



AN CHOMHAIRLE MHÚINTEOIREACHTA
The Teaching Council

**Consultation on
Draft Policy Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education**

Respondent Details

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Position (if applicable):	Chairperson
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Date:	25 th February 2011

Is this response a personal view or is it made on behalf of your organisation?

Personal []

On behalf of organisation [Yes]

Subject Association Representative Group

Subject Association Representative Group
Ballybay Community College,
Ballybay,
Co. Monaghan

25th February 2011

The Teaching Council
Block A
Maynooth Business Campus
Maynooth
Co. Kildare

**Re-: SARG's Submission on the Teaching Council Draft Policy Paper
on the Continuum of Teacher Education**

The **Subject Association Representative Group** (SARG) is a federation of Subject Associations (SA). SARG provides a forum for recognized Subject/Teacher Associations to discuss issues of common concern, identify areas of common practice and share information on topics of interest. SARG offers Subject Associations the opportunity to meet and share views, observations and information in a spirit of co-operation and collaboration. SARG does not have any political or commercial interests and operates on a voluntary basis for the common good of subject teachers.

SARG members have a long history of organising and delivering effective Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on a voluntary basis. Since 2005, the Subject Associations have applied for a funding for subject associations administration and CPD activities through the Teacher Professional Networks (TPN). The TPN funding is overseen by a management committee, of which SARG has two members. Through this system CPD is available to practicing teachers which is organised by practicing teachers, which successfully meets subject specific needs for their members and this had an impact on raising educational standards. It should be noted that TPN funds often do not completely cover the costs of hosting events, workshop and lectures and most Subject Associations supplement TPN funding with membership fees collected from members.



Subject Association Representative Group

Subject Associations are voluntary organisations offering teachers membership of a democratic participative group that seeks to promote a greater understanding of primary and secondary level subjects in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills. As individual organizations, each vary in size and operate under their own constitutions, yet all have a communal aim to provide teaching, learning and curricular support for their subject and its teachers at national and local level. At national level the executives seek to respond to professional development and curriculum support need. At local level there is an identification of local issues and a platform is provided for discussion through communities of subject specific teachers who feedback their views to executive committees.

Many Subject associations are affiliated to international bodies both European and worldwide. The representation of Irish Nationals on the planning groups of these bodies promotes a progressive vision of Irish Education abroad. Subject Associations publish in house magazines/bulletins and maintain web sites all of which provides information and links of relevant teaching resources. They respond to press statements around subject areas, correcting misconceptions about curricular content and respond to press queries on behalf of subject members.

Subject Associations are independent of other bodies including state educational services and professional teaching unions. They provide regular localized CPD activities at a voluntary, on-going basis. This provision supports teachers at all stages of their career and develops a community of learning within local clusters. They are committed to promoting teaching and learning in their subject area and are best placed to voice and met the needs of the subject teacher.

Subject Associations are run on a voluntary basis, and have been successful in creating learning communities through facilitating localized subject specific CPD/TPN activities and national annual subject specific conferences. While much of the CPD is formal, Subject Associations offer informal CPD and networking of teachers in common subjects. This type of a “community base model” which SA have been engaged in is very difficult to achieve successfully in any other type structure. Subject Associations model of CPD has been built by a bottom up approach from members within the association for which members have an ownership of. They have serviced the needs of subject specific teachers throughout the country.

The **Subject Association Representative Group** and **Subject Associations** wish to express, in the clearest terms, their deep concern at the provisions regarding Continuing Professional Development contained in the Teaching Council’s *Draft Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*.



Subject Association Representative Group

It is clear from the *Draft Policy* that partnership of various stakeholders within education, including that of the teacher, is important to the success of CPD. There are two separate references to such a partnership, “Be provided using a partnership model involving teachers, schools and teacher educators”(page 7), and “There should be a partnership approach to policy development and planning involving all the key stakeholders” (page 17). It is important that The Teaching Council’s *Draft Policy Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education* acknowledges the **Subject Association Representative Group** and **Subject Associations** involvement in CPD, through their inclusion in your policy. This would ensure their involvement in the role of voluntary CPD in the future. Below is a suggestion of where Subject Associations could be included.

*‘As learning communities, schools or clusters of schools working together through structures such as Colleges, Universities, **Subject Association Representative Group, Subject Associations** and the Education Centres, having a central role to play in prioritising professional developments needs’.*

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There are many fundamental reasons why this partnership must be acknowledged. SARG welcomes the introduction of CPD on a formal basis. However, CPD has to be freely available to teachers without any cost. Appropriate expenses should be paid to teachers taking CPD. Teachers should be remunerated for any form of compulsory CPD in teachers own time. Consequently, there should be a wide interpretation of what constitutes CPD. **If CPD was to be restricted to programmes delivered by third level colleges and universities, it risks becoming an abject failure.**

We are concerned that the language of the policy is aspirational, i.e. it contains ‘should’s’ rather than clear statements about what does and does not constitute CPD. In effect, it must be clear that changes to CPD policy cannot be unilaterally changed without the input of teachers, Subject Association and SARG. CPD requirements should be clear, transparent and easily understood. It should reflect best international practice yet not be onerous. It should not detract from the core job of a teacher, which is to teach children rather than research teaching methodologies. Finally the Draft Policy should contain a provision for regular review.

To encourage a cross sectional representatives, it is not uncommon for **Subject Association Representative Group** and **Subject Associations** to work in cooperation with the Department of Education and Skills. It is our wish that the Teaching Council continue to avail of the expertise and good will of **Subject Association Representative Group** and **Subject Associations** by including reference to them in the future CPD policy.



Subject Association Representative Group

Including Subject Association Representative Group and Subject Associations in the Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education would acknowledge the Department of Education and Skills and the Teaching Councils the past, present and future contributions of Subject Association Representative Group and Subject Associations to the CPD Irish teachers.

On behalf of the Subject Association Representative Group

Micheál Martin,
Chairperson, Subject Association Representative Group.

Anne Marie McEvoy,
Assistant Chairperson, Subject Association Representative Group.

Mary Ryan,
Secretary, Subject Association Representative Group.

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