PATRONAGE & PLURALISM IN THE PRIMARY SECTOR

Submission to:
Professor John Coolahan
Chairperson
Forum on Patronage & Pluralism
in the Primary Sector

Prepared by:
Irish Primary Principals' Network
Glounthaune
Co Cork

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Appendices

1. INTRODUCTION

The Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the debate on school patronage and to respond to the key issues and themes outlined in the Minister for Education and Skills' terms of reference for public submissions to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism.

This submission focuses on:
- Outlining issues around ownership, patronage, governance and management of schools
- Inviting Principals in all 3,300 primary schools to contribute to the patronage debate and providing a coordinated response of their views
- Responding specifically to the following themes cited for response in the terms of reference:
  - establishing parental and community demand for diversity
  - managing the transfer/divesting of patronage
  - diversity within a school or a small number of schools
- Referencing School Governance as a further topic of relevance to the patronage debate
- Providing some possible scenarios for new patronage models

The purpose of IPPN's submission to the forum is to represent the views of Principals. Chapter 3 outlines the findings of communication with Principals through questionnaires, focus-group meetings, individual responses and discussion through regional/county networks. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 respond specifically to the request to address three specific themes.

The invitation, within the terms of reference, to include any additional theme/topic of relevance has been addressed in Chapter 7. IPPN has highlighted school governance as an additional topic. Good school governance is an issue for Irish primary schools, and the success of any new directions on school patronage will require a strong, stable and effective governance model for all schools.

Chapter 8 provides some scenarios on possible future models for school patronage. These have been included to provide a practical response and an opportunity for others to explore their feasibility, and to suggest alternatives. IPPN looks forward to contributing to the debate on ownership, patronage, and governance of Irish primary schools. Whatever emerges, respect for all should be the underlying principle, and the driving force, for change. Faith should be an opportunity, not an obstacle in primary education.

2. PATRONAGE AND PLURALISM– DEFINITIONS, UNDERSTANDING, RELEVANCE

The words 'patron' and 'patronage' are not commonly used in schools. Teachers and parents refer to 'ownership' or 'ethos' in preference to 'patronage'. Indeed definitions of patronage vary from descriptors such as 'kindness', 'support', 'sponsorship' and 'influence' to 'power to confer favours', 'superiority', and 'unequal distribution of power'. School patronages are strongly associated with one-denominational ownership and/or control of schools, and more typically associated with 'the bishop'. In Ireland, the emergence of multi-denominational schools has further emphasised the traditional denominational patronage of religious-based school ownership.

Definitions of pluralism, by contrast, are more open suggesting acceptance of variations, particularly religions. Pluralism suggests harmonious co-existence of different faiths. Pluralism, in the context of primary education in Ireland, almost suggests a need to review and restructure the traditional patronage models that currently predominate in schools. A forum on patronage and pluralism will undoubtedly be challenged by assumptions that acknowledging and responding to a more pluralist society is an effort to dilute or diminish the ethos, values and beliefs of any and all religions.

The strong denominational characteristic of primary schools (96%) may have led to complacency. Patronage, in general, does not have an everyday relevance for teachers. Principals are influenced by parent needs and issues, and in the context of patronage the reality for parents is that when children are accepted into school, the overriding concern for them is their children's wellbeing, happiness, and the facilitation of high-quality learning and teaching.

Parents, teachers and Principals are far more attached to the terms 'ethos', 'ownership' and 'management' than to the terms 'patron' and 'patronage'. Indeed Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, in his address to Principals at IPPN's Principals' Conference in 2005, stated that "the primary ethos of any school should be an educational one". It may be helpful to focus on Archbishop Martin's words when reflecting on new structures for schools.

3. IPPN REPRESENTING PRINCIPALS –A COORDINATED RESPONSE

As part of its consultation process, IPPN invited all Principals to contribute to the debate on patronage and pluralism by the following means:
- Questionnaire designed in conjunction with the Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra, and distributed online to all 3,300 Principals (see Appendix 1)
- Discussions and feedback on a regional basis through national committee representatives
- Individual responses, oral and written
- Discussions and feedback at executive level

3.1. ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

The online questionnaire focused on key questions/statements. 820 Principals responded ensuring an authentic voice for Principals. IPPN surveys usually provide a strongly similar range of views - understandable given that Principals' experiences, issues and concerns are broadly similar. By contrast there was a very wide range of opinion expressed on patronage and pluralism. This may indicate the extent to which the key questions have not impacted in a practical way on most schools, thereby leaving Principals – for the moment – at a remove from the patronage debate.

3.2. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The range of school patronages was well represented in the responses received and geographical distribution was representative of all counties. 53% of principal-respondents were administrative Principals, 47% teaching Principals. 22% of all responses came from Deputy Principals, the majority of whom work in larger schools.

Almost half the respondents were in rural or small village schools. 27% were in rural towns and the remaining 23% were urban schools. Approximately half came from schools with 150 pupils or less. A quarter were in the 150-300 pupil category, and the final quarter were in schools with over 300 pupils.
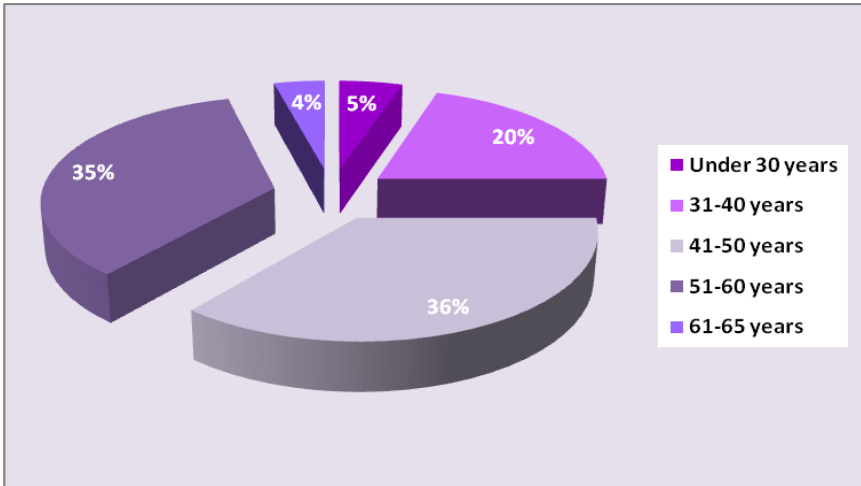

Fig. 3.1 *Age profile of respondents*

The age profile of respondents is fairly closely aligned to the age profile of primary Principals in general. 5% were under 30 years, almost 20% between 31 and 40 years, 35% between 41 and 50 years, 35% between 51 and 60 years and the remaining 4% between 61 and 65 years. Two thirds of respondents (66%) had less than 10 years experience as principal, and half of these (33%) had less than 5 years experience.

3.3. FINDINGS FROM THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

An overview of the findings from IPPN's online questionnaire is outlined in this section. The 820 responses ranged considerably from those wishing to maintain and protect traditional patronage structures, to others indicating their preference to respond to changing demographics, emerging cultures, new beliefs and attitudes. Given that a very strong denominational patron structure is embedded in Irish primary education, and that most Principals are leading schools from within the traditional models, the extent of openness to change from most respondents, and the eagerness/urgency of one third of Principals and deputy Principals to respond to parents' wishes and to provide for a more diverse and pluralist society was interesting.

3.3.1. Involvement of Principals in discussions on patronage
- 4% had formal discussions, 35% informal discussions, 61% no discussions
- Formal discussions mainly pertained to the establishment of new schools
- Informal discussions were prompted by INTO meetings or by requests to respond to the Catholic Primary School Managers' Association (CPSMA), Catholic School Partnership, and the Irish Council for Human Rights.
- A small number of Catholic schools indicated that patronage had been discussed at their board meetings with a view to providing for diversity (e.g. one Catholic school cited that it was an issue because over 30% of the children were non-Catholic, another stated that it had become a real issue because 85% of the pupils were new-Irish /international children)
- In a small minority of schools, Boards were proactively discussing patronage but some indicated that the Patron was unhappy/unwilling to allow the issue to be progressed

3.3.2. Current patronage models
- 10% feel the present models accommodate diversity
- 38% feel only minor modifications are necessary
- 17% feel a major overhaul of the current models is required
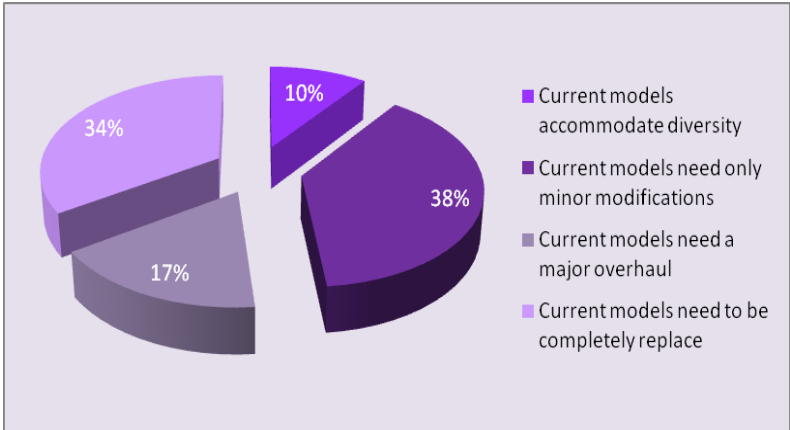- 34% feel the present models need to be completely replaced

Fig. 3.2 *Perceptions of the current patronage models*

3.3.3. Current practices and future directions

- 63% feel that school patronage has a direct impact on children's educational experience
- 49% feel that the current patronage models cater well for all faiths and none
- 45% feel Church management of schools works and should not change
- 44% feel current models probably generate more problems than benefits
- 52% feel it is no longer appropriate to have schools owned/managed denominationally
- 44% said they would prefer to work under non/multi-denominational patronage
- 73% feel that offering choice with new patron bodies could lead to elitism/ghettoism
- 57% feel effective management/governance does not requires patronage models such as a VEC or a denominational church
- 79% were opposed to transfer to a regional multi-denominational VEC structure
- 67% feel no further layers of bureaucracy are required beyond a competent administrator, as Principals are legally accountable for the quality of teaching & learning
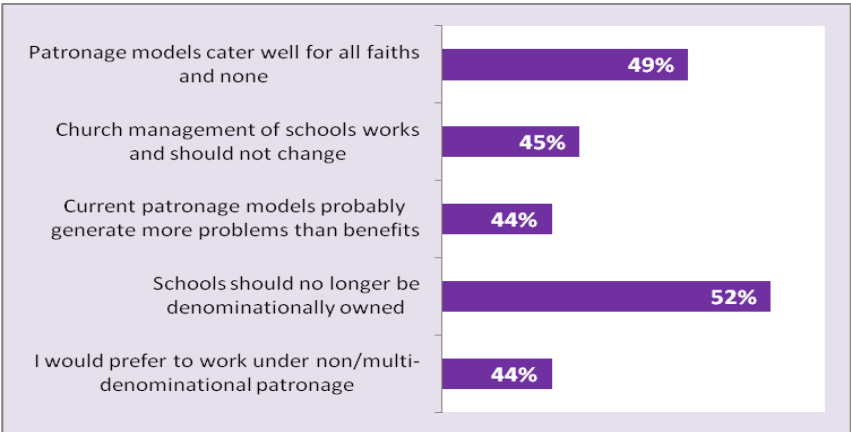
Fig. 3.3 Some views on patronage/ownership/management

82% of Principals favour a facilitated open-ended consultation process to agree future patronage models. 11% say the decision should be left entirely to patrons currently in the area, the remaining 7% favour a vote involving stakeholders. Those favouring the involvement of stakeholders say patrons and patron representatives, parents, Principals, teachers and the local community, should all be included in the process.

Fig. 3.4 Participation in discussions on patronage models

3.3.4. Principals opinions on the range of schools in their own area
- 45% say that there is not a sufficient choice of school types in their own area
- 68% say parents of children enrolled should be asked if they had sufficient choice
- 82% say parents of pre-school children should be surveyed to establish preferences

3.3.5. Reactions if patronage was to change in Principals' own schools
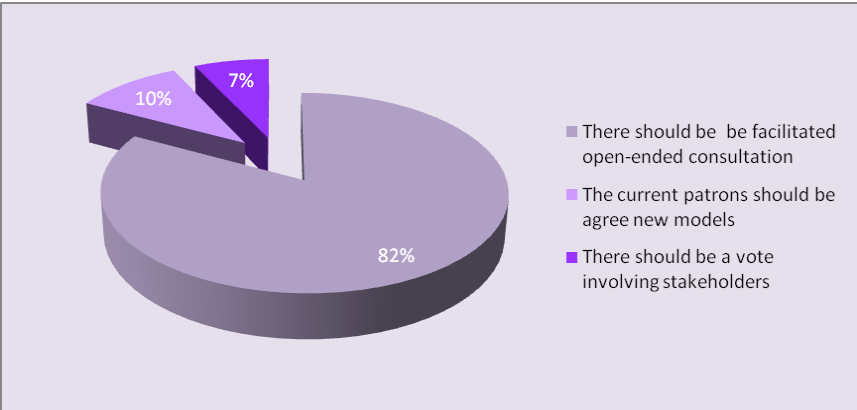- 16% felt patrons would favour change, 58% felt they would oppose the change
- 23% felt parents would favour change, 53% felt they would oppose the change
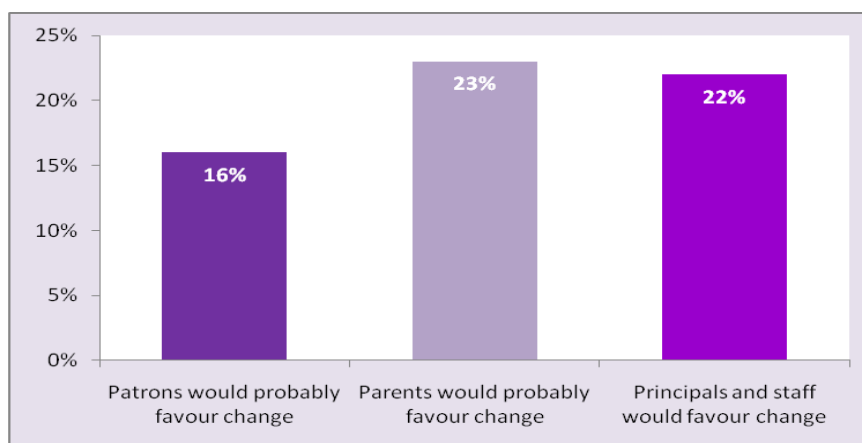- 22% felt Principals and staff would favour change, 60% felt they would be opposed

Fig. 3.5 *Principals opinions of the reaction to change of patron*

3.4. OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS FROM THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES
All respondents were invited to provide additional comments, particularly on the challenges for themselves, if there was to be a change of patronage in their own school. Some were strongly in favour of change, some acknowledged that very practical issues would need to be addressed. There was a strong emotional response to change – a sense of fear, loss and uncertainty as outlined below.

3.4.1. Fear....
- of divisions and tensions locally
- of the consequences for small schools
- of what might replace what is already there – the uncertain future
- of the vacuum that could emerge if the churches opt out
- of elitism in education, leading to stratification
- of the consequences for the Catholic faith
- of the withdrawal or non-availability of church property to schools

3.4.2. Loss....
- for the Catholic faith in terms of the security of the current patronage model
- for Church of Ireland schools if denominational status is diluted
- for Catholic schools regarding denominational practices/celebrations/sacraments that are intrinsic to the ethos of Catholic schools
- for Catholic schools if the positive image through religious celebrations is diminished

3.4.3. Uncertainty....
- about teacher security (panel rights) if schools are restructured
- about the contractual basis on which Principals and teachers were recruited
- about pupil entitlements to transport if they select a new model in a different location
- about traditional school structures and concern about what might replace these for Catholics

3.5. FEEDBACK FROM FOCUS-GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

Feedback from other groups and individuals reflected the outcomes of the survey. Principals, typically,
- accepted the need for change but were anxious about the process
- expressed concern about the possible alternatives
- believed consultation should be as open and inclusive as possible
- believed that the system needs minor changes rather than radical reorganisation
- were concerned about very practical arrangements that they may be left to manage
- believed that most clergy at this point wanted out of school management
- were concerned (particularly in rural schools) about finding competent chairpersons
- welcomed (particularly in small schools) shared/clustered patronage/management
- noted an increasing number of teachers asking not to be in sacramental classes
- believed many non-practising parents might still opt for Catholic primary education
- were aware sacraments through school provided the only link with church for some

There was, consistently, a pattern of diverse opinion – some believing church patronage was working well, others stating the proportion of church ownership/ management was at this point inappropriate, and others suggesting that schools no longer required patrons.

3.6. CONCLUSION

The information provided by Principals confirms their understanding of the need to urgently review patronage structures in primary schools. While this was primarily driven by the pluralism/diversity debate, Principals also raised many other fundamental issues about effectiveness at governance/board levels. Principals, while acknowledging change, also presented a strong emotional response based on fear, loss and anxiety. A significant minority of Principals (in Catholic schools in particular) were anxious to retain the current models, and expressed their concerns about the need to preserve the ethos of their schools, and to continue sacramental preparation in schools. Most Principals acknowledged the importance of consulting widely, particularly with parents, but were anxious that the process of consultation would be in no way divisive.

4. THEME 1 – ESTABLISHING PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY DEMAND FOR DIVERSITY

Establishing the demand for diversity within communities, and responding in so far as possible to parents' wishes regarding their children's education is essential. The reality is, however, that determining the level of change required will in itself be difficult. The strong tradition of denominational education, and the close link between school and community – particularly in small rural schools where school enrolments are almost a representation of an extended family – may fudge the issues.

Parents who already have their children in the system may not be as eager to engage in the diversity debate as new parents whose children have not yet started school. New parents, who are exploring the educational options available to them, may offer quite different views on their children's schooling for the following reasons:

- New parents have not yet made a decision; they usually have high expectations that have not been influenced by the reality of what school type is available
- Parents in the system have committed to a school or schools, albeit that their decisions were based on a low-or-no option in regard to type/ethos/patronage. Once children begin in school the overriding concern for parents shift largely to their children's happiness and safety in school, to the quality of education provided by the school, to the resources available, to the relationships established with teachers and friends, and to practical arrangements that make the selected school an all-round good choice. For most of these parents, the denominational status and/or the ethos of the school diminishes in favour of the educational experience, and the community 'feel' of the school
- For many parents, the challenge has not so much been to select an alternative to denominational schooling, as to ensure a place has been secured in the local school, or in the preferred school. A good measure of this is the extent to which parents – particularly in urban areas where schools are closely positioned - sometimes select a school of similar denomination but further away. Their selection is based on criteria other than school patronage.

Parents and teachers will probably react favourably to greater diversity in schools, to schools being more representative of the pluralist Irish society that is now a reality. In contrast, however, school patronage may have less relevance and therefore may prompt little or no reaction.

Establishing demand will require a multi-layered approach including the following:

- data from the 2011 Census and comparative data from other sources
- data at local level (parish and otherwise) – baptismal and enrolment records in denominational schools, information on religious patterns within schools
- data from Protestant schools on the percentage of Protestant children in these schools, on the percentage of Catholic children in these schools and follow-up research to establish why Catholic parents opt for the Protestant schools in preference to the local Catholic school
- data from Gaelscoileanna on the faith populations in their schools, and comparative data from denominational and non-denominational Gaelscoileanna; follow up research to establish the determinants for parents in selecting a Gaelscoil, and the extent to which choice was influenced by a desire not to have their children educated in the traditional Catholic/Protestant schools.

- data from multi-denominational schools on the faith populations in their schools, on how they provide for diversity, and on their experiences in establishing such schools
- data from teachers on the patronage and faith-relevance to them of being in a denominational, or multi-denominational school. The reality is that there is a huge shift in teacher-faith, an issue that must also be considered when providing for diversity. This has implications also for teacher education
- a major national consultation with parents to ensure that the needs for their children's education are established

The diversity debate provides an ideal opportunity to look at the situation of the small Protestant schools. In many instances these schools may present a picture of diversity overtaking denominational status. The resource issues, including teacher provision and the predominance of small schools in the Protestant sector, need attention if the Forum is to support diversity but also to ensure that minority denominational choice is secured.

Some 'models of bad practice' have emerged in recent years when inaction in acknowledging a more pluralist society, coupled with an unexpected pocketed-increase of immigrants in some areas, forced the opening of some schools to cater for pupil-overflow that essentially left large populations of non-Catholic, immigrant, children of different ethnic backgrounds corralled into new schools. These schools have valuable information on what has worked well, what should be avoided, and how differences can be respected.

4.1. RESEARCH

IPPN recommends that research underpins all the areas cited so that a true picture of the demand for diversity in education can be established. IPPN is happy to assist this work if required.

4.2. PUPIL DATABASE

IPPN has for some time been concerned about the absence of a pupil database in primary schools. The information that is now required to make well-informed decisions on diversity would be greatly enhanced by having a national pupil database available to the Department of Education and Skills. IPPN recommends that such a database be established as a matter of urgency.

5. THEME 2 – MANAGING THE TRANSFER/DIVESTING OF PATRONAGE

In order to offer a focused response to this theme, two assumptions are made: (i) parental and community demand for diversity has been established (as discussed under Theme 1 (Chapter 4), and (ii) all parties are committed to responding to parental and community preferences. Even with these assumptions in place, the transfer/divesting of patronage will be challenging for many reasons, including the following:

- the embedded nature of denominational education in Irish society
- the delay over two/three decades in not acknowledging the diversity-dilemma, and the growth during that period of multi-denominational schools and Gaelscoileanna, that may now complicate an orderly re-organisation of schools,
- the complicated State-Church relationship regarding ownership of schools, school governance/management, employment of staff and the fudge regarding ownership, employment, accountability and responsibility
- the heavy resource implications implied in the re-organisation of schools
- the issues of establishing 'critical mass' for new patronages and the opt-in/opt-out of parents if they find that their preference on patronage has other limitations
- the teacher dilemma - including teachers currently contracted to a denominational post – teachers contracts are with Boards of Management and not with the State
- the strong denominational presence of teacher education in Ireland with little knowledge/preparation of teachers for real diversity in schools
- the difficulties facing small Protestant schools, survival for many currently dependent on the enrolment of children who are not Protestant but who are seeking an alternative to Catholic education

5.1. DRAWING ON EXPERIENCE – INSIDE AND OUTSIDE EDUCATION

Past experience will be invaluable in managing change and there are some good models of success and failure that will be helpful in the management of change.

- Experiences of multi-denominational schools and Gaelscoileanna will be helpful, and should be sought, in terms of understanding some of the real difficulties for parents, teachers and school communities who have experienced the challenge of responding to parental choice and to community need. Aside from practical matters (location, site, building) the new-beginnings that energise people, coupled with the management/governance strains that these schools may experience, sometimes arising from single-issue over-enthusiasm, will be informative.
- The implementation of RSE, Stay Safe programme and similar programmes presented challenges for some schools and it might be helpful to examine how change was managed, mismanaged or challenged. Such a review should be helpful in planning for changes in school patronage.
- It may also be worth reviewing how decentralisation was planned, introduced and managed. What will probably be most helpful in drawing on this experience is to gain an understanding of the value of including people in changes that effect them, measuring the resource-impact, managing the ideal against the real, and having the resources required to implement change effectively.

The findings outlined in Chapter 3 confirm the very wide range of opinions of Principals, from those who present with high-anxiety on change, to those who are ready for the challenge.   IPPN believes that the 'best first-steps' in managing the transfer should include the following:

- Establishing some new models as prototypes
- Identifying approximately 10 communities that are 'ripe for change'
- Including a variety of situations within those communities e.g.
    - large urban schools with diverse pupil populations (e.g. cluster of 4 schools – junior, senior, boys and girls)
    - rural community with a number of Catholic schools within the one parish
    - small town with 4/5 schools (e.g. boys school, girls school, Church of Ireland school and Gaelscoil or multi-denominational school)
- Ensuring parental demand within these communities for diversity, the willingness of Boards of Management to engage in the process.

IPPN acknowledges the challenges, and the opportunities, that change presents. IPPN is wholeheartedly committed to supporting new structures in education, and in particular to supporting Principals in their demanding role as leaders of change.

6. THEME 3 – DIVERSITY WITHIN A SCHOOL OR A SMALL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

Diversity within a school or small number of schools has largely been addressed under Theme 2 (Chapter 5), and also in Chapters 3 and 4. The following points may also be helpful.

Ireland has an unusually large number of small schools. Principals are concerned about the practicalities of accommodating difference in such schools. IPPN's publication *Breacadh Ré Nua, New Horizons for Smaller Schools* (2005), may help when looking at diversity within/across a small number of schools.

IPPN believes that incentivising small schools to establish clusters and federations is the way forward for many of the challenges that present for smaller schools. Diversity should really be addressed within a wider debate on the potential for co-operation/clustering of small schools.

The governance of small schools is a much greater challenge than the debate on patronage and pluralism. It would be unwise to make big decisions for small schools based solely on a patronage/pluralism debate.

7. ADDITIONAL TOPIC – THE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS

In the Terms of Reference for this submission three themes were to be specifically addressed and any additional topic/theme included afterwards. IPPN has a specific interest in highlighting the issue of school governance as an area that urgently needs to be reviewed/restructured.

Governance is intrinsically linked to patronage. It will be a futile exercise to review and restructure patronage without ensuring that schools can be effectively governed. IPPN has conducted extensive research on school governance (*School Governance – Reform or Reinvention*)

8. CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE – SOME POSSIBLE PATRONAGE MODELS

Despite goodwill in providing for a more diverse and pluralist society, there are huge challenges in untangling the current patronage and governance models in schools. New patronage models must respond appropriately to the choices/needs of parents and community but they must also be workable.

As part of its commitment to this work, and based on the responses of its membership, IPPN has outlined some possible patronage models, and looks forward to seeing further models that others may propose. Each model will offer a basis for discussion, and an opportunity to explore feasibilities and test practicalities so that the best workable alternatives to the current patronage models are provided.

8.1. MODEL 1 – JOINT-PATRONAGE NATIONAL SCHOOLS

This is an extension of the current model where patrons agree on joint-patronage to respond to parental choice within a school or a cluster of schools. When Joint Patronage is established; practical arrangements are agreed to facilitate the requirements of each particular school. The allocated time for religious education is retained but arrangements reflect parental choice. This will probably involve a practical reorganisation of classes where, for example, most teachers will continue with the main-faith programme (including preparation for sacraments or religious celebrations and observances), while other children are separately taught a programme that responds to parental choice within the agreed structures of the joint-patronage ethos.

8.2. MODEL 2 – MULTI-FAITH COMMUNITY NATIONAL SCHOOLS

This represents a merge of the VEC Community National School with the Educate Together model whereby all are incentivised to become multi-denominational under the patronage of Community Primary Education Boards. The key features of such schools is that moral and ethical education programmes are taught to all children but that any aspect of faith formation, sacramental preparation and other matters not common to all religions occurs outside school hours, but with the school premises made available.

8.3. MODEL 3 – MULTI-FAITH STATE NATIONAL SCHOOLS

This is a variation of Model 2 without patrons and with each school dealing directly with the Department of Education and Skills. Considering the population of the Republic of Ireland is less than that of Greater Manchester, there is a genuine 'value for money' question about the need for further regional structures such as Community Primary Education Boards, if the outcome is that valuable resources are diverted into the overarching management structure rather than directly into schools.

8.4. MODEL 4 – COMMUNITY NATIONAL SCHOOLS

This focuses on the challenges of small schools embedded in the culture of the community where demand for change exists amongst a number of parents. School heritage is specifically acknowledged but from an agreed date the school becomes a multi-faith school with a fully inclusive revised ethos. The ethos would be learning-centred rather than faith-centred. The board of management structure would remain but the chairperson would be elected by the board. Religious background would no longer be a criterion in either the appointment of teachers or the enrolment of children. A common programme of morality and ethics would form part of the school's SPHE programme, and there would be an optional facility for faith formation (religious education) immediately after school.

Each of the models outlined offers some solutions to accommodate diversity, while acknowledging and respecting traditional structures. There is no perfect structure but there are reasonable alternatives. It is likely that change will come slowly and probably through 'model approaches' or 'pilot programmes' such as those outlined above. IPPN is prepared to assist in arriving at a situation where the diverse needs and demands of parents are met within an equitable education system

9. CONCLUSION

'Almost always, the creative dedicated minority has made the world better.'
— Martin Luther King

The Irish Constitution was enacted in 1937 and for half a century the State's constitutional obligation to respond appropriately to the rights of parents in the provision of primary education, especially in matters of religious and moral formation, was well served through a strong denominational school system. Catholic primary schools and Catholic 'training colleges' provided for the education of the predominantly Catholic population. The provision of a network of small Protestant schools, and a Protestant 'training college' supported the minority Protestant population.

The two-denomination option for education began to unravel in the 1980s with the introduction of the Educate Together schools, with the rapid increase in Gaelscoileanna and with the establishment of a small number of other new denomination schools. Parental choice has clearly been shifting for some time and, to date, the establishment of new-patronage schools such as Educate Together schools can largely be attributed to the commitment of creative dedicated minorities.

The debate on patronage and pluralism is overdue and will lead to change. Change does not come without inconvenience and diversity has, at times, almost been an inconvenience in primary education. However, despite the complexities that may emerge, the new thinking that will come from the work of the forum should not only provide for new models of patronage/governance of schools, but will undoubtedly prompt other changes that will impact on the quality of Irish primary education.

Patronage & Pluralism

1. Introduction

A chara

As you are aware, IPPN has been invited by the Minister to participate in the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector. This will involve the formulation of a written submission to the Forum by 7th June in advance of further participation in the Forum.

In order to accurately reflect the thoughts and opinions of Principals and Deputy Principals throughout the country, the IPPN Executive is eager to consult as widely as possible in a number of different ways. In consultation with the Educational Research Centre [ERC] in Drumcondra, IPPN has designed this survey based on the Terms of Reference for the Forum as outlined by the Minister. The survey will take between 5 and 7 minutes to complete.

The results of this survey will be published on our website and the views expressed will inform IPPN's submission. We invite you to take a few minutes to complete this important survey and so have your voice heard at the patronage forum. All responses are strictly confidential.

Thank you for giving your time to respond.

Is sinne le meas

Seán Cottrell (Director)
Pat Goff (President)

Patronage & Pluralism

2. Background

* **1. Please confirm your leadership role:**

jn Administrative Principal   jn Teaching Principal   jn Deputy Principal

* **2. Gender:**

jn Male   jn Female

* **3. County in which you work:**

[6]

* **4. Which of the following best describes the area in which your school is located?**

jn Small village or rural area   jn Medium or large town

jn Small town   jn City

* **5. School patronage**

jn Roman Catholic

jn Church of Ireland

jn An Foras Pátrúnachta

jn Educate Together

jn Jewish

jn Multi-denominational

jn Presbyterian

jn Methodist

jn Muslim

jn VEC

jn Autism Ireland

jn Saplings Ireland

jn Private

jn Other

Other (please specify)

[   ]

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* 6. Number of children in your school :

jn 1-25 Children   jn 151-200 Children   jn 501-600 Children

jn 26-50 Children   jn 201-300 Children   jn 600 + Children

jn 51-100 Children   jn 301-400 Children

jn 101-150 Children   jn 401-500 Children

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3. Experience

* 7. Age :

- jn 21-30 yrs
- jn 31-40 yrs
- jn 41-50 yrs
- jn 51-60 yrs
- jn 61 + yrs

* 8. How many years' experience do you have as a Principal or Deputy Principal (including 'Acting')?

- jn 1 year or less
- jn 5-10 years
- jn 21-30 years
- jn 2-4 years
- jn 11-20 years
- jn 31+ years

9. Have you been involved in any discussions on your school's patronage?

- jn Yes, formal discussion
- jn Yes, informal discussion
- jn No, none

10. If yes, please give some brief details:

4. Your views on Patronage and Pluralism

11. Which of the following statements best represents your opinion about patronage and pluralism?

- The present model already accommodates diversity and does not need to be changed

- The present model, with some minor modifications and without large transfers of patronage, can accommodate diversity

- A major overhaul of the present model is needed, involving a large number of transfers of patronage

- The present model needs to be replaced (by, for example, some form of democratic control)

12. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Changing the current patronage model will probably generate more problems than benefits	○	○	○	○
The present patronage model does a good job of catering for pupils of all faiths and none	○	○	○	○
Patronage of a school has no direct impact on the educational experience of children	○	○	○	○
My personal preference would be to work in a school that is not under denominational patronage	○	○	○	○
Offering choice of school type by adding new patron bodies leads to greater polarisation (some schools becoming 'elite' other becoming 'ghettoised')	○	○	○	○
The role of the Churches in managing schools works well and should not be changed	○	○	○	○
The management of Primary Schools should be transferred to the regional structures of the VEC using a multi-denominational approach	○	○	○	○
It is no longer appropriate that schools should be owned and managed by denominational Churches	○	○	○	○
The effective management and governance of Primary Schools does not require a Patronage Model such as a VEC or a denominational Church	○	○	○	○
Principals are already accountable by law for the quality of teaching & learning. With the support of a competent administrator, no further tiers of bureaucracy are required.	○	○	○	○

13. What kind of process for transferring patronage would you favour?

- One in which the decision is left entirely to the existing patrons in the locality

- A facilitated open-ended consultation process involving stakeholders in the school community

- A binding vote involving stakeholders

Patronage & Pluralism

14. If you favour the involvement of stakeholders, who do you think these should be? Tick all that apply.

- ∈ Current Patron
- ∈ Patron's local representative
- ∈ Parent Association
- ∈ Parents of current pupils
- ∈ Parents of future pupils

- ∈ Principal
- ∈ Teaching staff
- ∈ Non-teaching staff
- ∈ Wider local community

Other (please specify)

[   ]

15. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements on the choice of primary schools in your area?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
In this area there are sufficient primary schools catering for all religions and none	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
Parents of children enrolled in this school should be surveyed to establish whether they had an adequate choice of school	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
Parents of pre-school children should be surveyed to establish their educational preferences for their children	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩

16. If your school was a candidate for a change in patronage, what do you believe would be the attitude of each of the groups below?

	Strongly in favour	Somewhat in favour	Neutral	Somewhat opposed	Strongly opposed
Current Patron	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
Patron's local representative	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
Parent Association	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
Parents of current pupils	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
Parents of future pupils	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
Principal	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
Teaching staff	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
Non-teaching staff	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
Wider local community	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
Other (please describe below)	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩

Other (please describe this group)

[   ]

17. If it is decided that the patronage of your school is to be changed, what issues do you think would arise for your school?

[5]
[6]

Patronage & Pluralism

18. If there are aspects of the forum for patronage and pluralism which you feel have not been adequately addressed in the survey, please elaborate your views here.

19. Any other comments?

Patronage & Pluralism

5. Míle Buíochas

Our thanks to the Education Research Centre in Drumcondra for their help and advice in setting the survey questions.

Míle buíochas as ucht do chabhair leis an taighde tábhachtach seo.

5. Míle Buíochas