Marginalised students in Primary and Post-Primary DEIS Schools and other settings: System Gaps in Policy and Practice and the Priority Issues for consideration, with reference to the impact of Covid 19.

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About DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre   https://www.dcu.ie/edc

Founded in 2000 by the late Dr. Ann Louise Gilligan, the DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre, located in its Institute of Education, engages in interdisciplinary research, policy and practice regarding poverty and social inclusion in education at global, EU and national levels, as well as local community contexts. Dr. Paul Downes, Associate Professor of Education (Psychology) is its Director since 2004.

Many of the Centre's reports are published on the EU Commission's School Education Gateway and have been cited in a range of official EU Policy documents in areas of early school leaving, key competences for lifelong learning, transitions, inclusive education and future of learning. The Centre has been involved in European comparative research projects on parental involvement for marginalised groups across 10 European cities, access to education across 12 countries and has led an EU Commission published report on inclusive systems in and around schools that devised a structural indicators self-evaluation tool for inclusive systems for schools and policy makers across Europe, officially translated by the EU Commission into 22 European languages, and published by the Commission.

The Centre's Joint INTO/EDC DEIS National Conference (2015) was the largest consultation process for the National DEIS Action Plan 2017 on Social Inclusion in Education. The EDC's Roundtable on combining multidisciplinary teams with community lifelong learning centres attended, by the EU Commission, the then Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Katherine Zappone, Cedefop and European Parents' Association (2017) directly led to the Romanian EU Presidency International Policy Forum on this theme in Brussels, 2019, together with Cedefop and the Lifelong Learning Platform for Europe. With various funded projects by the EU Commission, Higher Education Authority (HEA), Department of Education and Skills, Irish Prison Service, Pobal, McVerry Trust, Local Area Partnerships and the North East Inner City (NEIC) Programme, the EDC has also led the establishment of:

- HEA funded, DCU community outreach hubs to promote access to the teaching profession in Darndale, Coolock and Kilbarrack, launched by then Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton in 2017;
- Familiscope community based multidisciplinary team (including school based speech and language services), linked with Ballyfermot schools since 2005, funded by DES, HSE & DCC (now Familibase);
- A National Working Group on Hunger Prevention in School with INTO and FORSA Trade Unions, the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN), National Parents Council, Barnardos, Focus Ireland & the Children's Rights Alliance since 2013;
- A national network, QDOSS (Quality Development of Out of School Services), hosted by the EDC, that influenced the National School Age Childcare Action Plan 2017 and the 2020 National Quality Guidelines for the sector;
- A National Working Group on the holistic educational needs of Children in Care;
- A global network, the International Research Network for Equity in Education and Training International Research Network for Equity in Education and Training (IRNEYET) (301 members, 30 countries)

The Centre's work has been disseminated through over 20 international conference keynote presentations, including invited presentations at 10 Countries' National Ministry Conferences, as well as the EU Parliament Working Group on Quality of Childhood, European Network of Education Councils (EUNEC) and UNICEF.

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System Gap and Priority Issue 1: Emotional Counselling/Therapeutic Supports in and around Schools to address Trauma, Anxiety, Mental Health Difficulties of Vulnerable Children

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System Gap and Priority Issue 1: Emotional Counselling/Therapeutic Supports in and around Schools to address Trauma, Anxiety, Mental Health Difficulties of Vulnerable Children

Trauma and adverse childhood experiences manifest themselves in many different forms, such as any of the following experiences: Domestic violence, Substance abuse in family, Emotional neglect, Physical neglect, Mental illness in family, Loss of parent though divorce, death or abandonment, Physical abuse, Emotional abuse, Sexual abuse, Incarcerated family member, Consistent Poverty, Experience of suicide, Childhood homelessness, Bullying in School, Placed in State Care. The Joint Oireachtas Committee Report on Early School Leaving (2010) identified trauma as distinctive risk factor in early school leaving. Our Educational Disadvantage Centre's child-centred school and community wide consultations in Ballyfermot (Downes 2004), Blanchardstown (Downes, Maunsell & Ivers 2006) and South West Inner City Dublin (Downes & Maunsell 2007) all identified needs for emotional counselling/therapeutic supports in and around schools for vulnerable students experiencing emotional distress and major gaps in these services – themes reiterated in a recent Carlow County Development Partnership study on early school leaving (Brady 2020) and at the INTO/Educational DEIS Conference 2015 (Nunan & Downes 2016).

Over the past decade especially, international research has highlighted the key issues of trauma and mental health for early school leaving. For example, Esch et al.'s (2014) review of mental health dimensions to early school leaving found that when adjusted for socio-demographic factors, mood disorders (e.g. depression) were significantly related to early school leaving. Among anxiety disorders, after controlling for potentially confounding factors, social phobia was a strong predictor of poor educational outcomes, as indicated by early school leavers themselves, such as feeling too nervous in class and being anxious to speak in public. Quiroga et al.'s (2013) research involving 493 high-risk French-speaking adolescents living in Montreal observed that depression symptoms at the beginning of secondary school are related to higher dropout mainly by being associated with pessimistic views about the likelihood to reach desired school outcomes; student negative self-beliefs are in turn related to lower self-reported academic performance and predict a higher risk of dropping out. Quiroga et al. (2013) conclude that interventions that target student mental health and negative self-perceptions are likely to improve dropout prevention.

Our Educational Disadvantage Centre's recent report on homeless men's experiences of school for the McVerry Trust (Murphy, McKenna & Downes 2019) was based on a sample of 51 men, almost a third of those in total in temporary/emergency accommodation in McVerry Trust. 34 of 51 questionnaire participants indicated that they had experienced 'traumatic childhood events' while 18.4% reported having been permanently excluded or expelled from school.

Trauma and adversity impacting on mental health of our children and young people are exacerbated in this pandemic, including the additional emotional and financial strain of lockdown on so many families. This requires a heightened awareness of policy makers about a key strategic gap in supports in Irish schools that places Ireland out of step with many European countries. This is with regard to the need for emotional counsellors/therapists in and around every school.

The recent evaluation for the EU Commission of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Early School Leaving examined the issue of emotional counselling supports in and around schools (Donlevy, Andriescu, Day & Downes 2019). Donlevy et al. (2019) observe that: 'Emotional counselling and support is provided in a range of countries in order to help those suffering from serious emotional distress, including the Czech Republic, Belgium and Germany', while 'In France, all pupils have access to the Psychologist of Education... Emotional counselling is also available in Sweden, where all students have access to a school doctor, school nurse, psychologist and school welfare officer at no cost and in Slovenia' (p.63). Donlevy et al. (2019) continue

- 'In some countries, emotional counselling is expressly backed by legislation. In Poland, legislation mandates for the existence of a system of support to students who are having significant difficulties at school, in the form of one-to-one academic tutoring and psychological support where required.'
- 'In Denmark, legislation states that school leaders can choose to recommend a student for pedagogical-psychological assessment, the results of which may initiate a process where the student may receive psychological support. Croatia and Bulgaria also have legislation in place that provides for emotional counselling and psychological support' (p.64).

There needs to be emotional counselling and therapeutic supports, such as play and art therapy, available in all DEIS schools and arguably beyond, to provide at least one key limb of support for the mental health strain and trauma experienced by so many of our children. Ireland is radically out of step with many European countries who provide these services in schools. *This is not addressed by NEPS (National Educational Psychology Service) or Career Guidance increases as neither provide or are suitable to provide ongoing individual therapeutic supports for trauma and complex emotional needs.* The National Wellbeing In Schools Policy 2018 of a teacher as 'One good adult' is no substitute for qualified emotional counsellors/therapists. A 2017 report *The Primary Schools Counselling Study (PSCS): Demand and provision of school based counselling in Ireland* (McElvaney, Judge & Gordon 2017) recommends a national policy be developed and that counselling services staffed with qualified professionals be provided on site in schools. This would allow for issues to be dealt with as and when they arise.

Some DEIS schools provide play therapy but this is *ad hoc* in nature, funded by a mixture of corporate funding, some limited School Completion funding or voluntary therapeutic placements. *These play and art therapy and emotional counselling supports can build on the Programme for Government's 2020 commitment to 'Improve access to supports for positive mental health in schools'* p.96.

> Ireland is radically out of step with many European countries such as for example, Czech Republic, Belgium, Sweden, Slovenia, Estonia and Germany who all provide emotional counselling/therapeutic services in schools. Croatia and Bulgaria even have legislation in place that provides for emotional counselling.

A principle of differentiated need to recognise different layers of complexity, building on public health models of need as universal prevention (all), selected prevention (some, moderate risk, group based supports) and indicated prevention (few, individual, intensive supports) is gaining fuller recognition in domains such as mental health (Suldo et al., 2010), positive behaviour in school, (Reinke et al. 2009), school violence and bullying (Astor et al. 2012; Downes & Cefai 2019), early school leaving (Downes et al. 2017) and social work (Hood 2018).
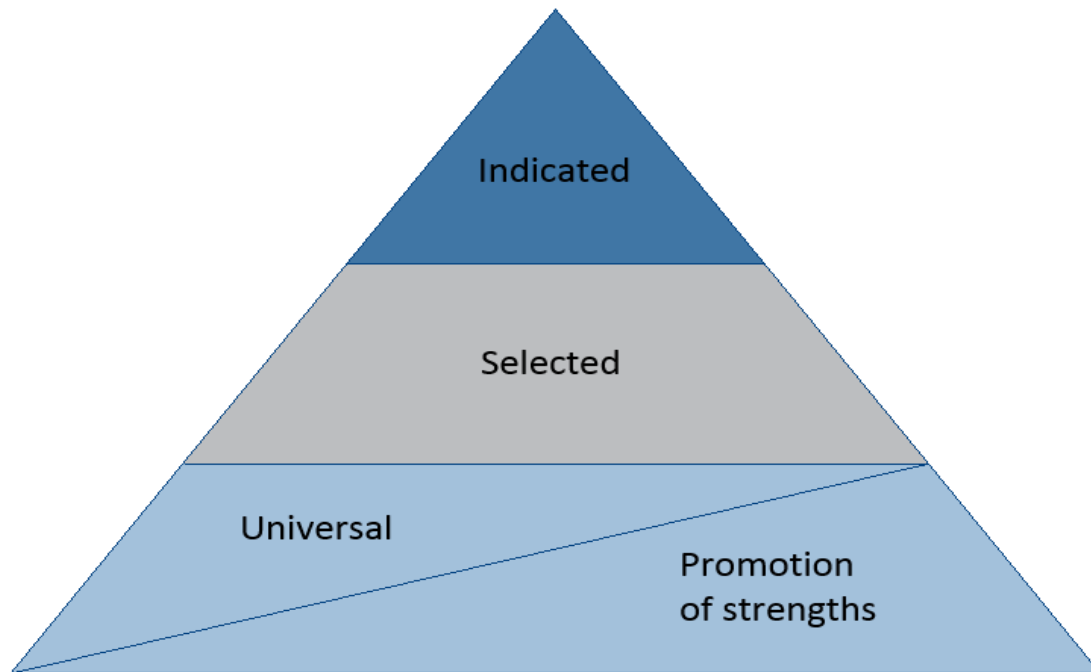
Universal – *All*
Selected – *Some, Groups, Moderate Risk*
Indicated – *Individual, Intensive, Chronic Need*

There is 'a growing emphasis on the use of multi-tiered approaches' (p.19) in psychology, specifically, this three tiered level of prevention (Rivara and Le Menestrel 2016). A similar model of need differentiation is the long established Hardiker model of need (Hardiker et al. 1991).

Against this backdrop, it is also important that system level responses to address needs of children experiencing trauma recognise these differences of levels. Our Centre has been involved in reports published by the EU Commission emphasising the importance of social and emotional education for social inclusion goals (Cefai, Bartolo, Cavioni, & Downes 2018), however, it is also emphasised in this report that *social and emotional education is no substitute for specialised emotional counselling/therapeutic supports*. Social and emotional education interventions, such as Incredible Years, which have come into the Irish system over the past decade are not suitable for the indicated prevention, trauma level of need. Likewise, West et al.'s (2014) US account of a trauma-informed teaching curriculum offers little on integrating the different levels of system responses beyond the universal to address this issue in schools. *Basically the Irish educational system is failing to provide supports at the indicated prevention, chronic, complex needs level of individual intensive support*

services for children and young people experiencing trauma – through a lack of emotional counselling/therapeutic services in and around schools. Indicated prevention levels and trauma does not necessarily mean clinical levels of mental health need.

It is also to be noted that schools can no longer refer children to CAMHS (Child and Adult Mental Health Services) (Courtney 2016). The complexity of emotional need in students at the indicated prevention requires supports that an individual teacher is not in a position to provide. A teacher can offer support as mental health promotion and stress prevention, but is not a therapist (Downes 2003).

An underemphasised adverse childhood experience is that of experiencing discrimination in school, including discriminatory bullying of minority groups (Elamé 2013). This invites focus on the universal and selected (group based) prevention level of systems. Building on an inclusive systems framework, the following aspects are recommended in an EU Commission published report on this theme (Downes, Nairz-Wirth & Rusinaite 2017), pertinent also to Irish minority group contexts such as for Travellers and Roma:

- A central driving committee in every school to promote a positive school climate, antidiscrimination and bullying prevention, including representatives from minority groups (such as Travellers, Roma)
- Build Traveller and Roma feedback formally into Whole School Evaluations (selfevaluations and Dept of Education and Skills Inspectorate)
- Ensure mandatory antidiscrimination module regarding Travellers and Roma is built into all initial teacher education degrees, with a much stronger focus on initial teacher education for this theme at postprimary level – there is a need to ensure the Irish Teaching Council addresses this

System Gap and Priority Issue 2: Multidisciplinary Team Alternatives to Suspension, Expulsion and Reduced Timetables

The American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement (2013) recognises that 'the adverse effects of out-of-school suspension and expulsion can be profound' (p.e1001); such students are as much as 10 times more likely to leave school early, are more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system and 'there may be no one at home during the day to supervise the

student's activity' (p.e1002) if the parents are working. The policy statement continues, 'They can also be very superficial if, in using them, school districts avoid dealing with underlying issues affecting the child or the district, such as drug abuse, racial and ethnic tensions, and cultural anomalies associated with violence and bullying' (American Academy of Pediatrics, p. e1002). Moreover, Gregory et al.'s (2010) review concludes that the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in discipline sanctions has not received the attention it deserves. Suspensions and expulsions are the antithesis to inclusive systems (Downes et al. 2017) and are a real risk factor for later homelessness, at least for men in Ireland (Murphy et al. 2019).

- Our Educational Disadvantage Centre's McVerry Trust study (Murphy et al. 2019) found that 24.5% of homeless men in McVerry Trust Accommodation said that they had been temporarily excluded in the form of suspensions; 12.2% had experienced multiple or 'rolling' suspensions
- 65.5% of permanent exclusions were due to non-violent behaviour; 37.9% were due to difficult relationships with teachers; 27.6% were due to poor attendance
- 34 of 51 questionnaire participants indicated that they had experienced 'traumatic childhood events'

A largescale Louisiana study of 596,537 children observed that expelled students had a 2.3 times greater chance of leaving school early than non-expelled students (Robison et al. 2017). It concludes that expulsion is one of the main factors leading to early school leaving and that 'these findings may suggest that school and social policies in response to these negative behaviors are ineffective and even counterproductive' (Robison et al. 2017, p.44).

A British sample at baseline of 7977 parents of children aged over 11, with final sample at follow up of 5326 found that experience of exclusion was higher for those experiencing socioeconomic deprivation, and exclusion was associated with higher psychopathology especially for those excluded at a younger age (Ford et al. 2018). An English study by

Rennison et al., (2005) found that young people in the NEET [Not in Education, Employment or Training] group were over three times more likely previously to have been excluded from school than young people overall.

Previously the Irish post-primary figure of 5% for suspension, applied to the total population of 332,407 students equated to well over 16,000 students suspended from post-primary schools in 2005/6 (ERC/NEWB 2010). There has been some limited but insufficient improvement over the past decade from 5% to 3.8% regarding suspensions. According to official statistics for 2016-17, 13,169 students were suspended, 3.8% of the school population (ERC/Tusla 2016-17). There were 167 expulsions nationally in 2016-2017, 0.048% of the population and 35 expulsions nationally in primary school in 2016-2017, up from 19 in 2014-2015 (Millar, 2018).

Removal from class does not have to require removal from the school, with the availability of multidisciplinary supports as part of an individual education and wellbeing plan. Trauma requires emotional counselling/therapeutic support services in and around schools, not a strategy of exclusion through suspension, expulsion and reduced timetabling. Reduced timetabling is now being monitored by the DES in light of the DEIS 2017 Action Plan but *this is not a substitute for multidisciplinary team supports.*

The notable commitment in DEIS 2017 to expand the NCSE Inclusion Service (formerly the National Behavioural Support Service, NBSS) to primary schools requires adequate resourcing to ensure children with complex needs are supported through multidisciplinary teams of emotional counsellors/therapists, occupational therapists, & speech and language therapists. The Programme for Government 2020 commitment to 'Expand and enhance the in-school speech and language and occupational therapist pilot, given its success p.81' is a hugely welcome development (see also CDI Tallaght/EDC 2016 briefing paper on a three-pronged model for school based speech and language therapists) requiring corresponding strengthened resources, including a focus on alternatives to suspension, reduced timetables and expulsion. Students are not mere conglomerations of behaviours; their experiential and emotional worlds need engagement in a supportive fashion (Downes 2020).

The Finnish population based, longitudinal birth cohort study of 2551 boys from age 8 years to 16–20 years (Sourander et al., 2007) found that frequent perpetrators of bullying display high levels of psychiatric symptoms in childhood. Sourander et al. (2007) observed that

frequent bullying perpetrators with conduct and hyperactivity problems and not the bullying perpetrators *per se* are the ones at elevated risk for later criminality. Sourander et al.'s (2007) conclusion recognises the key role of early intervention multidisciplinary supports integrated into schools, 'mental health services should be an integrated and active part of the school environment, as effective prevention requires the shortest possible delay between detection and intervention' (p.550).

Our Educational Centre's Reports for the EU Commission on multidisciplinary teams (Downes 2011; Edwards & Downes 2013) highlight the need to go beyond 'passing on bits of the child' in a fragmented referral system and note the existence of multidisciplinary teams in and around schools in a range of European country examples. It is to be noted that Ireland is far from the Danish standard of one multidisciplinary team for each school. A policy goal needs to provide such teams for clusters of schools in a given area, prioritising areas of highest need and poverty. Direct frontline delivery multidisciplinary teams are needed in and around schools for supporting students at the indicated prevention level involving multifaceted complex needs and individual, intensive supports as alternatives to suspension, expulsion and reduced timetables.

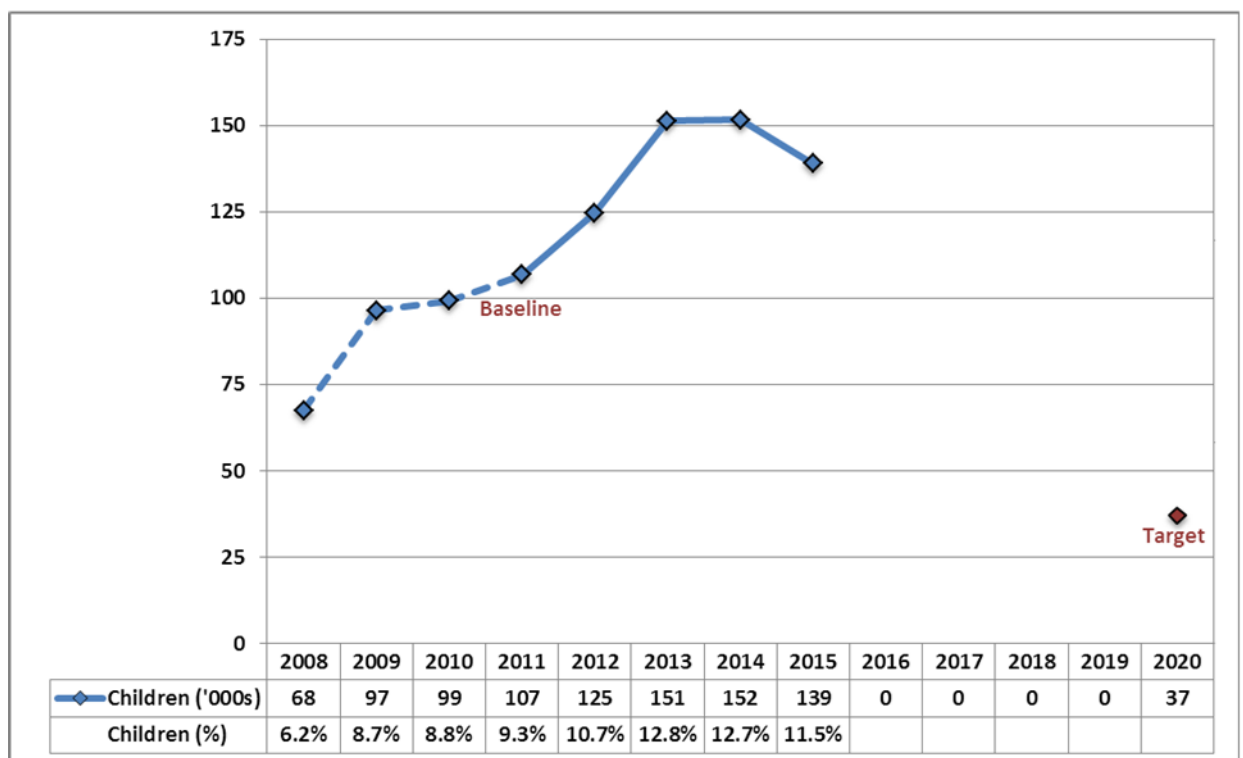### System Gap and Priority Issue 3: Adequate Hot Meals Provision in Schools

A major concern is the impact on child poverty of the economic crisis generated by Covid-19 and the series of lockdowns. There is a clear lesson to learn from the previous post-Celtic Tiger economic crash after the banking crisis, from 2008 onwards. Child poverty soared in Ireland then at the fastest rate in Europe between 2008 and 2011.

The AROPE indicator is defined as the share of the population in at least one of the following three conditions: 1) at risk of poverty, meaning below the poverty threshold, 2) in a situation of severe material deprivation, 3) living in a household with a very low work intensity. From 2008 to 2011, the AROPE for children rose in 21 EU Member States. According to Eurostat: the largest increases in the AROPE since 2008 were in Ireland (+11.0 percentage points (pp) up to 2010) and Latvia (+10.4pp). They were closely followed by Bulgaria (+7.6pp), Hungary (+6.2pp) and Estonia (+5.4pp). In other words, *uniquely in Europe, Ireland placed the burden of poverty in the last economic crash most substantially onto its children*. This was a clear policy choice and far from being an inevitable consequence of the last recession.

> It is no exaggeration to state that Irish society placed the burden of the last economic crash onto its children in disproportionate terms compared to any other society in the EU.

Equally concerning are the official child poverty statistics graph of the Irish Department of Social Protection which marks the further extensive acceleration of child poverty between 2011 and 2014.

Diagram 1: Progress on the child-specific social target

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Children ('000s)	68	97	99	107	125	151	152	139	0	0	0	0	37
Children (%)	6.2%	8.7%	8.8%	9.3%	10.7%	12.8%	12.7%	11.5%					

Source: SILC, various years

While there were some improvements in child poverty in 2017 and 2018 (Byrne & Treanor 2020), the question now arises as to whether history is going to repeat itself – or will the Irish State take proactive efforts to protect its children from the poverty impact of the recession induced by the pandemic ?

These concerns are being somewhat addressed in initial terms through the highly significant commitment of successive Irish governments in the recent and previous budget to expanding hot meals in schools to 35,000 more children in 2020 - and again in 2021 at an extra cost of

€5.5million - building on the initial almost 7,000 children receiving such hot meals the first year. This is hopefully evidence that a different national policy strategic response to the burden of poverty on our children will take place in this decade. The explicit commitment in the Programme for Government 2020 to "Continue to review and expand the roll-out of the new Hot School Meals initiative" (p.96) is a welcome and vitally important one. However, there is need for a much more substantial financial commitment to expand this across DEIS and other schools nationally so it is not simply a hit and miss approach depending on which schools can or cannot avail of this national scheme. Records released under the Freedom of Information Act show that the Department of Social Protection turned down 470 primary schools who applied to the scheme (McGuire 2019).

The related significant commitment in the Programme for Government to 'Work across government to address food poverty in children and ensure no child goes hungry' p.75 requires addressing also of the issue of hot meal provision for families in poverty and also outside of school times, such as holiday periods. This all needs to be part of a wider anti-child poverty national strategic approach to face up to this economic crisis in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Child poverty and the related problem of child hunger in school was exacerbated in an Irish context by policy failures regarding lack of hot meal provision in schools over many decades. These policy failures involved a diffusion of responsibility for food provision in schools across many Irish Government Departments leading to a complete fragmentation of strategic response at national level – a fragmentation recognised as being unacceptable by the Department of Education and Skills in the DEIS Social Inclusion in Education Action Plan 2017.

In response to the issue of child hunger prevention in schools, our Educational Disadvantage Centre, Institute of Education, DCU established a national working group in 2013 consisting of organisations including the INTO, IPPN, IMPACT (now Forsa), Barnardos, Healthy food for All, as well as subsequently the Children's Rights Alliance and Focus Ireland to examine and advocate for a national strategic response on this issue. It was also raised as a priority issue at the joint INTO/Educational Disadvantage DEIS Conference (December 2015) to inform the 2017 DEIS Action Plan.

This Hunger Prevention in Schools Working Group highlighted the need for hot meal provision in schools as part of a phased universalism, targeting areas most in need and

without the need for a stigmatising approach. It recognised the importance of providing hot meals for children and young people rather than establishing committees of professionals to make intrusive judgments into fluctuating levels of poverty of children and their families. Concern was also raised that the current Irish National Children's Policy Framework, Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (2014-2020) does not have a robust antipoverty focus.

Already during the Celtic Tiger, research by the Educational Disadvantage Centre found on average 18% of pupils in a range of Dublin DEIS schools either often, very often or every day too hungry to do their work in school, even in schools with breakfast clubs (Downes, Maunsell & Ivers 2006; Downes & Maunsell 2007). National surveys such as the HBSC 2014 study (Gavin et al. 2015) found that overall, 22% of children report ever going to school or to bed hungry because there was not enough food at home. These concerns are increasing in light of Covid 19 with a range of reports of increased families availing of food provision. The Hunger Prevention in Schools Strategy Group comprising of representatives from IPPN, INTO, NPC, FORSA/IMPACT, EDC DCU & Focus Ireland highlight the fact that 'children going hungry in Irish schools impacts upon their well-being, concentration and attention levels, learning and motivation, as well as heightening risk of aggressive behaviour in class and with peers'..

Hot meals in schools need to be a routine, unremarkable part of Irish school life, as they are in many European countries, such as Finland (Pellikka et al. 2019), France, UK, Lithuania, Slovakia, Spain, Slovenia, Austria etc (Polish Eurydice Unit 2016). Our Hunger Prevention in Schools Working Group also argue for the benefits of kitchens in schools, as part of constructivist learning methodology where children can be involved in learning to cook, as part of integrated cross-curricular approaches, including additionally a lifelong learning angle for parental involvement.

System Gap and Priority Issue 4: Expand DEIS School Funding Provision to Add New DEIS Schools without Cutting Existing DEIS Schools

Over the past decade Ireland is one of the countries in the EU with the sharpest decrease in early school leaving, going below our national ET2020 target of 8% and the EU target of

10% (Donlevy, Day, Andriescu & Downes 2019). We must ensure that the Covid 19 lockdown impact does not dismantle this progress.

Against the backdrop of the major child poverty increases since the 2008 economic crash, the highest increases in Europe between 2008 and 2011, the DEIS schools have demonstrated remarkable success in that time with regard to key educational outcomes. According to the ESRI 2015, attendance rates have improved in urban Band 1 primary schools, while the gap in retention rates between DEIS and non DEIS has narrowed significantly over time; from 22 per cent at senior cycle for the 1995 school entrant cohort to 10.5 per cent for the 2008 cohort. For DEIS urban primary, further improvements in reading and maths scores were found between 2010 and 2013 (Weir & Denner 2013). It can be concluded that the DEIS school system has provided a key societal glue to somewhat protect children from the excesses of the last economic crash, at least regarding educational outcomes. It is vital that this is recognised to protect, support and enhance DEIS schools against the backdrop of the current economic downturn in light of the pandemic.

The major successes of the DEIS 2005 strategy need to be borne in mind regarding any attempt to shift assessment criteria for DEIS designation, such as through the new DEIS allocation tool proposed in DEIS 2017. There is a lack of clarity regarding the policy purposes of the new proposed tool for assessing need for designation of a school's DEIS status, the HP (Haase Pratschke) index of deprivation (combined with DES Primary and Postprimary data supplied by schools). This is leading to growing concern across a large number of DEIS schools. Some of these concerns of a recent DEIS Primary Principals Advisory Group to the Educational Disadvantage Centre are summarised below.

It is clear that the DES does not intend to punish schools for their success. It is less clear whether a consequence of the new allocation model does precisely this, that schools may lose teachers and other resources if they attract a broader mix of pupils or if the scores of their pupils or educational attainment of local parents are developed. An unintended consequence of the proposed new model is that it risks a double bind for schools, where to receive the teachers and resources, pupils' levels of need, including educational need, will need to be high, while if a school then brings improvements to such need they may receive reduced staff and resources.

The following statement in the DEIS Plan 2017 is causing much concern: 'The new model may reveal that some schools currently included in DEIS have a level of disadvantage within

their school population much lower than that in some schools not included within DEIS. If this turns out to be the case, then we must consider whether it is fair that those schools continue receiving these additional resources, using resources that may be more fairly allocated to the schools with greater levels of disadvantage' (p.19). This appears to envisage cuts to a notable number of DEIS schools based on application of the new tool. This proposed shifting of resources rests on a highly questionable notion of fairness. Put simply, taking from the poor to give to the poorer is not a tenable ethic or public policy approach. It defies even the limited goal of equality of opportunity that is named as the very acronym and meaning of the original DEIS scheme. If the goal is to raise educational attainment to levels comparable to the rest of the population, this requires no cuts to teachers and other resources for the current schools in DEIS. The question arises whether this view of 'more fairly allocated' (p.19) implies an unacceptable vision of 'satisfactory disadvantage' rather than of ending inequality in education ? This raises the question whether even the goal of equal opportunity is intact if there are lower targets for DEIS schools than the rest of the population and this may soon bring lower resources through cuts to some schools ?

There is a lot of concern in many DEIS schools about the limited reference in the 2017 Action Plan to the so-called legacy posts, the ratios of 15:1 from schemes prior to DEIS. It is unclear if this proposed tool is to be a vehicle for cuts to these posts, despite former Minister Quinn's apology for seeking to do so previously. It is difficult to accept a fairness principle that envisages potential loss of resources for schools compared with a time the State was bankrupt or prior to the Celtic Tiger.

Is the consequence of this new allocation tool to basically pass the parcel of teaching staff and resources across schools ? Is it a rotation principle based on relative not real need ? Without clarification, it appears to envisage a zero sum game where for one new school to enter the DEIS scheme or increase resources within it, other schools must lose out. Is it a fixed pie that is proposed for this tool, with different slices as a notion of targeting need ?

A related concern is the vagueness on the additional financial commitment in DEIS 2017 which was of €5 million for 2017, plus €15 million for 2018. The original DEIS plan offered an additional *annual* investment of €40 million, on full implementation over a 5 year period. More clarity is needed over the envisaged funding of this scheme over the next 5 years. There is clearly a need to add more schools to the DEIS scheme to reflect the realities of the economic recession in light of the Covid 19 pandemic and lockdowns. However, this adding of schools must not be at the expense of existing DEIS schools.

With regard to the proposed use of this tool, a further difficulty mentioned by many DEIS schools is that it may have the unintended consequence of undermining stability in schools, to create a destabilising flux. How will much this more fluid, changeable system of resource allocation, depending on factors frequently outside the control of schools, impact on staff turnover, morale and permanent contracts ? There is a need to minimise not promote staff turnover in DEIS schools to promote a positive school climate and collaborative institutional culture. Many schools are concerned that this new system will entrench territoriality rather than collaboration across schools. Furthermore, how are parents to make informed decisions where to send their children to school, if the school resources may shift significantly over a 1-2 year period based on this tool ?

The following key interconnected principles are recommended to underpin the current DEIS strategy review regarding pupil-teacher ratio allocations in DEIS schools:

1a) A fundamental principle that of *no increase in pupil-teacher ratios in existing DEIS schools (including legacy posts with the 15:1 ratio)* in recognition of the key need *not to punish any DEIS schools for their gains/successes*

1b) The key principle of *progressive realisation*. Put simply, all DEIS schools are expected to be doing better in five years time in terms of both resources and outcomes than what they are doing today. This means no cuts in pupil-teacher ratio in any school, only extra resources.

2) *Sustainability* and *legitimate expectations* principles

The morale of a school that is key to a positive school climate that affects many desirable outcomes for marginalised children and young people would clearly be affected by increases in pupil-teacher ratios. This morale issue pertains not only to teachers but also to parents whose children are attending a school and their view of the school. Another aspect of these principles are the need for *continuity, clarity and certainty* about the sustainability of resources. Schools have a legitimate expectation of continuity and of at the very least not a worsening of supports. This is especially the case given its successes against the backdrop of the highest increases of child poverty in Europe in Ireland between 2008 and 2011 (Eurostat)

3a) Recognition of the *empirically proven success of DEIS schools*, *including the DEIS schools with legacy posts*. This has been through the critical mass of supports, a pivotal feature of which is the 15:1 ratio. Given the proven track record of success of DEIS schools,

including DEIS schools with legacy posts, it is *vital not to unravel an organic system of interconnected supports through application of a new tool*.

3b) Given the proven track record of success, it is *not justifiable to start from a first principles basis* of redesigning the whole system based on the Trutz Haase index.

4) A principle of interventions of *sufficient intensity to bring change*. This is a dimension of the 15:1 ratio at the junior end with improvements on the 20:1 at the senior end. All junior end settings in DEIS need to be 15:1

5) The Trutz Haase index tool may be a helpful way of identifying new schools' levels of need to join DEIS rather than for existing DEIS and DEIS legacy positions in schools. A strength of this is that it examines streets and not simply areas. However, even used in this limited way, there are still a number of concerns with this as an instrument to be used:
- it is far from evident that the most marginalised groups give input into this data
- the data is already dated from the census
- some areas are fast changing, including children in transient accommodation
- the index does not address key dimensions of poverty and social inclusion, such as mental health needs, both at clinical levels and at prior levels of risk from intergenerational poverty, as well as levels of crime in an area, gangland issues or parents in prison
- the role of grandparents is not directly addressed, which is often key in educational contexts of intergenerational poverty
- the index tool does not distinguish between current poverty and the cumulative effects of persistent poverty over a child's life; cumulative effects of poverty are associated with more detrimental educational outcomes (Perkins 2018).

System Gap and Priority Issue 5: A National Strategic Commitment to the Arts for Social Inclusion, involving Afterschool Services for Marginalised Groups[1]

There is currently no Arts and social inclusion in education strategy at national level. (IMPACT DEIS Review submission 2015). The EU COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on policies to reduce early school leaving (2011) recognises

'2.2 INTERVENTION POLICIES aim to avoid early school leaving…

(5) Extra-curricular activities after and outside school and artistic, cultural and sport activities, which can raise the self-esteem of pupils at risk and increase their resilience against difficulties in their learning'.

Within Ireland, the arts are categorized with play, recreation and sports in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (DCYA, 2014). In poverty and social inclusion policy, they are very rarely mentioned. The arts are discussed once in the current DEIS Plan (DES, 2017) within the section relating to STEM and with a view to developing entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation. The current DEIS Plan (DES, 2017), unlike its predecessor from 2005, at least explicitly mentions the arts and acknowledges that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds often have limited experience of accessing the arts (p.43). However, responsibility is deferred to the Arts Council in the form of implementation of the Arts in Education Charter (DAHG, 2013) and the roll out of the Creative Ireland programme. Although the Arts in Education Charter (DAHG, 2013) does focus on forging partnerships between outside art agencies and schools, something which Bamford (2009) found characterised quality arts education provision, it does not specifically address the issue of unequal access within the document itself – or emphasise the distinctive importance of the arts for engaging marginalised communities.

DEIS schools that are currently providing afterschool arts activities are mainly funding them through the School Completion Programme (Smyth, 2016). Recent decrease in funding for this programme and the restructuring of the methods of targeting measures would need to be reviewed in order to ensure equality of access to quality arts education and afterschool provision.

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[1] Thanks especially to Orla Doyle for her research work on this subsection

Catterall (2009) found correlation between family income and education levels and whether children had high or low levels of involvement in the arts. They found the probability of being highly involved was almost twice as high for students from economically advantaged families and similarly students from economically marginalised families were twice as likely to have low levels of involvement in the arts (p.9). Caterall (2009) attributes this to unequal access to arts experiences depending on family income. In the Irish context, Smyth (2016) found that similar differences occurred with regard to access to the arts, levels of engagement with cultural activities and socioeconomic status. A key contribution of the arts is that it overcomes fear of failure as there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer (Ivers, McLoughlin & Downes 2010).

Students engaged in quality arts education have been shown to develop significantly in terms of: emotional awareness, self-confidence, effort, adjustment, motivation, imagination, creativity, concentration, collaboration, self-regulation, reflection, empathy, and communication (Theodotou, 2019; Ros-Morente et al., 2019; Borovica, 2020; Mellor, 2013; Catterall, 2009; Bamford, 2009). Aside from the individualised benefits, the arts also promote a sense of community through shared goals (Murphy, 2007), joint effort (Ros-Morente et al, 2019), creating a sense of belonging (Mellor, 2013) and by the relationships that are built through the creative process (Bamford, 2009).

Being highly involved in the arts has also shown to have substantial benefits, in particular for students deemed to be economically marginalised, by increasing levels of achievement, improving attitudes towards learning and decreasing anti-social behaviours (Catterall, 2009). In creating a different entry point to thinking, learning and knowing the arts can have the potential to connect with more students in more meaningful ways.

> The Arts can engage a wide cohort of students who are otherwise disaffected from the school system.

In their study of young people who participated in group music-making activities, Ros-Morente et al. (2019) found that musicians scored significantly higher than non-musicians in Emotional Awareness. Similarly, Bamford (2009) argues that "the arts directly contribute to positive self-perceptions and identity" (p.20) which correlates with the increase in self-awareness, self-reflection and meta-cognition that Mellor (2013) found in their research with members of singing groups. Ros-Morente et al. (2019) also saw a strengthening in areas of self-perception, self-confidence and self-management in their musician participants.

The arts in afterschool settings needs to be part of a community strategy for overcoming prejudice through a) intergroup contact on b) structured cooperative tasks, as well as through sports and engagement with nature. Stronger investment in afterschool arts services is a key strategic limb to help inclusion of, for example, Travellers and Roma.

Traditionally in classrooms, methods of instruction are language heavy and thus Catterall (2009) argues for education through the arts as they 'provide children with access to subject matter and ways of thinking, children who otherwise may be short-changed in a classroom dominated by language centered or didactic methods of instruction' (p.36). In their research, Theodotou (2019) noted improvement in the children's communication skills following involvement in child-led arts projects, which they attributed to regular discussions and opportunities for interaction at every step of the artistic process.

Arts education is particularly important for students who may be marginalized, in the education system or socially. Downes, Nairz-Wirth & Rusinaite (2017) highlight the potential of the arts to engage such marginalized students as they employ different ways of thinking; they offer an alternative form of communication; the issues explored may be seen as more relevant; students often gain a sense of accomplishment they do not experience in other subject areas (p.40). It is clear that an acknowledgement of the benefits of arts education and a commitment to raising its value within national policy is needed from policy makers with regard to social inclusion in education.

System Gap and Priority Issue 6: A National Strategic Policy to recognise children's geographies and support participatory outdoor learning for marginalised communities

 'Children's geographies' is the study of places and spaces of children's lives, characterised experientially, politically and ethically (Holloway and Valentine, 2000). It includes children real, imagined and online worlds, local through to global. It recognises children as intrinsic to the life of their local environments (Bourke, 2017). 'Participatory outdoor learning' refers to a range of learning in and through the most local of these worlds, the locality. This characterised by children having the opportunity to be supported by educators to be:

- Engaged in decisions about the content and approaches of their learning through enquiry approaches to learning, where interests and curiosities are the starting point for learning (Roberts, 2013; Pike, 2016);

- Presented with content that is relevant but that takes them beyond their everyday experiences to increase their capabilities (Catling, 2003; Young and Lambert, 2012);

- Facilitated in using built and natural local places as a source of both leisure and learning (Nairn, et al.,2003; Pike, 2011);

- Learning through interactions with local places and people (Heffron and Downs, 2012; Pike, 2016);

- Enabled to understand, consider and act positively for the sustainable future of their communities (Percy-Smith, 2010; Shin and Bednarz, 2019).

There is currently a system gap in Ireland the recognition of children's geographies and their potential for participatory outdoor learning in their localities. Despite policy and curriculum statements, children's opportunities in their localities are often thwarted. Children have the potential to play, learn and participate fully in their localities, if adults recognise their agency and action as a force for enriching experiences for the children and for the good of communities. This section outlines the theoretical, research and practice rationales for enabling children participatory outdoor learning.

Within schools and in non-formal education settings children's localities provides a wealth of opportunities for participatory outdoor learning. These ideas are not new, as such opportunities are embedded in the curriculum (CnB, 1971; DES/NCCA, 1999). For example, the Primary School Curriculum introduction has a number of key principles that embrace participatory learning, including "the child is an active agent in his or her learning" and

"the child's immediate environment provides the context for learning" (DES/NCCA, 1999, p.8). The curriculum also recognises the quality of learning that occurs outside: "a rich experience of different aspects of the curriculum outside the classroom adds enormously to the relevance and effectiveness of children's learning"(Primary School Curriculum Introduction, 1999, p.15).

The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (DCYA, 2015), also recognises the importance of the immediate locality, as a source of participation, as it "focuses on the everyday lives of children and young people and the places and spaces in which they are entitled to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives" and specifically states that "children and young people will have a voice in decisions made in their local communities" (DCYA, 2018, p.3). The limited evidence on these essential aspects of the curriculum, suggest these aspects on children's learning may not be embraced by educators, and this includes DEIS settings (Pike, 2006; Cummins, 2008).

Over time there has been rapid development of research in children's geographies, with a clear focus in research on the influence of politics, social structures and the environment over children's lives, as well as children's abilities to act within restrictions of time and space (Aitken, 2018). Generally, research is conducted with the assumption that children's experiences are spatially constructed (Kraftl, Horton, and Tucker, 2012) and that children's lives are impacted by the many dimensions of place, including poverty (Templeton, 2020). In Ireland we know that marginalisation is strongly associated with children spending less time outside and more on sedentary, indoor activity (Growing Up in Ireland, 2011). We also know that children's use of mobile phones can have both positive (Pike, 2020) and negative impacts on their outdoor time (Dempsey, Lyons & McCoy, 2020) and that time outdoors reduces their screen time during and after activity (Mutz, Müller & Göring, 2019).

However we know there is evidence of some schools drawing on the locality and community with extremely positive results (Pike, 2016). Also that when adults' understandings of outdoor play and learning increased, so is the quality of design and use of the outdoor space (CRN, 2018). This is further enhances with the combination of children's participation in space making and adult appreciation of the importance of outdoor space for learning. Such findings were found repeatedly throughout the research collected together for the 2018

Children Research Network journal, focusing largely on marginalised children and the outdoors (CRN, 2018), with the editorial summarising:

"It remains the case that in relation to national policy it does seem children are only considered in times of needs, such as early childhood, mental health and early school leaving. Reference to children in their everyday situations, particularly in relation to their roles in decision making about their lives in their communities and schools is far less. This lack of children's voice, agency and action includes their role in decision making about their local environments" (CRN, 2018)

Such research into children's use of the outdoors provides an important insight into the diversity and depth of children's lives, and how their socio-economic situations impact on their experiences (Aitken, 2018). Such research shows the type of actions that could arise if the policy gap in relation to participatory outdoor learning can be rectified. International research exploring children's perceptions of and experiences in their local places has found they use and value a range of places (Tunstall, Tapsell and House, 2004; Pike, 2011; Nairn, 2003): those that are available, those that they like, and those where they can be with friends or perhaps alone (Chawla, 2002; Schlemper, et al., 2018). They appreciate the differing uses and views of them, and may have gained first-hand appreciation of local processes, such as changes in land use and the creation of new features (Pike, 2011).

Across decades of research it is evident that the range of experiences they have in their locality are particularly important to children, including their current wellbeing, self-esteem and identity (Aitken, 2018). Children's stories of local places, "serve as a means to understanding a sense of exclusion that individuals or groups may feel regarding certain spaces" (Schlemper, et al., 2018, p.607). Research in Ireland reveals that children's stories of places are positive about their localities, even where there are social issues. However children attending DEIS schools are more likely to be affected by excessive noise, graffiti and vandalism (Pike, 2011). These issues have a range of impacts from lack of sleep to a feeling of not being safe. Overall, however children value their local communities and evidence shows that children are able and willing to engage in learning for local participation and action for their local communities and environments (Barratt-Hacking, Barrett & Scott, 2007; Austin, 2010; Percy-Smith, 2010; Schlemper et al., 2018). However, children living in marginalised communities, are made 'invisible' as a result of limited community participation

in urban planning (Percy-Smith, 2010; Alarasi, Martinez and Amer, 2016). The use of local outdoor spaces can help support children to develop as ethical and engaged citizens. Pike explored examples of this with children in primary schools in Finglas and Coolock, with research revealing children increased their sense of place and belonging, as well as knowledge of their local community through carrying our action projects (Pike, 2016; Pike 2020).

This type of learning is enhanced where children are given the opportunity for critical enquiry within which they can consider alternative narratives for the future which generate "conditions in which people and life can flourish" (Scoffham, 2020, p. 1). Such approaches recognise the need to learn about the world, "in all its complexity, plurality, uncertainty, contingency and (unfortunately) severe levels of inequality, in order to enlarge possibilities for thinking and living together in a finite planet that is already in crisis" (Andreotti, 2013, p. 12). Therefore, the combination of using the locality for learning has the potential to provide opportunities for enhanced community participation for young people (Bourke, 2017; CRN, 2018; Pike, 2020). And the growing body of research in Ireland backs this up, whether in large scale national studies or smaller scale qualitative projects. All of it reveals the agency of the young citizens in DEIS settings to be active, creative and learned in their local outdoor environments.

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