

Educational Research Centre
MEETING OF THE BOARD
5th March 2018

A meeting of the Board of the Educational Research Centre (ERC), was held on March 5th 2018 at the offices of the organisation.

Board Members Present:

~~Edward Murtagh (EM), Chairperson; Denise Burns (DB); Pauric Travers (PT); Jude Cosgrove (JC);~~

In Attendance:

Peter Archer (PA), Anne Comey (AC) who took the minutes

Absent: Michael Martin (MM)

Counsel Present: N/A

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3.15 pm.

The CEO reminded the Board that the meeting of February 28th 2018 had to be postponed due to the weather conditions and that consequently Michael Martin could not attend the Board meeting on the day.

Board members had the opportunity to meet without the presence of members of the executive before the start of the ARC meeting.

The Agenda was adopted (Appendix I).

1. Minutes BMin 1 – 0118

The Chair noted that the minutes of the last meeting were adopted.

2. Matters arising from previous minutes

Potential payroll outsourcing solutions were considered by the Board. Although the independence of the Board would be best served by outsourcing the services to a third party, the issue of pensions renders the solution of DCU continuing to supply payroll services desirable. The Board agreed that as part of the next step to the transition agreement, the establishment of an SLA with DCU for the provision of such services would be welcome. The SLA would have to be very specific about the expectations of the ERC and should consider this as a paid service. The Board welcome the proposal of the DES to send a letter to DCU to clarify the current situation and to try to provide a temporary solution to the ongoing problems.

Any SLA with DCU would require a review after 12 months.

Constant delays in the CEO recruitment are affecting development of a strategic plan. The Board discussed the staffing part of the plan and agrees that the ERC needs more senior staff and a complete review of the current staffing structure.

The ERC would benefit from a comparison per project of the staffing of similar organisations worldwide to assess whether the current staffing is adequate. The increasing complexity of projects was highlighted by the CEO as well as the recurring issue of getting and retaining qualified staff.

The lack of long service increments in some of the grades was noted, as well as the lack of promotion opportunities. It was however recognised that the latter is not unusual in smaller organisations and that there is little to be done about this particular issue.

The Board asked that the current staffing be listed against the workplan to highlight any deficiencies.

It was agreed that the Board would review the current staffing document and address it as a matter of priority to deal with the immediate issues and that a consultant would be hired to carry out a review of the staffing need for the ERC as a five year plan.

The Chair asked that staffing remain on the Agenda until further notice.

The Board noted that sanction had been issued on February 21st for 2 temporary Research Assistant contracts to be made permanent (remain within FTE numbers), 1 AP position and provided the budget allowed it, an additional Research Fellow.

12. AOB

There was no other business.

13. CEO Recruitment

PA and JC withdrew from the meeting at this point.

The Chair confirmed that the CEO interviews initially planned for March 1st had to be rescheduled as one of the panel members was stranded in Brussels as a consequence of the weather conditions.

The Chair confirmed the selected candidates and clarified the selection process for the members of the Board.

The Chair issued a letter to the CEO to extend his current work situation.

*Pamela J. Smith
25 Apr. 2018*

1. We have been working with the DCU Institute of Education on a joint bid for a large longitudinal study of children's experience of primary schooling in Ireland in response to a Request for Tender (RFT) issued by the NCCA in January. Submission of bid is happening today (February 28).
2. The possibility of Irish participation in the International Civics and Citizenship Education (ICCS) in 2022 is being discussed with the DES. Although no decision has been made, Lauren Kavanagh will attend a planning meeting in March.
3. The Government has confirmed to the OECD that Ireland will take part in the next cycle of PIAAC. It is likely that this will be managed by the CSO but the DES seems to enlist some involvement from the Centre, perhaps through an advisory committee and membership of the Board of Participating Countries.
4. Progress has been made, in cooperation with ETS, on proposals for exploration of the potential of log-file analysis in the context of PISA (as reported to a previous Board meeting, Caroline made a presentation on this to a PGB meeting in November 2017). What is envisaged now is a symposium in Princeton in December of this year, followed by a workshop in Ireland in March or April of 2019.
5. Fieldwork for the main study of the current cycle of PISA starts this week.
6. Data collection for the standardisation of the revised reading and mathematics will commence shortly.
7. The governance meeting with the DES, that had been scheduled for January 17, took place on February 21 (report under subsequent agenda items).
8. The 2017 Protected Disclosure report is available on the ERC website and the return is Nil.