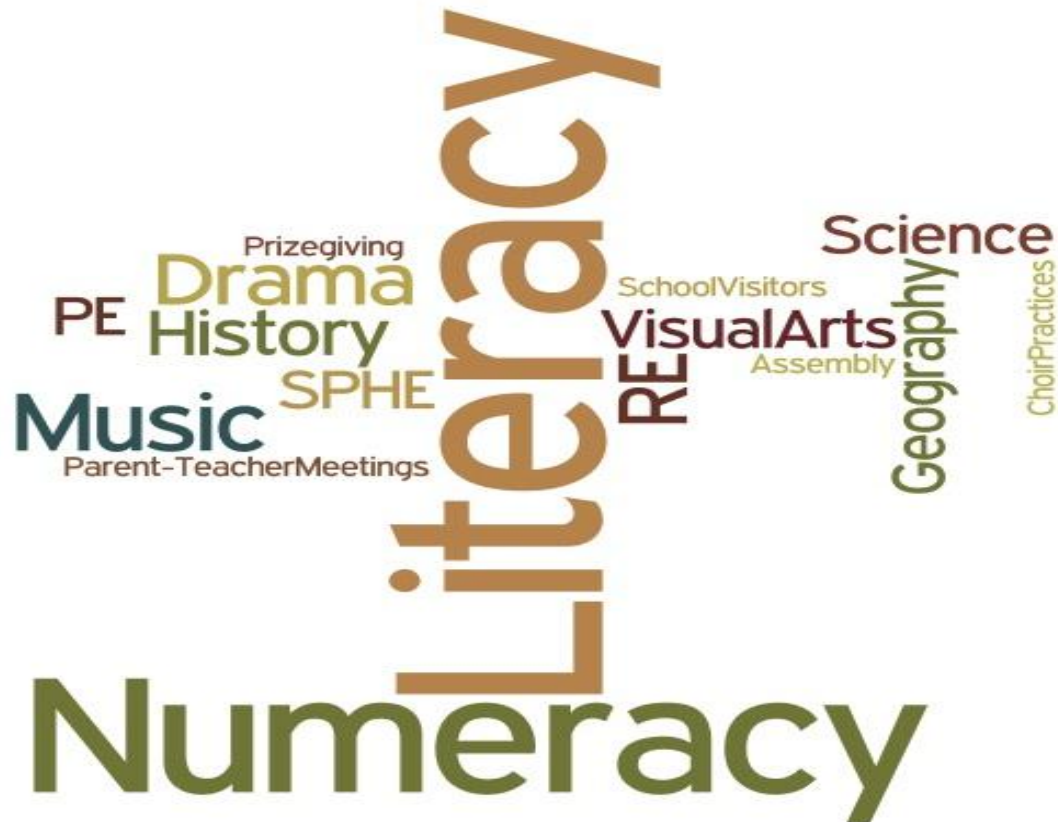


Beyond the Food Pyramid: Making the Case for Social, Personal and Health Education in Contemporary Irish Society

Schools for Health In Europe Summer School
University of Limerick
24th June 2014

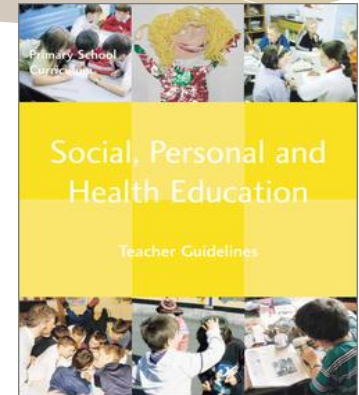
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Where's SPHE??



Outline

- * Rationale for SPHE
- * The Current Context
- * The Meaning of Change
- * Evidence
- * SPHE as an agent of Transformation
- * Future Possibilities



Rationale for SPHE... Some statistics...

- * High levels of psychological distress among Irish young people (Illback et al.2010)
- * High mortality from suicide among 15-24 year age group in Ireland (NOSP 2010)
- * Emotional and behavioural problems caused by cyberbullying (O'Moore 2012)
- * High rates of alcohol consumption among adolescents (ESPAD 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011)
- * Twenty-five per cent of 9 year olds in Ireland have a raised BMI (ESRI/TCD 2009; 2011)
- * Age of first sexual encounters has dropped (Mayock et al. 2007)

Key Role of Schools

- * “...an effective school health programme can be one of the most cost effective investments a nation can make to simultaneously improve education and health” (www.who.int/school_youth_health/en/)
- * The WHO “promotes school health programmes as a strategic means to prevent important health risks among youth and to engage the education sector in efforts to change the educational, social, economic and political conditions that affect risk” (ibid)



Rationale for SPHE... Some voices...

- * *“SPHE is very important because it covers loads of subjects and it teaches you loads about life. We learn more about other people and what happens when we grow up. It allows us to be different. It helps us to have better relationships, better friends and to be yourself. It helps us to make decisions and realise the consequences. It helps us to take care of ourselves and to know what to do” (Primary School Student, DES report, 2009).*

Rationale for SPHE... Some voices...

- * *“I would like to know more about emotional health especially before my exams”*
- * *“I would like to learn more about stress and what happens”*
- * *[SPHE could be used] “to focus on making important decisions for example if you thought a classmate was unhappy... and how you would deal with this sort of situation” (Post-primary School Students, from research of NicGabhainn et al. 2007)*

Ambivalences

- * *“Health Education occupies an indeterminate and ambivalent position; it has not yet been accepted as an essential part of the fabric of education. It tends to fall into the no-man’s land between the school and the home, or within the school, to be everybody’s concern, but no-one’s responsibility” (Scottish Education Department, 1974)*

How much of this is still true today?

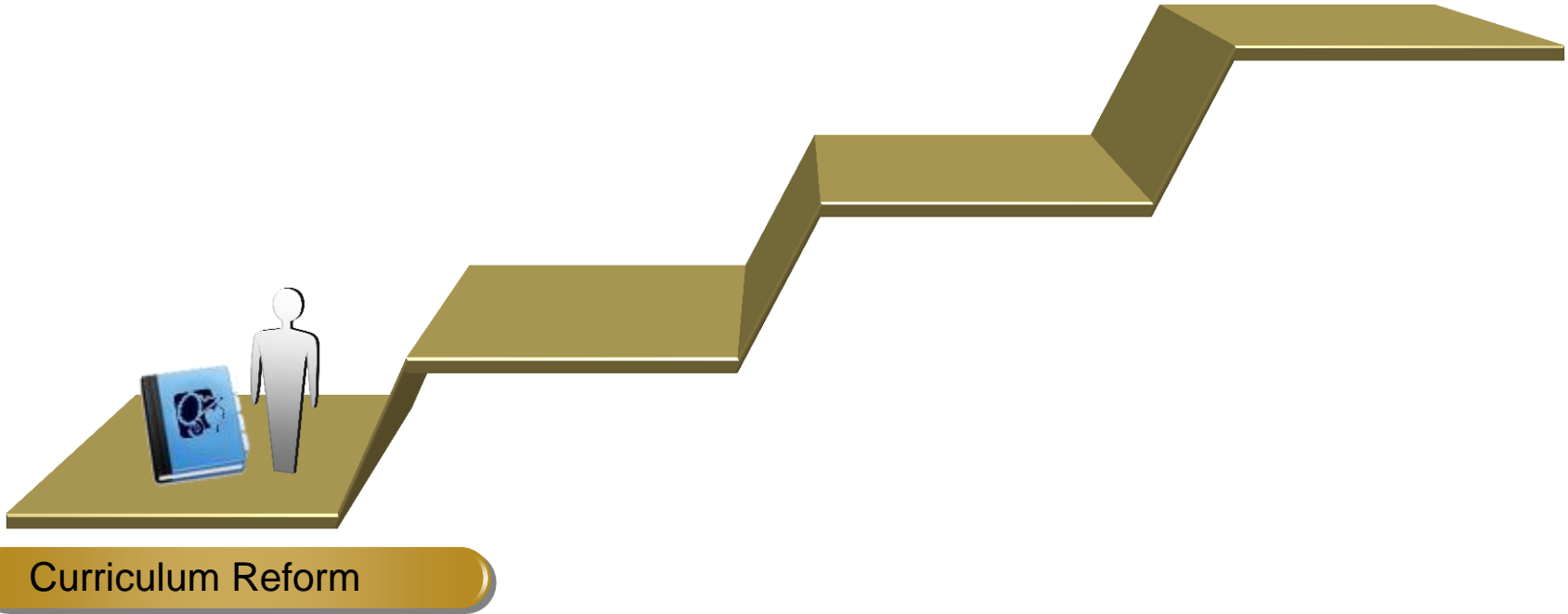
Some Developments since 1974

- * Quinlan Report (1990)
- * Bí Folláin programme (1994)
- * The Health Promoting School (1994)
- * Walk Tall/On My Own Two Feet (1994)
- * Relationships and Sexuality Education (1995)
- * Stay Safe (1996)
- * SPHE in the curriculum (Primary) (1999)
- * SPHE in the curriculum (Post-Primary) (2000)

“Deep Change”? (Gleeson, 2004)



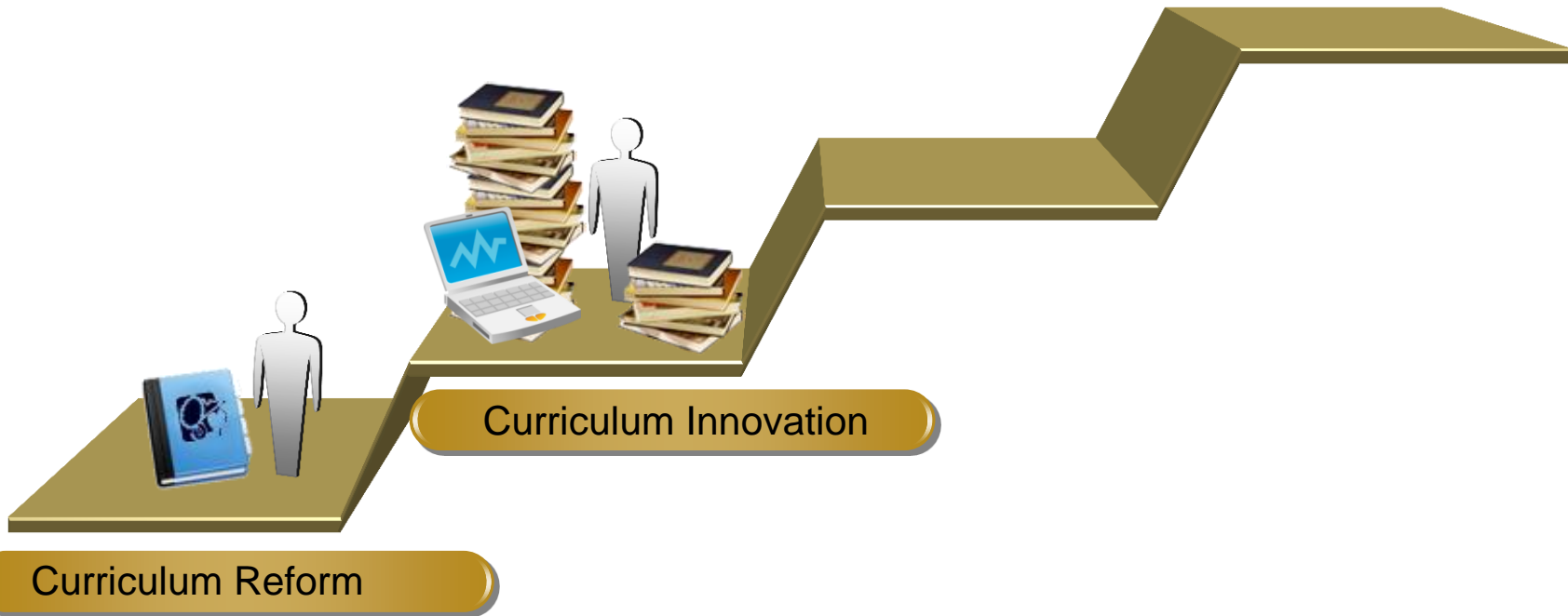
Continuum:



“Deep Change”? (Gleeson, 2004)



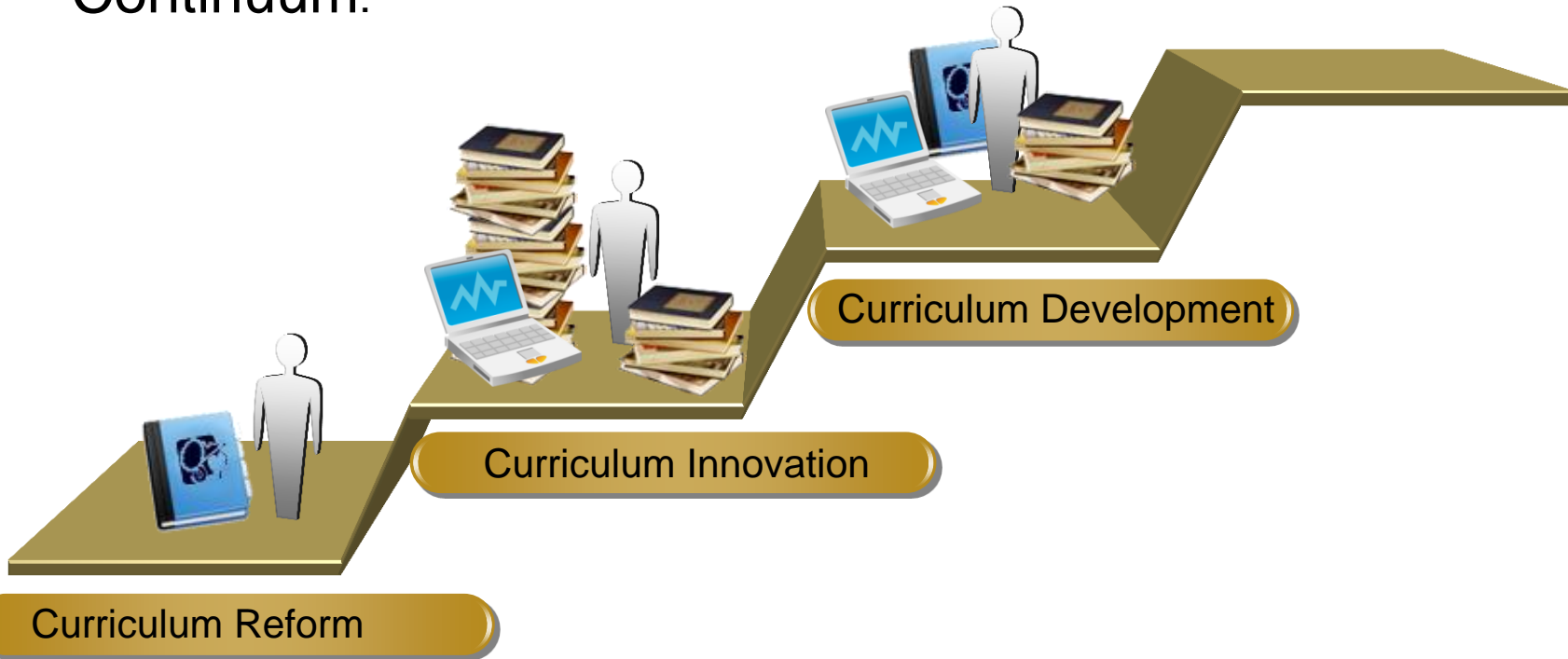
Continuum:



“Deep Change”? (Gleeson, 2004)



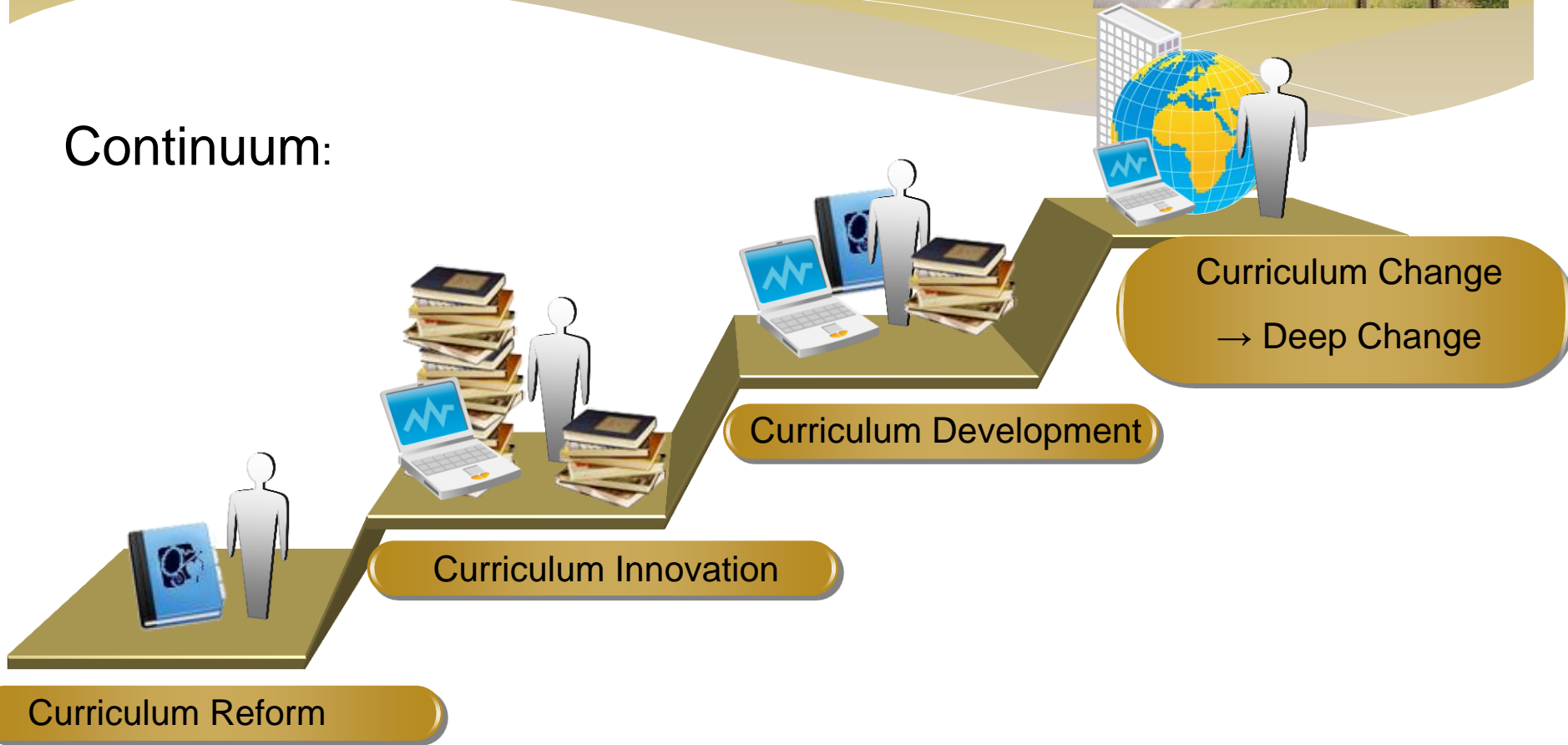
Continuum:



“Deep Change”? (Gleeson 2004)



Continuum:



Deep Change

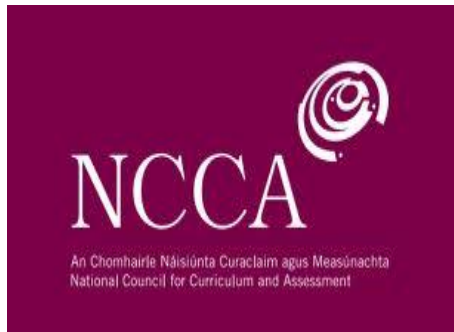
Deep Change becomes evident only through:

- * Change in Materials
- * Change in Practice
- * Change in Practitioner Beliefs and Values (Gleeson 2004)

Fullan on Change

- * Take account of school settings and culture
- * Go beyond 'flavour of the year' reaction and focus on sustainability
- * Specificity
- * Motivation – do not take this for granted (Fullan 2006)

Some reviews (Primary)



- * NCCA, Primary Curriculum Review, Phase 2 (2008)
- * DES, Social, Personal and Health Education in the Primary School (2009)

Successes

- * Self-expression, self-esteem, self-confidence (NCCA, DES)
- * Communication (NCCA, DES)
- * Teaching Methods (NCCA)
- * Collaborative Learning (DES)
- * Use of real-life events to facilitate learning (DES)

Problems

- * Planning (DES)
- * RSE (DES, NCCA)
- * *Myself and the Wider World* (DES, NCCA)
- * Sensitive nature of material (NCCA)
- * Helping children to treat each other with dignity and respect outside of the classroom (NCCA)
- * Media education (DES, NCCA)
- * Intercultural issues (NCCA)
- * Assessment (DES, NCCA)
- * Time Allocation (NCCA)

Some Reviews (Post-Primary)

- * NicGabhainn et al. (2007)
- * Mayock et al. (2007)
- * NicGabhainn et al. (2010)
- * Dáil na nÓg (2010)
- * Mannix McNamara et al. (2012)



Successes

- * 94% of schools provide SPHE up to Junior Cert
- * Most students recognise the importance of SPHE
- * Enjoyment
- * Group work
- * Role in skills development (e.g. decision-making)

Problems

- * Significant decrease in provision after Junior Cert
- * Provision of SPHE to Junior Cert tends to decrease by 3rd year
- * Impact of exams
- * Value of SPHE relative to other curricular areas
- * SPHE at Leaving Cert level not formalised
- * Lack of pre-service training
- * Planning
- * Time allocation

Note:

- * **These problems are not confined to the Irish context** (Samdal 1999; Paulus 2005; Fullan 2007, Tjomsland et al. 2009).

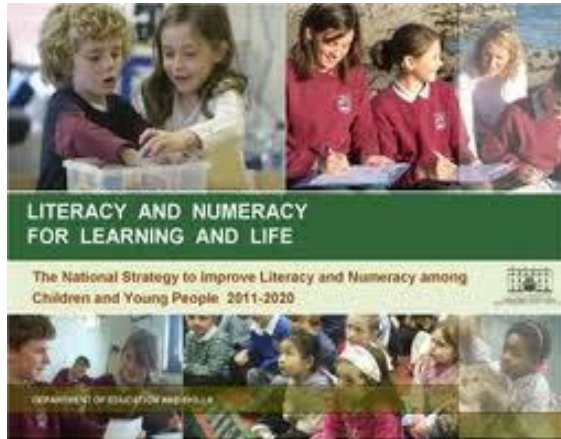
A question of priority



List in order of priority the following issues in relation to the education of our children:

- * *Their understanding and appreciation of the Arts*
- * *Their Language and Literacy Skills*
- * *Their Numerical Ability*
- * *Their engagement with Scientific Principles*
- * *Their Health and Wellbeing*
- * *Their engagement with Technology*

National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy



- * *“including a broader range of issues, topics and subjects in the curriculum runs the risk that the time available in schools for the acquisition and consolidation of critical core skills may be eroded”*

*

(DES 2011)

Status of SPHE

- * Is this defined in terms of exams?
- * Do we wish to render this area measurable in terms of exam grades?

Status of SPHE

* Time allocation



Teacher allocation

* Teacher capacity



Attitudes of teachers (pre-service and practising)

Assessment



Time allocation



- * Primary School :
- * 30 minutes p.w discrete time

- * Post-Primary School:
- * One class of 45 mins p.w

Teacher Allocation

- * “Every teacher is an SPHE teacher” (NCCA 2001)
- * “the highest status you can give it (SPHE) is to assign a person’s whole post to it...” (NicGabhainn et al. 2007)
- * Defined by hours? by timetable?
- * Not all pre-service teachers open to teaching SPHE after graduation (Mannix McNamara et al. 2012).

Teacher capacity

- * Capacity at primary level will increase due to greater focus on SPHE in new B. Ed programme
- * Those teaching SPHE at post-primary level not required to have formal qualifications
- * Teacher identity
- * Difficult and sensitive nature of the material
- * Historical and cultural traditions (Ball 1994, Goodson 2004)

Teacher Attitudes

- * Continuum...from positive to negative
- * A gender issue? (Richardson 2004)

Assessment of SPHE



- * Progress difficult to quantify
- * Changes in attitudes and behaviour tends to occur very slowly
- * Change often dependent on more than an educational programme (home/school/community links; legislation)

SPHE as an Agent of Transformation: The individual as an active citizen

Social, Personal and Health Education provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the child and to help him or her to create and maintain supportive relationships and to become an active and responsible citizen in society.

(DES 1999, p. 2)



SPHE: An agent of Transformation?

The strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum

Strand

Strand units

Myself

Self-identity

Self-awareness

Developing self-confidence

Making decisions

Taking care of my body

Health and well-being*

Knowing about my body

Food and nutrition

Growing and changing

As I grow I change

New life

Feelings and emotions

Safety and protection

Personal safety

Safety issues

Making decisions*

Myself and others

Myself and my family

My friends and other people

Relating to others

Myself and the wider world

Developing citizenship

My school community

Living in the local community

National, European and wider communities†

Environmental care

The sub-unit Environmental care is developed in detail in SESE.

Media education.

Possibilities



- * **For Schools**

- * Use the discrete time as effectively as possible
- * Identify possibilities for integration
- * Promote a whole-school approach
- * Preservation of the time on the timetable
- * A reflective approach to SPHE and to implementing all three Strands, i.e recognition of where a theme such as Nutrition could fit into all three Strands
- * Engagement with SPHE as part of staff meetings

Possibilities



- * Acknowledgement of SPHE as a facilitator of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
- * Appointment of SPHE co-ordinator
- * Develop a library of SPHE resources for all staff - designated space
- * Request ongoing CPD
- * Acknowledge the transformational potential of SPHE

Possibilities



- * **For National Policy**

- * Revision of SPHE curriculum (primary) so that there is more focus on active citizenship
- * Allocation of more discrete time to SPHE
- * Provision of more mandatory CPD for teachers
- * Acknowledgement of concerns of teachers – movement away from the discourse of assumption or consensus
- * Recognition that the provision of resources does not suffice to address the complexities that are inherent in SPHE

Possibilities



- * Recognition that some initiatives need to be supported by implemented national policy and legislation – e.g alcohol awareness
- * More accredited programmes (to degree and post grad level) in SPHE and Health Promotion
- * Defined criteria in the appointment of SPHE teachers (post-primary)

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