



An Fóram Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Sóisialta
National Economic & Social Forum

Child Literacy and Social Inclusion: Implementation Issues

Report 39 · November 2009

Child Literacy and Social Inclusion: Implementation Issues
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Preface by Dr. Maureen Gaffney

In 2008, the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) was given a renewed mandate by the Government and asked to focus strongly on the Irish experience of policy implementation. At the Inaugural Plenary Session of the NESF in May of that year, I set out how we were going to approach this work (Gaffney, 2008). This present report is the second of a suite of four major reports focusing on this implementation agenda. The first report focused on the implementation of Home Care Packages: *Implementation of the Home Care Package Scheme*. The next report on Exploring Local Participatory Governance in Ireland: *Community Participation in the Delivery of Public Services* will be published shortly. The final report which focuses on a prospective study of a major policy initiative that is attempting to radically innovate and reconfigure services to the elderly – *County Louth: Ireland's First Age Friendly Strategy* – will track the implementation of this Strategy over a two-year period.

Over the past decade Ireland has been a remarkably innovative and entrepreneurial environment for policy-making. Like many other countries, we have struggled with the challenges of policy implementation – incomplete and patchy, undesirable and unintended consequences of implementation, or outright failure.

When we set out to study implementation, we identified many factors found to be central to success. These included the structural or ‘*hygiene*’ aspects of the policy to be investigated such as:

- Clarity of policy objectives and desired outcomes, priorities, targets, design, costings and management all the way to and through implementation stage;
- The extent to which implementation issues, such as delivery plans, timescales, milestones, project management, clear deliverables, were built into the policy design stage;

¹ These are referred to as ‘hard’ elements in the current report.

- The nature of the resources available for policy implementation, including the nature of the funding, the capacity of staff to deliver, the clear definition of roles and the time allocated to staff for delivery;
- To what extent the issue of accountability at every level in the system was clarified, monitored and enforced;
- How implementation success and failure is rewarded and sanctioned;
- Particularly in relation to cross-cutting issues, the extent to which all major stakeholders were involved in the design and implementation of the project, the quality of their consensus and communication;
- The nature of the relationships among internal stakeholders and their relationship to their counterparts in other related agencies;
- The nature of the service integration within the project and the processes that enable or impede that integration;
- The presence or absence of leadership and '*policy champions*' at political, executive and agency level;
- The extent to which issues of central control and local autonomy were discussed and agreed before and throughout implementation;
- The quality of the information flow, general communication and coordination among the stakeholders;
- The impact of the policy, including its effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes, as well as any unintended consequences;
- The quality of the internal and independent monitoring structures and mechanisms and performance indicators; and
- The adequacy and availability of monitoring data and the extent to which it is disseminated and used to modify the policy or its delivery.

We also identified the '*softer*' but equally crucial aspects of implementation:

- organisational culture;
- organisational learning capabilities; and
- how policies are '*framed*' and internalised by those responsible for implementing them. Particularly important is how they think about risk and accountability and how they frame their own role and the role of others involved in the process: important or incidental? Defensive or interdependent? Self-protective or open to learn?

As in our first report on the implementation of Home Care Packages, it is remarkable how these factors have surfaced as critical in our analysis of how policies aimed at reducing serious literacy difficulties are implemented.

This report focused specifically on the implementation of the Department of Education and Science's Action Plan, *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* (DEIS) which sets out its policy on educational disadvantage, including its policy on literacy. This Action Plan underpins a high level goal of the current (and previous) *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016*, which seeks to reduce the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties in primary schools serving disadvantaged communities to less than 15% by 2016 (DES, 2005a; Government of Ireland, 2007a). The target group are primary school children living in disadvantaged communities, where nearly one in three pupils attending schools has serious literacy difficulties – three times the national average.

In very many respects, DEIS is a well designed policy that includes policy objectives, targets and outcomes. It sets out to provide to provide a range of educational and other supports to disadvantaged schools, including literacy action plans, structured programmes, provision for parental involvement, professional development for teachers and school meals. For the first time, it places literacy supports at the centre of policy action to counter educational disadvantage. However, the NESF analysis of the actual implementation of this policy reveals a number of weaknesses.

Firstly, DEIS has not been delivered as originally envisaged, either in its timeframe or in the full range of services provided. Many of the supports were not rolled-out until 2007, two years after the programme was intended to start. There are still some schools which have not received the full range of supports. From the Case Study Research, it is clear that there is variation in the timing and quality of training and supports available for schools, with urban and rural schools receiving different supports, and some larger urban schools share a DEIS Advisor with 26 other schools. Furthermore, while the initial DEIS publication included an early childhood education element, this was dropped from the plan last year. While free universal pre-school provision of one year for 3-4 year olds has been subsequently announced, it is not yet clear how this specifically ties into DEIS.

While DEIS does target schools with high levels of disadvantage, the out-of-school elements of DEIS are limited, including homework clubs, summer camps, and pre-school activity, especially for children not attending DEIS schools. Such supports are vital to a comprehensive and inclusive literacy strategy. Furthermore, while the DEIS policy recognised the importance of an integrated approach, the report shows that while there are many community-based and family literacy initiatives throughout the country, in most cases, the link between them and school-based initiatives is minimal. DEIS policy and implementation has been slow to capture community strengths and resources and link them to national strategies in any systematic way.

Secondly, while the DEIS policy included an implementation plan, its delivery details are not publicly available. Instead, what is publicly available are broad figures in relation to the inputs and the extent of service delivery, rather than clearly articulated outcomes. While there is an expectation that DEIS will help meet the NAPS high level goal of having the literacy problem in disadvantaged areas to 15% (from 30%), there is no direct link between targets that schools set themselves (which remain confidential) and this national target. This lack of clarity of outcomes through the delivery chain, from national policy to individual school policy, does not conform to best practice in implementation. Stronger accountability of achieving targets would improve implementation.² Moreover, there is no apparent penalty for failing to achieve the NAPS literacy goal. Under DEIS, there is no system for rewarding success nor is there an incentive structure for schools to meet literacy targets or other indicators of educational disadvantage in Action Plans. As outlined in the report, some schools feel uncertain how their disadvantaged status will be reassessed if they show evidence of improvement.

Thirdly, and perhaps most crucially, DEIS leaves it to individual schools to define for themselves what a successful outcome is in terms of the literacy of its pupils³. While the policy intention may have been to encourage flexibility, it risks a fragmented response. This report shows that some schools set very high standards for themselves in this regard. They set out to raise literacy levels for all their pupils in their charge by creating a school culture characterised by strong and effective leadership, by high staff expectations, and a culture of rewarding success. They worked to create a shared vision of success, with agreed targets and action plans and structured programmes delivered flexibly. As a consequence, staff morale was high, communication was open and effective and staffs were more focused on facing the challenges. Additionally, these schools created strong links with families and the community, and with support workers in the Home School Community Liaison Scheme and DEIS advisors and built strong networks with outside funders, private partnerships and other locally-based programmes, who contributed not just funding, but new ideas.

The NESF believes that it is only when schools operate such a whole-school approach to literacy teaching and integrate DEIS supports into the school culture that they can find success in meeting the significant literacy challenges they face in disadvantaged communities. Other schools struggle to articulate a positive literacy policy and to create the positive organisational culture that can deliver success. The extent to which it is true across the generality of DEIS schools is not yet clear.

² The NESF notes that previous NAPS goals in relation to literacy were not achieved. However, the same goal of halving the level of serious literacy problems was simply reiterated in the current NAPS.

³ DEIS Advisors support schools in drawing up their targets and action plans but it is up to the school what they contain.

The final evaluation of DEIS will not be completed until after 2010. The inclusion of an interim evaluation report would have allowed for the tracking of important milestones and indicators of success, including the 'softer' cultural and organisational indicators. It is clear from international evidence that creating a positive 'can do' organisational culture is predictive of ultimate success in policy implementation. Thus, including an interim evaluation of how the DEIS policy is being implemented would have identified those schools struggling with the 'softer' issues and allowed for a transfer of best practice and additional supports for them. In the light of these findings, the NESF has made a number of recommendations which include the following:

- Central to those recommendations is the introduction of a **National Literacy Policy Framework** to clearly articulate what every school is expected to achieve and the best ways to support teachers to achieve this. Such a policy would provide a shared vision for future action with greater policy coherence and integration and would ensure a strategic focus on child literacy;
- A Steering Committee on Literacy and Social Inclusion, with an independent Chair, should be established under the auspices of the Department of Education and Science, and representative of all the main stakeholders, with a clear mandate from the Government to drive forward the recommendations contained in this report;
- We strongly recommend that literacy be approached in a holistic way from early childhood to adulthood – and that a partnership approach between the various education and community stakeholders – including parents, at local and national level, is essential for success; and
- We recommend a stronger articulation of short-term and long-term targets, co-ordinated at local and national level; greater clarity with regard to the accountability and responsibility of the various stakeholders; more precise implementation and action plans; built-in process evaluation and feedback procedures and more incentives for success.

We hope that this report on literacy, an issue of critical importance to Ireland's long term economic and social success, may be a useful contribution in a policy landscape that is facing unprecedented and rapid change in the immediate future.



Dr. Maureen Gaffney,
Chairperson,
National Economic and Social Forum

Acknowledgements

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Our thanks also go to all those who made written Submissions or who met directly with the Project Team or the NESF Secretariat or who made presentations at the Plenary Conference. The expertise and insights gleaned from these discussions and documents were extremely helpful.

The members of the Project Team are also to be thanked for their hard work and commitment, and the Project Chair, Professor Áine Hyland for her excellent work in bringing the work to a successful conclusion.

As with all NESF reports, wide consultation was a key feature of the work and the high level of engagement was noted and much appreciated.

During the course of the Project the following made a particular contribution to the work and we are very grateful to them: Olivia Joyner, Cynthia Deane, Dr. Eithne Kennedy, Professor Kathy Hall, Liz Canavan, Tracey Connolly and Tracey O'Brien.

Finally, our great appreciation goes to the NESF Director Seán Ó hÉigearthaigh, who retired this year and whose contribution and commitment to the work of the Project was invaluable.

NESF Secretariat

Supplementary Report

The main findings and conclusions of the Project Team are presented in the following report. To supplement this work, a second, Supplementary Report is also available, which presents the Summary of Submissions made to the Project Team and Research Paper by Dr Eithne Kennedy. Copies of this can be obtained from the NESF.

Glossary

Aistear: is the *Framework for Early Learning* supports practitioners in planning for and providing enriching, challenging and enjoyable learning opportunities for children from birth to six years.

Band 1 & 2 Schools: are designated as disadvantaged under DEIS and classified as Band 1 (most disadvantaged), and Band 2 (highly disadvantaged).

DEIS: is *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* – Action Plan for Educational Inclusion.

DEIS Advisor: is an individual who offers planning advice, literacy training and staff development to staff of DEIS schools.

Digital Literacy: focuses as much on the use of digital tools and media as on the integration, evaluation, analysis and synthesis of knowledge.

Drumcondra Primary Reading Test: is a group-administered test of achievement in reading developed by the Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra, Dublin.

Educational Disadvantage: was defined in the 1998 Education Act as *‘the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevents students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools.’*

Emergent Literacy: is a developmental continuum along which children's literacy is acquired from birth to adulthood.

Family Literacy: is a way of working with adult learners that recognises and builds on their role as family members and the literacy and numeracy skills needed in family life.

First Steps: was created in Australia in 1992 and is a highly structured classroom-based programme covering the four areas of Oral Language, Reading, Writing and Spelling.

Formative Evaluation: (Assessment for learning) is usually carried out during the school year or programme.

Implementation (of public policy): is the realisation of a policy; it consists of organised activities by Government directed toward the achievement of stated goals and objectives.

Jolly Phonics: was designed in the UK and uses synthetic phonics method to teach children letters and how to read and write.

Literacy Liftoff or Literacy Power Hour: is a daily intensive classroom-based spinoff of Reading Recovery which uses the programme's phonological strategies in four classroom ‘stations’ with different literacy-based activities.

Life-Cycle Approach: places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery.

Literacy: is defined by DEIS as *‘the integration of reading and writing, listening, speaking’*. However, the skills needed for oral language, reading and writing skills point to a more holistic focus on comprehension, analysis and critical evaluation.

Micra T: is a reading attainment test first developed in 1988 under the aegis of the Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

Oracy: is oral language literacy.

Purveyors/Mentors: An individual or group of individuals who transmit effective policy implementation practices from one location to another.

Reading Recovery: is an early intervention designed in New Zealand to reduce literacy problems in schools, by improving the reading and writing skills of the lowest achieving children in the age band by withdrawing them from the classroom for one-to-one tuition.

School Completion Programme: operates in 124 areas nationally and mostly concerns secondary schools but includes some funds to support primary school activities. Pupils at age 8 are identified and then targeted through their school years for supports.

Siolta: is the *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* and was developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) in 2006, to improve the learning experiences of children from birth to six in a variety of settings.

Storysack/storybags: A programme usually run with parents and children around a book with props presented in a sack. It came from the UK and the US and is used widely by libraries, VECs schools, family resource centres etc.

Summative Evaluation: (Assessment of learning) usually takes place at the end of the school year or programme.

Tailored Universalism: Refers to the provision of services adjusted to an individual’s needs/capabilities but also taking into account the capacity of their family and community to address their needs.

Whole-Child Approach: takes account of all the influences that affect a child's life in and out of school.

Social Exclusion: *‘People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society’* (Government of Ireland, 2007a).

Abbreviations

BTC
Breaking the Cycle

DAS
Disadvantaged Areas
Scheme

DEIS
Delivering Equality of
Opportunity in Schools

DES
Department of Education
and Science

ECCE
Early Childhood Care
and Education

ERC
Educational Research
Centre, Drumcondra

GCEB
Giving Children an
Even Break

HSCL
Home School
Community Liaison

HSE
Health Service Executive

IALS
International Adult
Literacy Survey

NAER
National Assessment of
English Reading

NALA
National Adult
Literacy Agency

NAPS
National Action Plan for
Social Inclusion

NCCA
National Council
for Curriculum and
Assessment

NCSE
National Council for
Special Education

NCVO
The National Council
for Voluntary
Organisations

NEPS
National Educational
Psychological Service
Agency

NEWB
National Educational
Welfare Board

OECD
Office for Economic
Co-operation and
Development

PISA
Programme for
International Student
Assessment

PPDS
Primary Professional
Development Service

SCP
School Completion
Programme

SDPI
School Development
Planning Initiative

SDPS
School Development
Planning Service

SEN
Special Educational
Needs

SENos
Special Educational
Needs Organisers.

SSP
School Support
Programme

Executive Summary

- 1 ● With the renewed mandate from the Government to study policy implementation, the NESF established a Project Team on Child Literacy and Social Inclusion in September 2008. The present report presents the work of the Project Team. The focus of the report is to both identify best practice and to pin-point barriers and supports to effective policy implementation in and outside of schools, including in the home and the local community. The target group was primary school children living in disadvantaged communities, where nearly one in three pupils attending schools there has serious literacy difficulties; three times the national average (E. Eivers, Shiel, & Shortt, 2004).
- 2 ● The report is divided into four sections. It is designed to complement the present evaluation of the *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Action Plan* and as an input to the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016*, which seeks to reduce the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties in primary schools serving disadvantaged communities to less than 15% by 2016 (DES, 2005a; Government of Ireland, 2007a). It was prepared by a Project Team, under the Chair of Professor Áine Hyland, and comprised political, employer, trade union, farmer, community and voluntary sector, representatives and educationalists.
- 3 ● **Section One** provides the policy context and documents how, and despite widespread support and good practice, there has been little observable shift in levels of child literacy problems in disadvantaged areas. The economic and social costs in not dealing more effectively with this are severe; a UK study showed that costs from failure to learn to read in the primary school years was over the life-course to age 37 as between £1.73BN to £2.05 BN every year (KPMG Foundation, 2006). This has serious consequences for children's life-chances, with many of them more likely to experience educational failure, social and economic hardship.
- 4 ● What we understand literacy to be is shifting with new approaches emerging. It does not just refer to reading and writing but encompasses a wide range of skills, evolving to embrace new forms of technology and competences. It is imperative that we keep pace with these changes if we are to compete effectively at international level. While much can be done in schools, the report argues that improving literacy must also involve the family and the wider community.

- 5 ● While it has been a key issue in education in recent years, there is as yet no national policy on literacy for *all* children. However, statements about literacy are included in the *English Curriculum for Primary Schools and in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* (DEIS). DEIS is designed as an integrated policy on educational disadvantage, drawing together a focus on literacy, numeracy, home-school engagement, and family literacy. It includes targets, measurable outcomes and an evaluation plan. As part of the plan, a phased evaluation programme is running which began with assessing baseline literacy levels in all DEIS schools and this will be revisited again in 2010. The results of this evaluation will not be known until after 2010.
- 6 ● With only 22% of primary schools designated as disadvantaged and coming under DEIS, there is some concern that many disadvantaged children are not covered by this policy. A recent ESRI survey of school leavers indicated that 61% of young people from semi/unskilled manual backgrounds had attended non-DEIS schools (Smyth & McCoy, 2009).
- 7 ● **Section Two** examines the implementation of DEIS both from the views of stakeholders and Submissions made to the Project Team, and also from detailed Case Study Research of four DEIS schools that was undertaken by the NESF Secretariat. Here, the focus is from a process evaluation perspective, where some of the overall delivery issues and practices, including reaching the target group, its quality and perceived content are considered and secondly, DEIS is compared to an outcomes-oriented approach to policy using the Implementation Template (presented in Figure 1 below) and highlights both strengths and weaknesses in its implementation.

Figure 1 Implementation Template

i.	Strategy plans with agreed outcomes
ii.	Delivery plans and delivery on the ground (including standards, competition, co-ordination of organisations and procedures and tailored universalism)
iii.	Monitoring, evaluation and measurement of inputs, outputs and outcomes
iv.	Links between outcomes and budget
v.	Good accountability and incentive structure
vi.	Equity in provision
vii.	Cultural Elements (including values, beliefs and tacit assumptions, leadership, attitudes and quality of collaborative relationships)

Source: NESF Secretariat

- 8 ● Some areas of good practice were identified through the Case Study work, many of which were also found by the Inspectorate of Education and Science in their research on good practice in DEIS schools (DES, Forthcoming-a). These included that DEIS was broadly welcomed by the schools for providing needed resources, supports and training. In particular, teachers and principals emphasised the value of structured programmes, as well as the new focus on planning across the school and setting targets, effective leadership and teamwork. Others commented on the benefit of smaller class sizes, the increased funding, extra support staff and the contribution DEIS Advisors had played in helping to deliver these programmes and improve literacy teaching.
- 9 ● The NESF Secretariat's Case Study Research found that some schools were more positive about their work and their effectiveness in tackling literacy problems than others. These tended to be schools with high staff expectations, a culture of rewarding success, shared vision, agreed targets and action plans. Schools, where the approach to literacy was widely articulated, were more focused on addressing the challenges, and the importance of effective communication, staff morale and team spirit. Finally, building networks with outside funders, private partnerships and other locally-based programmes, contributed not just in terms of funding, but as a link also to new ideas and interplay between the old and the new.
- 10 ● Some supports to DEIS being implemented within schools strengthened how it worked on the ground. These included a welcoming school atmosphere, strong links with the Home School Community Liaison and sharing of good practice inside and outside of the school and the following:
 - *Involvement of DEIS Advisors;*
 - *Action Plans and Literacy Strategies;*
 - *Structured Programmes on Literacy with Flexibility in Delivery;*
 - *Strong Community Links and Wider Network Participation; and*
 - *A Positive Organisational Culture.*
- 11 ● Challenges to DEIS that were noted included: high staff turnover in some schools; the resource-intensive nature of some programmes; the fragmented experience of DEIS on the ground; the suitability of the literacy assessments being used; the steep learning required to develop Action Plans and targets; as well as a lack of sufficient practical guidelines on literacy in the in the English Curriculum.
- 12 ● The Case Studies also highlighted some barriers to effective implementation of DEIS, such as:
 - *Perceived uncertainty over DEIS status* – lack of clarity over how schools were selected;
 - *DEIS does not have a strategy for dealing with success* – there is no incentive or reward for improving literacy levels;

- *School as an island* – where schools are isolated from each other and the wider community, there is less sharing of good practice and the building of supportive networks;
- *Lack of understanding how disadvantage impacts* – a perception that current policy does not fully reflect the challenges being faced on the ground;
- *Lack of integration of different aspects and phases of DEIS* – the policy is delivered in phases and is not perceived to be an integrated one; and
- *Poor leadership, communication and team morale* – this adversely impacts the effectiveness of schools to deliver policy on the ground.

13 ● Conclusions from this Section include:

- Quality Early Childhood Care and Education, with oral language skills from the earliest years, was felt to be critical to support children from disadvantaged communities;
- Ongoing professional training and development was considered to be a key element to any literacy strategy;
- It was felt that the English Primary Curriculum does not give sufficient practical guidance on the teaching of literacy. More time on literacy in the classroom for disadvantaged children would be of value particularly for their oral language needs;
- ICT with use of computers, digital cameras, digital video cameras and digital audio recorders can play a key role in supporting the acquisition of traditional literacy skills and could be used more effectively across the curriculum;
- Schools which use formative assessment⁴ show academic gains and also gains for underachieving students;
- Strong parental involvement is important for success; and
- Family literacy work can help adults and children who find it difficult to relate to school learning.

14 ● **Section Three** presents the work that was commissioned by the Project Team on community literacy initiatives. Policy in this area has been slow to capture community strengths and resources in any systematic way. Community-based initiatives and projects emerge often from the grassroots, out of local need, and there is a challenge in finding ways of linking these with national strategies. However, shifts towards new forms of governance and more inclusive policy-making and implementation necessitate finding ways to better engage with communities and learn from their successes.

⁴ Formative assessment (assessment for learning) is usually carried out during the school year or programme, whereas summative assessment takes place at the end (assessment of learning).

- 15 ● A wide range of literacy initiatives and projects exist around the country funded by philanthropic organisations, charities, some private-public partnerships, statutory funding, universities and colleges and libraries, among others. These focus on literacy directly in terms of paired-reading schemes, summer clubs, speech and language development, and others which focus indirectly on early childcare and education schemes, emotional well-being, homework clubs etc. Some are targeted at particular age groups, or areas such as health, community development or the arts. The strengths of many of these initiatives are that they are located in disadvantaged communities, have a strong focus, target groups, key objectives and are being rigorously evaluated.
- 16 ● Some of the supports to implementation in communities worth highlighting are innovative ones which build up area-based cross-sectoral approaches (Familiscope); language development as part of a comprehensive early childhood development programme (Child Development Initiative, Tallaght); and family literacy projects such as the Clare Family Learning Project. One area that is strengthening family literacy through the VEC-school projects (19 nationally).
- 17 ● There is a delicate balance between State provision of services and community responses but for the most part, community initiatives arise out a lack of provision. However, sometimes there can be overlap and unnecessary duplication in some cases. Whereas, in others, it can create more choice for local residents. A good example of an initiative seeking out areas where there is little duplication is youngballymun.
- 18 ● Some conclusions from this Section are:
 - While there is excellence in community provision, there is also variability. Greater leadership, quality assurance and support are needed;
 - A more systemic approach to community provision is needed, building on relationships with schools;
 - Despite the considerable work of the Home School Community Liaison Scheme, there is a gulf between school and community which needs to be bridged;
 - Community development projects, Family Resource Centres, neighbourhood youth projects etc. can complement what is happening in the formal education system;
 - Initiatives from within communities can be more accessible to parents who might have had negative experience of school;
 - The integrated partnership companies act as intermediaries, conveners, linking service providers and facilitating dialogue and joint initiatives between communities and statutory agencies;

- Community mentors/advisors could share the learning from innovative practices across regions/nationally;
 - Family literacy projects are strengthening but more are needed as part of the development of a national family literacy strategy;
 - Libraries play a key role in building literacy links between schools and communities;
 - Volunteers play a key role in many literacy initiatives such as homework clubs and paired-reading projects. For example, the Barnardos' Wizards of Words project involves older volunteers; and
 - There is considerable merit in building on the Office of the Minister for Children's Services County Committees to include a focus on literacy and improved connections between agencies working in communities to achieve better outcomes for children and families.
- 19 ● **Section Four** is in two parts: (1) Implementation Overview and (2) Recommendations, using as a benchmark the Implementation Template presented in Figure 1 of the report.

Implementation Overview

i. Strategy plans with agreed outcomes

In summary, the reflections on policy indicate the need for:

- The development of a national strategy plan on literacy, with agreed national outcomes and specific targets for children experiencing educational disadvantage;
- An integrated approach which builds bridges and links between schools and communities in the delivery of literacy supports;
- A clearer link between national high level goals/targets and local goals/targets with transparent accountability structures all the way along; and
- Clear outcome measures for each stage of delivery.

ii. Delivery plans and delivery on the ground (including standards, competition, co-ordination of organisations and procedures and tailored universalism)

What would be of value here is:

- A roadmap for DEIS-what it is trying to achieve, by when and how. This would include an annual business and implementation plan; and
- Greater integration within DES and across Departments and agencies in the delivery of literacy policies from a Child-Centred Approach, with shared goals and effective communication.

iii. **Monitoring, evaluation and measurement of inputs, outputs and outcomes**

Some of the key policy implementation issues under this heading are:

- There should be systematic collection and publication of both formative and summative data in relation to literacy outcomes;
- Evaluation reports should be publicly available and should be used to review and revise implementation strategies; and
- Consideration should be given, in the next phase of DEIS, to the allocation of funding on a sliding scale of disadvantage so that a greater number of pupils experiencing educational disadvantage would be supported.

iv. **Links between outcomes and budget**

The policy issues here are:

- Greater linking of outcomes to budgets; and
- National outcomes need to be linked more closely with local outcomes.

v. **Good accountability and incentive structure**

The key policy lessons are:

- The system needs clearer and better accountability;
- Good governance- regular, comprehensive and transparent reporting;
- Accountability with consequences; and
- ‘Purveyors’ or ‘mentors’ from schools which have successfully implemented literacy policies should be encouraged to share good practice with staff in other schools and in the wider community.

vi. **Equity in provision**

Some key policy points are:

- More focused action to tackle disadvantaged issues linked to literacy under the Government’s *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2007-2016*;
- The need for a coherent and coordinated national literacy policy for all children;
- Increased clarity in relation to the target group for child literacy and social inclusion policy; and
- Greater consistency of service delivery to schools under DEIS.

vii. Cultural Elements

In summary, the following policy lessons under this heading are:

- A system for sharing information on implementation across Departments and agencies should be promoted;
- Where schools have developed good practice in literacy, this learning should be shared through network-building; mentoring programmes and professional development among practitioners and policy makers;
- More research on the impact of ‘soft’ cultural elements on implementation of policies in schools in an Irish context; and
- Setting clear and high expectations and a vision for what is to be achieved helps to create a positive and successful working culture.

Report’s Recommendations

20 ● This report has identified the need for an inclusive and integrated national literacy policy. It has pinpointed some barriers and obstacles to successful policy implementation and made suggestions as to how these should be addressed. From the Project Team’s consultative process, it is clear there is widespread commitment by the education and community stakeholders to addressing the challenge of serious literacy problems in disadvantaged areas. There is also agreement that the issue of literacy is not just a matter for schools but that it must be addressed in a holistic way - from early childhood to adulthood – and that a partnership approach between the various education and community stakeholders, at local and national level, is essential for success.

21 ● From its deliberations and analysis of implementation as set out above, the Project Team puts forward one central overarching recommendation, namely **that a National Literacy Policy Framework be put in place that has a ‘life –cycle’ emphasis, with the involvement of the various education and community stakeholders. A Steering Committee should be established to develop this framework led by the Department of Education and Science (See ‘Institutional Supports’ below). For this purpose, the Department should liaise with other relevant Departments, statutory and non-statutory agencies, and voluntary agencies. This would provide a shared vision for future action with greater policy coherence and integration. It should be underpinned with a strategic focus on child literacy.**

22 ● In developing this framework, the integrated approach of Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) and highlighted in the OECD Public Management Review on Ireland *Towards an Integrated Public Service* might be adopted (OECD, 2008). The OMC model provides a template for the approach which could be used in developing a National Literacy Policy⁵.

⁵ The OECD identified the OMC as representing an innovative model for ensuring greater coherence in policy-making and service delivery, from a whole-of-Public Service viewpoint. The OMC also supports implementation of the ‘life-cycle’ approach indicated above.

- 23 ● The Project Team considers that now is an opportune time to initiate decisive action, given the better understanding of literacy and its critical economic and social role in the 21st century. Having considered the evidence available from the submissions and from the research, this report sets out a vision for literacy for *all* children which envisages the involvement of families, communities, schools and a range of service-providers, both statutory and non-statutory in the formulation of literacy policy and in the delivery of literacy supports and tuition. Without such a vision, and a coherent, comprehensive policy framework, it is unlikely that all our children will be able to reach their full potential and contribute fully to society. This will require Departments, statutory and non-statutory agencies, and voluntary agencies, to work together, to communicate and share good practice.
- 24 ● The policy framework should be underpinned by a holistic child-centred approach and should taking account of the new free early childcare scheme announced in the recent Supplementary Budget, it should contain a number of core elements such as:
- A strong focus on consultation;
 - A partnership-based approach where literacy development becomes a collective and shared responsibility between all the stakeholders;
 - Clearly articulated targets, both short-term and long-term, coordinated at local and national level;
 - A ‘life-cycle’ approach;
 - Clarity as to the responsibility of the various stakeholders;
 - Strong parental involvement and participation at all levels from literacy policy development to delivery, including support for their own learning;
 - Clear accountability and incentives;
 - Implementation and action plans; and
 - A built-in process evaluation and feedback procedures.
- 25 ● Figure 9.2 in the report outlines some elements for this Framework while Figure 9.3 presents some of the supports that would be needed for those experiencing disadvantage, including targeted interventions for disadvantaged pupils.
- 26 ● Following the Policy Framework, the Project Team identified a number of supporting recommendations. These were presented under the following headings (and are detailed in Section 9.51 of the report) and listed here in brief:
- Quality ECCE;
 - School-based actions;
 - Support for Schools;
 - Community Literacy Practices; and
 - Institutional Supports.

- 27 ● The institutional supports recommended consist of a Steering Committee on Literacy and Social Inclusion which should be established under the auspices of the Department of Education and Science, representative of all the main stakeholders, and with a clear mandate from the Government to drive forward and put into effect the recommendations contained in this report. The Chair of the Committee should be an independent outsider with knowledge and experience of the issues involved. The functions of this Committee, which should report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Children and Integration through the Senior Officials Group, would include:
- Preparation of the National Literacy Policy Framework, including a strategic focus on child literacy. This would include national and local targets, implementation schedules, performance and outcome indicators and built-in evaluations to monitor progress and feedback procedures across schools and the wider community;
 - The development of models and guidelines to promote effective partnerships between the school, the family and the community with improved linkages between adult and child literacy policies and practice;
 - The promotion of research and improved data collection; and
 - The preparation and publication of regular reports on the activities of the Committee.
- 28 ● The recommendations in this report relate essentially to achieving improved outcomes through better co-ordination and integration between Government Departments and agencies. An increase in the availability and quality of professional development training would have some cost implications as would the provision of literacy mentors/advisors. However, greater collaboration with Colleges of Education' Postgraduate courses could provide some low cost and appropriate support for schools and further training for those yet to start full-time teaching.
- 29 ● It should be noted that few of the recommendations in this report involve increased public expenditure. Instead, they relate essentially to achieving improved outcomes through better co-ordination and integration between Government Departments and agencies. As such, these are not only cost-neutral but would also achieve better results from present levels of expenditure. However, it is important to bear in mind the substantial on-going costs to the individual and to society as a whole if the literacy problems in our society, and especially among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are not effectively addressed. The international evidence is clear – there are substantial returns from investment in successful literacy programmes, e.g. studies in the UK have shown a return in the range €17.15 to €20.24 for every € spent on such programmes⁶.

6 This has been converted from sterling: £14.81 to £17.56 for every £ spent.

SECTION ONE

The Context of Child Literacy and Social Inclusion

1

- 1.1 ● In the 21st century, the importance of literacy cannot be overstated, bringing with it social, economic and health benefits to the individual and across society as a whole. While our children's literacy levels (in terms of reading ability) are relatively good compared with our European neighbours, these have not changed for almost thirty years. Successive national assessments have shown no changes since the 1980s⁷. This is not unique to Ireland. A large number of OECD countries have seen a significant decline in [reading] performance between 2000 and 2006 (E. Eivers, Shiel, Perkins, & Cosgrove, 2005). The reasons for this are not fully understood. Furthermore, there is research evidence to show that children living in disadvantaged communities⁸ have nearly three times the rate of severe literacy difficulties to children nationally (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2004).
- 1.2 ● There are economic and social costs in not dealing more effectively with this which we can ill-afford as a society (The National Literacy Trust, 2008). For the individuals concerned, there are serious consequences for their life-chances. Children who do not learn to read, write and communicate effectively at primary level are more likely to leave school early, be unemployed or in low-skilled jobs, have poorer emotional and physical health and are more likely to end up in poverty and in our prisons (Barnados, 2009; KPMG Foundation, 2006).
- 1.3 ● In the meantime, our understanding of literacy is evolving to embrace new forms of technology and competences and there is a risk that more children will be left further behind. Interestingly, literacy is highest in the most equal societies, such as Finland (National College of Ireland, 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). It is imperative that we keep pace with these changes if we are to compete effectively at international level.

⁷ The ERC point out in a Submission to the Project Team that a potential reason for the lack of change in levels might be the tests used and other methodological limitations (see Archer and Weir, 2004) (Submission made by the Educational Research Centre).

⁸ The definition of educational disadvantage alongside key terms such as literacy and social exclusion, can be found in the Glossary.

- 1.4 ● Decades of policies on educational disadvantage in Ireland have had only limited impact on the reading ability levels of children from disadvantaged backgrounds at a national level. There is good practice going on in schools, but this does not seem to impact sufficiently on literacy levels in disadvantaged schools. Here and internationally, this is increasingly recognised as being a complex problem with no single solution. Eivers *et al.* found that 27% of pupils in First and Sixth classes in a national sample of designated disadvantaged schools had ‘serious literacy difficulties’ (defined as scoring at or below the tenth percentile on a nationally normed test) (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2004). In Third class, the estimate approached one-third. They concluded from their research that it was likely that children from poor backgrounds in non-designated schools perform better on tests than children from poor backgrounds in designated schools (Sofroniou, Archer, & Weir, 2004).
- 1.5 ● The literacy domain is wider than schools. International research confirms that the most significant effects on student outcomes continue to result from beyond the immediate school setting and these effects remain stubbornly persistent over time (Berliner, 2006). To contextualise its work, this report develops a vision of what is needed to be done to make literacy for *all* children a reality, and one that involves supportive and complementary actions from parents, the school and the wider community. As the National Literacy Trust in the UK argues, the literacy agenda sits at the heart of the desire to improve personal well-being, create safer and stronger communities and the drive to future economic success (The National Literacy Trust, 2008). It is wider in remit, than simply reading and writing, but gets at the heart of social inclusion and the development of progressive knowledge economies.
- 1.6 ● New understandings of literacy point to a broader approach which brings school and community more closely together. A child, like any individual, learns outside of school as much, if not more, than in school at different times in their lives. From an ecological perspective, an individual’s experience can be seen as ‘*a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls*’ (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). While school plays a vital role in teaching literacy, international research confirms the substantial and significant effects on student outcomes continue to reside beyond the immediate school setting. Barnardos, (in their Submission to the Project Team), outline their ‘whole-child’ approach which means taking account of all the influences that affect a child’s life in and out of school. In policy terms, taking a ‘whole-child’ approach or child-centred approach can be seen as part of the ‘life-cycle’ approach, looking across the whole public service at what can be done to support children’s (and later adults’) educational development (NESC, 2005).
- 1.7 ● Against this background, and as part of its new mandate from the Government to study policy implementation, the NESF decided to establish a Project Team to examine the implementation of existing policies on child literacy and social inclusion and document areas of good practice, as well as identify challenges to more effective implementation.

- 1.8 ● This chapter first outlines the Terms of Reference for the Project Team and the outline of this report. It then presents the implementation template and framework which underpins this work.

Project Team

- 1.9 ● The NESF established a Project Team to conduct this work, chaired by Professor Áine Hyland. The Team included literacy experts, representatives from the community and voluntary sector, Oireachtas members, trade unions, employers and independents. It started its work in September 2008.

CHAIRPERSON PROFESSOR ÁINE HYLAND

STRAND ONE

Michael McGrath, T.D. Fianna Fáil

Willie Penrose, T.D. Labour

Terence Flanagan, T.D. Fine Gael

STRAND TWO

Anna Maria Dennison Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA)

Geraldine Anderson Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC)

Marie Sherlock The Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU)

Catherine Byrne Ex Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)

STRAND THREE

Marie Claire McAleer National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)

Sr Mary Reynolds Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI)

Niamh Gallagher Children's Rights Alliance (CRA)

Inez Bailey National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) nominated by Community Platform

STRAND FOUR

Marie Carroll Southside Partnership

Jim Mulkerrins Department of Education and Science

Dr Harold Hislop Inspectorate of Education and Science

Dr Áine Cregan Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

Michael Hallissy Director of Learning, Digital Hub

Gene Mehigan Marino Institute of Education

NESF Secretariat Dr Jeanne Moore

Terms of Reference

- 1.10 ● With educational disadvantage, as with many other complex social inclusion issues, there has been difficulty realising goals and implementing policy. There is, therefore, considerable value in exploring what barriers and supports may be present to the effective implementation of literacy policy. This current report looks at literacy policy as it impacts on primary-age children, both in school and in the wider community. It is designed to complement the ongoing evaluation by the Educational Research Centre of the *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Action Plan (2007-2010)* by examining implementation on the ground (DES, 2005a).
- 1.11 ● The specific aim of this NESF Project was to:
- Identify best practice in the implementation of child literacy and social inclusion policies, as outlined in *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)* and elsewhere; as well as to
 - Pin-point barriers and supports to effective implementation in and outside of schools, including in the home and the local community.
- 1.12 ● The overall objective of the Project was to examine- both from the bottom up and the top down – the process of implementation of policies that seek to address child literacy and social inclusion.
- 1.13 ● In the course of its work, the Project Team sought to highlight:
- Ways to strengthen child literacy and social inclusion policy and its implementation;
 - The necessary actions at organisational, community and national levels to strengthen literacy and social inclusion practices; and
 - Lessons for policy implementation more broadly.
- 1.14 ● Within a framework of best practice internationally, the Project adopted a case study approach, grounding the work of the Project Team in examples of policy delivery. Four schools were selected that are currently serving disadvantaged communities taking part in the DEIS Programme. A community project was also included in the Case Studies, to demonstrate ways that school, family and community combine on the ground.
- 1.15 ● The Project Team narrowed the focus of its work to child literacy at primary level for the purposes of manageability within the timeframe of the Project. However, it did so bearing in mind the following points:
- i. It focuses only on literacy in the English language but recognises that there are particular issues arising for schools where the medium of instruction is Irish;

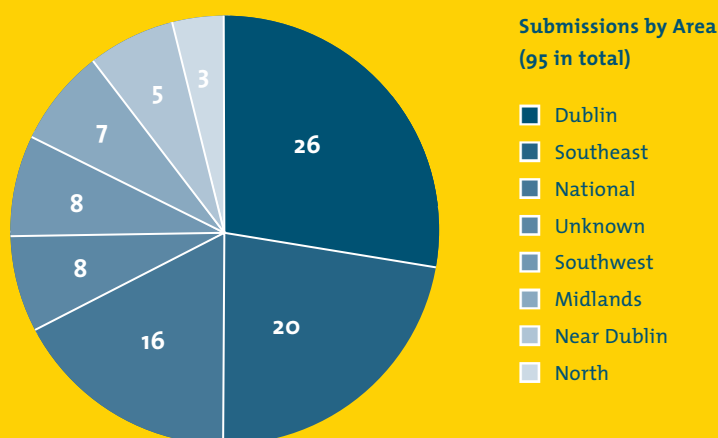
- ii. While child literacy is the focus, adult literacy is an important part of the context and continuity and literacy support is needed through the life-cycle;
- iii. Numeracy levels in disadvantaged schools are also low relative to schools generally and this is worthy of separate investigation beyond the scope of the current project (Government of Ireland, 2006a);
- iv. The Project Team acknowledges the specific additional supports needed by special educational needs (SEN) children. These are estimated at 190,000 nationally (National Council for Special Education, 2006). One report by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science, found that approximately 10% of the pupils in the disadvantaged schools under review were assessed as having special educational needs and were in receipt of resource teaching (DES, 2005b).

Project Team's Work Schedule

- 1.16 ● The Project Team met ten times from September 2008 – June 2009. In the course of their work, eight excellent presentations were made both by Team Members themselves and by invited guests. These will be drawn upon throughout the report. The presentations were:
- 1. DEIS – Brief overview and update, Jim Mulkerrins, Department of Education and Science.
 - 2. Family Literacy and Social Inclusion, Inez Bailey, NALA.
 - 3. Good Practice Research- Presentation from Dr Harold Hislop and Suzanne Conneelly, Inspectorate, Department of Education and Science.
 - 4. From Policy to Practice: The oral language challenge, Dr Áine Cregan, Mary Immaculate College.
 - 5. Roll-out of the Children Services- by Liz Canavan, Office for the Minister of Children
 - 6. Perspectives on Teaching Reading: Interventions/Professional Development – by Gene Mehigan.
 - 7. Improving Literacy in a Disadvantaged School- A Research Based Approach by Dr Eithne Kennedy, St Patrick's College.
 - 8. Mapping of Community Literacy Initiatives: A scoping paper – Cynthia Deane.

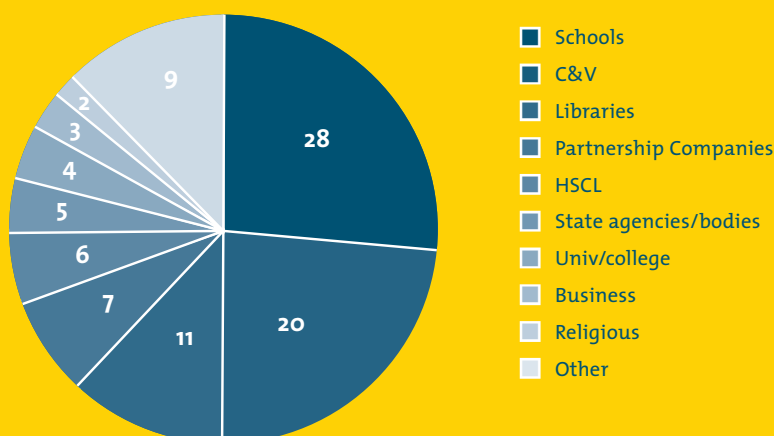
- 1.17** ● A public call through the media, resulted in 95 Submissions from teachers, parents, principals, libraries, university departments, partnership companies, voluntary and community organisations among others. Material from the Submissions has been used throughout the report, where appropriate. Figure 1.1 presents the source of the Submissions, with 27% (26) from Dublin, 21% (20) from the Southwest, 18 of which were from Cork. The Submissions were sent in by a broad-ranging group including 29% (28) from schools including principals, teachers and school support staff; 21% (20) from community and voluntary organisations; 11% (11) from libraries and 7% (7) from partnership companies (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.1 Submissions by Area



Source: NESF Secretariat

Figure 1.2 Submissions by Organisation/Background



Source: NESF Secretariat

- 1.18 ● As part of the work of the Project Team, five Case Studies were selected. These consisted of four schools, two in Dublin, one in Limerick and one in Cork, and a community project in Dublin. For each of these Studies in schools the NESF Secretariat spent two days meeting with staff and observing lessons and activities. The interviews from this work were recorded and transcribed. NVivo software was used to analyse the material into themes.
- 1.19 ● In addition, two papers were commissioned by the Project Team. One, focusing on the results of her doctoral work, was from Dr Eithne Kennedy on *Improving Literacy in a Disadvantaged School – A Research Based Approach*. The other was a *Mapping of Community Literacy Initiatives* by Cynthia Deane, a learning and development consultant.
- 1.20 ● The Team presented a draft summary of this report at a Plenary Session of all NESF members, invited individuals and organisations interested in this area of work, on 16th June 2009 in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. This Plenary Session was addressed by Professor Kathy Hall, University College Cork. The Plenary was well attended and provided valuable feedback to the Team. A list of those who attended is presented in Annex V.

Outline of the Report

- 1.21 ● The report is presented in four sections. Section One sets out the focus of this work, outlining the context of child literacy and social inclusion as well as the NESF's approach to policy implementation. Section Two presents the main work of the Project, and sets out the Case Study Research. It identifies key implementation issues arising from DEIS (*Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools*) considering these in detail in relation to schools. Section Three examines some of the existing community initiatives and projects in literacy and identifies implementation issues. Finally, Section Four sets out the main implementation findings and the Project Team's Recommendations. There is a Supplementary Report, also published, which contains the Summary of Submissions made to the Project Team and Dr Eithne Kennedy's Paper.

NESF Focus on Implementation

- 1.22 ● This report marks a new departure for the NESF in placing implementation as the central focus of its work. The Project Team examined child literacy and social inclusion policy through this lens, which both served to raise substantive questions about the supports and barriers to policy implementation, as well as on more effective policy strategies for improving literacy among this target group. More broadly, Irish children are above average in literacy levels (E. Eivers, Shiel, & Cunningham, 2008), so while the Project Team reflected on the nature of literacy policies, the focus of its work was with those most socially excluded in mind. Another NESF Report on the *Implementation of the Home Care Package Scheme* provides a valuable overview of implementation theories and approaches which is not repeated here (NESF, 2009).

- 1.23 ● Other complementary inputs to the work of the Team were the earlier NESF reports⁹ one on *Early Childhood Care and Education*, the other on *Delivery of Quality Public Services*. The latter had a focus on putting the citizen at the centre of public services reform, better services and delivered with greater efficiency and fairness. This emphasised a customer/service-user focused system, geared to meeting individual needs underpinned by a set of guiding principles namely:
- a. a whole-of-government approach with improved co-ordination and integrated provision of services;
 - b. a focus on early intervention /prevention;
 - c. a strategic medium-term perspective for the planning, funding and provision of services; and
 - d. greater autonomy, with innovative and pilot approaches at local level, and a built-in evaluation culture to determine what is or is not working.

Why look at implementation?

- 1.24 ● Policy implementation refers to the connection between the expression of governmental intention and actual results achieved on the ground (Hill & Hupe, 2002; O'Toole, 1995). What happens between policy design and policy delivery is a 'black box' (Quinn Patton, 1978). Nonetheless, it is crucial to delve into this black box, to find out why policy implementation is not achieving the results hoped for; or if it is, then how. As Quinn Patton notes, unpacking the 'black box' of implementation can be like opening a 'Pandora's box'. There is a variety of reasons why a policy might not lead to the outcomes hoped for. The various theories have been well summarised by Parsons (W. Parsons, 1996) and include the following:

Table 1.1 What Contributes to Successful Implementation?

The basis for the policy: For example, are there clear and consistent policy objectives for implementation?

Political support: For example, what formal political support is there for the policy?

Plans for implementation: For example, how is the policy planned to be put into action? Does such a plan include for example detailed logistics, scheduling, co-ordination?

People factors: Are the implementers skilled and committed?

Co-ordination and governance: For example, is there good accountability and governance among the groups implementing the policy? What is the mix of e.g. government, business, voluntary and community sectors, in implementing the policy?

Enforcement: For example, what mechanisms of enforcement are used? More informal persuasion, formal sanctions, or making it physically difficult/inconvenient not to comply? What modes of accountability exist?

Source: Parsons (1996) *Public Policy: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Policy Analysis*

⁹ NESF Report No 34 on Improving the Delivery of Quality Public Services, 2006 (NESF, 2007b) NESF Report No. 31 Early Childhood Care and Education, 2005 (NESF, 2005)

- 1.25 ● Contemporary implementation analysis such as by Hudson and Lowe, acknowledges the complexity of modern governance. Any policy is unlikely to be delivered by one organisation. Hudson and Lowe argue that *‘it is better to think of implementation as a process of negotiation inside a complex system of organisations and agencies rather than a defined outcome’* (Hudson & Lowe, 2004, p. 245).
- 1.26 ● In their influential book, *Policy Analysis for the Real World*, Hogwood and Gunn outline their recommendations to policy-makers for effective implementation. These include:
- That there is complete understanding of, and agreement upon, the objectives to be achieved, and that these conditions persist throughout the implementation process;
 - That in moving towards agreed objectives it is possible to specify, in complete detail and in perfect sequence, the tasks to be performed by each participant; and
 - That there is perfect communication among, and co-ordination of, the various elements involved in the programme (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984).
- 1.27 ● The Government commissioned the OECD to carry out a review of successes and challenges in public service reform in Ireland; *Ireland: Towards an integrated public service*, was published in 2008. It argues that *‘there is a need to develop a performance culture that is based on achieving outputs and outcomes’* (OECD, 2008, p. 31). Earlier work by the NESF on *Improving the Delivery of Quality Public Services* (NESF, 2007b) and NESC’s *Developmental Welfare State* (NESC, 2005) echoes many of the same findings and recommendations. Both of these reports focus more on designing services around users’ needs, taking a client-centred approach and the importance of quality standards than the OECD review. In addition, the Developmental Welfare State (NESC, 2005) outlines services with ‘tailored universalism’, which is about providers adjusting their services to accommodate a more diverse public and considers how policies can be more client-focused in theory.
- 1.28 ● The OECD report covers the most detailed ranges of issues that affect the success of policy delivery. The key issues are related to performance management, co-ordination and networking, accountability and innovation and best practice, among others. Actions proposed by the OECD report are interdependent – all must be implemented, not just a few (OECD, 2008, p. 12).
- 1.29 ● What is needed includes the following:
- improved dialogue between organisations;
 - more networks to bring people together;
 - performance measures looking at outcomes not inputs;
 - more flexibility for managers to meet these outcomes;

- budget frameworks for prioritisation and allocation of funding;
 - more emphasis on ICT and e-government to share info and integrate service delivery; and more mobility to develop skills and experience of generalist staff (OECD, 2008, p. 13).
- 1.30 ● All of these have a role to play in policy implementation. If a policy is directed at outcomes, so will all aspects of its delivery and implementation. To be successful, everyone has to be clear on the goals and expected outcomes and on their part in achieving them. These outcomes are directly linked to budgets and performance. If Ireland is to be more successful at implementation, as the OECD argues, then this is the way forward.
- 1.31 ● Having too many targets can create information overload and make it difficult to prioritise, resulting in an unclear focus. On the other hand, too few targets can create a distortion effect. It takes time to get a realistic balance and OECD experience has highlighted that it is better to limit the number of targets, but to set many measures for the achievement of a target (OECD, 2008, p. 150).
- 1.32 ● Studies of the policy process show that policy formulation and implementation are inter-dependent. In short, if policy is to be successfully implemented then those who have responsibility for its implementation should be consulted in its design and should be afforded the opportunity to be consulted in this process.
- 1.33 ● The OECD identified the Office of the Minister for Children as one area of good practice. They argue that *‘the OMC has also illustrated the importance of following-up national policy documentation with strategic implementation plans and taking early action to develop appropriate structures to ensure that services can be effectively delivered at the local level’* (OECD, 2008, p. 242). The OMC have uniquely developed reflective questions in individual booklets for policy makers, service providers and front-line managers in relation to the delivery of children’s services. This initiative is welcomed by the Project Team as it provides a powerful tool for implementation, recognising the different needs of stakeholders involved in the process. The OECD considered that the OMC represented *‘an innovative model for ensuring greater coherence in policy making and service delivery from a whole-of-Public-Service viewpoint’* (OECD, 2008, p. 241).
- 1.34 ● A further issue is the emergence of horizontal and well as vertical implementation. Inter-organisational collaboration is seen as central to modern approaches to governance but how is this measured and implemented? As Hill and Hupe argue in their book *Implementing Public Policy*, a great deal of the emphasis in writing on implementation has been in relation to problems where horizontal collaboration is very important. Some of the key issues to consider in this area include:

- The quality of collaborative relationships;
 - Attitudes to collaboration; and
 - The extent to which collaboration roles are developed (Hill & Hupe, 2002).
- 1.35 ● However, implementation is rarely straightforward. The National Implementation Research Network in the United States conducted a review of over 100 implementation studies and concluded that there is a process of organisational change involved which does not happen all at once (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). There are stages in the process of implementation (mostly evidence-based programmes) from exploration and adoption, programme installation, initial implementation through to full operation, innovation and sustainability. Each stage has its own challenges. As implementation is a process, not an event, it will not happen all at once or proceed smoothly, at least not at first (Fixsen, *et al.*, 2005, p. 15).
- 1.36 ● To that end, the NESF has adopted a process evaluation approach to policy implementation. Process evaluations '*address internal validity of an intervention by ascertaining the degree to which the program was implemented as designed or intended*' (Bouffard, 2003, p. 149; Joyner, 2008). Key questions to be asked in such an evaluation include:
- i. Is the policy reaching the target group?
 - ii. Are participants satisfied with the policy?
 - iii. Are all the materials and components of the policy of good quality?
 - iv. Are all the activities of the policy being implemented? (Hawe, Degeling, & Hall, 1990).
- 1.37 ● In its approach to this new focus of its work, the NESF is interested in exploring both the 'hard' or structural elements of implementation (such as policy objectives, targets and outcomes), but also the 'soft', organisational elements (such as organisational culture). The 'softer' issue of organisational culture has been addressed by Maureen Gaffney in her paper on the work of the NESF in the area of implementation, to both the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion, and the full National Economic and Social Forum (Gaffney, 2008). Both SOSIG and the Forum endorsed this issue as a key aspect of the NESF's new work programme. As Parsons argues, '*the trouble with so many of the managerialist and 'rationalist' models of implementation is that they derive from a notion of decision-making which fails to take account of the fact that human problems are varied in their nature and complexity*' (W. Parsons, 1996, p. 480).

- 1.38** ● Gaffney (2008) outlines how organisational culture exists at three levels. These are:
- Observable artefacts – visible and audible organisational structures, such as company records, annual reports, physical layout, dress code, how people address each other, how meetings are run, how decisions are made, communications, social events, how conflict is handled, jargon, rites and rituals, the ‘feel’ of the place;
 - Espoused values – the strategies, goals, norms, charters and philosophies of the organisation; and
 - Shared tacit assumptions – about people and their motivations, about the management process, about group membership, about how the work gets done, about how success is achieved, about the culture itself (Gaffney, 2008).
- 1.39** ● Taking this theory and evidence into account (NESF, 2007b; OECD, 2008), the Implementation Template presented in Table 1.2 is used throughout this report.

Table 1.2 Implementation Template

Strategy plans with agreed outcomes

Delivery plans and delivery on the ground (including standards, competition, co-ordination of organisations and procedures and tailored universalism)

Monitoring, evaluation and measurement of inputs, outputs and outcomes

Links between outcomes and budget

Good accountability and incentive structure

Equity in provision

Cultural Elements (including values, beliefs and tacit assumptions, leadership, attitudes and quality of collaborative relationships)

Source: NESF Secretariat

The next chapter provides the context for this work on child literacy and social inclusion.

2

CHAPTER 2 Child Literacy and Social Inclusion

Introduction

- 2.1 ● Nearly one in three children in schools serving disadvantaged communities have severe literacy difficulties (E Eivers, *et al.*, 2004) and are more likely to experience educational failure, and to leave the education system without qualifications (DES, 2005a). As Kennedy (2009, p. 2) argues, not having the skills to participate in today's knowledge society seriously compromises an individual's *'income, social mobility and ultimately their quality of life'* (Neuman & Celano, 2006). Research from the Educational Research Centre shows that these children are statistically more likely to be low attendees, with poor behaviour in school; less likely to have been at a pre-school; more likely to be living in lone parent families and with parents with lower status occupations, with medical cards and not members of a library (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2005). In addition, reading scores are related to social class and the mother's educational attainment level (DES, 2006; Smyth & McCoy, 2009). However, many other contextual factors to do with poverty and disadvantage need to be taken into account such as poor material conditions in the home.
- 2.2 ● A further contributory factor is, as identified by the research, a culture of low expectations in families and schools (P Archer & Weir, 2004, p. 4). As DEIS (2005) states *'unless children reach adequate literacy standards, they cannot properly benefit from the literacy-based education system that is at the core of a modern developed society. Research has shown that those with low levels of attainment in literacy are significantly more likely to experience educational failure and to leave the education system without qualifications'* (DES, 2005a, p. 35).

What is Literacy?

- 2.3 ● What we understand literacy to be is shifting with new approaches emerging. It does not just refer to reading and writing but encompasses a wide range of skills. Literacy is defined in the English Curriculum as '*the ability to read and write*' (Government of Ireland, 1999). However, the skills needed for oral language, reading and writing skills point to a more holistic focus on comprehension, analysis and critical evaluation. According to DEIS, literacy is '*the integration of reading and writing, listening, speaking*' (DES, 2005a, p. 34). However, there is no universal definition of literacy. A social-cultural view of literacy (Hall, 2003, p. 55) argues that learning to read and write cannot be removed from the context in which it happens and understanding this is as important as the technical skills. In this way, there are multiple communities of literacy practice (Hall 2004, p. 55). Hall argues that what society needs is someone who not only is technically skilled in a variety of print-media, but who can critically evaluate that text.
- 2.4 ● As Poulson (Poulson, 2003, p. 58) argues there is increasing recognition that literacy practices – as with all forms of language and discourse practice – are also shaped by power relations, both formal/institutional and informal, and that they are also historically situated.
- 2.5 ● A recent report from the National College of Ireland on Digital Literacy in Primary Schools (DLIPS) argues that literacy can best be understood as part of the reservoir of meaning possessed by a particular society; we may therefore regard literacy as shared understanding rather than a set of competencies in reading and writing (National College of Ireland, 2009). A further point is that whatever definition and approach to literacy is adopted raises questions for how it impacts on pupils from disadvantaged communities.
- 2.6 ● Definitions of digital literacy focus on the use of digital tools and media as much as on the integration, evaluation, analysis and synthesis of knowledge (National College of Ireland, 2009, p. 19). Digital literacy can be more broadly defined as including learning through a range of media where the ability to read, speak and write is complemented, enhanced and sometimes replaced by photographic and video images, graphics and sound (Brindley, 2000). In the UK, a proposed new English curriculum at primary level includes a focus on new media and web-based skills as well as traditional print media (Curtis, 2009). The Digital Literacy in Primary Schools project provides a good overview of some of these issues (National College of Ireland, 2009).
- 2.7 ● In recent years, the focus on literacy is increasingly on early years. However it is not restricted to this as *emergent literacy*, considered here, denotes a developmental continuum along which children's literacy is acquired from birth to adulthood (Casper, 2003).

- 2.8 ● Another growing focus is on competence in oral language. Being familiar with, and able to use, literate-style oral language has been shown to be a developmental precursor to school-based literacy learning; as well as a strong predictor of early literacy development (D. K. Dickinson & Sprague, 2002; Pellegrini & Galda, 1988).
- 2.9 ● Pedagogical practice is also changing. Schools are increasingly being shaped as learning organisations '*where employees excel at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge. Three building blocks of such institutions are: (i) a supportive learning environment; (ii) concrete learning processes and practices; and (iii) leadership behaviour that reinforces learning*' (Garvin, Edmonson, & Gino, 2008, p. 110).
- 2.10 ● DEIS and previous policies on educational disadvantage have been based on principles of social inclusion and equality. However, it is important that literacy is also considered within a rights-based approach. In December 2001, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution designating 2003-2012 International Literacy Decade. As Kofi Annan said at the time, '*literacy unlocks the door to learning throughout life, is essential to development and health, and opens the way for democratic participation and active citizenship*'.¹⁰

Literacy Levels

- 2.11 ● On the advice of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), all primary pupils are now conducting standardised tests in literacy and numeracy at the end of first class or at the beginning of second class, and at the end of fourth class or at the beginning of fifth class. However, this data is for school planning only and is not publicly available.
- 2.12 ● Assessment of reading has, however been conducted at national level since 1972, and on five further occasions in 1980, 1988, 1993, 1998 and 2004. The National Assessment of English Reading (NAER) is a periodic assessment of the reading literacy of Irish primary pupils, monitoring the reading levels of 10 and 11 year olds. The most recent of these was the 2004 (NAER) conducted by the ERC on behalf of the Department (Government of Ireland, 2006a, p. 51). Fieldwork in schools has been completed for NAER 2009 and the data is being analysed at present.
- 2.13 ● The 2004 study showed that:
- Pupils covered by the medical card, or whose parents have few or no educational qualifications, tend to have low test scores;
 - Pupils living in a lone-parent household, or a household where no parent is employed, have significantly lower average test scores than their classmates;

¹⁰ From a speech by Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations.

- Pupils who can access books and resources such as an encyclopedia, a dictionary, or a computer in their home have higher achievement scores than pupils who cannot;
 - Pupils who were regularly read to before starting school (or later on, read to someone at home) have higher average test scores than their classmates (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2005).
- 2.14 ● The appropriateness of current types of assessment for literacy among children in disadvantaged schools has been the subject of debate. Chapter 7 examines this issue in further detail.
- 2.15 ● More generally, Eivers *et al* in their report on PISA 2006, detail how children (15 year olds) in Ireland ranked fifth in reading literacy among 29 countries (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2008). Scientific literacy and mathematical literacy ranked ninth and fifteenth respectively.
- 2.16 ● Girls perform substantially better in reading literacy, on average, than boys in every country that participated in PISA 2000 and 2003. The OECD average difference in 2003 was 34 points, with 29 points difference in Ireland, unchanged since 2000 (DES, 2007). As a report on gender in Irish education argues, the differences are striking at both ends of the reading proficiency spectrum, with more than a third of boys, at the lower end, having a reading proficiency of level 2 or below as compared with a fifth of girls (p. 63).

Children in Disadvantaged Communities

- 2.17 ● In recent years, a number of valuable reports have outlined the context, scale and issues surrounding educational disadvantage (P Archer & Weir, 2004; Downes & Gilligan, 2007; Kelleghan, Weir, O'Huallachain, & Morgan, 1995; Smyth & McCoy, 2009). A full literature review is beyond the scope of this report, but some key findings are examined below.
- 2.18 ● Kennedy (2009) argues, '*research, nationally and internationally, indicates that the reading achievement gap between children in disadvantaged and advantaged schools exists before school starts and in general remains in place throughout a child's schooling. Even more disturbing in the Irish context, is the research that indicates that children's literacy achievement declines as they progress through the primary classes particularly in the most disadvantaged schools*' (DES, 2005b, p. 27; Kennedy, 2009; Weir, 2003).
- 2.19 ● In PISA 2006, about 20% of 15 year olds in designated schools achieved at or below Level 1 on the reading proficiency scales (Cosgrove, Shiel, Sofroniou, Zastrutski, & Shortt, 2005). In another study, the Department's Inspectorate of Education and Science, in a review of a sample of disadvantaged schools, *Literacy and Numeracy in Disadvantaged Schools: Challenges for Teachers and Learners* (April, 2005), found that 43% of pupils in the schools surveyed had literacy levels that fell into the bottom 20% of pupils nationally (Government of Ireland, 2006a).

- 2.20 ● As the Submission to the Project Team from Barnardos argues, *‘both the Department of Education and Science and OECD reports highlight that while the majority of pupils do well in Irish schools, many are left behind. Social class remains the principal determinant of educational outcomes such as duration of schooling, educational performance and access to grinds.’* (Submission made by Barnardos)
- 2.21 ● Another influential document was the ERC report, *Reading Literacy in Disadvantaged Primary Schools* (E Eivers, *et al.*, 2004). This is based on an in-depth survey of 94 schools, found that those with low levels of attainment in literacy are significantly more likely to experience educational failure and to leave the education system without qualifications. They also found that the average reading achievement was significantly lower in disadvantaged schools than in a representative national sample (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2005; E Eivers, *et al.*, 2004). The report showed that the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties in schools serving disadvantaged communities averages in the region of 27-30% (nearly three times the national average), with the percentage for some schools being significantly higher. They concluded that 27% had severe reading difficulties, (defined as scoring at or below the tenth percentile on a nationally normed test) as compared with 10% nationally¹¹. They also found that in junior classes, more boys than girls had serious reading difficulties. This group almost all spoke English as a first language and were Irish born.
- 2.22 ● Children from the Traveller community experience low levels of literacy to a much greater degree than the general population (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2005). In the above study by Eivers *et al.*, 2004, the percentage Traveller sample included had average scores far lower than the rest of the sample. A further report from the DES noted that the scale of low achievement in literacy and numeracy among pupils at primary level gives cause for concern (DES, 2005d).
- 2.23 ● The association between poor social background and poor reading performance is strong, but there is compelling evidence that *‘poor performance does not automatically follow from low socio-economic status’* (Clark & Akerman 2006, p.1). (From a Submission from the National Library Council)

¹¹ The ERC point out in a Submission made to the Project Team, that there is large variation in reading test performance.

- 2.24 ● ERC research showed, in terms of the classroom and teachers, that poor pupil achievement was associated with fewer books in the classroom, fewer years teaching experience and limited English instruction time in the classroom. This included questions on school climate/culture and poorer test scores were associated with lower teacher satisfaction with school climate, meaning that greater teacher satisfaction with climate was associated with slightly higher pupil achievement scores (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2004). Other associated factors were high teacher turnover, low attendance at parent-teacher meetings among others. They concluded that scores on the reading test were lowest in schools that were very socio-economically deprived. This included poor attendance rates, large percentages of pupils in need of additional support, a mainly male enrolment, poor attendance at parent-teacher meetings, a high rate of teacher turnover and a large-proportion of unqualified staff (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2005).
- 2.25 ● Research has also indicated that teachers in disadvantaged schools often have low expectations for their pupils (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2004). They recommend that raising teacher expectations of pupils' achievement should be part of any strategy. As (Kennedy, 2009) and (P Archer & Weir, 2004) argue, low teacher expectations can contribute to poor achievement. According to (P Archer & Weir, 2004, p. 30) *'deliberate attempts to raise expectations could be important in the disadvantaged context.'*
- 2.26 ● However, an OECD study showed that reading performance is *'weakly linked to students' socio-economic background'*, and that *'by contrast access to books at home is strongly associated with profiles of reading'* (2002, p.106), stating that *'students who have access to a larger number of books at home are more diversified in their reading and are more interested in reading other material, such as books (fiction and non-fiction) or comics.'* (From a Submission made to the Project Team from the National Library Council)
- 2.27 ● Research suggests that children's early understanding of literacy is learnt through their family and community, and that families' social and cultural practices shape the types of literacy children experience (D. Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

Wider Context of Educational Disadvantage

- 2.28 ● Educational disadvantage is a multidimensional problem and not simply an education-related issue. The Report of the Educational Disadvantage Committee presents two definitions, one from the 1998 Education Act which defines educational disadvantage as *'the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevents students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools.'* A more general definition sees educational disadvantage as *'a situation whereby individuals in society derive less benefit from the education system than their peers (Combat Poverty Agency, 2003).'* (Educational Disadvantage Committee, 2005, p. 1; Government of Ireland, 1998). It concludes that issues that contribute to disadvantage – for example poverty, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, violence, inadequate and sub-standard housing – must be tackled in parallel and in an integrated way.

2.29 ● Some other aspects of the problem that have been mentioned, include:

- The welfare needs of children not being met (diet, sleep, etc.);
- High participation costs of education (clothes, books, meals, etc.);
- Lack of family/community tradition in education;
- Lack of validation of the cultural backgrounds and learning styles of all learners across school curricula;
- Schools not fully addressing the needs of minority groups (e.g. Travellers, people with disabilities, etc.); and
- Barriers facing adults seeking to return to education (transport, childcare, etc.) (Combat Poverty Agency, 2003; Kelleghan, Weir, O'Huallachain, & Morgan, 1995).

2.30 ● Another related issue is school attendance. Not all children attend school regularly. 11% of primary-school students are absent for 20 days or more during the school year (NEWB, 2009). Attendance is closely related to other aspects of disadvantage. Schools with a high concentration of disadvantaged students experience poorer outcomes in relation to attendance, achievement and early school leaving (Smyth & McCoy, 2009). Currently, parents are required to ensure that their children from the age of 6 to the age of 16 attend a recognised school or receive a certain minimum education. There is no such requirement for children under the age of 6—one of the key time periods when the benefits of literacy educational investment are enormous.

2.31 ● Any focus on child literacy and social inclusion has, therefore, to be placed in the context of existing national strategies and frameworks on social inclusion such as the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*, *NAPinclusion* and the social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016* (Government of Ireland, 2006b, 2007a). Chapter 3 will outline their role in relation to literacy policy, but they are also mentioned here as a reminder of the broader social inclusion context.

Costs of Poor Literacy

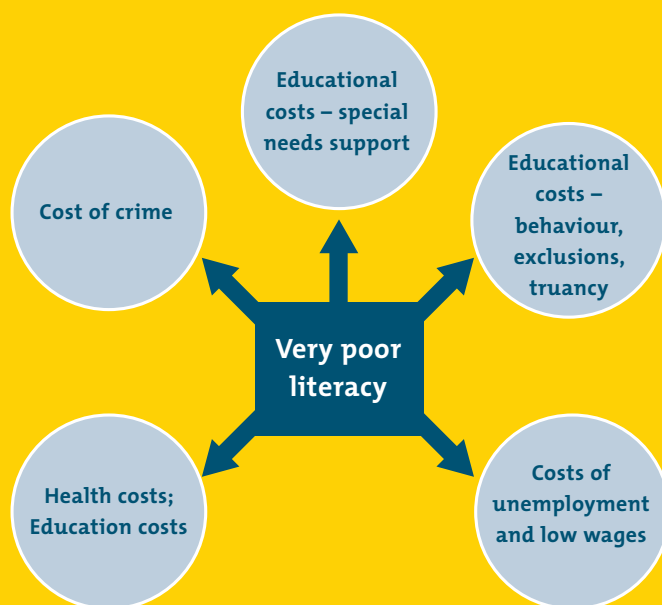
2.32 ● Literacy is central to economic growth and prosperity. Ireland and the rest of Europe are moving towards a knowledge-based economy which will depend more and more on the availability of educated, literate adults in the workforce. This country has a relatively poor performance in adult literacy (National Competitiveness Council, 2009)¹². A country that improves its mean literacy score by 1% relative to other countries will enhance its relative per capita GDP by 1.5% in the long run (Coulombe, Tremblay, & Marchand, 2004).

2.33 ● Prison studies reveal the strong links between anti-social behaviour and educational disadvantage. An Irish study found that over 50% of 300 prisoners scored at pre-level or level 1 literacy scores as compared to less than 25% of the general population (M. Morgan & Kett, 2003).

¹² There is some debate about the validity of comparing adult literacy results internationally for methodological reasons.

- 2.34 ● A report by KPMG Foundation in 2006 detailed the UK costs arising from failure to learn to read in the primary school years for an adult over the life-course to age 37 as between £1.73 BN to £2.05 BN every year (€2.37 BN). Figure 2.1 presents these general costs across society for literacy, but also this could be applied to social and economic disadvantage more broadly. They estimate that through an intervention, such as Reading Recovery, the total costs saved would be approximately £1,623,374,471 (€1,880,408,582), with £800 million for employment-related savings alone (KPMG Foundation, 2006). The return on investment for every pound spent is estimated to be between £14.81 (€17.15) and £17.56 (€20.34). However as Chapter 8 notes, such interventions require sustained effort to maintain and increase gains.

Figure 2.1 Long Term Costs of Literacy Difficulties



Source: *The Long Term Costs of Literacy Difficulties* (KPMG Foundation, 2006, p. 3)

- 2.35 ● Figure 2.2 presents some of the differences in profile, between those with poor literacy skills and those with improved literacy skills (The National Literacy Trust, 2008).

Figure 2.2 The Impact of Literacy Across the Life-Span

Profile of a person with poor literacy	Profile of a person with improved literacy
More likely to live in a non-working households. 22% of men and 30% of women with literacy below entry level 2 live in nonworking households.	Becomes less likely to be on state benefits. Men who improve their literacy rates see their likelihood of being on state benefits reduced from 19% to 6%.
Less likely to have children. Individuals with low levels of literacy are more likely to lead solitary lives without any children.	Becomes more likely to own their own home. A modest rise in literacy level sees the likelihood of a man owning their own house rise from 40% to 78%.
More likely to live in overcrowded housing. Individuals with low literacy levels are more likely to live in overcrowded housing with reduced access to technology.	Becomes more likely to use a PC at work. Increased literacy rates improve the chances of using a PC at work from 48% to 65%.
Less likely to vote. Men and women with the poorest literacy or numeracy skills were the least likely to have voted in the 1987 and 1997 general elections.	Becomes more involved in democratic processes. 16% of men who improved their literacy between the ages of 21 and 34 had contact with government, compared with 0% of those whose literacy remained poor.

Source: The National Literacy Trust (2008) *Literacy Changes Lives: An Advocacy Resource*

- 2.36** ● Poor literacy levels in adults in Scotland were found to be associated with poor physical and mental well-being and comparatively, were more likely to feel they never get what they want out of life. Furthermore, they were more likely to be in labour intensive, low-skilled jobs, and to be living in rented, overcrowded housing (S. Parsons & Bynner, 2008) cited in (NALA, 2009a).
- 2.37** ● The immediate impacts of literacy and learning are knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes, but they in turn lead to outcomes that determine human well-being in a knowledge-based society:
- Psychological well-being: self-respect, happiness, identity, decision-making;
 - Economic well-being: financial support, productivity, wealth;
 - Physical well-being: health, nutrition, safety; and
 - Social well-being: relations, friendships, empathy, civic involvement, democratic empowerment (Hartley & Horne, 2004; Maxwell & Teplova, 2007).

- 2.38 ● Children who are struggling with literacy will be more likely to be among those who leave school early. The financial and societal costs of this have been recently well argued by the ESRC (Smyth & McCoy, 2009).
- 2.39 ● Investing in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) has consistently been shown to reap both economic and social benefits in the longer term. A NESF cost-benefit analysis in 2005 showed that for every €1 invested in ECCE in Ireland, a return of up to €7.10 could be expected (NESF, 2005). International research demonstrates that early intervention programmes are effective in reducing criminal activity, promoting social skills, and integrating disadvantaged children into mainstream society. Where educational attainment is traditionally low, and unemployment and poverty levels are high, investment in ECCE can be the key to changing the life chances of a generation (Children's Rights Alliance, 2009, p. 11).

ECCE and Oral Language

- 2.40 ● The foundations for literacy are laid during the early years. As both the NESF and a recent Barnados report have argued, the benefits of high quality preschool education are particularly evident for disadvantaged and minority groups and that they are the most cost-effective way of reducing educational inequality (Barnados, 2009; NESF, 2005). The recent announcement of the one-year free universal pre-school provision for 3-4 year olds is welcomed by the Project Team. The quality of this provision is critical as noted by Professor Paul Connolly, who argues that attendance at preschool is especially beneficial for children from deprived backgrounds and has lasting positive effects. However, poor quality preschool provision is no better than having nothing at all (Connolly, 2009).
- 2.41 ● There is a strong relationship between oral language knowledge and the successful acquisition of literacy skills. Developing pre-requisite oral language skills from the earliest years is of critical importance in disadvantaged contexts. Dickinson *et al* present '*mounting evidence of the key role of oral language in supporting reading*' (D. Dickinson, McCabe, Anastasopoulos, Peisner-Feinberg, & Poe, 2003, p. 466). The oral language skills of kindergarten children have been found to be strong predictors of children's third grade reading comprehension (Sénéchal, Ouellette, & Rodney, 2005), and the relationships between oral language ability and reading were seen to continue to be strong into the high school years (Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991; Wood, Hill, Meyer, & Flowers, 2005).

Special Education Needs

- 2.42 ● The National Council for Special Education's 2006 *Implementation Report: Plan for the Phased Implementation of the EPSEN Act 2004* reported that there were 190,303 children (18% of all children) with SEN in Ireland (National Council for Special Education, 2006). The NCSE reached this broad figure by combining the numbers of children with physical and sensory disabilities, intellectual and general learning disabilities, specific learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disabilities and mental health difficulties. This figure is higher than other published reports due to different forms of assessment. The Department of Education and Science's 2005 evaluation of literacy and numeracy in disadvantaged schools involved a study of 12 schools which were designated as serving areas of disadvantage. This found that approximately 10% of the students were assessed as having special educational needs and were receiving the supports of a resource teacher (DES, 2005b). (From a Submission from the Rehab Group)

Adult Literacy

- 2.43 ● No in-depth research into adult literacy levels has taken place in Ireland since 1995. Then, the Educational Research Centre, on behalf of the Department of Education and Science, carried out the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and found 25% of Irish adults are at the lowest level of literacy, an incidence which is 50% higher than the average of other advanced countries (Government of Ireland, 1997). Ireland also stands out as a country with one of the greatest literacy problems among 16 - 25 year olds (Joint Committee on Education and Science, 1998). There are also particular problems with transition from primary to secondary school in Ireland. In addition, among 14 year olds, three times as many boys as girls have serious literacy problems. IALS also showed that another 30% of Irish adults were at Level 2, meaning they could only cope with very simple material (Government of Ireland, 1997; NALA, 2007).
- 2.44 ● For adults, raising literacy levels has a dramatic impact on earning potential. Denny *et al* (2003) show that for Ireland, an improvement by one standard deviation in International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) scores produces a 17% increase in earnings (Denny, Harmon, & O'Sullivan, 2003). A recent report by NALA shows that expenditure on literacy training generates high economic returns (NALA, 2009a).

Parental Involvement¹³

- 2.45 ● Parental involvement is central to any successful literacy strategy, and research indicates the most effective way of doing this. For example, handbooks explaining literacy development in parent-friendly language and strategies for parents to use at home are valuable (Marsh, 2006).

¹³ Chapter 8 outlines some examples of family literacy projects.

- 2.46 ● Parental involvement greatly enhances the benefits of preschool intervention. There is some evidence that efforts to promote learning at home (by helping parents to acquire new skills and confidence in their own teaching roles) can be particularly effective (Sénéchal, 2008).
- 2.47 ● It is *'now widely accepted that children whose parents are actively involved in their development are more likely to succeed in school'* (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003, p. 168). The Irish White Paper on Education, *Charting our Education Future* affirmed the crucial role of parents in forming the child's learning environment (Government of Ireland, 1995) and parents are viewed as partners in the Education Act (1998). Research also suggests that parental involvement in a child's learning has more of an impact on a child's educational outcomes than any other demographic measure, including social class, level of parental education or income (Feinstein & Symons, 1999).
- 2.48 ● Additional research suggests that although fathers are involved in supporting literacy work with their children, they spend less time than women (A. Morgan, Nutbrown, & Hannon, 2009). This time is reduced further when fathers are on lower incomes.
- 2.49 ● In their Submission to the Project Team, Barnardos presented three key ways to improve child literacy:
- Increasing and improving parental involvement in their children's learning;
 - Access to early childhood education and care, which improves a child's ability to adapt and be ready for school while enhancing their educational potential; and
 - Access to out of school services.
- 2.50 ● They argued that it is important to adopt a 'whole-child' approach which means taking account of all the influences that affect a child's life in and out of school. This approach underpins this report as outlined in Chapter 1.
- 2.51 ● While the complex inter-generational context of educational disadvantage and social exclusion must underpin any response to improving literacy and social inclusion, we now know that having high expectations in literacy, alongside targeted, supportive and sustained policy programmes in place, have proven to be effective elsewhere, for example in Scotland and Finland. Research in Scotland demonstrated a very successful multi-component initiative in West Dunbartonshire which practically eradicated poor literacy levels. It included work on phonics, expectations and support for children who were failing (MacKay, 2006)¹⁴.

¹⁴ See <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Policy/scotinitiatives.html> for further details.

Teaching of Literacy

- 2.52 ● National and international research shows that there is no single literacy method or approach that works for all. Kennedy makes the point, (2009, p. 36), citing the International Reading Association, that *'policy makers need to acknowledge that there is no quick fix and no one best way or no best programme to teach literacy effectively to all children (International Reading Association, 2000).'* In their review of educational disadvantage policy, (P. Archer & Weir, 2004) note the need for future initiatives to include attention to: (i) helping teachers and families raise expectations for children in relation to literacy achievement; (ii) enhancing professional development for teachers; (iii) supporting teachers in disadvantaged schools in maximising opportunities offered by smaller class sizes; and (iv) exploring ways of helping parents support learning (Kennedy, 2009).
- 2.53 ● There are elements of strategies which are effective (See Figure 2.3 for an illustration of the strategies outlined in Kennedy, 2009, presented in no particular order). But these need to be placed in the context of also tackling educational disadvantage and are not sufficient in themselves.

Figure 2.3 Evidence-based Strategies to Improve Literacy



Source: Adapted from Kennedy (2009) *Improving Literacy in a Disadvantage School: A Research-Based Approach*.

- 2.54 ● As (Kennedy, 2009, p. 2) notes, in Ireland, we have not seen the polarisation of views on how best to teach literacy that has occurred in other countries such as the UK and the US. The analysis of international good practice showed that there is no single overall model or approach that has been shown to be effective for all, but there are elements across many countries which have shown positive results in raising literacy levels (Chapter 7 explores these issues further).
- 2.55 ● There is some consensus on the challenges of teaching of literacy in disadvantaged schools. The report, *Literacy and Numeracy in Disadvantaged Schools: Challenges for Teachers and Learners* (DES, 2005b) recommends that:
- Everyone involved in the work of designated disadvantaged schools must recognise that the significant level of low achievement in classrooms means that teaching and learning approaches must be highly focused on the specific needs of individual children;
 - Provision in the schools must be characterised by high expectations for all children and an emphasis on improving standards;
 - Learning contexts involved require a very high level of teaching expertise; and
 - A more systematic, school-based planning process is required to ensure continuity and progression in children's learning.
- 2.56 ● One point which Kennedy emphasises is the role of professional development in supporting literacy practice. She argues that '*the emphasis must be on helping teachers develop an in-depth knowledge of the reading process, knowledge of a variety of methodologies, knowledge of a variety of assessment tools and the ability to know when and how to use them*' (Kennedy, 2009, p. 21).

Conclusions

- 2.57 ● Despite various policy initiatives over the last three decades, and some good practice, there has been little improvement in literacy levels in disadvantaged schools. This chapter has set out the context of child literacy and social inclusion in Ireland, drawing from existing research. The Project Team is conscious of the multivariate nature of educational disadvantage and how narrowing the focus to child literacy necessarily means having to mention only in passing, some of the other influential factors. This chapter has articulated the importance of literacy across the life-span, and the costs to individuals and society if current levels among disadvantaged schools persist. There are economic and social costs in not dealing more effectively with this which we can ill-afford. This report is timely, reflecting the changing meaning of literacy as our understanding broadens and deepens. New technologies and media, and a growing awareness of the social context of literacy are changing literacy practices.

- 2.58 ● There is broad consensus that no single initiative, programme or measure will be the solution to this problem. Rather, it will require a comprehensive, flexible and integrated approach. Chapter 3 examines the policy context for child literacy in schools and in the wider community.

3

Introduction

- 3.1 ● The Department of Education and Science has rolled out an Action Plan for Educational Inclusion – *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* (DEIS) – which was designed to provide a more coherent and targeted approach to the problem (and other aspects of educational disadvantage) as outlined by the previous NAPS (DES, 2005a; Government of Ireland, 2003). This Action Plan includes literacy initiatives. However, this policy only covers schools which are designated as disadvantaged, 673 primary schools, approximately 22% of the total. In this sense, there is no literacy policy for all primary schools, other than what is outlined in the English Primary Curriculum.
- 3.2 ● The DEIS Action Plan includes for the first time, action plans, targets and strategies on literacy, and other areas including attendance and parental engagement. A key element of DEIS is its focus on action plans for schools, and its emphasis on evaluation. DEIS has many of the agreed elements for successfully implementable policies, in that it comes with targets, delivery mechanisms and assessment/evaluation. However, with the evaluation not expected until 2010, there is only anecdotal evidence at best on how successful it has been implemented in the public domain. The Educational Research Centre collected baseline literacy data in 2007 but this is not yet publicly available. Recently, there has been some downscaling of the original plan, with the early childhood and care element no longer being rolled out and recent cutbacks to education may have further implications (Barnados, 2009). In recent months, the Government has announced one-year free universal pre-school provision for 3-4 year olds.
- 3.3 ● This chapter will firstly set out the main elements of DEIS, followed by a brief overview of educational disadvantage policies prior to DEIS, an overview of broader policies which relate to literacy and finally, outlines some of the critical issues in the current policy debate. It will further refer to some international policies that might be of value to consider in the Irish context.

Child Literacy Policy

- 3.4 ● In this report, policy is used broadly to refer to Government strategies, frameworks, legislation and programmes.
- 3.5 ● Ireland does not have a coherent and comprehensive national policy on literacy. However, comprehensive statements about literacy have been included in the *English Curriculum for Primary Schools (1999)* and *in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)*. The White Paper in 1995, *Charting our Education Future* acknowledges that ‘*a significant minority of students do not acquire satisfactory levels of literacy or numeracy while at primary school. This means that these students cannot access or benefit from the primary curriculum, are most likely to drop out of school and are most likely to become long-term unemployed.*’ It goes on to state that ‘*the revised curriculum will place particular emphasis on overcoming this problem. The objective will be to ensure that, having regard to the assessment of their intrinsic abilities, there are no students with serious literacy and numeracy problems in early primary education within the next five years*’ (Government of Ireland, 1995, p. 21). However, as yet, despite this aspiration, there is no evidence to suggest this problem is lessening from the existing evaluation and assessment studies.

DEIS Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools: An Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2005-2010)

- 3.6 ● The DEIS Action Plan (2005-2010) is based on the phased delivery of training, support, evaluation and funding to schools that have been designated as disadvantaged. DEIS was designed as a five- year action plan to address educational disadvantage in both primary and secondary schools. The focus in this report is on primary level only.
- 3.7 ● DEIS first identified disadvantage levels. While this had been done before in *Breaking the Cycle*, this time it was carried out using a standardised approach by the Educational Research Centre. They used the following criteria for primary schools: unemployment status, lone parenthood, Travellers, large families, free book grants and local authority housing (P. Archer, no date). These were found to be statistically correlated with reading scores and were combined into an overall scale of disadvantage. So while educational measures were not directly part of the designation of schools, they were indirectly related. In other words, they identified the socio-economic variables that collectively best predicted achievement, and these variables were then used to identify schools for participation in the School Support Programme (Dáil Éireann, 2007). It should be noted that the School Support Programme is the official term used to cover the delivery of supports under DEIS to Band 1 and Band 2 schools.¹⁵

¹⁵ Schools designated as disadvantaged under DEIS are classified as Band 1 (most disadvantaged), Band 2 (highly disadvantaged) and the remainder just as disadvantaged.

- 3.8 ● Figure 3.1 presents the different criteria over the years used to designate schools as disadvantaged and the relative weight attached to them, from the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on educational disadvantage (Government of Ireland, 2006a). It illustrates how variable this process can be.

Figure 3.1 Criteria used to Identify Disadvantage¹⁶

Criteria	DAS HSCL 1990	BTC Urban 1996	BTC Rural 1996	GCEB Urban 2000	GCEB Rural 2000	DEIS Urban & Rural 2005
Parents Unemployed	40%	17%	22%	25%	28%	16.7%
Accommodation	30%	17%	–	25%	–	16.7%
Medical card	20%	25%	22%	25%	29%	–
Lone parent household	–	8%	12%	12.5%	–	16.7%
Assistance due to Limited means from farm income	–	–	22%	–	29%	–
Free books grant	–	–	–	12.5%	14%	16.7%
Inspector assessment	10%	–	–	–	–	–
Parental education	–	17%	22%	–	–	–
School plan	–	16%	–	–	–	–
Travellers	–	–	–	–	–	16.7%
Large Families (5 or more children)	–	–	–	–	–	16.7%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total points available	1,000	1,200	900	800	700	600

Source: Government of Ireland, 2006a) *Educational Disadvantage Initiatives in the Primary Sector*

- 3.9 ● The aim of DEIS is 'to ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are prioritised and effectively addressed (DES, 2005a, p. 9).' An interesting point to note is that although DEIS is aimed at educational disadvantage as defined by the Education Act 1998, the programmes and supports are aimed at 'concentrated' levels of disadvantage, thereby excluding some disadvantaged groups.

¹⁶ DAS – A scheme to tackle disadvantage in designated areas (DAS); HSCL-Home School Community Liaison; GCEB-Giving Children an Even Break; SCP- The School Completion Programme; BTC-Breaking the Cycle.

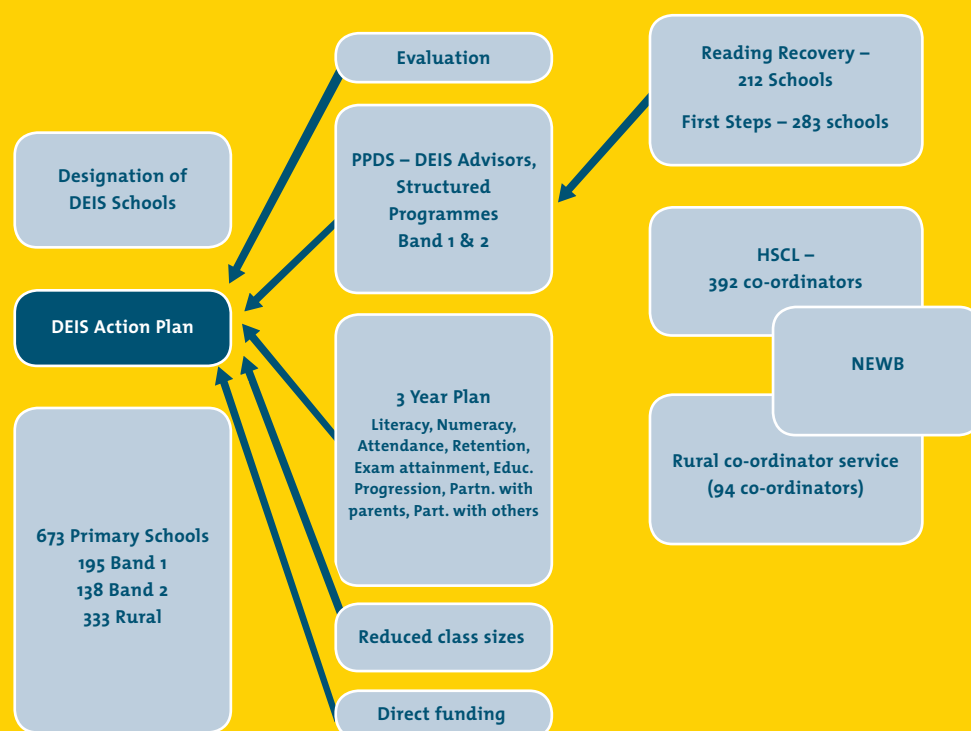
- 3.10** ● At the start of DEIS, schools were asked to develop a three-year action Plan for eight core areas including literacy and numeracy, attendance, parental engagement. DEIS established an integrated School Support Programme whose aim is to *‘ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are prioritised and effectively addressed’* (DES, 2005a). This brought together, a number of previous interventions in schools including the *Home School Community Liaison Scheme*, the *School Completion Programme*, the *Early Start Pre-School Scheme* and *Giving Children an Even Break: Breaking the Cycle*. Other measures were also rolled out, some of which had been part of previous initiatives (such as part of the Rutland Street project in the 1960s¹⁷). These included:
- Early intervention;
 - Preferential teacher pupil ratio;
 - Parental involvement;
 - Literacy and numeracy advisors;
 - Training of teachers in intensive literacy and numeracy programmes; and
 - Action Plans focusing on attendance, progression and retention, as well as literacy and numeracy.
- 3.11** ● The main delivery mechanism for DEIS in relation to literacy is through the Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) which subsumed the earlier Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) and the School Development Planning Support (SDPS) services. The PPDS includes 20 DEIS Advisors (formerly Cuiditheoiri) who train teachers in literacy programmes: First Steps Reading and Writing.¹⁸
- 3.12** ● Essentially, DEIS schools are given supplementary funds. These vary depending on whether the school has been categorised as Band 1 (195) (most disadvantaged) or Band 2 (138) (disadvantaged) and Rural (333). Band 2 schools get all the same programmes in theory with the only main difference that they do not qualify for lower pupil-teacher ratio. Band 1 and 2 schools are also offered support from the Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) through 20 DEIS Advisors who offer planning advice, literacy training and staff development (offering training first to Band 1 schools). In particular the PPDS deliver training for First Steps. These programmes will be discussed further in Chapter 7. Reading Recovery is delivered from authorised training sites around the country administered by the Monaghan Education Centre. This training is given to existing teachers in each school and is offered on a phased basis. To date, this has been provided to 197 schools, increasing to 212 by the end of the year. Currently 328 tutors that have received training in First Steps Writing, 71 tutors in First Steps Reading and 21 in First Steps Speaking and Listening.

¹⁷ Information supplied in a Submission made by the Educational Research Centre.

¹⁸ The change of terminology and restructuring within DEIS has led to some confusion on the ground. For example, DEIS Advisors are known in some places still as Cuiditheoiri, and in other places as DEIS coordinators.

- 3.13 ● The most disadvantaged rural schools received different supports to urban schools with access to a co-ordinator service if part of a cluster of schools or direct funding, if not. 496 rural schools currently have access to the services of 94 rural coordinators, serving clusters of rural primary schools (DES, 2009b). The DEIS Advisors and the PPDS primarily see their role as supporting professional development of teachers, then bringing in what they consider to be an effective way of developing literacy skills, not in addition to the curriculum, but as part of it.
- 3.14 ● For 2008/2009 school years, grants of €10.5 million were paid to Band 1 and 2 primary schools with another 1,900 primary schools receiving almost €3.3 million of grants to assist them with their respective levels of disadvantage (DES, 2009a). Budget 2009 made a number of educational cutbacks, not directly affecting DEIS schools, but the Department notes that DEIS schools may be affected by the substitution measures and the reduction in English language supports (Children's Rights Alliance, 2009; DES, 2009a). Figure 3.2 outlines the main elements of DEIS that apply to primary schools¹⁹.

Figure 3.2 Elements of DEIS that apply to Primary Level



Source: NESF Secretariat

¹⁹ This is based on figures available in June 2009.

- 3.15 ● Not all of DEIS is concerned with literacy at primary level. Some of DEIS covers numeracy, other aspects of educational disadvantage and also focuses on secondary level. Other initiatives indirectly impact on literacy such as the work of the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) service which pre-existed DEIS and of which there are 392 coordinators. This scheme was initiated in 1990 as a pilot project in 55 primary schools that were already part of the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, the educational disadvantage policy at the time. HSCL comprises a local full-time co-ordinator for one or several schools to work with parents and encourage them into the school. There are regional and national co-ordinators to support this work on the ground. This scheme has been evaluated several times by the Educational Research Centre (P. Archer & Shortt, 2003; Ryan, 1999) and by the National Co-ordinator of the scheme (Conaty, 2002). Ryan (1999) concluded that *'major effects on pupil achievement of a project such as the HSCL scheme would be likely to be long term rather than short term'* (Ryan, 1999, p. 31). Archer and Shortt also reported that large majorities of co-ordinators and principals believe that the scheme has had a positive impact on parents, schools, the community and pupils. A recent qualitative study of parents' views reported many positive features of having a HSCL co-ordinator in the school (Mulkerrins, 2007).
- 3.16 ● The School Completion Programme operates in 124 areas nationally and mostly concerns secondary schools but includes some funds to support primary school activities. Pupils at age 8 are identified and then targeted through their school years for supports. It was introduced prior to DEIS, in 2002, designed to combat early school leaving (Government of Ireland, 2006a). Now part of DEIS, this involves each cluster of disadvantaged schools establishing a committee of representatives of schools and other relevant agencies who then prepare and submit a costed plan for in-school, after-school, out-of-school and holiday supports for children at risk. It represents an integrated approach to tackling early school leaving and collaboration between school and local agencies. The EU Court of Auditors evaluated the programme in 2006 highlighted the project implementers' high level of interest, commitment and dedication to the programme. This was one of the most important factors for its success (Court of Auditors, 2006).
- 3.17 ● The Social Inclusion Unit of the Department is responsible for policy, coordination of strategy and the administration of programmes relating to educational disadvantage at primary level (Government of Ireland, 2006a). This strategy falls under one of the Department's high level goals to *'Support and improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner in our schools' under the Objective, to 'Provide targeted resources to promote social inclusion in our schools'* (DES, Forthcoming-b). According to Minister Haughey of the Department of Education and Science, *'the plan [DEIS] represents a shift in emphasis away from individual initiatives, each addressing a particular aspect of the problem, with the new plan adopting a multi-faceted and more integrated approach and places renewed emphasis on the involvement of parents and families in children's education'* (Dáil Éireann, July 3 2008).

- 3.18 ● Both the integrated feature and the targeting of schools in DEIS represented a recent departure for education policy. As the ESRI report argues, this followed *'a good deal of criticism of existing provision had centred on the fragmented nature of provision and the varied criteria used for targeting schools'* (Smyth & McCoy, 2009, p. 15).
- 3.19 ● The DEIS Action Plan includes a range of programmes and supports, which are being rolled out on a phased-basis across selected DEIS schools. In this way, the full delivery of DEIS programmes has not reached all disadvantaged schools. By the end of the 2010, not every DEIS school will have received the same programmes, funding or supports. It is anticipated that by the end of the period, all Band 1 and Band 2 schools, the urban schools will have had access to all that DEIS currently offers, noting that DEIS as originally devised would have included an early years programme which has been cut back. The rural DEIS schools have been allocated funds and some HSCL support, but they have not been included in the other programmes as provided by the PPDS.

Evaluation

- 3.20 ● The Educational Research Centre is conducting a phased evaluation of DEIS²⁰. This evaluation began with collecting baseline achievement data from about 17,000 pupils in a sample of almost 500 participating schools in 2007, and this will be repeated in 2010. In addition, the PPDS service is being evaluated. The evaluation also contains surveys of pupils and staff in secondary schools etc. Aspects of the evaluation include:
- A survey of all SSP primary schools about the implementation of DEIS with a particular focus on school planning (May/June 2008);
 - A survey of post-primary students (1st and 3rd year) about their attitudes to education, leisure, future plans (Feb to May 2008);
 - A longitudinal study of children with early reading difficulties (DES, 2009b); and
 - The ERC report that some data that will be relevant to assessing the effectiveness of Reading Recovering will be yielded by the evaluation of DEIS (From a Submission made by the Educational Research Centre).

²⁰ The evaluation team met with the NESF Secretariat several times and provided information to the Project Team.

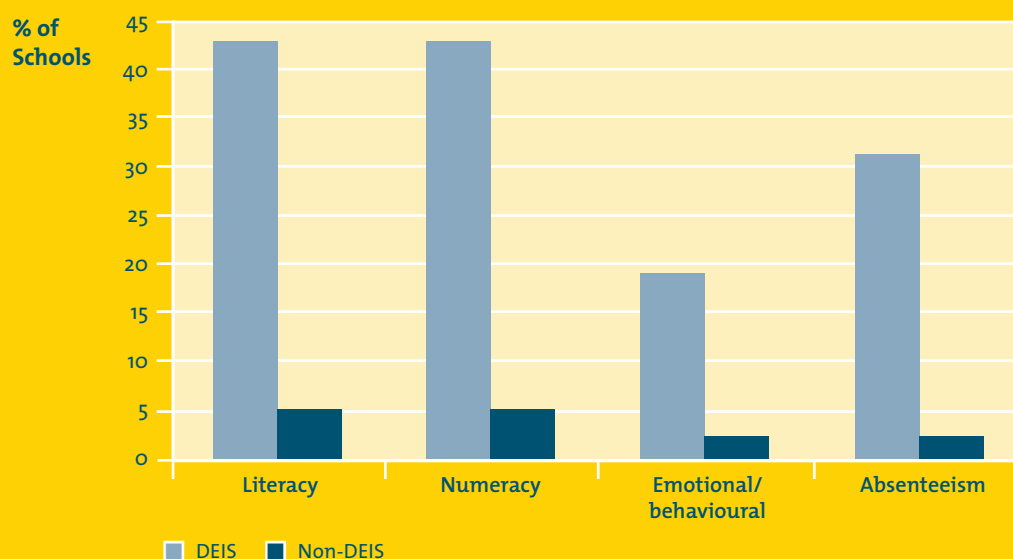
- 3.21** ● As part of DEIS, each school sets its own targets and goals. While the progress in this area is being monitored by the Educational Research Centre as part of the evaluation of DEIS, there is no publicly available information yet on this. However, according to the Inspectorate, there are indications that schools are engaging seriously with this and that literacy achievement is a major priority in the schools²¹. There is some descriptive information on this evaluation on the ERC website. A preliminary report containing information on baseline achievement data in urban and rural schools was submitted to the Department of Education and Science, but not released publicly. The School Support Programme component of DEIS in primary and post-primary schools is also being evaluated by the Educational Research Centre.
- 3.22** ● In recent months, as part of the DEIS implementation, the Department has announced the restructuring of the National Education Welfare Board to include the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL), the School Completion Programme (SCP) and the Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers (VTST). This is presented as part of an on-going series of restructurings and integration. It is too early to tell how this will work in practice and what implications it will have for delivering DEIS on the ground.
- 3.23** ● The Comptroller and Auditor General's report outlined that the principal impact of educational disadvantages initiatives prior to DEIS was on class size – though some schools visited applied the resources to learning support. At school level only 5% of cash grants were targeted at individual disadvantaged pupils (Government of Ireland, 2006a).

Characteristics of DEIS Schools

- 3.24** ● A recent report by the ESRI provided evidence of the characteristics of DEIS schools. They have a higher prevalence of students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, pupils from newcomer and Traveller families, pupils with literacy and numeracy difficulties and with emotional/behavioural difficulties (Smyth & McCoy, 2009). In addition, they report that DEIS urban primary schools, particularly those in Band 1, similarly report a high concentration of pupils with literacy and numeracy difficulties. Figure 3.3 presents this data from the ESRI report.

²¹ Anecdotal information supplied by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science.

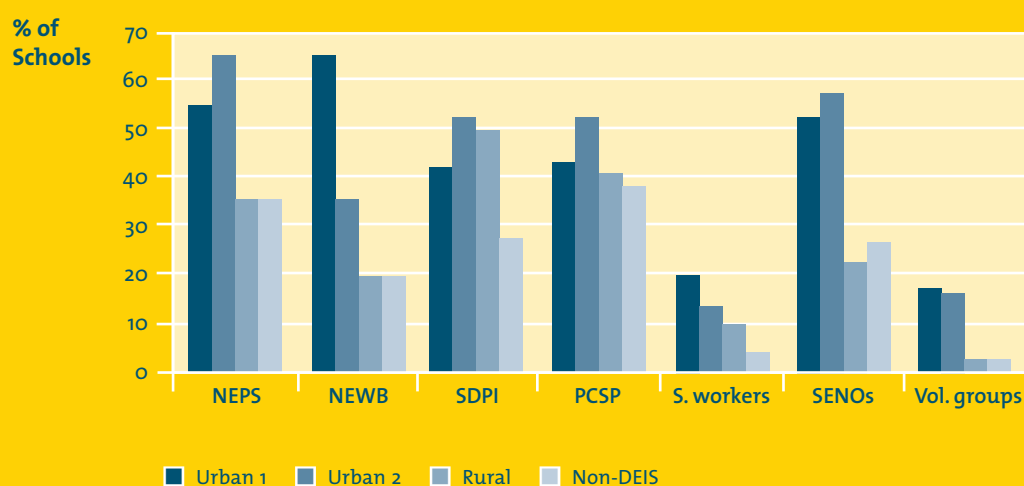
Figure 3.3 Perceived Proportion of Primary Schools where more than a Quarter of Students have Difficulties



Source: Smyth & McCoy (2009) *Investing in Education: Combating Educational Disadvantage*

3.25 ● The ESRI also note that principals in urban DEIS primary schools report much higher levels of contact with external services such as the National Educational Welfare Board and the National Educational Psychological Service and broader social work and voluntary services (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 Contact with External Services (To a 'Great Extent') Reported by Primary Principals²²



Source: Smyth & McCoy (2009) *Investing in Education: Combating Educational Disadvantage*

²² NEPS: National Educational Psychological Service Agency; NEWB: National Education Welfare Board; SDPI: School Development Planning Initiative; SENOs: Special Educational Needs Organisers.

Prior to DEIS

- 3.26 ● Although beyond the scope of this report, there has been a range of educational disadvantage policy prior to DEIS. Educational disadvantage policy consisted of ‘a patchwork of schemes each attempting to address aspects of disadvantage’ (Government of Ireland, 2006a, p. 8).
- 3.27 ● DEIS drew from reports from the Educational Disadvantage Committee, established under the Education Act (1998), the first of which examined the wide range of programmes in place to tackle educational disadvantage. The later report, *Moving Beyond Educational Disadvantage, Report of the Educational Disadvantage Committee 2002-2005*, included further recommendations which included action in adult and community education (Educational Disadvantage Committee, 2005). *The Report of the Educational Disadvantage Committee* outlined the move towards integrated services in line with integrated approaches to social inclusion. DEIS adopted some of the recommendations contained in their report but not all. Some of the key points made in this report include the need to go beyond schools to end educational disadvantage. It argues ‘the definition of educational disadvantage as set out in the Education Act (1998) clearly sees educational disadvantage in the formal school context and does not refer to education that is provided in other settings’ (Educational Disadvantage Committee, 2005, p. iv). While there is a family literacy component of DEIS, it is still largely school-focused, in partnership with the VECs. Furthermore, in relation to existing policy, it stated that ‘it was clear that there is serious lack of joined – up thinking and joined up action at both local and national levels in addressing issues of educational disadvantage’ (Educational Disadvantage Committee, 2005, p. 2).
- 3.28 ● Most of the policy initiatives prior to DEIS focused on staffing and resources including improvements in pupil-teacher ratio, appointment of support staff such as home school community liaison and learning support staff, and the funding of programmes such as *Early Start, Breaking the Cycle and Giving Children an Even Break*. Unlike similar programmes in the US and UK, no specific approaches to teaching literacy were referred to in these initiatives (Kennedy, 2009, p. 6). Despite this focus on resources, the gap between children in disadvantaged schools and other pupils is as wide as ever, if not wider in the most disadvantaged schools (Weir, 2003). Research in Ireland as elsewhere, shows that progress is made by children in disadvantaged schools alongside their more advantaged peers, but the gap is not narrowed (E Eivers, et al., 2004). Kennedy argues, ‘clearly, if underachievement in literacy is to be addressed, policy must have a dual focus – a focus on funding to equalise resources and on finding ways to accelerate achievement for those most in need of it’ (Kennedy, 2009, p. 7).

- 3.29 ● The National Reading Initiative (NRI) was set up in 1999 and aimed to raise public awareness of the importance of reading. As part of this initiative, the Babies Love Books Scheme (based on the BookStart programme in the UK) was introduced for children born in 2000 and then again in 2008. The aim of the scheme was to ensure that every child born in the year 2000 was to be given a free book pack at its nine month developmental check. It provided a good example of different agencies working together, relying on libraries and Public Health Nurses to deliver it on the ground but is no longer running. There was no published evaluation of this programme.
- 3.30 ● For an overview of educational disadvantage policy and perspectives, please see (P Archer & Weir, 2004; Downes & Gilligan, 2007b).

Wider Policy Context

- 3.31 ● As Chapter 8 outlines, many initiatives and projects related to literacy are underway locally and nationally which operate outside of schools. Libraries, in particular, play a strong role in literacy supports in the community. Some of the main policy documents and key policy frameworks are listed below:
- i. *Education Act (1998) and Education (Welfare) Act 2000* (Government of Ireland, 1998).
 - ii. *National Action Plans on Social Inclusion* set a high level goal for social inclusion to reduce the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties in primary schools serving disadvantaged communities from 27%-30% to less than 15% by 2016 (Government of Ireland, 2007a).
 - iii. *National Development Plan: Social Inclusion Priority* (Government of Ireland, 2000c, 2007b) restated the NAPS goal.
 - iv. *Towards 2016* (Government of Ireland, 2006b, p. 41) states that ‘every child should leave primary school literate and numerate’.
 - v. *National Children’s Strategy: Our Children Their Lives* (Government of Ireland, 2000b, p. 22) seeks to place the ‘whole child’ perspective at the centre of policy development and service delivery. One of the national goals was that ‘Children will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development’. The Office of the Minister for Children, in implementing the Strategy have rolled out pilot Children’s Services Committees in Dublin City, South Dublin, Donegal County and Limerick City. To date, members include the HSE, County Council, other statutory providers and in some cases voluntary providers. These committees focus on more strategic, joined-up-planning on how children’s services will be organised and delivered at the local level.
 - vi. *The RAPID Programme* targets 46 of the most disadvantaged areas in the country and focuses State resources under the National Development Plan.

- vii. *The Report of the Commission of the Family* recommended 'the development of a coherent policy approach to families across Government departments and services'. It further outlined an approach to supporting families in carrying out their functions which supports parents' choices in the care and education of their children (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 1998). Following on from that, the Family Support Agency was established to bring together programmes and services designed to: promote local family support; support ongoing parenting relationships for children and, help prevent marital breakdown. Also key in this area are Family Resource Centres which help combat disadvantage by supporting the functioning of the family unit.
 - viii. *Towards a Framework for Early Learning*, developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) aims to support children's early learning and development. *Aistear, the Framework for Early Learning* is due to be published this year.
 - ix. *The Primary School Curriculum for English* (1999) was designed to offer children a language experience which integrates oral language, reading and writing (NCCA). It outlines an approach to reading based on this integrated language experience (Government of Ireland, 1999). In 2006, Additional Support Material was provided which re-presents the English Curriculum under the strands of oral language, reading and writing (DES, 2005c).
 - x. *Siolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* was developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) in 2006, to improve the learning experiences of children from birth to six in a variety of settings.
 - xi. *Branching Out: Future Directions* (2008) states that one of the priorities for the library service is 'to support early learning and cultural expression by young people, by introducing them to the world of arts, and to the oral and material heritage of their community, by implementing programmes and events such as exhibitions of children's own work, children's drama and music events, reading programmes, Children's Book Festival, author visits and storytelling' (Government of Ireland, 2008, p. 54). The latest figures show that there are 14.25 million visits made to public libraries each year. (From a Submission from the National Library Council)
- 3.32 ● Many State Departments and agencies, semi- State bodies, partnership companies, trade unions, and community and voluntary sector organisations have a key role in responding to literacy needs in the community. These include the National Education Welfare Board, National Centre for Curriculum and Assessment, National Adult Literacy Agency, Family Support Agency and Family Resource Centres, Community Development Programme and LDSIP; INTO, Children's Rights Alliance, Barnardos, National Youth Council of Ireland, Rehab Group among many others.

International Literacy Policies

- 3-33 ● Some countries have been more successful than others at increasing literacy levels more broadly. Finland scored second after Korea in the PISA reading performance literacy test. According to the Finnish National Board of Education, this is due to the principles of comprehensive education including no selection of pupils by school, equality of access, principles of partnership building within schools and with the wider community, highly regarded teaching profession and pupils' own active involvement in their learning is viewed as paramount. Finland worked at improving literacy directly in the 1990s after detecting a decline (Finnish National Board of Education, 2009). Key elements of their success are high levels of trust for teachers, high professional academic status, educational equality, networks, targets and self evaluation in schools (Lavonen, 2008).
- 3-34 ● In England, the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, introduced in 1999 are ambitious and large-scale reform initiatives. They have been evaluated with mixed results, with significant variation in terms of teacher quality (Earl, *et al.*, 2003). The Strategies introduced the literacy hour to the primary school classroom and promoted a whole class teaching approach, which encouraged more student participation. However, reports of the independent Primary Review into the condition and future of primary education in England, published in November 2007, found that recent initiatives in the primary sector in England have had mixed results, particularly in regard to literacy and numeracy. The evaluation of the literacy hour in England was tied in to the English testing and league table approach. At age 11 around 20% of children still do not achieve the success in reading (and writing) expected of their age (The National Literacy Trust, 2005). A new *White Paper Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* looks set to give schools more autonomy in how they tackle literacy, stepping away from the standardised approach in the Strategies towards more flexibility for teachers (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009).
- 3-35 ● In Scotland, according to the National Literacy Trust, the central literacy focus is on raising standards in primary schools. This has been combined with setting up integrated community schools which will bring together social work, health, psychological and other child professionals in the selected schools. In 2007, the *Progress in Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS) found that the progress of Scottish 10-year-olds was significantly above the international average (The National Literacy Trust, 2009).

Conclusions

- 3.36** ● This chapter has set out the main policy initiatives in relation to child literacy and social inclusion. As noted in Chapter 1, it is difficult to separate out this area in policy terms from wider issues of social exclusion and educational disadvantage. Nevertheless, the main policy initiative currently in place is *DEIS, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* which focuses on schools serving disadvantaged communities. The next section of the report focuses particularly on this policy in terms of the implementation issues it raises from Case Study Research by the NESF Secretariat.
- 3.37** ● There has been growing investment in different initiatives in disadvantaged communities in recent years. However, this overview has highlighted the need for greater integration and coherence of policy in this area. Prior to DEIS, the Education Disadvantage Committee (2005) highlighted the need to develop a national strategy to address low literacy levels and much stronger intervention to prevent early school leaving. Furthermore, the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office carried out a review of educational disadvantage initiatives in the primary sector, published in 2006, *Educational Disadvantage Initiatives in the Primary Sector*. It found it disappointing that '*reading standards in designated disadvantaged schools have not improved*' (Government of Ireland, 2006a, p. 10). Their examination also suggested that there is a need for greater coordination and joined up approaches among the agencies and personnel involved in addressing disadvantage.
- 3.38** ● While DEIS has built on some of these recommendations, such as a stronger focus on literacy and early school leaving than previous initiatives, there is still a lack of a coordinated inter-agency policy and a joined-up approach to literacy education for all children. While DEIS includes a focus on literacy, apart from the English Curriculum, there is little in the way of a national policy framework on literacy for all schools and which also includes community initiatives (see Chapter 8). Furthermore, DEIS does not address educational disadvantage outside of designated schools. The following chapters will present the Case Study Research on ways that DEIS is being implemented on the ground.

Implementation Case Studies

4

Introduction

- 4.1 ● The report presents findings from the Case Study Research by the NESF Secretariat which involved two-day visits to four urban DEIS schools – in Dublin, Cork and Limerick. While the identities of these schools are not revealed in the report, one school was DEIS Band 2, the others were Band 1 schools. While each school had its own particular approaches to tackling literacy, all shared similar problems and context, being in highly disadvantaged areas. The purpose of the Case Study Research was to see how DEIS policy is being translated on the ground- what are the supports for effective implementation and what are the barriers?
- 4.2 ● It also sought to examine which literacy strategies were successful, what were the areas of good practice, from the school's perspective and those interviewed, and what the gaps were. Given the limitations of time and resources, this work was designed to be indicative and illustrative of the issues raised. Although small in scale, it followed a structured framework of questions and approaches. It provides detailed insights into what these schools consider the issues to be and how DEIS is being delivered. The views and ideas in this section are gained from the research and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Team.
- 4.3 ● This short chapter describes the Case Study Research process, the way schools were selected, questions asked and material analysed. It also provides a brief overview of each school, while respecting their anonymity. Despite using a wide range of consultation methods in its work, and commissioning research, this is a new departure for the NESF Secretariat. The focus in this report on the 'soft' aspects of implementation necessitated some on the ground work to identify and illustrate issues being experienced by schools.

Secretariat Team

- 4.4 ● Dr Jeanne Moore, Policy Analyst of the NESF Secretariat carried out this research, with three months assistance from Olivia Joyner, on loan from the Geary Institute in UCD. Dr Moore, a social scientist, has 20 years research experience, particularly in qualitative research. With support from the NESF Director Mr Seán Ó hÉigeartaigh and the Project Team, this research began in December 2008 and was completed by March 2009.

Conceptual Framework

- 4.5 ● The Case Study Research aimed to provide ‘on-the-ground’ examples of policies in practice. By focusing on DEIS schools, the research could examine how each school implemented DEIS in its own particular context. In addition, one community project was also included in the range of Case Studies to examine how literacy activities are experienced in communities.
- 4.6 ● The purpose of the Case Study Research was therefore to:
- Explore the process of implementation of DEIS and other policies related to literacy and educational equality;
 - Identify supports and barriers to successful implementation;
 - Find models of good practice of implementing DEIS; and
 - Provide examples where school, family and community intersect in delivering literacy services/initiatives in disadvantage areas and how this links to existing policy.
- 4.7 ● During the course of the Project, the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science informed the Project Team that they were undertaking work in this area in DEIS schools, particularly focusing on examples of good practice. The current report would be complementary to this work being able to identify both supports and barriers to DEIS on the ground.
- 4.8 ● Given that the timeframe for this work was limited to three months, the aim was not to provide a representative sample of schools but rather ones that could be illustrative of particular contexts. The Project Team decided that the following criteria would be important in the selection of schools. From the outset it was agreed to focus on urban schools as these were considered to be experiencing the biggest challenge in relation to social inclusion, confirmed by research from the Educational Research Centre.
- 4.9 ● On the basis of these criteria and with support from the Project Team, four schools were approached by the Secretariat (see Table 4.1). All of the schools agreed to take part and the Project Team is extremely grateful to these schools, their principals, staff and parents for being such willing participants.

Table 4.1 School Case Studies

Size	DEIS	New Communities/ Incomer Families	Region	Programmes/ Supports	Links with Community Initiatives/Projects
370 Girls only from Second Class	Band 2	Medium	Cork	First Steps; Reading Recovery; Literacy Liftoff; Bridging the Gap; Story Sacks; Kidstalk; School Library HSCL	Strong
242 Girls only from Second Class	Band 1 Girls	High	Limerick	Jolly Phonics; Reading Recovery; First Steps; Reading Schemes; Shared Reading; HSCL; School Library	Medium
123 (No First Class)	Band 1 Boys	Medium	Dublin City South	First Steps; HSCL	Low
69	Band 1 Boys	Low	Dublin City North	Zoom Ahead with Books; Literacy Hour; Jolly Phonics; Talking Partners; Therapeutic Play; Puppets; Literacy Through Creative Arts; IT programmes; School Library HSCL	Strong

Source: NESF Secretariat

- 4.10** ● Some schools provided the Secretariat with recent test scores on literacy, whereas others did not. The reluctance to give these was a sign of the sensitivities in the schools about their progress. All the observations and comments made here on what seems to be working and what is less successful are made on the basis of a subjective research assessment. All the schools had literacy levels below the national average and all have high levels of disadvantage. Any differences this research identified provides clues as to what might make one school ‘come alive’ with the implementation of a policy as compared to another.

Community Project

- 4.11** ● The Fatima Regeneration Board was selected as the community project as there was a specific literacy initiative ongoing there which was targeted at primary school children. While several visits were made to the project, it was not possible to complete this research fully. This was due to time pressures on the staff of the community project. However, observations were made on the homework club and the book-group for younger children. Several interviews were conducted with the Education Co-ordinator and some documentation received. To that extent it is possible here to describe some of the features of the project and some of the difficulties they faced, but not to provide a fuller analysis. To provide a more fuller analysis of community work on literacy in general, the Project Team commissioned a scoping document from Cynthia Deane, outlined in Chapter 8.

Methodology

- 4.12** ● The main methods used in this research were in-depth interviews, observations, focus groups and documentary analysis. In each school, the principal was interviewed over several sessions, as were class teachers, any Reading Recovery teacher and learning support staff, Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator, parents in three schools, and in one school, children themselves. Each visit lasted two days. With two members of the Secretariat present, it was possible to both observe classes and conduct interviews over the duration. Where possible an equivalent number of classes and interviews were conducted across the schools but there was some variation depending on timetabling and availability.
- 4.13** ● The interview schedule was developed, drawing from implementation theory outlined in Chapter 1. One schedule was designed for the principal. This included a strong focus on implementation and covered:
- Delivery, Context and Process of Implementation;
 - Policy Design;
 - Extent of Implementation; and
 - Impact of Policy.
- 4.14** ● The main focus was on the first area, the delivery of DEIS. To that end more specific literacy questions were also asked around the following themes:
- Current Literacy Initiatives in the School;
 - Literacy and Social Inclusion;
 - Delivery of DEIS;
 - Culture of the School; and
 - Thoughts on literacy policy.
- 4.15** ● All but one of the schools prepared a timetable for the two days which included all classes, key interviews and any literacy initiatives going on while we were there. In School C, four separate visits were made and it was not as structured as the other visits. It proved more difficult there to get access to the same range of classes and staff.
- 4.16** ● The interviews were all recorded with digital equipment and later transcribed. Each observation of a class was recorded on paper with an observation check list. Each school was discussed by the Secretariat and notes compared as to overall issues raised.

- 4.17 ● The Case Study visits produced a wealth of rich information. The observation material was typed up and notes made for each school. Once transcribed, the interviews were checked and then coded up thematically. Themes were identified from the interview schedule and focused directly around supports and barriers to DEIS. Once coded, the interviews were entered into NVivo, a qualitative software package which helps to sort and structure interview material. This enabled interview quotes concerning the same theme to be pulled together in separate documents, making it easier for writing up.

The Case Study Schools – Description

School A

- 4.18 ● This was a large girls' school in the city centre. They reported they were below the national average in terms of literacy but were improving. The principal had been in place for nearly 9 years. At the time, they had 370 pupils, 302 girls and 68 boys (for First Class only). There were 16 mainstream class teachers, 3 learning support/resource teachers, a language support teacher and a Home/School Community Liaison Co-ordinator. In addition, they had 3 special needs assistants and a classroom assistant. As well as classrooms, the school had 3 parents' rooms, 3 learning support/resource rooms, a language support room, a library, computer room, PE hall and general purpose room. There were four playgrounds, one had extensive climbing frames. There was a pre-school located in the school which was privately run.
- 4.19 ● The school stressed the importance of literacy from an early stage. Their literacy work included Reading Recovery, story sacks with parents, a language programme with junior infants, strong parental involvement/ethos, paired reading, speech therapist working with parents and storybook, First Steps, book week, graffiti-artists and other arts workshops. The literacy strategies were not all withdrawal methods (Reading Recovery) but methods, which involved all of the children and parents, for example, Literacy Liftoff and Story Sacks. The school believed in the importance of a wide approach to literacy, especially oral language, as they supported drama classes and debate time in classes. This school was also linked to an outside initiative (not named here to preserve anonymity) which provided additional funding for literacy projects in the past.
- 4.20 ● There was a large and friendly staff team, who seemed positive and enthusiastic. There was high morale, teamwork and a real sense of pride in the school as we observed. The school involved the parents via the Parents Teacher Association, parents' room, and classroom involvement. The teachers seemed to have great knowledge of the literacy programmes; how they started, their strengths and weaknesses and the cost etc. This helped to make the teachers feel part of a team fighting for improved literacy. Staff reported plenty of professional development opportunities which they said helps to empower them and give them confidence.

- 4.21 ● They had a wide range of books in every classroom and the school was supported by high quality IT resources. The classrooms and school corridors were highly print rich and display the children's work especially their literacy work. School lunches were also provided.

School B

- 4.22 ● This was a large girls' school in the city centre with 242 pupils. It had a high number of newcomer children, nearly half of pupils (48%). The school shared a Home School Community Liaison post with another school. As part of wider supports, the children were provided with lunches. The teacher noted that some children came to school hungry without breakfast.
- 4.23 ● The school spread across three floors and there was lots of movement of staff and pupils between classrooms, creating an energised atmosphere. The school had a new parents' room and seemed to work hard at involving parents. The lobby area had plenty of pupils' artwork on the windows and walls, much of it demonstrating the international backgrounds of many of the pupils.
- 4.24 ● They ran a number of literacy initiatives including Reading Recovery, First Steps, Jolly Phonics and reading schemes. There was a focus on IT supports in the school with the extensive use of electronic white boards in classrooms and the use of email to communicate among staff.
- 4.25 ● The school was proud of their new library with an electronic library system, so they could keep track of the books. Micra-T literacy tests were administered twice a year in the school. The staff seemed very dedicated to improving literacy in the school and some were doing postgraduate training in complementary areas.

School C

- 4.26 ● This medium-sized boys' school was located in the city centre. The school had 12 staff, with seven full-time teachers and five learning support or resource staff. The school shared a Home School Community Liaison Coordinator with a nearby school. The principal had been in the school for 30 years but only in post for four of these. There was a high staff turnover in the school.
- 4.27 ● The building was old and had an institutional feel. There were 12 classrooms in total. We noticed few posters, art work, literacy and information on the walls, compared with other Case Study schools. There were some interactive white boards in the school and some computers. The school provided lunches every day for the children.
- 4.28 ● The school had a guest music teacher in every class, once a week. The class learned songs and information about famous composer and artists and music was a big part of the school.

- 4.29 ● There was a well-established (privately run) homework club with friendly staff and a mixture of work time and play time, with activities and trips (cinema, ice-skating, football matches). The school offered popular trips to Wicklow Mountains and football matches. There was a supervised reading session where the boys read to themselves.
- 4.30 ● The school reported a high level of graduate teachers who stayed a few years before moving on. There seemed to be less whole-school interaction among the staff as compared with other schools. The building was larger and staff disappeared into their classrooms for much of the day. The reception areas were often cold and empty, despite the heating being on. The Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator worked closely with the school to try and engage parents. They felt that they were responding to a high level of disadvantage, and this had a big impact on the school and what it could achieve.
- 4.31 ● The principal was helpful and welcoming to us but was busy most days we were there, on one occasion leaving us to wait several hours before seeing us, despite having an appointment. They have had problems with absenteeism and poor behaviour. There were some incidents of poor behaviour from pupils while we were in the school. While this behaviour may be common in DEIS boys schools, it was not as present in other schools we visited.
- 4.32 ● We only had one brief chat around the staff table with teachers in this school unlike in other schools where we were involved more in informal chats at lunch. Other schools seemed to have a warmer, more collegiate atmosphere, from our observations. However, the parents we talked to were very positive about the welcoming culture of the school.

School D

- 4.33 ● This school was the smallest we visited with 69 boys, 6 of whom were newcomer children. A child showed us the principal's office politely. The sun poured in the large windows. The principal brought us around the school and introduced us to all the staff from the outset so that everyone knew who we were. There were 9 full-time teachers, 1 part-time teacher and 3 learning support/resource teachers.
- 4.34 ● This bright school had lots of the children's work displayed. One poster in the classroom read: *'All different.....but one great class'* and *'this is our school. We really love it'*. There were few corridors in the school and the classrooms linked in to each other over two floors. There were five classrooms. Classrooms had posters on the schools 'golden rules' and a table where the children could win golden stars for good behaviour. Four teachers were trained in therapeutic play.
- 4.35 ● The school had a reception class of 18 four year olds. The principal was a teacher in the school for 16 years before recently becoming principal and had been in post for a year. Three other staff members had been in the school more than 20 years. There were only six newcomer children in the school, the lowest across the Case Studies.

- 4.36 ● The school had a strong focus on play and saw it as key to oral language and literacy development. One difficulty for the school was that there was no outside place for the children to play, and they spent break times in the classroom. They had applied for funds to get the small space outside covered in protective material. A new school was under construction. There was an art room and a computer room with 14 PC's. Four PC's were gained before DEIS and others through DEIS.
- 4.37 ● As in two other schools, we were presented with a timetable for us and the school put thought into what we would see. There was a sense of openness alongside some uncertainty as to what we were looking for.
- 4.38 ● The staff room in the back was small but very domestic, with a round table with everyone round it. The staff seemed to get on well and stories of social gatherings told at break-time suggested they were friends as well as colleagues. A 'Parents together' community programme was running for parents in the school. The training course is two, 6 week courses. The programme consists of 6 two hour workshops in the local Centre. Six local parents have joined the first programme (in 4th week) and their feedback at the end of each workshop is very positive.
- 4.39 ● The children were not given lunches by the school but they were given a healthy snack every day, such as fruit or yoghurt. While we were there, teachers gave sweets regularly to reward the children. It was not clear if this was on a special occasion or every day.

Community Case Study – Fatima Regeneration Board

- 4.40 ● As part of the work of the Project Team, Fatima Regeneration Board was selected as a Case Study for a community project. It was not possible to do as intensive study as in the schools but it is included here as one example of a community initiative that focuses directly on literacy as part of its work. The Board has run a successful homework club for years, and more recently, this has had a specific literacy focus. They also run a paired reading scheme between local residents and children. The project is shortly moving to a building, as they are currently in temporary office buildings.
- 4.41 ● Fatima is an inner-city area of South Dublin with high levels of disadvantage and about 400 residents. Research undertaken into the health and education needs of the residents of Fatima in 2001 highlighted that 23% of the population only completed primary school whilst 61% aged fifteen and over left school without any formal qualifications (Collins & Lyons, 2001). The Board was established in 2001 to support the social and physical regeneration of the Fatima area in Dublin South City which houses just over 400 residents. This area has experienced severe economic and social disadvantage. A report by the Board by shows that 23% of the residents only completed primary school, while 62% left school without any formal qualifications (McVeigh, 2007).

- 4.42 ● Two visits were made to Fatima and a further two meetings were held with the Education Coordinator. The homework club storytelling session was observed by the Secretariat. This was a two- hour session with 5 children and 3 staff and included telling stories as a group and writing them individually.
- 4.43 ● The homework club had been going in Fatima since 1994. 113 children were enrolled, with 70 on average attending each day. The club opened from 2-7.30pm and involved parents and the wider community. Staff carried out a test of 53 children using the Burt Word Reading Test and found that 75% were more than two years behind their reading age (McVeigh, 2009). After this, the Literacy Project began which was developed in conjunction with the schools in the area and builds on the work that schools are doing around reading. This received funding from Atlantic Philanthropies. A key part of this project was the Buddy Reading approach which paired neighbours and children. 36 volunteer residents had been trained in this, supporting 42 primary school children. They set up a training programme in phonics and bought lesson plans, making up individual portfolios for each child. Further evaluation work was on-going. A further 19 attended a wider library group. The reading test were to be repeated at the end of the year to establish any progress.
- 4.44 ● One of their newer initiatives that crosses the school-community gulf was the after-school Rialto Learning Community programme. This was part of a wider education strategy as part of the social regeneration plan for Fatima. The community programme includes a focus on: *'establishing a bridge between the formal educational sector and the informal community sector and thereby facilitating children in the target areas to have equal access to the educational resources and the support necessary to enable them to maintain and sustain their education'* (Fatima Regeneration Board, 2008).
- 4.45 ● One planned aspect of this was the establishment of a School Community Forum consisting of teachers, parents and community staff. The particular functions of this were to be determined by the participants but the Forum would probably facilitate parent teacher meetings in the community, and a parent engagement programme.
- 4.46 ● A further programme element is the *'inside out and the outside in'* in which switched activities that normally take place in school to occur outside of school and activities that happened outside of school to happen in school e.g. Parent Teacher meetings in the community/ Drama Classes in the Community and community based resource artists providing direct class tuition (Fatima Regeneration Board, 2008). Chapter 8 discusses this, and other community initiatives more fully.

Conclusions

- 4.47 ● This chapter has presented the Case Study Research in brief. Primarily descriptive, it outlined the purpose and method of conducting this research and provided a short overview of the schools visited. Further discussion of these schools and the community project are presented in the following four chapters.

5

Introduction

- 5.1** ● In the case of educational disadvantage, as with many other complex social inclusion issues, the challenges in reaching goals and implementing effective policies over the years are very demanding (Weir, 2003, 2004). While the Inspectorate of the Department has produced valuable reports on literacy in disadvantaged schools, one in 2005 on the challenges for teachers and learners, the other is forthcoming on good practice in DEIS schools, there is still much to be learnt about how literacy policies work on the ground.
- 5.2** ● This section of the report examines the implementation of DEIS, from the views of stakeholders and from Submissions made to the Project Team and from the Secretariat's detailed Case Study Research of four schools (see Chapter 4 for further details on this work). This chapter begins by considering existing research on good practice. This is followed by an examination of DEIS both from a process evaluation perspective, where some of the overall delivery issues and practices, including reaching the target group, its quality and perceived content are considered and secondly, DEIS is compared to an implementation template drawn from an outcomes-oriented approach to policy, where good practice is identified, as well as barriers to implementation.

What is Good Practice under DEIS?

Existing Research

- 5.3** ● In their presentation to the Project Team, the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science, outlined some research work they had completed on *Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices in Schools Serving Areas of Disadvantage* (DES, Forthcoming-a; DES Inspectorate, 4th December 2008). This work has not yet been published. This good practice study describes a range of approaches that teachers and schools have taken to the teaching of literacy and numeracy in eight schools participating in the DEIS Action Plan. The findings from schools where there was good practice suggest that recognition and acceptance of the problem, willingness of the staff and boards to take it on, and feel confidence in their ability to change it are key to effective practice.

5.4 ● The key strengths identified by the Inspectorate included (in no particular order):

- Strong, decisive leadership that is shared;
- A ‘can do’ attitude and a culture of change for improvement;
- Positive expectations about levels of achievement and behaviour for all pupils;
- Commitment to strategic planning, review at whole-school level underpinned by the use of a variety of assessment data;
- Commitment to continuous professional development;
- Schools committed to involving parents in their children’s learning;
- Literacy education is prioritised clearly and purposefully across the school;
- Awareness that change is incremental and takes time and that it is the school and teachers that must adapt to meet the pupils’ learning needs;
- Teachers create learning and teaching opportunities tailored to the varied needs of groups or individuals;
- Use of class-based literacy work that is structured and uses small groups, rather than relying solely on withdrawal;
- Strategies to help assimilate new staff into school routines and procedures;
- Using a range of specific programmes, teaching strategies and methods;
- Implementation is consistent throughout the school; and
- High levels of collaboration and team teaching.

5.5 ● Apart from this research, there is no other publicly available information on what works in DEIS to date. The official evaluation of DEIS will not be completed until after 2010. Other available data on literacy initiatives and programmes are discussed in Chapter 7.

Process Evaluation of DEIS

5.6 ● As mentioned in Chapter 1, the process evaluation questions considered here include:

- i. Is the policy/programme reaching the target group?
- ii. Are participants satisfied with the policy?
- iii. Are all the materials and components of good quality?
- iv. Are all the activities of the policy being implemented?
(Hawe, *et al.*, 1990).

i. Is the policy/programme reaching the target group?

- 5.7 ● Unlike many other policies, the DEIS Action Plan comes with targets, planning, assessment and outcomes. This is relatively new in Irish policy. DEIS is targeted at 22% of the most disadvantaged primary schools. As Chapter 3 outlined, the designation of schools was conducted more systematically than had been previously done, with the aid of the Educational Research Centre. As a recent report by the ESRI outlines, the rationale for targeted provision [in DEIS] was based on the ‘multiplier effect’ whereby greater difficulties are evident for schools with a high concentration of disadvantaged students. They argue there is evidence of such a contextual effect in this country (Smyth, 1999; Smyth & McCoy, 2009).
- 5.8 ● However, they go on to say that *‘unfortunately, no evidence is available on the primary sector but a national survey of school leavers indicates that 61% of young people from semi/unskilled manual backgrounds and 56% of those from non-employed households attend non-DEIS schools’* (Smyth & McCoy, 2009, p. 16). It is not clear either what the literacy levels of this group are. So while it is likely that a large number of pupils experiencing educational disadvantage are not in DEIS primary schools, those that are in these schools, as the ESRI research shows, do have high levels of literacy difficulties. So in this sense, DEIS is reaching some of its target group in the most disadvantaged areas, but not all. In their view *‘school targeting alone cannot, therefore, address the needs of all children and young people in the relevant groups, and a tapered approach to allocating additional resources to schools according to the number of disadvantaged students in their population has some merit’* (Smyth & McCoy, 2009, p. 58).
- 5.9 ● The ESRI report also includes interviews with DEIS stakeholders some of whom felt that targeting on its own was a flawed mechanism for addressing the needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. One view was that *‘there are students who have extremely poor standards of literacy and numeracy, and they are in every school in the country. And we are extremely concerned that the policy to deal with educational disadvantage does not take that into account’* (Stakeholder) (Smyth & McCoy, 2009, p. 27).
- 5.10 ● That DEIS is delivered only to selected schools raised concerns on the designation of DEIS ‘status’ as well as its continuing once literacy levels improved. One teacher felt that DEIS itself did not provide an incentive to improve literacy levels and that there was some fear that any improvement would result in the loss of funding. This was a view expressed by others in the same school. Others teachers perceived their Band 1 status to be at risk if they were successful. This highlights how DEIS is not perceived to be a policy that rewards success.

‘You’re likely to work yourself out of the help’. (Learning Support Teacher, School A)

ii. Are participants satisfied with the policy?

- 5.11 ● As DEIS is still being rolled-out, it is not possible to assess overall satisfaction. However, the recent ESRI report interviewed principals and found them mostly satisfied with what they were receiving and that it had made a positive difference for children and parents (Smyth & McCoy, 2009).
- 5.12 ● But some stakeholders felt that the resources were not sufficient to 'close the gap' with more advantaged children who have access to a range of social and cultural supports in their home setting, suggesting that *'the gap is actually widening (DEIS Principal)'* (Smyth & McCoy, 2009, p. 29). Others wanted policy makers to *'take a more holistic view of the child and their family, criticising the current absence of appropriate supports, in the form of speech and language therapy ('almost impossible to get'), social work services and family support services (an issue previously raised by the Comptroller and Auditor-General, 2006)'* (Smyth & McCoy, 2009, p. 29).
- 5.13 ● From the NESF Case Study Research, in broad terms, most teachers and principals were positive about DEIS and what it was bringing to the school. Some felt that the situation was improving in their schools in recent years, in terms of improving education levels among pupils and their families.

'There has been ... when people say well DEIS and all the inputs haven't made an impact, they actually have. In my 30 years there has been a change. When I started, and you asked kids in second class, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?', I was shocked that a lot of them said 'On the dole like me Da'. And this was the aspiration...Now there is an awareness out there of the fact that you have to go through secondary, it is worthwhile, and not all of the parents would subscribe to that, but a larger number do. So that trend is improving.' (Principal, School C)

For others, the current economic climate was creating a fear that DEIS would be pulled back.

'I would like to see it continue. I would be afraid of my life now with all these cut backs that I would ... I think whatever progress we are going to make it is vital that we keep it going because we keep the security of it going. They're trained up now and the teachers ... and you know the way that we have got the extra teacher and all that for ... I would say it would have an awful effect if we had to double up classes there ...' (Principal, School B)

Initial Roll-Out of DEIS

- 5.14 ● From the Case Study Research, some schools felt that DEIS was introduced without sufficient preparation and training for staff. This meant it took them some time to get used to what they were doing. This start up period, time to bed-in a policy, is not often considered as new policies get implemented.

'It was rolled out a bit too fast I think. The first thing we got about DEIS was a book. And that was where we lost a year nearly in one sense. We should have been taken some place first and fill up the papers ourselves and tried action plans ourselves, and we may have ... no, we might contradict that by saying we were better off to make a bit of a mess the first year, and to come back on it... the preparation could have been better.' (Principal, School B)

iii. Are all the materials and components of good quality?

- 5.15 ● The key components of DEIS include the use of DEIS Advisors and the training and delivery of structured programmes. The quality of DEIS Advisors is difficult to assess. While there are 20 DEIS Advisors²³ now in place, some of these have up to 27/30 schools in their care and it is hard to see how much support can be delivered in those areas. It is not clear either the extent of their literacy training beyond the programmes they are helping to deliver. However, the Case Study Schools were largely positive about the help they received from DEIS Advisors. Another difficulty in planning this service is the lack of continuity as Advisors are seconded year to year. This makes it difficult to plan as experienced staff may be recalled by their school at any time.
- 5.16 ● Fixsen *et al* (2005) in their review of implementation research, outline the value of purveyors in the implementation process who are *'individuals or a group of individuals representing a program or practice who actively work to implement that practice or program with fidelity and good effect'* (Fixsen, *et al.*, 2005, p. 12). The purveyor can accumulate knowledge and experience and work out challenges as they go along. Such purveyors or mentors could be invaluable in the implementation of literacy policies in schools. This can be illustrated by the positive response outlined to working with DEIS Advisors, presented in Chapter 6.
- 5.17 ● Shanahan, in a recent presentation in Dublin, outlined the key role that mentors played in implementing his literacy strategy in Chicago schools. He trained them all intensively and they all had the same literacy vision, guidelines and practical information for the schools so that the message was clearly getting through on the ground (Shanahan, 2009).
- 5.18 ● The Case Study Schools talked favourably about their DEIS Advisors' help. This ranged from support with Action Plan development at the start, to modeling lessons and bringing in structured programmes such as First Steps and Reading Recovery.

'Oh we've seen her a good number of times now. We had a planning day and she came down to that and she was excellent... she went over, what's it called, First Steps is it? She went over that with the new teachers and she also came down and she also came down and she spoke to us about First Steps, how to read in the classroom, the big books, with the children. She did a course on that in every class in the school and she's going to do the language First Steps in the last term. So yeah she's been very good, very good.' (Principal, School D)

²³ DEIS Advisors, formerly Cuiditheoirí, offer literacy and numeracy support to designated schools, including training in First Steps and Reading Recovery Programmes, as well as helping them to prepare and review their Action Plans.

- 5.19 ● One school had noted that the type of support they were getting from the Advisor had changed since the service was restructured and with the cutbacks in the system.

'We are finding now that our DEIS coordinator is all caught up in paperwork again and the teaching isn't happening as much. Like she used to come in and model lessons. That's what you need. At the end of the day we are trying to help the children you know, we are not trying to have folders or plans. Do you know what I mean?' (Class Teachers, School B)

Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)

- 5.20 ● There were positive comments about the role of the HSCL in the school. School C had a Home School Community Liaison Co-coordinator working to bring parents in to courses and linked better with the school.

'They are very good. They're really committed to their job and they go to the houses of those families there and keep after them and try to get something. They only get that much but it is some effort and they're very good. It is a fantastic scheme to be fair to them, we never had that before, like it would really follow up with someone.' (Principal, School B)

- 5.21 ● The main literacy-related programmes in use in DEIS schools are Reading Recovery and the First Steps Series, both of which are international programmes. These are discussed fully in Chapter 7.

Structured Programmes

- 5.22 ● Interviews by the NESF with school staff reveals many of the same positive elements of DEIS good practice that the Inspectorate's Good Practice research found (DES, Forthcoming-a). All the schools found that structured programmes were effective in improving their literacy teaching. One principal explained the difference.

'When Reading Recovery came in it was brilliant because it takes the very weak children and it really helps them to come along over a 20 week period and then when we developed the literacy hour and they started to read reading books and continuous text we could see a huge improvement. Before they could read their little page of a reader but if there was anything written on a wall or written anywhere they couldn't read unless they had practised it.' (Principal, School D)

- 5.23 ● For most of the teachers, the important thing was being able to adapt a programme to suit local needs.

'I put a picture of a man up on the board and they wrote the word 'man' on their magnetic boards. You would never have seen that up until this year in the school. Never, ever. And that is not down to the teacher or anything, it is the programme. It definitely is. But, having said that Jolly Phonics on its own wouldn't have suited our needs, because I think it is because we are DEIS really and because we have non-nationals and things. Any programme that we take on we have to adapt it for our needs.' (Class Teachers, School B)

- 5.24 ● Others commented on the high level of training a staff member receives to deliver a programme. For some this was as valuable, if not more so, than the money they receive.

'It has made a big difference. The difference actually, between this and the previous thing is that it's not just money ... it's actually skilling the people; money is important of course as well, but it's not ... like the money comes into the office, if you like, but what is done with that money ... and it's having the personnel, and having the personnel trained.' (Principal, School A)

- 5.25 ● While initially welcoming DEIS, in a Submission made to the Project Team, Barnardos raised a number of concerns regarding its quality and resources. These included the low budget allocated for the roll out and the relatively few schools benefiting from specific supports, for example, not all DEIS schools have Reading Recovery training. (From a Submission made by Barnardos)

iv. Are all the activities of the policy being implemented?

- 5.26 ● Some of the main elements which have been implemented so far under DEIS include the following:

- Class size has been reduced to between 20:1 and 24:1 for DEIS primary schools;
- 20 DEIS Advisors (Cuiditheoiri) are in place;
- Reading Recovery is available in 212 DEIS schools to date (31% of DEIS primary schools);
- 328 tutors have received training in First Steps Writing; 71 tutors in First Steps Reading and 21 in First Steps Speaking and Listening;
- Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) services are available to all DEIS urban primary schools with the Rural Co-ordinators or additional funds available to DEIS rural schools.
- From September 2009, the National Educational Welfare Board will be expanded to include the HSCL service, the School Completion Programme and the Visiting Teachers Service for Traveller pupils;
- 19 projects have been funded under the Family Literacy Programme, with an expenditure of €190,000; and
- Three-year action plan templates are in use in all primary DEIS primary schools (DES, 2009b).

Class Sizes

- 5.27 ● From the Case Study Research, the main areas of DEIS that have been implemented that were noted included class size, funding as well as the structured programmes discussed in the previous section and the use of DEIS Advisors. One of the fundamental shifts since DEIS was introduced to schools, was the reduction in class sizes.

'They've done an awful lot, yeah [DEIS]. Breaking the Cycle before it, and first of all smaller class. An average of 15 to one. But there might be more than 15 in some classes. The second thing is I suppose, funding, it means that we can do so much more with the parents, with the children, in terms of outings and all the different initiatives that have been funded. Reading Recovery which has really been fantastic.' (Principal, School D)

Funding

- 5.28 ● Another positive element of DEIS that schools noted was the additional funding which had also made a difference to the school.

'Then the DEIS grant always comes in very, very useful, and of course that means the whole school, I can't even begin to say how important that is – not just for parents, but for the whole school in general.' (Principal, School A)

'I think it gave us the opportunity to modernise, to lift the whole thing from a point to another plane. For example, to be able to get involved in those white boards as you saw in your classes, any class you have been into- we wouldn't have been able to do without DEIS, and that has a knock on effect.' (Principal, School B)

- 5.29 ● Some schools found the DEIS funding not satisfactory, as it does not take into account the increased costs in the day to day running of a school:

'In fact with increases we are probably, economically we are not hugely better off than we were pre-DEIS and there is constantly new bids. For example, they have introduced, not just for ourselves now, but countrywide, standardised testing.....There has been no increase for that. Water rates were introduced last year for all schools. No increase for that so there are extra costs. Bin charges were introduced four or five years ago, no increase for that. So you get, there are constantly new economic demands on the school that are totally outside your control that you have to pay and there is nothing you can do about it. IT [technology] would be another one now, for example.' (Principal, School C)

- 5.30 ● Since the DEIS Action Plan was introduced in 2005, there have been some changes to the policy. The early childhood care and education (ECCE) element is no longer being delivered as envisaged due to cutbacks by the Department. The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) was closed and some staff were brought into the Early Years Education Policy Unit in the Department of Education and Science. According to the Department, the work of this unit in relation to DEIS will now focus on:

'Improving the quality of provision within Early Years settings, particularly in areas of disadvantage; the Early Years Education Policy unit will work with the Voluntary Childcare Agencies funded under the National Childcare Investment Programme on an implementation programme for Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education' (DES, 2009b, p. 33). In recent months, the Government has announced a one-year free universal pre-school programme for 3-4 year olds. The Department of Education and Science are working with the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on the implementation of this programme.

Importance of Early Childhood Care and Education

- 5.31 ● All the Case Study Schools talked about the importance of early childhood care and education to literacy. One principal felt that the lack of focus on this was a weakness of DEIS.

'Another kind of weakness there with DEIS is ... I know that they talk about early childhood.....I just think that there should be much more emphasis on what goes on before the children are pre-school. We don't have an early start, and that I believe is to do with management at the time, they were actually offered an early start and they didn't make space. So then it was only offered once.' (Principal, School A)

- 5.32 ● The schools felt that DEIS implementation can be affected by disadvantage in the children's lives and local area. Some teachers feel they are compensating for something that's lacking at home:

'I think if they come in with so little, do you know what I mean? Where other schools they would come in with knowing that this is the book and you turn the pages this way and that, you move along and each word is different. I mean I had a child come in to write like that. He'd never picked up a pencil before in his life, so those kinds of things, they're the challenges.' (Class Teachers, School A)

- 5.33 ● In overall terms, DEIS has not yet been fully delivered while teacher training on programmes is still on-going. However, DEIS Schools vary in how they receive and respond to funding and programmes. This is partly due to the design of DEIS in terms of Band 1 and 2 schools, the staggered roll-out of programmes and the difference in delivery between urban and rural schools. Rural schools are not generally in contact with DEIS Advisors but work in clusters with rural co-ordinators. The Educational Research Centre have conducted a study of literacy in rural schools as part of the DEIS evaluation but the results of this are not yet available.

- 5.34 ● A key part of DEIS in terms of literacy was the strengthening of professional development. According to DEIS, this is to include:

— An understanding of educational inclusion issues at a whole-school level;

- Giving priority to pedagogy, including teaching methodologies and practices for smaller classes, teaching literacy and numeracy, assessment strategies and methodologies, attainment-related target setting, promoting learner engagement and motivation and collaborative working; and
- Whole-school and school cluster approaches will be emphasised as well as professional development and mentoring delivered on-site by the new team of literacy and numeracy advisors wherever possible (DES, 2005a, p. 61).

5.35 ● The extent to which professional development, as outlined above, has been strengthened, is not yet clear. Cultural factors also shape the delivery of DEIS and many of these are discussed in Chapter 6.

Outcome-oriented Approach to DEIS Policy

5.36 ● As outlined in Chapter 1, the recent NESF Report No. 38 on the Implementation of *the Home Care Package Scheme* and reviews (Boyle, 2005; Curristine, 2005; NESF, 2009; OECD, 2008) have highlighted several features of public sector management which have a role to play in an outcomes-oriented approach to policy. The implementation template developed is outlined in Figure 5.1:

Figure 5.1 NESF Implementation Template

- | | |
|------|---|
| i. | Strategy plans with agreed outcomes |
| ii. | Delivery plans and delivery on the ground (including standards, competition, co-ordination of organisations and procedures and tailored universalism) |
| iii. | Monitoring, evaluation and measurement of inputs, outputs and outcomes |
| iv. | Links between outcomes and budget |
| v. | Good accountability and incentive structure |
| vi. | Equity in provision |
| vii. | Cultural Elements (including values, beliefs and tacit assumptions, leadership, attitudes and quality of collaborative relationships) |

Source: NESF Secretariat

These are discussed in turn in relation to DEIS, below.

i. Strategy plans with agreed outcomes

Planning

- 5.37 ● The supports from DEIS where staff felt it had made a positive difference to the school were varied. Many emphasised the new focus on planning which was welcomed. While the planning element of DEIS was considered one of its strengths by some, others found it onerous.

'We have a DEIS committee in place in the school and we have representatives from every level of the school, and every language and across infants, middle and seniors... we all work together, we would be so proud now to show our plans to anybody because we are working so much better.'
(Class Teachers, School B)

- 5.38 ● DEIS was framed in the context of supporting existing national targets to increase literacy, educational advantage and social inclusion, in particular, the NAPS (2003-5) (Government of Ireland, 2003) which has been superseded by the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016*. This sets the goal of halving the incidence of serious literacy difficulties in disadvantaged communities by 2016. The overall focus of the Action Plan is, therefore, on targets and outcomes. According to DEIS:

'Locally-based targets will also be established at school and school cluster level in relation, for example, to literacy and numeracy attainment and parent and community partnership. This target-setting at Department, cross-sectoral and local level will inform and complement the formulation and establishment of future national education targets in the context of both NAPs/incl and social partnership agreements' (DES, 2005a, p. 18).

- 5.39 ● The Comptroller and Auditor General argued that outcomes should be supported by short-term targets, at system and school level and targets for average and high-achieving pupils (Government of Ireland, 2006a). Schools themselves, receiving DEIS funding, are required to complete Three Year Action Plans. However, it is not clear what the consequences are for any schools who do not complete them. Nor is it clear if there are any actions arising from either reaching or not reaching targets and goals. While there is a national target for improving literacy in disadvantaged communities, and each DEIS school sets its own targets and action plans, there is no direct link between the results of the two. Every school is required to monitor and assess pupils' literacy levels twice a year. However, this data is not used to evaluate how a school's progress relates to the national goal set by NAPS.

- 5.40** ● It is not clear to what extent the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science has had a role in relation to Action Plans in DEIS schools or if this is left to the DEIS Advisor. The relationship between DEIS Advisors and the Inspectorate was not evident at a local level in the Case Study Schools. However, on a more general level, according to the Department of Education and Science, annual briefings for all primary inspectors and their managers have been delivered by DEIS advisors as well as regular briefings from the Social Inclusion Unit on DEIS roll-out and delivery.

Targets

- 5.41** ● While we did not see all of the literacy targets set by the Case Study Schools, some schools showed us their Literacy Plan. School B had set out the following targets in Figure 5.2:

Figure 5.2 Example of DEIS Literacy Plan Targets

Year 1	Reduce the number of pupils performing at or below the 20th percentile by 10%. Increase the number of pupils performing at or above the 40th percentile by 2%.
Year 2	Reduce the number of pupils performing at or below the 20th percentile by 12%. Increase the number of pupils performing at or above the 40th percentile by 2%
Year 3	Reduce the number of pupils performing at or below the 20th percentile by 13%. Increase the number of pupils performing at or above the 40th percentile by 2%.

Actions Year 1

- Provide in-school training in First Steps Reading Programme
- Set up school library
- Plan Shared Reading Initiative
- Develop systematic approach to the teaching of phonics in infants
- Develop whole school approach to the teaching of oral language
- Compile a list of recommended literacy sites suitable for classroom teaching
- Pilot a buddy reading initiative
- Allocate time to USSR (Uninterrupted, Sustained, Silent Reading) in class, 10-15 mins per day, 3-5 days a week
- Supply books to classroom libraries

Source: Case Study School B

- 5.42 ● Some of the schools welcomed the targets that come with DEIS Action Plans. They gave a structure and focus to the school that had been missing.

'It's good to have something to work towards, but it's just very difficult until the actual process begins, do you know what I mean? But we do have a target set for ourselves and our ultimate target would be to get all of the children in school to be at or above the national.' (Principal, School A)

- 5.43 ● However, some schools found it difficult to identify their targets and goals for the Action Plan. One principal felt there was an assumption that the problem could be overcome in this way.

'And that one, the problem with that, that we have found is what do you focus on? And what areas do you target because I suppose my biggest concern, biggest problem is that children coming into a DEIS school are starting with a deficit. Educationally they are a couple of years behind their counterparts, and all of this DEIS and all the extra supports are to try and remediate that. So there is an assumption that you can do that, that's number one.' (Principal, School C)

- 5.44 ● A further point is that DEIS is being delivered on a phased basis. This means that it will be difficult to fully assess its impact in 2010 with only some schools having received the full range of supports for the full three years. However, as implementation is a process, not an event, the Project Team recognises that implementation will not happen all at once or proceed smoothly, at least not at first (Fixsen, et al., 2005, p. 15). According to (Kennedy, 2009, p. 33), *'there is a fundamental problem with asking schools to set targets before they have had extensive professional development and experienced some success in raising achievement. It is difficult to commit to a vision of raised achievement when one is operating under the challenging working conditions that are inevitable in disadvantaged schools. Why would one set high targets if over a large number of years one has not been successful in changing outcomes despite one's best efforts? Schools therefore, may set lower targets than could be achieved, as to set the bar too high is to risk failure and professional embarrassment if the targets are not achieved.'*

- 5.45 ● Although targets are welcome, issues arise in the setting of targets at a national level, school level and the nature of these targets and their impact on policy. The concept of 'severe child literacy' is worthy of further discussion. In 2004, the ERC were critical of the earlier NAPS target of *'halving the proportion of pupils with serious reading difficulties by 2006. These problems concerned the lack of a definition of serious reading difficulties, lack of a specified target group, and an unrealistic time frame'* (E. Eivers, et al., 2008; E. Eivers, et al., 2004, p. 164). They proposed, instead, that *'serious reading difficulties' may be operationally defined as reading achievement scores at or below the 10th percentile on standardised tests and the target (which does not specify disadvantaged schools) be replaced by one specifically aimed at pupils in designated disadvantaged schools.'*

They predicted that that it would *'take a minimum of 10 years to effect a substantial change in reading standards'*. They further recommended that *'the long-term target should be supported by short-term system-and school-level targets (which should be consistent with national targets but appropriate to their own circumstances)'* (E. Eivers, et al., 2004, p. 164). Whatever target is set, further discussion and consultation is needed on the policy implications and monitoring arrangements that need to be in place to achieve this. In relation to DEIS, schools were asked to set targets and goals before many of the programmes and services included in DEIS were rolled-out.

- 5.46 ● A further issue concerning targets was raised by the Office of the Minister for Children in their presentation to the Project Team (OMC, 3rd February, 2009). They outlined the importance of targets which are horizontal as well as vertical in reference to collaborative working and cross-departmental initiatives. The OECD (2008) note that its success to date is linked to the high level support it receives at both political and administrative levels (OECD, 2008). In this sense, there would be value in setting a target for integrated delivery of DEIS, aligning the delivery of literacy-related services to disadvantaged schools more closely with the vision set out in the DEIS Action Plan. From the Case Studies, it is not clear that DEIS is perceived to be delivered in an integrated way and given the spread of delivery across agencies, it presents a considerable challenge to deliver this effectively. As this work suggests, and others have argued, the solution lies across sectors and cannot be provided by schools alone. A strategy for literacy and social inclusion needs to be more inclusive of community needs.

ii. Delivery plans and delivery on the ground (including standards, competition, co-ordination of organisations and procedures and tailored universalism)

- 5.47 ● DEIS is presented as an integrated strategy. However, as Figure 3.2 shows, there are many different agencies and services included in the delivery of DEIS at different stages of its implementation. It is complex and challenging to implement policies in relation to educational disadvantage. The Department of Education and Science are reportedly preparing an overall plan for addressing services integration and partnership working issues. This will take into account the potential for increased cooperation at local, county, regional and national level. This is to be welcomed as a strengthening of implementation.

5.48 ● At present, there does not seem to be sufficient co-ordination between some of the different services and agencies, so that the DEIS Advisor, for example, might not communicate the same message as the Inspectorate, or the Home School Community Liaison Coordinator might not be aware of the Family Literacy initiatives in their locality, which also come under DEIS. It is not clear what mechanisms are in place to draw on the knowledge of the Inspectorate in relation to the implementation of DEIS on the ground. However, according to the Department of Education and Science, inspectors and officials sit on the advisory committee overseeing the evaluation of DEIS and their advice was sought on the planning templates used in schools.

5.49 ● The ESRI report refers to the views of some stakeholders who *'contended that the system is fragmented and hierarchical, with a lack of integration across services and government departments: 'we [in education] are very regimented in our views, we always think in terms of vertical, hierarchical structures, we don't think horizontal'. Allied to this, a number of interviewees suggested that there is a lack of coherence across policies, even within the DEIS programme'* (Smyth & McCoy, 2009, p. 23). While fragmentation is a barrier to implementation, it is not the only measure needed.

5.50 ● The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) is in the process of developing linkages and relationships with key agencies under a restructuring process. However, as the Comptroller and Auditor General pointed out a few years ago, its experience even prior to this would suggest that the challenge of coordination will go well beyond administrative linkages and will have to address difficult considerations of joint planning and priority setting at local level, resource allocation and issues of joint national strategy (Government of Ireland, 2006a, p. 44).

iii. Monitoring, evaluation and measurement of inputs, outputs and outcomes

5.51 ● While the evaluation of DEIS is ongoing, there is also data that could be more effectively gathered and used by schools. As the Comptroller and Auditor General pointed out, *'the majority of primary schools conduct standardised tests of literacy in all classes every year. The Micra-T test was the most popular in the schools visited. However, the results of these tests are retained by schools and as a result the Department does not regularly collate and publish the results on a national basis or use them in order to evaluate outcomes'* (Government of Ireland, 2006a, p. 51).

- 5.52 ● There is a growing awareness of the need to both gather and analyse data about the impacts of a policy but also to gather data about the processes that have produced these impacts – which factors produced success and failure (Hudson & Lowe, 2004). Such an approach requires conducting both summative (at the end) and formative (the process) evaluations which do not have the same objective or approach. The value of conducting formative evaluations is that the results can be fed back into the programme or policy while it is happening, rather than having to wait until after it is completed by which time it is too late to make corrections. Table 5.1 outlines the differences between these two approaches.

Table 5.1 Summative versus Formative Evaluation for Programmes

	Summative Evaluation	Formative Evaluation
Nature	Non-interventionist	Interventionist/improve as you go
Asks	What happened? How did you do?	Why did it happen? How are you doing?
Evaluator	Independent	Participant and co-researcher
Temporality	Retrospective	Prospective
Focus	Cost-effectiveness	Process
Purpose	'Dials' (marks out of ten)	'Can Openers' (evaluation as starting point)
Outcomes desired	Evaluation for judgement	Evaluation for improvement
Consequence	Evidence for accountability	Evidence for improvement
Key questions	Does it work? Was it worth the investment?	What are we achieving? Can it be improved?

Source: Adapted from (Hudson & Lowe, 2004, p. 273) *Understanding the Policy Process: Analysing Welfare Policy and Practice*.

iv. Links between outcomes and budget

- 5.53 ● It is difficult to change ways that budgets have been traditionally allocated, as noted in the OECD review (NESF, 2009; OECD, 2008). In relation to DEIS, funding was allocated on the basis of levels of disadvantage (as established by the ERC in 2005/6). Although the variables used did not include literacy measures, there is some anxiety in schools that if they improve literacy, their funding will be taken away. Some schools which had been designated as disadvantaged prior to 2005 were not included in the DEIS scheme. The recent ESRI research also identified this issue as the fear of being penalised for success: *'Fears were expressed that schools which are effective in using additional resources in the current DEIS programme would be 'thrown out' of the programme at the end of the current phase, in the same way as former disadvantaged schools had been'* (Smyth & McCoy, 2009, p. 25).

- 5.54 ● The Department has stated that the designation of schools will be revisited during 2010. There is a policy dilemma however, in how to reward schools who do well on one hand, but, at the same time maintain or even increase limited funds for those still struggling. If budgets were more closely linked to performance in literacy, those who did well would benefit and be incentivised, but would weaker schools then lose out? Further work in this area is needed.

v. Good accountability and incentive structure

- 5.55 ● The OECD review outlines a range of mechanisms that can be used to incentivise performance. These include increasing or reducing funds, providing bonuses or salary reductions to staff. But changes in flexibility can also act as incentives, allowing the organisation greater flexibility to transfer funding. A further means is transparency, which can allow public recognition or criticism of performance, as appropriate (OECD, 2008). The OECD notes that there has not yet been the shift in systems and incentives that would support a move to a performance culture in Ireland. In only 20% of OECD countries does failure to meet organisational targets have a negative consequence on the pay of the organisation head (OECD, 2008).
- 5.56 ● In terms of accountability, DEIS states *‘there is also a need to ensure that existing best practice is shared and widely disseminated. Equally, there is a need to identify the causes and to take appropriate action when interventions have not met expectations’* (DES, 2005a, p. 23). It is not clear what ‘appropriate action’ means under the DEIS, and what the expectations are. When previous targets were set and not met under the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, they were reiterated and included in the next Action Plan. DEIS itself does not set targets for its schools in terms of improvements, but provides a structured blank template. It will be hard to be critical if only minimal improvements are made. Although the current national target is to halve the literacy problem among disadvantaged pupils by 2012, there is no direct link to DEIS and its role in this delivery.
- 5.57 ● The lack of publicly available data on how schools are doing in relation to pupils performance more generally and specifically, in relation to literacy, makes the implementation of policy impossible to verify. It further makes accountability harder to manage.

vi. Equity in provision

- 5.58 ● In terms of delivery of DEIS on the ground, there is considerable variation. This is reflected in the time available from DEIS Advisors whose caseloads vary from 17 to 27 schools and above in some places. It is not clear what standards are being applied across schools in terms of the consistency of services being provided. Some schools have yet to have the full range of supports outlined in DEIS and others have had all the supports for some time. This variation will present challenges for the final outcome evaluation and also raises questions about the delivery of DEIS on the ground. Schools themselves, staff and parents, are not always aware that what they are receiving comes under DEIS and the perception of DEIS as an integrated package of services and supports is not always shared.

vii. Cultural Elements

- 5.59 ● Chapters 6 and 7 will examine in further details some of the organisation and implementation issues in relation to schools. However it is worth noting here that schools interpret innovations in complex ways, with the result that sometimes, less change happens than is intended (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Also, schools change at a slower pace than other organisations for several reasons. These include the tendency to see the changes as more similar to existing practices than is the case ('we're doing this already'). A further factor is there is a threat to teachers' professional esteem if they are being told what they have been doing until now is 'wrong' or 'not up to date' (Mayock, Kitching, & Morgan, 2007, p. 40).
- 5.60 ● Most of the schools felt that their learning support teams had been strengthened through DEIS and that this was having an impact.

'As somebody who has been teaching here since 1980, when you think of the lack of support the kids had then, like those supports do make a big, huge difference.' (HSCL, School C)

- 5.61 ● However high staff turnover can affect the implementation of DEIS, as a school may not have the resources, experienced staff and DEIS trained staff. This was recognised in an earlier report by the Inspectorate for the Department of Education and Science which recommended that *'the Department of Education and Science should consider issues associated with teacher turnover in schools designated as serving areas of disadvantage with a view to developing strategies for the retention of teachers'* (DES, 2005b).
- 5.62 ● One school had particular problems with this. However, other schools did not report this problem.

'That is a problem in our DEIS school, and I would suspect in a lot of DEIS schools is staff turnover...So we hold our interviews, we get our newly qualified teachers, they come in, they do their diplomas and then traditionally within five to six years, a lot of them tend to move.' (Principal, School C)

Conclusions

- 5.63** ● This chapter has considered the implementation of the DEIS Action Plan to date by reference to different criteria. From a process evaluation perspective, it has examined some of the overall delivery issues and practices and in addition, it has compared DEIS to an outcomes-oriented approach to policy and highlighted both strengths and weaknesses in its implementation. It has also included the views of teachers and principals from Case Study Schools on the way DEIS has been delivered on the ground. Good practice areas have also been identified from previous work by the Inspectorate for the Department of Education and Science (DES, Forthcoming-a).
- 5.64** ● The Case Study Research identified many similar themes and found support for DEIS overall in what it had brought to the schools. Many found the structured programmes to be of great value and noted the impact that had had on their own teaching practices. Others commented on the benefit of smaller class sizes, the increased funding, extra support staff and the contribution DEIS Advisors had played in helping to deliver these programmes and improve literacy teaching.

In summary, the main areas of good practice mentioned by schools or outlined through the Case Study work are outlined (in no particular order) in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Good Practice Areas Identified in Case Study Research

Whole-school planning, prioritising literacy and target setting
Effective leadership from the principal
School support for professional development
Collaboration and teamwork
Structured programmes, particularly those which could be brought into the classroom
Guidance from DEIS Advisors, including modelling lessons
Parental involvement with programmes and paired reading schemes
Funding for books, IT, special projects
Assessing and recording pupil progress
Outside networks with community projects, artists, other organisations

Source: NESF Secretariat

- 5.65 ● Challenges noted included the suitability of the assessments being used, the learning required to develop Action Plans and targets, as well as the lack of time spent on English in the Curriculum. Other challenges that featured strongly in all schools visited related to the complexities of disadvantage and how this impacted on teaching. For some teachers, this meant the work they were doing was compensating for what children had missed out at home. Others felt that parents could be doing more to help their children improve and thought that for some parents, more support was needed to support their learning and relationship with books.
- 5.66 ● While DEIS is not yet fully rolled out and evaluation data is not yet available, a great deal can be learned from a reflection on both the policy itself, its supports and critics as well as on the process of implementation in schools. From interviews with stakeholders and existing research, there are clearly some positives, including smaller class sizes and additional funding for DEIS schools. Challenges have also been identified which include the lack of information on progress to date, limited co-ordination and integration across agencies and services, a lack of publicly available data on literacy levels to show what is working well and could be applied to other schools, and insufficient clarity in accountability to deliver improvements in relation to national targets.
- 5.67 ● The OECD report argues that performance and accountability need to be more closely aligned so that the person or persons who are accountable are clearly determined, and incentives are put in place to promote better performance (NESF, 2009: Report No. 38; OECD, 2008). One way to support that is *'by linking individual objectives to the organisational mission and objectives [it] can help reinforce a performance culture and creates incentives for high performance'* (OECD, 2008, p. 175). There are many different ways incentives and rewarding success could be applied. Further work is needed to explore how incentives can be developed in relation to the delivery of DEIS.
- 5.68 ● The new one-year universal pre-school provision for 3-4 year olds is welcomed by the Project Team. However, it is not yet clear how this can be linked effectively with DEIS, and with the development of literacy policy more generally. One suggestion is the great potential in the model developed by the Office of the Minister for Children in relation to Children's Services Committees. These could play a central role in the delivery of ECCE and literacy co-ordination across counties.
- 5.69 ● In overall terms, this chapter has demonstrated the local and contextual features of policy implementation. Each school had different experiences of the delivery of DEIS and its programmes, albeit with common themes emerging. To fully understand how policy can be most effectively implemented, it is important to consider further, the role of the school and its culture, in shaping that delivery. The next chapter does this as part of the Case Study Research.

6

Introduction

- 6.1 ● While earlier chapters have examined the ‘hard’ aspects of policy implementation to do with policy design, structure of delivery, resources, among other things, this chapter explores some of the ‘softer’ aspects of policy-in-action. There is a growing understanding that the culture of an organisation has a key role to play in achieving results and effecting change. How might schools themselves view and approach the roll-out of DEIS? What are the key factors that shape more successful implementation? The following chapter presents the main issues that emerged from the Case Study visits. This work is underpinned by the mostly excellent work observed in schools which were experiencing the same difficulties as other schools with high levels of disadvantage, but yet seeming to find a positive way forward. Trying to tease out why this is the case is the main goal for this chapter and to throw light on this often invisible side of implementation.
- 6.2 ● Culture has become an increasingly important concept in the corporate world, with growing evidence and experience that without engaging with the culture of an organisation, change or resistance to change cannot be fully understood or managed (Gaffney, 2008). Culture, according to Gaffney is commonly understood as the values and norms of an organisation. Another fairly common, simplistic definition of organisational culture is ‘*the way we do things around here*’ (Lindahl, 2005). Organisational cultures can be strong or weak, collaborative or individualistic, trusting or suspicious (Hargreaves, 1994 Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008, p. 82).
- 6.3 ● This area is a new departure for policy implementation research. As a recent review of research evidence on implementation argues, ‘*there is very little information about the processes used to gain access to and secure the cooperation of individuals, organisations, departments, and political groups. Thus, organisational and systems intervention strategies and skills represent a critical research and practice area for national implementation of successful practices and programs*’ (Fixsen, et al., 2005, p. 66)

- 6.4** ● Some schools are more successful in raising literacy levels than others, even when their socio-economic profiles are broadly similar. This is due to a range of school- and classroom-level factors as well as differences between individual teachers (Kennedy, 2007). What is clear from international research is that policy in itself cannot be imposed top-down, it has to come alive in a school. To make that happen it has to work within or change the existing culture, building on networks already established, effective leadership, positive relationships. These represent key elements of organisational culture that have tended, to date, to be left out of policy implementation enquiry.
- 6.5** ● One lesson from the study of organisational change is that, innovations that are imposed from the outside, do not last (Fullan, 1982). Also, if teachers and schools have information and feedback on what they are doing in a non-threatening way they are much more likely to bring about positive change. In other words providing teachers with information about the school's level of performance increases the likelihood that they will be willing to use that information to make the changes that are needed (Bamburg, 1997).
- 6.6** ● To that end, questions which the research sought to explore in the Case Studies included:
- Are the objectives of DEIS understood in the same way by the stakeholders?
 - How is literacy understood and is this consistent among all stakeholders?
 - What are the shared tacit assumptions - about people and their motivations, about the management process, about the school, the Department, about how the work gets done, about how success is achieved, about the culture itself?
 - What other aspects of the school's culture strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of delivering DEIS?

Key Elements of Organisational Culture

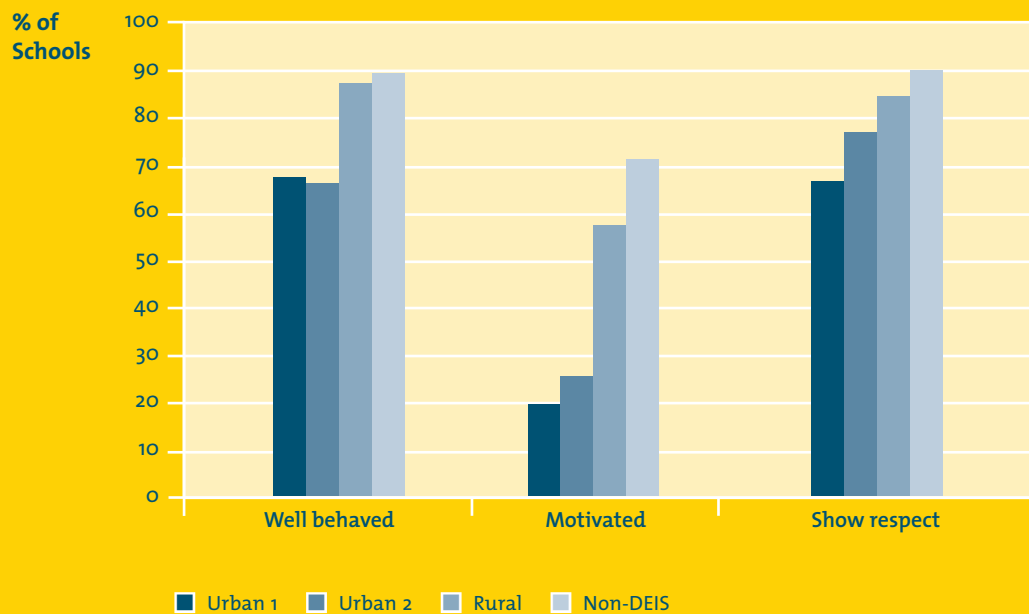
- 6.7** ● Organisational culture can be approached in a variety of ways. Firstly, and from a functional approach, it can be viewed as operating at different levels, such as observable artefacts (such as reports, structures); espoused values (such as goals, strategies) and shared tacit assumptions (Gaffney, 2008; Schein, 1992).
- 6.8** ● The Implementation Template, presented in Chapter 5, presented in brief some of the organisational cultural issues that impact on implementation. These will be examined throughout this chapter to explore how they can impact on the delivery and wider implementation of DEIS.

Schools as Learning Organisations

- 6.9** ● Most modern theorists and reflective practitioners of school improvement recognise the important roles played by organisational culture in the change process. As far back as 1932, Waller noted that *'schools have a culture that is definitely their own'* (Waller, 1932, p. 103). It is the case that schools that operate as strong learning communities have more successful outcomes in performance results and they deal with change more effectively (Hargreaves, 2007).
- 6.10** ● In a study by the Hay Group in the UK (2004), successful schools were characterised by cultures which:
- Had the highest ambitions for every pupil;
 - Put the welfare of pupils ahead of the comfort of staff;
 - Focused on capability and learning (inputs) to improve outcomes;
 - Held teachers accountable to the whole school;
 - Promoted team work and learning from each other;
 - Were intolerant of failure and staff excuses for underperformance; and
 - Valued discipline, reliability and service delivery (Hay Group, 2004).
- 6.11** ● Schools are increasingly being shaped as learning organisations *'where employees excel at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge. Three building blocks of such institutions are: (i) a supportive learning environment; (ii) concrete learning processes and practices; and (iii) leadership behaviour that reinforces learning'* (Garvin, *et al.*, 2008, p. 110).
- 6.12** ● It can be difficult to bring about change in schools for several reasons. Mayock *et al* schools identify the following:
- Changes or reforms that contain an implicit threat to self-esteem may not work as teachers have to let go of old ideas and reinterpret the self;
 - There are sometimes different interpretations of the same message; teachers' interpretation has been found to be a major predictor of the extent of implementation of a reform (Spillane, 1998);
 - Changes in teaching practices have a major emotional and personal significance for those involved in the change (Ball, 1993);
 - The process of change can be more important than the content- teachers who started with learning and question their practice in relation to benefits for students made serious changes (L. Darling-Hammond, 1995); and
 - A change in the culture of a professional community is a major factor in success, including shared norms and values, a focus on student learning and collaboration (Mayock, *et al.*, 2007).

- 6.13** ● Research shows that teacher leaders may be particularly influential in bringing about innovations. In one study, those who received Reading Recovery training to equip them to teach others were more associated with empowerment, knowledge of student learning and re-designing work in the school (Rinehart & Short, 1991).
- 6.14** ● Lieberman identified themes related to teacher change which included:
- Turning problems into possibilities for change;
 - Putting student learning and engagement as the main focus;
 - Principals staying in the background, putting teachers in the foreground;
 - Building shared meaning through joint action, reflection and reducing teacher isolation;
 - Tension and conflict which come out of different perspectives on teaching; and
 - Creating new structures such as teacher development teams and planning groups (Lieberman, 1995).
- 6.15** ● In recent years there has been a strong focus on developing leadership in schools in Ireland. The Leadership Development in Schools (LDS) programme was established by the Department of Education and Science in 2002 to promote professional development for principals, deputy principals and others involved in school management in first and second level schools.
- 6.16** ● Schools serving disadvantaged communities have to deal with many complex issues arising from poverty and disadvantage as part of their daily work. This can impact on the pupils but also on school culture in both positive and negative ways. A recent ESRI study has shown there are differences between DEIS and non-DEIS primary schools in relation to what they call 'school climate'. As part of this work, they found that principals in urban DEIS schools are much less likely to see their pupils as motivated in their schoolwork than those in non-DEIS or rural DEIS schools. They are also less likely to see them as well behaved in class (Smyth & McCoy, 2009) (See Figure 6.1).

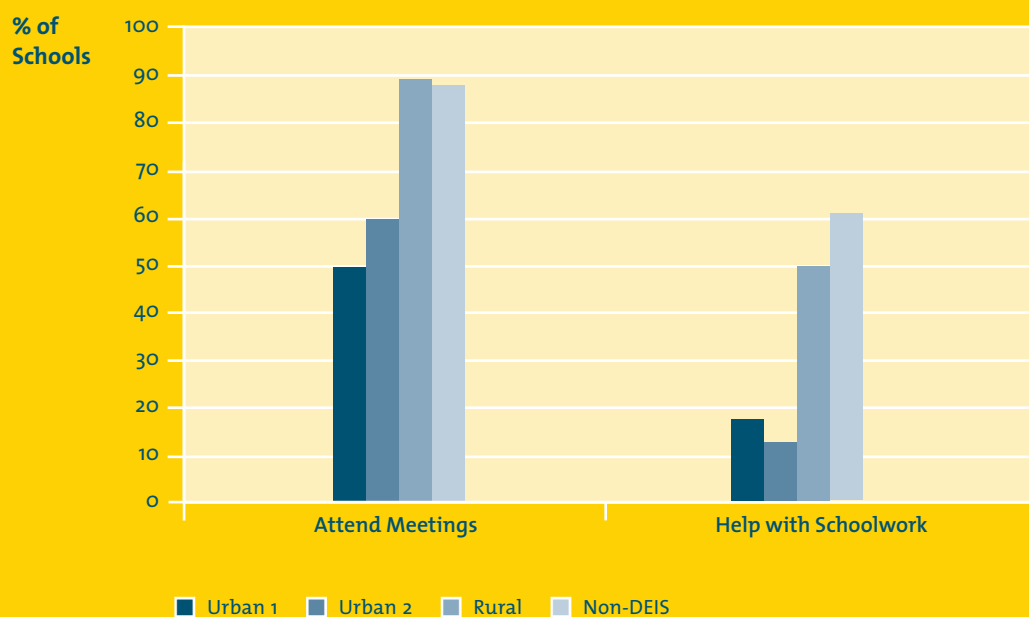
Figure 6.1 Perceptions of Pupils by Primary Principals



Source: Smyth & McCoy (2009) *Investing in Education: Combating Educational Disadvantage*

6.17 ● This research also found that parents of pupils in urban DEIS schools are 'seen as less likely to attend meetings and to help with schoolwork than those in non-DEIS schools and that rural DEIS schools are similar to non-DEIS schools in the profile of parental support' (Smyth & McCoy, 2009, p. 19) (see Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 Perceptions of Parents by Primary Principals

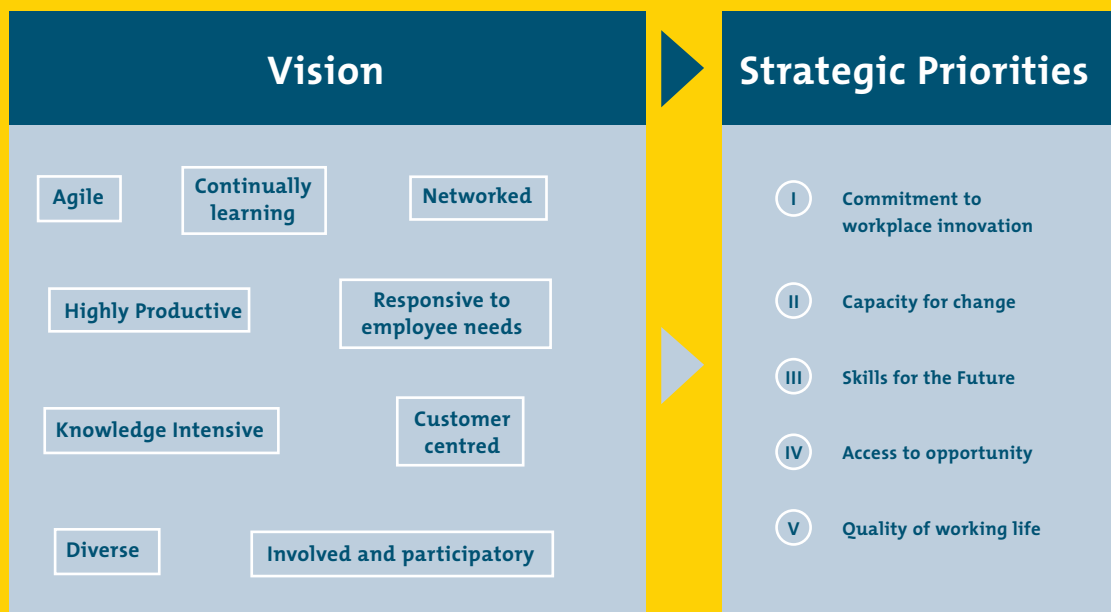


Source: Smyth & McCoy (2009) *Investing in Education: Combating Educational Disadvantage*

The school as workplace of the future

6.18 ● Schools, while unique in many ways, are workplaces. The National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP) outline elements of the workplace of the future which include being ‘customer-centered’, involved and participatory, continually learning, networked and knowledge intensive (See Figure 6.3). In this sense schools which have some or all of these elements, will be in a stronger position to implement policy changes on the ground and to be more effective in tackling literacy. As in other workplaces, Irish schools could benefit by reflecting more on how they can become more ‘customer-centered’, more involved and participatory, and networked to better equip them as workplaces for the future.

Figure 6.3 The Workplace of the Future (NCP, 2007)



Source: NCP (2007) Workplace of the Future

6.19 ● There are parallels between this vision and research on school effectiveness conducted in the US and UK and considerable consensus exists as to the elements of successful schools for effective teaching. For example, the National College of School Leadership in England (2002) has drawn up research-based areas where leaders of schools in challenging circumstances can make a difference (The National College of School Leadership in England, 2002). These are set out in the following Table (Table 6.1).

6.20 ● Given the key role of leadership in implementation, this table and these core elements of effective schools underpin the focus now on our Case Study Schools. The research examined how schools delivered and experienced DEIS differently, despite all being urban schools in disadvantaged areas facing similar challenges. One of the key questions we wished to explore was, to what extent do these ‘softer’ aspects affect the process of implementing literacy policy? The material we collected from case study visits has been organised under these eight themes. However, leadership is not the only factor at play in schools as the material presented below reveals; the focus on attitudes and values among staff also creates strong undercurrents.

Table 6.1 Making the Difference: Successful Leadership in Challenging Circumstances

1. Focus on learning and teaching	Focus on the core purpose of learning for both staff and pupils, research into effective learning and barriers to learning.
2. Generate positive relationships	Create a school where people feel supported and motivated based around courage, integrity, honesty, trust and openness.
3. Provide a clear vision and high expectations	Celebrate success, transparent and well-communicated targets for improvement, informed by in-depth analysis.
4. Improve the environment	Create a welcoming environment.
5. Provide the time and opportunities for collaboration	Emphasise collaborative learning and high expectations.
6. Distributed leadership: build teams and discover shared solutions.	Share responsibility and encourage groups to work together to research.
7. Engage the community	Strategic work with the community is vitally important; engage parents and carers; have an open-door policy; consult pupils, parents and others; involve the business community.
8. Evaluate and innovate	Develop a culture of constructive evaluation and use data effectively to challenge accepted truths. Build evaluation and innovation into the culture of the whole school.

Source: (The National College of School Leadership in England, 2002) *Making the Difference: Successful leadership in Challenging Circumstances*

1. Focus on Learning and Teaching: Literacy

6.21 ● Effective schools place the highest focus on learning and teaching in the school. DEIS has an in-built mechanism that requires schools to plan and reflect on their goals and targets. Each of the schools had an Action Plan which they developed under DEIS. While some schools shared these with the Secretariat, others did not. They are confidential to the school and contain eight action areas, including improving literacy levels and partnership with parents. The Action Plan form includes targets, inviting the school to *'state in specific terms how literacy levels should improve as a result of measures in the school's DEIS plan'*. While these Action Plans were not always available, it was possible to establish from interviews and observations, the school's approach to literacy.

6.22 ● While all the schools talked about their literacy strategies, it was clear that some had really integrated it into every aspect of its teaching and learning strategy. One example is School A, which had a strong focus on literacy from an early age (for example, the Jolly Phonics Programme in the pre-school, the gift of a pre-school home entry pack to parents). Their later literacy strategies involved children and parents (for example, Literacy Liftoff and Story Sacks). They also benefited from being part of an outside programme which brought many creative methods into the school. School A also involved the parents via the Parents Association, parents' room, and classroom involvement. School B tried to instil a love of books.

'Nobody feels that they can't read in this school. Everybody likes books. They mightn't know what to do with it but I like books and I can read and I am good at it, you know, and I think that's huge.' (Class teacher, School A)

'At the end of the day that the child would leave with a love of books. And the whole world of books and they would enjoy it and especially this age of technology, that they would be able to have the technology at one side and the book at the other side.' (Principal, School B)

6.23 ● Some schools, such as School B, had decided on a definite strategy.

'Well this year now we really want to work on literacy in a big way. First of all we're getting the parents involved. The whole shared reading programme at infant level, a colossal amount of money was spent to buy lovely books.' (Principal, School B)

6.24 ● For one school, the focus on literacy had always been important but the problem was finding the time for it in the school.

'It would always be recognised by the teachers that literacy is the priority, because it impacts on all the other subjects. By the time you get to the fourth and fifth class, if you can't read, you can't do history, you can't do geography, and you can't do science. It is always the priority, but it is finding the extra time for it.' (Principal, School C)

- 6.25 ● Two of the principals articulated literacy in terms of multiple literacies.

'Literacy, at a very basic level, is a tool that the children might use to communicate, to improve their life chances... and it's just an absolutely basic tool that people have to have in this day and age, and if people don't have it they're extremely disempowered... And then moving on it's kind of an enhancement of their lives, where they will use it for enjoyment and for aesthetic reasons, and for communication probably at a higher level. And then it's intelligence if you like, because people can be literate in very many ways. And then, of course, like as I say in the playground, even the language to say, 'I don't like you doing that;' and I suppose it's the whole language of emotional literacy as well So it will be a very, very broad thing. You teach them literacy then not just by teaching them reading, and that is extremely important in the skills of reading and the basic literacy skills, but you're also looking at a lot of other literacies.' (Principal, School A)

- 6.26 ● There was also recognition that there were different forms of language at play for children from disadvantaged backgrounds which affected literacy and teaching.

'They do have their own form of language which is as valid and as accurate, and complex as what is standardised English but unfortunately the education system doesn't recognise that. The standardised tests don't recognise that. The textbooks don't recognise that.' (Principal, School C)

- 6.27 ● In contrast, although recognising the importance of literacy, School C seemed 'disillusioned' by all of the literacy programmes and changing information and wanted to know what programme would be the most effective and to stick with that. The impression given was the school felt they had little control over the home environment and thus, the challenges to improving literacy. Nevertheless, one of the parents in the school felt her child was improving.

'He loves reading, he just found a little bit hard but with the extra help he's got, he's made an improvement.' (Parent, School C)

- 6.28 ● In all schools, there were enthusiastic and skilled teachers. Some teachers were doing post-graduate training, supported by the school and this specialist expertise was evident in the use of interactive white boards in one school, and play therapy in another. Teachers also worked effectively as a team in the delivery of Power Hour/Literacy Liftoff which happened daily in several schools.

2. Generate Positive Relationships

- 6.29 ● The strength of the relationships was obvious in some schools between teachers and between the principal and staff. Break-times were brief but full of intense and lively chat and banter that created a rich social environment, as well as facilitating the informal exchange of information. School A seemed to have a very dynamic staff team, who are positive, empowered and enthusiastic. There was high morale, teamwork and a real sense of pride in the school. While, School B strengthened communication between staff with IT support by using email.
- 6.30 ● Where openness, communication and positive networks exist, 'communities of practice' or networks can emerge. These are important but are often neglected structures for learning, innovation and change (Brown & Duguid, 1991). A 'community of practice' has been defined as *'a group of people who consider themselves to be involved in the same sort of work; whose identity is drawn from the work; who share with one another a set of values, norms and perspectives that apply to but extend beyond work-related matters; and whose social relationships meld work and leisure'* (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984, p. 287).
- 6.31 ● Within some of the schools, there were signs of such communities emerging. For example in School B, with one teacher doing postgraduate work on interactive whiteboards, there was a sub-grouping of staff interested in this practice and developing it within the school. In School D, one area of core interest was on the value of play and this had provided a focus for their teaching planning and development.
- 6.32 ● The openness of some schools was mentioned by parents and they noted how schools more generally had become more welcoming places in recent years.

'... let's say now there is a vibrancy here because there are new staff coming in every year and... there is a constancy about the staff here to be fair to them. For a disadvantaged school it is very good. Nobody leaves here at all.' (Principal, School B)

'It is a really welcoming school. You can always drop in and see the teachers and, even the Homework Club as well here.' (Parent, School C)

'I went to school here myself in the girls. So everybody knows everybody down here. And no matter who you are, like people, even it comes to when there are days off, people say don't forget this day is off or the half day. So everybody helps each other.' (Parent, School D)

3. Provide a Clear Vision and High Expectations

- 6.33 ● Setting out a vision for the school in terms of literacy seemed key to making progress. In three of the schools visited, there was a sense in which all staff members understood what that vision was and how the DEIS Action Plan was going to help them reach it.

- 6.34 ● In terms of high expectations and rewarding success, some schools developed sophisticated reward systems.

'They have star charts in the classroom now as well the pupil of the week, they have a different child get pupil of the week every week which is very encouraging for every child, every child gets their turn... The Golden Book is brilliant, if you do something in the classroom or something and you're sent to the principal and your name is put into the Golden Book. It's a great honour to go to the principal.' (Parents, School A)

- 6.35 ● This school also had a 'Kidstalk' Programme Graduation inviting the parents along to see the children collect their Cert, sweets and a book. School D had an effective reward system using racing cars, Zoom Ahead with Reading, which parents seemed very engaged with.

4. Improve the Environment

- 6.36 ● Most of the schools visited created a welcoming environment through a combination of the school layout, design and building, and the presence of staff in the corridors. Although small, School D had a curious layout with few corridors, so that classrooms could only be reached by going through other classrooms. The school viewed this positively as it created a constant throughput and flow between classes.

'And it is like a railway station, like the new teachers they can't believe it, because they are used to going into their classroom, closing the door and seeing nobody all day except for their break. And here, there are people coming and going.' (Principal, School D)

- 6.37 ● The disadvantage of this school's building was that there was no outdoor area for children to play leaving them to have their lunch in the classroom. Despite this, staff did not report any poor behaviour from pupils.

- 6.38 ● One school had invested in a new parents' room.

'They bring the parent down and the parent's away from the principal's office and they sit down and have a cup of coffee and it's a warmer scene. We have the school psychologist come in there and we go into that room and the whole atmosphere, I'll show you the room, it's a lovely room, it has lovely facilities, television and lots of thing they can do. We go out of our way to try and welcome the parents into the school.' (Principal, School B)

5. Provide the Time and Opportunities for Collaboration

- 6.39 ● Collaboration among teachers was one feature of many of the schools visited- small groups had been created to look at interactive white board use, development of play strategies, the DEIS committee within the school- each providing an opportunity for collaboration and sharing of good practice. While this is hard to do within the tight timetable of a primary school day, there were examples of this, always under the leadership of the principal.

- 6.40 ● In School B, the teachers put together a manual to share their training with teachers in the school.

'Everybody needs to be singing from the same hymn sheet. So that was really the reason for doing this sort of presentational manual. So that every teacher knows ... or we said you don't have to follow this word for word like but it is just generally this is the framework and the structure'. (Class Teachers, School B)

- 6.41 ● Collaboration happens outside of the school as well. Research has shown school networks create improvement gains by schools helping schools, through sharing best practice, especially between the strong and the weak (Pont, Nusche, & Hopkins, 2008). School A had a wide range of outside artists, musicians, writers and graffiti artists coming to the school to do workshops, and these relationships were rich and long-standing.

'Literacy workshops, writing and poetry. and the drama. Over the years we have had a lot of visiting authors and that's usually in conjunction with Book Week'. (Principal, School A)

A parent also found links with local artists and facilities were beneficial.

'We went the week before last to the printing works, the print makers, and the artists were... working and everything and the children really enjoyed it, fantastic, and you see places that you wouldn't actually know existed. I thought it was fabulous place and to know that its there and there's exhibitions and things going on there and places to take them as well which is great.' (Parent, School A)

- 6.42 ● School D was also running a music and literacy programme in the school. Both of these schools had outside links/support which was evident in the way these additional programmes were resourced and using often creative means of delivery. These links were also supported by universities/ colleges and this enriched the focus on literacy in both cases.

- 6.43 ● One principal talked of the regional network of schools of which they were part.

'There was a kind of a common bond coming from all those schools, common problems and behavior and discipline and all of these.. So there is a lot of good coming out of that. Networking is good. It is a good idea.' (Principal, School B)

- 6.44 ● For two of the schools, outside privately-funded programmes provided additional supports and community links to DEIS. This led to a wider focus of those schools, bringing in artists and community groups and supporting the schools to be creative in their responses to literacy. This was most effective where there was strong leadership in the school that could draw the different elements together in a coherent school plan. Other strong supports were provided by universities and colleges, which increased the focus on literacy in several Case Study Schools. Other links were made by schools to local networks of other DEIS schools and through teachers who had been trained in Reading Recovery. In some cases, the intensive training programmes fostered strong supportive links between teachers who had undertaken them.

6. Distributed Leadership: Build Teams

- 6.45 ● Leadership has a central position in organisational culture. According to the OECD, there is a growing awareness of the central role of school leaders in policy implementation and school achievement. Instead of being managers who implement policy, school administrators will increasingly need to become leaders of their schools and also exercise leadership in the environment beyond their schools (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008).
- 6.46 ● Effective school leadership is also crucial to successfully improving literacy, according to (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). For example, school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning.
- 6.47 ● Different types of leadership have been shown to have varying impacts. Instructional leadership, places emphasis on the principal's co-ordination and control of instruction, is a more traditional model. It is considered by some as a top-down approach. However in the OECD Irish Background Report on School Leadership it is noted as '*critical in determining the success and effectiveness of the school and in providing quality education for the children*' (Leadership Development for Schools Programme, 2007, p. 23). Whereas, transformational leadership, a type of shared or distributed leadership that focuses on stimulating changes through bottom-up participation, has been shown to have a major impact on teachers' perceptions of school conditions, their commitment to change and the organisational learning that takes place (Hallinger, 2003; Mayock, *et al.*, 2007).

6.48 ● As the OECD report on *Improving School Leadership* points out, school leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas across OECD countries (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008, p. 19). Successful implementation of reform requires leadership at the school level to promote adaptations of school processes and systems, as well as cultures, attitudes and behaviours (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008). The Irish Background Report on School Leadership for the OECD concludes by arguing that *'leadership does not reside with one person at the top, but, rather is part of every teacher's work. Future policy might recognise this in a more formal way and provide the training and support required for leadership to be developed throughout the education system (Leadership Development for Schools Programme, 2007, p. 69).'*

6.49 ● There were many examples of strong leadership in the Case Study Schools.

'No matter what, [the principal] will trust you and let you go ahead and do it, you know, and won't question which is a great thing really, you know, that you just know that you have their trust and that does I think prove to be a very positive in any work situation doesn't it...?' (HSCL, School A)

6.50 ● This trust reflects this school's problem-solving approach. As outlined in the OECD report, when schools behave and are led as problem-solving learning organisations, then they enhance their effectiveness and improve their outcomes with students (Leithwood & Louis, 1998; Mulford, 1998; Pont, Nusche, & Hopkins, 2008, p. 72).

'I mean one thing I would always do is listen to people, and I'm very conscious of the fact that I don't know everything..., and like if somebody has an idea I'll always listen to people's ideas... I like to think that the other people are the leaders really, do you know what I mean?' (Principal, School A)

6.51 ● Spreading leadership out to teachers is referred by some as distributed or distributive leadership (Harris, 2001). In its more robust forms, this extends to students, parents and support staff (Pont, Nusche, & Hopkins, 2008).

'I want the teachers to have a sense of ownership of the school. That they are in there and their ideas are valued, and they are appreciated and I appreciate their commitments to the children. I really value that. I would say that anyway, outside or behind, they are really committed to the children.' (Principal, School B)

6.52 ● Others in the school commented on this.

'[The principal] gives you the impression that when you come into your room and close your door it is your business and he doesn't ... whatever goes on in here I am the boss. But having said that he/she has us all working together. gives you this sort of sense that you are your own boss. [The principal] is not the boss.... He/she empowers you somehow.' (Class teacher, School B)

7. Engage the Community

- 6.53 ● Policies that try to improve achievement and wellbeing for children in disadvantaged communities are increasingly requiring leaders to become more involved with other partners beyond the school such as local businesses, sports clubs, faith-based group and community organisations (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008, p. 74; PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2007).

- 6.54 ● Being in the heart of community with high levels of disadvantage presented challenges and opportunities for all the schools. One saw the school as a sanctuary from the threats of outside.

'Last month somebody was murdered outside the chipper, a young lad and they all came to school, the children went in, it's like it's their safe haven. Something they have to be proud of, and they don't want it to be tainted or varnished by anything that's on the outside. They don't want to be seen as these disadvantaged people who go around shooting each other. They want to be seen as something else which is fantastic.' (Principal, School D)

- 6.55 ● For the same school, being long-standing in the community brought with it a sense of familiarity to local parents. And for her, the relative rise in prosperity in the local area had impacted positively.

'Because for years when we had nothing down here, do you know what I mean. It goes back to say even when I went to school next door, 30 years ago, we had nothing... we can see there is more positive things. The kids are more open to everything else.' (Parent, School D)

- 6.56 ● All the schools talked at length about the challenges of getting parents more involved. School D ran a 'Parents together' programme over six weeks. Six local parents joined the first programme (in 4th week) and their feedback at the end of each workshop was reportedly very positive. The parents apparently said they wished the course was longer and they enjoy meeting each other and making friends. The aim of the programme was to help the parents to build their child's confidence and to promote development and management of behaviour problems in children aged 2-6 years. The workshops offered discussion time, DVD's and information. The parents also gained the opportunity to open up about their worries and set clear goals for their children's behaviour/future.

- 6.57** ● The parents in School A talked about the benefits of their increasing involvement in the school.

'I think when your children see you're interested in and involved in school, it makes them more interested in what they are doing themselves the teacher told me, my daughter's age is seven years and one month but her reading age is seven years and six months. So I can see the benefit of what we are doing involving her, so it's great for the kids themselves and when they feel involved they take more interest in what you are doing.' (Parent, School A)

- 6.58** ● School B ran a paired reading programme with parents.

'We try to keep it as simple as we possibly can for the parents and as short as could be because knowing the parents we're dealing with....at least for 10 minutes per day. Now that was really successful I think, of all the books we gave out, because I want parents to take responsibility as well. No matter what disadvantage they're coming from, I want some sense of ownership.' (School B, Principal)

School C had a Homework Club in the school which was privately run.

'I think the Homework Clubs have made a big difference to children. Even from when I was in the classroom, where you would get kids that would opt out because there wasn't anybody able or available to help them at home. So they would be coming in feeling bad about themselves, hiding if you like, staying out of your eye line as best as they could. Whereas children are much more likely to engage now because they have those supports so they are coming in feeling confident.' (Principal, School C)

8. Evaluate and Innovate

- 6.59** ● All of the schools were taking part in the DEIS evaluation, as well as monitoring their pupils literacy scores twice a year. As part of the Action Plan, they have had to reflect on what targets to set, how to measure them and strategies to reach them. Evaluation is critical to an outcomes-based policy approach and DEIS has a detailed in-built evaluation strategy. All the schools talked about their literacy scores, even if not revealing them directly, to show that they were still below the national average. Issues were raised about the assessment used to measure literacy and this is discussed in Chapter 7.
- 6.60** ● In terms of innovation, two of the schools emphasised taking risks and trying new initiatives. The principal in each of these schools played a key role in creating a climate of risk-taking.

'If they come and say, 'Look, I think this will be a good idea,' I generally speaking would run with that. I suppose I try to create a culture where we're thinking about things and where it's alright to come up with an idea, even if it doesn't work out. ' (Principal, School A)

- 6.61 ● School A was also open to trying new things.

'But I think as a staff we are very open to change as in we change things and we'll introduce things, like we used to use Legoland and we went with Jolly Phonics because we thought it was better so we would be open to trying new things'. (Class Teachers, School A)

- 6.62 ● Another example was that School A involved older children in a paired reading programme with younger children. The older children helped the younger ones to read and watched over them at break times. The teachers noted that this had a positive effect also on the older children, as they had responsibility, enjoyed it and grew in confidence. School B had introduced interactive whiteboards across the school and was clearly trying out new things and sharing good practice. For School D, the emphasis on the school was on play and its therapeutic and literacy development value.

- 6.63 ● School B had run a successful literacy summer camp.

'It was all based on literacy, but it was a fun camp so everything we did, we wrote. Say we took a trip to a castle, I made out a treasure trip for them on the way. So they had to read the question, find out, when did the King live here, different activities like that and they just had to fill it out. Every morning before we set out we'd have breakfast so we made sausage rolls but they had to read instructions on the packets of sausage rolls, they cooked them, we ate them. We had a cereal day as well and then we kind of did a big project on cereals. A lot based in the computer room here as well.' (Class Teachers, School B)

Conclusions

- 6.64 ● This chapter presents just one part of the implementation 'black box.' Clearly the structural and resource aspects of any policy are critical in its implementation, alongside policy design and outcome-focus. Nevertheless, as has been argued here, there are organisational cultural issues which can strengthen or weaken policy delivery. In broad terms, effective distributed leadership has value in creating a positive team focus on teaching and learning. It is not possible to say conclusively if those schools with such leadership 'do better' than other schools. However, the observations and interview material gathered by the NESF Secretariat point to that conclusion. Other key elements of more effective schools are closer parental involvement, building a vision across the school in terms of literacy and then taking risks to try out new programmes. Building networks with outside-funders, universities and colleges, libraries, private partnerships and other locally based programmes was another effective strategy, not just in terms of funding, but as a link to new ideas and interplay between the old and the new.

- 6.65** ● As will be discussed in later chapters, the school itself is changing, with greater community involvement, and with schools reaching out to share facilities and opportunities. The 24 hour school is a concept gaining ground. The extended model being successfully piloted in Belfast demonstrates this, the Belfast Model Girls School (discussed in Chapter 7).
- 6.66** ● Some key conclusions from this chapter include:
- Effective school leadership is crucial to successfully improving literacy, according to Leithwood, *et al.*, (2006). For example, school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning;
 - Integrated/extended service provision with links to community services can be very positive;
 - Schools, which were moving towards being learning organisations, were more positive about their work and their effectiveness in tackling literacy problems;
 - High expectations of staff, a culture of rewarding success, shared vision, targets and action plans were important elements of positive approaches; and
 - Building networks with outside funders, private partnerships and other locally-based programmes, not just in terms of funding, but as a link also to new ideas and interplay between the old and the new.
- 6.67** ● Finally, the Implementation Template, first introduced in Chapter 5, presented some of the organisational cultural issues that impact on implementation. These included values, beliefs and tacit assumptions, leadership, attitudes and quality of collaborative relationships. These combined with the leadership-focused features identified in this chapter can produce an example of what an organisational culture template for schools could look like (see Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4 Organisational Culture Template for Schools



- 6.68** ● As mentioned in Chapter 5, there is great value of formative evaluation in the study of implementation. While outcome data may not be available until after several years in the delivery of a programme, interim formative information on how the programme is being delivered is attainable. These soft organisational markers could be useful in identifying the early signals for successful implementation. For example, effective distributed leadership could be examined in schools, alongside the extent of collaborative relationships, the values and beliefs of school staff towards literacy and the policy being examined. The richness of this material could help interpret the final outcome data to understand why some schools are more effective at delivering policy on the ground than others and what the key factors are that can help support this process.
- 6.69** ● The next chapter examines some of the other school-based issues that have emerged from the Case Study work, from the Submissions received by the Project Team and the interviews with stakeholders.

7

Introduction

- 7.1** ● The previous chapters have examined the implementation of DEIS on the ground drawing from Case Study Research. This chapter continues the focus on schools and draws together material from the research paper commissioned from Dr Eithne Kennedy²⁴, other existing research, Submissions, stakeholder interviews, Case Study findings and the work of the Project Team to examine key literacy issues arising in schools. This is not intended as an exhaustive overview but rather highlights some of the complexity of delivering literacy on the ground and the need for a holistic approach. While some of the points raised have been signalled across other chapters, it is worth drawing them together here.
- 7.2** ● As highlighted in Chapter 2, the context of educational disadvantage has a particular impact on schools and how they respond to literacy and social inclusion. The main issues raised on a daily basis include: absenteeism, hunger, sleep deprivation, disruptive behaviour, staff turnover, poor concentration as well as some instances of lack of parental supervision. The effects of absenteeism in particular were noted in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report, which concluded that schools can only address educational needs of pupils who are regular attenders. Some schools had success in combating absenteeism while others continue to have chronic problems (Government of Ireland, 2006a, p. 38). They report that absent pupils fall behind their peers in key areas of literacy and numeracy. This leads them to feel unhappy and uncomfortable and lose confidence in themselves and their abilities. The NEWB in its enhanced role will hopefully enable it to tackle poor attendance more effectively.

²⁴ Dr Kennedy's paper can be found in the Supplementary Report, published alongside this Final Report.

School-Based Issues

7.3 ● The issues related to literacy and social inclusion examined briefly here include:

- i. *Whole School Approach*
- ii. *Oral Language*
- iii. *ECCE*
- iv. *Pre-Service Training and Professional Development*
- v. *Teaching Literacy*
- vi. *The Curriculum*
- vii. *Programmes in Schools*
- viii. *Assessment and Measurement*
- ix. *Broader Socio-Economic Context*
- x. *Family Literacy and Parental Involvement*
- xi. *Other School-Based Issues*

i. Whole School Approach

7.4 ● As highlighted in Chapter 6, the organisational culture of a school presents many supports and barriers to improving literacy levels. Certainly having a vision, backed up with targets and outcomes, that everyone in the school can sign up to and which the parents can be involved in shaping, is fundamental. Nevertheless, it is clear that the complexities of educational disadvantage do present challenges to schools.

7.5 ● Research from *Bridging the Gap* has pointed to a whole school approach being central in terms of setting targets and monitoring results (Deane, 2007). It produces positive outcomes for teaching and learning in the participating schools. It is also clear that empowering schools to respond flexibly to the needs of their pupils and of the community has a positive impact on schools and produces good learning outcomes (Educational Disadvantage Committee, 2005, p. 14).

7.6 ● Australia and New Zealand have been at the forefront of developing whole school approaches to literacy²⁵. This provides a framework for individual teachers to critically reflect on how planning of literacy teaching within their classes may be improved. The whole school approach assists each teacher to be able to articulate:

- how students learn to be literate;
- expectations of what students will learn about literacy in that class;
- how literacy, especially reading, is being taught in that class;

²⁵ http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/pdhpe/assets/pdf/lit_oo4.pdf
<http://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/learning/literate-futures/wsl-guidelines.html>

- how the classroom organisation, procedures, core learning tasks and teaching strategies support students to learn literacy;
- how literacy development is being assessed, recorded and reported;
- how they are learning more about literacy and its effective teaching; and
- how they are supporting the learning of colleagues.

ii. Oral Language

- 7.7 ● Being familiar with and able to use literate style oral language has been shown to be a developmental precursor to school-based literacy learning (D. K. Dickinson & Sprague, 2002; Pellegrini & Galda, 1988) as well as a strong predictor of early literacy development. Eivers *et al.* (2004) signal that children's '*orientation towards particular kinds of language (such as the language found in books) are major determinants of their ability to achieve in school*' (E Eivers, *et al.*, 2004, p. 8). This oral language literacy has been referred to as 'oracy.'
- 7.8 ● Recent research in the Irish context suggests that children from disadvantaged backgrounds require explicit support in acquiring the 'literate style' of language required in school. Developing pre-requisite oral language skills from the very earliest years is of critical importance in disadvantaged contexts (Cregan, 2008).
- 7.9 ● As one Submission put it '*the language the disadvantaged child hears at home is at variance with the language the child hears in school.. For example, in Southill the children say 'wore' instead of 'were'. This poses a huge problem and it is like teaching the child a language that is not their native tongue.*' (Submission from Mary O'Dwyer, Learning Support Teacher)
- 7.10 ● Another Submission makes a point regarding DEIS, oral language and role of play. '*In relation to policy documents, clear and explicit statements are needed in relation to the genesis of early literacy, the range of early learning experiences that contribute to child literacy, and the ways in which such experiences in early childhood provide the foundations for literacy.*' (Submission from Dr Elizabeth Dunphy, Lecturer in Early Childhood Education)

Speech and Language Support

- 7.11 ● One issue raised in most schools, was the delay in speech and language assessment for children and also for specific expertise in that area.
- 'I'm a trained primary school teacher, I'm supposed to be helping but I really need to do speech and language therapy stuff because I can't access the child's head with literacy until we've gotten over this heap.'*
(Learning Support Teacher, School A)

iii. Early Childhood Care and Education

- 7.12 ● The importance of ECCE for literacy was emphasised in the views of the Case Study Schools, stakeholders and in Submissions received by the Project Team. Literacy learning has to be supported across the life-span. While ECCE is vitally important, it does not replace literacy teaching in primary and secondary level, or further supports into adulthood.
- 7.13 ● An earlier NESF Report provided a set of recommendations on ECCE, one of which was for universal access to ECCE for all children (NESF, 2005). A Submission sent to the Project Team argued, *'the key point to take away is that there exist significant gaps in cognitive and non-cognitive skills that arise even before school, that the gaps are strongly linked to social disadvantage and family background, and that 'quality' early childhood education may play a role in narrowing them.'* (From a Submission from the Clondalkin Partnership)
- 7.14 ● A Submission outlines that what is needed is *'support ECCE beyond the Free Pre-School Year. Children younger than those entitled to access the scheme require Early Childhood Care and Education. To this end we believe that the Government should commit to developing a National ECCE Plan which will secure the policies, supports and investments required for the provision of a comprehensive and sustainable system of Early Childhood Care and Education in Ireland.'* (Submission from the Irish Childcare Policy Network)
- 7.15 ● There was concern raised at and after the Plenary about the low level of qualifications required for the lead adult in the new universal pre-school provision. A Submission received made the following point: *'High quality early education is of benefit to children, but is linked to having highly qualified personnel. AISTEAR, the NCCA Curriculum Framework for Early Years, in addition to Siolta, the National Quality Framework, should form the basis of programme in the new state-funded preschools.'* (Submission received from the INTO)
- 7.16 ● There is considerable consensus that the early language development that can be supported in ECCE will make a dramatic difference to literacy development later on. The introduction of the free universal pre-school provision for 3-4 year olds will make a significant contribution to the concerns raised at the current lack of provision for communities with high levels of disadvantage. In recent months, the Government has introduced an increased capitation grant of €75 per week for sessional playschool services with highly qualified staff and lowered the age of eligibility. As has been raised in recent work by Barnardos and the ESRI, the quality of this childcare provision is critical. Also important is the roll-out of the Aistear, the Framework for Early Learning. Parental engagement, considered below, also would be effective in working with children to improve their literacy skills, alongside the school.
- 7.17 ● One view is that there are serious gaps to fill – both cultural and structural – before Ireland reaches a level of ECCE comparable with its EU counterparts (Children's Rights Alliance, 2009, p. 11).

iv. Pre-service Education and Professional Development

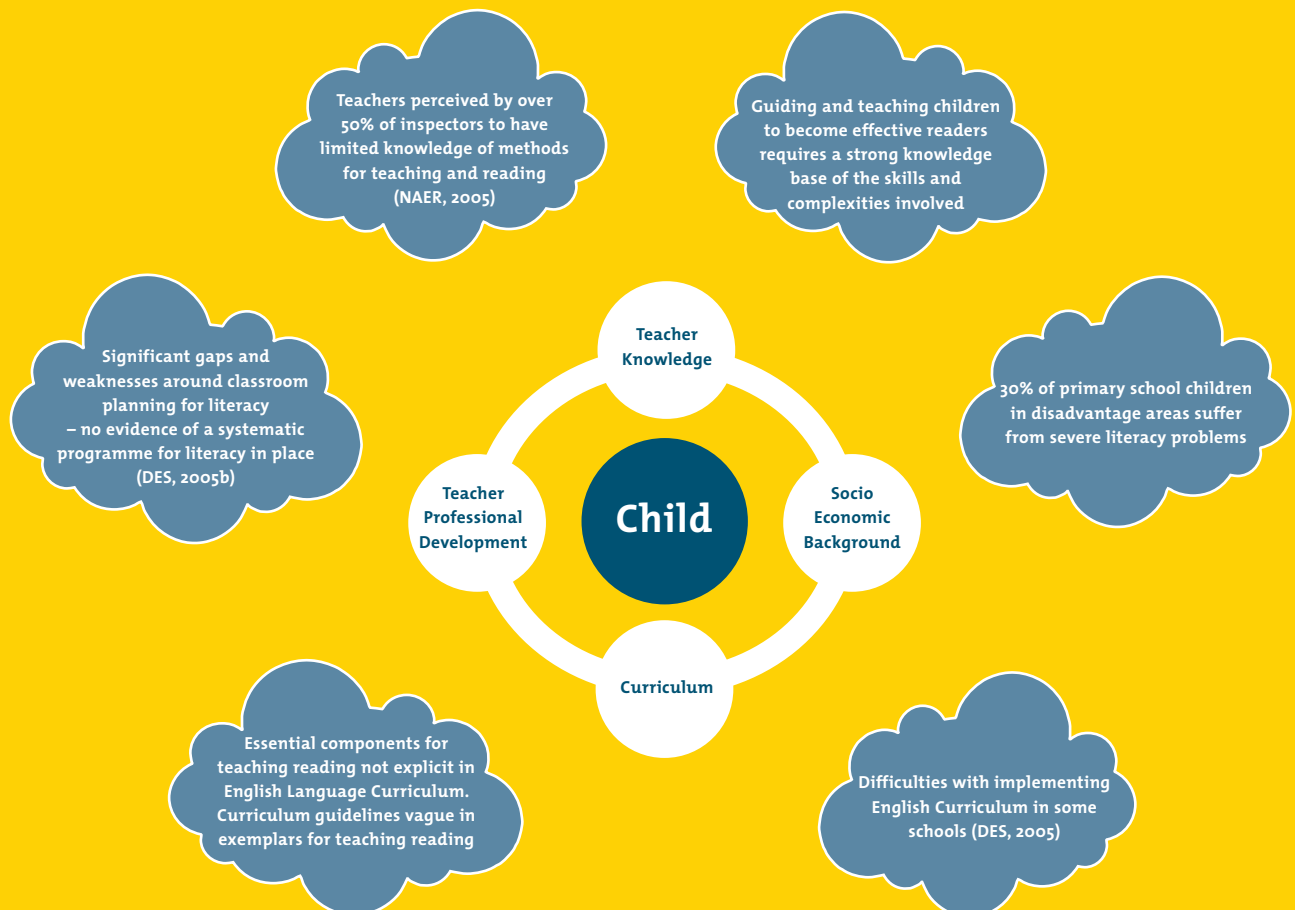
- 7.18 ● With regard to pre-service training, an ERC report argues that it is lacking in relation to the teaching of reading, identifying and tackling reading difficulties and oral language tuition. They also suggest that teachers in disadvantaged schools participate in on-going school-based professional development on the teaching of oral language, reading and writing (E Eivers, *et al.*, 2004).
- 7.19 ● There is consensus from the Submissions received and interviews with stakeholders that there needs to be a more coordinated approach to pre-service teacher education. In some cases, there is insufficient teacher knowledge in teaching literacy skills, some students leaving college with only a rudimentary knowledge of literacy issues or teaching reading. This is not helped by placing literacy teaching early on in the degree course in many instances.
- 7.20 ● There has been a major shift in thinking internationally about professional development. Traditional forms have typically been short courses often conducted outside of school hours and isolated workshops. In relation to literacy, research has indicated that this form of professional development can lack research-based and substantive content (L. Darling-Hammond, 1996). The views expressed to the Project Team focus on the importance of quality instruction and practical guidelines for teachers in literacy.
- 7.21 ● One Submission made the point, citing (Kazmierczak, 2007) that *‘there is a real need for teacher professional development to develop their formative assessment skills (as distinct from summative assessment), so that the reasoning process underlying a specific incorrect answer of a child is more fully understood in any given situation.’* (Submission from Dr Paul Downes, Educational Disadvantage Centre)
- 7.22 ● The Project Team concludes that quality continuous professional development is a key building block to any literacy strategy.

v. Teaching Literacy

- 7.23 ● A whole-school approach with high expectations for all pupils is one of the basics for any literacy initiative or teaching. However, teaching literacy is not a simple task and requires a flexible approach to meet the varied needs of pupils. Teaching children to read is a science which needs the appropriate expertise and support to be successful (Willms, 2008, p. 10). The Submissions received and Case Study work showed that effective teaching can make a difference in supporting children to read. One parent commented,
- ‘She said he read a whole book ... she had a book and he said it was too hard, but she said no, read it. There was only word he didn’t know. There were a couple of hard words in there. But his confidence, he thought he couldn’t do it but when it came to it, he could. (Parent, School C)*

- 7.24** ● Given the issues raised in Chapter 2 about what we understand literacy to be, and the significance of the socio-cultural context in which children learn, it is important to set out the main grounding issues first. Hall identifies many factors that impact on learning to read including:
- how children view themselves as learners;
 - how they view the reading process;
 - the range of skills they need to be successful readers; and
 - their teachers' views of the literacy process (Hall 2006).
- 7.25** ● These and other factors impact on the climate and pedagogy of the school and classroom as well as the home and wider community (Hall 2006). What matters is consistency of approach. Mehigan identifies some of the factors that shape teaching literacy within a disadvantaged context (see Figure 7.1). Some of the research cited refers to schools in general (e.g. E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2005) whereas some particularly focuses on disadvantaged contexts.

Figure 7.1 Variables which Impact on Reading/Literacy Standards for Schools



- 7.26 ● However, there is then the question of how to go about bringing about change in a disadvantaged school? Dr Eithne Kennedy grappled with this question as she undertook her doctoral thesis in a disadvantaged school. Her approach, and subsequent paper, outlines what can be achieved in a few years through action on a range of home, school, and classroom factors that interact and impact on literacy achievement in a disadvantaged urban setting. Working closely with the classroom and support teachers, Kennedy drew up a two year strategy to improve literacy in a disadvantaged Dublin school. This included:
- A multifaceted approach to professional development;
 - A 90 minute uninterrupted block of instructional time;
 - Collaborative teaching with involvement of team;
 - Use of a range of levelled texts;
 - Use of word-identification and comprehension strategies;
 - Strong word study programme, including synthetic and analytic phonics;
 - Quality classroom library and independent reading;
 - Daily writing workshop;
 - Oral language development through teaching the art of conversation in reading and writing lessons; and
 - Strengthening parental involvement (Kennedy, 2009).
- 7.27 ● Kennedy outlines how by the end of the two years of the study, the numbers of children performing below the 10th percentile had been reduced by three quarters and there were now 20% performing above the 80th percentile (there were no children at this level at the start of the study) on a standardised test of reading achievement. Children made statistically significant gains in writing and also reached the national norms in spelling.
- 7.28 ● Kennedy concludes that *‘policy makers need to acknowledge that there is no quick fix and no one best way or no best programme to teach literacy effectively to all children (International Reading Association, 2000)’* (Kennedy, 2009, p. 36). Nevertheless, her work and the work of others point to a range of approaches and methods that have been effective. What emerges from Kennedy’s overview is that it is not enough to include essential skills in a literacy programme, but the ‘how’ is as important as the ‘what’ and how these skills are mediated in the classroom is critical (Kennedy, 2009, p. 3; B. M. Taylor, 2003).
- 7.29 ● While beyond the scope of this report, as Chapter 1 outlined, there is a gender gap in reading literacy in Ireland and across OECD countries. When this is combined with educational disadvantage, the problem can be challenging to address. One UK study found that gains can be made in primary literacy, particularly in the levels achieved by apparently under-achieving boys, when:

- A variety of interactive classroom activities are adopted, with a ‘fitness for purpose’, so that both short, specific focused activities and more sustained, ongoing activities are used, as and when appropriate;
- Acknowledgement is given to the central importance of talk, to speaking and listening as a means of supporting writing;
- The advantages to be gained through companionable writing with response partners and through group work are recognised;
- Teachers are prepared to risk-take to bring more creativity and variety to literacy;
- More integrated use is made of ICT so that quality presentation can be more easily achieved, and drafts amended with more ease (Younger & Warrington, 2002).

vi. The Curriculum

- 7.30 ● From interviews with stakeholders, Submissions received and the work of the Project Team, there is a strong sense that the English Curriculum is very literacy based. One Submission argued, *‘the school curriculum is very much literacy based and failure in reading leads to failure throughout the whole system. It becomes impossible to access the curriculum if you are not reasonably literate. Initial letter sounds and blends should be taught right up to 6th class in disadvantaged schools.’* (Submission made by Learning Support Teacher, Mary O’Dwyer)
- 7.31 ● While many in the Case Study Research noted the Curriculum as a valuable framework for literacy teaching, others felt it was not very clear on exactly what kinds of teaching is most effective. Class teachers viewed the programmes delivered under DEIS, e.g. First Steps, as a way of strengthening the Curriculum.
- 7.32 ● One principal felt there just wasn’t enough time spent on English in the Curriculum.
- ‘...unless you increase the English Curriculum. You are taking that time from something else, or you are scrapping something else to put that in...’*
(Principal, School C)
- 7.33 ● There was a view that the English Curriculum needs stronger emphasis on literacy across topics/categories, that the Curriculum as a whole should be more integrated. One of the stronger themes to emerge from consultation was that additional time for literacy would be beneficial for students in disadvantaged communities. Kennedy’s research found that a 90 minute daily block of time in classrooms for literacy was critically important. As she outlines, it is considered a minimum for any attempt to raise achievement. An ERC (2005) report also recommends 90 minutes of dedicated time to English in the classroom for very disadvantaged schools, supported by a school-wide focus on language and literacy (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2005).

- 7.34 ● Tim Shanahan, a leading USA literacy expert, argues on the basis of evaluation and research that increasing the amount of time on literacy in the classroom is the single most effective strategy against all others (Shanahan, 2009). From a review of the evidence, he recommends that students should get at least two hours of reading and writing instruction each day, rising to three hours per day when greater achievement gains are desirable. To support this, he suggests that ways to increase learning should be found beyond the school day and year. The second most important determinant is the content of that instruction, which according to Shanahan, should emphasise four fundamental components of literacy learning (word knowledge, fluency, comprehension and writing) (Shanahan, 2009).
- 7.35 ● A Submission argues that: *'it is important to note that providing extra time will not achieve the desired outcomes unless it is accompanied by a change in the use of the time. Teachers will require support on how to structure the 90 minutes in order to make maximum use of it... It is essential that teachers' self-efficacy is developed regarding incorporating literacy instruction into the whole process of teaching and into various areas of the curriculum.'* (Submission made by Dr Paul Downes, Educational Disadvantage Centre citing (Downes & Gilligan, 2007a) Dr Downes goes on to make the following point *'Subjects such as history, SPHE, geography, drama and religion offer particular scope for oral language development goals pertaining to literacy.'*
- 7.36 ● Another issue is the role of digital literacy and new technologies which should be embedded across the Curriculum. As outlined in Chapter 2, ICT tools and associated software developments are contributing to newer, ever expanding, definitions or understandings of what it means to be literate. The DLIPs report charts much of the history around this issue and presents a good synopsis of this literacy landscape (National College of Ireland, 2009).
- 7.37 ● ICT tools, particularly the use of computers, digital cameras, digital video cameras and digital audio recorders can play a key role in supporting the acquisition of traditional literacy skills. ICT should be integrated into school-based literacy activities such as student writing, oral fluency, reading and comprehension. Unfortunately many existing literacy teacher professional courses – both at pre-service and in-service – do not integrate ICT into their activities presently. A 2008 report, *ICT in Schools*, shows that teachers are struggling to integrate ICT into their classroom practice currently across all areas of the curriculum and that includes literacy (DES, 2008). The Project Team believes ICT should be viewed as an integral part of all current and future literacy professional development programmes.

- 7.38 ● The NCCA has developed an ICT Framework, which identifies the skills students should have when ‘Creating, Communicating and Collaborating.’ This document showcases how ICT can be integrated into existing literacy activities (NCCA, 2007). The ICT Framework offers schools a structured approach to using ICT in curriculum and assessment by identifying the types of learning with ICT (including knowledge, skills and attitudes) appropriate for students during the period of compulsory education.

vii. Programmes in Schools

- 7.39 ● There is further consensus from the Submissions and Project Team that disadvantaged schools need an intervention in literacy to make improvements. While it is also important to have the fundamentals in place with a strong whole-school approach, sustained continuous professional development and good teaching, that these are not enough on their own to tackle severe literacy difficulties. This intervention can take the form of mentors and one-to-one professional development supports for teachers in literacy or structured and standardised programmes.
- 7.40 ● As Chapter 2 outlined, there are several structured programmes currently being delivered under DEIS which are aimed to improve literacy: First Steps and Reading Recovery. While the former is class-room based, the latter uses withdrawal and one-to-one tuition of pupils with the most challenged literacy skills. However, there are other programmes running in some DEIS schools. These include: The Newell Literacy Programme and Phonicsplus, among others. A full review of programmes falls outside the remit of this Project, but some key points have emerged from Submissions and Case Studies which are mentioned below.
- 7.41 ● First Steps was created in Australia in 1992 and it is designed to complement the English curriculum and to improve literacy outcomes. It is implemented in DEIS schools by DEIS Advisors. This highly structured programme offers advice on how to teach and not what to teach. It covers the four areas of Oral Language, Reading, Writing and Spelling. Some schools only take on certain elements, such as First Steps Reading or Writing. The First Steps programme was chosen over other programmes but there is no published rationale for this and Kennedy argues that this does not seem to have been researched extensively (Kennedy, 2009).
- 7.42 ● One of its strengths is that it apparently encompasses the developmental needs of all children regardless of age or ability. *‘That’s why I love the First Steps approach because I can do it with the whole class. Even you saw today a few of the internationals they were great for coming up with, they wanted to fill in the blanks.’* (Class Teacher, School B)

- 7.43 ● First Steps can be delivered to the whole school: *'First Steps Writing, and the beauty of that is that it is a whole school thing, it's also something we receive training for on an ongoing basis, and I'd say that will impact on the literacy as well. Because you know, we always taught writing and we always did our best with the writing and all that, but this is just so structured, we have the materials, and I would imagine that will be very, very important.'* (Principal, School A)
- 7.44 ● One potential challenge is that this programme relies on the teacher's professional development and DEIS support to deliver the programme effectively and maintain fidelity to the programme (Kennedy, 2007). It involves time and resource investment to be trained in First Steps and to implement it.
- 7.45 ● Another challenge is that it is *'very, very time consuming, especially in writing because you've your free writing, you are trying to do five or ten minutes every day.....there's a lot expected between all the different types writing... the steps that you have to do, it is time consuming.'* (Class Teacher, School B)
- 7.46 ● Reading Recovery (which was introduced to Ireland in 2000) is an early intervention designed in New Zealand to reduce literacy problems in schools, by improving the reading and writing skills of the lowest achieving children in the age band by withdrawing them from the classroom for one-to-one tuition. Teachers are trained on a year-long in-service basis, at different sites nationally, and then deliver the programme. This involves administering a series of tests to establish a baseline and then designing the 30 minute daily lessons (12-20 weeks) according to the needs of each child. When administered faithfully, only a small number of children, approximately 12 in a teaching year for one Reading Recovery teacher, can be supported in this way.
- 7.47 ● Reading Recovery is targeted at children around 6 years of age who indicate from the Assessment tests that they have gaps in their ability to progress successfully. *'216 schools across the Republic of Ireland have participated in Reading Recovery with 270 teachers trained who have reached approximately 3,000 children. The overall success rate for Republic of Ireland stands at 93% [2005/06 data report].'* (From a Submission from the Monaghan Education Centre).
- 7.48 ● Many teachers using Reading Recovery are very positive about the programme, and it was also cited frequently in the Submissions received by the Project Team. However, it is not universally lauded. One criticism of it when used for small numbers of pupils is that it is withdrawing students from the classroom, so only a few benefit from direct tuition while also missing out on classroom activities. It is not reportedly as good for schools with high concentrations of poverty where half the class are being withdrawn. However, where Reading Recovery has been adapted to the classroom it has resulted in structured activities called a variety of names from 'Power Hour' to 'Literacy Lift Off' and these are widely praised. Other criticisms of Reading Recovery include its expense, that it requires an existing teacher to be released to be trained intensively and that, delivered in its pure form, it can only be delivered to a limited number of pupils each year (Kennedy, 2009, p. 8).

- 7.49** ● Some of the strengths of the programme noted in the Case Study interviews and from Submissions include that it is a structured and supportive programme, which is easy to follow: *'it's very clear, you're highly trained, you're highly supported. It works and you get all the things you need....there is no question that isn't answered by the manuals.'* (Reading Recovery Teacher, School A) There is a view that Reading Recovery may not have lasting effects as some argue, and sustained efforts to maintain and increase gains are required.
- 7.50** ● Reading Recovery is designed to be tailored to each child's needs: *'It really all comes back to your decision making as a teacher, so every programme is different. You have to tailor every programme to the needs of the child.... The book just gives you lot's of tips about what to do.... but it really comes back to the teacher making the best decisions.... It's absolutely fantastic and so challenging for the teacher and the pupils.'* (Reading Recovery Teacher, School B)
- 7.51** ● A Submission received by the Project Team outlines that *'the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) a branch of the United States Department of Education (USDE) and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), released an updated report of research in December 2008. WWC's authoritative and independent assessment confirmed that Reading Recovery is an effective intervention based on scientific evidence.'* (Submission from Satty O'Riordan, Reading Recovery Coordinator)
- 7.52** ● Another Submission from the Monaghan Education Centre points out that *'approximately 470 teachers in 450 schools have participated in Reading Recovery training and implementation since 2000. Schools report that the implementation of Reading Recovery has resulted in seismic change to how literacy is taught in their schools'*. They go on to point out that *'each Reading Recovery teacher has an average of four programme places for daily one-to-one teaching and each teacher completes an average of seven Reading Recovery programmes each year. The success rate is currently 93%. (Source: NDEC National Data Report for Ireland 2006-2007).'*
- 7.53** ● Some of the challenges it presents are its high costs and the small number of pupils it can support in a school year. *'If the child's age is six years and two months they're not going to get a chance to come on the programme again. The next time you go looking they're going to be too old so if they're weak enough... you should take them, even if there's a weaker child who's younger... there are a lot of rules, they're not written down... if I don't take him now he's never going to get a chance to come on again.'* (Reading Recovery teacher, School A)
- 7.54** ● According to one Submission, *'approximately 40-50% of eligible students are dismissed from the Reading Recovery tutoring sessions for failure to improve and sent back to the classroom. Staff and school resources impact on the delivery of the programme.'* (Submission made by Phonics Ireland)

- 7.55 ● A teacher from one of the Case Studies found that *'If a child is not progressing by week 10, then the Reading Recovery teacher has to decide if the child should continue: 'in a school like this where you've only one Reading Recovery teacher, you can't afford to leave a child in it for too long. You give them their fair chance.'* (Reading Recovery Teacher, School A)
- 7.56 ● Reading Recovery is based on withdrawing pupils from the classroom and this can present problems in some schools. In one report, the ERC viewed the withdrawal approach as inappropriate for schools with high levels of students with poor reading levels (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2005).
- 7.57 ● Literacy Liftoff is a spinoff from Reading Recovery and uses the programmes' phonological strategies. In School A it worked in this way. Every day for six weeks, four teachers (including the Reading Recovery teacher) work with one class for 30 minutes. In groups (4-6 children), the children move around the room to each teacher/work station every 7 minutes. At each station the children complete a different activity, such as reading a new book, reading a familiar book, writing and using magnetic letters to create words. The children are tested at the start and placed in ability groups, where they work with the relevant level books.
- 7.58 ● The groups are organised by level of ability and the children are assessed daily so groups can be adjusted and progress can be tracked, leading the programme to be very measurable. The tracking and adjustment means that groups/children are not held back by children who are struggling. *'You suddenly find 'look we put that child in the higher group but ... that group is moving ahead and that child is staying behind, that child needs to move down a group but there's a child here in the bottom group who's flying ahead so we're going to move her, so the children are constantly moving depending on their abilities and their speed of learning.'* (Reading Recovery Teacher, School A)
- 7.59 ● While any of the teachers who had received First Steps or Reading Recovery training were very positive about it, for others in learning support, they felt there was insufficient training prior to these programmes.
- 'When I came into learning support, yes I had two/three terrible years where, you know, there isn't ... there was no training available... I had four children and I never allowed that to happen to me again.....Then I took the learning support course and that at least became clear, the parameters became clear and I knew, okay, right, of course.'* (Learning Support Teacher, School A)
- 7.60 ● Another programme used in some DEIS schools, Jolly Phonics, was designed in the UK and uses synthetic phonics method to teach children letters and how to read and write. Each letter has a sound, an action and a song to it. Some of its strengths are that it can be implemented into the early primary classroom with minimal resources or training.

- 7.61 ● The children seem to enjoy the songs and actions, which helps them to have a positive view of education. The children can relate to the sounds and actions: *'it is just....when you see things clicking with the children... you have to see the children's progression since September, but I have never seen it, in infants, never.'* (Class Teachers, School B)
- 7.62 ● However School B staff reported that the aim of teaching a new letter each day, was too advanced for their pupils. Like all programmes, it can take time to set the programme up. *'There is a bit of time involved tweaking it and making out your thing for your school. This programme will do us for a long time.'* (Class Teachers, School B)
- 7.63 ● While the Project Team has no overall view on what programmes are most effective in targeted interventions, it does view such programmes as valuable only as supplementary to quality and sustained Continuous Professional Development.

viii. Assessment and Measurement

- 7.64 ● All the Case Study Schools assessed their pupils at least twice a year and some felt this was welcome and had become part of the school's focus on how to improve assessments for the rest of the year. All of the schools felt that the current form of assessment (Sigma, Micra-T or Drumcondra Primary Reading Tests), did not take into account the particular aptitudes and challenges their pupils face. One principal felt they had developed a better assessment policy in the school but that they still had problems with the high numbers of international students. Others felt that their children were not able to do the tests because of a lack of oral language.
- 'At senior classes where there is a new problem comes with comprehension, again I would say it is largely influenced by the restricted oral language. And that is an issue for disadvantaged schools that I don't think the standardised tests take account of. And I feel our pupils tend to do worse on those tests because of that.'* (Principal, School C)
- 7.65 ● Another school principal noted the difficulty was a word test, which their pupils were not used to.

'We don't find it great because our children, first of all it is a word test, and they are used to reading continuous text. And second of all, that an awful lot of the words they might not even be familiar with. Sometimes like the words like 'moss' and sometimes even with the comprehension if they read it, they don't really understand what ... they might not have the language to answer. 'The day on which you were born', I think is one of them or 'Your birthday is the day on which you were' and I think they have to put in 'born' or something like that. And they don't really understand it. And they are not great candidates for standardised tests so even though it definitely shows an improvement. It isn't a great tool to measure it with.' (Principal, School D)

'And really the MICRA-T isn't a great test for our children. Especially the weaker ones. They just don't have the confidence. They don't have what it takes to sit down with 15 other kids and just do this test. They start off quite well and then towards the end they just don't bother. They skip over. They don't bother even doing the rest of the questions. It doesn't give them enough support. There are a set of tests for the Reading Recovery and it is a better indication really.' (Principal, School D)

One parent could not understand why her child got a low reading score in a recent test.

'I a member of my local library. I read myself all the time, so he comes with me, so I do get a book out, a book probably every, second or third week. Yes. I go down there and get a book. I was surprised at [the teacher] there she did a test now at Christmas, and he only got four from between one and ten. He only got a four in the test.' (Parent, School C)

- 7.66** ● When used appropriately standardised tests can provide teachers and parents with valid information that, when used alongside other assessment data, can assist them in addressing particular learning needs. Issues have been raised, however, include questioning:
- The validity of current standardised tests to assess literacy levels in disadvantaged schools;
 - The value of a single summative assessment without additional qualitative and formative assessments; and
 - The absence of measuring and assessing new literacies including digital literacy work, and wider supports to literacy such as HSCL work and early language development.
- 7.67** ● The tests currently used in schools and nationally are typically 'normed' across an entire school population and there are questions over their appropriateness for use regarding one sub-group, namely disadvantaged schools. Other countries, such as Canada, have developed their own assessment tools specifically to generate data that would allow them to monitor their literacy interventions (Sloat, Beswick, & Willms, 2007). Their approach includes providing teachers with data on individual students and aggregate data on the programme. However, when standardised tests are misused – namely to compare schools or teachers – then problems can arise. These tests are not designed for such use. A further issue is that when standardised tests are the primary factor in accountability there is a temptation to narrow the curriculum and teach to the test (FairTest, 2007).

- 7.68** ● Popham notes that *‘the primary purpose of standardised achievement tests really is, namely, to detect sufficient differences among test takers so that sensitive norm-referenced comparisons can be made’* (Popham, 2001, p. 27). He notes to achieve this test developers include items that are apt to be answered correctly by students either a) from advantaged socio-economic backgrounds or b) those of above average academic aptitude. These two factors almost always have the desired spread of student scores *‘because both socioeconomic status and inherited academic aptitudes reflect what children bring to school, not what they learn’* (Popham, 2001, p. 27).
- 7.69** ● Even if one standardised test could be developed that was suitable for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, there are further arguments made that what is needed is a range of measurements, including formative and summative. As highlighted in Chapter 5, formative assessment has been shown to be highly effective in raising the level of student attainment, increasing equity of student outcomes, and improving students’ ability to learn’ (OECD, 2005, p. 2). Others, see for example Hall and Burke, outline the benefits at a primary level (Hall & Burke, 2004).
- 7.70** ● A further point made at the Plenary, by the Project Team and in Submissions is that the current measurements of literacy are not fully capturing its emerging forms. As Leo Casey from the National College of Ireland commented, the current measurements are not capturing work currently going on in schools in relation to digital literacy, despite teachers reporting improvements.

ix. Broader Socio-Economic Context

- 7.71** ● All of those interviewed in the Case Studies talked of the particular challenges of teaching in communities with high levels of disadvantage. Many felt that the full complexities of poverty have not been fully understood.

‘There are so many other factors that can be influencing, and I suppose that is the problem. How do you tackle the home, the parents, what ... there is seldom a key thing that you can say, ‘Right, if we hit that, everything is going to improve’. And it seems to be that unless you hit that, and that, and that, and that, you are not going to get it overall. We are working away on the reading, and somebody else is working on the attendance, and somebody else is working with behaviour, but even with all that, and first of all you have to make sure that all that is happening, so it is...’ (Principal, School C)

- 7.72** ● From many of the teachers’ perspectives, the difficulties arise from the moment children are born or even earlier. It impacts on them in the way they are left to play on the street and the environment at home.

'They have disadvantage because some of their parents, a lot of their parents might have drug problems or drink problems... then a lot of them are born prematurely or they could be in detox, some of them not very many would be in detox but some of them but an awful lot of them would be born prematurely so even before they're born they're disadvantaged.' (Principal, School D)

'But for those children, that's it. They are out learning and experiencing life on the streets. It is like being in Africa or Calcutta or somewhere. That's the reality of disadvantage.' (Principal, School C)

'To be honest in this particular area.. you are at the very base line, I would have parents asking me, 'I need to get custody of this child because the mum is causing disruption', the grannies usually. And there is no way you can talk to those people about education or reading and writing, because they are living in ... the mother's coming around to the door full of crack like, and cocaine, screaming and roaring, shouting and fighting and threatening to take the kids. There is just no point. You are down at the level of looking for help from running out to the Family Centre to get the child into play therapy.' (Principal, School C)

- 7.73** ● Some problems manifested in the classroom with a lack of confidence.

'What I would call it this disadvantaged attitude, and again I am talking as experience of being in the classroom, really I suppose at the minute, that children who lack confidence in themselves are afraid to try things that are new. They are afraid of getting them wrong, and they just clam up, and they won't try anything.' (Principal, School C)

- 7.74** ● One of the difficulties teachers identified was the lack of reading going on at home.

'They don't read themselves, like I say the children don't see their parents reading books and I see a lot of the children aren't spoken to a lot either. You know, they say 'go in and watch the telly, I'm cooking the dinner', you know this kind of thing.' (Class Teachers, School A)

'Because there's such a culture of not having books...like... I know the Reading Recovery teacher next door told me that she had said to a parent, during the parent-teacher evening, before Christmas, you know, maybe get her a few books and the parent just laughed - 'get her books; are you mad?' You know, that's a school thing...why would you...why would I waste my money on books sort of thing...and it really is, it's just a whole attitude thing.' (HSCL, School D)

- 7.75** ● While there are no easy answers, some felt the problem was about parents not taking sufficient responsibility. These views were not shared across all the schools.

'But it's not the child's fault, it's the parents. That's my point about the responsibility; people must take responsibility. That's a crime to me against the child. We hear about the other abuse, that's an abuse on a child'. (School B, Principal)

'There is an abdication in certain families of parenting. Either they don't know how to do it, or they haven't got the confidence themselves to take the power of being parents. And again, that empowering parents would be a big part of our work, and I would be saying, well who's the boss here? And quite often it is the child.' (HSCL, School C)

- 7.76** ● One principal articulated this in terms of life taking over parents' good intentions.

'Yeah you have got to compensate, if that's the right word. And I'm not saying that in any sort of pejorative way, I just think that the parents around here have a huge regard for education, and actually we often find, especially at infant level and junior level. If the children are around the parents will come in and say 'What homework has she, I'll take it home. I will do it at home'. So really they do regard education as being extremely important. I think what sometimes happens is on route life takes over, and children get to secondary school and some of them drop out.' (Principal, School A)

- 7.77** ● One class teacher felt that for some parents, their priorities were not on education.

'I think for a lot of them education isn't a priority... they are not interested in anything, the parent, only the communion. They couldn't care less if they're reading, writing, doing their sums, they're not interested. It's just the communion.' (Class teacher, School A)

x. Family Literacy and Parental Involvement

- 7.78** ● In the UK, family literacy programmes, run jointly by adult basic education providers and schools, have proved particularly effective in reaching socially and educationally excluded parents. Family literacy work can help to overcome the barriers to learning felt by adults and children who find it difficult to relate to school learning. It is an important way of recognising and building on the strengths of families and communities who feel marginalised or excluded from the expectations of school. (From an explanatory note from NALA (2009b).
- 7.79** ● A key feature is the recognition that literacy is a broader concept than the needs and demands of school-work. The literacy learned at home and in local communities is rich in the use of local language and the expression of the experience and history of families, communities and cultures. Children who feel that their home use of literacy is recognised and valued in school are more likely to engage confidently with school learning. If the demands of school do not build on the child's experience of literacy and language at home, difficulties can be created for both parents and children. Family literacy programmes based on a strengths model of family learning reflect the literacy learning that already exists at home and aim to validate, support and develop the work that parents already do. This is in contrast to an approach that assumes that families cannot be relied on to provide learning opportunities and that parents with little positive experience of education themselves need to be taught how to help their children learn (NALA, 2009b).

- 7.80** ● The Clare Family Learning Project (see Chapter 8) outlines how family literacy programmes tend to focus on parents and children simultaneously, providing both adult basic skills training and early childhood education. The key to their approach is to work with parents as partners. Their work and the work of others such as Professor Peter Hannon, indicates that most parents, regardless of their own levels of literacy, are anxious to help their children (Clare Family Learning Project, 2000; Hannon, 1995).
- 7.81** ● Taken from the Submission from NALA to the Project Team: *'Family literacy programmes, run jointly by adult basic education providers and schools, have proved particularly effective in reaching 'socially and educationally excluded parents...Children who feel that their home use of literacy is recognised and valued in school are more likely to engage confidently with school learning. If the demands of school do not build on the child's experience of literacy and language at home, difficulties can be created for both parents and children.'* (Submission from NALA)
- 7.82** ● NALA, in their document *Working Together: Approaches to Family Literacy*, prepared by a working group comprised of VEC, HSCL, DES, Partnership, Barnardos, Library Council, Learners and a Community group, recommended a Department of Education and Science led *'integrated national strategy for the development of family literacy work as part of its strategy for literacy development'* (NALA, 2004, p. 79). The national strategy should involve organisations involved in adult literacy, adult and community education, school and early childhood development, training, workplace education and community development.
- 7.83** ● In countries where the family literacy approach has become well-established, notably the UK, New Zealand, the USA and Canada, schools and adult basic education providers work together in creating and delivering programmes. By sharing and supporting each other's expertise, partners from different educational environments can develop effective joint approaches and programmes, to the benefit of the families and communities in which they are based.
- 7.84** ● Schools face certain barriers in engaging parents including practical issues such as lack of time, language barriers, child care issues and practical skills such as literacy issues and the ability to understand and negotiate the school system. However, in the schools in Harris and Goodall's research, the engagement of parents was a central influence upon positive learning and behavioural outcomes. The research shows a consistent relationship between increasing parental engagement (particularly of hard to reach parents) and improved attendance, behaviour and student achievement (Harris & Goodall, 2007).
- 7.85** ● There is evidence that previous initiatives, particularly HSCL, have resulted in increased parental involvement. Some of the problems that can arise include how difficult it is to reach out to parents in extreme marginalisation and the need to avoid patronising and disempowering forms of involvement (P. Archer & Shortt, 2003).

- 7.86** ● Chapter 8 outlines some examples of family literacy projects including those run under DEIS but administered by the Further Education Section of the Department. There are 19 projects, mostly in VECs working in partnership with schools.
- 7.87** ● The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) is an innovative project about to be rolled out under the Obama administration in the US across 20 cities. It is a coordinated intervention starting from birth, working with parents and across all aspects of daily life, including literacy, health and housing. It has already been shown to be effective in raising the achievement level of the poorest minority children.²⁶

xi. Other School-Based Issues

Gender

- 7.88** ● One issue raised in relation to mixed schools was that boys can sometimes take the teacher's attention away from the girls. One girls' school had boys in the infants' classes before they left for the boys' school.

'Yes they're draining the resources from the girls. The girls that lose out at early intervention that if you hadn't as many boys here to get your specific timeframe and they may lose out the whole way up.' (Learning Support Teacher, School A)

Behaviour

- 7.89** ● While most of the schools reported good standards of behaviour among pupils, one school noted challenging behaviour. In School C, the teachers seemed worried about the problems. One teacher in another school felt bad behaviour was a product of a child not being able to express themselves fully at home but feel freer to do it at school.

'And a lot of their vented up emotions, they can just release them like, and then they can't express themselves so, you could have a child throwing stuff. We all come across the child that did that, throwing stuff, and they could physically kick you, bite you. It is very ... it is a hard one to call... A lot, some of the children I would say they are exposed to corporal punishment at home, and when they come into school they know that you can't do that, so they kind of express themselves emotionally and physically, and that definitely has, hasn't it through the years like.' (Class Teachers, School B)

²⁶ From 'To unlock millions of children's lives, Britain must look to the Harlem Miracle,' Jenni Russell, The Guardian Wednesday August 5th, 2009.

Attendance

- 7.90 ● One principal noted the constant challenge to maintain good attendance and how patterns set in early.

'Whereas, some of our kids didn't turn up, and it is basically because nobody bothered to sort of organise them to come. And attendance hasn't been mentioned. Again if another magic wand I would wave is that children would be legally obliged to turn up at school every day from the age of four, not six as it is at present. Because if bad habits are formed in those first two years.' (Principal, School C)

Newcomer Pupils

- 7.91 ● Three of the Case Study Schools had medium to high levels of newcomer families. They did not report problems.

'We've found it very easy to absorb them. We'd see other children's language difficulties as more problematic, our own children, the difference in language as being more problematic..It does present a challenge for a teacher who has two or three of them in the class to kind of keep them occupied and to make sure that they are working away all the time, because if you have 24 children in the class and you've two or three of them who don't understand English, you can be quite worried about whether you're really giving those children all they need.' (Principal, School A)

- 7.92 ● One principal in a school with 50% newcomer children was proud of the lack of apparent racism in the school. The same principal talked about learning how to give feedback and the cultural differences that can arise occasionally.

'I had a mother into me saying that she couldn't ... she had some book that she bought her [child] and she couldn't read it. The poor child ... I don't know if she beat her but... you know it is important, especially for those parents to constantly give positive feedback. That is the immediate effect. You have to be very careful giving homework so that we give homework that they are able to do it. Because if you give homework that they are not able to do ...' (Class teacher, School B)

Limits of what schools can do

- 7.93 ● One teacher felt frustrated at the high expectations on schools to tackle everything.

'I just think, in future generations they will look back at us as teachers and they will say why didn't they put their hands up and say stop, stop giving us children and pretending that we can do something further and we can't, we can't you know. Not without any proper training or help or somebody in school who has some expertise, you know. I just think all those children are being duped and the parents into thinking that the primary school can do everything.' (Reading Recovery Teacher, School A)

- 7.94** ● Moving beyond the school walls to their links with the wider community, some of the Case Study Schools felt they were alone in their efforts to tackle literacy. One of the difficulties schools reported was the sense that schools are on their own in tackling literacy in disadvantaged schools, and that often, good practice is not shared beyond a single school.

'I mean it's just like saying 'oh our primary schools can do everything. They can't and it's a lie and we can't do everything you know.....we can do very little. We're trained to teach reading and writing and a few other subjects with the few very limited methodologies and you know very little chance to re-train or to hear what other schools do or other teachers. No link. I mean it's most amazing if it was a private company they'd be linking very quickly and finding good practice there. Everyone would go and see the good practice and try and bring it.' (Reading Recovery Teacher, School A)

- 7.95** ● Some schools talked positively about the networks of which they were part, as a way of sharing good practice and gaining confidence to try out new measures.

'We're in a network situation as well here, so we call that the Network, which. We have a family cluster of the six schools here, the two boys schools beside us, primary and secondary, our two, a primary school on X Street, a primary school just here below us as well.' (HSCL, School A)

'We have a system where you meet your colleagues now and again, so you can share good practice and hear the different things that are going on in different places. But that should be built in.' (HSCL, School C)

- 7.96** ● International research shows that, over the course of the summer months, children can lose many of the gains made in reading during the school year (Entwhistle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997). Moreover, reading loss is more persistent among children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and children at risk of academic failure. One study suggests that nearly 80% of the achievement difference between high-income and low-income students may be attributable to summer reading loss (Hayes & Grether, 1983). Among the aspects of reading that have been shown to decline are word decoding skills and reading fluency. The need for a strategic approach to summer out-of-school services has already been highlighted, Quality Development Out of School Services (QDOSS) network in Ireland, and is of the utmost importance for children's literacy development (Downes, 2006). (From a Submission made by Dr Paul Downes, Educational Research Centre).

- 7.97** ● In their Submission, Barnardos argue that *'in Ireland the access to out-of-school services is largely restricted to parents' ability to pay. However, services such as home work clubs, English language clubs, arts and crafts and sports offer children an alternative way to enhance their literacy skills and improve their overall school experience. Such diversity of opportunities should be available to all.'*

7.98 ● One other interesting example of a school reaching out to the community is provided by an extended service model. In 2009, the NESF Secretariat visited the Belfast Model Girls School. This is the only full service extended school in Northern Ireland. An extended school links the school, community and parents all working together but only before and after school, whereas this school provides a range of activities before, during and after the school day to support teaching and learning. It works closely with its local community, parents and other 32 agencies. The Model School was picked as a pilot because the Shankhill is the most disadvantaged community in the area and it had already been working with the community, via the Communities in Schools. It has 1000 pupils, 99% of whom are Protestant and come from a ten mile radius. It receives £175,000 a year plus £32,000 for extended school services. They receive a further £300,000 amount of free services as service providers want to get involved and get endorsed by the school. They report they are still integrating and it takes time. They did an evaluation last year and found a 2% reduction of absenteeism but they feel this was just the start. While this is a new approach, it offers a valuable way of integrating necessary services and supports within or close to the school. Pupils can access counseling services, speech and language therapy or literacy supports directly on the premises. It is a model worth considering here.

Conclusions

7.99 ● This chapter has presented some of the school-related issues that were raised throughout the Project. While there are many others, these were the key issues that the Project Team viewed as central to developing any literacy strategy for children.

7.100 ● The key conclusions drawn from this chapter include the following:

- The provision of quality Early Childhood Care and Education is critical to support children from disadvantaged communities;
- There is a strong relationship between oral language knowledge and the successful acquisition of literacy skills. Developing pre-requisite oral language skills from the earliest years is of critical importance in disadvantaged contexts;
- Continuous and focused ongoing professional development is a key element to any literacy strategy. It is of vital importance to have high quality professional development for literacy teaching across the continuum of teacher education, from pre-service through induction and continuous professional development;
- There is insufficient literacy instruction at a pre-service level. For the most part, provision for developing knowledge around literacy teaching is delivered early, for example, in the three year B.Ed Course, this occurs during the first two years of college;

- The English Curriculum does not give sufficient practical guidance on the teaching of literacy. More time, from across the curriculum, should be spent focused on literacy in the classroom for disadvantaged pupils. Furthermore, more guidance is needed on the literacy and oral language needs of children in disadvantaged contexts;
- A sustained systematic programme for interventions and professional development is lacking;
- ICT tools, particularly the use of computers, digital cameras, digital video cameras and digital audio recorders can play a key role in supporting the acquisition of traditional literacy skills;
- Schools which use formative assessment²⁷ show not only general gains in academic achievement, but also particularly high gains for previously underachieving students (OECD, 2005);
- Family literacy work can help to overcome the barriers to learning felt by adults and children who find it difficult to relate to school learning. Schools alone cannot address poor literacy but can be successful when working with parents; and
- Strong parental involvement requires a school commitment to support parents in the home and community, as they, in co-operation with the school, to help develop their children's literacy. Successful interventions have strong partnership structures and processes with defined opportunities for all those working in the intervention to come together and share approaches and learn new ones.

²⁷ Formative assessment (assessment for learning) is usually carried out during the school year or programme, whereas summative assessment takes place at the end (assessment of learning).

SECTION THREE

Literacy in the Community

8

Introduction

- 8.1** ● We know that children develop their literacy outside of schools, with their family, in the home and the wider community. It is in these settings and contexts that children speak, listen, read and write most naturally. This significant platform of literacy development needs to be recognised and supported if we are to assist communities experiencing educational disadvantage achieve their potential and get the most out of their school experience. There is a wide range of literacy projects and initiatives which take place outside of schools in disadvantaged communities around the country, many of which provide excellence and innovation with few resources. These projects are often small and local and do not have the same visibility as the initiatives under DEIS. Despite this, for the most part, policy in this area has been slow to capture community strengths and resources in any systematic way. Community-based initiatives and projects emerge often from the grassroots, out of local need, and there is a challenge in finding ways of linking these with national strategies. Nevertheless, shifts towards new forms of governance and more inclusive policy-making and implementation necessitate finding ways to better engage with communities and learn from their successes.
- 8.2** ● The focus of this part of the Project Team's work was on literacy policies outside of school, their extent and effect; as well as to identify if such initiatives might be different in this context and in what ways? What are the supports and barriers to effective community responses to literacy and social inclusion?
- 8.3** ● Little is known about the range, extent and impact of community-based projects and this chapter seeks to explore these issues further, including barriers and supports to effective policy implementation on the ground. It firstly outlines the scope of community activity nationally, drawing on illustrative projects to highlight differences in approach as conducted in a commissioned mapping exercise. It then goes on to outline some of the emerging issues in relation to community literacy responses and effective implementation. Finally, the chapter concludes by identifying some key supports and barriers to action in this area.

Scope of Community Literacy Activity

- 8.4** ● To examine the range and breadth of these projects further, the Project Team commissioned Cynthia Deane from Options Consulting to prepare a Mapping Exercise in the early part of 2009. This information was gathered with help from members of the Project Team, Submissions from the public, practice manuals and guidelines published by projects and initiatives themselves, evaluation reports, websites and telephone interviews with project personnel. The limited scope of the information available meant that the examples were largely self-selected and they should be regarded as illustrative rather than *representative* of the full range of current practice.
- 8.5** ● The analysis was framed using four questions that reflected the concerns of the Project Team:
- Where does the momentum for the work on child literacy come from?
 - What are the main features of child literacy practice outside schools?
 - What is the potential for wider implementation, mainstreaming or scaling up the projects?
 - What are the main issues about child literacy outside schools that need to be investigated further?
- 8.6** ● Many different child literacy initiatives have sprung from public policy in the areas of education (including early years), children's services, youth work, social inclusion, health, community development, the arts and culture. Some provide a service outside the school's focus such as summer camps, after school homework clubs, early child care and education, and at post-primary, for children who leave school early. Some projects make literacy their main focus, but for others it is a by-product. There is overlap in some cases with expertise developing in parallel, and in most cases, these small projects remain local and do not scale up.
- 8.7** ● In some instances, the project has emerged from gaps in local need, from the bottom-up, while in others, this has been further encouraged by private funding such as by Atlantic Philanthropies. Others grew out of partnership and have networks and cross-institutional working at their heart. Integrated Partnership Companies can play a role, for example, the Cork City Partnership set up a consortium of early child language and learning groups. In this way, there are different drivers in the development of these projects. These include:
- i. Public policy;
 - ii. Projects Driven by Philanthropic, charitable, not-for-profit or religious organisations; and
 - iii. Public-Private Collaboration.

i. Public Policy

- 8.8** ● Figure 8.1 lists some of the examples of these projects that are linked to the above policy themes. Although the picture here is far from complete, it is nevertheless clear that the provision for developing child literacy outside schools is fragmented and diverse, and it often involves complex and multilayered relationships between public authorities and local providers.

Figure 8.1 Examples of Child Literacy Projects Outside Schools Driven by Public Policy Areas

Summative Evaluation	Formative Evaluation
Education/ Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Family literacy projects (19 around the country funded by Department of Education and Science and mostly run by VECs) — Pre-school to primary school transition projects: focus on early language development (Greenmount and the Glen, Cork)
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — HSE speech and language therapy Projects: Chatterbox (Cavan – Monaghan); The Glen, Cork — Familiscope Ballyfermot (in collaboration with local Drugs Task Force and Partnership) — Neighbourhood, Youth and Family Project (Mounttown, Dun Laoghaire)
Youth work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — National Youth Council of Ireland (youth organisations throughout the country): — Early school leavers programmes (ages 12 to 16) — Literacy intervention programme (first-year post primary pupils) — After-school club for 4th to 6th class — Transition programmes primary to secondary school — Collaboration with schools on fun activities that promote literacy
Social inclusion/ Community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Projects within Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), promoted by area-based partnerships, e.g. Athlone Educational Action Research Project — Early language and learning projects in Cork (Mahon and The Glen) — Research study on literacy performance at transition from primary to post-primary school (Clondalkin partnership) — Family literacy work (Education and Rights Resource Centre Cork)
Arts and cultural sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Public Library service: events to promote reading for pleasure among children — Family Reading Project: Dublin City Public Libraries in association with National College of Ireland (Early Learning Initiative) — Community-based arts organisations: e.g. Draiocht Blanchardstown 'Adventures of Me'

Source: Cynthia Deane, Options Consulting

8.9 ● Early Childhood Care and Education is a good example of fragmented service delivery and poor overall policy coherence. A considerable amount of work on developing children's literacy takes place in pre-school settings, but up to now there has been no clear policy framework developed. However, the implementation of *Síolta*, a national quality framework for early childhood education, and the imminent launch of a Framework for Early Learning, *Aistear*, by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) will provide a basis to fill this gap. Recent policy reports - including the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 – 2016*, the *National Development Plan and Towards 2016* – stated a commitment to expanding early childhood education, and this has been delivered with the roll-out of free pre-school places for all children for one year from 2010. This is welcome and follows on from both the original recommendation made in the 2005 NESF report on *Early Childhood Care and Education* and repeated again this year, by the National Competitiveness Council in its *Statement on Education and Training* (National Competitiveness Council, 2009; NESF, 2005).

8.10 ● Some projects have adopted an experimental approach to policy development and implementation. The youngballymun initiative is based on the concept of the *Developmental Welfare State* (elaborated by NESF in a 2005 report), namely a universal social policy system that supports and facilitates the development of each person, enabling them to reach their full potential. The central argument of this approach is that the welfare system consists of more than income transfers to those in need; the range and quality of services are critical, and a radical development of services is the single most important route to improving social protection. In youngballymun, there is an emphasis on universal activist measures in the education, health and care services to address the clearly identified needs of children and young people.

ii. Projects Driven by Philanthropic, Charitable, Not-for Profit or Religious Organisations

8.11 ● There has been significant activity in recent years by philanthropic, charitable, not-for profit or religious organisations in promoting child literacy projects and initiatives outside schools. These can be seen as attempts to 'pick up the pieces' or fill the gaps created by the absence of public services and to promote the development of literacy - whether in early childhood, during primary or post-primary schooling, or even for adults who have literacy difficulties after they have finished formal schooling. Some private donors have begun to adopt a systematic and research evidence-based approach, with early intervention targeted at parents and children, in some cases from pre-birth to the early years of formal schooling. Figure 8.2 lists some examples.

Figure 8.2 Examples of Child Literacy Projects Outside Schools Driven by Philanthropic, Religious and Charitable Organisations and Private/Corporate Donors

Sponsors	Examples of projects and initiatives
Barnardos (some programmes jointly funded by Atlantic Philanthropies)	Child literacy and social inclusion projects (various locations) including for example: — Programmes for parents; — Early childhood education and care (High/Scope); — School readiness programme; — Out-of-school clubs and activities; and — Wizards of Words Reading development programme;
Atlantic Philanthropies Lifestart foundation	Lifestart parenting programme for parents of 0-5 year-olds
Children's Books Ireland	Research on book-based events for children
Holy Faith sisters	Literacy support programmes for children in primary schools (school-based but outside mainstream classrooms)
Church of Scientology	Research into literacy (international, not specific to Ireland)

Source: Cynthia Deane, Options Consulting

iii. Public-Private Collaboration

- 8.12** ● There is a growing trend of child literacy projects and initiatives that involve collaboration between public authorities and philanthropic foundations, charities or other private sector organisations. Sometimes, private donations are used as 'matched funding', which helps to leverage public investment, and such funding often enables the organisations involved to add considerable value and introduce innovative approaches. Figure 8.3 lists a few examples of such collaborative projects. youngballymun is one such project funded under Atlantic Philanthropies. It is one of three projects which form part of The Prevention and Early Intervention Programme for Children. This Programme was established by the Government in February 2006, with Dormant Account funding, under the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to support and promote better outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds through more innovation, effective planning, integration and delivery of services.

Figure 8.3 Examples of Child Literacy Projects that are Public-Private Partnerships

Partners	Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs — Atlantic Philanthropies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Childhood Development Initiative, (CDI) Tallaght — youngballymun
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — University College Cork — Department of Education and Science — Atlantic Philanthropies — Tomar Trust (private donor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Bridging the Gap project with school and community-based elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Atlantic Philanthropies — Northside Partnership — youngballymun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Preparing for Life: early intervention programmes for mothers and children, including antenatal support

Source: Cynthia Deane, Options Consulting

What are the Main Features of Child Literacy Practice Outside Schools?

- 8.13** ● It has already been noted that the approaches to child literacy are diverse and fragmented in terms of policy and funding. The same can be said about programme planning and implementation: while there are many good examples of practice where projects adopt a systematic and strategic approach within their own work, there is no coherent policy framework to guide them in their work. As a result, groups often work in isolation from each other, and this may result in overlap and duplication of effort and a waste of scarce resources.

Target Groups

- 8.14** ● Within the selected examples, there is general recognition that child literacy is a complex issue, and that it is not enough to deal with the child in school only. Some are targeted at children of all ages from birth to 12 years old; some include work with parents and families, some are aimed at childcare and pre-school practitioners, and some work mainly with older children and young people out of school settings. A significant group of projects (19 in total, in 15 counties) aim to promote family literacy, and these projects include complementary elements targeted at adults only, children only, or adults and children together.
- 8.15** ● Most child literacy projects are local in their reach: they target children and/or families in a confined geographical area, usually an area of socio-economic disadvantage, linked with the RAPID programme or one of the area partnership interventions under the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP). Examples of this approach are the programmes jointly funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in Ballymun and Tallaght, Dublin. Some however are national in scope, such as those based in public libraries. Estimates of the number of participants reached by the various initiatives are not available; nor is it possible to check whether the current approaches to targeting are effective in reaching those most in need.

Identifying Needs

- 8.16** ● The examples show that child literacy projects respond to the needs of the target groups, using one of three broad approaches:
- Specially-commissioned research studies;
 - Published research literature and readily available national or international data; and
 - Data (or informal information) that are available locally, for example from schools, area partnerships, health services or community resource centres.
- 8.17** ● A number of projects have commissioned research, sometimes quite extensive, to provide a rigorous and objective analysis and to enable systematic evidence-based planning. The Childhood Development Initiative in Tallaght, Familiscope in Ballyfermot, the literacy study in Clondalkin and the Educational Action Research Project in Athlone have all invested considerable resources in this kind of research. Other projects such as the Family Learning/Family Literacy cluster, the literacy-focused activities sponsored by Barnardos and the work of the library service have drawn on the findings of national and international research (such as OECD studies), census data and educational and other research literature. Projects promoted by area partnerships or the health services draw mostly on local data provided by schools, health professionals and other agencies working in the community; they may also conduct small-scale screening programmes to identify the children most in need of language and literacy support, including speech and language therapy for example.
- 8.18** ● While the needs are often well-articulated in the written material, they are not always translated into clear goals and targets for the development of child literacy. This can lead to a weak evidence base and a lack of clear strategic focus in the projects and initiatives themselves.

Methodologies

- 8.19** ● The examples show that a considerable body of expertise has been developed by the organisations that are active in promoting child literacy outside schools. There is generally a systematic approach to selecting appropriate methodologies, for three identifiable groups:
- i. Customised literacy-based approaches designed specifically to meet the needs of the specific target groups (see examples in Figure 9.4);
 - ii. Branded or off-the-shelf ‘packages’ that have been tried and tested elsewhere (see examples in Figure 9.5); and
 - iii. Broader developmental approaches that focus for example on learning disposition, motivation, emotional well-being or school readiness (see examples in Figure 9.6).

i. Customised Approaches

- 8.20** ● These approaches are often innovative and closely linked to the needs identified; there is a high level of expertise among practitioners which contributes to successful implementation of the initiatives. There is a predominance of integrated approaches with children and families and a focus on language and literacy as part of the holistic development of the child, including for example their physical well-being; motor development; social and emotional development; approaches to learning; language development and literacy; cognition, and general knowledge. Some of the more comprehensive programmes such as those promoted by the Child Development Initiative in Tallaght, youngballymun and Barnardos include activities for parents and children from before birth and through the major life-cycle transitions - from home to preschool, preschool to primary school and primary school to second level. Positive parent-child relationships are supported, and parents are equipped with the competences that result in good child development outcomes (See Figure 8.4).

Figure 8.4 Examples of Projects Incorporating Customised Literacy-Based Approaches

Methodology and focus	Examples of projects
Family learning/family literacy	— 19 family literacy projects funded by DES youngballymun
Speech and language therapy	— HSE Cavan-Monaghan: Chatterbox programme — HSE South, Cork City Partnership and two primary schools in The Glen — Familiscope Ballyfermot
Early language development	— CDI Tallaght (language development as part of a comprehensive early childhood development programme) — Cork City Partnership: language development and learning using the outdoor environment
Literacy supports for primary school-age children	— youngballymun
After-school clubs and programmes	— Doodle Den Tallaght CDI — Barnardos: homework clubs; English-language clubs

Source: Cynthia Deane, Options Consulting

- 8.21** ● The youngballymun initiative focuses on creating a Learning Community that recognises the complexity of community cultures and inter-relationships among stakeholders including policy makers, statutory, voluntary and community service providers, residents, parents, children and young people. It is engaging with formal and informal networks to bring about enhanced and lasting well-being and learning outcomes for children and young people.

8.22 ● Projects that are aimed at children of primary school age often focus on improving literacy by better attendance, encouraging more learning outside school, increasing the involvement of parents in and out of school time, encouraging families to use libraries and social support networks and enhancing children's confidence and self-esteem as well as their relationships with parents and peers. Examples of such projects include Bridging the Gap, the Dublin Docklands Education Project, and the reading initiatives promoted by the public libraries and Children's Books Ireland.

8.23 ● The Fatima Case Study is of interest here. In a proposal for the NALA Ace Awards, McVeigh argues that the literacy project in Fatima is directly transferable to other communities. The development of the buddy reading programme between residents and local children, a literacy reading intervention to support work already going on in schools and a homework, a library club and family literacy project can be done elsewhere. She gave for the following reasons:

- The existence of training and programme materials that can be replicated for the cost of photocopying;
- It is a community-led and owned initiative, not run from elsewhere;
- The materials used were cheap and purchased on the internet; and
- Celebrating literacy can be done in a number of inexpensive and creative ways (McVeigh, 2009).

ii. Branded or Off-the-Shelf 'Packages'

8.24 ● Branded or off-the-shelf 'packages' that have been tried and tested elsewhere (see examples in Figure 8.5) include High/Scope, the Hanen Programme, Incredible Years, Wizards of Words, Marte Meo (video-based approach to social and emotional development), and Circle Time.

iii. Developmental Approaches

8.25 ● Broader developmental approaches that focus on learning disposition, motivation, emotional well-being or school readiness (see examples in Figure 8.6).

Figure 8.5 Examples of Projects Incorporating Branded or Off-the-Shelf 'Packages'

Methodology and focus	Examples of projects
High/Scope	CDI Tallaght; youngballymun; Barnardos programmes
Incredible years	Familiscope Ballyfermot, youngballymun (and elsewhere)
Wizards of Words	Barnardos: intergenerational paired reading programme
Marte Meo (social and emotional development)	Mounttown Neighbourhood Youth Project, Dun Laoghaire

Source: Cynthia Deane, Options Consulting

Figure 8.6 Examples of Projects Incorporating Broader Developmental Approaches

Methodology and focus	Examples of projects
Early childhood family support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Northside Partnership: Preparing for life — youngballymun: Antenatal services and parent – support — Child Development Initiative Tallaght
Building positive parent-child relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — youngballymun: Antenatal services and parent support
School and learning readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Northside Partnership — Young Ballymun — Tús Maith (Barnardos)
Child development skills for parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Lifestart foundation: parenting programme
Book and library-based activities for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Children's Books Ireland — Public Library Service
Support for primary-secondary transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Athlone Community taskforce: study skills; summer and winter programmes; ICT programme — Youth organisations: targeted transition programmes
Motivating children to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Early Years Making It Work (2-3 year olds) — Business in the Community: Mentoring by business people for 8-9 year-olds
Arts and culture activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Draiocht Blanchardstown — Musical Beginnings and Art Therapy programme, Familiscope Ballyfermot
Learning enrichment: after school and out-of-school activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Bridging the Gap — Dublin Docklands Education Programme

Source: Cynthia Deane, Options Consulting

Monitoring and Evaluating Results

- 8.26** ● Monitoring and evaluation are still underdeveloped aspects of practice in child literacy projects. In some of the examples, there is a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation, including qualitative and quantitative elements and often incorporating pre-testing and post-testing using standardised methods. In other cases, there is a more informal approach to measuring outcomes, where the evidence is often anecdotal and based on the impressions or reactions of participants.
- 8.27** ● There is an emerging trend, especially in some of the bigger projects that are promoted in association with philanthropic groups, towards a more strategic approach based on explicit goal-setting and measurement of impact. The youngballymun project, for example, has a clear focus on achieving enhanced learning and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people. The project structures and processes are designed and monitored to ensure the effective and reliable delivery of all aspects of the work. Staff engage in quarterly planning and review meetings, work with strategic partners and evaluators to document outcomes and to disseminate learning from the project.

Potential for Involving Arts and Cultural Organisations as Partners

- 8.28** ● Many arts and cultural organisations provide programmes and events for children and young people that have a language development or literacy element. The public libraries, for example, organise class visits, children's summer reading schemes, competitions, author visits, creative writing, arts and cultural events, summer camps, quizzes, games support, homework clubs, mother and toddler groups, storytelling, toy libraries and reading groups to children and young people. The libraries also link with local and national groups and individuals to promote reading for pleasure as an important element of literacy: county and city childcare committees, schools, preschools, publishers, book suppliers, authors, illustrators, storytellers, drama groups, magicians, local artists, cultural amateurs, sports stars and other local heroes and local arts officers all work to support reader development.
- 8.29** ● There is potential to explore further the ways book-based activities can support the development of children's literacy. Integrated programmes between schools and libraries might also be further developed and collaborative research undertaken into the value and impact of library use on children's literacy. It would also be worthwhile considering how to involve parents and other adults as readers in storytelling sessions; library staff could provide training for groups of parents/grandparents or interested community volunteers who could then work with childcare facilities on family reading sessions. For older age-groups, an internet-based approach modelled on social networking sites might be worth exploring for its relevance to literacy development.
- 8.30** ● One example is Draíocht's 'The Adventures of Me: A Project for Children's Storytelling.' Draíocht's role is to support schools in their work by delivering appropriate arts experiences. The project provides high-quality arts experiences around reading and storytelling for the children in the Early Start programme in one school, and to encourage all the ancillary benefits that a child gets from reading with a parent, such as the intimacy of time spent together on reading and stories.
- 8.31** ● An earlier report by the NESF in 2007, *Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion*, outlined the ways that cultural projects can support greater social inclusion (NESF, 2007a).

Family Literacy

- 8.32** ● Some of the more integrated and focused areas of work are in family literacy, where the VECs work alongside schools and community to focus on literacy for adults and children. Family literacy is showing positive signs of development; there is an annual family literacy conference, 2 EU networks and 19 VEC/ School programmes are underway nationally under DEIS. In this way, DEIS through providing the first national fund for partnership with schools and has facilitated the groups to be more mainstreamed. The VEC's became a key player in this partly because of their administrative structure and knowledge of local issues and needs and they have practical experience through Youthreach and the Adult Literacy Service.

- 8.33** ● Another factor in the growth of family literacy was the link to child literacy via parents as for many, the motivation to help their child, facilitated helping themselves in improving their own literacy.
- 8.34** ● There are some notable activities on family literacy, namely NALA's work (for example, NALA, 2004). The EBS has also given money to produce a book called *Home with Family Learning: Fun and useful ways to improve reading, writing and maths skills for all* (NALA, 2005). One striking example of good practice in family literacy work is that of the Clare Family Learning Project which runs a wide range of family literacy programmes. One of these is Storybags which is aimed at parents with 0-7 year olds and uses props and games to support reading.
- 8.35** ● Their perspective on family literacy is one which sees:
- the home environment not as a site of deprivation but a site of learning opportunities;
 - increased awareness that family members are best placed to stimulate early language and literacy development;
 - there is always a social context for literacy; and
 - the prime motivating factor in learning to talk also motivates a child to read and write, that is, the desire to be socially communicative (Clare Family Learning Project, 2000, p. 14).
- 8.36** ● A directory of family learning services nationwide is being prepared by Co Clare VEC, listing the provision that is currently on offer under adult literacy schemes and Lifestart programmes. Another example is the Cork Anti-Poverty Resource Network which has been actively involved in family adult literacy since 1979 in responding to local needs as they emerged from the work of community-based Education and Rights Resource Centre.
- 8.37** ● The models of funding and support that are appropriate for schools often do not work for community-based activities. Some community agencies feel that their work can be overshadowed and controlled by the larger and more powerful agencies and organisations. This represents a potentially serious barrier to progress.
- 8.38** ● As NALA in their Submission to the Project Team argue, *'Successful family literacy programmes are based on a response to the needs and concerns of the learners, adequate long-term funding and a commitment to strong partnership (Padak, Sapin, & Baycich, 2002). It is particularly important that partnerships are developed between schools and adults and community education. In order to develop this way of working, partners in education and community development need structures, which promote collaborative work on programmes involving children and adults, together and separately.'*

Examples of Other Initiatives

- 8.39** ● Familiscope is a project for children and young people who may experience emotional, behavioural, communication and/or relationship issues in Ballymun. It is supported by Ballymun Partnership, URBAN Ballyfermot, the Ballyfermot Drugs Task Force and the HSE. It grew out of commissioned research work by Dr Paul Downes on a possible model for a community-based psychological support service.
- 8.40** ● Youngballymun, mentioned earlier, is jointly funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. One of their projects is Literacivic which is a community-wide service to promote communication in all its forms, including reading and writing and self-expression through the arts. The VEC, Axis Arts Centre, Blue Drum and Art To Heart are among the partners involved in the design of this service.
- 8.41** ● A further example of Atlantic Philanthropies funded projects is the Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) in Tallaght which runs the Doodle Den After-School Literacy Programme. Its aims include making improvements in children's literacy, contributing to more frequent school attendance, encouraging more learning outside of school and increasing parental involvement in and out of school time. There is also an Early Childhood Care and Education Programme which is a two-year prevention service for children aged three and four and their parents/carers.
- 8.42** ● Bridging the Gap, University College Cork, ran from 2001 to 2007 and was funded by the DES/Atlantic Philanthropies/Tomar Trust and worked with 42 designated disadvantaged primary and post-primary schools and communities. The schools identified the needs of their pupils and planned projects involving families and community: many of the school-based projects focused directly or indirectly on literacy and they linked closely with parents and with community-based organisations. The project had five strands: research, professional development, networks, school-based projects and dissemination (see Deane, 2007). Although Bridging the Gap was mainly school-based, the most successful literacy development activities were those which actively involved parents and communities in supporting children's learning.
- 8.43** ● Another Cork-based project is the Glen Language and Learning Project, a joint initiative of the Health Services Executive (HSE) and Cork City Partnership, which was run on a pilot basis over a one-year period ending in June 2008. It comprised two parallel interventions which were designed in response to the need to pay more focused attention to speech and language development among young children in The Glen. The 21 children in Junior Infant classes in the two primary schools were assessed at the beginning and end of the year and 81% showed improved scores.

- 8.44** ● Tús maith is a new approach to developing school readiness that is being rolled out in many Barnardos services. It integrates the High Scope curriculum with the REDI (Research based, Developmentally Informed) programme to maximise developmental outcomes for children. It focuses on social and emotional competence and emergent literacy for three to four-year-olds.
- 8.45** ● Barnardos are also currently running Wizards of Words, an intergenerational paired reading programme to improve children's reading achievement. It focuses on phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, vocabulary building, and reading fluency. It is designed to encourage and promote children's interest in and love of reading and improve their confidence in their ability to read. It is being run in four schools with 90 pupils from first and second class, who are paired with a trained volunteer aged 55 years or over.

Emerging Issues and Conclusions

- 8.46** ● Although critical to any strategy to improve child literacy, the school is not the only arena where support and action is needed. However, the Education Act (1998) views educational disadvantage only in the formal school context and does not refer to education that is provided in other settings. For the most part, policy in this area has been slow to capture community strengths and resources in any systematic way.
- 8.47** ● In the UK, the charity, the National Literacy Trust acts as a bridge between statutory and voluntary provision. Recently it has started to develop a literacy manifesto for the country, seeking consultation. This is a model which would be invaluable here and could provide a fertile crossroads for collaborative work on literacy as well as help set a vision for literacy to support any policy development.
- 8.48** ● The commissioned work by the Project Team revealed that a wide range of literacy initiatives and projects are funded by philanthropic organisations, charities, some private-public partnerships, statutory funding, universities and colleges and public libraries, among others. These focus on literacy directly in terms of paired-reading schemes, summer clubs, speech and language development, and others which focus indirectly, early childcare and education schemes, emotional well-being, homework clubs etc. Some of these are targeted at particular age groups, or areas such as health, community development or the arts. The strengths of many of these initiatives, for example those co-funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and Dormant Accounts, are that they are located in disadvantaged communities have a strong focus, target group, key objectives and are being rigorously evaluated. However much of this evaluation is on-going and not yet publicly available.

- 8.49** ● There is a delicate balance between State provision of services and community responses but for the most part, community initiatives arise out a lack of provision. However, sometimes there can be overlap. This may lead to unnecessary duplication in some cases, whereas, in others, it can create more choice for local residents. A good example of an initiative seeking out areas where there is little duplication is youngballymun.
- 8.50** ● Some of the supports to implementation worth highlighting are innovative ones which build up area-based cross-sectoral approaches (Familiscope); language development as part of a comprehensive early childhood development programme (Child Development Initiative, Tallaght); and family literacy projects such as the Clare Family Learning Project.
- 8.51** ● The establishment of the Centre for Effective Service Centre²⁸ promoting service design, evaluation planning and networking /dissemination for children's services in Ireland, is also welcomed by the Project Team and could serve as a model for a wider community focus on sharing the learning on literacy and evaluation.
- 8.52** ● In terms of funding commitments, out-of-school activities for literacy development are small in scale. For example, family literacy is being funded under DEIS to the tune of €200,000 per annum covering only 19 projects. This compares to large-scale funding which is committed to the school based interventions, like School Completion which stands at €30 million. Overall there is a weak resource commitment to out of school literacy interventions. More significantly, the links between the DES policy interventions to raise literacy levels and the policy and resourcing of other Government Departments and State Agencies to achieve the same goal need to be strengthened.
- 8.53** ● The White Paper on Adult Education is useful here in relation to the key role it envisaged for the community education sector and its role is seen as:
- a provider in its own right which needs to be resourced;
 - an important voice, locally and nationally, in child literacy policy development, innovation, and review;
 - in engaging in partnerships with the statutory sector; and
 - a key agent in successfully meeting the needs of communities and groups who are most marginalised (Government of Ireland, 2000a).
- 8.54** ● The work of the NESDO Futures Ireland Project is valuable here in relation to the links between the State and local innovation and good practice. They have argued that where local providers have success, this needs to be deeply understood and for ways to be found to share that experience. Rather than just showcasing success stories there is merit in looking at ways to place key people from such projects in mentoring roles (NESDO, 2009).

²⁸ This is funded by Atlantic Philanthropies, the Office of the Minister for Children and the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

8.55 ● Some of the concluding issues are:

- a) Supports and Challenges to Implementation
- b) Literacy is a Complex Issue
- c) Gulf between School and Community
- d) Making Good Connections

These are presented below.

(a) Supports and Challenges to Implementation**8.56** ● While there is excellence in community provision, there is also variability. Greater leadership, quality assurance and support are needed. The criteria of good practice for educational and social inclusion initiatives have been identified in the international literature and from the examples presented here. They are:

- Family-oriented and community-based;
- Involve teams of professionals, parents and community workers;
- Achieve a balance between prevention and intervention;
- Adopt a multi-agency approach; and
- Have a mix of funding from various sponsors.

8.57 ● With different drivers come different agendas. The work of Atlantic Philanthropies, for example, emphasises partnership and has driven up standards of evaluation and evidence based research.**8.58** ● Services that are explicitly needs led, outcome focused and implemented with consistency have been shown to result in better outcomes: rigorous monitoring, evaluation, data collection and measurement of impact enables policy-makers to verify what works and what does not work, and the lessons learned in site-specific pilot projects can then be applied to other areas. A systematic approach to project planning and monitoring also makes the progress on literacy goals visible to everyone who is affected by the issue. What is essential is a sustained commitment to evidence and research-based actions that involve schools in partnership with families and community agencies, with systematic monitoring and tracking of outcomes, especially in literacy and numeracy.**(b) Literacy is a Complex Issue****8.59** ● Integrated approaches that meet children's specific health and cognitive needs, as well as the needs of parents and carers, can contribute to better outcomes for children. An area-wide family literacy strategy could be of great benefit in many parts of the country, since it is not possible to focus on child literacy without having parallel programmes supporting the literacy skills development of the adults/parents. Experience in Family Learning/ Family Literacy projects suggests that one of the great motivators for adults returning to education is to help their children with school work. Projects that focus on parent-child interactions have indirect benefits for speech, language and literacy: early intervention maximises parent-child communication, building self-esteem of both parents and children at a critical time in language development.

- 8.60** ● Youth work and other out-of-school projects have also produced measured improvements in the social and emotional development of young people, which have in turn contributed to enhancing their self-esteem and educational aspirations. While such projects do not focus specifically on literacy, they demonstrate the effectiveness of multi-agency partnerships in addressing the complex and interdependent needs of children and young people.
- 8.61** ● The process of building community responses to literacy is as important as the final service. It is important to reflect on what we mean by community. There is a distinction to be made between formal services which take place in the community and a considered community response where a community has been asked to provide care (as Eamon O'Shea recently argued in relation to the care for older people – O'Shea, 2009). In developing future links between communities, literacy and schools, there is value in drawing from community development approaches. The White Paper on *Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector (2000)* defines community development as '*an interactive process of knowledge and action designed to change conditions which marginalise communities and groups and is underpinned by a vision of self-help and community self-reliance*' (Government of Ireland, 2000a, p. 49).
- 8.62** ● Community development processes can be effective in strengthening local community responses and to building bridges between schools and other members of the community. What is needed is a more collaborative, cross-sectoral and shared approach to finding literacy solutions.
- 8.63** ● There is considerable merit in building on the Office of the Minister for Children's Services Committees to include a focus on literacy and improved connections between agencies working in communities to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

(c) Gulf between School and Community

- 8.64** ● Despite the considerable work of the Home School Community Liaison Scheme, there is a gulf between school and community which needs to be bridged. Where this partnership is absent it is sometimes due to a misunderstanding of roles in schools and community, and in not seeing the potential for collaboration.
- 8.65** ● Initiatives that emerge from within communities that support child literacy often taken place in a trusted environment and can be more accessible to parents who might have had negative experience of school. In this way, community responses and initiatives have strengths which may be lacking in schools.
- 8.66** ● NALA has in the past brought people with different roles and responsibilities together such as Home School Community Liaison, Adult Literacy Organisers and literacy tutors and this was effective in fostering working together. NALA argues that the Department of Education and Science playing a national leadership role, as via DEIS, can help.

- 8.67** ● The Fatima Regeneration Board offer one approach to bring together community residents and schools and although not yet evaluated, it does show what is possible with the drive and expertise to develop this area.
- 8.68** ● Volunteers play a key role in many literacy initiatives such as homework clubs and paired-reading projects. For example, the Barnardos' Wizards of Words project involves older volunteers.

(d) Making Good Connections

- 8.69** ● Almost every policy document and report about social inclusion published in this country over the past decade or so has made the case for more inter-agency working or 'joined-up' action as it is sometimes called. However, up to now there have been relatively few documented examples of effective multi-sectoral partnerships that focus explicitly on developing child literacy, so the innovative approaches described here indicate some possible directions for the future.
- 8.70** ● Development of equality in relationships between stakeholders is key. Trust has to be built for traditional barriers to be overcome. To generate equal partnership - there is a need to get to know the different cultural contexts that each operates within. Often stakeholders want to achieve the same goal but have different approaches and understandings as to how to get there. This can be facilitated by joint training /learning opportunities that can break down barriers (and silos) that exist within agencies (intra agency) between agencies (interagency) and between agencies and communities. Integrated Partnership Companies, such as Southside Partnership, have direct experience of this working well where it is supported and sustained²⁹.
- 8.71** ● One potential mechanism for greater inter-agency collaboration around literacy is provided by the OMC's work with Children's Services Committees. The OECD noted the work of the OMC as being a way forward in public policy implementation. As outlined in Chapter 2, in setting up these committees, considerable work with all the agencies involved has been carried out to develop relationships.
- 8.72** ● There is also a potential role for community mentors/advisors that could share the learning from innovative practices across regions/nationally in schools and communities.
- 8.73** ● In advocating more and improved connections between agencies in the community, it needs to be recognised that the models of funding and support that are appropriate for schools and other public services often do not work for community-based activities. Community agencies sometimes feel that their work is undervalued and misunderstood by larger and more powerful agencies and organisations. This needs to be addressed if progress is to be made on child literacy, through real partnerships that value the expertise and contributions of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

²⁹ Information supplied by the Project Team.

SECTION FOUR

Conclusions

9

- 9.1** ● This chapter sets out the Project Team’s Child recommendations in relation to implementation of current literacy policies. However, it first provides an overview of the key issues to emerge in the report on implementation.

Part 1: Implementation Overview

Implementation of Child Literacy and Social Inclusion Policies

- 9.2** ● As outlined in Chapters 1 and 5, the OECD, NESC and more recently NESF, have argued that effective policy implementation should contain the following key elements (NESC, 2005; NESF, 2007b, 2009; OECD, 2008):

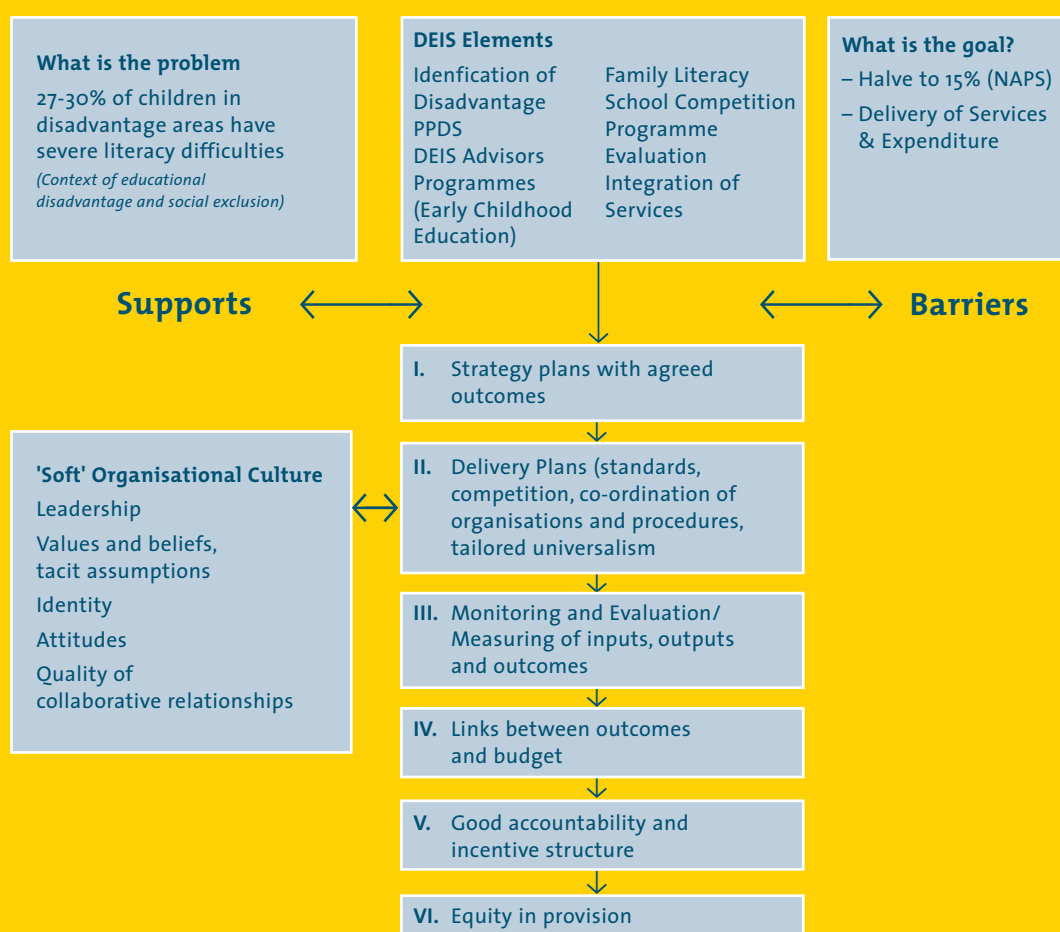
- i. Strategy plans with agreed outcomes
- ii. Delivery plans and delivery on the ground (including standards, competition, co-ordination of organisations and procedures and tailored universalism)
- iii. Monitoring, evaluation and measurement of inputs, outputs and outcomes
- iv. Links between outcomes and budget
- v. Good accountability and incentive structure
- vi. Equity in provision
- vii. Cultural Elements (including values, beliefs and tacit assumptions, leadership, attitudes and quality of collaborative relationships)

- 9.3** ● In this chapter, the implementation of DEIS, as understood from DES publications, from documentation provided by DES, from Submissions received, and from the Case Studies, has been mapped against the elements of the above template. A number of questions are posed and addressed. To what extent does current policy measure up against this template? What lessons can be learned by taking a detailed look at implementation? This Section begins by examining the current policies, primarily DEIS, in relation to these six elements. It then takes a broad and less detailed look at remaining policy in relation to literacy with the same lens.

Child Literacy and Social Inclusion Policies

- 9.4** ● This Section examines these elements, primarily in relation to *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, DEIS*, but also with reference to broader frameworks and policies. As outlined below in Figure 9.1, the question first posed in Chapter 2 – ‘*What is the problem*’ is clearly stated. There is consensus in DEIS, in the literature and among stakeholders generally, that poor literacy levels among children attending schools serving disadvantaged communities is a major problem. The ERC report showed that 27-30% of pupils experienced serious literacy difficulties, about three times the national average (E Eivers, *et al.*, 2004). This is acknowledged in DEIS, and it forms the basis for the ‘high level goal’ set out in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) to halve this rate to 15% by 2016.

Figure 9.1 Implementation of DEIS for Child Literacy



9.5 ● Most commentators acknowledge the complexity and multivariate nature of educational disadvantage (see Chapter 2). In recognition of this, DEIS provides a range of educational supports to schools, including literacy action plans, parental involvement, professional development, structured programmes, in tandem with supports for social disadvantage such as school meals. However, it is not yet clear if DEIS is addressing the problem as outlined in Figure 9.1, of children experiencing severe literacy difficulties in disadvantaged areas. In the interim, lessons can be learned from the implementation of DEIS. This Section now examines the planning of DEIS and related outcomes.

i. Strategy Plans with Agreed Outcomes

- 9.6** ● On many levels, DEIS has a strong implementation focus, setting out a staged roll-out and timeframe. It sets out a strategy for tackling the schools with the highest concentration of pupils with educational disadvantage, first by identifying them with the support of the Educational Research Centre, and then by directing additional staffing and funding to them to tackle educational disadvantage. In addition to staffing and funding, there is an emphasis on each school drawing up its own three-year Action Plans based on templates prepared by the Department of Education and Science.
- 9.7** ● The strategy plan for DEIS consists of a range of programmes, supports and measures delivered to targeted schools over a defined time-span from 2005 to 2010. However in practice, many of these supports were not rolled-out until 2007. With this staged roll-out, some of the programmes and supports will not have been in place in some schools for the full five year period of DEIS.
- 9.8** ● DEIS does not include any outcome measures for the various stages of implementation, so at this point in time (July 2009) it is difficult to assess the extent to which DEIS is achieving its goals. While a mechanism for summative evaluation is in place (carried out by the ERC), a system of transparent formative evaluation is not evident (see Chapter 5). The value of formative evaluation which provides milestones, identifiable indications of implementation etc. was outlined in Chapter 5, and this appears to be lacking in DEIS.
- 9.9** ● The goal which underpins DEIS is that outlined in the earlier NAPS Sustaining Progress, 2003-2005, of halving the incidence of severe literacy problems by 2006. As stated in DEIS, this is '*central to the Department's responses to the agenda set out in the special initiatives*' (NAPS higher level goal). This NAPS was superseded by the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016* which restated the goal as halving the incidence to 15%. DEIS positions itself as going some way to work toward this goal, but falls short of setting it as a definable outcome for DEIS. The proposed outcomes for DEIS could therefore be regarded as 'fuzzy' or not clearly articulated.

- 9.10** ● One of Hogwood and Gunn's elements of successful implementation is that there is complete understanding of, and agreement upon, the objectives to be achieved, and that these conditions persist throughout the implementation process (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984). In the case of DEIS, the objectives are framed in terms of service delivery and inputs rather than clearly articulated outcomes. Schools in the Case Study Research articulated their own individual targets as part of their Action Plans, but these targets did not appear to be linked to the national NAPS target of halving the literacy problem to 15%. This lack of clarity of outcomes through the delivery chain (from national policy to individual school policy) does not conform to best practice in implementation.
- 9.11** ● As previously stated, the Comptroller and Auditor General has argued that target setting needs to be matched with periodic reviews of outcomes based on indicators derived from reliable data. It also recommended that long-term targets should be supported by short-term targets, at system and school level, and that targets should be specified for average and for high-achieving pupils (Government of Ireland, 2006a). This recommendation does not appear to have been implemented to date.
- 9.12** ● DEIS is primarily school-focused but also includes the Home School Community Liaison Scheme and supports a modest family literacy programme, recognising the key role of parental and family interaction. This emphasis on out-of-school support was a strong focus in the final report of the Educational Disadvantage Committee (Educational Disadvantage Committee, 2005) (See Chapters 3 and 8).
- 9.13** ● While the initial DEIS publication included an early childhood education element, this was dropped from the plan last year. In terms of actual implementation, the out-of-school elements of DEIS are now very limited.
- 9.14** ● Apart from the Primary School English Curriculum, as discussed in Chapter 3, there is no literacy policy for non-DEIS schools or for groups outside of school. As Chapter 8 outlines, there are many community-based and family literacy initiatives throughout the country, but in most cases, the link between these and school-based initiatives is minimal.
- 9.15** ● As this report has emphasised, despite many good practice and successful initiatives both in-school and out of school, there has been little evidence of a significant overall shift nationally in levels of child literacy problems among pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds over the last 25 years. While we recognise that there are many excellent practices and initiatives in place and that many of these have shown encouraging results, this has not translated into statistically identifiable improvements in literacy rates for those from disadvantaged backgrounds at national level. This is particularly noticeable in cities, where severe literacy problems have been passed on from one generation to the next, thus perpetuating the cycle of disadvantage and social exclusion. While the reasons for this remain unclear, the point was made during the Team's consultation process, that the methods and criteria for defining and assessing literacy may be a contributory factor.

- 9.16 ● The poor levels of literacy for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are in contrast to national averages. In the most recent PISA study, Ireland was one of the top countries in terms of overall literacy performance of its 15 year old population (E. Eivers, *et al.*, 2008). With these positive national results, and what is achieved in other countries, we believe better results are possible for those with disadvantaged backgrounds. But this will require concerted and systematic action by all stakeholders. As this work suggests and others have argued, the solution lies within the whole community and the problem cannot be solved by schools alone.

In summary, our reflections on policy indicate the need for:

- The development of a national strategy plan on literacy, with agreed national outcomes and specific targets for children experiencing educational disadvantage;
- An integrated approach which builds bridges and links between schools and communities in the delivery of literacy supports;
- A clearer link between national high level goals/targets and local goals/targets with transparent accountability structures all the way along; and
- Clear outcome measures for each stage of delivery.

ii. Delivery Plans and Delivery on the Ground

- 9.17 ● While DEIS included an implementation plan, its details are not publicly available. It is not possible, therefore, to compare the plan with its actual roll-out. A phased roll-out was always envisaged but it is not clear how the actual delivery mirrored this nor do we know if there were any barriers to the roll-out. From the Case Study Research, there is variation in the timing and quality of training and supports for schools. As noted earlier, the DEIS plan envisaged the deployment of 20 Advisors (formerly called Cuiditheoiri). The full complement of 20 Advisors was not, however, available until 2008/9. We understand that some Advisors have more schools to support than others. For example, in parts of Dublin, DEIS Advisors have considerably more schools to visit than other areas of the country.

- 9.18** ● While schools were allocated funding on the basis of their level of disadvantage (there are two tiers or Bands of DEIS schools - Band 1 and Band 2) it is not clear whether the services and programmes of DEIS were tailored to individual schools (i.e. the NESC idea of 'tailored universalism') (NESC, 2005). The individual school's Action Plans were tailored by each school to respond to its specific needs and requirements, and although the ERC have gathered data on schools and the planning process, this data is not yet in the public domain. We have no information, therefore, on the extent to which individual school plans varied. However, schools which are involved in Reading Recovery and First Steps programmes are being provided with standardised training. The Case Study Research and other available material suggests that there is variation in how these are delivered on the ground. In some cases, Reading Recovery and First Steps were adapted for classroom use. This proved to be beneficial in the specific cases identified, such as Literacy Liftoff or Power Hour, but it is not in place in other schools.
- 9.19** ● In terms of delivery, different elements of DEIS are being provided by different agencies, and the extent of communication and collaboration between these various agencies is not clear. For example, the Home School Community Liaison Service was in operation before DEIS was introduced in 2006 and has its own structures and working practices. In recent months, it has been announced that HSCL and the School Completion programme will be amalgamated with the NEWB. This is likely to result in greater co-ordination between the various agencies.
- 9.20** ● The school principal plays a major role in delivering a policy such as DEIS. The Case Study Research illustrates this key role and demonstrates the extent to which effective leadership can have a positive impact on implementation. This will be discussed further under Cultural Elements, below. However, there is variability in leadership and for effective delivery, more attention may need to be paid to the training and support for principals in disadvantaged schools. As a recent debate in the UK has shown, despite having national targets and policies in place, schools and principals need flexibility to be effective in delivering on literacy teaching.³⁰
- 9.21** ● There appears to be significant variability in delivery between urban and rural schools. Rural schools do not receive all the supports available to urban schools. For example, DEIS Advisors are not available to rural schools. These schools are grouped in clusters and each cluster has access to a rural co-ordinator. In the limited time available to it, the Project Team did not have an opportunity to compare the support available to rural DEIS schools with that available to urban DEIS schools.
- 9.22** ● In summary, while DEIS has many positive implementation characteristics, such as a focus on targets and action plans, and in its move towards integrated services and delivery, there is no publicly available roadmap in relation to outcomes.

³⁰ http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/david_aaronovitch/article6605073.ece

In conclusion, what would be of value here is:

- A roadmap for DEIS: what it is trying to achieve, by when and how. This would include an annual business and implementation plan; and
- Greater integration within DES and across Departments and agencies in the delivery of literacy policies through a Child-Centred Approach, with shared goals and effective communication.

iii. **Monitoring, Evaluation and Measurement of Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes**

- 9.23** ● The evaluation of DEIS has been referred to earlier in this chapter. The ERC was commissioned by the DES to undertake a baseline study of literacy in DEIS schools in 2005/6. A comprehensive summative evaluation will be undertaken by the ERC in 2010. In the interim, the ERC is involved in ongoing qualitative evaluation. It is not however, in the public domain.
- 9.24** ● As indicated in an earlier chapter, evaluation is integral to the design and planning of an intervention from the outset. As with all measurement, a key challenge of evaluation is to identify the most reliable, valid and robust method of assessment. This is particularly true in relation to literacy at a time when views on the definition of literacy are shifting from traditional definitions to definitions which are context-dependent and socially constructed. Chapter 7 outlines some of the current debate on literacy measurement and the need to identify tools to capture what is happening in disadvantaged schools. Some of the Submissions to the Project Team suggested that traditional measurement tools do not adequately recognise excellence and good practice in newer approaches to literacy. Examples of situations were cited where multi-media methods and group-work produced positive results that were visible to teachers, but were not captured by traditional assessment measures being used by schools.
- 9.25** ● The work of the ERC in 2005/6 in identifying disadvantaged schools and rank ordering them by level of disadvantage was systematic and based on standard criteria. The role of the ERC was to rank order all 3,000 national schools based on the agreed criteria for disadvantage. The decision on the designation of the highest ranking schools as Band 1 and Band 2 DEIS schools was made by the DES. The possibility of having a sliding scale of additional financial and other support for a broader range of schools (other than Band 1 and Band 2 schools) was raised by the ERC – but the DES decided not to adopt this approach. The schools which had the highest concentration of disadvantage pupils (22% of all schools at primary level) were designated DEIS schools and virtually all the additional staffing and funding resources available under DEIS were allocated to these schools. In 2008/9, the additional funding totaled around €10 million.

- 9.26** ● It is not possible to know the extent to which DEIS is reaching its target group. Research carried out by the ERC in the mid 1990s indicated that at that time, about 60% of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds were attending schools which were not designated as disadvantaged. While to-day's figure may be lower, the extent to which the re-designation of schools under DEIS reduced this figure is not publicly known. The ESRI recently provided evidence relating to second level students, which stated that *'61 % of young people from semi/unskilled manual backgrounds and 56 % of those from non-employed households attend non-DEIS schools'* (Smyth & McCoy, 2009, p. 16). While we recognise that this is a social/ economic disadvantage indicator rather than an educational disadvantage indicator, it serves as a proxy figure and as an indication of the extent to which children from disadvantaged backgrounds are attending schools other than DEIS schools. It would be helpful, of course, if data on a national level on the proportion of educationally disadvantaged children who are attending schools other than DEIS schools, was made publicly available by the DES.
- 9.27** ● As outlined in Chapter 5, while the evaluation of DEIS is ongoing, there are also data that could be more effectively gathered and used by schools. The Project Team is aware that this has been an issue of discussion between the DES, school management and teacher unions in recent years, and while the Team recognises the sensitivity of individual school data, we see no reason why collated and gross data should not be made publicly available on a systematic basis, even if this required more careful monitoring of what assessments were being used in the schools. This issue needs to be addressed.
- 9.28** ● In broad terms, it can be argued that DEIS focuses more heavily on inputs of resources and the roll-out of services rather than focusing on outcomes in terms of implementation. There is a danger that if measures of achievement are not available until the end of the five year period of DEIS, it will be too late at that stage to identify and build on the successful factors of the initiative and correct for the less successful.

In summary, some of the key policy implementation issues under this heading are as follows:

- There should be systematic collection, and publication, of both formative and summative data on literacy outcomes;
- Evaluation reports should be publicly available and used to review and revise implementation strategies; and
- Consideration should be given, in the next phase of DEIS, to the allocation of funding on a sliding scale of disadvantage so that a greater number of pupils experiencing educational disadvantage would be supported.

iv. Links between Outcomes and Budget

- 9.29 ● There are few outcomes specified in DEIS, and those that are specified, refer to the roll-out of services and more indirectly, to the NAPS goal of reducing the level of serious literacy problems from 27% to 15%. However, none of these are linked directly with budgets. Under this implementation template, funding should be related to outcomes. However, there are challenges to this in relation to implementing DEIS on the ground. Should schools that meet their targets, for example by succeeding in improving literacy scores, receive less funding under DEIS than schools that do not reach their targets? Similarly, if schools become 'less disadvantaged', should their additional financial supports be removed? What happens in the longer-term if funding is reduced - will schools revert to previous levels of under-achievement? While these are difficult questions with no easy answers, they need further exploration. Schools need to know where they will stand financially should they be successful or if they fail to meet their targets.
- 9.30 ● In broad terms, policy design has to build in supports for implementation linked to achieving outcomes and targets at national and local levels. This has to be more directly linked to budgets and the policy should be transparent.

In summary, the policy issues here are:

- Greater linking of outcomes to budgets; and
- Local outcomes need to be linked more closely with national outcomes.

v. Good Accountability and Incentive Structure

- 9.31 ● Under DEIS, there is no system for rewarding success nor is there an incentive structure for schools to meet literacy targets or other indicators of educational disadvantage in Action Plans. As outlined in Chapter 5, some schools feel uncertain how their disadvantaged status will be reassessed if they show evidence of improvement.
- 9.32 ● Stronger accountability of achieving targets would improve implementation. As regards the NAPS goal of halving serious literacy problems, there is no apparent penalty for failing to achieve that goal. The Project Team notes that previous NAPS goals in relation to literacy were not achieved. However, the same goal of halving the level of serious literacy problems was simply reiterated in the current NAPS.
- 9.33 ● School principals play an important role in ensuring that their schools provide a satisfactory service for pupils but are they accountable in terms of delivering DEIS on the ground? It is not clear what the consequences are of failing to meet DEIS targets. And while service providers such as HSCL, PPDS etc. have their own organisational structures and roles, the extent of their accountability for the delivery of DEIS is unclear.

- 9.34** ● Other implementation research has shown the value of ‘purveyors’ or mentors in sharing good practice in implementation (for example, (Fixsen, *et al.*, 2005). For example, literacy experts could share their knowledge across schools and community initiatives and this would strengthen and help to integrate new policy initiatives with existing practices. The ‘purveyor’ can accumulate knowledge and experience and address challenges as they arise and could be useful in the implementation of literacy policies in schools.
- 9.35** ● The Project Team recognises the value in incentivising and rewarding (DEIS and non-DEIS) schools which have a proven track record in enhancing literacy levels.

Overall, the key policy lessons are:

- The system needs clearer and better accountability;
- Good governance – regular, comprehensive and transparent reporting;
- Accountability with consequences; and
- ‘Purveyors’ or ‘mentors’ from schools which have successfully implemented literacy policies should be encouraged to share good practice with staff in other schools and in the wider community.

vi. Equity in Provision

- 9.36** ● DEIS was delivered to targeted schools identified by the Educational Research Centre as being the most disadvantaged in Ireland. As discussed earlier, a proportion of pupils experiencing educational disadvantage are not currently attending DEIS schools, and there needs to be a clearer focus in policy terms, on what to do to support them.
- 9.37** ● The Project Team notes that in its implementation, DEIS provides only limited support to out-of-school groups and services, including homework clubs, summer camps, and pre-school activity, especially for children not attending DEIS schools. Such supports are vital to a comprehensive and inclusive literacy strategy. In terms of literacy initiatives outside of schools, Chapter 8 describes a disjuncture between school and community, in some cases a gulf, where one service begins and the other ends.
- 9.38** ● As also outlined in Chapter 8, the *White Paper on Adult Education* envisions a role for the community education sector which includes it as an important voice, locally and nationally (Government of Ireland, 2000a). This should be built into a national literacy policy framework.

In conclusion, key points for policy are:

- More focused action to tackle disadvantaged issues linked to literacy under the Government's *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2007-2016*;
- The need for a coherent and coordinated national literacy policy for all children;
- Increased clarity in relation to the target group for child literacy and social inclusion policy; and
- Greater consistency in service delivery to schools under DEIS.

vii. Cultural Elements

- 9.39 ● As earlier chapters demonstrated, the culture of schools and organisations play a key role in implementation. It is only when schools operate a whole-school approach to literacy teaching and integrate DEIS supports into the culture of school that change is likely to happen. From the Case Study Research material, this is clearly happening in some DEIS schools, but the extent to which it is true across the generality of schools is not yet clear.
- 9.40 ● With the forthcoming publication of the Inspectorate of Education and Science's report on good practice in DEIS schools (DES, Forthcoming-a), there is likely to be a better understanding of what works on the ground. However, as research shows, the difficulties of replicating good practice often lie in cultural elements, rather than 'hard' elements of policy implementation. An understanding of values and attitudes is key to knowing what cultural aspects need strengthening for more effective implementation. While this report has offered illustrative examples, further work is needed in this regard. What emerges from organisational research is that the greater the depth of the change, the longer it takes to happen. As schools are shaped to be learning organisations, and more focus is placed on the professional development of teachers, those who are not supported to develop their skills and expertise, may impede policy implementation on the ground from having a long-lasting impact.
- 9.41 ● Sharing good practice is at the heart of successful implementation. This is not confined to literacy but can be found in collaborative partnerships, team-building and integrated models of working. Some Government Departments and agencies have not traditionally shared information on implementation. This is not unique to Ireland, and requires considerable and focused change to shift towards more collaborative working arrangements.

- 9.42** ● Effective distributed leadership has been shown to create a positive team focus on teaching and learning. Although it is not possible to say conclusively if those schools with such leadership ‘do better’ than other schools, the observations and interview material gathered in this study point to that conclusion.
- 9.43** ● Other elements of effective schools include parental involvement, collaboration among teachers, having clear and high expectations, building a vision across the school in terms of literacy and taking risks to try out new programmes. Building networks with outside funders, universities and colleges of education, private partnerships and other locally based programmes was another effective strategy. Such networks not only provide additional financial support, but also serve as a link to new ideas.

In summary, the following policy lessons emerged under this heading:

- A system for better sharing of information on implementation across Departments and agencies should be promoted;
- Where schools have developed good practice in literacy, this learning should be shared through network-building; mentoring programmes and professional development among teachers and policy makers;
- More research is needed on the impact of ‘soft’ cultural elements on implementation of policies in schools in an Irish context; and
- Setting clear and high expectations and a vision for what is to be achieved helps to create a more positive and successful working culture and more effective implementation.

Part Two: Recommendations

National Literacy Policy Framework

- 9.44** ● This NESF study of child literacy and social inclusion has helped to elucidate a number of policy issues and has identified the need for an inclusive and agreed national literacy policy framework. It has highlighted some barriers and obstacles to successful policy implementation and has suggested some solutions. Arising out of the consultative process, it is clear that there is widespread commitment among the education and community stakeholders to addressing the challenge of serious literacy problems for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is agreement that this is not just a matter for primary schools but it must be addressed in a holistic way - from early childhood to adulthood – and that a partnership approach between the various education and community stakeholders, at local and national level, is essential for success.

9.45 ● From the analysis of implementation as set out above, the Project Team puts forward one central recommendation, outlined below with a number of supporting recommendations (9.51). **The Team recommends that a National Literacy Policy Framework should be put in place that has a ‘life –cycle’ emphasis, with the involvement of the various education and community stakeholders. A Steering Committee should be established to develop this framework led by the Department of Education and Science (See ‘Institutional Supports’ below). For this purpose, the Department should liaise with other relevant Departments, statutory and non-statutory agencies, and voluntary agencies. This would provide a shared vision for future action with greater policy coherence and integration. It should be underpinned with a strategic focus on child literacy.** In developing the framework, the integrated approach adopted by the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) and highlighted in the OECD Public Management Review on Ireland *Towards an Integrated Public Service* (OECD, 2008) should be considered. The diagram below attempts to present the holistic and inclusive nature of such a framework (see Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2 Towards a National Literacy Policy Framework



Source: NESF Secretariat

9.46 ● The Project Team considers that now is an opportune time to initiate decisive action, given the better understanding of literacy and its critical economic and social role in the 21st century. Having considered the evidence available from the Submissions and from the research undertaken, this report sets out a vision for literacy for all children which envisages the involvement of families, communities, schools and a range of service-providers, both statutory and non-statutory in the formulation of literacy policy and in the delivery of literacy supports and tuition. Without such a vision, and a coherent, comprehensive policy framework, it is unlikely that all our children will be able to reach their full potential and contribute fully to society. This will require Departments, statutory and non-statutory agencies, and voluntary agencies, to work together, to communicate and to share good practice.

9.47 ● A Submission by the INTO to the Project Team, summarised such a policy as follows:

‘A national policy on literacy should be inclusive of literacy from birth through to adulthood. For the present, and for some time in to the future, initiatives to support adult literacy will be required. Within a national policy, the development of children’s literacy must be central. The focus should be on all children, regardless of school attended, and should be a holistic child-centred approach. A national policy must also include literacy in the Irish Language, particularly for those for whom it is the mother tongue.’

9.48 ● The policy framework should be underpinned by a holistic child-centred approach and should taking account of the new free early childcare scheme announced in the recent Supplementary Budget, it should contain a number of core elements such as:

- A strong focus on consultation;
- A partnership-based approach where literacy development becomes a collective and shared responsibility between all the stakeholders;
- Clearly articulated targets, both short-term and long-term, coordinated at local and national level;
- A ‘life-cycle’ approach;
- Clarity as to the responsibility of the various stakeholders;
- Strong parental involvement and participation at all levels from literacy policy development to delivery, including support for their own learning;
- Clear accountability and incentives;
- Implementation and action plans; and
- A built-in process evaluation and feedback procedures.

- 9.49** ● This Framework should be supported by the findings of national and international research on literacy. For example, the results of research on the effectiveness of various literacy programmes in different contexts, should be taken into account before any specific literacy programme is adopted and/or funded. Criteria used to allocate funding for various literacy initiatives should be open, transparent and publicly accessible.
- 9.50** ● This broad framework would need to be complemented with particular supports for those experiencing disadvantage. It is envisaged that this support would include targeted interventions for disadvantaged pupils. Figure 9.3 presents some of the supports that would be needed including targeted interventions.

Figure 9.3 How Disadvantaged Pupils and Schools would be Supported



Source: NESF Secretariat

Supporting Recommendations

- 9.51** ● There are a number supporting recommendations arising from the National Policy Framework, considered in turn, below.

Quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

- 9.52** ● ECCE plays a key role in literacy development. The new free universal pre-school provision for 3-4 year olds announced in the recent Supplementary Budget, which was one of the key recommendations outlined in the NESF's earlier report on Early Childhood Care and Education (NESF, 2005), should provide the impetus and context for this, to ensure that:

- All pre-school provision is of a high standard and compliant with the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (*Síolta*);
- Provision includes an early-years curriculum for children of pre-school age as outlined in the *Aistear, the Framework for Early Learning* (NCCA);
- There is an increased emphasis on oral language development to support literacy learning and support for children with delayed speech and language skills to meet the challenges of primary school; and
- Early-years educators are equipped with the skills necessary to develop oral language, including through play³¹.

School-Based Actions

- 9.53** ● Drawing on national and international research, on best practice and on insights on what works best, and recognising the importance of on-going teacher education, the teaching of literacy should be strengthened as follows:
- Schools in disadvantaged areas should consider prioritising literacy by dedicating 90 minutes per day to literacy instruction across the curriculum. They should have license to draw from discretionary time and other areas of the curriculum where needed for a specific period of time, agreed with the Inspectorate and with the required professional development supports;
 - Schools should allocate responsibility to a post-holder for literacy across the whole school;
 - Schools should ensure that parents are involved in literacy policy, planning and delivery, including setting targets and outcomes;
 - Both formative and summative literacy assessment should be used at school level;
 - ICT should be integrated into school-based literacy activities such as student writing, oral fluency and reading;
 - Literacy expertise should be fostered among staff through professional development and other appropriate means; and
 - Schools should engage with out-of-school services to ensure coherence and continuity of literacy initiatives for children and young people.

Support for Schools

- 9.54** ● Schools should be supported in the following ways:
- A school-based, sustained and focused intervention in literacy should be provided for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds;

³¹ A Workforce Development Plan for the early childhood care and education sector is expected to be published in Autumn 2009.

- The Primary Professional Development Service, (PPDS), should work with schools to help them to develop as learning organisations where teachers excel at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge in literacy, where self-reflection and assessment is routine practice;
- In planning professional development support for primary teachers, support for literacy should be given high priority by the Teaching Council and those responsible for continuing professional development;
- Strategic partnerships should be developed between the Colleges of Education/ University Education Departments and designated disadvantaged schools to provide a combination of on-site and College-based professional development;
- The increased use of mentors/literacy advisors should be considered in supporting the implementation of any literacy policy initiative;
- The NCCA should consider developing further structured and practical guidelines on teaching literacy in the delivery of the Primary English Curriculum;
- The Primary Professional Development Service, (PPDS), should be supported in ICT training to improve the integration of ICT for literacy learning in schools;
- Multi-disciplinary teams should be developed, including Speech and Language Therapists to work with schools around literacy practice;
- Drawing on international best practice, there should be further development of literacy policies for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and children with specific disabilities;
- Increased links between schools and the wider community should be developed through extended hours, adult courses and community events and direct links with community services. Training initiatives should be developed for all involved in delivering literacy programmes, jointly, where possible; and
- Improved supports should be provided for parents with limited knowledge of English to help them to support their children's literacy.

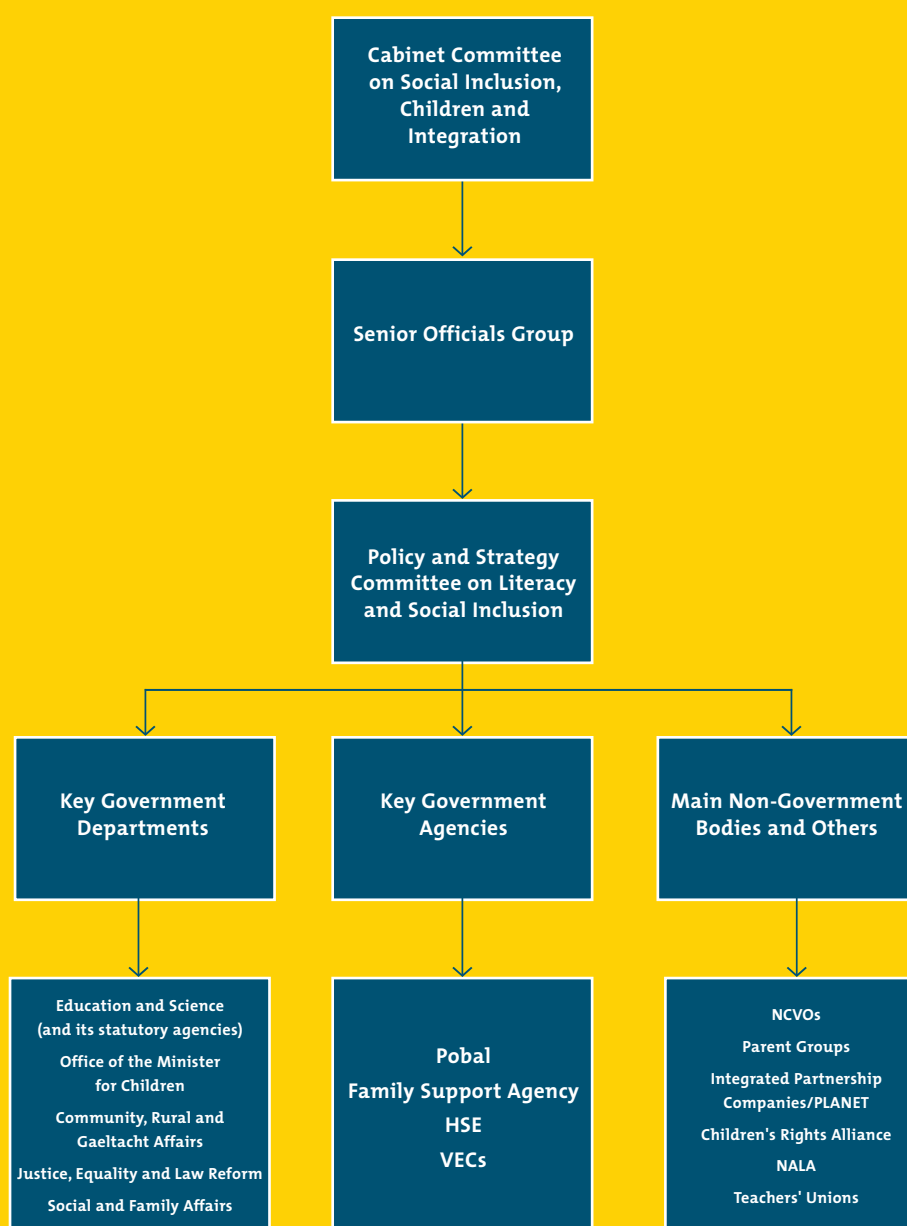
Community Literacy Practices

- 9.55** ● As emphasised earlier in the report, literacy approaches that are provided only in the school are limited in their effectiveness. What are required are effective relationships and partnerships between the school, the family and the wider community with an acceptance of the respective roles and responsibilities of the different partners. The Home School Community Liaison scheme, Family literacy initiatives and community initiatives all have an important role to play:

- Community literacy initiatives should be evaluated with a view to identifying models of good practice;
- Communities should use existing structures such as Integrated Partnership Companies and VEC's, to help identify and monitor barriers to child literacy development in their communities;
- Close co-ordination should be established between pre-schools, primary schools and post-primary schools to develop a more coherent approach to child literacy practice. Home School Community Liaison teachers and School Completion Officers have an important role to play;
- The role played by libraries in enhancing child literacy should be more fully recognised and supported;
- Summer Literacy Programmes should be provided, especially in disadvantaged areas during the school holiday period; and
- An intensive National Child Literacy Campaign should be undertaken to emphasise the importance of literacy development in early childhood.

Institutional Supports

- 9.56** ● A Steering Committee on Literacy and Social Inclusion should be established under the auspices of the Department of Education and Science, representative of all the main stakeholders (see Figure 9.4 below), with a clear mandate from the Government to drive forward and put into effect the recommendations contained in this report. The Chair of the Committee should be an independent outsider with knowledge and experience of the issues involved.
- 9.57** ● The functions of this Committee, which should report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Children and Integration through the Senior Officials Group, would include:
- Preparation of the National Literacy Policy Framework, including a strategic focus on child literacy. This would include national and local targets, implementation schedules, performance and outcome indicators and built-in evaluations to monitor progress and feedback procedures across schools and the wider community;
 - The development of models and guidelines to promote effective partnerships between the school, the family and the community with improved linkages between adult and child literacy policies and practice;
 - The promotion of research and improved data collection; and
 - The preparation and publication of regular reports on the activities of the Committee.

Figure 9.4 Institutional Supports³²

Source: NESF Secretariat

³² Acronyms will be listed in the Glossary of the Final Report.

Public Expenditure Implications

- 9.58** ● While acknowledging that expenditure on education is lower in Ireland than among the EU 19 at all levels of the educational system (Smyth & McCoy, 2009), few of the recommendations in this report involve increased public expenditure. Instead, they relate essentially to achieving improved outcomes through better co-ordination and integration between Government Departments and agencies. As such, these would achieve better results from present levels of expenditure.
- 9.59** ● An increase in the availability and quality of professional development training would have some cost implications as would the provision of literacy mentors/advisors. However, as Kennedy suggests, greater collaboration with Colleges of Education Postgraduate courses could provide some low cost and appropriate support for schools and further training for those yet to start full-time teaching (Kennedy, 2009).
- 9.60** ● It is important to bear in mind the substantial on-going costs to the individual and to society as a whole if the literacy problems in our society, and especially among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are not effectively addressed. The international evidence is clear – there are substantial returns from investment in successful literacy programmes, e.g. studies in the UK show a return in the range €17.15 to €20.34³³ for every € spent on such programmes (KPMG Foundation, 2006).

³³ This has been converted from sterling: £14.81 to £17.56 for every £ spent.

Annexes

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Annex I**Annex 1: NESF Case Study School Interview Schedule**

School:

Overview

1. What literacy Initiatives are in place (for example?)

- First Steps
- Reading Recovery
- Home School Community Liaison
- Learning Support Teacher
- Homework club
- Paired reading
- Book groups
- Other initiatives
- School Support Programme

2. DEIS Action Plan?

- Whole School Planning
- Measurement
- Evaluation
- Resources

3. Targets on literacy?

4. Reading levels/literacy levels in school?

5. School Completion Programme?

6. Absenteeism rate?

7. Indicators of disadvantage?

8. Parental involvement?

9. Community links?

Interview with Principal

1. Literacy and Social Inclusion

- What do you mean by literacy in this school?
- What is the goal/target here?
- What is the biggest literacy initiative?
- How does social exclusion impact on the school?
- What do you see as the problem(s)?
 - Context
 - Curriculum
 - Teacher contracts
 - Professional Development
 - Turnover of teachers
- Who are the target group you are trying to reach?
- Are the literacy initiatives reaching the target group?
- Teaching experience (years and types)?

2. Delivery of DEIS

- What do you understand DEIS to be?
- What are its objectives?
- How is DEIS delivered in this school?
- Why these elements? How much choice did you have in this?
- Are all the available components delivered? If not, why not?
- What is the nature of the resources available, the capacity of staff to deliver, the clear definition of roles and the time allocated to staff for delivery? How are problems addressed in regards to this? Is there any discussion?
- Are all the components of good quality?
- What works? What isn't working so well?
- What are the supports needed to successfully implement these?
- What are the barriers to reaching that target?
- Has DEIS been welcomed here?
- What are the underlying assumptions in literacy and in the development of DEIS?
- What discretion do you have in implementing DEIS?
- What is DEIS not addressing?
- Integrated services in DEIS and with other services?
- What are the documents, minutes, school events, rituals and procedures of the schools in to DEIS delivery?
- How is the school designed/layout and how does this impact on delivery?
- What has been the *impact* of the policy, including its effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes, as well as any unintended consequences?
- In your view, to what extent are DEIS (and other broader policies) addressing illiteracy and disadvantage?
- Are services targeted and delivered to greatest need?

3. Culture of the School

- Expectations of teachers and principal
 - Professional development opportunities
 - Is there a culture of success in the school?
 - Community and family oriented
 - School in Partnership with families, community
 - Challenges
 - Celebration of 'wins'
 - Leadership
 - Staff morale/mood of the school
- How is your learning shared or going to be shared?
 - What if any, might a more effective policy strategy be to improve literacy and social inclusion?

Interviews with Other Staff

- Learning Support Teacher
 - English class teachers
 - Home School Community Liaison
 - Home work club
 - Parents
 - Children
- Tell me about what you are trying to do here?
 - What is the purpose of this activity?
 - How long have you been doing it?
 - Teaching experience/type/years?
 - What is successful? What are the challenges?
 - Will it help improve literacy of the most disadvantaged pupils?
 - How does this link in with other initiatives in the school?
 - Do you have input to the school planning process?
 - How do you engage with parents in this school?

Annex II Case Study Class Observation Sheet

Name of School:

Date:

Observer:

School activity/class/event being observed (circle one):

- First steps
- Reading Recovery
- Literacy List
- Bridging the Gap
- Story sacks with parents
- Language programme with junior infants
- Paired reading
- Speech therapist/Story book
- Other

Number present (specify numbers of teachers, learning supports, parents, children):

Purpose of session (ask before/after session):

How often does this session occur? (specify- daily, weekly, monthly etc.):

How this session fits into wider programme/teaching strategy?:

Is this part of the curriculum or a separate programme?:

How does it link to literacy?

Other key things to note:

- Engagement of children:
(the level, extent and duration of their interest- is it all of the children, just some etc.)

Fully Engaged (1) to Not Engaged (5) 1 2 3 4 5

- What methods are used in the session: describe in full detail?
- Resources: (book, toy, flipchart):
- How is the classroom arranged?
- How successful was the class/event/session in your view
(totally subjective!)? Why?

Any other details about the session:

Annex III List of Submissions³⁴

Name	Organisation
Ms Micheala Avlund	
Ms Carmel Baron	St Mary's Primary School
Mr Liam Beausang	Scoil Iosagáin BNS
Ms Marian Brattman	Curriculum Development Unit
Ms Susan Brocklesby	CPLN Area Partnership
Ms Teres Browne	HSCL Scoil Chríost Rí
Ms Shirley Butler	South Midlands HSCL Co-ordinators
Mr Lloyd Byrne	ISPC
Ms Aideen Cassidy	Curriculum Development Unit
Ms Elizabeth Connolly	Monaghan Education Centre
Ms Brid Connor	North Midlands HSCL
Ms Clare Conroy	Scoil Chaitiona
Ms Marguerita Courtney	Respond
Ms Norah Cowel	
Ms Delores Crerar	Athlone Community Taskforce
Mr Pat Deegan	
Mr Seamus Devaney	
Mr Larry Dineen	
Dr Philomena Donnelly	Educational Disadvantage Centre
Dr Paul Downes	Educational Disadvantage Centre
Ms Elizabeth Dunphy	St Patrick's College Drumcondra
Ms Marie Fidgeon	Abbey Community College
Mr Maurice Fitzgerald	
Ms Siobhan Fitzpatrick	High/Scope Ireland
Ms Ruth Flanagan	Cork County Library
Ms Ann Franey	St Brendan's Girls School
Mr Joe Grennell	Dublin Inner City Partnership
Ms Noreen Guiney	Cathedral Shandon Blackpool Family Cluster
Ms Irene Gunning	IPPA, the Early Childhood Organisation
Ms Margaret Hayes	Dublin City Library and Archive
Ms Áine Heffernan	Cork City Childcare Company
Ms Anne Hegarty	St. Patrick's Infants National School
Ms Shauna Henry	Meath County Libraries
Mr Vincent Hunt	Castlerea Prison
Ms Dorothy Keane	Holy Cross NS
Ms Breda Kenny	Tolka Area Partnership
Mr John Kerins	Neuron Learning
Ms Mary Lenihan	Cork City Partnership
Mr Ronat Lillis	
Dr Catherine Maunsell	St Patrick's College
Ms Marie-Claire McAleer	National Youth Council of Ireland
Ms Cliona McCormack	Rehab Group
Ms Nora McDermott	An Chomhairle Leabharlana
Ms Aileen McDonnell	
Mr Patrick McEvoy	Phonics Ireland

³⁴ The details of 5 Submissions have been withheld at the request of the individual who submitted them.

Ms Patricia McGrath	North Kerry Programme
Mr Ruairí McKiernan	SpunOut.ie
Ms Iseult McLoughlin	Archbishop Ryan J.N.S
Mr Michael McNamara	
Mr Sean Meagher	
Ms Ann Molumby	St Joseph's Girls Primary School
Ms Edel Moran	FÁS
Ms Maureen Moran	Galway County Libraries
Ms Margaret Mulligan	Waterford Area Partnership
Ms Aileen Murphy	Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative
Ms Ann Neff	Cork Northwest Literacy Forum
Ms Niamh Nestor	School of Languages & Literatures, UCD
Ms Íde Ní Riain	Scoil Ghleanna Maghair Íochtaraigh
Ms Grainne Noone	Presentation Secondary School
Mr Art Ó Broin	
Mr Seosamh Ó Maolalaí	
Ms Emer O'Brien	Tipperary Libraries
Ms Rosalie O'Brien	Cork Anti Poverty Resource Network Ltd
Ms Oonagh O'Callaghan	
Ms Mary O'Dwyer	Doon CBS
Mr Robert O'Leary	Sacred Heart SNS
Ms Deirdre O'Mahony	X-PO
Mr Jim O'Regan	St Muredach's College
Ms Dorothy O'Reilly	Kilkenny Co Library
Ms Delia O'Sullivan	Scoil Na Croise Naofa
Ms Sylvia O'Sullivan	
Ms Eleanor O'Toole	Mayo County Library
Ms Mairead Owens	Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council
Ms Fran Prunty	
Mr Peter Reade	Beyond Chiropractic
Mr George Roche	Nagle Community College
Mr Gerard Ryan	Church of Scientology
Ms Johanna Saterina O'Riordan	Cork Education Support
Ms Mary Scriven	City of Cork Vocaitonal Education Committee
Ms Catherine Shanahan	Primary Professional Development Service
Ms Patsy Sweeney	St Mary's Secondary School
Ms June Tinsley	Barnardos
Ms Ann Twomey	Scoil Phádraig Naofa
Mr Josephine Vahey	Leabharlanna Chontae na Gaillimhe
Ms Sinead Walsh	
Ms Mags Walsh	Children's Books Ireland
Ms Audrey White	
Ms Kasia Wojtach	Inishowen Development Partnership

Post Plenary Submissions

Name	Organisation
Mr Ciairín de Buis	Irish Childcare Policy Network
Ms Aideen Cassidy &	
Ms Bernadette Kiely	Junior Certificate School Programme Support Service
Ms Deirbhile Nic Craith	INTO
Ms Johanna Doherty	
Dr Paul Downes	Educational Research Centre
Ms Siobhain Fitzpatrick	
Mr Joe Grennell	Dublin Inner City Partnership
Mr Pdraig Hurley	
Catherine Joyce	Barnardos
Mr Patrick McEvoy	Phonics Ireland
Mr Pat McMahon	Galway County Libraries
Ms Ann Molumby	
Ms Maureen Moran	Galway County Libraries
Ms Orlaith O'Hare	
Ms Satty O'Riordan	
Marian Quinn	Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative

Annex IV Individuals and Organisations Consulted

Name	Organisation
Ms Aileen Murphy and Ms Marian Quinn	Tallaght West CDI
Ms Eleanor McClorey	Youngballymun
Ms Mary McNelis	PPDS
Ms Catherine Shanahan	PPDS
Ms Arlene Foster, Mr Hal O'Neill,	
Ms Kathryn Crowley and Ms Susan Dennison	NCCA
Ms Concept Conarty and Regional Managers	HSCL
Dr Tracey Connolly	UCC
Ms Deirbhile Nic Craith and Mr Tom O'Sullivan	INTO
Dr. Emer Smyth,	ESRI
Lucy Fallon Byrne	NCPP
Gerry Shiel	Educational Research Centre
Dr Peter Archer and Dr Susan Weir	Educational Research Centre
Dr Paul Downes	Educational Research Centre
Janice Clarke and Johnny Graham	Belfast Model Girls School
Suzanne Connolly	Barnardos
Sylda Langford	Office of the Minister for Children
Prof. Amy Ellen Schwartz	Institute for Education and Social Policy, NYU
Prof Colm Harmon and Orla Doyle	Geary Institute, UCD.
Dr Ann Higgins	Mary Immaculate College
Tina McVeigh	Fatima Regeneration
Abi Reynolds	National College of Ireland
Dr John Sweeney	National Economic and Social Council
Dr Mary Nugent	National Educational Psychological Service

Annex V List of Plenary Attendees

Name	Organisation
Ms Irene Alger	
Ms Geraldine Anderson	IBEC
Ms Michaela Avlund	
Ms Inez Bailey	National Adult Literacy Agency
Cllr Ger Barron	Association of County & City Councils
Ms Kathleen Bennett	Laois VEC
Ms Marian Brattman	Curriculum Development Unit
Ms Susan Brocklesby	CPLN Area Partnership
Mr Raymond Byrne	Law Reform Commission
Ms Eibhín Campbell	Archbishop Ryan Senior National School
Ms Marie Carroll	Southside Partnership
Mr Leo Casey	National College of Ireland
Ms Sinead Casey	WCDL After School Service
Ms Aideen Cassidy	Curriculum Development Unit
Ms Marion Connolly	St Lawrence O'Toole's Junior Boys School
Dr Tracey Connolly	University College Cork
Mr Tom Costello	Atlantic Philanthropies (Ireland) Ltd
Ms Marguerita Courtney	Respond
Dr Áine Cregan	University of Limerick
Ms Kathryn Crowley	NCCA
Ms Mary Cullen	Mounttown Neighbourhood Youth & Family Project
Mr Ciairín de Buis	Irish Childcare Policy Network
Ms Cynthia Deane	County Carlow VEC
Mr Pat Deegan	
Ms Anna Maria Dennison	Irish Countrywomen's Association
Dr Philomena Donnelly	St Patricks College
Mr Michael Doody	ICMSA
Ms Máire Dorgan	Cork Northside Adult Literacy Forum
Mr Paul Downes	Educational Research Centre, St Patrick's College
Mr Stephen Doyle	ISPCC
Ms Marie Dullea	Department of Health & Children
Mr Declan Dunne	Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership
Mr Mark ffrench-Mullen	Dublin City Library & Archive
Ms Marie Fidgeon	Abbey Community College
Ms Jane Forman	Atlantic Philanthropies (Ireland) Ltd
Ms Niamh Gallagher	Children's Rights Alliance
Ms Martina Gannon	Youngballymun
Ms Toni Gleeson	Disability Federation
Mr Joe Grennell	Dublin Inner City Partnership
Ms Irene Gunning	IPPA, the Early Childhood Organisation
Mr Michael Hallissy	Digital Exchange
Ms Máiread Hayes	Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
Ms Marion Healy	St Vincents Primary School
Ms Marian Heeney	Home School, Community Liaison Scheme
Ms Aine Heffernan	Cork City Childcare Company
Mr Harold Hislop	Department of Education & Science
Prof. Áine Hyland	Chair, NESF Project Team
Ms Kate Ibbotson	POBAL

Ms Catherine Joyce	Barnardos
Ms Breda Kavanagh	NALA
Ms Dorothy Keane	Holy Cross NS
Dr Eithne Kennedy	St Patrick's College
Mr John Kerins	Neuron Learning
Mrs Joyce Kerins	Neuron Learning Ltd
Ms Bernadette Kiely	Curriculum Development Unit
Miss Lorna Lafferty	Bray Area Patnership
Ms Carol Lannin	HSCL
Ms Mary Lenihan	Cork City Partnership
Ms Tina MacVeigh	Fatima Regeneration Board
Ms Deirdre Mathews	Department of Education & Science
Ms Marie Claire McAleer	National Youth Council of Ireland
Mr Peter McCarney	Presentation Secondary School Warrenmount
Mr Denis McCarthy	HSCL
Mr Patrick McEvoy	Phonics Ireland
Mr Mark McLoughlin	HSCL
Mr Iseult McLoughlin	Archbishop Ryan J.N.S
Ms Maura McMahon	Barnardos
Mr Sean Meagher	
Mr Gene Mehigan	Coláiste Mhuire
Ms Ann Molumby	St Joseph's Girls Primary School
Ms Maureen Moran	Galway County Libraries
Mr Jim Mulkerrins	Department of Education & Science
Ms Loraine Mulligan	SIPTU
Ms Carol Anne Murphy	University of Limerick
Ms Michelle Murphy	Ballymun Initiative for Third Level Education
Ms Ann Neff	Cork Northwest Literacy Forum
Ms Deirbhile Nic Craith	INTO
Mr Seosamh Ó Maolalaí	
Ms Aileen O'Brien	Southside Partnership
Ms Maura O'Connor	St Patrick's College
Ms Mary O'Dwyer	Doon CBS NS
Dr Anne O'Gara	Marino Institute of Education
Ms Jean O'Mahony	Labour Party
Ms Marion O'Reilly	NALA
Ms Sylvia O'Sullivan	
Ms Duana Quigley	Youngballymun
Ms Marian Quinn	The Childhood Development Inititative
Sr. Brigid Reynolds	CORI Justice
Ms Joanne Richards	RESPOND!
Cllr. Mattie Ryan	Association of County & City Councils
Ms Johanna Saterina O'Riordan	Cork Education Support
Ms Catherine Shanahan	Primary Professional Development Service
Ms Marie Sherlock	SIPTU
Mr Aki Stavrou	Integrating Ireland
Mr Thomas Tyrrell	Abbey Community College
Ms Jillian van Turnhout	Childrens Rights Alliance
Ms Anna Visser	EAPN Ireland
Ms Susan Weir	Educational Research Centre, St Patrick's College
Mr Toby Wolfe	Irish Childcare Policy Network

Annex VI Terms of Reference and Constitution of the NESF

1. The role of the NESF will be:
 - to monitor and analyse the implementation of specific measures and programmes identified in the context of social partnership arrangements, especially those concerned with the achievement of equality and social inclusion; and
 - to facilitate public consultation on policy matters referred to it by the Government from time to time.
2. In carrying out this role the NESF will:
 - consider policy issues on its own initiative or at the request of the Government; the work programme to be agreed with the Department of the Taoiseach, taking into account the overall context of the NESDO;
 - consider reports prepared by Teams involving the social partners, with appropriate expertise and representatives of relevant Departments and agencies and its own Secretariat;
 - ensure that the Teams compiling such reports take account of the experience of implementing bodies and customers/clients including regional variations;
 - publish reports with such comments as may be considered appropriate; and
 - convene meetings and other forms of relevant consultations appropriate to the nature of issues referred to it by the Government from time to time.
3. The term of office of members of the NESF will be three years. During the term alternates may be nominated. Casual vacancies will be filled by the nominating body or the Government as appropriate; members so appointed will hold office until the expiry of the current term of office of all members. Retiring members will be eligible for re-appointment.
4. The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the NESF will be appointed by the Government.
5. Membership of the NESF will comprise 15 representatives from each of the following four strands:
 - the Oireachtas;
 - employer, trade union and farm organisations;
 - the voluntary and community sector; and
 - central government, local government and independents.
6. The NESF will decide on its own internal structures and working arrangements.

Annex VII Membership of the NESF

Independent Chairperson	Dr. Maureen Gaffney
Deputy Chairperson	Mary Doyle

Strand (i) Oireachtas

Fianna Fáil	Michael McGrath T.D. Cyprian Brady T.D. Seán Ardagh T.D. Senator Brian Ó Domhnaill Senator Geraldine Feeney Senator Marc McSharry Senator Maria Corrigan
Fine Gael	Dan Neville T.D. Terence Flanagan T.D. Senator Paul Coghlan Senator Jerry Buttimer
Labour	Seán Sherlock T.D. Willie Penrose T.D.
Green Party	Senator Dan Boyle
Independents	Senator Rónán Mullen

Strand (ii) Employer/Trade Union/Farming Organisations

a. Employer/Business Organisations

IBEC	Danny McCoy Tony Donohoe
Small Firms' Association	Patricia Callan
Construction Industry Federation	Dr Peter Stafford
Chambers of Commerce/	
Tourist Industry/ Exporters' Association	Seán Murphy

Trade Unions

Technical Engineering & Electrical Union	Eamon Devoy
Civil & Public Service Union	Blair Horan
AMICUS	Jerry Shanahan
SIPTU	Manus O'Riordan
ICTU	Esther Lynch

Agricultural/Farming Organisations

Irish Farmers' Association	Michael Berkery
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association	Mike Doody
Irish Co-Operative Organisation Society	Emer Duffy
Macra na Feirme	Michael Gowing
Irish Countrywomen's Association	Carmel Dawson

Strand (iii) Community and Voluntary Sector*Gender*

National Women's Council of Ireland	Órla O'Connor
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Housing

Irish Council for Social Housing	Karen Murphy
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Labour Market

Congress Centres Network	Sylvia Ryan
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Social Analysis

CORI	Sr Brigid Reynolds SM
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Poverty

Society of St Vincent de Paul	John Mark McCafferty
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Youth/Children

NYCI	Marie Claire McAleer
Children's Rights Alliance	Jillian van Turnhout

Older People

Senior Citizens' Parliament/Age Action	Maireád Hayes
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Disability/Carers

Disability Federation of Ireland	Joanne McCarthy
The Carers' Association	Frank Goodwin

Rural

Irish Rural Link	Seámus Boland
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Voluntary/Networks

Community Platform	Frances Byrne
The Wheel	Ivan Cooper

Others

National Traveller Women's Forum	Maria Joyce
Integrating Ireland	Stavros Stavrou

Strand (iv) Central Government, Local Government and Independents

Central Government

Secretary-General, Department of Finance
 Secretary-General, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
 Secretary-General, Department of Social and Family Affairs
 Secretary-General, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
 Secretary-General, Department of the Environment, Heritage and
 Local Government

Local Government

Association of County & City Councils	Cllr Ger Barron
	Cllr Constance Hanniffy
	Cllr Mattie Ryan
Association of Municipal Authorities	Cllr Paddy O'Callaghan
Local Authority Members' Association	Cllr William Ireland

Independents

Institute for the Study of Social Change, UCD	Prof. Colm Harmon
NUI Maynooth	Prof. Mary P. Corcoran
Trinity College, Dublin	Prof. Rose Ann Kenny
Southside Partnership	Marie Carroll

Secretariat

Director	Seán Óh Éigeartaigh
Policy Analysts	Dr Anne Marie McGauran
	Dr Jeanne Moore
Executive Secretary	Paula Hennelly

Annex VIII NESF Publications

(i) NESF Reports

Report No.	Title	Date
1.	Negotiations on a Successor Agreement to the PESP	Nov 1993
2.	National Development Plan 1994 – 1999	Nov 1993
3.	Commission on Social Welfare – Outstanding Recommendations	Jan 1994
4.	Ending Long-term Unemployment	June 1994
5.	Income Maintenance Strategies	July 1994
6.	Quality Delivery of Social Services	Feb 1995
7.	Jobs Potential of the Services Sector	April 1995
8.	First Periodic Report on the Work of the Forum	May 1995
9.	Jobs Potential of Work Sharing	Jan 1996
10.	Equality Proofing Issues	Feb 1996
11.	Early School Leavers and Youth Employment	Jan 1997
12.	Rural Renewal – Combating Social Exclusion	Mar 1997
13.	Unemployment Statistics	May 1997
14.	Self-Employment, Enterprise and Social Inclusion	Oct 1997
15.	Second Periodic Report on the Work of the Forum	Nov 1997
16.	A Framework for Partnership – Enriching Strategic Consensus through Participation	Dec 1997
17.	Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Local Employment Service	Mar 2000
18.	Social and Affordable Housing and Accommodation: Building the Future	Sept 2000
19.	Alleviating Labour Shortages	Nov 2000
20.	Lone Parents	July 2001
21.	Third Periodic Report on the Work of the Forum	Nov 2001
22.	Re-integration of Prisoners	Jan 2002
23.	A Strategic Policy Framework for Equality Issues	Mar 2002
24.	Early School Leavers	Mar 2002
25.	Equity of Access to Hospital Care	July 2002
26.	Labour Market Issues for Older Workers	Feb 2003
27.	Equality Policies for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People: Implementation Issues	April 2003
28.	The Policy Implications of Social Capital	June 2003
29.	Equality Policies for Older People: Implementation Issues	July 2003
30.	Fourth Periodic Report on the Work of the NESF	Nov 2004
31.	Early Childhood Care and Education	June 2005
32.	Care for Older People	Nov 2005
33.	Creating a More Inclusive Labour Market	Mar 2006
34.	Improving the Delivery of Quality Public Services	Feb 2007
35.	The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion	Mar 2007
36.	Mental Health and Social Inclusion	Oct 2007
37.	Fifth Periodic Report on the Work of the NESF	June 2008
38.	Implementation of the Home Care Package Scheme	Oct 2009

(ii) NESF Opinions

1.	Interim Report of the Task Force on Long-term Unemployment	Mar 1995
2.	National Anti-Poverty Strategy	Jan 1996
3.	Long-term Unemployment Initiatives	Apr 1996
4.	Post PCW Negotiations – A New Deal?	Aug 1996
5.	Employment Equality Bill	Dec 1996
6.	Pensions Policy Issues	Oct 1997
7.	Local Development Issues	Oct 1999
8.	The National Anti-Poverty Strategy	Aug 2000

(iii) NESF Opinions under the Monitoring Procedures of Partnership 2000

1.	Development of the Equality Provisions	Nov 1997
2.	Targeted Employment and Training Measures	Nov 1997

(iv) Social Inclusion Forum: Conference Reports

1.	Inaugural Meeting	Jan 2003
2.	Second Meeting of the Forum	Jan 2005
3.	Third Meeting of the Forum	Feb 2006
4.	Fourth Meeting of the Forum	Nov 2007
5.	Fifth Meeting of the Forum	Nov 2008

(v) NESF Research Series

1.	A Study of Labour Market Vulnerability and Responses to it in Donegal/Sligo and North Dublin	Jun 2005
2.	The Economics of Early Childhood Care and Education	Sept 2005
3.	Delivery of Quality Public Services	Sept 2006
4.	Mental Health in the Workplace: Research Findings	Oct 2007
5.	In The Frame or Out of the Picture	Feb 2008

(vi) NESF Occasional Series

1.	Evidence-based Policy Making: Getting the Evidence, Using the Evidence and Evaluating the Outcomes	Jan 2007
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(vii) NESF Seminar Series

1.	In The Frame or Out of the Picture	Feb 2008
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