

CfE Senior Phase Survey – sample comments

(Question 21 of survey – “do you have any additional comments on CfE implementation?”)

Sample Comments from members of Senior Management Teams:

- *Whilst I embrace the underpinning philosophy, I sincerely believe that it is quite frankly a mess. I also believe that no one has any real grasp of what it is about. The more reassurances SQA and partners try to give, the more concerned and confused I have become!*
- *Not enough thinking time which, as we all know is essential to good learning and teaching!*
- *CfE - a sensible, and much needed reform of the curriculum has been jeopardised by excessive politically-led haste and many poor decisions by Education Scotland. Some areas, such as assessment, have been neglected and I would not be surprised if a further radical shake-up of the system were eventually needed. Do we have the correct people carrying out the correct managerial functions?*
- *Teachers are bearing the burden of implementation on top of their daily job. Resources allocated to implementation are completely inadequate. Education Scotland does not appear to know when teachers want to have freedom to develop independently or when they require clear guidelines. It simply appears as trying to implement a fundamental change in Scottish education on the cheap.*
- *To implement at this time of dwindling resources has been wrong - staff have not embraced these changes and lack ownership and, coupled with this, there has not been any capacity in time to implement successfully.*
- *The lack of a consistent message around the delivery of subjects across Scotland is creating a situation that is a nightmare to manage with some authorities delivering different numbers of courses in S4 therefore they must be starting teaching the courses before the Senior Phase. This potentially undermines and disadvantages those who are following the broad general education and the original advice. Recent publications from Ed Scotland lack clarity and are ambiguous effectively allowing people to interpret things as they wish. There is a real danger that young people are disadvantaged.*
- *My major concern is that the diversity of curriculum structures across Scotland is creating potential inequity across the country. It is also causing considerable worry for teachers and senior managers as there is no clear national direction on curriculum structure but at the same time a degree of conflicting dogma and direction which are confusing. I find that I am therefore managing the development of curriculum structure in my school with a 'risk assessment' approach to ensure pupils do not lose out and parents and staff remain confident. Vast amounts of time are being wasted dealing with the anxieties that the new curriculum and especially the Senior Phase is causing. This is unfortunate as essentially CfE is a great initiative which has become tangled up in politics. Absolute clarity is seriously needed*

to ensure that pupil curriculum experience is not a matter of which school or LEA they are in. The EIS would do well to argue for national clarity now to for the benefit of members as well as pupils. I am very worried for the future credibility of secondary education in Scotland that the current situation is leading us towards.

Sample comments from class teachers and lecturers, and principal teachers:

- *We all just want to feel we know exactly what will be required of us, the teachers, and of the students. We all need to know what it is we are working towards so that the work can be focused to this end. At the moment I don't think this is the case.*
- *Not enough information, support, resources, assessment info issued in the timescale given prior to implementation.*
- *There are far too many school models for implementation even across the same authority.*
- *I feel implementation is being rushed. Teachers need more time with the arrangements, more exemplification and more course materials. This would allow us to fully familiarise ourselves with the course and carefully plan learning and assessment to suit our local needs. At the moment many SQA materials will be made available later than teachers need them.*
- *Within the college sector, and specifically my own college, I am still unsure exactly what the specific changes are, what has been done, what still needs to be done, how I fit in, etc. The only understanding I have about CfE is what I have read for my own professional development. . I have had no CPD. There is a lot of talk about applying CfE principles in our lesson plans, but very little practical guidance or information on its implementation.*
- *Too much expected too soon. Staff as always will try to cope but I watch my dedicated and hard-working colleagues buckle under the pressures of the day-to-day maintenance of their subject responsibilities and the extra development, reading and basically getting their heads round some very poorly produced materials in which the specific detail is sadly lacking. Publishing materials at the end of Feb and April is far too late for us when we will be faced with class at the end of May doing N4/5.*
- *Stress levels have increased across the school. Work levels have increased, and often feel having to reinvent the wheel, goals changed and re-write required becomes very frustrating. Do not think the implementation was handled well at all. Still has several serious issues to be addressed - and big concern of the pupils who are having to endure these changes.*
- *Should have been postponed as the general feeling from teachers is that we are floundering in the dark and we are all concerned that it is the poor pupils that will suffer, along with the stress that this has put onto an already stressful occupation.*

- *I feel that implementation is a misnomer when it comes to CfE and its introduction to Scottish secondary schools. In order to implement something, you need to be clear what the changes are and what the long-term impact will be. At present, I know neither of these things in the context of my subject area. Despite a number of vague documents being published, I remain unclear about exactly what a new course should look like. In comparison with courses that already exist.*
- *Lack of information from all - SQA, Education Scotland, Authority and school. What information there is is scant and vague e.g. course content information - not like an arrangements document (yes, it's now supposed to be non-prescriptive but it's gone too far the other way - if there's an exam we need more information). Education Scotland/SQA documentation vague and has more questions rather than answers e.g. building the curriculum documents etc - just full of educational jargon with no substance.*
- *The timescale has been incredibly compressed with the teachers at the end of the process having to bear the brunt of not having enough high quality information on which to plan for next session. Teaching staff having the complete picture only at the end of April, one month before the new courses are due to start is simply madness. A lot of support materials will only become available during the new course potentially after budgets have already been spent. Also if the materials have specific resource requirements these might not be able to be put in place during the first year.*
- *The new courses look great but the assessment information and resources are arriving far too late. It is now a huge rush to prepare for these new courses which start in a matter of months now.*
- *We are still not ready to implement CfE in National Qualifications as yet. A delay would benefit the students currently in S3. Additional finances and resources MUST be provided if we are to make a real go at teaching these courses.*
- *I feel that the implementation has been rushed through. Teachers have not been given time or the monetary resources necessary to implement these changes effectively. I am very concerned about the implementation of the senior phase especially as we seem to be developing as we go. It is an unacceptable situation where the future of our children is at stake.*
- *We are trying to change the tyres on a car as it continues to hurtle down the motorway. Current S3 will not be disadvantaged due to the professionalism and dedication of staff determined to protect the quality of education being delivered to them whilst 'powers that be' decide how and what to assess and then how to use this information gathered.*
- *This is the most far reaching yet worst supported curriculum reform I have experienced in over 30 years in the teaching profession.*

- *All seems a bit rushed and disjointed. It seems crazy to have no published rationale for the senior phase when we are now only 4 months away from implementing it. Teachers love talking about teaching and learning in their classrooms, and learning about best practices. It goes without saying that more resources are needed to ensure that teachers have the best resources (especially ICT) available to them.*
 - *Too much too soon without adequate resourcing in terms of finance or support. Staff in my Faculty are working as hard as they possibly can, yet we are on our knees - totally overwhelmed.*
 - *Although the guidelines and contents of many courses may be similar, the desire of many teachers to implement a more diverse teaching style, to update their course material, and to best provide a meaningful learning experience for pupils means that the workload is unmanageable. While teaching and reviewing new courses in the lower school, developing courses for the senior phase, becoming familiar with new exemplification, working on new cross curricular ventures and perhaps teaching subjects which are completely new to them (leadership, employability etc) is a full time job in itself. Teachers are doing this on top of their teaching commitment to their present classes. It is due to the dedication of the profession that we are anywhere near being able to move toward the final implementation of CfE at all. It is not always clear that this is recognised and acknowledged.*
 - *Time scale for implementation should have been phased much more gradually. We have barely managed to develop S1 - S2 CfE and are now teaching mixed classes which will be Nat 3,4 and 5 making the course up as we go along with no support other than that supplied by colleagues and while still delivering a demanding timetable, marking and reporting. The fact that all the course requirements and advice on assessment have still not been completed and published is also worrying.*
 - *I like much of what I have seen. I am however concerned about lack of focussed support at authority and national level. Perhaps when we see the Assessment support materials it will instil confidence.*
 - *The material that comes from SQA has to be more coherent, of better quality and published before we decide to embark upon these courses. There is little point in starting a 160 hr course without an end point in sight.*
 - *Although I am a strong advocate of CfE and the need for change it feels rushed, lacking leadership and exemplification, guidance and support. I appreciate that individual schools and staff have to take responsibility for developing courses and implementing CfE but in a time of economic cuts, pay freezes, increasing demands on teachers to support and deal with what appears to be an increase in young people experiencing social, emotional, behavioural and/ or learning difficulties there is too much pressure being heaped on the shoulders of teachers and school staff to implement change.*
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