taught in the PD teachers’ home classrooms, which ranged from the traditional classroom to science and home economics laboratories

and, in one case, the school art room. Typically, classes were carried out in conventionally arranged classrooms with desks in rows facing the teacher's table. This afforded some flexibility for pupil interaction and movement, depending on the size of the classroom. However in the laboratories, fixed benches and in some cases seating permitted minimal opportunities for the creative use of space and often limited opportunities for pupil interaction, groupwork and role-play. Teachers in the various classrooms worked against these somewhat restrictive, conventional settings, which tend to symbolise teacher-control, by coming out from behind their desks, taking up positions more centrally within the class, moving around and interacting with individuals and small groups during task time. This was therefore viewed as teachers' ways of compensating for the lack of classroom environments conducive to genuinely facilitating the goals of PD. As one PD teacher (School B) indicated at the end of her session:

"I would have done role-play, although with twenty-nine pupils I am constrained by the room. I am always in this room and would prefer no tables."

5.4 Streaming and Needs across year groups

There was no evident difference between PD topics covered across the different year groups. However, what clearly demanded teacher skill was stimulating sufficient confidence and maintaining interest with pupils in lower streams during PD classes. Although through the focus groups, many pupils did indicate that they enjoyed PD classes because they were more relevant and involved less writing, there was some pupil anxiety emanating from expectations for self-disclosure and participative discussion, thus providing ongoing challenges for their teachers. This was apparent in classroom observation with Year 9 pupils in school D. It was noted that such teachers had to be particularly creative in their approach such as in one case (school D) engaging Year 9 (lowest stream) pupils by means of them creating a game that

involved them discussing ideas, exploring feelings and making decisions in order to arrive at an end result. This PD teacher indicated that what was crucial here was, *"finding the key with particular pupils and groups"*. Finding such a key allowed trust and relationship to be built at individual pupil level (e.g. that a diffident pupil had a passion for greyhound racing) or at the class level (e.g. finding what is of pressing interest in terms of television programmes). It was evident that the teachers of lower ability groups went to significant lengths inside and outside the classroom to find ways of finding areas of common interest and therefore connection with these pupils.

Perhaps surprisingly, in some secondary school contexts (e.g. school D, with high ratio of free school meals) a significant percentage of pupils arrived into school without breakfast, also indicating that they had had virtually no sleep. This was reckoned to be the case for both of the Period 1, morning classroom observations in school D. PD teachers in that context recognised that such basic physiological needs (e.g. snacks through breakfast clubs or vending machines) had to be met at a personal level before there would be any meaningful engagement with topic-based Personal Education.

While there might be some concerns expressed about the lack of standardized curriculum for PD there was a lot of support for the capacity of school, knowing its own pupils and catchment area, being able to incorporate particularly relevant and specific themes. In addition, specific PD teachers valued this flexibility. As one secondary school teacher put it:

"As individual teachers we are free to deviate from the programme ...to tailor the materials to suit the different ability groups"

(Year 10 PD teacher, school A).

By contrast, pupils in grammar school settings (Schools B and E) were easily engaged intellectually by PD tasks (evidenced by immediate,

quiet, focused attention to task) but could, if left unchallenged, not fully engage at personal or emotional levels.

5.5 Inclusiveness

One of the characteristics that was apparent in the PD teachers' classroom behaviour was their constant alertness to inclusivity. This appeared to operate at different levels. At its simplest level, this involved the teachers' encouragement for all pupils to be involved and to speak up during class. All ten PD teachers in each of the observed classes knew the pupils by name and used their first names frequently when referring to individual pupils or in reflecting on their responses. This served to create a personal atmosphere and was very much linked to the desire by PD teachers to make a connection with the pupils and to affirm them for their contributions to the class discussion.

Linked to this were observations of a number of occasions, where PD teachers showed sensitivity to latecomers entering the group. For example, in school D the teacher inquired of one Year 8 boy whether he felt included by the class when he joined late. In another individual example the PD teacher (school B) reassured a Year 8 male pupil who was headachy, and gave him space to put his head down whilst not ignoring him during the lesson. Such attention to the inclusion of individual difference or pupil need sends a message to the rest of the pupils about the safe nature of the co-operative learning venture in PD.

In addition to such individual pupil attention, a number of the PD teachers were alert to patterns of classroom interaction, looking for areas of agreement and, for balanced disagreement. The best examples demonstrated teachers who were drawing commonality and harmony from the responses through open questions such as,

"Does anyone else feel like C?" [Another boy responds].

“S thinks that girls are more independent than boys, does anyone else agree with this view?” [After another pupil replies] “Anyone disagree?”

Such an approach appeared to reduce any pupil isolation, encourage group support and collaboration and reinforce confidence in pupils having and expressing their own opinions and/or feelings.

With a view to equality and balance, attention was also paid to the overall response pattern in a class and encouragement given to any grouping that had been noticed to be less participative or more reticent. Thus, for example, in school A, the PD teacher invited the Year 10 girls who, by comparison to the boys, having not said much at a particular point in her lesson on self awareness ‘*Girls, do you want to contribute what you think about X?*’. In many of the lessons (schools A, B, C and D), the PD teachers made sure to elicit responses from children who did not raise their hands through using their names and without putting them on the spot.

“M. (hand unraised), would you have an idea about what ‘conspicuous’ might mean?” (Year 8 teacher, school B).

Finally, there was also evidence of one teacher having considered in her planning how a task with carefully designed rules concerning positive feedback could foster the sense of belonging by an ethnic minority child. When asked about the highpoint in the lesson during the follow-up debrief, this teacher noted that this pupil, although not directly observed in the lesson, was deeply moved (to tears) by the positive things that had been written to her by other pupils.

5.6 Development of Emotional Intelligence

Goleman (op.cit) describes two main elements comprising emotional intelligence, one of which relates to our *interpersonal intelligence*, including our capacity to be empathic around others’ feelings and, the

other relates to our *intrapersonal intelligence* which concerns our sensitivity towards and insight into our own feeling states. A large element of the development of emotional intelligence relates to an expansion of emotional vocabulary and the capacity to link identified feelings to behavioural states in ourselves and others. Until recently, the development of emotional intelligence has certainly not been a mainstream or formal objective in curriculum planning and has not hitherto been demonstrably addressed in initial teacher education programmes. Fortunately, spurred by the convincing popularity and evidence of Goleman (op cit.) this situation is changing.

In the classrooms observed, not all the topics covered lent themselves readily to the pursuance of objectives concerning pupil emotional development. In addition, not all of the PD teachers expressed a confidence or willingness to undertake this emotional dimension, however embryonic, into the work of PD. Nevertheless, in a number of the classes, the teachers were observed to be making valiant inroads into pupils acquiring a wider register of emotional understanding of self and others, which many of the teachers in the interviews referred to as central to the goals of PD.

Emotional vocabulary

One of the distinctive features of three of the lessons was the way in which the PD teachers reinforced an emotional vocabulary through their interaction with pupils. This was observed particularly in lessons associated with self-awareness (school A), bullying (school C) and moods (school D). In these instances, there were two main approaches. The first of these was linked to empathic responses by the teachers (i.e. where the underlying but unstated feeling tone in a pupil's statement is reflected) such as:

"You'd be embarrassed";

"You would find it difficult to do this: it would feel boastful?"

(Year 10 PD teacher, school A)

The second is the encouragement by the teacher for pupils to articulate an emotional vocabulary themselves. Thus, in a PD lesson in school D aimed at exploring moods and feelings and the connection of feelings to experience and behaviour, the Year 9 teacher initially used simple facial expressions to help the pupils determine feelings and reflect on some personal causes of basic feelings through simple sentence completion and sharing as appropriate:

" I am happy when...";

"I feel sad when...";

"I feel confused when...";

"I feel angry when..."

These pupils were then able to expand with such examples as:

"I feel sad when I am let down by friends" ;

"I feel happy when I play with my sister's baby".

Self-awareness and amplification of feelings

A number of teachers defined opportunities in their interaction with pupils to encourage them to amplify what they felt and to link feeling and thinking:

"Why are you dreading this ?"

(PD teacher Year 10, school A: pupil on receipt of positive feedback)

"Can you explain a little more how you felt ?"

(PD teacher Year 10, school B: pupil on feeling aggrieved by a teacher)

"Are you happy or are you sad ?"

(PD teacher Year 8, school E: asking pupils to reflect on their exam results).

"How do you feel about other people getting bullied ?"

(PD teacher Year 8, school D: exploring feelings).

There was also a very specific illustration in school A during a session on self-awareness with a Year 10 class. The early focus was on exploring the difficulty associated with people being affirming of themselves. This led to an exploration with the pupils on the cultural and emotional difficulties of being positive about oneself in our society. Pupil discussion covered the unease (*"not being cool"*), shame and social embarrassment associated with thinking well of oneself, with the teacher teasing out and encouraging an elaboration of feeling states:

"Being embarrassed – what might this be like?"

"I'd like you to write out how you feel as a result of what you have just done".

[after a task in which the class wrote affirmations to one another]

"Are you surprised? Are you touched?" [and with the instruction for the next written task] *"Use feeling words."*

(Year 10 PD teacher, school A)

Modelling of emotion

In some instances, pupils were indirectly encouraged to develop a wider appreciation of feelings through the teacher role-modelling self-disclosure involving their own past or present emotions:

"I remember feeling left out when not picked for the team...and it is hurtful, well, that's how I felt...hurt."

(Year 8 teacher, school D)

"Stories of teasing can be very sad...I hated being called 'ginger' at school."

(Year 9 teacher, school C)

Empathic understanding

In other classes there were attempts by various teachers to encourage insights by pupils into others' experience and to enhance their emotional intelligence through the interpretation of behaviour (e.g. from video clips or case studies). In one illustration, a short case study was used with Year 8 boys to explore feelings of compromise associated with a moral dilemma.

"How do you think the boy in the story is feeling? Can you identify with him?"

(Year 8 teacher, school B)

Later in the lesson, the same teacher also took the further opportunity to clarify interpretations of feeling attributions by pupils:

"Envy? I'm not sure we could call it envy, envy is the situation where you don't like them being so good....do you mean envy?"

In another lesson example, Year 10 pupils (school C) were preparing for a role play of a courtroom scene regarding a joy-riding incident. By placing the pupils in groupings associated with key interested parties such as family of victim, joy-rider, jury, magistrate and the public, the PD teacher was encouraging pupil identification with a variety of *feeling sets* associated with different perspectives on a critical incident of this type.

Overall, in the lessons sampled, the acquisition of emotional sensitivity to self and others was not observed to be a high priority for the majority of teachers. It was however a significant feature in a few of the lessons which addressed issues towards the more personal end of the spectrum. It is an area which requires psychological insight, confidence, openness and skill which cannot be assumed to be an automatic element in a traditional subject teacher's repertoire.

5.7 Classroom Atmosphere

In all lessons observed there was a positive learning atmosphere between the PD teacher and the pupils. Only in one classroom observed could the atmosphere be described as flat. Overall, this conducive climate was indicated, on the one hand, by the general engagement of the pupils in the lesson, their responsiveness to the teacher and in some instances their overt enthusiasm for the task and the teacher (Year 10, school A). On the other hand, the classroom atmosphere was influenced by the teacher's verbal (see 5.9 below) and non-verbal behaviour, the interest shown in individual pupils and groups and, in some cases, what combined to be teacher passion for the whole process.

One critical factor appeared to be the careful way in which the PD teacher exerted control and discipline in these classes. There was a very even-handed approach in dealing with any pupils who pushed the agreed boundaries of behaviour in the school or classroom. For instance:

Dealing with an interruption

"No, you're not going to tell me that just yet, you're going to get into groups to decide".

Calling attention

"Right everybody, chatting stops now, we're ready to start work..."

"Sorry, WT, would you listen to me please..."

Reducing noise

"Keep noise levels down, gentlemen"

"Whoever's clicking that pen, would you stop it a wee minute cos it's doing my head in."

Interrupting disruptive behaviours

"We don't move furniture in my classroom, K. You know you don't do that, put the desk back please and... S. can you move and sit with K at that double desk..."

Overall, these PD teachers were notable in finding ways of tempering their control statements to pupils such that the pupils clearly heard the message but did not feel unduly admonished by the commands. This was achieved by the tone of voice and more importantly the use of first names and endearments. The emphasis was on affirming, positive behaviour, respect and engagement rather than statements of control which tended to be in the minority in all lessons observed.

However, despite this, it is fair to note that attention and engagement by pupils in lessons did vary across the classes observed, due to a variety of factors already noted (time of day, fatigue, and generally poor academic motivation).

5.8 Language, Voice and Style of Interaction

Preliminary observations suggest that levels of teacher verbal and non-verbal attention to pupils both individually and collectively were generally high in the sampled PD classes. However, individual teacher characteristics or style of delivery varied considerably across the classes observed. However some interesting patterns emerged.

Teacher tone of voice

Among the more subtle of the tools at a teacher's disposal is how they use their own voice within a classroom setting. Its power is perhaps neither fully recognised nor acknowledged since considerable meaning can be conveyed not so much in *what* is said but *how* those words are delivered. This is the case both in the tone of voice and the choices that are made, awarely or unawarely about emphasis.

Classroom observations revealed a spectrum of uses by teachers from the quiet, conspiratorial whisper (as sensitive or personal information was exchanged) to the loud and authoritative voice that 'commands' the class.

In all but a couple of instances, the tone of the PD teacher's voice appeared to be a central component to the success of the lesson. Pupil motivation energy levels within a lesson appear to be influenced to some extent by the teacher's tone of voice. Three of the teachers had particularly dramatic and entertaining qualities in their voices, but without this being over-bearing or disingenuous, and their modulation often had the effect of inspiring attention at moments when pupil interest may have momentarily flagged.

Congruence

Where PD is concerned, pupils are very sensitive to both the explicit and implicit messages conveyed by the teacher's voice and a continual challenge exists to respond to pupils' comments and questions in a constructive and non-judgemental manner. Imbued with emotion, the voice can convey interest, warmth, excitement, amusement and surprise as easily as it reveals disinterest, impatience, boredom, or judgement. Combined with physical demeanour, this translates into a powerful message. When the genuine inner sense of someone – their personal reaction in thoughts and feelings is matched by their physical demeanour and expressed by their tone of voice, then their communication is at its most powerful and congruent. It is difficult to pretend an interest we do not feel and this tends to dupe no-one, least of all pupils.

For example, expressing her genuine concern for a pupil who was feeling unwell, the teacher moved closer, inclining herself in his direction and lowered her voice, asking '*do you want to go to the nurse?*'. His reply was inaudible but she repeated, '*well, do you want*

to go up?’ as her attention remained focused on him and her facial expression continued to demonstrate her concern for his well-being. Eventually, he was accompanied to the nurse by another pupil but on their return, the teacher stopped in mid-sentence to enquire about how he felt, giving him permission to *‘put his head down’* should he feel the need to so do (Year 8 teacher, school B).

Using pupil idiom and metaphors

With its focus on the more personal and emotional dimensions of pupils' lives, PD requires that the normal social distance between adult-teacher and young person-pupil is reduced sufficiently so that conditions such as trust, empathy and mutual respect can prosper. One way in which a number of the PD teachers moved towards the pupils was by picking up and using their idioms, whether these were related to the local context or adolescent sub-culture. Examples usually occurred when teachers were reflecting back to pupils their understanding of what had been said. Such interventions which were accepted by the pupils came across as natural rather than forced attempts by the teachers to get on to the young people's wavelengths:

“Good girl yourself” commonly used by a Year 10 teacher, as a form of affirmation, which would be common parlance in the rural locale in which school A is located.

“Sure you're mighty at boardin'...!” in reference to a Year 10 boy's reputation at skateboarding.

“It's important to have a clean pair of what do you call them - ‘gunks’ and ‘kaks’ ... every day” in the context of a discussion on hygiene with Year 8 male pupils, school B.

“Yes that's right, ‘slagging off” taken by Year 8 teacher, school D, as another example of verbal bullying.

Humour

Light humour and elements of self-depreciation by the PD teachers were observed commonly in all but one of the PD classrooms. There were a number of specific examples observed in the lessons, where, through using humour without feeling threatened, teachers were able to respond constructively to light-hearted incidents and even teasing that was directed at them. Having the capacity to respond non-defensively to pupil-initiated humour and to initiate humour themselves at appropriate points led in many instances to keeping the interest of more lively members of the class focused on the lesson. Thus, what could appear as a distraction to the main learning point that the teacher was pursuing, nevertheless appeared to add to the sense of safety or emotional release in the classroom and led to an increase in on-task contributions by pupils.

Goodson and Walker (1991: 32) talk of the ways in which humour in classrooms create social ease by 'reduce(ing) the social distance between persons occupying different positions in the social structure' – in classroom situations, between teacher and pupils. What was observed in the study classrooms was occasional 'joking relationships' (as opposed to humour deriving from comic sources). These authors suggested that such humour tends to be characteristic of classrooms in which close, and to some degree private, relationships develop between teacher and pupil – within structures described as 'informal' (p28), and this was characteristic of what was observed in many of the PD classes.

Affirmations

Rewarding pupils' contributions through positive feedback and affirming comments was the most common element of teacher communication in all lessons, with task instructions coming in second place. PD teachers in all schools had a very clear fix on the importance

of accepting and reinforcing pupils' ideas and feelings. Even if the ideas being mind-stormed or fed back through discussion were not always entirely relevant to the issue under discussion, there were no put-downs and ideas would be added to and shaped through further interaction rather than rejected out of hand. The teachers also responded with a lot of affirming comments to individuals and groups, for example:

"Now, isn't that a good idea"

"All right..... good boy."

"That's excellent, well done."

"That's super!"

Key points

Based on classroom observations, best practice in sample schools is typified by:

- PD themes focusing on relevant pupils' life issues where levels of interest could be maintained.
- Carefully prepared PD resources materials (booklets; worksheets etc.)
- Clear structure for each PD period.
- Flexibility and spontaneity on the part of the teacher.
- Suitable facilities.
- Teachers with core attributes such as respect for pupils, creativity and imagination, humour, sensitivity towards pupils' needs, empathy, enthusiasm and openness,
- Teachers who are able to create a positive learning environment in which pupils' confidence and sense of safety and trust in the teacher and the process can flourish.
- Teachers who can operate comfortably in the area of emotions.

6. Outcomes of interviews

Chapter content

The perspectives of the school Principals, PD Co-ordinators and PD teachers (n=49) in each of the five sample schools are presented. These are based on semi-structured, individual interviews. Emerging from nine follow-up focus group sessions, pupils' views are also presented (n=56). Data are analysed not only within schools but also across schools to enable common patterns and trends to be identified.

The in-depth interviews provide insight into how Principals, PD co-ordinators, PD teachers and, importantly, pupils construct meaning from their experience of personal education classes. There is an opportunity generated not only to provide case study examples but also to triangulate the data identifying overlap in perspectives as well as differences and gaps both across best practice schools as well as within them.

In the final analysis, the data not only illuminate good quality current practice and its challenges but also inform the basic principles and precepts that should underpin models of effective training and support for teachers in the delivery of classroom PD for the future.

Forty-nine interviews in total were recorded and subsequently transcribed and analysed. There was also a follow-up of nine focus groups of pupils comprising fifty-six pupils in total. Staff interviews and pupil focus groups were analysed both within-school and across-schools in order to determine and illustrate what are the essential features and dynamics that constitute effective practice in this area.

6.1 Principals' perspectives

A number of distinct themes emerged from the analysis of the five interviews conducted with school principals. Expanded below, these concern reflections upon their own early experiences in teaching and how this has shaped what they are attempting to achieve at a whole school level. This is exemplified by their attitudes towards the children in their care, towards their staff and towards their own role as principal. In each school, the principal's personal philosophy determines, to a greater or lesser extent, the tone set within it and therefore experienced by all those who work within or have cause to visit it.

Their interpretation of the value of PD was examined, as was the perceived fit between the goals of PD and the school ethos. Lastly the qualities or skills deemed necessary by the successful teacher of PD were addressed, to be illuminated further by an analysis of the problems faced by teachers who struggle with this area of the curriculum.

- Whole school level (including personal beliefs)
- Value of taught PD
- Qualities / skills needed by the successful PD teacher
- Challenges for teachers in relation to PD

6.1.1 Whole school level

Without exception, all the principals interviewed spoke at length about the importance they attached to a holistic view of their pupils and that the desire to build pupil self-esteem was of prime importance. One principal mused that his school might have been chosen for the study because 'the experiences we set up show that we care about developing the whole child in the widest possible brief' (school A). Building pupils' self-esteem was cited as the school's *raison d'être* by one principal, who thought it 'more important than getting them their

academic qualifications' whilst acknowledging that, in educational circles, he 'possibly would be shot' for holding such a view (school B).

Building self-esteem was given particular emphasis by the secondary school principals (schools A and D) who observed that many if not most of their pupils arrived in year 8 with a diminished sense of personal worth as a direct result of the transfer test. One school went to considerable lengths to develop relationships with feeder primary schools in an attempt to assure prospective pupils that they could expect to be happy and to achieve there and would be 'treated as an individual', long before the prospect of the tests and their downstream effects became apparent to primary level pupils.

Following on from this, an evidently caring attitude was exemplified by all principals, encouraging staff 'to be sympathetic, to be helpful, (and) to be kind' in both the formal curriculum and the informal curriculum (school C). They sought to create an atmosphere in which 'every single child' is important, with the goal that pupils leave the school 'quite happy with themselves (and) pleased with what they have achieved in terms of personal development.' One principal commented on the importance of recognising that 'you have twenty eight individuals in front of you' and another developed this point by questioning the use of good examination grades if pupils did not leave the school as fulfilled persons, adding that, if he or she could not hold conversations with future employers or lecturers, then, as a school 'we have failed.'

Child-centredness was evident in the close fit between the various mission statements or school mottoes and principals' views on the importance of PD. One acknowledged that all aspects of the school were driven by it, 'not just what we teach and how we teach but...how we handle behaviour (and) how we work with the parents', PD being

'very much the essence' (school C). Seeing that you have a contribution to make was described as a major realisation for many children and this together with the building of self-esteem was seen as an important contribution in 'developing confident, responsible citizens' (school A). This personal confidence was described by one principal as 'absolutely crucial' for his own pupils, many of whom were 'lacking in personal and social skills' (school D). Another principal spoke of the importance of creating an environment 'in which they do not feel threatened (and) in which they feel safe' going on to observe that 'learned PD is the foundation of it all' and elaborated his view that the pastoral and the academic 'are one' (school E).

An atmosphere of mutual respect was 'very high on the agenda' for most interviewees and examples were given illustrating its evident importance within the school in all directions – between pupils, pupils and staff and between staff. Pupils could not be expected to show respect for one another unless they observed staff doing the same and that all interactions between staff and students should be characterised likewise. Respectful treatment between individuals carried out into the corridors of the school all day was something that needed to be practiced since 'every aspect of what you do' as a teacher was judged to be important. Perhaps, above all, consistency was the most important since 'little things matter' and double standards quickly become evident to pupils who 'are the best judges by a long, long way' (school E). Pupils being greeted by members of staff was seen as important and that it was not so much the fact of that greeting as the manner of it which carried significance. Thus teacher demeanour was judged to be supremely important – their level of interest in and acceptance of pupils which communicated itself both verbally, and more importantly non-verbally. The groundwork was seen as 'upfront, honest dealing with young people, accepting them,

correcting them and laughing with them' since 'you cannot start an educative process unless you have inbuilt good sound relationships', and that, in terms of success as a whole school, if discipline is failing then the first question one principal asks is 'what has happened to the relationships?' (school A). The centrality of this accorded with the beliefs of two other principals, one describing it as his hobbyhorse and maintaining that effective teaching could not otherwise take place.

Starting from a baseline of mutual respect, each principal then took the lead in terms of setting the tone of interaction within each school and their individual personalities shaped by their own experience, thus came to the fore. For example, three expressly stated that, in terms of priorities, it was the children who came first within the school.

From early experience as a newly qualified teacher, one principal observed that, for some of his colleagues this had not been the case and consequently that 'a lot of what we did in school was wrong' (school E). For another, it was early in his career when he realised that, despite being paid to teach his subject, the human beings in front of him might benefit from 'a wee bit of understanding (and) someone to listen to them' and that 'just getting an insight into their world' might help him to do his job more effectively. 'It was only when I realised that each child is different...and has a blinking story to tell' that the importance of a holistic and child-centred approach dawned on him. Whilst recognising that time does not always permit the hearing of someone's story, nevertheless 'simply getting to know your children' as a teacher enables you to know that 'when the homework's not done, there's a story behind it' and that the personal and social relationship that develops not only benefits the children but 'does you as the teacher the world of good' (school C).

Firm in his belief that a hierarchical structure within the school is counterproductive and can 'unwittingly' perpetrate attitudes of superiority and disrespect, one principal makes a point of always referring to 'staff', making no distinction between their respective roles within the school since they are all part of the school community. 'Staff' meetings are held accordingly. This egalitarian approach therefore has no place for prioritising people in terms of rank and, as a pupil, 'if you are asked by an adult...to do something, you do it or you negotiate with him or her' (school B).

The development of a social conscience was something mentioned by several principals and its expression took different forms. Promoting a school culture in which people value one another works directly in opposition to the pressures experienced in wider society and several interviewees made mention of the 'cruel world' in which children must learn to adapt to lives far more complex than they themselves had experienced. The delicate balance of enabling children to reflect on their own lives in a neutral environment where they are really encouraged to form opinions and think for themselves thereby developing a sense of self robust enough to withstand the vagaries of such a world is expanded below.

In their attempts to increase social cohesion, several schools had instituted a system whereby older pupils became actively involved in the care and support of younger ones by a variety of different means including turning up on a weekly basis to assist in various ways during form period, PD lessons or to volunteer at residential events run for new pupils. The fact that thoughtless or silly behaviour frequently described as 'messing' often equates to bullying, since it can and does cause others hurt, was judged important in school B because 'we don't know what is going on in any pupil's mind' – a fact of which the principal

constantly reminded his staff. Mindful of the implied criticism of group reprimands, this principal had recently made a point of apologizing for having to address a large group of older pupils about the thoughtless behaviour of only a few.

In 'coming to terms with relationships' and with himself, another principal sees his role partly in terms of breaking cultural, gender and class stereotypes, commenting that he was 'not a great person for status.' To do this involves modelling behaviour and attitudes to staff, pupils and parents alike which 'not everybody takes...on board' yet which require him to be consistent since, although you cannot be what everyone wants, 'you have to be true to yourself and you have to be true to children' (school A). Challenging these stereotypes involves combating the 'bully boy mentality' wherever it arises and thus breaking 'the male *macho* image that men cannot have a sensitive side to them.' This challenge also expresses itself in his desire to be seen to get on with whatever needs to be done because 'you've got to roll your sleeves up.' Examples of this attitude include covering a class for a colleague to facilitate an interview for this study and making tea and coffee for staff working late to finish a particular task, which 'was a shock to them' although he himself considered it entirely normal. Authority being conferred by the role of principal, his concern is that the children feel comfortable and can relate to him, this being 'the PR job of the principal' and in this regard, humour was expressly mentioned. 'Children love you to laugh' and 'it's most important that the children see me laughing with them and with their teachers...because humour is a bond', adding that, in his view, nothing could be done without it.

Another principal developed this theme, commenting ruefully that he missed 'the hilarity of teaching' since moving into an administrative

role. He viewed a sense of humour as being a prerequisite of survival because 'a good teacher is a good actor' and that 'without a sense of humour you are dead in the water' (school C). This point will be expanded below.

In conclusion, principals saw their role as promoting an environment where the importance and unique quality of every single pupil was appreciated. This child-centred and holistic approach recognised a genuine concern for each pupil in the knowledge that school was only one of many factors in their lives. 'Developing confident, responsible citizens' able to handle the increasing complexity of their lives was the task in hand and building that self-confidence 'absolutely crucial' to foster the knowledge that they had a contribution to make. Creating the opportunities for that to happen fell within the remit of all staff who responded very differently to the challenge depending upon their own levels of personal confidence in and enjoyment of what they were doing. Individual mindsets thus determined attitudes to their own role and relative significance as teacher, attitudes to their own subject specialism plus anything else they might be required to teach (such as PD), attitudes to the methods that might be employed in so doing and, most importantly, their commitment to and conceptions of the children in their care. To a greater or lesser extent therefore, principals were able to estimate the proportion of staff who subscribed to their own vision and could therefore be described as 'on board.'

Any school, it was suggested, is only about 'learning, caring and preparing for life' and it follows from the analysis described above that there was a close fit between the perceived value of taught PD and the mission statements or mottoes of the five schools. Preparing for life was seen largely in its current context and not some nebulous future when individuals would have *become* persons in their own right. This

was due to the recognition that 'they do think very seriously about their lives' even those who pretend not to care and that preparing for life meant just that – 'your life's work, relationships ...and surviving because there are big threats out there for them all' (school E).

6.1.2 Value of taught PD

Without exception, all principals expressed enthusiastic support for the place of taught PD within the curriculum and the degree of overlap between what they sought to achieve in their schools and the significance of this area of the curriculum is already apparent above. In school C it was described as 'intrinsic to us' and, having been accorded a central place, it was the 'vehicle' used for putting their ethos into practice. Described as 'the foundation of it all', learned PD mostly hinges upon 'that essential relationship between the form teacher and the class', used as a crucible within which to examine and reflect upon the quality of relationships generally and an impartial atmosphere where pupils are encouraged to think and where ideas and information can be exchanged and evaluated since it is the processes 'that are the highlight of PD.'

By 'processes' they refer to the many ways that a teacher can 'tune into' their pupils' interest, attention and enthusiasms, so that thoughts, feelings, reactions, experience and opinions are engaged or 'drawn out' and shared within the class. Most principals were clearly of the opinion that 'PD is about the child and the life that they lead' and, seen in this light, engagement in the process was of prime importance. Bringing this about, however, is no easy task and stripped of the usual confidence conferred by their subject specialism, teachers can easily feel 'naked'.

Described as 'a wonderful bridge between the formal and the informal curriculum', PD provides a forum where independent thought and expression are valued and the skills of rational discussion, debate and argument are developed. For some, this may be the only place that they can talk about certain things and it thus 'enables young people to have a broader view of things' than might be acquired otherwise.

Since it is not possible to be comfortable and confident 'if you don't analyse the world we live in (and) where you play your part' and if 'this can only be born out of a young person able to do it' then this means providing just such opportunities within the context of PD.

In being encouraged to think and give expression to their thoughts therefore, personal confidence was seen as being developed as pupils increasingly saw themselves as agents in their own lives with a contribution to make. One principal further developed this by outlining his view of necessary challenge. He saw their role as creating an environment where 'children are given opportunities to look at themselves and to look at their place in school, at home and in society, where they analyse, where they are challenged, where the value system that the school is putting forward is challenged.' Inevitably therefore, 'questioning the whole concept of what they are dealing with' includes what happens in school if it is to be really meaningful and thought provoking. Trying to mould children 'not to just accept things at face value' and to develop a more questioning approach means they are less likely to be content to accept the position 'we say this is good for you so just do it' at school. Knowing that unless children are provided with such opportunities in school 'they will never get away with it in society' although the interviewee readily acknowledged the difficulty that this can create for teachers. 'Accepting that the children will speak out' is, in itself, a challenge and he expressed the need for

teachers not to take this personally. Providing 'challenge in a safe environment' takes a certain level of self-confidence, a vision about what it is you are trying to achieve and the ability to sustain that confidence for individual children and it is to the PD teacher that this delicate but demanding task falls.

6.1.3 Particular qualities / skills in the successful PD teacher

There was considerable overlap in the qualities and skills deemed to be necessary in the opinion of all principals interviewed. When considering this question at some point during each interview, principals had cause to reflect that the particular qualities and skills needed for the successful teaching of PD were not substantially different than those generally required in a teacher who was good at their job. Someone who wants to teach was a prerequisite as was a professional approach and with it, the ability to 'come across as someone who means business' but this commitment and ability to work hard needed to be motivated by a particular viewpoint in terms of *what* they were trying to achieve and *how* they set about it. This is best expressed by the concept of 'teacher as facilitator'.

'Taught PD is about establishing relationships – a teacher establishing a relationship with their class' and to do this 'you've got to like kids.' Pupils, teachers, co-ordinators and principals were unanimous on this point and it seemed to be the crux upon which success hinged.

Someone who likes and is interested in children, someone who actively seeks to establish relationships with them, as individuals and as a class and who does this by creating a particular kind of atmosphere in their lessons emerged as the successful hallmark of the PD teacher. The detail of how this is brought about is identified and expanded in the

points below, in terms of attitudes, qualities and skills that the successful PD teacher is likely to have.

Child-centred - 'you can tell the teacher who likes kids – their classes are such a joy and such a relaxed atmosphere.' In addition to *what* they say and *how* they say it 'their whole non-verbal communication is brilliant.'

Empathic – 'you've got to empathise with children and give them a clear understanding that you do care what happens to them.'

Willing and able to listen – because 'they do love to be asked their views.' Knowledge of groupwork skills and 'a range of strategies as opposed to one' enables the teacher to mediate between multiple voices as well as hearing individual ones.

Open-minded, respectful and tolerant – teachers who 'don't force their views on pupils' but take the pupils as they are and are capable of accepting a variety of opinions, value-positions and lifestyles.

Relaxed and comfortable within themselves – a teacher who can go into the classroom and 'just be, but in a structured way and this demands quite a level of expertise.'

Non-judgemental – 'you're trying to transmit values, but you...don't want to be making value judgements on them (the pupils) either.'

Can give the benefit of the doubt – giving them 'the space to get out of tight corners rather than tightening the corner.' Being sensitive to what goes on in pupils' lives and making allowances accordingly because 'no-one knows what's going on in that person's heart.'

Hold out confidence – the desire to build pupils' self-esteem and have 'that vision for a child.'

Flexible, creative and adaptable – well-prepared yet able to depart from the envisaged programme 'when the issue requires it' and 'able to show them that life is not black and white.'

Prepared for the unexpected – 'you can have the best laid lesson plan' and have to abandon it 'when two boys storm into your room unexpectedly.'

Sense of humour – because 'there has to be a sense of fun in it, nothing is hard and fast.' Also the ability to turn your own mistakes to your advantage and 'make a laugh of it' for 'that's how it works' indicating a need not to take oneself too seriously.

A thinker – 'behind it all you must be a caring individual who is reflective.' Also 'prepared to look at the issues, take them on board...and be able to give a position on a particular issue.'

Although this may read as a formidable list, there was ready acknowledgment among principals that a teacher needs 'to be able to display most of those things if they are going to deliver it with any degree of success' since PD is one of the most challenging areas of the curriculum, demanding a level of expertise and personal engagement over and above the norm.

If PD is 'about processes not about products' then the ability to handle the process is of prime importance and youth tutors were mentioned by some of the principals as having earned their credibility in this area by

'learning on the ground.' Consistently *walking their talk* and proving themselves reliable allies is no mean feat 'but they've done it.' According to the principals, teachers, in a more formal school setting, nevertheless seek to create something similar in establishing a relaxed relationship with their pupils. In the classroom, this relaxedness may well express itself in an increased tolerance for the noise generated by most forms of groupwork.

Another key characteristic identified of 'teacher as facilitator' was an attitude of neutrality, where 'the teacher is neutral but guides the process.' In the view of one principal, as a PD teacher, establishing credibility among pupils is as much about what happens outside the classroom as within it and those who can 'just be' are 'the type of teacher that you're looking for.' Thus 'living it out day to day' in this manner - taking a genuine interest in the person of each pupil and showing it - pays huge dividends since 'they have an affinity with you or a closeness that you wouldn't otherwise have attained.'

6.1.4 Challenges for teachers in relation to PD

From a principal's perspective, the challenges that exist generally for teachers are, in some respects, heightened within the context of PD. This was stated explicitly by several principals and implied by the others. If 'you've got to like kids' and 'taught PD is about establishing relationships' and this *is* the crux upon which success hinges, then it follows that teachers who struggle will be those who, for whatever reason, fail to establish a satisfactory relationship with their pupils. Failing to engage in this way can be for any number of reasons ranging from attitudes to their role as teachers, attitudes to pupils in general or fear of what the 'personal' in Personal Education might lead to.

In the minds of principals, attitudes to the role as teacher might, for some, only include an interest in and commitment to their subject specialism, seeing themselves *only* as subject teachers and PD 'as something they turn up to.' A change of attitude 'to one of engagement' was clearly identified here since, according to one principal, 'they just don't share my vision for young people.' Clearly then, some teachers were viewed as being resistant to the whole notion of PD and, to a greater or lesser extent, were seen as resentful about having to teach it, the identified lack of 'engagement' relating not just to the teaching of PD but indicative of attitudes towards pupils in general. It can be seen, then, that other difficulties and challenges may spring directly from this perspective and impact most noticeably in the context of PD.

Concerning one's view of humanity and expanding upon the necessity of 'liking' pupils, as agreed unanimously by all principals in the study, it is not just a matter of liking the ones who one happens to find likeable, but *wanting* to find what is likeable. This generosity of spirit will determine the degree to which a teacher finds their pupils inherently 'likeable' or 'of interest' and has tremendous repercussions inside and outside the classroom. A lack of mutual respect was identified as a central flaw in the interpersonal relationships of those teachers who struggled - relationships with both pupils and, on occasion, other staff. The presence of interpersonal behaviour characterised by mutual respect was therefore thought to be 'essential.'

On difficulty with discipline, another principal observed that 'you can almost sense the tension the minute you walk through the door and the atmosphere is just not right (and) it's because of that teachers relationships with his / her pupils, they just don't like kids,' commenting

ruefully that teachers who are in the wrong job for the wrong reasons 'are very difficult to deal with.'

For those wedded to their subject specialism, PD can represent a departure from the relative comfort and control of the familiar. 'When it comes to opinions and values people get very edgy, especially teachers because you're safe with a file, with a content-driven subject' and when you put this aside 'you're naked - there's just you and that's dangerous.' This was considered to relate directly to whatever degree of confidence a teacher may feel in simply being themselves, showing itself in relaxedness of personal demeanour and in the atmosphere the teacher is able to create. Thus, according to one pupil, the process or flow, the 'highlight' of the PD lesson, will be influenced by how much the teacher can relax and 'just be' - an undue reliance on worksheets often being a symptom of unease.

Increased noise levels in the classroom are often equated with a lack of control and, despite increasing emphasis on 'active learning strategies,' the desire to keep a class quiet can often outweigh the benefits of a livelier environment in which suitably subdued pupils are seen to reflect well upon the less confident teacher. One principal commented that this was of 'major concern' to teachers and had been observed to be the case throughout his career, adding that he foresaw a 'danger in PD becoming too didactic' which would make it 'unacceptable.'

Lack of reflection was mentioned by several principals who highlighted the need for a teacher 'to think about self and the way he/she uses skills, interacts with youngsters', personal reflection not being something that happened automatically or that could be relied upon since, in the main, 'we are reactive' as teachers.

Therefore, given the exhaustive list identified above, the sheer delicacy of the task, the current demands of the curriculum and the level of training that presently exists to support them, the successful PD teacher seems to be working against considerable odds and it could be said that, as things stand, 'not everyone can face the challenges.'

6.1.5 PD as a GCSE subject?

The two grammar school principals welcomed the idea of PSE as an assessed subject in a cautionary manner 'if we can deliver it as a GCSE it has a greater value to our pupils,' although the other three principals, arguing on behalf of their pupils, were unanimous that if this were to happen all that was of most value about PD would be lost. If PD is conceived as being 'about the child and the life that they lead' they feared that this focus would shift away from 'the most important part of it (which) is the processes and debate' and towards content and prescription and be 'taught to the exam.' They queried the motive behind such a development, saying that if the 'intention behind PD is to help the pupil, not the teacher get results' then it would be counterproductive and 'content driven.' Three of the principals felt they represented pupils who find themselves on the lower tier of the education system in Northern Ireland, some of whom, they felt, stand to benefit most from the successful delivery of PD. One principal from this group was adamant in his view that if assessment of PD is introduced, 'it's dead.'

6.1.6 Common characteristics

Across the five sample schools, various leadership styles were espoused and displayed by the Principals. However, despite these apparent differences, a number of common characteristics inherent in principals

could be identified which were viewed as significantly supportive of the goals of PD. These included:

- Having vision - Principals having a very simple, clear vision of what they are trying to do and they act on this vision personally;
- Translating mission statements into relationships – *‘walking the talk’*;
- Relationship-building – positive, supportive attitudes to teachers extended to pupils and how they are treated:

“Relationships, that’s what it’s all about – PD”;

- Creating a tone and ethos within the school which harmonises with the values and approaches within PD;
- Personality – open, approachable, friendly (and with availability for people) which sets a model;
- Orientation to pupils - looking for the best in pupils individually and having care and respect for the whole child, irrespective of class, gender, ability, race, religion etc. and being an advocate for young people generally:

“It’s all about dialogue with the kids”

“We need to accept them for what they are, not what we think they should be and remember they are vulnerable wee people”

“Breaking cultural and gender stereotypes is part of my role here”.

- Making resources available in time as well as money for PD activities and training in the knowledge that freeing up such time is beneficial in the longer term in that teachers (and therefore pupils) will gain from internal support structures and/or those teachers who go out on training courses will bring this learning back into school.

6.2 Perspectives of PD Co-ordinators

6.2.1 Value of taught PD

The value of PD was viewed variously in terms of its significance from a means of delivering necessary content to developmental 'quality time' with the teacher. All co-ordinators judged the social element to be very important and saw PD lessons as a place where every pupil could hear and be heard and that, in the right environment, it was a place where awareness about self and others was raised and this included the capacity for attitudes towards others to be changed. It allowed them to see a 'different side of the teacher' and, very importantly, to develop self-respect and respect for others. It was seen as the sole focus for certain issues and 'information that children need' which could not, reliably, be supplied from home.

Drawing on Socrates' dictum - 'the unexamined life is not worth living', one co-ordinator went on to explain that the goal, in reflecting upon themselves and their own lives, was to encourage response - 'to understand, to articulate and communicate...and for the more able ones, to foster a viewpoint or view - a perspective.' Ultimately, PD was seen to make an important contribution to pupils becoming more aware, more responsible and able to make increasingly well-informed decisions.

6.2.2 Hallmarks of success

According to the PD Co-ordinators, the hallmarks of a successful PD lesson fell into four distinct categories:

- The personal qualities of the teacher
- What they did
- Why / how they did it, and

- Effects on the pupils.

Taking each of these in turn:

Personal qualities of the teacher

The personal co-ordinators in all five schools emphasized this dimension. It was reflected in their attitude and manner both generally as a presence around the school and also within the PD classroom, personality coming through 'no matter what you do.' Personal qualities included their demeanour, their attitudes, their sense of self-confidence and the degree to which they were able to give something of themselves or 'come out from behind the desk'.

The overwhelming sense from co-ordinators was that PD should be 'taught by someone who wants to do it', in other words, a teacher who 'is interested in children and likes them' most going as far as to say that this was crucial.

This was elaborated by one co-ordinator who said that being prepared to get to know each individual child might take a long time, but that 'you have to *want* to like them, you have to see that there's at least one nice thing about each youngster in your class' adding that 'it might take you five years to find!' (school D). Self-confidence, was cited repeatedly as underpinning a teacher's effective delivery, that 'the teacher has to be confident in tackling these issues.' (school A). This was elaborated in school B where self-acceptance and 'a high level of self-esteem' was deemed necessary.

What they did

This concerned the PD teachers' means of handling the pupils both individually and as a group and thereby, the tone that they set within

lessons. Best practice in PD was characterised, in the co-ordinators' view, by a teacher who created a different atmosphere with the children in which the relationship between them was being actively built in the context of the lesson. Showing an active interest in the children both as individuals and as a group allowed an atmosphere of confidence to develop between them by means of which the pupils felt 'comfortable and confident with the teacher.' This atmosphere was one in which the teacher allowed pupils 'the freedom to express what's happening in their lives (and) how they see things' (school A). Since the 'social element is very important', the 'whole tenor of the class is likely to be different' and this relaxedness communicates itself easily. In a sense, the teacher 'lends' their confidence within the class, creating an atmosphere in which even reticent pupils 'maybe unwilling to speak out in other lessons' feel increasingly able to do so, expressing thoughts or opinions in a place where equality is, perhaps, more evident and there is no premium on knowledge and opinions are valued equally. The pupils' curiosity about their teacher is rewarded by teachers who are 'willing to give a bit of themselves' (school B).

When confidence is evident on the part of the teacher and it is matched by self-awareness and a high level of self-esteem, the remaining plank for effective delivery in PD teachers was seen as a set of attitudes towards both the pupils and what happens within the lesson and why. This will be expanded and exemplified below. That the teacher 'must not dominate' was a view commonly held and in maintaining a 'controlled two-way discussion', the teacher 'in many respects should be a facilitator'. In so doing, they created an openness in which control was kept 'subtly and at a distance' (school E). Best practice usually showed itself in a greater tolerance for high energy and noise within the classroom often involving the use of active learning strategies such as discussions in pairs, groups or as a class,

group activities perhaps involving physical movement or movement of furniture, or role play etc.

The teacher's interest in, enjoyment of and concern for pupils as individuals and as a group is evident in all their dealings and this can lead the lesson in interesting and unpredictable directions in which the locus of control lies somewhere between pupil and teacher and PD lessons become something embarked upon together. 'You can *plan* all you like' observed the co-ordinator from school D, but 'each lesson is almost like an adventure – you have to almost draw breath and wait and see what happens.'

Following from this, there was a sense in which issues raised by pupils sometimes took priority over lesson plans and 'going with their interest and enthusiasm' called for both a focus on the concerns and experiences of the pupils and flexibility on the teachers' part in order 'to help them understand what they worry about.' This capacity for flexibility was seen as enabling the teacher to handle sensitive issues such as treatment by other members of staff or incidents outside the school.

In terms of school C, the co-ordinator saw this facilitative task as being one where individual pupils are 'drawn out' in an attempt to understand both themselves and one another since 'you want to help to create...someone that's accepting, someone that's responsible, someone that's aware' and 'someone who can make informed decisions.' This approach contrasted sharply with his own experience of being a pupil in an atmosphere laden with judgement where the teacher took a position of moral authority and issued statements about 'the reasons why things were wrong.' The delicate task therefore undertaken by the successful PD teacher was considered to be the

creation of a 'neutral environment' within the classroom. 'It's hard, isn't it, to put yourself into the child's place sometimes' was an observation made by the co-ordinator from school E and yet this is precisely the task that PD seeks to address - the creation of a neutral environment based upon tolerance and respect in which the teacher takes on an empathic role. To achieve this, it was thought necessary for teachers themselves to move beyond their own assumptions and preconceptions which 'is very hard to do.'

How / why they did it

Part of the ethos of school B was the high expectation that all staff held a holistic view of their pupils without which 'you cannot be an effective classroom teacher.' In a sense, this also underpins the successful delivery of PD – what comprises the set of attitudes that determine not only what they do but, more importantly, why they do it. This includes attitudes towards themselves as teachers, how they see themselves in relation to their pupils, their respective status and significance, their attitude towards pupils, both individually and as a group, what they see as worthwhile or of interest and what can happen during a PD lesson that is both permissible to them and valuable from a pupil perspective.

In co-ordinators' views generally, taking a holistic stance requires that teachers are able to 'give the benefit of the doubt' since it is not possible to know the entirety of anyone's situation. Pupils may have 'not had a table to sit at last night to do their homework or someone to get them out in the morning' (school A). They may not have had breakfast or enough sleep the night before: they may have come from or be returning to an emotionally troubled or threatening atmosphere at home in which school or school work seems an irrelevance.

Teachers facilitating PD lessons were viewed as being continually involved in weighing up decisions about how important the 'process' of the lesson (the interaction of the pupils both with one another and with the teacher) is over its 'content'. Most co-ordinators came down strongly on the side of the pupils since 'it's their lesson, about them or issues that are pertinent to them' (school D) and were of the opinion that it was important to go with their enthusiasm and interest since the 'process' of the lesson should take precedence over the 'content' (school B). There was a general view that the curriculum can too easily be abstracted and that this can happen through undue reliance on worksheets, although resources can be both a 'safety net' or a valuable 'jumping off point' since 'you always feel naked without them!' (school C). This relates to the fact that, where PD is concerned, many teachers 'find this area very difficult' - an issue that will be expanded in subsequently under 'Challenges.'

All manner of issues can be raised by pupils which teachers would never have thought of 'or considered in (their) wildest dreams.' If PD is partly about relationships between teacher and pupil and the personality of the teacher 'comes through no matter what', then the way that the teacher chooses to react on any given occasion will send explicit and implicit messages about what is acceptable and the use of humour was judged to be very important, particularly in lightening 'heavy' subject matter. Teachers undoubtedly were viewed as having the capacity to affect the emotional barometer of the classroom since their skill at handling comments, questions and issues raised by the pupils does much to determine the relevance of particular lessons.

If pupils are taken seriously and real concerns are aired, then the curriculum is brought to life in the context of *their* own lives. For example, the co-ordinator from school C quoted an incident where a

pupil mentioned during class having been injured by random violence between gangs. This developed into a wide-ranging discussion about the things that people do to one another and what their motivation might be which continued for the rest of the lesson. This co-ordinator was quick to acknowledge that not all teachers would do this, but in the context of best practice, it is a good example. Another co-ordinator from school E referred to an incident where the teacher allowed an entire class to air their grievances and frustrations about another member of staff in the safety of their PD lesson where the information was treated as confidential. As in the previous case, teachers took seriously the experiences and concerns of pupils and gave opportunities, where possible, for them to express and thereby understand their own situation more fully. Both these were examples in which the teacher was seen as maintaining a neutral stance whilst, at the same time, according pupils their space. There is a sense, from the co-ordinators' views in which 'it's not the message' that matters in PD, but 'how you make it relevant' (school D) and that skill lies in the ability to make it relevant.

There were occasions identified by the co-ordinators, however, when the issues that pupils wanted to raise became too threatening for teachers altogether and this was expressed by the co-ordinator from school D where paramilitarism affects the lives of many pupils 'day and daily'. This 'impinges on the school atmosphere, the corridor (and) the playground' to such an extent that staff are continually working against the effects of it to some degree although, understandably, not dealing with the issues explicitly in PD lessons. About the very difficult behaviour of a pupil, she quoted a parent who said 'I'll get him a visit from the big boys and that'll sort him out' a 'definite paramilitary link' that she felt put the child in danger *because* of school which 'scared the wits out of me.' This indicates a gap between pupil and teacher about more than

just age since 'generally we (teachers) are middle-class with middle-class values and you're not always dealing with middle class children.' The class divide was cited as a reason that made it difficult for some teachers to empathise. This gap was also expressly articulated by the co-ordinator from school A who observed that 'some children have experienced things that we have never experienced ourselves', adding 'what seems fine to them might horrify us.' In this sense, it was acknowledged that, in many cases, the pupil levels of actual knowledge and experience could far outstrip that of the teacher and for these reasons it was important for PD teachers 'not to impose what *you* think people should be doing' i.e. to maintain a non-judgemental and respectful stance. In doing so the PD teacher implicitly acknowledges the fact that pupils are the expert witnesses about their own lives.

Effects on pupils

The fourth category identified was the effect that the preceding three had upon the pupils - the degree of engagement or enjoyment that they experienced within lessons and consequently the extent to which they found it interesting, relevant or valuable. In creating the kind of atmosphere described above - a neutral environment in which the teacher is respectful, takes a genuine interest in and 'wants to like' the individual persons of their pupils. This communicates itself easily and renders almost whatever else follows potentially fruitful.

If, in the context of PD they make the lesson relevant without dominating, whilst also being prepared to give of themselves then pupils respond to this extremely positively, as borne out by the focus group interviews. They appreciate the relaxedness and can almost 'learn by diffusion.'

6.2.3 Challenges

From the PD co-ordinators' perspective, the challenges fell into a number of categories that could be described as follows:

- locus of control
- fear of the unpredictable / unknown,
- bridging the class / values / experience gap
- reaching adolescent boys
- lack of confidence borne out of inadequate knowledge of both subject content and the kinds of 'active learning strategies' expected to deliver it.

It was readily acknowledged by co-ordinators that some teachers find this area of the curriculum very difficult. One co-ordinator expressed the view that 'I would love to have gone through my life and done nothing but teach (her subject specialism)' and that not having had to 'bother with these other things...might have made life easier', also that 'these days you don't get a choice...you *have* to take part.' She cited 'common sense and your own values' as a PD teacher's most valuable resource, adding that being a parent was also beneficial since you then 'know what children are like, you know what they think (and)...can pre-empt what they are going to say.' This, however, was not a representative view. Nevertheless, the sense of being forced or coerced into delivering PD is a perspective that finds more support elsewhere in the teaching profession. Perhaps it is worth re-stating the view which found widespread acceptance across the study that, where PD is concerned, it is 'crucial that it is taught by someone who wants to do it.'

The co-ordinator from school D admitted that when she first started teaching, 'PD used to terrify me.' This is not uncommon since confidence is paramount in the subject specialism and can easily evaporate since PD deals on a personal level with pupils and, ideally,

teachers also. In this way, what is challenging to pupils can be equally challenging to teachers and, given that they are charged with the responsibility for the lesson, venturing into the unknown where there is 'a deliberate loss of control' can be an uneasy prospect. This is particularly so for new teachers, who are 'thrown in at the deep end' and have a greater need to feel supported in what they do. As for being in control, 'to a young, inexperienced person, it is the one thing you are afraid of losing, whereas we are talking about almost deliberately losing it but at the same time having a hold.' The subtlety of this balance is hard to achieve and takes a confident teacher. Lack of confidence therefore sometimes shows itself in an undue reliance on resources, conforming to a more conventional, teacher-driven lesson format focused more on content than process, on completing tasks in PD booklets 'because you have to have something for the teacher who can't cope with the group discussion.' 'Teachers' it was suggested, 'should not feel bad about not using resources.' Therefore, rather than a jumping-off point, PD booklets can often 'form lesson content to fill the lesson' when 'they should be used as a trigger.' This approach is by no means confined to young, inexperienced teachers and was referred to as 'death by worksheet' by a co-ordinator (school C).

Bridging the gap, whether it be to do with class, values or personal experience was identified as a challenge for teachers since these divisive issues are more likely to come to light in the context of a PD lesson and the gap can just as easily exist between teacher and pupil as it can between pupil and pupil. For this reason, successful delivery was seen as characterised by teachers who had managed to 'move beyond their own assumptions and preconceptions' in order to create the neutral environment mentioned above in which respect for and tolerance of difference were fostered.

Another obstacle was identified explicitly by two of the co-ordinators who spoke about the importance of 'getting beyond the veneer that is thrust upon boys.' Self-awareness and soul-searching are often seen as 'problem page stuff which boys don't do' and since 'any sort of disclosure is a weakness' this can lead to a 'hard man' attitude and posturing among boys for their own self-protection which may become evident from year 10. Showing weakness or vulnerability of any sort is particularly risky for boys who may face reprisals outside the context of school. 'Boys won't let you in and won't look at themselves' was the experience of one interviewee and getting underneath this was therefore seen as a challenge. One co-ordinator, commenting on pre-conceptions, remarked that 'teachers taken in by the 'macho' image that boys present have more difficulty with PD in terms of their attitudes to boys and added that such teachers were unaware of the fact that 'underneath, boys are vulnerable.' Classroom observations bore out that regardless of whether the school was co-educational or single sex, older boys 'are very good at laughing the whole thing off and treating it all as a joke' which can be either disarming or merely reinforce existing prejudice depending upon the attitude of the teacher.

Although for one co-ordinator, teachers 'shouldn't have any difficulty' with the issues to be covered in the PD curriculum and did not see the need for 'all that much training' this was not a representative view. Most interviewees were emphatic on this point, recognising that subject confidence was missing in PD and insistent that many teachers felt that, because they had received little or no training in either content or method, they were ill-equipped and insecure yet expected to deliver this area of the curriculum. For this reason it was judged to be a very difficult and challenging area for many teachers.

It became apparent from a synthesis of views by the co-ordinators that teachers whose training had been focused on and whose practise had relied upon 'active learning strategies' often took these skills completely for granted. The statement that 'some teachers are very comfortable with role play' was therefore not generalisable across the population. That these skills are transferable is undoubtedly true but if they are not employed regularly within the repertoire of a teacher, then they will not experience the ease that comes with frequent use and the confidence that springs from trusting that they can handle the 'process' in action. Pair work, small group discussion, group tasks, circle time, role plays and whole class discussion are seemingly not within the regular repertoire of many teachers who thus find themselves compromised by the expectation to teach an area of the curriculum in which 'the unexamined life' may well remain unexamined.

6.2.4 Common features

Certain common features are evident in the effective delivery of the PD co-ordinator role. For example, best examples of effective PD co-ordinators were those who:

- were committed and passionate about the whole area of PD;
- were seen as a champion of the PD area both inside and outside the school;
- were seen as supportive and knowledgeable by the PD teachers;
- were viewed as interpersonally skilful themselves;
- had an overview of what year groups were doing not just in terms of content but also what approaches the PD teachers were taking with the various classes;
- organised regular meetings (eg with Form Tutors/PD teachers) as part of their support and co-ordinating role and were sensitive to the needs and well-being of teachers in this area;

"PD is a subject in which teachers easily feel at sea"

- had the courage to ask pupils' views at the beginning of the year to identify areas of need and then incorporate these in the planning of the PD curriculum;

"Approach of PD should be differentsuch that every child has a voice"

- had an awareness of individual year groups' needs;
- brought in relevant outside agencies to provide expertise and support in specific areas.

6.3 PD teachers' perspectives

The teachers interviewed for the study ranged from those with many years of experience and a professional background well-suited to the demands of PD to more recently qualified teachers, one of whom felt that his training left him ill-prepared for this task in some respects. The teachers were asked for their views on a wide variety of matters relating to taught PD - its value and approaches, what was experienced differently from a pupil and a teacher perspective, issues for young people that PD should address, group contracts, the level of pupil influence over content and direction of lessons, the hallmarks of a successful lesson, the challenges implicit within this, whether their training had prepared them adequately, what Initial Teacher Education (ITE) or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) they envisaged as necessary in the light of their experience and lastly what they, personally, enjoyed about delivering this area of the curriculum. Teachers' views have been summarised as follows:

- Value of taught PD
- Hallmarks of a successful lesson
- Influence of pupils
- Issues for young people

- PD – a different approach?
- Challenges – in search of the ‘professional’

6.3.1 Value of taught PD

The teachers interviewed were unanimous about the value of taught PD for broadly similar reasons. ‘I see it as invaluable’ declared one teacher and ‘a lesson where you get to bond with your form class’, adding ‘I believe that taught PD...is a fantastic way of getting the children to open up to you as a teacher’ and ‘a great way to advise them on issues that they might be too embarrassed to go to their own parents about’ (school A). She qualified this, however, by stressing that, to be of such value it needed to be taught correctly. Similar importance was expressed by another teacher who saw it as ‘essential...because we see ourselves here at X as not just academic but developing the whole person’ (school B). She went on to explain that PD was prioritised within the school in terms of the time, attention and staff resource devoted to it.

Other teachers were similarly fulsome in their assessment of its value. ‘Children get the opportunity to do what they don’t get to do in a lot of other subjects’ – things ‘very valuable to their whole lives’ (school E).

‘It’s good to give them a grounding’ was one observation, so that when bullying is encountered or friends fall out for some reason they can talk about it ‘because it’s all very natural’ (school C). The teacher quoted here constantly draws on this connection with her pupils. Girls, in particular, come to her with relationship problems and she is able to refer back to things they have discussed in class. On a whole class level, she mentioned the naturalness of acknowledging that friendships go through phases and that they ‘can’t all be best friends’ since ‘personalities don’t work like that’ but ‘we have to be a team (and) we do have to spend every day together’ which creates ongoing

problems of its own. On the overlap between respective roles as PD teacher and her subject specialism, she commented that teaching the mechanics of reproduction whilst also trying to cover 'being aware and being sensible', meant that time pressure did not allow for discussion whereas 'PD gives you a perfect time to talk about all the implications of that'. This was echoed by almost all other interviewees who sought out other contact time with their class to develop or expand issues raised in PD.

In school D it was seen as 'an opportunity to encourage the children to talk to each other about issues in their everyday lives that are not academic' and 'to make them think and reflect on what influences them and how they react to different situations'. Pupils responded well to the more relaxed atmosphere of PD lessons since the dynamic within the class 'dictates an awful lot' and limits the approaches that can be used successfully, there being 'certain things you wouldn't try with certain classes' - a feature of any lesson in her experience at the school.

PD was seen as a great way of generally airing issues that might be of concern about an individual without singling out anyone in particular. For example, a lesson and handout about stealing is available for the teachers in school A if it becomes an issue in their class. This highlights the importance of carefully matching what is relevant to pupils needs at any given time both in terms of overall planning and also, more specifically, during individual lessons. The need for a combination of both being well-prepared but yet also flexible became apparent so that the school can provide pupils with a real opportunity to talk about things as they arise. A teacher from school C acknowledged that he was prepared to cast the timetable aside to make room for this eventuality. Similar remarks were made by other interviewees, one

saying that although the teacher may have a theme or a direction in mind for the lesson that, once it starts 'it's over to them – the children must discuss it' since 'when an issue occurs where there is greater participation then I think we should go with that' (school E).

A number of interviewees made reference to the fact that since many things arise in relation to the class that take up the teacher's time, 'the PD curriculum could be easily ignored' by seemingly more pressing but probably petty issues – the 'business' of the class. This tended to encroach in most schools since PD lessons were often used to access children whilst in their form class and could involve anything from announcements and the signing of homework diaries, to individual children being 'plucked' from the class. One teacher found this particularly disruptive and felt that it detracted from the importance of the subject since, due to these interruptions, PD was not 'protected time' and thus 'not being given the credibility and the time that it deserves' (school E). One teacher went so far as to highlight the fact that, under these circumstances and left to individual inclination, some teachers might *never* do PD lessons as such, rendering its delivery highly variable from a pupil perspective. The overwhelming body of evidence indeed bears out the temptation to avoid, or, at least 'dumb down' materials on the part of teachers, many of whom feel justifiably anxious at the prospect of venturing forth into this challenging area of the curriculum, the 'bedrock of confidence' that accompanies a subject specialism being suddenly removed. This aspect will be further developed below in the section entitled 'Challenges – in search of 'professionalism'

6.3.2 Hallmarks of a successful PD lesson

'Developing good relationships with your students is the basis of everything'

(school B)

Four distinct but interrelated themes emerged in answer to this question. Overarching these, however, was a central, unifying theme best expressed by the quotation above and implicit within this are teachers 'who like the kids and are interested in the kids' (school A). The four themes were:

- enthusiasm and engagement of the pupils
- relevance of the topic under discussion
- consequent level of enjoyment experienced by both teacher and pupil
- nature of the classroom atmosphere which makes these things possible.

Taking each of these in turn:

Enthusiasm and engagement

'When children talk about it going out the door' (school A)

'It's so rewarding as a teacher when you see that your pupils are engaged because quite a lot of the time they're not!' a teacher from school C remarked, adding that, in particular, she was referring to 'involvement of the ones who would be disillusioned – especially (those) in ordinary class but also the quiet, shy ones where PD 'draws them out' and where 'they can speak up without fear of getting the answer wrong' since in PD 'there's very few times when there are right or wrong answers, it's more opinions'. 'If they feel valued' she continued 'and that this is their class and they can speak out, then they are more likely to do so' adding that, in this environment, people are 'more equal' in some way. This 'involvement of the pupils' was mentioned by all interviewees, it being seen as important that PD was a place 'where they feel their opinion is valued and where they are

willing to join in'. 'It should be really pupil-centred' commented another teacher 'that it's the children who are doing most of the talking – teachers really are facilitators, we have to be good listeners' (school E). This relates to and is a point further developed in 'Challenges' below, since even with a well-developed sense of what works well for pupils, it's 'natural' for a teacher to gravitate towards being the dominant voice in a classroom setting and it takes a conscious act to relegate that role in favour of group discussion, for example.

A teacher from school A judged engagement as 'when children talk about it going out the door', 'when they talk about it the next day at roll call' or when they refer back to it in the context of other lessons. She also related with evident pleasure instances 'when they come in and tell you about a discussion they had with their parents about that particular class' since this shows the extent to which something 'sticks with them' and this was borne out by how frequently lesson content was referred to during parent / teacher interviews (school A).

Relevance

'You get a hundred stories' (school C)

In order to maximise pupil engagement and interest, it was clearly important to all those interviewed that material remained as relevant as possible and this was achieved in a variety of ways both at the level of planning and preparation and also 'on the wing' in lessons. In school C, a choice of five topics from a list was made by a class of year 10 pupils at the start of the year. In school A, topics are carefully chosen among teachers who meet with their year head to discuss this and swap ideas about what worked for them. As individual teachers, however, they are free to deviate from this and therefore concentrate their efforts, doing 'topics that mean something to the children' and

just taking what is relevant 'because then you can concentrate your efforts'.

Having a theme or direction in mind for the lesson but being prepared to deviate from it emerged, more generally, as an important aspect of making PD relevant as was 'being able to do it in a language that the children understand' (school E).

In the classroom this flexibility was described as like hitting a nerve since 'when you do hit on a topic that's relevant then you get a hundred stories'. Smoking, for example, came up in a lesson and, due to the reaction 'you just know that this is something that is very relevant to their lives' (school C). Conversely, you also know when you're dealing with topics that 'they really haven't come into contact with (and) are not that interested in'. Another class in the same school had covered the laws of joyriding in Civic and Political Education but had a sustained interest in the subject since the brother of a pupil in the class had been charged for a joyriding incident in which someone was killed. Having checked beforehand that the pupil had no objection, the teacher was able to pursue the subject, in a general manner and to the benefit of all, in the preparation of different character parts for a role play.

Another teacher quoted an example of homing in on anxiety that she had noticed among some pupils about an upcoming sporting fixture against another school. She devoted her lesson to dealing with anxiety and stress, including affirmations and introducing the concept of 'positive mental attitudes' (PMA) that they have referred back to ever since (school A).

To maintain relevance then, emerged as the ability to remain alert and sensitive to particular areas that generate interest and engagement in the pupils which is expanded more fully in the section below entitled 'Pupil influence'.

Enjoyment

'A chance to find those little key points – like the greyhound' (school D)

Most teachers were effusive in their comments about taught PD and the extent to which they enjoyed delivering this part of the curriculum. 'I love it and I just *love* the first years – they are so responsive, uninhibited, they have lovely ideas, they're very fresh, they're a great bunch' said a teacher from school E.

'I do, I love it!' commented another, 'it gives me a chance to relax a bit more with the pupils and to talk about real issues' without the 'time constraint of getting through the syllabus'. She clearly valued this relaxedness and 'getting to know them a bit more', adding that 'I find out everything (about them) mostly through PD' (school C). She recalled feeling 'very comfortable in school and able to speak to my teachers' who 'wanted to know how I was'. Acknowledging that this was 'rare' made her more appreciative in hindsight, realising that she had been buoyed up by the evident sense of connection and was therefore determined to provide it for her own pupils. This reinforced her belief that 'you really do need to know your class very well' since that level of personal interest is 'what children need'. The focus group of pupils from her class gave the distinct impression that they could come and talk to her about anything - 'and they do!' she agreed.

There was clear support for this interpersonal contact and the need for acquiring more insight into the personalities of their classes was clearly

a high priority for most of the teachers interviewed. PD was seen as the vehicle through which this could be done most effectively and the increased contact time provided through the teaching of another subject was cited as an advantage in this respect. Indeed, teachers who do not have this level of contact could find it 'very difficult', especially those who do not have their own class for PD.

A teacher from school A unequivocally expressed the significance of the teacher's role from a pupil perspective as follows:

'A lot of them see this (school) as their haven...a place where they feel safe and comfortable and valued and we need to keep that going...to foster that.'

'This is where they get their dinner, this is where they see their friends and you need to be the adult they can talk to because every child needs an adult to talk to...you could be the only one and that's why you need to be receptive when they come looking advice.'

In building these relationships she enjoyed 'the versatility and flexibility and the variety – you can do *anything* with a PD lesson...that's why I like it', adding 'it doesn't have to be handouts, you can do drama, you can do music, relaxation techniques, meditation'. She recounted a recent lesson where they had enjoyed a 'great discussion' about the Iraqi people and President Bush, arrived at in the context of the topic of 'respecting each other'. This wide-ranging attitude to what was acceptable for a PD lesson found other support among interviewees and contributed to their overall sense of enjoying the varied and dynamic 'process' of the lessons which clearly contributed to the pupils sense of engagement. It was acknowledged, however, that more 'activity based' work might be needed with a lower ability class.

Being receptive as a teacher is one thing, but having a pupil or pupils willing to share aspects of themselves is another since not all pupils are readily forthcoming. The delicate task of 'drawing out' such pupils or finding a point of connection therefore falls to the teacher and is not necessarily straightforward and may require considerable patience. A teacher from school D, for example, made a point of 'keeping abreast of (the things) young people are interested in ...so that you can talk about them'. If they mention something to her she will make sure she takes a look at it so that she can know, to some extent 'where they're coming from and what their interests are'. Sometimes, however, this is not enough and she observed that you have to work very hard to find something and make a connection because of the barriers erected by the children. With one pupil she eventually discovered his love of and interest in greyhounds and, taking an active interest then herself could see that this marked a turning point in their relationship, hence her comment about PD - 'it does give a chance to find those little key points - like the greyhound.'

'The bonding, getting to know about them (and) ...about their lives' was understood as a very important aspect of PD by all respondents and 'listening to their stories' an integral part of this since, for one teacher, 'they do come out with some excellent...and interesting things' (school C) adding that he enjoyed the learning himself 'because there are lots of topics that (we) come across where I wouldn't feel wholly confident'.

'I think we cover topics that are so important' declared a teacher from school B, who also enjoyed hearing their ideas and liked 'the fact that they can feel comfortable, there's nothing taboo' and observed also that 'there's a warmth about it'. Describing herself as 'genuinely not judgemental', she also expressly said that if pupils had not 'grown personally, socially and emotionally *with our help*, I think we have

failed' since 'what they end up (with) in terms of academic ability' was of far less consequence in her view.

However, the 'bonding' and 'getting to know' is a two-way process and being prepared to tell a little bit about yourself as a teacher was seen as an important facet of building trust with the class. Focus group interviews with pupils confirm this although a teacher from school D sounded a cautionary note on the subject. Her observation was that not every teacher would feel comfortable doing that because it lets down the barrier of what is perceived to be 'professionalism' a point expanded in the section below entitled 'Challenges'.

Atmosphere

A comfortable, relaxed atmosphere of tolerance and sincerity where the teacher can communicate a certain confidence in and enjoyment of what they are doing leading, sometimes, to humorous exchanges enable a lesson to 'flow' really well such that neither teacher nor pupils want it to end.

6.3.3 Influence of pupils

'It's their personal and social education' (school C)

There was a divergence of opinion about how much influence over the content and direction of lessons should be accorded to pupils. Although some consultation went on at the start of the year, a teacher in school A felt that pupils should exercise 'very little' influence over the content and direction of lessons since, in her view 'it's up to you as the adult and the teacher'. This, however, was not a representative view and all other interviewees expressed their willingness to be guided by the class in terms of the 'progress' of lessons.

One teacher held that his pupils should be able to influence the main things that are covered and the sequence and also the direction of individual lessons since 'It's *their* personal and social education'. Seeing himself as flexible he commented that 'tangents are one thing that we do go off on a lot – there's times I've started a lesson and ended up on a completely different topic' since 'if they want to continue talking about something then I don't feel the need to change that – it's what *they* want to know and discuss therefore *why* change it?' adding 'I'll always let it go – you can always get back on task'. He agreed that that this did represent quite child-centred practice and a considerable degree of influence on their part (school C). Noticing what was relevant or important to pupils and being guided by that caused another teacher to mention tangents. In her view this was important, on principle, 'even if it's not what I intended to do' since 'a teacher should not feel restricted' where this is concerned as it can compromise what is in the best interests of the pupils (school D).

The flexibility inherent in this perspective was echoed among other interviewees. A teacher from school B said 'I think the teacher should be sensitive to what seems to engage their attention and to go there and what seems important to *them* which you can't really predict'. Going with what engages the children was described by one teacher as 'quite a bonding thing, too' and a 'feeling of commitment – that we are in this together'. Seeing herself as 'a mother hen' she declared that 'they are my chickens, I am on their side and we, together, will get through the problems that occur' (school E).

Not presuming to know what is precisely relevant at any given time, or what may be emerging as an issue in the dynamics of young peoples' lives was expressed by another teacher who said that 'we may not

know what they are dealing with' and 'there may be something coming up...that we aren't aware of'. 'They may be asking for a reason' she continued 'and we have to be aware of that'. She did not feel too constrained by the syllabus since 'we are very much told that we can pick an issue and do it – we don't have to start at the beginning of the book and work our way through it' although she remark wryly that 'if they had their way we would just do circle time every week' (school C). In the main therefore, teachers highlighted the need for both flexibility and adaptability, fine tuning PD lessons to take account of something that, as an adult, they are not in a position to predict.

6.3.4 Issues for young people

There were considerable overlaps in answer to this question. However, particular schools also did have highly individual needs depending upon their catchment areas.

For example, the teacher from school D talked at length about the particular circumstances of many pupils at her own school. 'One of the big issues would be drugs and with that comes all sorts of family breakdown issues'. Alcohol is also a widespread problem many pupils having to cope with parents who are users / abusers. Theft and burglary are also associated with the drug culture in the surrounding school catchment area from her experience and, in addition to that, 'they would be facing quite a bit of paramilitary influences in some of the estates that they live in – and that one has to be handled very carefully because you need to be aware of where they are living and (what) they have to face day and daily outside of school'. 'Giving them the skills to say no or say no and then survive in the environment that they come from 'is a 'very difficult issue which staff can be very scared of'

because 'there are threats out there and you tend to side-step it to a certain extent for your own self-protection.' Also, 'we can't put ourselves in the children's shoes when we are not living in that area.'

'Suicide is a huge one...because of the area' commented another teacher who went on to talk about suicide levels at a previous school which, during one year, was 'frightening' and affected everyone, but that staff needed to know how to handle it. More generally, he also mentioned death and this was confirmed by his colleague who commented that 'one issue we don't deal with is bereavement' (school C). She considered that many important areas were already dealt with in PD but questioned the depth at which they are done - 'we do the *theory*, but do we really get down to the *relevance* of joyriding, or solvent abuse or smoking or even family breakdown' because getting to their everyday experiences is crucial in her view. Prior to teaching, her experience in youth work enabled her 'to see the real issues –the things that they are dealing with every night on the street'. Having come from a very sheltered background herself, this experience let her see 'what young people go through outside school' - an eye-opener which has hugely influenced her own attitude to being a teacher (school C). She also remarked that 'also we have to deal with the whole religion/Northern Ireland conflict – every day' although, by contrast, 'the whole area of sectarianism' was expressly mentioned by a teacher in school A as an evident gap in their own provision.

Issues mentioned by other teachers to be addressed, or addressed more fully included tolerance of others – allowing and respecting differences, the pressure of relationships and sexuality, boy / girl dynamics, fatherhood *and* motherhood and the teacher from school B highlighted becoming assertive and being able to resist what we don't

feel comfortable with – an area in which she felt her pupils needed a lot of help.

'A sense of belonging (and) of being assured or re-assured' was the only addition suggested by the teacher from school E, since 'being part of a community is important'.

6.3.5 PD – a different approach?

'The teacher isn't always the teacher' (C)

Most teachers commented on the relaxedness of PD lessons, the fact that there were no exams, no homework and a consequent lack of the pressure experienced in so many other areas of the curriculum. More significant, however, was the sense that no-one had a premium on subject knowledge because 'you're discussing things (where) maybe the child knows more than I do' in which case 'the teacher isn't always the teacher' (C). From a pupil perspective they may experience a different side of the same teacher both in the degree of personal disclosure and by the very fact that 'you may be dealing with issues you know nothing about'. 'You are there...not just the teacher (but) the teacher and the learner...working together as a group...and you are trying to circulate knowledge in the room' and enjoyment stemmed from being 'somewhere their opinions matter'.

At one school, the teacher most valued the variety afforded by PD including outside visits and visiting speakers plus a range of activity within school already mentioned. She evidently drew heavily on her early training in terms of her ability to handle discussions, role-plays and groupwork, although this was by no means representative of other interviewees. In answer to this question, others mentioned not their training as a teacher, but more their *experience* as a teacher or their life experience although one was adamant that her training as a youth worker had been formative and that her personality also contributed.

'What helps me is that I am interested in young people' she said, and that this training had helped her recognise 'what children are feeling (and) signs that they're not happy'. For another it required teaching styles unfamiliar to him and removed the familiar bedrock of confidence provided by his own subject. His opinion was that to experience PD at the hands of someone totally confident would provide pupils with 'a far better learning experience', a point developed further in the section below on 'Challenges'.

Group contracts

Lastly, the negotiation of a group contract may be something that only happens for many pupils in the context of PD lessons although opinion about their efficacy was sharply divided among the teachers. Important 'without a doubt' said one teacher from school C, members of whose class still check, two years on, whether confidentiality still holds. Another teacher was emphatic that 'it must *come* from them' (B) having given the development of it an hour at the start of the year. 'Kids come up with things you wouldn't have dared suggest' said someone else, adding that it was 'important to have a confidentiality agreement when we are talking about real issues' (C). It was seen as giving the pupils ownership and setting guidelines without them seeming to have come from the teacher, also 'a bonding thing' (E).

Alternatively, another teacher, although she saw it as important, commented that her class were not good at 'keeping to themselves what somebody else tells them' often passing things on because 'they think it's a bit of a laugh' (D) prompting her to wonder whether they were unaware of the potential harm this could cause. 'They forget very easy' reflected someone else, and 'it's something that gets put away in a cupboard' (A).

6.3.6 Challenges - in search of the 'professional'

Addressing a lot of ordinary issues yourself 'before you go into the classroom' (school E)

A number of factors emerged from the interviews about the successful delivery of PD and therefore what it meant to be 'professional' in this context. As a teacher 'you get so caught up about them having *our* subject done that you forget about what's going on in their lives' (school C). In PD however, this comes to the fore and is the very raw material with which the teacher works. This embodies substantial challenges, summarised below:

Establishing relationships 'I really think that establishing good relationships with your students is the key in every subject' asserted one teacher, identifying this as the 'foundation' upon which everything else rested (school B). Taking an active interest in the person of your students would enable you to draw out the quiet, shy ones and find that special connection e.g. the 'greyhound connection' with the difficult/disenchanting ones.

Wanting to do it 'Taking it seriously from (the) pupils' perspective and from a staff perspective' and seeing it as worthwhile, since some teachers see it as 'something they have to do...and (that) comes across to the children' (school D).

Facilitation 'Teachers really are facilitators, we have to be good listeners' (school E). Many teachers are not prepared for undertaking this since its 'natural' for a teacher to gravitate towards being the dominant voice in a classroom setting and it takes a conscious act to relegate that role. In addition, not everyone is willing, comfortable, or trained to employ the subtleties of 'how to lead a discussion', 'how to involve everybody' or 'how to draw people out' (school C).

Process over product The need for flexibility in your approach, remembering that the process is the important thing here so 'don't get too bogged down in the outcome' (school D) since 'progress' in PD may become apparent in subtle ways, bearing fruit many years hence and, in that sense, is hard to quantify in any meaningful way.

Sharing self Expecting pupils to talk about themselves means that, to build trust, 'you must be prepared to speak a little of yourself (although) you don't have to tell them everything' (school A) and is a matter for individual judgement. Not every teacher feels comfortable doing this because it can seem to compromise their perceived idea of what constitutes 'professionalism'.

Scanty /non-existent knowledge 'You may be dealing with issues you know nothing about' (school C) in which the familiar bedrock of subject specialism is removed.

Prepared to be the learner 'You are there, not just the teacher, the teacher *and* the learner (and) you are working together as a group...trying to circulate knowledge in the room' (school B) thus substituting the role of subject expert for one in which 'the teacher isn't always the teacher' (school C) and the child may know more than you.

Coping with difficult / sensitive issues Since PD can be of an emotive nature and involve personal disclosures, teachers can find themselves dealing with sensitive or difficult issues like grief or loss, for instance. Acknowledging that a lesson might impact upon them personally is difficult for anyone who has not addressed these things in their own lives and makes teachers understandably wary of venturing into 'a classroom situation' where they might arise (school E).

Confidence in handling the unexpected A level of confidence in oneself, independent of any subject specialism, was judged as necessary when 'you don't know what's going to come up next'. Valuing *process over product* and moving into the unknown means that 'you may be opening a bag of worms' (school C).

Management styles The more relaxed atmosphere of a PD class can generate class management problems for teachers that fall outside their area of expertise. This can be anything from more noise or movement of pupils or furniture through to unfamiliar teaching styles that accommodate more active learning.

Preparation There can be a danger of thinking that not much time is needed for the preparation of a PD lesson. However, if anything, more careful thought and preparation than usual seem to be necessary according to the PD teachers and lessons can be enhanced by the use of numerous resources. 'I do feel that the greatest challenge is being prepared for it and having the training and the knowledge to put it across as successfully as possible' (school E).

Not having time for the preparation necessary or making use of the good resources that can be tapped.

Lack of training Pushing all the desks back in order to do a role play or handling the other dynamic processes already mentioned were seen by another teacher as essential elements of what she did. When asked whether someone experiencing difficulty with any one of these would be challenged in the area of PD she replied 'oh, definitely!' (school A). Correspondingly, another teacher remarked that she felt 'hard and fast training is required in the process of how to teach PD' with which she

would 'be going into that class a much more confident person' (school E).

6.3.7 Classroom PD teachers

Patterns identified in teachers who appear to demonstrate good practice in PD lessons are summarised below, supported where appropriate with direct quotes from classroom teachers arising from their own reflections during interview:

- The best examples showed teachers who really liked their classes and appeared to really enjoy teaching PD. They had a passion for working in this area. In so doing, they worked hard at viewing their (PD) classes as a collection of individual pupils rather than a mass or anonymous composite pupil group.

"You need to want to find what is likeable about every individual whatever that struggle might be".

" PD teachers should be sensitive to what engages their attention and what seems important to them and this cannot be predicted"

"Establishing good relationships with students is the key"

- Not only did such teachers hold such a positive attitude but they showed it demonstrably in the classroom. Teacher demeanour seems very important in setting a safe and positive classroom atmosphere, in which more genuine and open pupil reflection and discussion can take place (*'Forbidding personalities ensure that issues are not opened up'*). Best teacher examples showed their interest, their approval and acceptance of the individual pupil and encouraged pupil responses.

"PD teachers need to be outgoing, sincere, honest, friendly and tolerant and those that aren't will struggle".

- Effective PD teachers won the engagement of their pupils which was often achieved through humour, sharing something of themselves (which, from examples observed, does not need to be substantial but the teachers needed to be prepared to do so). For this area of the curriculum in particular, the key seemed to be in showing humanness and not hiding behind the teacher role.

“As a PD teacher you must lose the stiff upper lip, you cannot be distant, you must be prepared to tell a little of yourself”.

- Effective teachers in this area were prepared to be flexible in their methodology and also sought to include life issues into the PD curriculum which were not only sensitive and challenging but also necessary, in their view.

“I don’t agree with teaching by handouts”

“Confidence is paramount in teaching a subject specialism but teaching of PD is removing that bedrock of confidence”

“Areas PD addresses include suicide..... a huge one because of the area, also death”

6.4 Pupils’ perspectives of PD

Focus group sessions were carried out with KS3 pupils in the five sample schools following classroom observation sessions. Table 5 details the numbers, gender and age groups of participants.

6.4.1 General pupil reactions to PD

There were no evident, significant differences in views across year groups or gender on the issues raised with regard to pupils’ perceptions of PD in the classroom. Rather unexpectedly (and this did not appear

to be due to any researcher *halo effect* as far as can be detected) most pupils expressed tremendous enthusiasm and appreciation for their PD teachers:

'Our PD teacher is the best person to chat to...'

"PD teacher helps you get things off your mind that you might be worrying about e.g. appearance, weight, height, anything like that. She'll take you aside and explain that it is alright and reassure you"

In summary form, pupils' views on PD lessons were that they were variously *fun, interesting, opportunities to get to know people better, places to learn about how other people think, where to learn how to listen or learn what happens in your own life and therefore begin to understand it*. For many, this was clearly a very important and contrasting learning experience at school:

"As soon as you walk into that particular class, everything is just lifted up".

Quite strong opinion was expressed, based on their experience that teachers in the area of PD had to have a number of key features:

- Passion and enthusiasm

"PD teachers have to really like it"

- Understanding

"She has to understand you too"

"Probably the best teacher we have..... she understands"

"You can tell them about what is going on in your life.."

- Reassuring

"The PD teacher makes you feel better about yourself so then you feel more confident"

- Open and trustworthy

"She's not afraid to share her personal life with us because she knows she can trust us and we can trust her".

For both male and female pupils, in the best examples of PD classroom experience, there was a clear understanding and valuing of these being mutual learning spaces, where the teacher-directed role was relinquished to a more equal and democratic learning approach:

"In PD lessons we are all the teachers. It's like she's in the class, like you're teaching with her"

You learn loads...you don't know you're learning it but you are."

For these reasons pupils seemed to recognise a greater opportunity for depth and breadth of personal learning:

"PD is a chance to unbottle yourself of things that have been bothering you".

"You understand it more when you discuss it e.g. talking about drugs at the beginning of the year, people became more aware instead of just writing it down."

Several groups commented on the differences they had observed within the same person but in these different contexts. This centred around a more relaxed approach - 'he's sounder in PD...more dead-on' (school C) one pupil observed, to the general agreement of his peers.

With the exception of one group, general agreement existed across the focus groups of pupils in respect of all the questions asked during the interviews and there was a considerable degree of overlap. Pupils were generally very appreciative of both their PD lessons and their PD teachers and some expanded on this animatedly when given the

opportunity to do so. However, the quantity and quality of the information disclosed within focus groups of pupils were observed to be in direct relation to the 'liveliness' of their respective PD classes and could be described as a spectrum of involvement.

Consistent with this, the group that had least to say comprised pupils who were least enthusiastic about their PD lessons, had appeared to be the least engaged in the classroom observed and, when asked if they enjoyed it, responded by saying 'not really – it's just like any other class' (school D). The whole situation of this particular school - its catchment area, the socio-economic background of many pupils, the levels of local paramilitary involvement and associated tensions have been clearly articulated by adult interviewees and documented elsewhere in this report. Taking these factors into account, then, and noting also that this was a low ability group of pupils, they fully represent themselves and, probably, many other young people in Northern Ireland with similar circumstances. As such, the task of pursuing the personal in PD and trying to 'win' the engagement of such a group is no mean feat and undoubtedly represents a formidable and unremitting challenge to any teacher. Their younger counterparts from the same school, however, corresponded far more closely to the findings outlined below.

'It's not like a normal lesson' (school C)

Pupils generally considered their PD lessons to be very useful for a wide variety of reasons which they were able to elucidate. Most looked forward to this part of the week because it represented a contrast to their other classes to a greater or lesser extent and they could vouch for the fact that their teachers liked it too. This contrast existed in a number of respects which could be described as the focus of the lesson, the

form it took, the style of the teacher and the attendant expectations placed upon the pupils. One pupil (Year 9) commented that 'you think that you don't really need them but when you talk about them like this then you realise how important they really are' (school E).

Pupils greatly appreciated whatever degree of relaxedness was evident, the opportunity to talk and to sit with their friends, the chance, sometimes, to choose their own group, although as one pupil candidly observed, this 'depends what mood she's in' (school D). They liked the chance to hear everyone's opinion and find out more about each other. One group were particularly enthusiastic about 'circle time' as a means by which this could be done and were keen to have more regular opportunities to do so. Other groups mentioned playing learning games on a semi-regular basis and most recognised PD as a chance to get to know their teacher.

Pupils were readily able to distinguish the ways that PD was different and 'not like a normal lesson' - a representative comment. This difference in the nature of PD was seen positively, and, as such, raises certain questions about the nature of the contrast and what is perceived to be 'normal.'

'You shouldn't fear your teachers' (school B)

Contrasting the 'relaxedness' evident in their PD lessons with what can occur at other times in the formal curriculum, some pupils identified a number of inhibitory factors that centred around fear. On the subject of teachers, one year 10 pupil remarked that 'you don't enjoy it more if you fear them' and another, reflecting on the general atmosphere in one of their classes commented that 'I'm always scared that something bad's going to happen.' Another pupil evidently speaking

for others, disliked voices raised against him, saying 'if the teacher shouts at you then you think "I don't want to do work for her because she shouted at me" '(school B).

'I think teachers should make things more interesting' (school B)

There was a general consensus that, in addition to the detail of *what* they did, the individual person of the teacher mattered a great deal – determining the *how* of what they did. These teachers were alluded to very positively and some in glowing terms. In all cases, their PD teacher was also their form teacher who taught them another subject besides.

Representatives from one year 8 class said that they did not always feel comfortable in asking for explanations or repetition since 'some teachers are a bit critical if you don't understand' and that 'sometimes teachers just put you on the spot and say *why* don't you understand?' (school E). This is clearly a disincentive to the asking of questions and for this same class, PD turned out to be the means by which the problem was solved. For pupils, airing your feelings about being scared to ask certain teachers to repeat themselves and being given the opportunity for a general discussion on that subject is the 'process' by which pupils reach a fuller understanding of the issue. If, in addition, this happens within the supportive environment of a PD lesson where the teacher evidently cares for the well-being and happiness of their pupils, then the issue is more likely to be resolved satisfactorily. This was borne out by the classroom observations in which several teachers made it their business to hear the detail of difficulties experienced by pupils in relation to their school lives, including difficulties with other members of staff. In part, this was, perhaps, a recognition of the fact that school is a large part of any young person's life and that to pursue the 'personal' in any meaningful way means that their school lives must,

by default, be included. These incidents were some of the livelier exchanges observed in classrooms and where greater levels of interest and engagement were evident.

'It's about ourselves...it's different because it's about us' (school D)

'It's about real life' (school B)

Thus PD turned out to be the crucible in which some thorny issues could be aired and progressed by teachers more attuned to the 'personal' in PD and more confident of their own ability to handle or 'facilitate' that process. However, the success of this concerns the relative ease with which pupils felt they could relate to the individual person of the teacher.

These qualities, most appreciated from a pupil perspective, are expanded below.

'The chance to unbottle yourself'' (school A)

PD was seen as being for themselves - that 'everything's just about the pupils' (school E). It served to help them understand 'things that you have never thought about' and even 'things that you wouldn't talk about with your mummy or daddy (school C). One group commented on their teachers evident motivation in saying 'she makes sure you feel comfortable and tries to sort out all your problems' (school E) and another identified PD as the only context in which personal matters could be aired.

They greatly appreciated the chance to join in and the fact that 'you actually get to talk' (school E) was mentioned repeatedly. 'We don't copy out notes' one pupil observed and 'you have the chance to talk whereas in other classes the teachers usually talk and teach' continued

another (school E). Airing their opinions was evidently something enjoyed and this was used constructively. 'You get to show your views and argue with other people' (school C) and in so doing 'get to speak your mind and...get things off your chest if you're having problems' (school E). 'It's better doing stuff like...debating...and doing role plays' one year 10 group agreed, although they also pointed out that 'it should be a bit longer' because 'you don't get enough time' (school C).

'It tells you things you're strange of' (school C)

There was a sense of pressure being off in PD, 'a chance to feel free' (school E) to talk about things such that 'everyone can relax' (school B), these lessons being 'more fun' and 'more laid back' (school C).

Considered easier 'because you don't write, but listen and talk an awful lot' (school B) PD nevertheless led to substantial learning in its own way – a raising of awareness about self and others in which the teacher themselves played a significant part and in which 'you're learning about the present and the future' (school B).

'How to put yourself in someone else's shoes' (school B)

In addition to general comments like 'helping you to get used to the school', 'learning how to control yourself and not get into fights' (school D) and how to cope with bullying, pupils explicitly identified the following as the learning outcomes of their PD lessons:

- Learning how to fit in and be social
- Learning more about others than you would normally
- Learning how to look after yourself
- Learning how to express yourself honestly without hurting someone's feelings
- Learning how to control and express your anger

- Learning how to say 'no'

'Like a normal person – not like a teacher' (school C)

Teachers were specifically mentioned for being flexible or fair or for evidently remembering what their own childhood was like, thus being able to identify more readily with their pupils. However, in addition to this, other significant qualities became apparent which are described below.

6.4.2 Teacher as ally

'When you know your teacher, it's easier for them to teach you' (school B)

Analysis of the focus group interviews clearly revealed the importance for pupils of being able to relate to their PD teacher and numerous comments were made in connection with this.

'You feel closer to your form teacher' declared one pupil and 'she's more of a friend than a teacher' (school B) added another. The evident interest in them personally was expressed by one pupil who said 'I was the only one from my school whenever I came here and Mrs X always asked me how I was getting, on but now I've got loads of friends' (school E). Another, who used to be shy in primary school, declared that she had now 'come out of my shell' (school A).

Teachers were clearly instrumental in helping to deal with things that arose in their school lives and elsewhere - 'we get to talk about our problems and our form teacher helps us solve them' according to one pupil (school E). This could include anything from the myriad of ways

that younger pupils can be helped to adjust to a new school, interrupting injustice on their behalf in a dinner queue in one case, to helping handle difficulties experienced at the hands of another teacher. On the subject of personality clashes, for example, one pupil observed dourly 'I don't like my X teacher because he doesn't like me' prompting someone else to comment 'he doesn't like *anybody* and nobody likes him!' (school A).

In this sense it was clear that some teachers were adept at taking pupils' concerns seriously and, without compromising themselves professionally, able to facilitate this kind of situation. The simple act of listening, for instance, to a pupil's felt sense of hardship can, if sensitively handled, act as a validation of that pupil, enabling them to understand their situation more fully and perhaps to respond differently in future. In their ability to fulfil this delicate role, pupils clearly recognized such teachers as allies. 'She's probably the best teacher we have – she understands' declared one pupil to the general agreement of his peers (school B).

6.4.3 Teacher as confidante

'If we have a problem, her door is always open'

Most pupils were of the opinion that they could tell their PD teacher 'about things that have been going on in your life' and that this was a person they could confide in. This air of confidence made them feel that things could be discussed without the fear of it being 'blabbed' around the school, summed up by one pupil who observed 'whatever you say in PD, it doesn't leave the room' (school C). Sometimes this extended to their class agreement of confidentiality was clearly significant to them in that 'the whole class knows but no-one else

knows'. This had a qualitative effect on the nature and degree of disclosure about personal information. One group felt that, because of this 'you can talk to him about more stuff and then they know but they're not going to say...like he asks who smokes (and he may not agree) but he's not going to tell' (school C). Another group agreed that 'she knows she can trust us and we can trust her' (school B). This mutual trust clearly mattered to them as did respect for their privacy. Another teacher used personal jotters or journals with sensitivity where this was concerned. The focus group pupils interviewed from her class were aware of the benefits of 'getting your problems out by writing about them in a book', also described as 'like talking to your book' particularly since they knew that their teacher would not read this kind of material (school C).

If an issue arose that proved too sensitive or personal to air in the context of the classroom, most felt comfortable in approaching their teacher on an individual basis since 'you get to tell her things that you wouldn't tell anybody else' (school E). Teachers, in some cases, might find themselves the preferred option over parents for a variety of reasons. Not wanting your parents to know 'that you're having trouble with a particular subject' could be one reason, for example or, as another pupil explained, 'maybe if you're not comfortable talking to your parents or something, you can talk to your form teacher' (school E). One teacher evidently allayed anxiety about being approachable for her pupils and that they had no need to feel embarrassed around her because 'she says she's shockproof...she's heard it all before' (school B).

6.4.4 Teacher as learner

'You get to teach the teacher stuff' (school C)

Mutual trust and respect became apparent as significant factors in pupils' appreciation of their PD teachers and they responded well to the fact that their opinions were judged to be of importance. With some teachers, however, this went still further as pupils described instances in which teachers relegated themselves to the status of learner, conceding that their pupils held greater knowledge and experience in some respects. 'We are all the teachers' observed one pupil 'it's like she's in the class' and 'like you're teaching *with* her' (school A). The degree of relish with which these observations were made perhaps indicates the stark contrast that exists between this environment and some other lessons. Reflecting on their teacher behaving 'like she's one of the pupils' was clearly novel, and the fact that 'she just sits back and listens to us' was something they greatly enjoyed (school A). Another group identified the advantage of this from the teacher's point of view since they could see that 'he learns stuff from us' (school C).

One group reckoned they were very lucky in their PD teacher – since most of the male teachers were really strict and, for that reason, it would not be possible to discuss things with the same degree of latitude. Classroom atmosphere in this particular case was described enthusiastically - 'as soon as you walk into that particular class everything is just lifted up' commented one pupil, another adding that 'it practically lights up' (school B).

6.4.5 Teacher sharing self

'She's not afraid to share her personal life' (school B)

A number of the teachers clearly took the opportunity to disclose personal information from time to time including anything from sharing truthful or funny stories from childhood to present day concerns. One

group evidently enjoyed hearing their teacher 'talking about what she felt like when she was young' (school C) and could identify with her experience of having been 'roared at' by a teacher which affected her confidence in reading. Another group really liked the way their teacher behaved in PD lessons because, since she made it easier for them to talk, they were aware that this improved *their* talking and listening skills. In addition to the teacher's role as confidante, openness of the teacher further promoted trust and openness from the pupils, encouraged by this to disclose more about themselves than they otherwise might.

It became evident that some teachers do not represent an adult world full of certainties in which adults have all the answers but rather as a complex place, constantly changing, where we experience a wide range of feelings and in which difficult issues continue to arise. In this important sense such teachers convey that they themselves are as much a part of that process as their pupils and that doubt, confusion, and uncertainty are completely 'normal'. By openly sharing some of the struggles from their own lives in an appropriate way, they 'model' the fact that this characterises adulthood as much as it does childhood. This commonality of experience – 'the human condition' – can be used in significant ways by a thoughtful teacher and boosting confidence is one such example.

6.4.6 Teacher as confidence booster

'She makes you feel better about yourself so then you feel more confident'

(school C)

Pupils' confidence in themselves can be challenged in an entire spectrum of ways that may well remain completely unknown to all but the most receptive teacher. One group said that although their teacher was very sensitive to how they felt generally, there were still some issues that they found embarrassing. Those present, however, had no hesitation in approaching her individually for help with more personal concerns such as appearance or weight for example since 'she'll take you aside and explain to you that it's alright' (school C). This reassurance helped combat things that they worried about privately including problems with friends in which case she could be relied upon to bring them together and then help to sort the problem out. Another group, who enjoyed role plays, spoke about the help, encouragement and compliments they received in their practice attempts such that 'when you come to do it, you're brilliant at it', reflecting that 'it's always a load of fun in form class (PD)' (school B).

6.4.7 Buddy support

Several groups of pupils mentioned the significance of older students (by a buddy or other system) where older pupils are allocated a small group of young pupils. All the younger pupils spoke favourably about this; indicating that it served an important function because the 'buddy' was someone who could be called upon for help and support around the school if need be – to intervene on their behalf when situations arose. They greatly appreciated this..... *'they have done this stuff before and they know what school's like already'*. Thus, there is a general sense that help is at hand without always having to ask teachers.

6.4.8 Humour

Pupils emphasised the importance of teacher's use of humour and the way in which this helps to create a better learning environment. A range of comments were made by pupils, as detailed below:

'Most of the time she's one of the lads' (school B)

'The form teacher's the only one you can joke about with...all the other ones take it too seriously' (school B)

'She's the best craic' 'she livens it up' (school B)

'She jokes about' is 'dead on' 'not a normal teacher'

'She looks for opportunities to be funny and this helps the mood in the classroom' (school B)

'When the teacher's good craic it livens up the class' (school B)

6.4.9 Does the teacher need to like PD to teach it well?

In response to this question, the pupils gave a unanimous 'yes'. Follow up comments were then made, as follows:

'She has to understand you too', 'she has to be open' (school A)

'She needs to take an interest' (school E)

'You'd know if the teacher was interested or not' (school E)

'The teacher would have to be interested for us to be interested'
(school E)

'If she didn't, she wouldn't deal with your problems.....I'm sure there would be a lot more problems because your problems wouldn't get solved' (school E)

'He wouldn't be able to understand your problems' (school C)

'He has to understand it.....he has to know his class' (school C)

'Otherwise she wouldn't be no use to us.....she'd just give us a book to do' (school D)

'If they are enjoying it then you'll enjoy it...but if they don't enjoy it then you'll find it boring and you won't learn' (school B)

6.5 External Personnel

As part of the research study, a total of seventeen personnel who were associated with the delivery of PD but were not school staff were interviewed. Ten of these were from a variety of statutory organisations, including ELB advisers and statutory support agencies, a remaining six were from voluntary agencies that provided support to schools in the delivery of PD or associated issues and a key officer responsible for the

development of training for relationships and sexuality education in the Republic of Ireland (see Table 4 for details) provided the sample. This section of the report describes the perspective of these individuals in terms of their understanding and perception of PD, their identification of the essential factors for good delivery and their views on training.

6.5.1 What is PD?

There was general agreement amongst this group of individuals, whether they were from the statutory or voluntary sector, that the purpose of PD was to provide children and young people with the tools for living, or what was sometimes referred to as '*a broader education*' or '*preparation for life and relationships*' and '*making informed judgements and decisions*'. This overarching perspective is captured in the following quote which encapsulates the commonality of opinion that PD is about:

'nurturing and encouraging the full growth of the human person and the full potential of that person. In essence it is preparing young people for life's journey so that they will make responsible decisions and invest in healthy relationships'.

Additionally, there was a consensus of opinion that the personal and social development of children and young people should be seen as part of the ethos and whole raison d'être of a school and it is the school's responsibility to provide a non-threatening environment in which young people feel safe and secure and which thus facilitates personal growth. However, there was a tendency for the interviewees from the voluntary sector to use the terms personal and social education and personal and social development interchangeably and this group argued that 'it' should not be seen as a separate 'subject' to

be taught in the classroom and they similarly questioned whether it can be delivered in the formalised structure of the school as it exists:

PD is about informality, it's about trust, it's about what PD should be about and what PD's not about because it's within the formalised structure of the school.'

In contrast, the interviewees from the statutory sector did distinguish between personal and social education and personal and social development, and this group argued that the latter was the broader context within schools with PSE being the timetabled subject. They thus suggested that there were two levels to the topic:

'(PD) is the whole ethos and culture within the school (it) filters into all the other themes and dovetails into many areas of the curriculum but PSE that's the specific content to be taught in PSE classes.'

Several of the interviewees (both from the statutory and voluntary sectors), raised the issue of the restrictions that a set PD curriculum, combined with the emphasis placed on academic achievement, places on the delivery of PD. The argument here was that this results in a focus on the product and a sense that *'this is all you need to know'* rather than concentrating on the process and the outcome of the learning for your own development. One respondent, who was appalled at the suggestion that PD might be examined, put this argument very succinctly:

'It (PD) is not a product, it is a process which should be inherent in the school's ethos.'

Despite such insights there was surprisingly little specific reference to the emotional component of PD, though it was occasionally mentioned in definitions of PD:

'A broader education with some emphasis on the development of emotional intelligence'.

However, it should be acknowledged that emotional issues, in many ways, were inherent in the discussions, for example when reference was made to sensitive topics such as self-injury or depression or when referring to providing a safe environment for discussing personal topics.

6.5.2 Essential factors for Good Delivery of PD

While there was an acknowledgement that certain approaches may be more appropriate in some schools than others, and, therefore, there needs to be sensitivity to the context in which each school operates, there was much agreement on the essential factors for good delivery and these could be divided into three categories:

- Management issues
- Teacher qualities
- Teaching strategies.

- **Management Issues**

There was common agreement that critical to the effective delivery of PD was the tone that is set by the principal and senior management team in the school. If these people are not fully committed to PD then little progress will actually be made. It was further argued that this type of commitment will mean that an appreciation and valuing of PD will

filter through the school and be seen as part of its overall ethos. This will be reflected in the school development plan and timetabling, and resource implications will be carefully thought-out rather than PD simply being handed out to form teachers who *'are not particularly geared up'* to deliver the programme. Associated with this point, though not one mentioned by all interviewees, was the need for staff support and care and particularly in the area of staff stress. It would indeed seem to be important that if the ethos of the school is key in the delivery of PD then that caring ethos should spread to its staff as well as its pupils.

A related issue that the group of interviewees from the statutory sector mentioned was that the management team, along with the whole school, need to be clear about what they are talking about when they refer to PD. Such clarity would require discussion and consultation to have taken place with the whole school staff leading to a cohesive approach and agreement about the purpose and delivery of the PD programme. Additionally, it was suggested that the school and all staff need to be very clear about the child protection policy that operates.

A further suggestion coming from some of the interviewees in the statutory sector was that schools need to have one person who has a post of responsibility for PD and this individual needs to be enthusiastic about the role and dedicated to it. They also need to be allocated time in which to co-ordinate PD across the school and to ensure progression and continuity. It would also be their role to establish where the school is in terms of PD, ensure that proper links exist with other aspects of the curriculum, particularly Citizenship, Health Education and Pastoral Care in the wider sense. It should be the duty of this person to consult and to develop an action plan which ensured that monitoring and evaluating procedures were in place.

Similarly, it was argued that schools need to have a small team of individuals who deliver PD work together and support each other rather than teachers being forced into delivering material they do not feel comfortable with. This also overcomes all the problems identified previously concerning teachers who do not want to teach PD (or feel uncomfortable doing so).

Inter-agency links were also believed to be extremely important to the effective delivery of PD. The benefits include not just the involvement of outside agencies in the delivery of certain specialist material but the support of such establishments as the local library, banks, building societies, leisure centres for displays to name but a few. However, where an outside agency is brought in, the school needs to give some thought to both preparation and follow-up that might be required, especially with sensitive topics. As one interviewee put it:

'it's not as straightforward as just bringing somebody in for an hour – delivering sensitive topics is a much bigger picture.'

Finally, it was suggested that the PD package needs to be negotiated with pupils, teachers and parents. This was seen as especially important when talking about sensitive issues such as drugs or sex education but it also can be very informative for all concerned including advisers. The point was also made here that if this is not done, there is a danger that the person who designs the curriculum package will simply be *'handing out what they think they know best'*. Additionally, the Board of Governors should be fully informed and could also be involved in the negotiation and development of any specific curriculum.

- **Teacher Qualities**

Though the phrases and words used differed, there was common agreement amongst all the interviewees as to many of the qualities that a teacher requires to deliver PD effectively, and these are therefore simply listed below as a check list of individual qualities required.

- Genuinely enjoys teaching children, is driven by a child-centred approach, has high expectations for all children and is committed to meeting the needs of all their pupils.
- Need to want to teach PD. This point was frequently followed up with statements suggesting that too many teachers are not given the choice and teaching PD sometimes *'terrifies them a bit'*. These teachers welcome people coming in from outside to do sessions because it means that they will not have to teach it themselves. Staff such as these are 'hiding' within their own subject areas because they find PD threatening. This can cause stress among staff who are fearful yet forced to teach this with no training or support.
- Need to be flexible and willing to take risks – to allow discussion to develop and not see themselves as constrained by their lesson plan. Need to be willing to move in and out of roles and be willing to consult with pupils about matters which affect them.
- Need to have the skills akin to counselling. They have to be able to be a good listening ear, have an ability to hear things not normally disclosed to a teacher, alongside respect for the views of the young people themselves. They also need to be able to be open and honest and show empathy not just with the individual but also with the community in which they are working.

Such attributes will mean that young people will be able to trust the teacher and know that this is a safe place to talk; such skills facilitate the building of a relationship with the pupil and the class.

- Need to be able to use humour to deal with heavy and serious matters and have the skills to work within a group situation and be aware of, and sensitive to, group dynamics.
- **Teaching Strategies**

The people interviewed came from a range of backgrounds and themselves used a variety of strategies to work with children and young people. For some outside the teaching profession, they were adamant that:

'we don't teach PD – we use all the attributes we have and the skills of facilitation to do it – kids will do PD **with** us but they won't do PD **for** us'.

The variety of backgrounds from which the interviewees came meant that a wide range of strategies used in different settings, both within the classroom and outside, were described all of which it was suggested were successful, though this was usually based on personal experiences rather than empirical evaluations. As with the Teacher Qualities above, these are therefore simply listed with comments made where these are deemed necessary:

- Interactive teaching which was defined as 'not all talk and no do' with the point being made that young people can become very restless if there is 'too much talk'. Also, interactive teaching means that the paper work is reduced for the pupils who are

'getting that in thirteen other lessons in the school' and as one other interviewee put it *'in PD to be able to understand it is far more important than how to spell it or write it down.'* Several ideas for interactive teaching were put forward including: discussions and debates, group-led Powerpoint presentations, buzz groups, brainstorming, and delivering something to an invited class as a form of peer education.

- The use of art as a means by which children can learn the skills concerning how we live our lives was described very vividly. Using drama or art in a safe space provides a means of dealing with a problem or an incident, or thinking about ways of problem-solving or resolving an issue. However, this it was suggested would be best done outside the constraints of the formal classroom thus allowing for what as described as *structured informality*, i.e. presenting an informal structure to what you are doing even though everything is very thoroughly planned. Furthermore, the use of art was seen as especially beneficial in promoting ownership among the participants themselves, something that is seen as key to PD.
- An accepted way of delivering PD is Circle Time, though this has not been as well-developed at KS3 and there is a lack of adequate training in this technique at post-primary education in Northern Ireland.

6.5.3 Views on Training

The importance of teachers who deliver PD having an appropriate training was referred to frequently though there was little indication as to what exactly they believed to be appropriate and/or adequate

duration of training or what it should cover. In relation to formal training at the various levels of teacher education (i.e. initial, early professional development and continuing professional development) the point was made that if the DE saw PD as a high priority then funding and resources would be much more readily available for teacher training at all levels, including specialist training for dedicated PD teachers. At the moment, it was argued that teachers have little preparation for dealing with what might arise when venturing into the personal with children and it is therefore not surprising that they feel concerned about teaching in this area. Furthermore, it was suggested that there is a general expectation that teachers will be willing and able to deliver any new initiative or programme that is introduced, frequently alongside a range of other initiatives, and for which they have no training at all.

The point was also made that the active learning strategies which were seen as the most appropriate way of delivering the PD curriculum are just as valid for all subjects. However, a belief was expressed that while initial teacher training used to place a high priority on active learning, this is being given a much lower profile today because of the pressure to perform for the league tables, combined with the fact that DE have prioritised literacy, numeracy and ICT. However, it was felt that if the revised curriculum as proposed by CCEA is implemented this would be likely to have a major impact on initial teacher training and provide greater opportunity for the development of a wider range of pedagogical skills for underpinning a skills-based curriculum.

Other comments on the topic of training tended to focus on outside agencies who provide various types of training ranging from short input on resource packs on specific topics to more general training in the area of PD. A common fact across this type of training was the need

for extensive planning before delivery and this required inter-agency work and there were several references made to the need for some type of group workers forum to support these individuals. These points about collaboration find resonance in O'Connor's (2000) report, albeit on drugs education, where she asserts that the:

"evidence-base...amongst educationalists on what constitutes good practice in this area...recognises the need for schools and teachers to lead and co-ordinate this area with the support of parents, multi-agencies including the police, and the broader school community." (p2/3).

The interviewees who had used art-based activities as an approach within PD had much experience of working in a training capacity with teachers in a workshop setting and voiced their clear opinions and experiences on this topic. They commented on the wide range of attitudes they had encountered, ranging from some of the teachers being very willing to learn and participate in activities while others strongly resisted different and challenging approaches and avoided them at all costs. However, they also pointed out that even those teachers who were enthused by this new approach and felt that it had potential still felt the need for further training. This group of respondents argued that the curriculum advisers should be able to dedicate more time to training in PD, and to include creative and expressive approaches.

This group of interviewees also felt that one of the biggest obstacles for teachers in delivering PD was the change of role from subject teacher to PD teacher and they suggested that pupils find it difficult to talk 'across the role'. This is further exacerbated by the fact that the teacher also finds it difficult to change roles and the subject teacher-pupil relationship is the more established one:

'simply because you switch roles and become the PD teacher doesn't mean that you suddenly become more trustworthy – this is dependent on you having the attributes I mentioned earlier' (i.e. the attributes that facilitate the delivery of the PD curriculum).

It was suggested by this group of interviewees that even in such situations where the teacher is popular and does have a really good relationship with the pupils based on empathy and respect they still teach PD from within their subject areas. Thus, while pupils may not necessarily 'open up' to that teacher in a PD lesson (or any other lesson) that teacher will still be in better position to teach PD to that pupil than any other member of staff.

6.5.4 Summary

Overall, this group of external personnel identified a range of management and teacher qualities which, if combined with a variety of teaching strategies, they believed would lead to good delivery of PD. However, to counter this there was a belief that the Department's continuing emphasis on academic achievement and a promotional structure which increasingly demands administration and management rather than classroom practice lead to many teachers not perceiving that they have any part to play in the delivery of personal and social development leading to an overall devaluing of the whole area.

Views on Training

Key points

Best practice in sample schools is typified by:

- Principals who have a key role in promoting a caring school culture in which people value one another.
- Principals who feel that PD provides an invaluable forum where independent thought and experience are valued....perhaps the *only* place where pupils can talk about certain things and be heard.
- Schools which take a child-centred, holistic perspective on pupil development
- A strong relationship between the form teacher and the class.
- PD coordinators who are seen as champions of this subject and who are supportive, knowledgeable and interpersonally skilled.
- PD coordinators who have a good overview of what each year group was doing and what approaches teachers were using.
- Good communication and regular supportive meetings within the PD team.

Best practice in sample schools is typified by:

- PD teachers who are actually suited to the role, who like children, are interested in them and who possess a range of important core attributes such as passion, empathy, warmth and a sense of humour.
- Teachers' ability to relate to pupils and to consult with them, finding out their views and trying to accommodate age-specific needs.
- Teachers who place a high premium on the *process* of the lesson and spontaneity; not just on well-prepared, prescribed content.
- Teachers who are perceived by pupils as open, an ally, a confidante, humorous, genuinely interested in them and as a source of affirmation.
- Enthusiastic principals with a vision who were prepared to *walk the talk*, be strong advocates for young people and create an ethos within the school which reflected the values and approaches associated with PD.
- A genuine commitment on the part of all teachers, not just PD teachers, to the importance and value of PD principles and practices.
- Schools where special efforts are made to help boys to engage with PD in a meaningful way which helps them to move beyond stereotypical male defensiveness/veneer of coping well with life situations.
- External personnel reinforced the views of principals, co-ordinators, PD teachers and pupils in terms of the importance of management, teacher qualities and effective strategies in the delivery of PD but emphasized the role of arts-based activities and the value of a co—ordinated, collaborative working relationship with external agencies.

7. Challenges in Teaching PD

Chapter content

Challenges in teaching PD are explored, together with links to general pastoral support for pupils in schools. Three issues which emerge are:

- Planning and timetabling of PD
- Tensions which arise from the duality of the form teacher's role with respect to PD and also administration
- The importance of a *whole school* approach to PD work.

7.1 Planning and timings

Timetabling is a notoriously difficult and stressful aspect of school planning. Notwithstanding this, teachers generally agree that where a subject is placed in the timetable will often indicate its priority and status in the mindset of the school. Most year groups in the sample had fairly limited access to weekly PD classes (once per week for schools A, C, D & E and twice per week for school B) and thus if this area of the pastoral curriculum is to fulfil its goals, it requires careful consideration in the timetable planning. Despite the intense commitment demonstrated by the majority of PD teachers and the PD co-ordinators in the sample schools, some lessons were scheduled for periods which were not optimal for pupil engagement. For example, School D which held its PD lessons first period meant teachers were working against pupil fatigue, latecomer interruptions, and early morning administrative tasks. Equally, last period classes meant pupils (school C) tended to have diminishing attention and the window of active learning time was significantly reduced, thus limiting the depth of any potential learning. Clearly mid-morning to early afternoon is the most conducive period for fuller engagement by the range of pupils observed but securing these

slots in the weekly timetable will be difficult as long as the PD remains low-priority.

7.2 Conflation with Form teacher's role

Perhaps one of the most serious questions raised by the study with regard to the teaching of PD concerns the identified impact and implications of the dual role of form teacher and PD teacher. Organisationally and structurally most post-primary schools in Northern Ireland have set up their pastoral system such that form teachers deliver the PD curriculum for their allocated form class. From a school-based pastoral care perspective this has obvious advantages that hold some persuasive rationale. Thus, it is argued (e.g. Blackburn, 1975, Hamblin, 1978) that PD classes, by their very nature, provide regular and structured opportunities for a form teacher to get to know in depth their form class and vice versa. Within the study, this was evident in how frequently the form teachers, in their interviews, referred to the importance of 'bonding' with their form class. Correspondingly, five of the pupil focus groups uninhibitedly expressed their strength of feeling that their PD teacher was their ally and friend. In three of the five case study schools, the form teacher remained their form teacher as the pupils progressed up through the school. This sense of mutual connectedness should not be underestimated. Significantly, this approach was one of the driving forces at the early inception of pastoral care in schools in the UK (see Best, Jarvis & Ribbins, 1980) – that in large, potentially anonymous post-primary schools (newly formed comprehensives in England and Wales), an effective form teacher system would lead to pupils being known personally by at least by one person (namely their form teacher) in the organisation. Pupils, in turn, would have an increased sense of identity with their form teacher, form

class and ultimately with the school. The current study reinforces this strategy and, in particular, what it signals in terms of the form teacher's relationship with pupils. Additionally, it was clear that this duality contributed to the wider pastoral system in a variety of forms, including a concern for individual pupils and teacher follow-up of issues identified inside the PD classroom.

Nevertheless, within the study, a downside to the dual role of form teacher/PD teacher was also noted within the observed classroom lessons. This related to the potential for disruption and distraction within the lessons arising from the double agenda running within the lessons. A form teacher's role carries with it a series of regular and routine administrative duties (e.g. attendance and sick notes - School A) and, in some cases, monitorial and discipline tasks (e.g. checking parental signing of homework diaries (Schools C and D) which it appears must have time allocated within PD lessons. In terms of time availability, PD lessons, have already been defined within the study as cramped learning spaces in which personal and emotional topics are to be raised and facilitated. Thus the erosion of time at the beginnings and endings of PD lessons, taken up by form teacher tasks, not only reduces available opportunities for deeper engagement with PD lesson topics but also creates a potential fragmentation within the lesson for the teachers and for the pupils concerned.

For the teachers involved, there appeared to be a need to multi-task within the PD lesson, which may involve remembering to complete form teacher duties whilst in the midst of facilitating a sensitive topic. For the pupils, there is the experience of contradiction whereby they are being encouraged, at one and the same time, to engage personally with a topic of social or emotional valence and yet being distracted from this by the requirements of the teacher to attend to a variety of seemingly

minor administrative tasks. This was exemplified in school D, Year group 9 in a PD lesson focusing on moods and emotions when the teacher, with two-thirds of the lesson gone, is disrupted by the PD co-coordinator needing to check that absentee notes and monitor books have been signed by the form teacher. It also occurred in school E, at a similar point in the lesson, when the teacher suddenly focused on homework diaries in the midst of a pupil exchange about frustration on teacher style in science education:

*'If Dr M comes through the door and you don't have this diary signed there will be a row. You **must** get these diaries signed, folks, it's really important. Your parents must check!'. (PD teacher, Year 8, school E).*

In general, the nature of PD topics requires some form of safety and security before pupils will engage with any degree of honesty or integrity. Many of the teachers referred to a contract agreed at the beginning of the school year, which involved a code between the teacher and the pupils and referred to some element of confidentiality. Nevertheless, it appeared in the outworking that PD lessons held little sanctity or understanding from the school perspective. In the ten lessons observed, at least four were interrupted by other members of the school personnel on ad hoc or regular pretexts (e.g. school B, secretary walks in; school D, PD co-coordinator enters; school E, a technician fixes taps and unawarely works around the room as the lesson progresses).

7.3 Links to general pastoral support

A synthesis of the data drawn from the various sources (teachers, principals, pupils and classroom observations) suggests that, in the best examples of high quality PD schools, there was a harmony of perspectives within the whole school. In other words, all participants

held a common view of the relevance and value of PD principles and practices not just for the well-being of the pupils but also for the school community as a whole. Even though key players may feel that the delivery of PD might not be perfect, there was nonetheless a genuine commitment to the core values of *relationship and respect* for pupils, coupled with a recognition that this should be extended to staff as well.

Key points

The study identifies several challenges to the planning and delivery of PD, as follows

- Where possible, PD sessions should be timetabled in the middle of the day rather than first or last period, in order to maximise the impact of pupil learning and benefit.
- The critically important role and relationship which a form teacher has with his/her pupils is at risk of being significantly undermined if administrative tasks, associated with the form teacher role, interfere with the process and methodology of the PD lesson, which needs to be viewed as protected time.
- PD does not operate in isolation, alongside a variety of other unrelated school processes and dynamics. Rather, in the best examples of high quality PD schools, there was a harmony of perspectives within the whole school.

8. Recommendations

Chapter content

Arising from the study's findings and issues implicit in the data, a number of recommendations are presented. Whilst some of these relate to steps which need to be taken within schools themselves, others refer to broader issues in the development of PD for the education sector. Recommendations include issues such as recruitment and selection, role tension, classroom environment, pupil voice, class size, timetabling of PD, teacher support, and the use of external agencies, PD curriculum content and professional standards.

Schools in the present study have been identified as exemplars of good practice. From the data described above it is clear that there are a number of recommendations that can now be made both in terms of:

- Increasing the likelihood that the *best* features of these schools will be replicated elsewhere, across the whole post-Primary school sector.
- and also
- Weaknesses or areas for further development, apparent even in these *best practice* schools which need to be addressed.

The recommendations, based entirely on the content and implications of the data, are as follows:

8.1 Issues for schools

8.1.1 Recruitment and selection of PD teachers

Effective subject teachers, form teachers or those with enthusiasm for the job do not necessarily, automatically make effective teachers of PD. Indeed, some teachers who stray into PD roles may not naturally possess the type of core attributes which are characteristic of individual and group facilitators. The present study clearly elucidates the correlation between teachers' openness to their own personal process, issues, emotional sensitivity to self and others and a range of beneficial

pupil outcomes. Greater responsiveness and personal development gains by pupils are more likely to flow from contact with PD teachers who fundamentally like young people and think highly of them. The study also highlights the importance of teachers with a passion and conviction about the importance and potential of PD in the all-round, holistic development of pupils. The above issues signpost the need for careful selection of teachers for the PD role. Appointing suitable individuals in the first place is a critical, initial step in securing effective PD provision for pupils. It is recommended that much greater attention is placed on selection and that an appropriate, effective, standardised approach to selection is developed which will enable teachers with the necessary qualities, potential and motivation to be identified and recruited. Considerable expertise exists in the wider field (eg: among the caring agencies) with regard to rigorous selection processes for key people-roles and Education and Library Board may wish to consider availing of such expertise in the design of appropriate selection processes and procedures.

8.1.2 Dual role of Form teacher and PD teacher

Whilst it is appropriate, desirable and potentially effective that a Form teacher also fulfils the dual role of PD teacher, there is a clear need to ensure a much clearer separation of the pastoral/PD function and the discharging of necessary administrative and quasi-disciplinary tasks by the Form teacher during PD lessons. These two functions cannot happily co-exist in the same lesson at the same time, without interrupting (and arguably damaging) the potential of PD goals, especially when sensitive processes are being encouraged and developed. Within the study, it is significant that, in the context of limited time available to deliver a PD period (typically thirty-five minutes) more than 17% of the time is often lost due to matters other than PD being attended to.

Much greater awareness and clarity are necessary, on the part of all concerned, to ensure that the PD lesson is viewed as protected time and that the climate of safety, trust and uninterrupted space can be respected.

8.1.3 Classroom environment

The study clearly illustrates that, despite the best efforts of PD teachers to make the most of their surroundings, some traditional classroom environments, science laboratories etc. represent wholly unsuitable working spaces for PD sessions. In the coming period, schools need to identify suitable or adaptable spaces/rooms, conducive to groupwork and informal interaction, in which pupils can feel relaxed and comfortable. Given that the physical layout of conventional classrooms tends to set a tone of formality and predetermined order and control, it is consequently difficult for pupils to move beyond this classroom norm into a more reflective, personal space in which they can respond to a more informal way of working.

8.1.4 Class sizes

Generally speaking, in the post-primary sector, PD classes are delivered to full class group sizes of up to 30 pupils. Within the study, class observations indicated that typically PD teachers are having to deliver sessions with full class groups of up to thirty pupils. From the point of view of potential effectiveness and the facilitation of any kind of meaningful engagement with pupils, such numbers are unrealistic. It is commonplace in post-Primary schools that smaller class sizes (eg: no more than twenty) are arranged for practical subjects such as art, science, technology etc. This needs to become the norm for PD also.

8.1.5 Positioning of PD periods within the timetable

Clearly, some curriculum subject classes need to take place first period and/or last period within the school timetable. However, it was noted in the study that where this occurred for PD classes, it was not conducive to active participation. Fuller pupil engagement eventuated from PD classes which took place within the period mid-morning to mid-afternoon. With this in mind, schools should reassess the positioning of PD classes within the timetable and symbolise their commitment to this important subject area by timetabling PD at a more appropriate point in the school day.

8.1.6 Support and supervision of PD teachers

Teachers carrying out PD roles within schools are undertaking difficult, challenging work which extends them personally, well beyond the normal delivery of subject teaching within the established curriculum. Commonly, they are facilitating discussion and learning processes focused on emotive topics and sensitive pupil issues which may be complex, personally restimulating and emotionally draining. In some cases, as identified in the study, teachers may even feel emotionally or psychologically threatened because facilitating PD processes takes them well beyond the confident persona shored up by subject-specialism, files, folders and teaching notes. PD teachers may also be confronted by pupil disclosures about life circumstances/experiences which were/are harrowing for them at a personal level. For instance, unprocessed teacher grief will inevitably be restimulated by class discussion about loss and bereavement. In such circumstances, it is unrealistic for PD teachers to *soldier on* regardless, without access to structured support and debriefing opportunities. It is well documented in the literature (eg: Figley, 2002) that the compassion-fatigue which results from unsupported caring can lead to damaging results in terms of carers' health and personal welfare. Teachers are no exception to this. In the present study, it is noted that the support felt by PD teachers

from PD Coordinators was a common element in the overall effectiveness of PD provision and that such input facilitated not only professional development and growing competence but also personal support and encouragement regarding what is a demanding role. Specifically, teachers valued coordinators' interpersonal skill and their sensitivity to teachers' needs.

8.1.7 Wider school support and school ethos

Through the study, the critical importance of a supportive Principal who understands the value of PD, coupled with a coherent *all school* commitment to the ethos which underpins it were shown to be essential elements of quality and effectiveness in *best practice* schools. With this in mind, it is recommended that within all schools, every opportunity is taken, through staff meetings, staff development sessions and team briefings, to develop this shared support and sense of affiliation to the goals and purposes of PD within the school.

8.1.8 Continuity of approach

Most primary schools in Northern Ireland have invested strongly in their pastoral dimension, a large element of which is the personal, social and emotional development of their pupils through classroom-based activities. Significantly, Circle Time (Mosley, 1998) with its whole-school emphasis on positive relationships and democratically respectful processes throughout the school community has largely been embraced by this sector (Irvine, 2001). Circle Time is a planned programme of activities which incorporates 'circular discussion meetings' (Mosley, 1996: 6) that seek to promote children's personal and social development through building their self-esteem.

Schools within the study sample that incorporated Circle Time processes and built upon work already established in primary schools

confirmed that there were noticeable benefits deriving, including pupil ease in reflecting upon emotional experience and handling group-sharing. Similarly, PD teachers, familiar with such an approach, were observed to have more confidence in negotiating class groundrules, structuring group process in lessons and handling conflict as it might arise. Consideration should therefore be given to providing opportunities for Primary and Post-Primary schools to learn from each others' approaches and for PD teachers in both sectors to advance together their skills in this respect. In addition, there would be much to be gained by schools continuing to liaise with one another to ensure that there were opportunities for pupils transferring to have some continuity in experience in their PD classes at post-primary.

8.1.9 Greater use of external agencies

In the best examples of effective PD delivery, schools made use of the skills and expertise of outside agencies such as voluntary sector groups. The benefits of this are four-fold:

- Utilising actual skills of other professionals such as youth workers (eg: groupwork) to help in the delivery of PD sessions.
- Utilising the knowledge base of other specialist organisations, for example in the fields of bereavement (Cruse), relationships (Relate), contemporary youth problems and issues (Contact Youth) etc.
- Helping the school to be less insular and more connected to the community and wider society.
- Developing a stronger awareness of agency expertise in the field and therefore a more effective referral network to support pupils experiencing particular difficulties.

It is recommended that much greater use is made of such agencies and that the Education and Library Boards should enter into strategic

partnerships with identified partners in the field to devise a systematic approach to liaison and conjoint working in the area of PD in schools, rather than individual schools making their own approaches to voluntary sector organisations on an ad hoc basis or, worse still, not at all.

8.1.10 Basic needs of pupils

A matter of concern emerging from contact with pupils in the study relates to situations (not uncommon) where pupils are arriving into school without having had breakfast and/or not having slept the previous night. Such situations are alarming, regardless of the issue of best practice in PD teaching. Pupils will find it difficult, if not impossible to learn, when such basic physiological needs remain unmet. Thus, there is a significant educational issue here but also a potential welfare/child protection issue, both of which schools need to address. Whilst some steps could be taken to deal with the breakfast issue through the introduction of breakfast clubs, liaison with parents, educational welfare officers etc. may also be necessary.

8.2 Issues for the wider education sector

8.2.1 Content of PD curriculum

Within the study it was evident that PD Coordinators typically invest a lot of time and energy in preparing the taught pastoral programme through, for example, the creation of PD booklets, worksheets etc. This is commendable and should be encouraged because it enables schools to focus on particular issues, topics and themes of particular import to their own setting and pupils' needs. It also encourages teachers to be creative and imaginative in working out how best to connect with their pupils in a meaningful way. However, there is also a need to standardise the goals, content, themes, processes and methodology within the agreed PD framework, to ensure that this important

curriculum area does not develop in a piecemeal fashion with significant variations in quality, standards, outcomes and effectiveness across the schools sector. Flexibility should also be retained to allow individual schools to adapt content and process in line with the perceived needs of pupils and their social contexts.

8.2.2 Monitoring and evaluation

Following on from a coordinated, standardised approach to the content and processes pertaining to PD, a systematic approach should be developed to enable teachers, schools and the ETI to monitor the impact of PD programmes on pupils and also to assess the various ways in which it makes a difference in their lives.

8.2.3 Professional standards

Within the caring services generally, there is a clear, emergent focus on professional standards, regulation and the need for all those working with people in a helping capacity to be properly trained, supported and supervised. The education sector needs to be mindful of these developments regarding the growing trend towards statutory controls and regulation of counselling, social work, care-worker roles etc. and also needs to monitor and assess the implications of these trends for caring work carried out with pupils in schools. For instance, schools providing counselling-type interventions within the pastoral context need to be aware of the imminent statutory regulation of counsellors.

8.2.4 Training for PD teachers and coordinators

The study elucidates a situation in which many PD teachers felt that they had received little or no training regarding either content or methods and that this left them feeling ill-equipped, insecure and, in some cases, terrified about the job. Implicit in the findings of the present study are a range of training needs which will need to be met in the coming period if the development and quality of PD is to be

encouraged and managed. For example, various key teacher characteristics and competences have been articulated, especially through the direct observation of classroom activity within PD sessions. Section 9 (below) focuses on this important area and makes recommendations about future directions.

Key points

- Careful selection of PD teachers is essential
- Duties associated with the dual role of Form teacher and PD teacher need to be separated out so that administrative tasks do not interrupt and undermine the potential value of PD sessions themselves.
- PD sessions should take place in rooms that are conducive to informal methods.
- PD class sizes should be smaller than full class numbers approaching thirty pupils.
- Within ongoing timetabling constraints, consideration should be given to optimising the potential of PD by identifying more favourable slots during the school day.
- Effective, systematic, support for teachers undertaking PD work should be provided to ensure not only professional development and growing competence but also personal support and encouragement regarding what is a demanding role.
- Within schools, opportunities should be taken to reinforce the whole-school commitment to the ethos of PD through staff meetings, staff development sessions and team briefings.
- There should be more widespread use of external agencies and ELBs have a role in planning strategically in partnership with a range of relevant providers in the community.
- Goals, content, processes and methodology within the agreed PD framework should be standardised, to ensure that this important curriculum area does not develop in a piecemeal fashion with significant variations in quality..
- A systematic approach should be developed to enable teachers, schools and the ETI to monitor and evaluate the impact of PD programmes on pupils.
- The Department of Education and ELBs should monitor closely emergent trends towards statutory regulation of caring roles in the community in terms of how these developments potentially impact on PD and pastoral work in schools.
- Teachers should be adequately prepared for the PD role through the provision of appropriate training.

9. Development of training models for PD teachers and coordinators

Chapter content

- Arising from the identification of *best practice* features of PD work within the sampled schools is the issue of appropriate training for potential and/or fledgling PD teachers as a means of building up their knowledge, skills, personal development and overall competence.
- Content areas to be included in such a course are suggested, together with a recommendation that a working group is established to bring such a development forward.
- The need for additional resources from DE is identified.

Specific training content necessary to support the development of PD within the post-Primary sector is detailed below.

9.1 Knowledge

Teachers need to acquire and develop a sufficiently strong knowledge base to enable them to discharge effectively their responsibilities within PD. The table below outlines a number of key content areas in this regard.

KNOWLEDGE

- Effectively structuring a PD period to ensure an appropriate opening, facilitation of the main content and process of the lesson and also, importantly, proper closure of the session, especially where pupils have been opened up to emotions or personally challenging, sensitive issues.
- Basic grounding in Rogers' person-centred counselling theory and other relevant theories regarding emotional development and emotional release.
- Theory of groupwork, circle time and creative and expressive approaches.
- Content areas relating to such social and life issues as separation and divorce, loss, abuse and neglect, illness, death, trauma and bereavement, suicide, as well as those concerning health, mental health, sexuality and relationships.
- Awareness-raising regarding referral networks and the procedures for making referrals (internally and externally) in response to particular pupil issues, needs or difficulties which surface in the context of PD sessions.
- Building learning contracts/group groundrules with pupils.
- Equity awareness and inclusivity.
- Understanding the developmental and emotional needs of pupils at different age stages.
- Knowledge and awareness of external agencies and their potential contribution to the PD programme referral networks.
- Confidentiality and data protection.
- Child protection.
- Links with other aspects of the school pastoral system and the role of education colleagues such as EWOs, Ed. Psychs etc.
- Evaluation methods regarding the impact and effectiveness of PD.
- Informal teaching and learning methodologies.

9.2 Skills

Alongside knowledge, PD teachers also need to acquire, develop and hone a range of key skills which will support pupils' learning and enable the potential of PD to be maximised in the school setting. It should not be assumed that all (or even most) teachers have these skills, although many will have a predisposition towards acquiring them. Initial and ongoing skills training will be necessary to ensure that quality programmes and effective outcomes can ensue. The table below outlines a number of key skills areas to be included in a training programme for PD teachers.

SKILLS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills associated with maintaining structure, order and discipline in the context of informal methodologies.• Building confidence, safety, trust, rapport and the relationship with pupils.• Negotiating group contracts and groundrules based on inclusivity.• Active listening skills.• Creating a positive, facilitative learning climate in the classroom.• Maintaining pupils' interest in lower streams.• Engaging with able pupils other than intellectually/cerebrally.• Groupwork skills including Circle time.• Facilitation of creative and expressive approaches in PD.• Facilitating mutuality, respect and sharing power in the classroom• Basic counselling skills including<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empathy and working comfortably with emotions• Positive regard and approval.• Facilitation of role-play.• The impact and use of appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviours to reinforce pupils' openness and responsiveness.• Handling conflict and encouraging peer and buddy activity.

9.3 Personal development

The main resource which teachers bring to the teaching of PD is themselves; their openness, warmth, self-knowledge, humanness and genuine concern for the pupils. As confirmed earlier in the report, such behaviours cannot be faked and only have real impact when they are rooted in the congruence of the teacher as a *real person* rather than a professional acting out a role. Findings within the present study indicate that, in addition to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, teachers should also have the opportunity, within a suitable PD training programme, to explore and examine *themselves* with regard to feelings, issues, defences, motivation and attitudes, otherwise some of these factors may act as obstacles in working at an interpersonal level of engagement and encounter with pupils. Given that, within many pastoral training programmes, the personal development dimension is often overlooked or under-emphasised, the table below provides examples of elements which need to be included, in preparing teachers for an active PD role within the school.

PDRSONAL DEVELOPMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of <i>intra-personal intelligence</i> (ie: our sensitivity towards and insight into our own feeling states).• Expansion and development of an emotional vocabulary.• Openness to feedback.• Exploring personal issues and reflecting on life issues and their impact on self.• Becoming comfortable with the non-defensive expression of thoughts and feelings and the use of appropriate self-disclosure and sharing.• Self-awareness in relation to views, attitudes and prejudices.• Development of interpersonal <i>intelligence</i> i.e. our sensitivity and

empathy towards others' feeling states.

- Capacity to cope with and respond to others' disclosures.

9.4 Establishment of a working group

As indicated above, working effectively in the area of PD is a skilled job and teachers need to be properly prepared for such a role. It is recommended that a working group is established to devise an appropriate training programme or course for potential and/or fledgling PD teachers as a means of building up the knowledge, skills, personal development and the overall competence of PD teachers in the coming period. A course could be developed which encompasses all the necessary areas mentioned above and which is packaged in such a way as to attract professional accreditation/endorsement from a relevant body. Such a course could be developed in conjunction with the ELBs, RTU, CCEA, the ETI, the universities and key partners in the voluntary sector. In addition, this working group will need to consider on-going training and development needs including appropriate CPD for teachers in the profession.

9.5 Resource implications

From the Department of Education's point of view, there will be obvious resource implications associated with the establishment and development of strategies (eg: training) to promote and secure good practice in PD in schools across Northern Ireland. However, within existing budget constraints, government will nonetheless need to assess the priority to be placed on PD as a key part of schooling in the coming period if the above recommendations are to be adopted.

Key points

- PD teachers need to acquire and develop a sufficiently strong knowledge base to enable them to discharge effectively their responsibilities within PD.
- PD teachers also need to acquire, develop and hone a range of key skills which will support pupils' learning and enable the potential of PD to be maximised in the school setting.
- PD teachers should also have the opportunity, within a suitable training programme, to explore and examine *themselves* with regard to feelings, issues, defences, motivation and attitudes.
- A working group to be established to devise an appropriate training programme or course for potential and/or fledgling PD teachers as a means of building up the knowledge, skills, personal development and the overall competence of PD teachers in the coming period.
- Additional resources will need to be identified by the Department of Education to support the introduction of recommendations contained within this report.

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1

Criteria for best practice of taught PD included:

- ❖ Principal and SMT who endorse PD and place a high priority on it.
- ❖ Prioritised in timetabling
- ❖ Commitment in time as well as finance e.g. releasing teachers for training, allowing co-coordinator time for internal meetings
- ❖ A 'champion' within the school who coordinates PD and considers progression, continuity, overlap etc.
- ❖ Quality/active teaching strategies
- ❖ Carefully selected small team of teachers who deliver PD, already trained or having trained in their own personal development
- ❖ Collaborative approach using outside agencies to bring expertise into the school.

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Appendix 2

Dear Principal

Personal and Social Education in the Curriculum at Key Stage 3

I am writing to you in connection with a research study that the Graduate School of Education has recently been commissioned to undertake by the Department of Education. The study focuses on identified 'best practice' schools in the delivery of taught personal and social education (PD) in the curriculum.

Through the development phase, a series of initial interviews have been undertaken with key education and related professionals (including ELB officers, CCMS, CCEA staff and others). Against their identified criteria for best practice, your school ***** has been selected as one of a sample of five 'best practice' schools in this curriculum area in Northern Ireland.

I am therefore writing to seek your agreement to engage with us in this study, starting September 2002, which aims to understand the factors that contribute to the effective delivery of PD in classrooms. Our focus will be on the teaching of pupils at Key Stage 3 and would greatly appreciate the opportunity in due course to talk to yourself as Principal, the PD co-ordinator and other key pastoral/PD staff as well as the observation of some PD lessons, by agreement. Our hope would be that if you and your school were willing to be involved, we might be able to meet with you and/or the PD co-ordinator briefly before the end of June.

In order to gauge your interest in any future involvement of the study and to answer any questions or concerns you might have about the nature of the study, Stephanie Mitchell (Research Assistant) will be making telephone contact with you early next week.

With thanks and best regards

Yours sincerely

Head of School

Appendix 3

Personal Education at Key Stage 3: Identification of Good Practice

Code of Practice with Teachers to be visited

- ❖ I consider it to be a privilege to be allowed in to the classroom;
- ❖ My focus is to try to distinguish the art and skill of good practice;
- ❖ I aim to be as unobtrusive as possible during the lesson and will not engage in any of the learning activities;
- ❖ I will introduce myself to the pupils and explain that I am there because I am interested in this type of learning in schools;
- ❖ I will spend some time by agreement after the lesson talking to you the teacher on your and my experience of the lesson;
- ❖ I would seek your agreement (and that of the School and/or parents) to speak to the pupils (or a sub-group) of the pupils after the class (or at some later date) on their experience of PD classes;
- ❖ I will make available to you any transcript or recording of the lesson should you request it;
- ❖ I will forward to you and ask you to validate any description/interpretation of the specific material gathered during this lesson (or others) should we desire to include it in any research publication
- ❖ School or teacher will not be identified by name in any publication or dissemination of research findings (unless by specific agreement).
- ❖ Material collected (through notes or audio tape) will be held respectfully and securely and will only be available in raw form to myself, and the research team which includes Ruth Leitch (Head of Graduate School of Education) and Rosemary Kilpatrick (Senior Lecturer in the Graduate School of Education).
- ❖ Data collected will be destroyed after the research has been completed unless by agreement of the School and all interested parties.

Appendix 4

Statement by Classroom Observer to pupils at outset of Classroom Observation

'Hello, my name is Stephanie Mitchell and I'm from Queen's University in Belfast. I'm very interested in these kinds of lessons and my job involves travelling to different schools to see what goes on. So, thank you for having me. I will be sitting in the classroom just noticing the lesson. Hopefully you will forget that I am here at all so that I won't interfere with your lesson. Afterwards, I am looking forward to talking to a number of you on your experiences of such lessons.'

Interview Questions

Personal Education Research Project

The following questions represent the core areas of interest that will be raised in semi-structured interviews with the Principal, the PD co-ordinator and the PD teacher who have agreed to be interviewed for this study. Whilst it is important that all of the areas are covered within a school, not all questions will necessarily be asked of each person and there may be a few which are oriented specifically to the role of the person being addressed.

Interview question areas:

Interviews with Principals

- What do you think are the key factors that contribute to this school having been identified as a 'good practice' school in terms of taught PD?
- What is your personal view on the value of taught PD? Where does this fit into the mission of the school?
- In terms of your own passion about education, where do these values spring from?
- What do you think are the particular qualities/skills in a teacher that really promote this area of the curriculum?
- In five years time what would you like to see having happened within PD in this school? What would it take to realize this?
- What, if any, additional training/ awareness-raising do you think will be necessary for teachers in the delivery of an extended PD curriculum in schools as proposed in the CCEA proposals?
- CCEA currently propose that PD becomes a GCSE – what is your reaction to this?

Interviews with PD co-ordinators

Why do you think your school was selected to take part in this study?

What do you see as the value of taught PD?

What are the hallmarks of a successful PD lesson in your view?

What issues are confronting young people currently that you feel PD needs to address?

Do you think that the delivery of PD requires a different approach than might be used in other subjects? If so, what is different for the teacher? and the pupils ?

How much influence should pupils have over the content / direction taken in a lesson?

How significant in the delivery of PD lessons are the resources that are used within the school? i.e. do they form lesson content or are they just used as a 'jumping off point'?

Do you think that negotiating a 'group contract' with pupils is important? If so why? (explain group contract if necessary)

Do you feel that your own training as a teacher prepared you for delivering this area of the curriculum? Does teacher training currently do so in your view?

What do you see as the challenges for teachers in this area?

What, if any, additional training/ awareness-raising do you think would benefit teachers in their delivery of PD?

How significant is the contribution made to PD from outside agencies coming into the school? Which ones do you use?

What Initial Teacher Training do you think would be needed for newly qualified teachers to deliver this area of the curriculum well?

Interviews with PD teachers

What do you see as the value of taught PD?

Why do you think your school was selected to take part in this study?

What are the hallmarks of a successful PD lesson in your view?

What do you enjoy about it?

What issues are confronting young people currently that you feel PD needs to address?

Do you think that the delivery of PD requires a different approach than might be used in other subjects?

If so, what is different for the teacher? and the pupils ?

How much influence should pupils have over the content / direction taken in a lesson?

Do you think that negotiating a 'group contract' with pupils is important?

If so, why? Explain group contract if necessary.

Do you feel that your training as a teacher has prepared you for delivering this area of the curriculum?

What Initial Teacher Training do you think would be needed for newly qualified teachers to deliver this area of the curriculum well?

What do you see as the challenges for teachers in this area?

Interviews with pupils

What was your most recent PD lesson about? (warmup question)

Did you find it interesting? (also warmup)

Since you came to this school, whose lessons do you really like? Why?

Are PD lessons done differently than other lessons? What does the teacher do, or what do you do that makes them different?

What, if anything, do you enjoy about them?

How useful are PD lessons in your view?

Does PD deal with the kinds of things that you think it should?

If not, what should they deal with?

How much influence do you feel like you have over what happens in the lesson and the kinds of things that are discussed?

What would make them better?

Does the teacher need to like PD to teach it well?

Appendix 6

Personal Education at Key Stage 3: Classroom Observation Schedule

Date_____

School (or code)_____

Class_____ N=_____

Teacher (or code)_____

N° of Boys_____ N° of Girls_____

Topic area (PD)_____

Week_____

Background

The Lesson: Purposes etc.

Draw the layout of the room

Introduction: How was the topic introduced/negotiated?

Class organisation throughout

Quality of Interaction – how was participation encouraged?

Types of Pupil Responses?

Use of groupwork (skills)

Lesson Closed: How?

Observer identified high point

Observer identified low point

Whole Class Spectrum:

Interested	Bored (Cognitive)
Engaged (Behavioural)	Disengaged
Emotionally Stimulated (Emotional) . . . . .	.Detached
Actively contributing . . . . .	.Compliant (Classroom behaviour)
Alert/Bright	Dull (Classroom atmosphere)
Any further comment...	

Individual/small groups of pupils feelings range:

Excited	Pleased	Affirmed
Sad	Insecure	Resentment
Hurt	Scared	Angry
Anxious	Confusion	Threatened
Embarrassed	Guilty	Other.....
Any further comment...		

Teacher communication spectrum:

Teacher directed . . . . .	. Pupil Centred
Humour/Fun . . . . .	. Dry
Interested . . . . .	. Routine/Dull
Good listening . . . . .	. Poor Listening
Initiating pupil ideas. . . . .	. Mostly teacher ideas
Opening ideas. . . . .	. Closing ideas
Affirming . . . . .	. Neutral
Reflecting Content. . . . .	. Not responding to pupil content
Reflecting Feelings. . . . .	. No reflection of feelings

Debrief with teacher

Reflections



The Department of Education (DE) Research Report Series is designed to provide easy access to research findings for policy makers, researchers, teachers, lecturers, employers and the public. This reflects the high value which DE places on the wide circulation of research results to ensure that research has the maximum impact on policy and practice in education.

Research cannot make decisions for policy makers and others concerned with improving the quality of education. Nor can it by itself bring about change. But it can create a better basis for decisions, by providing information and explanation about educational practice and by clarifying and challenging ideas and assumptions.

Any views expressed in the Research Report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of Education.