

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF

P.D.A.

MR. MICHAEL J. DALY

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2011

**WHITES HOTEL
WEXFORD**

AREA 4

(KILKENNY, TIPPERARY (SOUTH) WATERFRORD, WEXFORD)

Introduction

A chairde, taimid cruinnithe anseo I gcomhar Comhdháil Bhliantúil cumann Priomhoidi agus Priomhoidi Tanaisteacha 2011. Is mór an pleisiúr dom fíorchaoin fáilte a chur roimh na h ionadaithe agus na cuairteoirí go leir go dtí ár gComhdháil anseo i nOstán Whites i Loch Garman. Táim cinnte go mbainfidh sibh taitneamh agus tairbhe as an gcúpla lá anseo agus tá súil agam go bhfillfidh sibh ar ais go dti bhúr scoileanna le breis uachtaigh agus misnigh de bharr imeachtaí naComhdhála seo.

Colleagues and friends, it is a great privilege for me as president of the Principals' and Deputy Principals' Association (PDA) to welcome you all to Wexford. Our conference theme this year is ***“Building Social Capital within our School community”*** a very apt and positive theme at this time in our country's history. The organising committee in Wexford have pointed out that while we will be cogniscent of the challenges ahead for us all we will at the same time attempt to build for the future.

We and the students in our charge and indeed the educational community in general continue to endure the consequences of the government's austerity measures. These measures have rowed back on achievements reached in the past suggesting in us uncertainty and concern for the immediate future. We will help each other and our school communities through this time.

Education Cuts

The prosperity of Ireland depends on the work of the educational community in the country and the citizens formed by that community who will constitute the country's workforce of the future. We can deliver that workforce but we need help, we need reasonable investment in education and training.

The possibility of raising the Pupil Teacher Ratio in our school has been referred to as a serious possible option for government. If this happens it will have the deleterious effect of not only reducing the number of teachers available to the system but critically, will restrict subject choice in Post Primary schools and access to courses at Further Education levels. A school of 380 students presently is allocated 20 teachers, an increase of one in the PTR will give that school 19 teachers. Subjects will be removed from the curriculum. But which ones? Concerns also have to be registered for schools with rising enrolments and increased student numbers but who will have the same number or even fewer teachers to deliver the curriculum to a higher number of students.

Posts of Responsibility

The blunt and indiscriminate implementation of the moratorium on filling posts of responsibility continues unabated in the education system. Posts continue to be lost and schools are being stripped of key personnel such as Yearheads, Programmes Co-ordinators, Special Education Co-ordinators, Examination

Secretaries, the list continues. Important school and college leadership positions are being lost and the profession is being denuded of a necessary and appropriate career structure. The duties and responsibilities attendant to these positions are defaulting to Principals and Deputy Principals. There is a limit to the amount we as principals and deputy principals can continue to do however. Some sensible solution to this issue must be forthcoming from government.

Public Service Agreement (PSA) / Croke Park Deal.

The PDA has already expressed its disappointment to the TUI that as senior school and college personnel we were not consulted in respect of the recommendations issued by the IVEA/ACCS/JMB regarding the implementation of the extra 33 hours in the PSA. We did not and do not appreciate being put into a position where our responsibilities to our employers on the one hand and to our leadership role as principals and deputy principals in schools and colleges, were sometimes viewed as *'taking the management side'* in the interpretation of the circular. We act and will continue to act in the best interest of our schools, our teaching colleagues and the school community. We expect the TUI to understand and appreciate that.

The agreement has been implemented reasonably successfully in our schools and colleges. Schools have employed a series of different implementation models, suitable to the needs of staffs and students throughout the country. This

is a testament, I believe, to the ingenuity and creativity of ourselves and our colleague teachers with whom we worked locally in the interests of our school community.

There continues however to be little understanding of how the extra 33 hour requirement will play out in FE colleges not to mention the challenges in dual union schools. In the circumstances we are faced with, the guidance we receive in these instances is both less than clear and less than helpful. The TUI has indicated however that it is up to Principals/deputy principals to ensure that flexibility works and that schools behave responsibly in relation to the new requirements. We need their help to achieve this and quite frankly we expect it.

The PDA is very concerned that current employer demands are suggestive of the need for an inordinate amount of record keeping. This means devolving to Principals and Deputy Principals even more work associated with the agreement. We are also very concerned that as a net result of being obliged to implement the PSA the risk of the erosion of teachers' goodwill is heightened, threatening the time given freely by teachers in respect of voluntary and extra-curricular activities. I believe that our goal of a positive and co-operative work environment is certainly being affected negatively.

We are suggesting that in the interest of getting the best for all sides out of the implementation of the PSA that workplace committee reps. and school staffs would communicate openly and generously with Principals and Deputy Principals in an effort to have all parties of the same mind prior to the full local implementation and roll out of any local agreements for implementation.

Redeployment

Vocational Schools have been asked by the DES to identify non CID and PT staff. I presume that the DES is conducting a similar audit in the other sectors to identify possible teachers for redeployment.

At present the VEC sector does not have the same numbers of supernumerary staff as the Voluntary Secondary sector. Some redeployed teachers have come from other sectors into VEC schools. The issue of teacher redeployment will become a major one next year. The VEC sector will become over quota in time. There is a need now for further clarification on the lists of candidates for redeployment. It is advised that a seniority list be implemented. In cases where redeploying the least senior teacher results in subject erosion and the possible compromising of the school's curriculum, then is the next least senior teacher the one to be redeployed? Openness and equity must be the overarching principles that will govern the operation of the redeployment scheme.

Further Education

The Further Education (FE) sector is one of our many success stories in the VEC system over the last three decades. Schools and College have developed innovative quality assured courses in response to local and national needs.

Many courses have been and continue to be developed to meet the needs of the Irish economy and provide school leavers and adults returning to education with educational opportunities and relevant employable skills. The professionalism and flexibility of our school leaders and teachers have been pivotal to this success. We have done and continue to play to our strengths in this regard.

The FE sector has many challenges at present making the situation particularly problematic for the sector. Despite many efforts, no FE stand-alone sector has been established and the sector suffers from a lack of coherent recognition and support. The moratorium on posts of responsibilities has removed personnel from key roles in colleges and the lack of clarity in the provisions of the PSA regarding the sector is inexcusable. It is not clear for example how much extra work there will be for staff under the new FETAC certification procedures.

Colleges have many questions e.g. who are going to be the internal verifiers?

How many internal verifiers will be required in a College? etc.

The DES Circular Letter 0013/2011 on FE capitation changes and the 'Participant Contribution' of E200 are particularly onerous on the sector. The

introduction of a mandatory fee for all FE courses may well deter a significant number of learners from applying. The issue that is identified by every College as giving rise to major administrative difficulties is the collection of the E200 government 'levy'. FE colleges are now being regarded as collecting points for government funding. The onus for collecting, verifying and recording exemptions to the mandatory fee being placed entirely on the provider with no administration provision provided.

The issue of ICT hardware being made available to educational establishments without ancillary technical support and maintenance accompanying the provision, has also become a significant challenge for FE and indeed all post primary schools. Ireland's economic recovery and future success is synonymous with access to and expertise in modern ICT resources and facilities including speedy broadband. It is baffling that these issues cannot be thought through to their logical conclusion by our education planners.

Circular 0013/2011 must be revisited and revised to recognize the dynamic contribution that the Further Education sector is making to the education, skills and training of learners. We strongly suggest to the Minister for Education and Skills that planned and continuing support for this exceptionally good value sector should be strengthened not removed.

Scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge

Tá príomhoidí in ár bhunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge de chuid na gCoiste Gairmoideachais ar an airdeall i mbliana de bharr an múr ciorraithe atá buailte ar an earnáil gairmoideachais go ginearálta le cúpla bliain anuas. Le linn 2010/2011, rinne An Roinn Oideachais & Scileanna cinneadh an acmhainn de mhúinteoir amháin ex-quota a bhaint de bhunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge, rud a ghearr circa 50 postanna ón gcóras bunscoileanna. Tá moltaí ag teacht ó fhoinsí áirithe sa Roinn Oideachais & Scileanna go ndéanfaí an rud céanna i scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge dara leibhéal amach anseo.

Ní mór a thuiscint go bhfuil 36 den 58 coláiste lán-Ghaeilge faoi choimirce na gCoistí Gairmoideachais in Eirinn. Is scoileanna beaga a bhformhór, cuid mhór díobh bunaithe ó 1995 i leith. Tá brú damanta ar a leithéid de scoileanna beaga aon rogha ábhar réasúnta a chur ar fail. Tá brú dochreite go háirithe ar na hábhair eolaíochta agus praiticiúla dá bharr seo.

Caithfimid dul in ngleic leis na fadhbanna uafásacha seo.

DES. Indicative Calendar 2011-2012.

The PDA felt that this should be resisted as it put Principals and Deputy Principals in the invidious position of de facto locally having to renegotiate holidays. It appears that the School management bodies are in support of this proposal but of course they are not in the schools every day of the academic year like us. The annual school calendar has already been agreed. Family plans

and arrangements for breaks have already been decided. PDA registers its strong reservations regarding the contingency element of the indicative calendar. The PDA believes that the Minister should not make arbitrary changes to a time frame which has already been agreed. There is of course no guarantee that students would or could attend school should it be declared open by the principal/deputy principal. Nor as far as we can ascertain is there any other workplace where such a contingency proposal would be implemented. We can only hope at this juncture for a warm, bright winter.

The Parents of our Students

As a group of experienced educational practitioners in Vocational Schools, Community Colleges, Colleges of Further Education and Gaelcholáistí we welcome every opportunity to liaise with our parents' representatives in the National Parents' Association for Vocational Schools and Community Colleges (NPAVSCC). The PDA has over the years worked closely with the NPAVSCC and our interactions have been professional, enlightening and productive.

Congratulations to Jacki O Callaghan on her election as President of NPAVSCC and we look forward to working with parents pursuing our common interests in the future.

At our invitation Jacki addressed our national executive meeting in September. Issues discussed included bullying in schools, better communications between

parents groups and their national representative association, the possible negative impact on students of the retirement of teachers in mid-term 2012 especially those teaching exam classes and the implications for schools of an increase in the PTR. The PDA enlisted the support of the National Parent Council on these issues.

We also referred to the important Code of Practice on Complaints made by Parents of students against a staff member employed by a VEC. PDA observed that the role of the principal is referred to many times in the document. The PDA is disappointed that in spite of the many references to this involvement, TUI principals and deputy principals were not consulted for their input before the document was nationally agreed on 1 March 2011. The PDA has no argument with the spirit of the document, in fact we fully support it. But we must point out the urgent need for appropriate training of Principals and Deputy Principals with regard to its provisions and operation in our schools.

PDA / TUI

The issue of the continuing increase in the work-load of principals and deputy Principals was discussed with the TUI at every meeting during the year. The TUI was to set up a meeting with the DES to discuss this on-going issue but as yet this has not taken place. I am assured though that a plan is afoot to make it happen soon.

However, we have progressed many other areas very well with the TUI over recent months for which we acknowledge their work. The PDA has, with the help of TUI and in particular with Conor Griffin the Press and Information Officer, constructed a web link to the PDA on the TUI website. The Web link is live at present and will be fully developed soon with much uploaded data including the recent PDA Newsletter: thanks to the efforts of Brian O Maoilchiarain. The PDA logo appears on the TUI home webpage, simply click on the logo. We will be using the link a lot from now on to facilitate two way communications between the national executive and the membership throughout the country.

I am sure you all get your copy of the TUI News regularly. The TUI president has facilitated the PDA with editorial space to address its interests/issues in the TUI News regularly. This is another step in the right direction for communicating with members and we thank Bernie Ruane President of TUI for that.

Following the report of the TUI Structure Review Group (SRG) it is currently establishing Workplace Committees in each school/centre/college throughout the country. The aim is to modernise the current structures and processes in the TUI, and to make them more accessible, effective and responsive to the needs

of the TUI membership including principals and deputy principals. A Workplace Committee will normally be comprised of three to four members and will include the School/College Representative but most importantly it will be the initial, local and primary level of intervention in a dispute resolution process.

Following negotiations between the TUI president and officials, including the branch organiser Ide Ni Fhaoileain and the PDA officers, a protocol was agreed. The purpose of the protocol is to help foster a genuinely cooperative approach between all TUI members ie. Principals/Deputy Principals and Teachers. The PDA and the TUI believe that the protocol will encourage a consensus between all parties in the school/centre/college and will also facilitate the development of task oriented approaches that are conducive to collaborative working practices. The PDA is confident that the genuine operation of the protocol in schools and colleges will be in the interests of the entire school/centre/college community. Careful attention needs to be given to the operation of the workplace committees in schools/colleges. Principals and deputy principals will, as TUI members, be invited to attend all TUI meetings held in schools/colleges including meetings held to select the members of the workplace committee.

I would wish to draw your attention to the TUI workplace committees' document and ask you all to read it and appraise yourself of its contents. The protocol is now agreed, it can be immediately implemented and its provisions applied in every school, college in the country. There is a perception that principals/deputy principals are not as accommodated by TUI in disputes as are members of the teaching cohort. We now have the opportunity of testing that contention through the operation of this protocol.

VEC Restructuring

In June the Minister for Education and Skills announced the approval of a revised reconfiguration of the Vocational Education Committees system and confirmed that the number of VECs would be reduced to sixteen.

Legislation to bring about the changes has been published and involves the consolidation of the provisions of the existing nine Vocational Acts into one new bill. The Minister told us that the new bill will reflect the important role which these new entities will play in relation to education and training in the future. If this reconfiguration of VECs into proposed local education and training boards results in changes to the further education and training sector that offers the chance for an enhanced and integrated FE sector then the PDA will fully support it. The opportunity for the integration nationally of further education and training under one body is to be applauded.

On 2 July 2011 the minister announced the establishment of SOLAS, the new further Education and Training authority for Ireland. Michael Moriarity General Secretary of the IVEA has been appointed a member of SOLAS. We congratulate him on his new role and wish him and the work of SOLAS in the interest of further education in Ireland every success into the future. We look forward to working with SOLAS in the interests of our members in the FE sector.

The Teaching Council

The Teaching Council document ‘Initial Teacher Education : Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers’ advocates many changes to programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Some of the proposals include a two year Post Graduate Diploma in Education, 40% of which will be on School Placement in Post Primary schools. The document refers to new school placement models being developed and a whole school approach to supporting student teachers under the guidance of principals as leaders of learning. The use of co-operating teachers for mentoring, supervision and constructive feedback on practice is advocated as is the provision for student teachers to undertake a variety of non-teaching activities in schools.

The PDA supports the work of the Teaching Council in its efforts to ensure that tomorrow’s teachers are competent to meet the challenges that they face to

enable them to support post primary student learning. However the PDA has concerns that must be addressed prior to any final agreement on the shape of any new model of Initial Teacher Education (ITE). They include: The supports for schools that will allow for the induction and probation processes to be agreed and conducted.

The need for all schools in the country to participate in the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) process.

There is no clarity of the role of the DES in the area of teacher education.

The reality that a teaching qualification will possibly now take six years to complete (Degree 4 and PGDE 2) may not be fully comprehended at present.

The role of the principal, deputy principal and Mentoring Teacher in the process, particularly in terms of certification of competence is unclear. We must bear in mind all the while that we are at a time of post holder losses in schools.

Comments on these issues would be most welcome from PDA members and the executive will liaise with by Bernie Judge of the TUI on the matter as a matter of urgency.

Leadership from the PDA and TUI

At this time of turbulence, uncertainty and upheaval in our schools it is incumbent on the members of the executives of representative bodies such as the PDA and the TUI to lead well. This is not always easy to achieve.

It is I believe a very important task because it requires us to be future focussed, anticipating and managing future events if we can and being accessible and keeping dialogue and communications channels with members open.

We have in the PDA and in the TUI many future challenges:

Short Term Challenges dealing with the immediate education cuts and the running of our schools each year;

Medium Term Challenges of caring for our school community for the next 3-5 years and the implementation of the recently announced curriculum issues and

Long Term Challenges such as the development of the types of educational experiences and capacities that will be required by the nation, the nature of the necessary learning and schooling to be provided in the next 10 to 15 years to our students.

We have to achieve all of this without getting over stressed. I believe we can do it.

We in the PDA executive are positive about the future. We are listening to you the members views and will inform our policies and practices to solve conflicts and direct our actions in the interest of the members. We undertake as an executive to work collaboratively and build closer relationships with the TUI, the IVEA, parental interests and indeed any other educational interests that will help us enhance our sector.

Conclusion

There are many other educational issues that are of import to us in our work, among them:

The recently announced NCCA proposals for Junior Cycle reform. We reiterate the view that adequate resources are required to achieve the reforms.

The Incidental Inspections document issued by the DES in Oct.

The Grievance Procedure for Staff Employed by VEC's

The PDA will not be neglecting these issues and the way they affect the work we do in our schools.

Friends, it has been an honour and a privilege for me to serve as President to this association over the past year. I have been extremely well supported at all times by my colleagues on the National Executive. I would like to thank them for the articulate, professional and business-like manner in which they have represented your concerns at our national executive meetings. Special thanks go to Past President Kevin Whyte, Vice-President Brian O Maoilchiaráin, Secretary Joan McGarry Moore and Treasurer Mary Friel for sharing their genius, warmth and wisdom with me at all times.

Regrettably we are losing some very talented executive members due to retirements, namely our esteemed past president colleagues Martin Wallace, Tom Hughes and our Area 1 Executive member and Conference 2010

organising committee member Caitlin Mhic Carthaigh. We will miss them. I thank them for their loyal service and acknowledge their effective council to the P.D.A. over many years.

Throughout the year the Officers of P.D.A. have had numerous meetings with T.U.I. and the I.V.E.A. to discuss and advance the issues of concern to us as an Association. I will take this opportunity to thank all T.U.I. Head Office staff for their generous help, support and availability for meetings especially the TUI President Bernie Ruane, General Secretary Peter McMEnamin, and Incoming GS John Mac Gabhan, the other Head Office staff and of course our Liaison Officer from the TUI executive Paul Whelan.

To the IVEA President Noel O'Connor, Michael Moriarty, General Secretary, Pat O'Mahony, Education Research Officer and their staff we extend our thanks for facilitating meetings with us. We wish them well for the future and the challenges ahead in particular the establishment of SOLAS. I would also like to thank Fiona Hartley, President of the C.E.O./E.O.'s Association and wish her and her association well with the establishment of the new Education and Training Boards. We look forward to continuing these co-operative arrangements with the new officer board on a regular basis.

Many thanks of course to the Conference 2011 Organising Committee and to the leadership of Area 4 National Executive member Mary Finnegan Burke for

their choice of venue, choice of guest speakers and for making all the necessary arrangements for conference in addition to a full work schedule in their schools and colleges.

I would like to thank our guest speakers Dr. Aidan Mulkeen, Sandra Walsh Michael O Connell for their entertaining and thought-provoking presentations

In conclusion I would refer back to our theme “Building Social Capital within our School community”. If we can get the students in our charge to live life well, to live it with dignity so that they become people of worth that command our esteem, to live it with integrity so that they become people with moral soundness, then we will, as school leaders have achieved a great deal.

I have made reference to the challenges that lie ahead for us but it is extremely important to be optimistic and have hope for the future. Naturally we are challenged by and uncomfortable about the present but for our own sake and that of our students we can and must be realistically excited about the future. We can and will play our part in restoring both our country’s economic competitive advantage and as importantly the country’s social cohesion by continuing to dedicate ourselves to doing our work in education well.

The end

Story of the four experts on a plane. The plane got into difficulty and the pilot ejected. Four experts and only three parachutes remain.

One was an important heart surgeon and very useful to mankind

The second a nuclear physicist decommissioning Nuclear Power stations.

Each got a parachute and jumped .

The older of the two experts remaining volunteered to stay as the younger has his whole life in front of him

The younger man said there was no need as they had two parachutes.

The last man to jump may have been an expert in Nuclear physics but he knew nothing about parachutes because he just jumped out of the plane with my rucksack

We as principals certainly are expert in the way we conduct our affairs. We do apply our ingenuity, competence, perseverance and courage in the service of our communities.