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Foreword

I welcome the publication of this progress report on the School Development Planning Initiative. The Initiative was established in September 1999 to support collaborative whole-school planning in primary and post-primary schools. The report is based on the work of the Initiative’s Support Teams, focusing in particular on the calendar year 2002. First, it outlines the services that were provided in that year. It then identifies patterns of school practice in implementing the development planning process during the period 1999–2002, highlighting aspects in which significant progress was made and indicating areas where much remains to be done. Finally, it explores the challenges still facing us in promoting School Development Planning as a strategy for improving learning outcomes for students.

This report enables school communities to relate their own experiences of School Development Planning to the nationwide picture, and to locate their level of progress within the national profile. It provides an opportunity to affirm existing good practice and to pinpoint areas for improvement. By highlighting challenges, it identifies key planning issues regarding the quality of our education service at both school and system level.

The ultimate objective of school planning is to identify students’ needs and to respond appropriately to them. I welcome the recognition in this report that the quality of student learning should be a core focus in development planning activities. A fundamental challenge for our education system is to devise measures to promote and support the learning of all students.
Collaboration and partnership are important aspects of development planning. The process promotes the establishment of school structures that recognise the contribution of all staff members to the standard of education in a school and that draw on the support of all partners in shaping its future. A shared responsibility for providing a quality education in our schools is certainly the way forward. I am encouraged by indications in this report of improved levels of parental participation in school planning. It is clear, however, that advances in the involvement of partners have been modest. The promotion of partnership remains a major challenge for the Initiative.

I wish to express my appreciation of the work undertaken by teachers, principals and whole school communities in developing the planning process in their schools since the start of the Initiative. Their commitment to our young people is the foundation for progress in our education system in the coming years. The positive manner in which they have responded to the services of the Initiative and to the seminars, workshops, summer schools and training events in which they have participated is a clear affirmation of the Initiative’s programme to date. I am confident that identified school needs will continue to shape the support for School Development Planning.

Noel Dempsey, TD
Minister for Education and Science

October 2003
Introduction: The School Development Planning Initiative

1.1 Context
The School Development Planning Initiative was established with effect from 1 September 1999. The purpose of the Initiative, as enunciated by the Minister for Education and Science in May 1999, is to stimulate and strengthen a culture of collaborative development planning in schools, with a view to promoting school improvement and effectiveness. It was introduced against the backdrop of the international debate on quality assurance in education, in which School Development Planning (SDP) is viewed as a powerful means of enhancing quality in schools. It was established in the national context of:

i. government policy on Social Inclusion, which required that its initial focus should be on schools designated as serving areas of disadvantage, and

ii. the enactment of the Education Act, 1998, which introduced the requirement that all schools prepare a School Plan using a collaborative process, and which thereby provided a rationale for extending the Initiative to cover all schools.

Its place in the system was further underpinned by the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000), which identified SDP as the basic element of modernisation in the education sector at first and second level, by the National Plan for Women 2001–2005, which designated SDP as a means of addressing gender equality issues in schools, and by the Government National Anti-Poverty Strategy (March 2002), which specified SDP as a strategy for raising standards of literacy and numeracy.

1.2 Aims
The aims of the Initiative are:

- To support schools in furthering the process of School Development Planning (SDP) in order to promote school improvement and effectiveness
- To promote collaborative School Development Planning (SDP) as a means of identifying pupils’ needs and responding appropriately to them
- To build the capacity of schools to implement development planning as a means of quality enhancement.

---

1 Section 21 of the Education Act 1998 requires that a school’s board of management shall “make arrangements for the preparation of a plan (in this section referred to as the ‘school plan’) and shall ensure that the plan is regularly reviewed and updated.” It specifies that the school plan shall be prepared “in accordance with such directions, including directions relating to consultation with the parents, the patron, staff and students of the school, as may be given from time to time by the Minister in relation to school plans.”
1.3 Structures

Reflecting the structure of the school system that it was designed to serve, the School Development Planning Initiative has two branches: Primary and Post-Primary. The structure of each branch involves a Support Team, an Internal Management Committee that oversees the working of the Support Team, and a Consultative Group representative of the partners in education that serves as a Steering Group. (See Appendix 1)

The Support Team at Primary Level is known by the acronym SDPS: School Development Planning Support. It comprises a National Coordinator, Regional Coordinators, and a team of full-time SDP Facilitators. It is based in Drumcondra Education Centre. (See Appendix 1)

The Support Team at Post-Primary level is known by the acronym SDPI: School Development Planning Initiative. It comprises a National Coordinator and Regional Coordinators, and a panel of SDP Facilitators available to work with schools on a part-time, occasional basis. It is based in Marino Institute of Education. (See Appendix 1)

1.4 Services

The School Development Planning Initiative was designed to provide support services, resource materials, and grant aid for schools.

Support services offered by SDPS and SDPI personnel include:

♦ Advice: information, advice and guidance on SDP for schools on an individual basis

♦ Seminars and Workshops: information and skills training for groups of school representatives on a regional, network or cluster basis

♦ Regional seminars to serve large groups of schools, where the grouping is based on geographical location

♦ Network seminars and workshops to serve groups based, not on the geographical location of the schools concerned, but on the characteristics that they have in common – patronage/trusteeship; ethos; management structure; size; language; involvement in a particular education project; involvement in addressing a particular issue, such as disadvantage or the inclusion of international students (this list is not exhaustive)

♦ Cluster workshops and planning sessions to serve small groups of schools in a local area, such as a town or parish or school transport catchment area

♦ Facilitation Services:

♦ Pre-planning meetings with representatives of individual schools to arrange for planning sessions

♦ Facilitated planning sessions with whole staffs of individual schools or school clusters

♦ Post-planning-session meetings with representatives of individual schools to support planning activities arising from planning sessions

♦ Facilitation Training and Support: information and skills training for those involved in SDP facilitation, either within their own schools (in the case of SDPI) or in schools other than their own (in the case of both SDPS and SDPI).

SDPS and SDPI personnel also provide inputs on SDP to courses, seminars and workshops organised for teachers and education personnel by other agencies, such as school management organisations, trustee education offices, teacher representative bodies, education centres, 3rd level institutions, and fellow support services, for example, the Primary Curriculum Support Service (PCSP) and the Second Level Support Service (SLSS). Where appropriate, they cooperate with other agencies in supporting schools. (For details, see Appendix 3)
Resource materials developed through the School Development Planning Initiative at both Primary and Post-Primary level include:

- Guidelines on School Development Planning
- Materials to support the facilitation of the SDP process

Grant aid for School Development Planning has been provided to schools at both levels via the Initiative. At Primary level, grant aid was provided each year to schools included in the Initiative. At Post-Primary level, start-up grant aid was provided on a phased basis to all schools for two years in succession during the period 1999-2002.

(For further details, see Appendix 2)

1.5 This Report

This publication gives a progress report on the School Development Planning Initiative, Primary and Post-Primary, with particular reference to the calendar year 2002.

Chapter 2 details the services provided at Primary level by SDPS.

Chapter 3 details the services provided at Post-Primary level by SDPI.

Chapter 4 provides a progress report on School Development Planning in Primary schools since the inception of the Initiative.

Chapter 5 provides a progress report on School Development Planning in Post-Primary schools since the inception of the Initiative.

Chapter 6 summarises the strengths of the support programmes in 2002 and identifies issues to be addressed in the next phase of the Initiative.
2.1 Context for 2002

During the first year of the Initiative, a strategic plan was devised for the phased extension of development planning support to all Primary schools over a number of years. Schools were categorised in four phases or cohorts according to the date of their proposed inclusion in the Initiative. The support programme was divided into stages to assist schools to progress through a sequence of planning operations over a period of time. This strategic plan, which is outlined in Table 2.1, provided the framework for the SDPS support programme in 2002. (See Circulars 18/99, 34/00 and 05/02.)

The challenge facing SDPS from mid-2002, therefore, was to extend Stage 1 support to the cohort of schools that was entering the Initiative for the first time while continuing to provide differentiated support to the three cohorts that were already included in the Initiative. Increasing team capacity in order to cater for all 3294 Primary schools was thus a major concern for SDPS in 2002.

Taking account of these considerations, the key elements of the SDPS Programme for 2002 were as follows:

- SDPS Development: Increasing Capacity
- Regional Seminars for Groups of Schools
- Facilitation and Advisory Services for Schools
- Development of SDP Resource Materials
- Cooperation with Other Agencies.
Support Programme at Primary Level

### Table 2.1 Strategic Plan for SDP Support at Primary Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Programme Provision</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/9/99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regional Seminars: The seminars provided information on SDP and initial training in skills required to engage with the SDP process. Whole school review, prioritising, short term planning, action planning, monitoring and evaluation were modelled at the seminars. Facilitation was provided on one school based day to address issues prioritised by each school community. Materials and frameworks were designed and provided in hard copy and from a website. Opportunities were provided to schools to meet in clusters of similar size or category.</td>
<td>Disadv. 442 Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Regional Seminars: Sharing good practice in relation to the work of year one as well as review of School Development Planning skills took place at the seminars. Schools were invited to engage in formulation of vision statements; to work on policy formation; to devise a strategic plan to address change needs over time. Opportunities to share good practice in cluster situations were also provided. Facilitation on one school based day was available to assist with aspects of planning (from either the Stage 1 or the Stage 2 seminar programme) on issues prioritised by the school community. Materials and frameworks were designed and provided in hard copy and from a website. School strategies for recording and monitoring work in progress and for self-evaluation were explored.</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Skills and strategies specifically directed at principals and others with responsibility for School Development Planning were explored. Independent planning was promoted by offering help to run a self-facilitated planning day and providing advice as to how to set it up. Parents’ roles as partners were explored as were exemplars of good practice. Use of SDP process with pupil learning as its specific focus was dealt with in a workshop situation. School strategies for recording and monitoring work in progress and for self-evaluation were explored. Specific help through facilitation/help line etc. was provided for some schools.</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total Schools</strong></td>
<td><strong>442</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>% of Mainstream Class Teachers</strong></td>
<td><strong>18%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Disadv:** Schools serving areas of disadvantage  
**Small:** Schools with 1–3 mainstream class teachers  
**Medium:** Schools with 4–6 mainstream class teachers  
**Very Large:** Schools with 24+ class teachers
2.2SDPS Development: Increasing Capacity

Recruitment of Additional Facilitators
A National Coordinator and four Regional Coordinators for SDPS were appointed in September 1999. In the first year of the Initiative, their work was supplemented by 44 part-time facilitators. As part of the strategic plan for SDPS, however, it was decided that full-time facilitators were needed to cater for the large number of schools in the Primary sector. On 1 January 2002 there were 19 full-time facilitators working with the SDPS Coordinating Team. An additional 10 were appointed from 1 September 2002. The full-time facilitators were assigned an average of 114 schools and 750 teachers each. A panel of 28 part-time facilitators was also retained, to assist as needs arose.

Programme of training and support for SDP Facilitators
A programme of training and support for SDP facilitators was devised to cater for the development needs of both existing and new facilitators. Intensive sessions took place in June, August and September 2002.

The Department of Education and Science accepted a proposal from NUI Galway for a pilot scheme to validate the training programme through a Higher Diploma in Professional Education Studies (School Planning). It was agreed that the elements of the training programme provided for coordinators and facilitators would constitute the main components of the Diploma course. 33 members of the SDPS team registered for the Diploma. (For further details, see Chapter 3, section 3.2)

2.3Services to Schools: Regional Seminars

Two series of Regional Seminars were held in the autumn of 2002, one for schools at Stage 1 of the support programme, the other for schools at Stage 2.

Regional Seminars: Stage 1
52 introductory seminars, facilitated through Irish and English, were held during September and October 2002 for schools entering the Initiative for the first time. 683 schools invited were represented at a seminar. Of the 1,220 seminar participants 48% were principals, 21% were deputy principals and 7% were assistant principals. 14% of participants were mainstream classroom teachers. The remaining 10% of participants included special duties teachers, special class teachers, resource/learning support teachers, and home-school liaison teachers. The seminar programme is outlined in Table 2.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction to SDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Conducting a whole school review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Developing a statement of priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Developing action plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Monitoring/evaluation of plans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 Regional Seminar Content: Stage 1
Regional Seminars: Stage 2

During the same period (September–October 2002), 38 seminars facilitated through Irish and English were held for schools entering their second year of support. Of the 785 participants, 72% were principals and 14% were deputy principals. 6% were mainstream classroom teachers. The remaining 8% of participants included special duties teachers, special class teachers, resource/learning support teachers, and home-school liaison teachers. The seminar programme is outlined in Table 2.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sharing good practice between schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Policy formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Developing vision and aims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Strategic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Monitoring and evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3 Regional Seminar Content: Stage 2

Regional Seminar Evaluations

The Stage 1 seminars were very successful in introducing the concept of School Development Planning and encouraging the initiation of SDP in schools, and were rated very highly by participants, as is shown in Table 2.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Excellent/Very Good</th>
<th>Fairly Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information on the Initiative</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of the SDP process</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering queries</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of initial planning materials</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 Participant Evaluations of Stage 1 Seminars

All aspects of the Stage 2 seminars were highly rated by participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Excellent/Very Good</th>
<th>Fairly Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information on the Initiative</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to share good practice</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy formation</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School vision/mission and aims</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering queries</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of planning materials</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5 Participant Evaluations of Stage 2 Seminars

2.4 Facilitation and Advisory Services to Schools

Facilitation

The full SDP facilitation process involves pre-planning meetings, facilitated planning days and post-planning follow-up.

Planning Meetings

Between January and December 2002, planning meetings (through Irish and English) were provided for 2,339 schools. These meetings were held between the facilitator and the school principal, the school’s planning coordinator and/or “school planning team”. Meetings were generally held during school hours and lasted from 1 to 2 hours. The programme for the school’s planning day and for other planning occasions throughout the year was agreed. The date and the location for the planning day were arranged. If other members of the school community, e.g. board of management representatives and/or parent representatives, were to be in attendance on the school based
planning day, issues arising from this were explored. The preparatory work to be undertaken before the planning day by all those due to attend was outlined.

Facilitated Planning Days
Facilitated planning days (through Irish and English) were provided for 2,253 schools. Facilitators assisted schools in identifying and exploring areas to be developed, and developing action plans to carry through the proposed developments. Participants at facilitated planning days always included the principal and teaching staff. Other participants included: members of the board of management, parents, teaching staff shared with other schools, special needs assistants, and ancillary/support staff.

Participants rated the planning days very highly, as is shown in Table 2.6:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Excellent/Very Good</th>
<th>Fairly Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addressing chosen area(s)</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of planning process</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of facilitator</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.6 Participant Evaluations of Planning Days

Post-planning Contact
Further assistance by way of post-planning contact was provided to 1,510 schools. The necessity for such assistance arose out of issues prioritised by individual schools on the School Development Planning day.

(For details of schools’ progress in relation to SDP during 2002, see Chapter 4)

Advisory service to schools
Additional resources and materials were provided to a number of schools by post, and advice was provided by phone or on a second visit to other schools.

2.5 Resource Materials
During 2002, SDPS continued to develop resource materials for SDP. The range of materials produced included:

- **Information Poster**: An information poster was issued to all schools. The poster, in Irish and English, illustrated the development planning process and allied issues and was posted to all schools/partners in autumn 2002.
- **Manuals/Handbooks**: Manuals for facilitators in relation to their work and a handbook on the management of ICT were prepared and circulated to all facilitators. These materials were also made available on CD.
- **Booklets for Schools**: Three different sets of materials for schools involved in the Initiative were designed, printed in booklet form and distributed at Regional Seminars. All materials were available in Irish and English. Additional copies were supplied on request.
- **Website**: The SDPS Website was updated, with copies of the most recent materials available for download in both English and Irish.
- **Reading Material**: Reading material was researched and supplied to all members of the facilitating team during the course of the year, in order to inform their work in schools.
- **Leaflet for Parents**: Work continued in consultation with National Parents’ Council (Primary) on the development of a leaflet for parents in relation to School Development Planning.
2.6 Cooperation with Other Groups/Agencies

In addition to maintaining regular communication with schools involved in the Initiative, SDPS (Primary) was in contact with a number of other agencies in the course of the year and responded to requests from various groups for information and/or training in the area of School Development Planning. These agencies and groups included: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA); Department of Education and Science (DES) Inspectorate; management bodies; National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS); fellow DES support services, e.g. Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP); the Association of Teachers’/Education Centres of Ireland (ATECI); organisations representative of the education partners; third level colleges, especially Colleges of Education; and agencies addressing the needs of the disadvantaged. (For details of work with other agencies, see Appendix 3).

The essential purpose of working with Inspectors from the Department of Education and Science and Trainers from the Primary Curriculum Support Programme was to ensure that messages in relation to School Development Planning were coordinated in the interest of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms.

Working with management bodies, education offices of the religious orders and parents’ representatives raises the awareness of the role and responsibility of management for development planning activities, while consultation with parents is crucial to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning within the context of the school as a learning community.

Working with Colleges of Education helps in the preparation of teachers for their role in relation to School Development Planning as they begin their careers. This two-way communication ensured that interested parties had opportunities to familiarise themselves with the SDP approach while SDPS personnel kept in touch with changes in education generally.

Work with agencies addressing the needs of disadvantaged (e.g. Bridging the Gap, Cork; Working Together Project, Limerick; Forum on Ending Educational Disadvantage, St Patrick’s College; Galway Rural Development supporting three clusters of Co. Galway schools in combating rural disadvantage) highlights the ongoing need to target coordinated support towards the pupils in participating schools. Such cooperation also ensures that SDPS personnel keep in touch with research in relation to possible solutions to problems associated with educational disadvantage.

SDPS cooperated with the Association of Teachers’/Education Centres of Ireland (ATECI) in the coordination of all in-service events for primary schools, as well as with the provision of 20 facilitators to address schools’ needs on the summer course programme in July and August 2002.
3.1 Context for 2002

In 1999, SDPI devised a strategic plan for the phasing of support to all Post-Primary schools in the period 1999–2002. For lengthy periods during the school years 2000/2001 and 2001/2002, however, schools at Post-Primary level were precluded by industrial relations considerations from cooperating fully with the School Development Planning Initiative. The industrial relations (IR) situation had a major impact on the support programme for 2002 in a number of ways:

Programme of Activities

The SDPI strategic plan for 1999–2002 featured the provision of support to all Post-Primary schools on a phased basis: in three overlapping phases – i. 1999+2001, ii. 2000+2001, and iii. 2001+2002 – all schools were to be offered support for two consecutive years. (See Circular M39/00.) Grant aid was paid to all schools in accordance with the phasing schedule, but forms of support involving facilitation and inservice training had to be postponed in 2000 and again in 2001. The challenge facing SDPI in 2002, therefore, was that, when IR restrictions eased, all Post-Primary schools would be eligible for support at the same time. This factor necessitated a major re-design of the original support programme.

Staffing

A complement of 6 Regional Coordinators had been allocated to SDPI for the school year 2000/2001, and an increase to 10 had been proposed for the following school year. Because of the IR situation, the increase to 10 was postponed for a year and the filling of vacancies in the complement of 6 was delayed. Consequently, SDPI commenced the year 2002 with a team of just 3 Regional Coordinators. The reduced level of full-time staffing had implications for the extent of the support programme that the Initiative had the capacity to offer at Post-Primary level, especially given that the brief of the Regional Coordinator at this level included a significant amount of SDP facilitation in schools.

The panel of part-time facilitators was also seriously affected by the IR situation. The availability of a small number was unaffected because they were not currently teaching, but the majority of panel members, as serving teachers, were precluded from participation in SDPI activities for protracted periods. The consequent dormancy of the panel was a limiting factor in planning for 2002.

Accordingly, re-building capacity was a major concern for SDPI in the year 2002.

Taking account of these considerations, the major elements of the SDPI Programme planned for 2002 were as follows:

- SDPI Team Development: Rebuilding Capacity
- Regional Seminars for Groups of Schools
- Facilitation and Advisory Services for Schools
- Development of SDP Resource Materials
- Cooperation with Other Agencies.
3.2 SDPI Development: Re-Building Capacity

Recruitment, induction and training of Regional Coordinators
SDPI commenced the year with 3 Regional Coordinators. 2 new Regional Coordinators were seconded to the Initiative in the first half of 2002. 4 additional Regional Coordinators were recruited in the second half of 2002. As part of the induction and training process, arrangements were made for all new appointees to attend SDPI Team Meetings as soon as they were recruited and to shadow experienced Regional Coordinators on the SDPI and SDPS Teams.

Programme of training and support for SDP Facilitators
A programme of training and support for SDP Facilitators was planned for the spring of 2002 to revitalise the existing panel of facilitators and increase the pool of expertise. It featured i. workshops for existing facilitators and ii. a training programme for an additional cohort to work either in their own schools or in schools other than their own. Implementation of the programme was hindered by IR factors.

- **Workshops for existing facilitators**: Because of the IR situation, the number of workshops was limited to one in each of 4 regional centres. 32 facilitators participated.
- **Training programme for additional facilitators**: Although 248 applications were received for the training programme and an introductory module at Easter 2002 was arranged for 99 shortlisted applicants, the course had to be cancelled following the activation of a contingency plan on supervision and substitution.

Because of these difficulties, other approaches to capacity-building were developed:

- **Summer Schools**: Two SDPI Summer Schools were held in 2002, one in June and one in August. Invitations were issued to existing facilitators and to applicants who had been offered places on the cancelled course. 136 attended the Summer Schools.
- **Diploma Programme**: The Department of Education and Science accepted a proposal from NUI Galway for a pilot scheme to validate the Initiative’s training programme through a Higher Diploma in Professional Education Studies (School Planning). It was agreed that the Summer School programme would constitute a component of the Diploma course. Subsequently, 81 participants in the SDPI Summer Schools registered for the full Diploma course (in addition to the 33 from SDPS – see Chapter 2, section 2.2). Training workshops were held in 6 regional centres during the autumn term and continued until June 2003, when the Diploma course concluded with a further Summer School.

The Diploma course consists of 3 taught modules and a practical experience module

1. **The Context of School Planning**
   - Unit 1: The National and International Context of Policy Development
   - Unit 2: Local Issues in Policy Development

2. **The Planning Process**
   - Unit 1: Models of and Approaches to the Planning Process
   - Unit 2: Individuals and the Change Process
3. Facilitation Skills
   Unit 1: Facilitation
   Unit 2: Presentation Skills
   Unit 3: Group Dynamic Skills

4. Practical experience
   Unit 1: Observation and cooperation with a trained facilitator
   Unit 2: Personal presentation

Participants are assessed on three types of assignment: essay, case-study, and portfolio.

3.3 Services to Schools: Regional Seminars

The SDPI Plan for 2002 included two series of Regional Seminars, one in spring and one in autumn, featuring concurrent workshops to provide for the needs of schools at different stages in the planning process. The seminars in each series were to take place in many regional centres and to cater for all 749 Post-Primary schools; implementation was to depend on improvement in the IR situation.

A series of 14 Regional Seminars featuring concurrent workshops was organised for February/March 2002. Because of the issuing of a trade union directive in relation to supervision and substitution in February 2002 and the consequent activation of a contingency plan involving the cancellation of inservice courses, this series of seminars was postponed until the 2002/2003 school year.

In November/December 2002, Regional Seminars took place in 7 locations. There were 347 participants, representing 237 Post-Primary schools. The programme for each seminar featured

i. a general information session on the SDP process, the legislative context for SDP, and the progress of schools to date, and

ii. concurrent workshops dealing with school review, prioritising areas for development, establishing school structures for SDP, action planning, policy-writing, approaches to evaluation, and compiling the school plan.

The design of the programme was informed by the findings of a consultative process focused on identifying schools’ support needs in relation to SDP. (See Section 3.4) The seminars were highly rated by participants, as is shown in Chart 3.1:

![Chart 3.1 Evaluations of Regional Seminars](chart3.1.png)

Arrangements were made for a further 16 Regional Seminars in this series to take place in spring 2003 to cater for the remaining 512 Post-Primary schools.
3.4 Services to Schools: Facilitation and Advisory Services

Facilitation Services
The full SDP facilitation process involves pre-planning meetings, facilitated planning days/sessions and post-planning follow-up. In 2002, 153 schools availed of facilitation services, involving 423 contact sessions

- 161 pre-planning meetings
- 191 facilitated planning sessions
- 35 facilitated task group sessions
- 36 follow-up visits.

(Note: In many cases, immediate follow-up was by telephone and/or by post rather than by visit. In schools that had more than one facilitated planning session, a pre-planning meeting for a later session could encompass a follow-up to the earlier session.)

Advisory Services
The advisory service in 2002 had two main aspects:

i. **Support to individual schools on request** – the provision of information, advice, and guidance, by means of school visits, telephone, email, as required. 150 support visits took place.

ii. **Structured consultative process with schools** – the profiling of schools, on a phased basis, in relation to SDP through a programme of structured interviews with school planning personnel, in order to:

- Gain an overview of schools’ progress in School Development Planning
- Identify schools’ needs in relation to support for School Development Planning

- Heighten the awareness of school personnel of the importance of School Development Planning and of the availability of support from the Initiative
- Provide detailed information and guidance on the SDP process to school personnel with key roles in planning

A structured interview template was devised for use in the consultative process. 209 schools were profiled up to June 2002 in relation to their progress in implementing SDP. 192 of these were Phase 1 schools, that is, schools that received the first instalment of their SDP Start-up Grant in 1999. A detailed analysis is presented in **Chapter 5** of this report. The profiling process continues. A further 72 schools were profiled in the period June to December 02. The analysis of profiles compiled in the 2002/2003 school year will be completed in 2003.

Patterns of Engagement with SDPI in 2002
There were significant sectoral differences in the level of schools’ engagement in whole-staff planning sessions facilitated by SDPI Coordinators or Facilitators during the year 2002. These differences in engagement can be accounted for, at least in part, by differences in the IR situation from sector to sector. Patterns of engagement with the Initiative are summarised in Table 3.1, which shows both the number of schools and the percentage of schools in each sector that availed of:

i. whole staff planning sessions, and

ii. any of the services for individual schools
It should be noted that in the majority of cases, whole-staff planning sessions involved the principal and teaching staff only. In a small number of schools, participation was broadened to include representatives of other partner groups: support staff, parents, trustees, or students. In only a few instances was the board of management formally represented at whole-staff planning sessions, although teacher nominees on the board were always involved in their capacity as staff members. Generally, the principal and the teacher nominees liaised between the board and the other partner groups.

To conclude this section, the table below summarises the take-up of SDPI services for individual schools by each sector at Post-Primary level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Whole Staff Planning</th>
<th>All SDPI Services</th>
<th>Type as % of Post-Primary sector</th>
<th>Type as % of SDPI facilitation work</th>
<th>Type as % of total SDPI services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community/Comprehensive</td>
<td>21 23.6%</td>
<td>44 49.4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>65 15.9%</td>
<td>133 32.4%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>67 27.1%</td>
<td>112 45.3%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>153 20.5%</td>
<td>289 38.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Patterns of Engagement with SDPI

Table 3.2 Take-up of SDPI Services by Sector
3.5 SDP Resource Materials

During 2002, SDPI continued to develop resource materials for SDP. The range of materials produced included:

- **SDPI Guidelines**
  A new enlarged edition was prepared and printed, but plans to distribute copies to schools through Regional Seminars could not be implemented in the first half of the year because of the IR situation (see Section 3.3). Copies were delivered to many schools that requested service or that were visited as part of the consultative process. Further distribution was postponed until the 2002/2003 school year, when Regional Seminars resumed.

- **Curriculum Review Materials**
  The Junior Cycle curriculum review materials prepared in collaboration with the NCCA were finalised and printed. Plans to disseminate them through Regional Seminars could not be implemented in the first half of the year because of the IR situation (see Section 3.3). Copies were distributed on school visits and presented to Summer School participants. Further dissemination was postponed until Regional Seminars resumed.

- **Website**
  All additional materials listed above were published on the SDPI website. The News sections of the website were updated regularly. SDPI publications downloaded from the website were adopted by the National Council on Education in Jamaica as training materials for its Governance and Leadership Intervention, an intervention aimed at improving the quality of organisational and instructional effectiveness in Jamaican schools.

3.6 Cooperation with Other Agencies

In addition to providing its own service for schools involved in the Initiative, SDPI established or maintained cooperative links with a number of other agencies in the course of the year and responded to requests from various groups for information and/or training in the area of School Development Planning. These agencies and groups included: Department of Education and Science (DES) Inspectorate and other national education agencies; fellow DES support services; education departments of third level institutions; organisations representative of the education partners; and initiatives and agencies focused on addressing educational disadvantage. (See Appendix 3)

Cooperation with the Inspectorate and with national education agencies such as NCCA, NEPS, and COSAN enabled SDPI to benefit from a wide range of expertise in developing its programme to address school needs, to provide opportunities for personnel from these agencies to familiarise themselves with School Development Planning, and to engage in collaborative projects focused on school improvement.

Two-way communication between SDPI and fellow DES support services enabled SDPI personnel to keep in touch with the changing context for school planning and to collaborate with other services in the development of approaches focused on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in schools. SDPI cooperated with other support services at

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2 The Leadership and Governance Coordinator with the National Council on Education in Jamaica applied on behalf of the Council to the SDPI Management Committee for permission to reproduce the materials as a training guide for SDP consultants and as a reference guide for 72 project schools.
Post-Primary level and with the Association of Teachers’/Education Centres of Ireland (ATECI) in the progressive coordination of all inservice programmes across the sector.

SDPI provided inputs on SDP to graduate programmes for teachers in a range of third level institutions during the year. These inputs ensured that participants in the programmes were enabled to familiarise themselves with School Development Planning and to come to an understanding of its significance as a context for their professional activity. (See Appendix 3).

SDPI maintained links with organisations representative of school management, trustees, principals, teachers and parents to brief them on SDP and the work of the Initiative, to ascertain their views and concerns, and, where appropriate, to cooperate with them in the provision of seminar presentations and workshops for their constituents.

SDPI cooperated with two special projects focused on addressing educational disadvantage: Bridging the Gap, a UCC-DES project to alleviate urban disadvantage in Cork City; and GRD, a Galway Rural Development project supporting three clusters of Co. Galway schools in combating rural disadvantage. Both projects promote a multi-agency trans-sectoral approach, highlighting the benefits of coordinated support. In addition, SDPI maintained contacts with a number of Area Partnership Boards.

3.7 Quality Partnership of the Regions (QPR)

In 2002, SDPI continued to play a coordinating role in Quality Partnership of the Regions (QPR), an EU Socrates project involving 36 schools in 5 countries: Austria, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, and Scotland. The aim of the project, which commenced in 2001, was to improve, enrich and strengthen the case for school self-evaluation by testing and validating various quality indicators. Ireland’s participation in the project involved four German-Irish school partnerships, each of which was required to choose a theme of common interest as an area for development. The themes chosen were:

- A Portfolio and project assessment in the context of pupil learning
- B Health promotion in the context of pastoral care
- C Work experience in the context of preparation for work
- D Work experience in the context of home-school-community links

The partner-schools then collaborated on establishing quality indicators for evaluating their performance in their chosen development area. They decided not to use quality indicators already in existence but rather to design and agree their own through a process of discussion and negotiation.

An SDPI Regional Coordinator acted as Irish National Coordinator for the project, and a member of the DES Inspectorate acted as Project Leader. During the year 2002, the Coordinator and Project Leader organised and facilitated visits by representatives of the Irish participating schools to Germany and by representatives of the German schools to Ireland. They also visited each of the Irish participating schools on a number of occasions to meet with the project team, and they brought the four project teams together for cluster sessions.

The QPR project had many positive outcomes. Significant progress was made on the design of quality indicators. Participants gained an understanding of school self-evaluation and developed skills that should enable them to lead the process in the future. The project provided a powerful professional development experience which built capacity in the schools involved and gave them confidence in their own abilities to self-evaluate. As a result of their participation, they have prioritised further areas for action.
The following conclusions were drawn from the QPR project:

- Self-evaluation requires commitment, openness, time, resources and planning
- Successful school self-evaluation is contingent on external supports being provided
- Common terminology on evaluation must be agreed as a base for a common understanding of quality in schools
- There is a need for training on the technical aspects of evaluation i.e. skills training in designing evaluation instruments, administering tests or questionnaires, and analysing and interpreting data in ways which respect the need for validity and reliability
- Advisory support must be made available, as required, to guide and direct schools in the process of self-evaluation.

The QPR project concluded in February 2003.

3 From Quality Development Experiences of the Giessen/Vogelsberg and Ireland Partnership, the final report of the Irish QPR Project Leader.
In 2002, schools at Primary level made considerable progress in SDP with the support of the SDPS Team. This progress report outlines:

1. Levels of engagement in planning activities by schools participating in the various stages of the SDPS support programme, with respect to the aspects of the SDP process that were undertaken, and the areas of school life that were addressed.
2. Levels of progress achieved by schools over the course of the Initiative, in relation to engagement in key SDP operations, collegiate planning, partnership in planning, and school clustering.
3. Levels of capacity for independent planning in schools that were included in the SDPS programme prior to September 02.

It should be noted that, at the time of writing, collated information on schools’ engagement in SDP was available only to 30 June 2002.

4.1 Planning Activities in Schools

4.1.2 Aspects of the SDP Process

The main aspects of the SDP process in which schools engaged through the SDPS support programme were: school review; prioritisation; action planning; development of organisational policies; development of whole-school curricular plans; development of vision/mission; and development of strategic plans to address development priorities over an extended period of time.

Schools in Stage 1

840 medium-sized schools participated in Stage 1 of the support programme during 2001/02.

In their first support year, these schools concentrated on school review, prioritising areas for development and drawing up action plans for the implementation of developments. 704 of these schools were assisted in conducting a general school review or a review of a specific area of school life. 694 schools were facilitated in the drawing up of development priorities, while 685 were assisted with the development of one or more action plans. The range of their planning activities is summarised in Table 4.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity (1/9/01 – 30/6/02)</th>
<th>% of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School review</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Priorities</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action planning</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of organisational policies</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of curricular plans</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of vision/mission</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of strategic plans</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Summary of Planning Activities (Stage 1 Schools)
Schools in Stage 2

1309 small schools and 19 very large schools participated in Stage 2 of the support programme during 2001/02. Schools in their second year of support revisited and consolidated activities begun in the previous year – school review, prioritising and action planning. 1,074 of these schools were assisted in conducting a school review. 1,023 were facilitated in the drawing up of development priorities, while 1,094 were assisted with the development of one or more action plans.

In addition, they were introduced to new activities – developing school vision/mission, strategic planning and the development of curricular plans and administrative policies and procedures. 418 schools were assisted in the development of school vision/mission, while 207 were facilitated in the drawing up of strategic plans. The range of their planning activities is summarised in Table 4.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity (1/9/01 – 30/6/02)</th>
<th>% of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School review</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Priorities</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action planning</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of organisational policies</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of curricular plans</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of vision/mission</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of strategic plans</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 Summary of Planning Activities (Stage 2 Schools)

Schools in Stage 3

433 schools, designated as serving areas of disadvantage, were included in the Initiative from September 1999 and continued to receive limited support in the school year 2001/02. By June 2002, 257 of these schools had been assisted in conducting a school review. 271 had been assisted with drawing up development priorities, while 340 had been assisted in action planning. 314 of these schools developed one or more policies in an administrative area and 262 were assisted in drawing up curriculum plans. 83 schools were assisted in the development of school vision/mission, while 49 were facilitated in the drawing up of strategic plans.
4.1.2 Whole School Development Planning: Priority Areas

Whole School Development Planning activities during 2001/02 extended over a wide range of topics or areas. Schools tended to identify areas as “curricular” or “organisational”. In practice, however, these divisions were less clear-cut, with much “curricular” planning addressing linked organisational issues, and “organisational” planning frequently addressing administrative practices and procedures which impacted on curriculum.

Curricular Focus

Following their school review, many schools prioritised aspects of curriculum for whole school planning. While facilitating schools in planning for their identified curricular area, the Initiative was simultaneously assisting schools in the development of their planning skills. These skills could then be transferred to planning for other aspects of school life.

1,408 schools (388 in Stage 1 and 1,020 in Stage 2) were assisted in planning in areas identified as predominantly curricular. The most popular curricular focus areas and the percentage of planning days on which these were dealt with are laid out in Table 4.3.

The quality of teaching and learning as the focus of all planning and development was specifically addressed at SDPS Regional Seminars, and schools were encouraged to maintain that focus on subsequent planning occasions. To date, however, curriculum planning has been dominated by schools’ needs to address the demands of the Revised Curriculum. The most frequent curriculum area identified from September to December 2002 was English (introduced 1999). Less frequently identified were Gaeilge (introduced 2000) and Mathematics (introduced 2001). The fact that curricular planning time was so dominated by English and that areas such as Music, SPHE and PE were rarely dealt with suggests that prioritisation was significantly influenced by the need to respond to the roll-out of the Revised Curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curricular Area/ Aspect of topic</th>
<th>Frequency on Planning Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 1 Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaeilge</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPHE</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SESE</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSE</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Whole School Planning: Curricular Focus Areas

It is likely that, as inservice training on each subject area in the Revised Curriculum is provided, there will by a significant demand on the Initiative for Whole School Development Planning assistance in that subject area during the subsequent 1–2 years. The Initiative needs to consider how best it can assist schools in addressing the challenge of continuing to implement revised curricula while simultaneously beginning the evaluation and modification of curricula already implemented, such evaluation being based on evidence of pupil attainment.

Organisational Focus

1,567 schools (511 Stage 1 and 1056 Stage 2) developed one or more policies focused on organisational areas by June 2002. Implications for teaching, learning and the curriculum were generally included when planning on issues such as homework, special needs, assessment, learning support and record keeping occurred. The most popular
organisational focus areas and the percentage of planning days on which these were dealt with are laid out in Table 4.4.

A wide range of other organisational issues was addressed on less than 1% of planning days, including staff collaboration and decision-making, school tours, multi-class teaching, pupil attendance, timetabling, special needs assistants, substance use, child abuse, gender, induction of new teachers, disadvantage, complaints procedures, access to school records, equal opportunities, school uniforms, promotion of pupils, individual educational profiles, class allocation, posts of responsibility and teacher absences.

The fact that organisational planning to date seems to have been dictated by the need to comply with legislation suggests that schools have not yet felt able to address the responsiveness of general school organisation to the needs of their pupils. It is likely that recently introduced guidelines on substance use and child protection will also influence organisational planning choices. Areas clearly linked to pupil attainment such as attendance and disadvantage have yet to be accorded significant planning time.

The Initiative needs to consider how schools can best be assisted in complying with external organisational policy demands arising from legislation and directive so that internal organisational issues, which impact directly on the learning of pupils, can receive greater attention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisational Area/Aspect of Topic</th>
<th>Stage 1 Schools</th>
<th>Stage 2 Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code of Behaviour</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment and Admissions</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Pupils</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Support and Resource Teaching</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Meetings</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-school Liaison</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record Keeping</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Information Booklet</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Building Issues</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of Medication</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Whole School Planning: Organisational Focus Areas
4.2 Schools’ Progress in SDP over the course of the Initiative

Prior to the commencement of the 2001/02 school year, the SDPS Coordinating Team put in place mechanisms by which the development planning activities of schools before and after inclusion in the Initiative could be established.

The previous development planning activities of schools which were entering the Initiative for the first time were ascertained at pre-planning meetings. At the end of the school year 2001/02, their level of engagement in SDP activities prior to their inclusion in the Initiative was compared with their record of engagement during their first year of support.

The following points in relation to schools’ progress in SDP emerge both from the comparative analysis outlined above, and from the feedback from SDPS facilitators on the planning activities of schools in their second and third years of SDPS support:

4.2.1 Progress in SDP Engagement

During their first year of inclusion in the Initiative, schools were introduced to three aspects of development planning: i. School self review; ii. Prioritising; iii. Action planning.

Inclusion in the Initiative had a major impact on the incidence of all of the targeted planning activities among these schools, as can be seen from Table 4.5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Before Inclusion</th>
<th>After Inclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Review</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritising</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Planning</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 Stage 1 Schools: Planning Activities before/after Inclusion

The experience of facilitators would indicate that inclusion in the Initiative has had a similar impact on the incidence of targeted planning activities among schools in Stages 2 and 3. Comparative statistics in relation to these schools cannot be presented, however, as the baseline pre-inclusion data are not currently available. The collation of such information is of value to the Initiative as it facilitates the charting of schools’ progress in implementing the SDP process.

In their second year of inclusion in the Initiative, schools were introduced to the concept of strategic planning as a means of delivering on development priorities arising from the school-based review over a period of 3 to 5 years. There was a marginal increase in strategic planning among Stage 2 schools during the year following inclusion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before Inclusion</th>
<th>After Inclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6 Stage 2 Schools: Strategic Planning

While progress has been made in this area, and 207 Stage 2 schools had been assisted in strategic planning by June 2002, the translation of development priorities into 3-5 year Strategic Plans remains to be completed by a majority of schools. The development of such plans will greatly assist schools in the coping with, and implementing, the significant changes now in train in primary education.

4.2.2 Increased Staff Involvement

One of the major impacts of the initiative on schools has been the promotion of collegiate planning. Before inclusion, 61% of staff in schools in their first year of support had played some role in policy development in their schools. Almost 1 in 3 (29%) had not been included in the policy development activities of their school, while a further 10% had never been involved because of the lack of any policy development in their schools.

4 The schools in question were the 840 medium-sized schools (schools with 4–6 mainstream class teachers) that were included in the Initiative from September 01.
Following the provision of regional seminars and facilitated planning days for Stage 1 schools, all staff members in these schools are being involved in policy development on, and subsequent to, the facilitated planning day. A culture of collegiate planning has been introduced for the first time to almost 40% of schools in this cohort.

4.2.3 Partnership in Planning

The inclusion of boards of management and parents in the development planning process at Primary level has been most successful among schools in their third year in the Initiative. Up to 33% of these schools have included parents in the development planning process.

Some improvement in the rate of active inclusion of boards of management and parents has also been evident among schools in their first and second years of SDPS support. Increases in the involvement of parents (an additional 6%) and boards of management (an additional 5%) since these schools’ inclusion in the Initiative have been modest, and much remains to be done in this area, as can be seen from the table below. The low level of involvement of boards of management is of concern, given the responsibility of the board in relation to school planning under the terms of the Education Act, 1998 (Education Act, 1998, section 21).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before Inclusion</th>
<th>After Inclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BoM</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7 Involvement of Partners in Policy Development (Stage 1 Schools)

Involvement of partners was most common in organisational planning. When boards of management were involved in schools’ planning activities, 84% of this involvement was in organisational areas, with 12% involvement in curricular planning. Similarly, 90% of parental involvement was in organisational planning.

4.2.4 Planning in Clusters

Small 1–3 teacher schools were encouraged to plan in clusters of an average of four, while 4–7 teacher schools planned in clusters of 2. Schools in particular categories were also facilitated in planning together, e.g. hospital schools and special schools. Inclusion in the Initiative in September 2001 resulted in an increase from 7% to 98% in the incidence of planning clusters among Stage 1 schools. The opportunities thus afforded to work cooperatively with similar-sized schools have been enthusiastically received by schools.

The practice of smaller school clustering for planning purposes has been extremely beneficial to the schools involved. Clustering addresses specific issues in relation to working in smaller schools including issues of professional and geographic isolation as well as multi-class teaching. Schools have access to the good practice and experience of their cluster partners, and the planning workload on all can be reduced. The Initiative should continue the practice of clustering and consolidate successful clusters, not only in relation to schools of similar size, but also in relation to schools of similar category. It should develop the practice for particular categories of school personnel (such as learning support teachers, or principals of very large schools) to address planning issues that they have in common.
4.3 Capacity for Independent Planning

While the Initiative has been extremely successful in introducing schools to the concept of whole-school development planning and fostering the process through seminars and facilitated planning days, much remains to be done to embed the process in schools to such an extent that they can carry on independently.

At the end of 2001/02, facilitators were asked to evaluate the potential of the schools they had worked with to continue planning with one of three levels of continuing support:

- **Low-level Support.** Schools capable of planning independently, where planning instruments, guidelines and exemplars of best practice are available via publications and/or the Internet.
- **Medium-level Support.** Schools mostly capable of self-facilitation on a planning day, but needing assistance in the organisation of their planning and best use of the available planning instruments, guidelines and exemplars of best practice.
- **High-level Support.** Schools continuing to need a full facilitation service.

Table 4.8 below shows facilitator evaluations of schools’ preparedness for independent planning.

It is clear from the data that the longer schools are supported in the initial stages, the more likely it is that independent planning will occur. After three years of support, 40% of schools are identified as being in a position to continue planning with low or medium-level support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Stage</th>
<th>Low-Level Support</th>
<th>Medium-Level Support</th>
<th>High-Level Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1 Schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1st year of support)</td>
<td>2% (17 schools)</td>
<td>9% (76 schools)</td>
<td>89% (747 schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 2 Schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2nd year of support)</td>
<td>3% (40 schools)</td>
<td>17% (226 schools)</td>
<td>80% (1062 schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 3 Schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3rd year of support)</td>
<td>10% (44 schools)</td>
<td>30% (132 schools)</td>
<td>60% (263 schools)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8  Preparedness for Independent Planning
Circumstances in the Post-Primary sector precluded continuity and progression in the implementation of the SDPI support programme from the year 2000. Accordingly, the Post-Primary progress report is based, not on sustained contact with schools since 1999, but on the structured consultative process that was initiated with schools when the IR situation eased in November 2001 (see Section 3.1), and on Regional Coordinators’ reports of the Initiative’s work with schools during the year 2002.

5.1 SDPI Consultative Process

The SDPI consultative process provides for the profiling of schools’ progress in School Development Planning using a structured interview template, as outlined in Section 3.4. This report presents an overview of the progress indicated in the profiles that were compiled by June 2002. The intention was to profile all 276 Phase 1 schools (that is, schools that received the first instalment of their SDP Start-up Grant in 1999) in the period November 2001 to June 2002. Because of the deterioration in the IR situation in February 2002, however (see Section 3.3), this target was not met. Only 209 schools were profiled in the period in question. 192 of these were Phase 1 schools. 27 of the 209 schools profiled were in the Community/Comprehensive sector; 93, in the Secondary sector; and 89, in the Vocational sector.

The profile report comprises 4 main sections:

1. Planning activities in schools since the inception of the Initiative
2. Schools’ progress in SDP over the course of the Initiative
3. Current school situation in relation to SDP
4. Future SDP Support Needs

5 The 17 non-Phase 1 schools were included in the profiling process during this period because they were availing of other SDPI services at the time, most commonly pre-planning for SDP facilitation, which would involve the collection of similar information.
5.1.1 Planning Activities in Schools since the inception of the Initiative (Sept. 1999)

Whole-Staff Planning Sessions 1999–2002
Schools were asked to indicate how many whole-staff planning days or planning sessions they had held since September 1999. 80% had held at least one planning day; 30% had held at least one shorter planning session; in all, 91% of schools indicated that they had taken time for planning. There were wide variations in the amount of time allocated to SDP by schools, as shown in Chart 5.1:

SDP Facilitation Arrangements 1999–2002
Schools were asked about the form of facilitation they had adopted for the SDP process in the period 1999–2002. 40% had adopted external facilitation only; 12%, facilitation by members of school staff only (internal facilitation); 36%, a combination of external and internal facilitation. 12% did not specify a form of facilitation.

The combined form of facilitation, where an external facilitator works in conjunction with school personnel, is a model that the Initiative wishes to encourage as a means of building capacity for independent planning in schools.

Planning Activities since September 1999
Schools were asked to give details of the development planning activities they had engaged in since September 1999. They indicated the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of SDP engaged in since 1999</th>
<th>% of 209 profiled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Review conducted</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priorities for development agreed</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Structures established</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Plans drawn up</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Plans implemented</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies formulated</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission/Vision/Aims statement drafted</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Plan completed</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangements made for monitoring implementation</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangements made for evaluating outcomes</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangements made for reporting</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Planning Activities since September 1999

Given the IR situation that had obtained at Post-Primary level since mid-2000, this pattern of planning activities is in line with expectations. It indicates that the majority of schools profiled had completed the Review stage of the SDP process; that almost half had made significant progress in devising and implementing Action Plans, but that only a tiny minority had proceeded to the latter stages of the SDP cycle. The high level of engagement in the drafting of policies can be attributed largely to the impact of legislative requirements and to the fact that, unlike formal School Development Planning, policy formulation per se was not proscribed in trade union directives. It was perceived, therefore, as an area where progress was both essential and possible. The high level of activity in relation to school mission can be attributed partly to the requirements set by some trustees for...
the boards of management of their schools, and partly to the fact that some schools chose to commence the SDP process by articulating or reviewing their mission, vision and fundamental aims.

Priorities Chosen

Schools were asked to list the areas of school life that they had prioritised for development. A wide variety of areas was listed. The top 10 priorities identified are in Table 5.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities for Development</th>
<th>% of 209 profiled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Senior Cycle Curriculum</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Discipline/Behaviour</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pastoral Care</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Remedial Education/Learning Support</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Junior Cycle Curriculum</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Staff Development</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. School Building/Facilities</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mission/Vision/Aims</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Educational Disadvantage</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Attendance</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 Areas of School Life Prioritised for Development

The list indicates that schools attended to both curricular and organisational needs in selecting their priorities. In relation to the Senior Cycle curriculum, schools’ main focus was on diversification through the introduction of additional programmes – Leaving Certificate Applied, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme or Transition Year Programme. In relation to Junior Cycle a major concern was to find ways of accommodating the two additional compulsory subjects, CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education) and SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education). In general, therefore, schools were focusing more on curriculum provision than on teaching and learning processes during the Review stage, but they would adjust that focus when preparing for the implementation of the new programmes, assisted by the relevant Curriculum Support Service. The fact that fewer than 50% of schools prioritised the issue of attendance is perhaps surprising, given the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act in relation to school attendance strategies and records (see Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, sections 21 and 22). The Act was not commenced until July 2002, however, and feedback indicates that many schools may have been awaiting the guidelines from the National Education Welfare Board that are mentioned in the Act (section 22 subsection 7).

Policies put in Place

Schools were asked to identify the policies that they had put in place since September 1999. A wide variety of policies was listed, the most common of which were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies in Place</th>
<th>% of 209 profiled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discipline/Code of Behaviour</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions/Enrolment</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships and Sexuality Education</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral Care</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3 Policies put in Place since September 1999

It should be noted that the question did not address policies put in place prior to September 1999. Moreover, the answers provided by some schools may not have been comprehensive. Nevertheless, the pattern of responses would suggest that, by June 2002, a significant number of schools had not yet addressed legislative requirements for written policies in certain key areas of school life, despite the fact that 87% of schools
reported that they had been working on policy formulation. School leaders commented on the slowness of the policy formulation process and on the need to find time-effective ways of satisfying legislative requirements in order to prevent SDP from being dominated by policy-writing.

Planning Structures established

Schools were asked about the planning structures they had established to address the priorities and advance the planning process. 65% had established some kind of planning structure: 59% had established task groups; 41% had established a steering committee. When asked how these planning structures were established, 52% of the 209 profiled indicated that members had volunteered; 10% indicated that members were elected by the staff; 11% indicated that members were appointed by the principal; 9% indicated that members were appointed through the in-school management system. In some schools, a variety of methods was used. 15% of the schools profiled had allocated a full in-school management post to SDP and 12% had allocated part of a post.

Planning structures are essential to ensure the advancement of the planning process. Had IR considerations not prevailed, one would have looked for a higher incidence than 65%.

Involvement of Partners in SDP since 1999

Schools were asked to indicate the level of partner involvement in key aspects of the SDP process: school review; policy formulation; and the formulation of a statement of mission/vision/aims. As previously indicated, of the 209 schools profiled, 78% had conducted a school review, 87% had formulated policies, and 75% had formulated a statement of mission/vision/aims during the period in question. The pattern of partner involvement is summarised in the following table (the percentages quoted are of the 209 schools profiled):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partners Involved</th>
<th>School Review</th>
<th>Policy-Formulation</th>
<th>Mission/Vision/Aims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Staff</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Staff</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Management</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustees</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No partners specified</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 Involvement of Partners in SDP

With regard to partnership structures, 92% of schools profiled had a board of management, 85% a parents’ association, and 52% a students’ council.

The pattern of partner involvement is better than might have been expected, given the IR situation during the period in question. Nevertheless, the pattern is far from ideal. The low level of involvement of boards of management is of particular concern, given the responsibility of the board in relation to school planning under the terms of the Education Act, 1998 (see Education Act, 1998, section 21). It is notable that parents’
main area of involvement is in relation to policy-formulation. Feedback would indicate that, while in some cases parents have been involved in the policy-formulation process from the outset through their representation on policy committees, in others their involvement has commenced at the consultation stage, with the circulation of draft documents prepared by members of the school staff for their consideration. With regard to pupil involvement, the levels that schools reported, while moderately low, are encouraging. The fact that more than half of the schools profiled had a students’ council indicates that structures to facilitate and promote student involvement are already well-established in the system.

5.1.2 Schools’ Progress in SDP over the course of the Initiative

The school profiles compiled through the SDPI consultative process enable comparisons to be drawn between schools’ levels of engagement in SDP activities prior to the establishment of the Initiative and their record of engagement since the Initiative was launched.

### Progress in SDP Engagement

The schools profiled reported a marked increase in their level of engagement in key aspects of School Development Planning since the inception of the Initiative. The pattern is revealed in Table 5.5.

Given the prevailing IR situation with particular reference to SDP during the period in question, the level of engagement reported by schools exceeds expectations and suggests that progress has been made in establishing the process within the Post-Primary system. It should be noted, however, that levels of engagement in the latter stages of the SDP cycle of operations – systematic monitoring and self-evaluation – have remained low, with no increase reported. (Only 3% of schools profiled indicated that they had engaged in evaluation since 1999. See Table 5.1.) Engagement in these operations is considered essential for school improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of SDP</th>
<th>% of 209 profiled New to this aspect since Sept. 1999</th>
<th>% of 209 profiled Engaged in this aspect since Sept. 1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Review</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritising</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Planning</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy formulation</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission/Vision/Aims</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5 Progress in SDP Engagement
Progress in Partner Involvement

Schools profiled reported a significant increase in the level of partner involvement in the School Development Planning process, as indicated in Table 5.6.

Overall, the level of progress reported in partner involvement is encouraging, but work must be done on identifying and promoting good practice with regard to the nature of the involvement. The reported level of involvement of support staff is significantly lower than that of other partners. The Initiative needs to explore ways of addressing this issue.

5.1.3 Current School Situation re SDP

As part of the profiling process, schools were asked to rate the current level of staff openness to SDP, the extent of progress in SDP since September 2000 (when the first of the trade union directives affecting SDP was issued), and the school’s current location or take-up position within the SDP process.

Staff Openness to SDP

Schools were asked to rate the current level of staff openness to SDP on a four-point scale. Some schools insisted on converting the scale to a five-point one by inserting a middle value. The pattern of responses among the 209 schools profiled was as follows: Very High, 31%; Fairly High, 44%; Middling, 6%; Fairly Low, 11%; Very Low, 3%. 4% of schools did not provide a rating. Given the complexity of the IR situation in the post-primary sector since September 2000, the positive rating of staff openness to SDP by 75% of the schools profiled was encouraging.

Progress Rating re SDP since September 2000

Schools were asked to rate their level of progress in SDP since September 2000 on a four-point scale. The date September 2000 was chosen because it was at that point in the Initiative’s history that the first of the trade union directives against SDP was issued. The pattern of responses was as follows: A lot of progress, 10%; A fair amount, 24%; A little, 33%; None, 30%. 3% of those profiled did not provide a rating.

Given the IR situation that obtained during the period in question, the fact that 63% of schools considered that they had made little or no progress since September 2000 was not surprising.
**Current Stage in SDP Process/Take-up Position in SDP Process**

Schools were asked which category in a given list would best represent their current stage or their take-up position in the SDP process. The majority (73% of the 209 profiled) selected a combination. Accordingly, the total in Table 5.7 exceeds 100%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Stage in SDP Process</th>
<th>% of 209 profiled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Start from scratch: introductory overview</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School review to identify priorities</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Action Planning</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Policy Writing</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Formulating statement of Mission/Vision/Aims</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Compiling overall School Plan</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Implementation of the School Plan</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Evaluation of outcomes of the School Plan</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7  Current Stage in SDP Process

Schools seem to have interpreted the first category, “Start from scratch” as signifying total relaunch of SDP following a period of inactivity.

Most of the schools that chose this category had previous experience of SDP and so would not be commencing the process for the first time. In hindsight, it might have been more informative to offer two separate categories: “Start the process for the first time” and “Restart the process”.

With regard to the second category, “School Review,” many schools indicated that although they had already identified priorities for development, the list needed to be reviewed for confirmation or amendment because of the length of time that had elapsed since the initial review had taken place.

### 5.1.4 Future SDP Support Needs

Schools were asked to indicate the forms of support that they would find helpful in advancing the process of SDP and to rank those supports in order of priority. The responses are summarised in the following table. The percentages quoted are of the 209 schools profiled. Some schools gave equal priority to a number of forms of support. This suggests that they were unwilling to rely on a single support-option, preferring a multi-faceted system integrating a variety of complementary forms of support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Support</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
<th>Priority 1 or 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultations with an SDPI Coordinator</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services of an external SDP Facilitator</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inservice training seminars (off-site)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to expertise on particular priorities</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops focused on particular aspects (off-site)</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster meetings to share experiences (off-site)</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional guideline materials</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other planning support</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8  Forms of Support Prioritised by Schools
**Topics on which Support Required for SDP**

In relation to future support, schools were invited to identify 

i. the aspects of planning on which they would like workshops, 

ii. the issues or priorities in relation to which they would like access to expertise, 

iii. the topics on which they would like guidelines, and 

iv. any other planning supports that they would find helpful.

Many of the schools profiled indicated that, because of their lack of recent experience of SDP, caused by the IR climate, they would find it difficult to be specific about their future support needs. Hence, 22% chose not to specify any support needs at that time. Only 8% of the 209 profiled identified support needs in all four categories offered. The pattern of responses is summarised in Table 5.9:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Topics on which Support Required for SDP</th>
<th>% of 209 profiled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Plan as a legal document</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Structures for SDP</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Development Planning process stages</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline/Behaviour/Bullying</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Development/Affirmation/Motivation</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamation</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Planning Supports Required</th>
<th>% of 209 profiled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time for SDP</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding/resources</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inservice on-site, not off-site</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.9 Topics on which Support Required**
5.1.5 Profile Summary

- All schools profiled had engaged in SDP to some extent since September 1999. Largely because of IR issues, however, 63% of them considered that they had made little or no progress since September 2000.
- The aspects of SDP in which most significant progress was made since September 1999 were policy-formulation, formulation of mission/visions/aims statement, and school review leading to the identification of priorities.
- 91% of schools indicated that they had held at least one whole-staff planning session since September 1999.
- 76% of schools had engaged external personnel to facilitate either alone or in collaboration with members of the school staff.
- 65% of schools had established internal planning structures.
- 64% of schools had consulted parents in relation to some aspect of the planning process.
- Action Planning was the stage of SDP most often identified by schools as their current location or take-up position in the SDP process.
- The forms of SDP support prioritised by most schools were consultations with an SDPI Coordinator and the services of an external SDP Facilitator.
- The most common topics or aspects in relation to which schools identified the need for support were: the school plan as a legal document; the development of structures for SDP; time for SDP; discipline; and staff development.
5.2 Regional Coordinators’ Progress Reports

5.2.1 Schools’ Progress in SDP Activities

The pattern that emerges from Regional Coordinators’ reports of the Initiative’s work with schools during the year 2002 is largely consistent with the findings of the profiling process.

Regional Coordinators reported the following overall pattern of SDP activities during facilitated whole-staff planning sessions with individual schools:

For the most part, schools that requested introductory sessions had not previously availed of the Initiative’s services. Those that requested Review sessions fell into two categories: schools that were new to SDP, and schools that had previous experience of the process but that wished to reconsider their situation in the light of changes that had taken place during the IR suspension of the process. (See Issues section below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDP Process Activities</th>
<th>% of sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SDP Introduction:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Introductory presentation on SDP</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Preliminary workshop – “Where are we now?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>From Review to Design:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Review of school’s current reality</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Identification of development priorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Establishment of planning structures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Initiation of Action Planning to address priorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Fleshing out of Action Plans</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Preparation for monitoring implementation of Action Plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ and evaluating outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Policy-writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Seminars on Specific Issues:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Planning seminars focused on specific whole-school issues</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ (such as discipline, pastoral care, subject-department planning)</td>
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Table 5.10 SDP Process Activities in 2002
The pattern of schools' attendance at the concurrent workshops during SDPI Regional Seminars in November/December 2002 presents a slightly different picture of SDP progress at Post-Primary level. There were three levels of workshop:

i. Formalising School Planning, for schools in the initial stages of the SDP process
ii. Action Planning, for schools that had already identified their development priorities by means of a review process
iii. Continuing the Planning Cycle, for schools with significant experience of the SDP process

49% of the 347 participants selected Workshop 1; 35% selected Workshop 2; 16% selected Workshop 3. These figures suggest that, by the end of 2002, more than half of the schools at Post-Primary level that had availed of the Initiative's seminars had moved beyond the initial stages of SDP. It is interesting to note that the corresponding figures for Regional Seminar workshops in the period January to April 2003 were: Workshop 1, 34%; Workshop 2, 41%, and Workshop 3, 25%.

5.2.2 Issues
Arising from the Initiative's work with schools on both an individual and a group basis, Regional Coordinators highlighted the following issues:

- In many schools that had commenced SDP in the first year of the Initiative (1999–2000), momentum was lost and progress eroded during the period of IR difficulties. Regional Coordinators found that it was more difficult for schools to restart the process when it had become stale than to start it for the first time, especially when morale was low. It was generally necessary to conduct a further review in order to confirm or amend the selected priorities and to establish an appropriate starting point for addressing them. Motivation for planning was an issue in some schools that had undergone repeated reviews without ever having experienced follow-up action. Regional Coordinators working with such schools were sensitive to their particular need to make early progress with action planning and implementation.

- If SDP is to become established as an ongoing process rather than as a transient event, schools need to find ways of maintaining the momentum after facilitated planning sessions. Regional Coordinators reported that schools found it easier to maintain momentum where a schedule for the process over an extended period was agreed at the first pre-planning meeting and where the time-lapse between full planning sessions (especially in the early stages of the process) was relatively short. Schools found it particularly helpful where the facilitator was available to work with task groups or steering committee between planning days. These approaches to maintaining continuity and momentum have resource implications if they are to be applied across the Post-Primary system. In relation to time, they would require that schools be enabled:
  i. to devote the equivalent of at least two days per year\(^6\) to whole-staff planning work, and
  ii. to timetable task group and steering committee meetings between whole-staff planning sessions\(^7\)

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\(^6\) Some schools suggested an allocation of the equivalent of three days per year for whole-staff planning work, at least until the first full cycle of development planning (review, design, implementation and evaluation) had been completed. A number of schools emphasized the need for local flexibility in relation to the way in which time might be scheduled for School Development Planning. Some schools, for instance, would prefer to schedule planning time in two-hour or half-day blocks, whereas others would find planning sessions of such duration impractical because of local circumstances.

\(^7\) Some schools suggested an additional allocation of teaching staff or part-time teaching hours to enable small-group planning meetings to be structured into teachers' timetables.
In relation to expertise, they would require the availability of sufficient trained personnel to support and facilitate the work of task groups and steering committees. In relation to finance, they would require revised arrangements for the payment of facilitation costs. These points were articulated repeatedly by principals at the Regional Seminars.

- Schools requested clarification regarding the timeframe for completion of a full cycle of SDP. No time-frame is specified in the Education Act, 1998 or in DES Circulars M20/99, M40/99 and M39/00, which deal with School Development Planning. The general guideline provided by the Initiative is three to five years, based on the normal term of office of a school board of management (because of the board’s responsibility in relation to the school plan – see Education Act, 1998, section 21), and on practice among schools in the system with considerable previous experience of School Development Planning. Some schools expressed the need for more specific guidance on this issue, and suggested that DES issue a circular detailing its expectations in relation to timeframe.

- School representatives found Regional Seminars helpful as a means of accessing information and skills training and of sharing experiences with others. Many advocated more frequent cluster meetings with schools of similar size or type, or at similar stages in the planning process, to facilitate the sharing of experience. Yet they also highlighted the difficulties posed for schools by off-site in-service provision. This issue is not particular to the Initiative. The progressive coordination of all in-service provision at Post-Primary level may perhaps enable the Initiative to facilitate the benefits of clustering without discommoding schools.

- In all forms of contact with Regional Coordinators throughout 2002, principals emphasised the pressure on schools to produce policy documents required by legislation and the need for assistance to respond to that pressure. As already noted, they commented on the slowness of the policy formulation process and on the need to find time-effective ways of satisfying legislative requirements in order to prevent SDP from being dominated by policy-writing. Towards that end, they requested legally-proofed sample policies and access to free legal expertise. The SDPI Team is compiling resource materials to support the policy-formulation process in relation to specific issues. In some areas, principals have proposed intensive cluster workshops focused on the drafting of particular policy documents. SDPI is to cooperate in the implementation of this proposal.

- The partnership dimension of SDP was raised both during school visits and at Regional Seminars. Schools requested clarification of the relative roles, rights and responsibilities of the various partners in relation to SDP, information and training sessions for boards of management and parents’ associations, and exemplars of good practice. Regional Coordinators have facilitated sessions on SDP for a small number of individual boards of management and are compiling exemplars of good practice in cooperation with the National Parents’ Council (post-primary). The Initiative and the National Centre for Partnership and Performance are also cooperating in a consultative capacity with Marino Institute of Education in a DES-funded project promoting partnership as a school improvement strategy. Further work needs to be done in promoting the partnership dimension of SDP.
During the year 2002, the vast majority of schools that availed of the Initiative’s services were engaged in Review and Design – the first two operations of the SDP cycle. Few had advanced to the Evaluation stage. The full benefits of SDP will not accrue until schools develop a capacity for systematic self-evaluation as the impetus for ongoing improvement. The challenge for the Initiative is to support schools in building that capacity. The recent DES publication, *Looking at our School: An aid to self-evaluation activity in second level schools*, will be a valuable resource to that end. It is intended that the Regional Seminar programme for 2003/04 will include workshops focused on approaches to and skills for school self-evaluation. The Initiative will also need to assess schools’ support needs in moving beyond the evaluation stage into the next cycle of development planning.

As already indicated (in section 5.2.1 above), a small proportion of schools that attended Regional Seminars had considerable previous experience of SDP. Some questioned whether the model suggested by the Initiative for establishing SDP within a school was applicable to schools with extensive experience and well-established structures. The fact that such a question was raised highlights for the SDPI Team the need to give greater prominence to one of the basic principles of the Initiative: As every school is unique, the operation of the planning process will vary considerably from school to school. The School Development Planning process is flexible. It is not a set of rules to be followed blindly but a framework for collaborative creativity. Each school must adapt the framework to suit its own particular circumstances. (*School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools*, p. 13) The SDPI Team should also develop a portfolio of case-studies outlining a range of approaches and structures that experienced schools have found fruitful.

Schools requested clarity on the link between School Development Planning and Whole School Evaluation. The Initiative will work with the Inspectorate to articulate how external evaluation can validate and support the school’s internal process of review, design, implementation and evaluation in the promotion of school improvement.

Schools highlighted the need for SDP skills development and facilitation training for school personnel. The Initiative must address this need if it is to fulfil its aim of building the capacity of schools to implement development planning as a means of quality enhancement. Strategies under consideration include i. expansion of the current programme of facilitator training (see section 3.2) and ii. provision of local courses, in Education Centres where possible. Resource implications for the Initiative are being researched.

Schools welcomed the provision of support through the Initiative for the implementation of the SDP process. They pointed out, however, that they also required resource support to enable them to implement their plans for addressing prioritised needs that could not be met from their current resources.
Looking Forward

This chapter summarises the strengths of School Development Planning support to date. It then presents a range of issues for consideration in the context of promoting good practice in SDP implementation. The views presented in this closing chapter take account of a variety of stakeholder interests and are intended primarily to stimulate broad discussion on policy options for the future development of school planning. Such options should be carefully weighed in the context of available resources for the future direction of School Development Planning.

6.1 Support Programme at Primary Level

6.1.1 Strengths

The key elements of the support programme at Primary level have been successful in stimulating a culture of School Development Planning in school communities:

- **Regional Information Seminars**: The seminars have proved a successful means of introducing schools to the rationale for, approaches to, and processes involved in School Development Planning, and of encouraging schools to begin SDP. Between 1999 and 2002, 220 Information Seminars were held throughout the country and were very highly rated in all their aspects, as was shown in Chapter 2.

- **Facilitated Planning Days**: During 2001/02, facilitated planning days were made available to 2,364 schools. Participants valued the provision of an external facilitator, the usefulness of the planning process adopted, and the manner in which the school’s chosen areas were addressed. (See Chapter 2.) As a result of facilitation, there was a significant increase in schools’ level of engagement in particular aspects of school-based planning: review of current practice, prioritisation of areas in need of development, action planning, involvement of all teachers in planning activities, and strategic planning. (See Chapter 4.)

- **Preplanning visits** to schools to enable them identify their priorities for the planning day as well as ensuring preparation for the day itself were very successful.

- **Post-planning Visits**: The provision of visits by facilitators to schools six to eight weeks after their planning day has been very successful in maintaining contact with schools, assisting the continuation of planning initiatives begun on planning days and providing additional assistance and advice as required.

- **Clustering**: Schools with 1 to 6 teachers that were facilitated in clusters appreciated the opportunity to share experiences and expertise. For the vast majority, planning
in clusters was a new experience. Similarly, schools in particular categories were facilitated in planning together e.g. hospital schools.

Accordingly, these support strategies represent strengths which can be built on in the future.

6.1.2 Issues

The ultimate goal of SDP support is to ensure that the process of development planning becomes embedded in school communities as a strategy for optimising the quality of education for all pupils. Experience of working with schools has enabled the identification of a number of issues and challenges that have implications for the future development of school planning:

- **Focus on the Quality of Teaching and Learning**: This is the core issue, to which all others are subservient – to be judged a significant success, School Development Planning must have a positive impact on pupil learning. Enhanced learning outcomes for pupils will be more likely to occur if schools are enabled to
  1. Evaluate and articulate their existing strengths and identify the specific challenges involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning provided
  2. Clearly identify necessary developments, focused on enhanced outcomes in teaching, learning and standards of work
  3. Identify success criteria and put in place action plans to reach these criteria
  4. Establish clearer procedures for the evaluation of the impact the school development plan is having on pupil learning outcomes. This will include using internal and external assessments and testing as progress indicators.

Attention must be directed to the core issue of improving the quality of teaching and learning. Schools must be enabled to incorporate enhanced pupil learning as one of the outcomes of all their development planning activities.

- **Continuing Support**: Schools will maintain a positive attitude towards SDP if they continue to experience success in development planning activities. The challenge is to identify and, within the limitations of available resources, provide the supports required by schools to ensure a positive outcome. Three broad categories of support should be considered:
  1. Resource materials, including templates and exemplars, to ensure that schools have appropriate information and guidelines to enable them to continue effective planning. Such resources could be accessible to schools through publications and also available for download via the Internet. In this regard, the Internet is a particularly suitable medium for ensuring that resources can be continuously revised, updated and made immediately available to schools.
  2. Targeted advice for schools that require guidance in organising and managing their on-going planning processes.
  3. Facilitation support for school planning occasions.

Differential support for schools, taking account of their varying levels of identified support need, would enable successes in the stimulation of SDP to be maintained.

- **Coordination of support**: Inservice training aimed at the professional development of teachers is currently provided by a number of agencies. The contribution of professional development to the progress of SDP is crucial. Teachers need significant background knowledge, including a wide
range of new pedagogical skills and familiarity with new approaches, methodologies, emphases and resources, to enable them to plan effectively on a whole school basis. Greater coordination of professional development provision would enhance its effectiveness in promoting and supporting school improvement.

- **Partnership dimension of SDP:** Stimulation of interest in School Development Planning has been most successful among teachers. Much more needs to be done to establish the inclusion of other partners as a normal part of development planning in schools. The low level of involvement of boards of management in the SDP process needs to be addressed, in cooperation with management bodies, through provision of information and resources dealing with the specific responsibilities, roles and needs of boards. The role of parents in the SDP process needs to be strengthened and expanded, in cooperation with parent organisations, through provision of information and resources addressing the specific needs of parents.

- **Role of the Principal, Deputy Principal and Middle Management:** The role of the principal and the school management team in supporting and promoting SDP is crucial. A significant predictor of success in School Development Planning is the leadership and vision of the principal and management team in creating a school climate of review and development. Accordingly, future support strategies should take account of the particular needs of the principal and management team. Links between relevant support providers should be extended and strengthened as a means of meeting the needs of principals and deputy principals with regard to fostering and directing development planning in schools. The key competencies of principals as identified in the HayGroup Report\(^8\) – leadership, teaching and learning, resource management, human resource management, administration, policy formation and external relations – should inform professional development provision to assist principals in delivering on their role as the pivotal person in each school’s development planning.

Consideration should also be given to the role of the principal in the context of the overall management structures and activities of the school. A clearer definition of management roles, including those of the principal, board of management and middle management team, would be helpful.

- **Development planning skills:** Embedding of development planning is more likely to be successful if teachers, parents and boards of management have acquired the necessary skills to continue independently. Evidence suggests that a majority of schools have not, as yet, acquired all these skills. The hands-on experience of most teachers in relation to the process has occurred during pre-planning meetings and on planning days and, as such, has amounted to approximately twelve hours over a period of three years. This period of involvement is insufficient to ensure that a majority of teachers have acquired all the necessary planning skills. Future policy direction on SDP should include provision for skill development.

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\(^8\) HayGroup Management Consultants (2003) *Defining the Role of the Primary Principal in Ireland*
Facilitation: Embedding of SDP is most likely to be sustained in the longer term if schools become self-sufficient with regard to facilitation. This would entail one or more staff members per school acquiring the skills necessary to promote, coordinate, facilitate, and sustain school-based development planning activities. The implementation, monitoring and evaluation of each school’s development planning activities would also need to be addressed in this context. Approaches to building these capacities in schools could include: leadership training and middle management development (see Role of the Principal, Deputy Principal and Middle Management, above); direct provision of inservice training for teachers with key roles in facilitating and coordinating SDP in their schools; and liaison with other providers, such as 3rd level institutions, concerning the design and delivery of accredited courses relevant to SDP. The feasibility and resource implications of these approaches should be explored, in consultation with the appropriate agencies.

Consolidation/Development of Planning Clusters: The organisation and promotion of planning clusters of similar sized schools has been a major success. The collegiality and mutual assistance that has emerged from these clusters has been of enormous benefit to all schools and has been of particular benefit to smaller schools. Experience has shown that, in the absence of continuing promotion and organisation, clusters tend to fracture and disintegrate. There is a need for strategies to enable planning clusters to continue to operate effectively with minimal external assistance. The roles of the Education Centre network and of other inservice providers should be considered in this context.

The importance of clustering for principals of smaller schools was identified in the HayGroup report. The potential of planning clusters as a means of dealing more effectively with issues which have significant commonalities among schools (e.g. enrolment policy, learning support etc.) should be exploited. While clustering by school size and location has been very successful, consideration should also be given to the development of clusters based on commonality of purpose or need, such as clusters for special schools, hospital schools, school principals, resource teachers, etc.

Consideration should be given to increasing the uses and effectiveness of clusters through expanding the range of activities involved. Such expansion might include the sharing of secretarial expertise, resources and other supports via clusters. The sharing of principals’ administrative time/workload, and ways of addressing issues of teaching and learning could also be explored through clustering of appropriate personnel.
 Assistance for Schools in Addressing New Issues: In their planning activities, schools need to address issues that arise from new legislation, new guidelines and curricular change. Emerging issues include new educational welfare provisions, substance use policy requirements and the ability to address the needs of school self-review and external evaluation. Further issues will arise as educational innovation continues to occur. There is a need for methodologies by which standard approaches to common emerging issues can be developed and made available to schools.

The publication by the Department of Looking at our School – An aid to self-evaluation in schools is a significant development. SDP is focused on addressing school needs identified in the initial stages of school self-evaluation (SSE). Accordingly, Looking at our School can provide a useful springboard for development planning. Schools must be enabled to use this publication to identify priority planning areas and draw up development plans to deal with these areas over time.

SSE and SDP can be supported and validated by the development of whole-school evaluation (WSE). The interrelationship of internal and external processes should be clarified so that schools can respond positively to this development.

 Differentiated Support: There is a need to design appropriate responses to schools with particular difficulties, e.g. schools which have amalgamated, schools with particular staff difficulties/staff turnover as well as very large schools and special schools.

 Compliance with Legal and Departmental Requirements: As indicated in Chapter 4, the organisational areas addressed most frequently on planning days suggest that schools were evaluating organisational issues in the light of their compliance with legal or departmental requirements, rather than their impact on teaching and learning. Similarly, curricular issues were dominated by the demands of the Revised Curriculum. Because schools feel obliged to respond to external demands, many feel constrained in their ability to use the learning needs of their pupils as the starting point for School Development Planning activities.

Ways must be found of assisting schools to deal expeditiously with these external obligations so that more time is available for addressing the quality of teaching and learning. Some planning and policy areas are so governed by legislation and/or directives, as to provide for little or no local autonomy. The provision of clear guidance and generic exemplars of best practice would enable schools to deal quickly and correctly with these areas. More time could thus be made available for schools to explore and plan for local needs.
Addressing Disadvantage and Special Needs: Based as it is on the design of appropriate school responses to pupil learning needs, SDP can provide a useful methodology for addressing the particular needs of pupils in schools designated as disadvantaged and those with special needs. A review of current practice and current support provision would inform the design of better focused approaches to addressing these areas of need.

Multiculturalism: As Ireland becomes a multi-cultural country, schools must serve the needs of pupils and parents of increasingly diverse cultural backgrounds. Some schools have already used development planning to better address these needs. The issues that arise when dealing with a multi-cultural school community should be examined from an SDP perspective, with a view to identifying best practice in this area and enabling schools to devise appropriate responses to the specific needs of their international pupils and parents.

Using ICT in School Development Planning: A website was launched in 2000 as a means by which teachers, parents and boards of management could access information on SDP and download planning frameworks and guidelines. The website needs to be expanded and updated to reflect the continuing refinement of planning information and instruments. Consideration should be given to the design and delivery of means whereby schools can plan more effectively by using ICT. Development planning software packages in use in other countries should be examined as to their suitability/adaptability for use in Ireland. The potential of e-learning as an inservice tool should also be explored, in consultation with the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE).

Time for School Development Planning: Schools repeatedly expressed concerns about the time necessary to engage with the School Development Planning process.
6.2 Support Programme at Post-Primary Level

6.2.1 Strengths

Following two years during which progress was hindered by IR difficulties, 2002 saw a major increase in the level of SDP activity in the Post-Primary sector and a concomitant increase in the level of schools’ engagement with the Initiative. The increase was especially marked in the second half of the year, when circumstances allowed for the resumption of the Regional Seminar programme.

The main strengths of the support programme in 2002 were as follows:

- **Regional Seminars:** As three years had elapsed since the previous programme of Regional Seminars at Post-Primary level, the 2002 series proved an effective means of updating school representatives in relation to current patterns of SDP practice, drawing their attention to key principles of development planning, and providing them with skills training appropriate to their level of progress in implementing SDP. The concurrent workshop model enabled the seminars to address the widely-differing needs of a large number of schools within a short space of time while creating fora for the sharing of experiences and the discussion of common concerns.

- **Facilitation:** The facilitation model, involving pre-planning, facilitated planning days, and post-planning follow-up, was successful in promoting SDP as an ongoing process rather than as a transient event. Schools found it particularly helpful where the facilitator was available to work with task groups or steering committee between planning days. Schools found it easier to maintain momentum where a schedule for the process over an extended period was agreed at the first pre-planning meeting and where the time-lapse between full planning sessions was relatively short.

- **Capacity-Building:** The provision of training in SDP facilitation was welcomed by school personnel. The response of participants in the current training course has been extremely positive and there is a waiting list for future programmes. The strategy of involving members of school staffs in co-facilitation with external personnel worked well in the instances where it was adopted and has significant potential for the future.

- **Advisory Service:** School visits by Regional Coordinators proved an effective means of introducing or reviving the SDP process in schools where circumstances had precluded progress between 2000 and 2002, and of maintaining the momentum in schools where the process had already been activated. As indicated in Chapter 5, access to advice and assistance from a Regional Coordinator was prioritised by schools as a support need. The structured consultation process was of value in enabling support personnel to gain an overview of schools’ progress and support needs in relation to SDP, to identify emerging issues, and to develop relationships with individual schools in their respective regions.
6.2.2 Issues

Many of the issues identified in Section 6.1.2 are relevant at Post-Primary level also, but the impact of the IR situation has created an additional challenge. This section outlines the considerations that should inform future policy on SDP.

- **Focus on the quality of Teaching and Learning:** The overriding consideration is the need to ensure an appropriate focus on the quality of teaching and learning in all development planning activities. (See Section 6.1.2 above.) This focus is essential if SDP is to achieve its core purpose: school improvement. To date, although issues relating to teaching and learning have been prioritised by a significant proportion of Post-Primary schools, they have tended to be overshadowed in the SDP process by legal and organisational concerns. There is a need to find ways of redressing the balance, through cooperation among support providers in the development of strategies, where appropriate.

- **Continuing Support:** Because of IR factors, the implementation of SDP in many Post-Primary schools has been sporadic rather than sustained and the delivery of the support programme up to mid-2002 has performed been random rather than systematic. A major challenge is to devise a support strategy that will promote continuity and progression in SDP implementation, so that schools gain experience of the full planning cycle, not merely of the early stages. The strategy should provide for a high level of differentiation to cater for the wide range of levels of SDP experience currently to be found in the Post-Primary sector. Revitalising SDP in schools where momentum was lost and progress eroded is a particular concern. As school improvement is an ongoing process, there should be a thorough assessment of schools’ support needs in moving beyond the evaluation stage into the next cycle of development planning.

- **Development Planning Skills:** To date, the support programme for schools at Post-Primary level has focused largely on the skill-requirements of teachers in relation to review, action-planning, and policy-formulation. There is a need to address the development of monitoring and evaluation skills within schools as they reach the implementation stage of the SDP process.

The recent DES publication, *Looking at our School – An aid to self-evaluation activity in second level schools*, will be a valuable tool to assist schools in applying development planning skills. Schools would benefit from guidance on its use within the overall process of SDP. There is also a need to articulate for schools how external evaluation can validate and support their internal process of review, design, implementation and evaluation in the promotion of school improvement.

- **Internal School Management:** As at Primary level, the principal’s role is crucial to the success of SDP in the school. Accordingly, approaches to the provision of SDP support for principals should continue to be developed in cooperation with relevant providers. As participative or dispersed leadership is a key aspect of SDP, there is a need for models of good practice for relating in-school management posts to SDP structures. The provision of SDP training for holders of in-school management posts and for school planning coordinators, steering committees and task group convenors should be a priority. Support service personnel have already facilitated a number of such workshops at the request of VEC and Trustee Education.
Offices. More widespread training for these groups could be arranged through the Education Centre network, or in association with relevant education organisations, or through Regional Seminar workshops.

**Facilitation:** Future approaches should build on the progress that has been made in developing capacity for SDP facilitation and coordination within schools. The co-facilitation option should be availed of where appropriate, that is, where a school is open to it and where there are members of the school staff with the requisite interest and skills available to undertake it. With regard to the future development of external facilitation services, it should be noted that schools have benefited considerably from access to their facilitator for task group and steering committee meetings between full planning sessions. The implications of this model of good practice should be explored.

**Partnership Dimension of SDP:** Although schools at Post-Primary level have reported some progress in developing the partnership dimension of SDP (see Chapter 5), much remains to be done. Consultation has sometimes been perfunctory, giving partners other than the teaching staff little meaningful input to decisions about priorities. Exemplars of good practice in the system should be identified in order to inform the development of fruitful approaches to the involvement of partners. Further, the relative roles, rights and responsibilities of the various partners in relation to SDP should be clarified. Consideration should be given to the question of how best to cater for the SDP training needs of partners’ representatives – boards of management, parents’ associations, and student councils.

**Assistance for Schools in Addressing Prioritised Issues:** Every issue that emerges for schools is potentially relevant to School Development Planning. There is a need to identify expertise and resources relevant to the issues that emerge as planning priorities, and to develop approaches for dealing with those issues, through inter-agency cooperation where appropriate. (Agencies that have provided support relevant to School Development Planning are listed in Appendix 3.) Progress already made in devising approaches to major issues such as educational disadvantage, special needs, and interculturalism should be built on.

**Specific Planning Information:** Schools at Post-Primary level complain about change overload and lack of opportunity to research the development options and resource materials available to them. There is a need to ensure that support personnel are kept up-to-date in their knowledge of the system, so that they are fully cognisant of the changing context for development planning. There will be a continuing need for the compilation of digests of information, resource materials and exemplars relevant to specific planning issues.
Using ICT in School Development Planning: The website has proved a useful means of disseminating information and materials relevant to SDP at Post-Primary level. It should be further developed to enable personnel involved in SDP in any capacity to discuss issues of common concern and to share experiences. The use of ICT as a planning tool for schools should be investigated. The possibility of adapting SDP software packages from other countries for use in Ireland should be explored. The potential of e-learning and video-conferencing in the provision of inservice training should be examined, in consultation with the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE).

Compliance with Legal Requirements: As indicated in Chapter 5, schools involved in the consultative process prioritised assistance in the production of documents required by legislation as a future support need. Similarly, principals at the Regional Seminars indicated that they felt obliged to give priority to policy-writing in order to comply with legislation, and expressed an urgent need for access to legal expertise and legally-proofed sample policies to assist them in this task. Accordingly, a major challenge for the system is to find ways of meeting these needs, through inter-agency cooperation where appropriate, while ensuring that schools’ concerns about compliance with legal requirements for documentation do not distort the SDP process. The development of generic templates to cover legal issues would expedite policy-writing, thereby enabling schools to focus on teaching and learning issues.

Planning Clusters: In general, clustering schools for full planning sessions is not a practical option at Post-Primary level, primarily because of the size of school staffs. In a number of cases where amalgamation has been agreed, however, support service personnel have been engaged to facilitate joint planning sessions for the schools involved. This approach to preparing for amalgamation is worth developing where circumstances are suitable. The cross-sectoral clustering of schools in a catchment area to address particular needs (as practised in projects to combat disadvantage) is a model that should be explored.

Logistics: During the consultative process and again at Regional Seminars, schools repeatedly expressed concerns about the time necessary to implement the School Development Planning process. The difficulties posed for schools by off-site inservice provision were also highlighted.
6.3 **Links between Primary and Post-Primary**

As sections 6.1 and 6.2 clearly indicate, there is much similarity between the Primary and Post-Primary sectors in relation to SDP issues facing schools. It is appropriate, therefore, that support personnel at both levels should work together on matters of common concern:

- Primary and Post-Primary schools serve the same pupils at different stages in their education. Accordingly, cooperation between support personnel at both levels should address issues related to the transition from Primary to Post-Primary, to ensure the provision of a continuous, progressive journey for pupils through school.

- Joint Primary/Post-Primary approaches to policy areas such as interculturalism, disadvantage, special educational needs and substance use should be explored.

- Support personnel at both levels should collaborate in meeting the SDP support needs of special schools that offer elements of the Post-Primary curriculum.

- Liaison between Primary and Post-Primary support personnel should be strengthened through the development of closer connections at regional level.

- A more structured procedure should be devised for the sharing of experiences and resources, the development of common or complementary approaches to key cross-sectoral issues, and the preparation of guideline materials on matters of relevance to both sectors (such as legislative requirements).

- Support personnel at both levels should work together to find ways of building schools’ capacity for rigorous self-evaluation, focused on the core issue of the quality of teaching and learning.
6.4 Summary

The fundamental challenge in relation to SDP at both Primary and Post-Primary level is to ensure an appropriate focus on the quality of teaching and learning in all development planning activities. This focus is essential if SDP is to achieve its core purpose: school improvement.

A number of issues have been identified that have implications for SDP development in schools. The challenges include:

- Providing differentiated forms of support to cater for widely-varying levels of experience and success in implementing SDP
- Providing skills training relevant to SDP for those involved in the leadership of the process – principals, post-holders, planning coordinators, steering committees and task group convenors
- Developing capacity for SDP facilitation within schools
- Strengthening the partnership dimension in schools’ implementation of SDP
- Developing supports on an ongoing basis to assist schools in addressing emerging priority issues
- Deepening cooperation among the various support programmes and agencies that serve schools
- Maintaining up-to-date resource banks of specific planning information, including digests, templates, and exemplars
- Extending the use of ICT to support SDP
- Devising methods of addressing schools’ concerns about legislative requirements in order to ensure that the development planning cycle is not neglected
- Addressing schools’ logistical concerns about planning time.

Future policy direction on SDP should take account of these challenges, prioritising in accordance with available resources so that a clear focus is maintained on the core development planning support needs of school communities.
School Development Planning Initiative: Structures and Personnel

1. Primary

Support Team (SDPS)

National Coordinator: Eileen Flynn
Regional Coordinators: Seán Balfe, Mary Culhane, Tom Feeley, Catherine Hennessy
Facilitators: 19 full-time facilitators (to August 2002), 29 full-time facilitators (from September 2002), 28 part-time facilitators
Administrative Officer: Linda Gorman (from May 2000)

Internal Management Committee (IMC)

The Internal Management Committee at Primary level is composed of representatives of the Inspectorate, the In-Career Development Unit, and the Primary Administration Section of the Department of Education and Science (DES), and of Drumcondra Education Centre (which hosts the Initiative at Primary level), together with the National Coordinator of SDPS.

The members of the Internal Management Committee in 2002 were:
Lorcan Mac Conaonaigh, Príomhchigire Cúnta, DES (Chairperson)
Patrick B. Diggins, Director, Drumcondra Education Centre
Patrick Bennis, In-Career Development Unit, DES (to March 2002)
Ciarán Rohan, In-Career Development Unit, DES (from May 2002)
Colette McNulty, Primary Administration, DES
Mícheál Ó Conghaile, Roinnchigire, DES
Eileen Flynn, National Coordinator, SDPS (Primary)

Consultative Group

The Consultative Group is composed of representatives of the partners in education, together with the National Coordinator and the two Inspectors on the IMC, who are ex officio members.

The members of the Consultative Group in 2002 were:
Lorcan Mac Conaonaigh, Príomhchigire Cúnta, DES (Chairperson)
Maria Spring, Catholic Primary Schools Managers’ Association
Anne Colgan, National Parents’ Council (Primary):
Deirbhile Nic Craith, Irish National Teachers’ Organisation
Patrick B. Diggins, Director, Drumcondra Education Centre:
Mícheál Ó Conghaile, Roinnchigire, DES
Eileen Flynn, National Coordinator, SDPS (Primary)
2. Post-Primary

Support Team (SDPI)

National Coordinator: Sinéad Breathnach
Regional Coordinators: Mary Forde
Jean Geoghegan
Joe Harrison
Mark Fennell (from November 2002)
Paul Fields (from April 2002)
Dolores Mullins (from June 2002)
Jim O'Leary (from September 2002)

Facilitators: No full-time facilitators (but the role of the Regional Coordinator at Post-Primary level encompasses aspects of the role of the full-time facilitator at Primary level)
30 operational part-time facilitators

Administrative Officer: Jacqueline Daly (from June 2000)
Administrative Assistant: Patricia O’Connor (from September 2001)

Internal Management Committee (IMC)

The membership of the Internal Management Committee at Post-Primary level includes representatives of the Inspectorate, the In-Career Development Unit, and the Post-Primary Administration Section of the Department of Education and Science, and of Marino Institute of Education (which hosts the Initiative at Post-Primary level), together with the National Coordinator of SDPI.

The members of the Internal Management Committee in 2002 were:

Lorcan Mac Conaonaigh, Príomhchigire Cúnta, DES (Chairperson)
Luke Monahan, Marino Institute of Education
Patrick Bennis, In-Career Development Unit, DES (to March 2002)
Ciarán Rohan, In-Career Development Unit, DES (from May 2002)
Christopher McCamley, Post-Primary Administration, DES
Bríd Uí Riordáin, Cigire Sinsearach, DES
Sinéad Breathnach, National Coordinator, SDPI (Post-Primary)

Consultative Group

The Consultative Group is composed of representatives of the partners in education, together with the National Coordinator and the two Inspectors on the IMC, who are ex officio members.

The members of the Consultative Group in 2002 were:

Michael Corley, Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
Pádraigín Uí Riordáin, Teachers’ Union of Ireland (to June 2002)
John Mac Gabhann, Teachers’ Union of Ireland (from September 2002)
Michael McCann, National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
Brian Cannon, Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
Charles Mc Manus, Irish Vocational Education Association
Eilís Humphreys, Joint Managerial Body
Barbara Johnston, National Parents’ Council (post-primary) (to November 2002)
Connie Carolan, National Parents’ Council (post-primary) (from November 2002)
Dermot Morris, Congregation of Religious of Ireland
3. Cross-Sectoral Coordination

To facilitate coordination in addressing issues of relevance to the Initiative at both Primary and Post-Primary level, the two National Coordinators and the Inspector-members of the respective IMCs liaise closely. As an additional coordinating measure, the IMC and the Consultative Group at both Primary and Post-Primary level have a common Chairperson.
SDP Grant Aid for Schools 1999–2002

Primary
At Primary Level, grant aid has been provided each year to schools included in the Initiative. In 2002, grant aid totalling €367,500 (excluding facilitation costs) was paid to a total of 2,835 schools. €100 per school was issued to schools with 1–7 mainstream teachers, while €250 per school was paid to larger schools.

Post-Primary
At Post-Primary level, start-up grant aid for two years in succession was provided on a phased basis to all schools during the period 1999–2002. A school with fewer than 400 pupils received €1,270 per instalment; a school with 400 pupils or more received €1,905. In 2002, grant aid totalling €631,825 (to cover SDP-related expenses, including facilitation costs) was paid to a total of 393 schools.

Grant Aid Schedule
The schedule of grant payments to schools since the inception of the Initiative is summarised in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>No. of Schools</th>
<th>Grant per School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>£500 (1–8 teachers) €750 (9+ teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>£1,000 (&lt;400 pupils) €1,500 (400+ pupils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>1772</td>
<td>£215 (1–8 teachers) €415 (9+ teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>£1,000 (&lt;400 pupils) €1,500 (400+ pupils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/2002</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>2610</td>
<td>£273 (1–8 teachers) €527 (9+ teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>€1,270 (&lt;400 pupils) €1,905 (400+ pupils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>2,835</td>
<td>€100 (1–7 teachers) €250 (8+ teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>€1,270 (&lt;400 pupils) €1,905 (400+ pupils)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cooperation with Other Agencies

1. Primary

During 2002, the Initiative’s Support Team at Primary level linked with the following agencies:

Department of Education and Science

- **Inspectorate:** Ongoing communication at national and regional level; provision of inservice on SDP for newly appointed inspectors
- **Social Inclusion Unit:** Cooperation in the formulation of guidelines for schools on the development of Substance Use Policy, in accordance with action 43 of the National Drugs Strategy
- **Gender Equality Unit:** Contribution to National Plan for Women.

Partner Organisations

- **Catholic Primary School Managers’ Association/Religious Education Offices:** Ongoing communication at national and regional level to coordinate approaches; provision of inputs at training seminars for boards of management
- **Irish National Teachers’ Organisation:** Ongoing cooperation; provision of inputs to training programmes for principals; contribution of article on SDP to INTO publication
- **National Parents’ Council (Primary):** Cooperation at national level in planning for a publication on SDP for parents; cooperation with local parent associations
- **Irish Primary Principals’ Network:** Ongoing communication; provision of information on SDPS for newsletter and website enquirers; facilitation of workshops in Education Centres for principals and deputy principals.
Fellow Support Services

- **Primary Curriculum Support Programme**: Ongoing communication between the two coordinating teams; provision of training input on SDP for PCSP personnel
- **Leadership Development for Schools**: Representation on LDS Advisory Committee; joint discussions on professional development needs of principal teachers
- **Primary Sports Initiative**: Communication at national level; briefing for SDP facilitators
- **Visiting Teachers for Travellers Service**: Facilitation of session at VTTS Annual Conference.

Third Level Institutions

- **Colleges of Education involved in Primary Teacher Training**: Provision of workshops for two colleges; joint research on publication for probationary teachers with one college; provision of access to SDP Regional Seminars for college personnel
- **St. Angela’s College, Sligo**: Provision of input to the college’s facilitation training programme.

National Education Agencies

- **National Council for Curriculum and Assessment**: Meetings for mutual briefing; review of NCCA draft curriculum guidelines for teachers of students with mild and moderate general learning disabilities by SDPS team
- **National Centre for Technology in Education**: Meeting re ICT planning in schools; NCTE inservice on ICT planning attended by SDP facilitators
- **National Educational Psychological Service**: provision of input on SDP to induction course for new psychologists.

Education Centres

- **Education Centre Directors**: Ongoing communication with Education Centre Directors re SDPS programme and personnel within each area; cooperation in the organisation of SDP Regional Seminars and clusters; delivery of summer courses by 20 SDPS facilitators; provision of SDP modules to Centres’ inservice programmes; participation in meeting of regional support personnel hosted by Navan Education Centre.

Initiatives and Agencies focused on Addressing Educational Disadvantage

- **Forum to End Educational Disadvantage**: Participation by SDPS in the forum in St. Patrick’s College of Education, Dublin, in July 2002
- **Bridging the Gap**: Cooperation in implementation of UCC-DES project focused on alleviating educational disadvantage in Cork City
- **Galway Rural Development**: Supporting three clusters of County Galway schools in combating rural educational disadvantage.
2. Post-Primary

During 2002, the Initiative’s Support Team at Post-Primary level linked with the following agencies:

**Department of Education and Science**

- **Inspectorate**: Ongoing communication at national and regional level; provision of inservice on SDP for newly appointed inspectors
- **Social Inclusion Unit**: Cooperation in the formulation of guidelines for schools on the development of Substance Use Policy, in accordance with action 43 of the National Drugs Strategy; liaison re National Anti-Poverty Strategy
- **Gender Equality Unit**: Contribution to National Plan for Women; cooperation in the provision of inservice on Gender Mainstreaming for the Inspectorate.

**Partner Organisations**

- **School Management Representative Organisations**: Ongoing communication at national and regional level with representatives and members of ACS, IVEA and JMB; cooperation by request in devising approaches to interculturalism, adult education; facilitation of SDP workshop at ACS conference; provision of inputs on SDP for individual boards of management
- **Religious Trustee Bodies/Vocational Education Committees**: Ongoing communication with education offices of individual religious trustee bodies and with the CEOs of individual VECs on issues relevant to SDP; provision of seminar inputs on request
- **Teacher Unions**: Communication at national level with education offices of ASTI and TUI; cooperation in researching equality issues
- **National Parents’ Council (post-primary)**: Liaison at national level both with umbrella body and with a number of individual constituent groups; cooperation in researching best practice in parental involvement in SDP
- **National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals**: Regular communication at national and regional level on issues relevant to leadership roles in the SDP process; facilitation of SDP workshop at NAPD seminar.

**Fellow Support Services and Education Services**

- **Second Level Support Service**: Regular meetings between the two teams of Coordinators for mutual briefings and development of collaborative strategies to support school improvement; cooperation in provision of professional development opportunities for support personnel
- **SPHE Support Service**: Regular mutual briefings and consultation on issues of common interest
- **Leadership Development for Schools**: Representation on LDS Advisory Committee; joint discussions of school leadership needs in the context of SDP
- **Youthreach**: Presentations on SDP to meetings of Youthreach Coordinators; briefings on SDP for National Coordinator and Coordinator of Quality Framework Initiative
- **Senior Traveller Training Centres**: Briefing meetings on SDP with National Coordinator and Directors of individual centres; provision of input on SDP for Association of Directors of Senior Traveller Training Centres.
Third Level Institutions

- **Education Departments of Universities:** Provision of inputs on SDP to graduate programmes for teachers in the following third level institutions: NUI, Galway; NUI, Maynooth; UCC; UCD; collaboration with NUI, Galway, in piloting of diploma programme
- **Marino Institute of Education, Dublin:** Cooperation in DES-funded project promoting partnership as a school improvement strategy.

National Education Agencies

- **National Council for Curriculum and Assessment:** Meetings for mutual briefing; SDPI representation on Junior Cycle Review and Senior Cycle Committees of NCCA; collaboration on design of curriculum review materials; consultation on planning sections of draft curriculum guidelines for teachers of students with mild general learning disabilities
- **National Centre for Technology in Education:** Meeting re ICT planning in schools; NCTE inservice on ICT planning attended by SDPI Coordinators
- **National Centre for Guidance in Education:** Facilitation of workshop on SDP for principals of schools involved in Guidance Enhancement Initiative
- **National Educational Psychological Service:** Provision of input on SDP to induction course for new psychologists
- **Commission on School Accommodation Needs:** Cooperation in supporting SDP in schools preparing for amalgamation.

Education Centres

- **Individual Education Centres:** Support from Education Centre Directors and staffs in provision of accommodation for Regional Coordinators and assistance in the organisation of SDPI Regional Seminars; cooperation with a number of Centres at regional level in organisation of inservice seminars relevant to schools’ planning priorities
- **Association of Teachers’/Education Centres of Ireland:** Facilitation of planning seminar for ATECI; cooperation with ATECI and all post-primary support services in progressive coordination of inservice programmes.

Initiatives and Agencies focused on Addressing Educational Disadvantage

- **Forum on Educational Disadvantage:** Participation in the forum in Dublin Castle in November 2002
- **Bridging the Gap:** Cooperation in implementation of UCC-DES project focused on alleviating educational disadvantage in Cork City
- **Galway Rural Development:** Cooperation in multi-agency project supporting three clusters of Co. Galway schools in combating rural disadvantage
- **Irish Learning Support Association:** facilitation of planning workshops for learning support teachers at national and regional level.
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E-Mail info@sdps.ie
www.sdps.ie

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