



The Future Starts Here Every Day

Essential planning for Education in 21st century Ireland

Educate Together Business Plan 2007-2009



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Acknowledgments

Educare Together would like to thank the many people who have contributed advice, time, effort and knowledge to the drawing up and production of this plan. The planning process has involved many interviews and research workshops. We are particularly grateful to our partners in education and a wide range of public officials who have given their time so generously for this purpose.

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Many members of Educare Together school communities attended workshops to assist the planning process, contributed comments and suggestions and participated in consultative meetings to finalise the plan. Many friends and supporters reviewed our ideas and made important suggestions. Without this volunteer input, the plan could not have been completed.

In particular, we would like to acknowledge the hard work of the planning team:

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All documents have to be pulled together into a creative design, for this we are very grateful for the outstanding work of Derek Kennedy and Slickfish Design.

Educare Together, March 2007

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Chairperson's Foreword

In the period since Educate Together's last Strategy Statement we have seen major economic, demographic and cultural changes in Ireland, so as a network committed to a better and more egalitarian society, we have a responsibility to periodically re-examine our core principles and strategies to ensure that our objectives remain valid and relevant in changing circumstances.

The process we have undertaken is described elsewhere in this document – suffice it to say that it has been intensive and very rigorous and I would like to thank all of those from within and without the sector who have contributed to the process, as well as Prospectus who have helped us distil the many hours of discussions and healthy debate into the present document. Having considered from first principles the sort of society we would like our children to grow up in, this Strategy Statement and Business Plan examines what actions we should take on foot of this analysis. Inevitably this involves making choices and compromises, juggling options against available resources.

The vision we have set ourselves is grounded in the importance of making a difference for others irrespective of belief system, race, ethnicity, class, culture, gender, language, lifestyle or ability. It is a tribute to the perceptiveness of the founders of Educate Together that their vision remains valid and relevant today. Our mission poses challenges for Educate Together at both national and local level, but it is vital that we always remain focussed on making a difference for the child in the classroom, so that our efforts always support the work of the teacher in the classroom and the principal in the school.

In looking at the various strategic options open to us, we have consciously sought to build on the huge amounts of professional and volunteer energy and enthusiasm available in the network. We believe that there is a wealth of experience within the Educate Together community that can be centrally captured and reflected back to members to the benefit of all. Over the past five years, we have seen much expansion in our network, although not enough to keep pace with demand, and we have learned anew the importance of safe-guarding our professional staff and volunteer enthusiasts if we are to maintain the quality of education delivered in our schools. Over the period of this Business Plan, we see it as vitally important to invest more time and resources into sustaining our front-line teachers and principals and the boards and local patrons supporting them.

But if we are to act locally, we must also think globally, and at this time of change in society, we must remain open to taking new strategic initiatives when opportunities present themselves. This strategy statement and business plan identifies a number of such opportunities which can be pursued as resources become available, and we are confident that given the strength and validity of our vision that we will find strategic partners interested in working with us as agents for change in Irish education. As a democratic, membership-driven organisation the pace and order in which we pursue these various strategies will, of course, always be subject to the scrutiny and priorities of our members. The present plan sets out a very clear set of priorities and a framework for making decisions going forward. I commend it to you.

David Denny

Chairperson, Educate Together, March 2007

Executive Summary

Educate Together undertook a detailed and robust review of its operations during the summer of 2006. This review has been undertaken by the directors, staff, and volunteers of Educate Together and has been assisted by professional consultants. This document is the result of this process.

The plan covers the following areas:

- The context in which we intend to build a network of 400 excellent Educate Together schools
- Our options in addressing this objective
- An examination of each option in detail
- Our operational plans for the next three years.

All business plans are works in progress. If used correctly, they drive and are grown by the thinking and work of a dynamic organisation. This one is no exception. We look forward to implementing it with our staff, supporters and partners.

Context

In Ireland today, there is an encouraging environment for the substantial growth of a network of Educate Together Model schools. Our study showed key social factors that can sustain this growth, attract potential partners for our progress and drive positive changes in State policy and planning.

COURAGE AND CONFIDENCE

Our analysis shows that Educate Together should be confident and courageous in advancing its model of education in Ireland. It should build partnerships with other providers and remain focussed on its central mission to ensure that those who seek its model of education can enjoy it in excellent schools.

EDUCATE TOGETHER'S RESOURCES

The plan is based on a careful and detailed analysis of the resources available to Educate Together. The organisation's income has significantly increased over recent years, but this has not kept pace with the cost of providing adequate professional services in the increasingly complex business of running schools.

During the same period, Educate Together has dramatically increased the size of its network. Whilst there have been some improvements, the government has neither delivered on promises of improved provision of new school buildings nor has it brought forward a properly funding system for school opening. This has resulted in escalating costs for new school promoters. Consequently, Educate Together's resources have become over-stretched and with this has emerged a danger to the cohesion of the network as a whole.

GOVERNMENT POLICY CHANGE REQUIRED

Our review has clearly shown that Educate Together cannot efficiently 'scale up' without major changes to the State's regulations governing the provision of buildings for new schools and support for the school opening process.



DELIVERING HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES

Further growth of the network can only take place if the Educate Together schools retain high-quality support from their national organisation, especially in their early years and in areas of ethos, curriculum, leadership and community building. The quality of the Educate Together Model or 'brand' must be maintained as the network expands. A major objective of this plan is to deliver enhanced levels of services to Educate Together schools. This will strengthen the network, build its reputation, garner friends and alliances and bring increased resources.

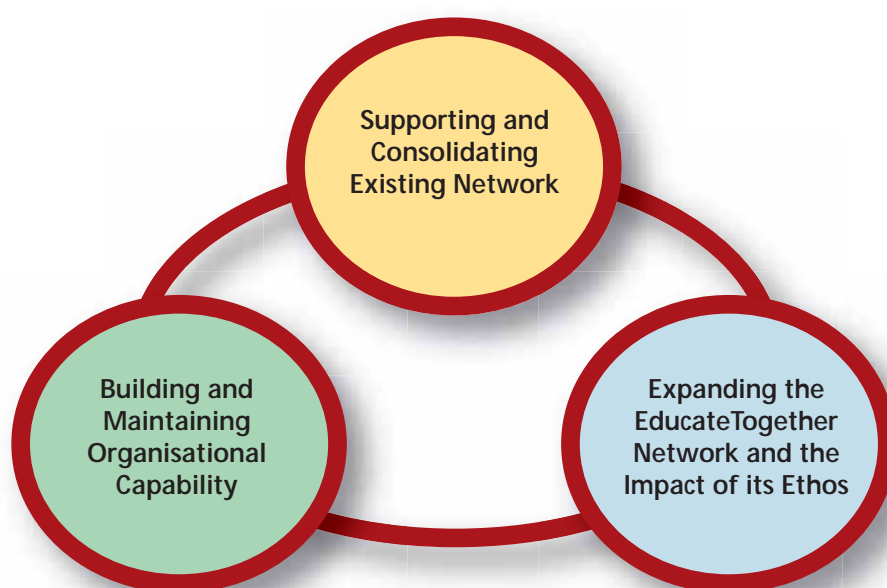
Goals

This plan sets out specific targets for Educate Together in the long, medium and short terms.

Long Term
There will be sufficient Educate Together Model schools to allow everyone in the country to have access to such a school within a 30-minute commute. Current estimates indicate the need for approximately 400 schools. This network will be configured in clusters with enhanced support services and be integrated with complementary pre-school and second-level provision.
10 Years
There will be an Educate Together Model primary school in every urban area with a population greater than 20,000 or with growth of more than 2,500 people since the last census. The Educate Together network will be configured in clusters through which enhanced support services will be delivered. In at least three clusters there will be integration programmes with pre-school and second-level provision.
5 Years
Educate Together schools are of perceived high quality. There will be a major improvement in State policy towards new schools. There will be at least 50 Educate Together primary schools, 1 pilot Educate Together Model second-level school and a feasibility study completed for the establishment of Educate Together Model pre-schools.

Areas of Focus

The plan sets out three clear areas of focus for the activity of the organisation.



Strategic Objectives

Being based on a realistic analysis of Educare Together's current resources, the plan identifies those objectives that can be achieved within current income and fundraising projections for the period 2007-2009. It also identifies a set of exciting priority options that can be achieved if and when additional funding becomes available.

Core Objectives 2007-2009

1.	Develop a full training programme for members of Educare Together school Boards of Management.
2.	Strengthen Educare Together's role in supporting the leadership and management of its schools.
3.	Train all teachers in the Educare Together network in the 'Learn Together' ethical education curriculum.
4.	Work with the Department of Education and Science and other partners to bring forward an efficient system of new primary school opening.
5.	Pursue potential partnerships with other providers with the view to increase the number of Educare Together Model schools.
6.	Work with the Department of Education and Science and the Colleges of Education to introduce the 'Learn Together' ethical education curriculum as a formal element of all teacher education.
7.	Provide appropriate and high quality administrative, logistical and other support services and functions for the Educare Together organisation.
8.	Develop and implement focused and aligned communication, PR and lobbying strategies to enable the achievement of these objectives.
9.	Develop and implement a robust fundraising strategy so that these objectives can be achieved.

The business planning process showed that these strategic objectives can be achieved within the current human and financial resources of the organisation.

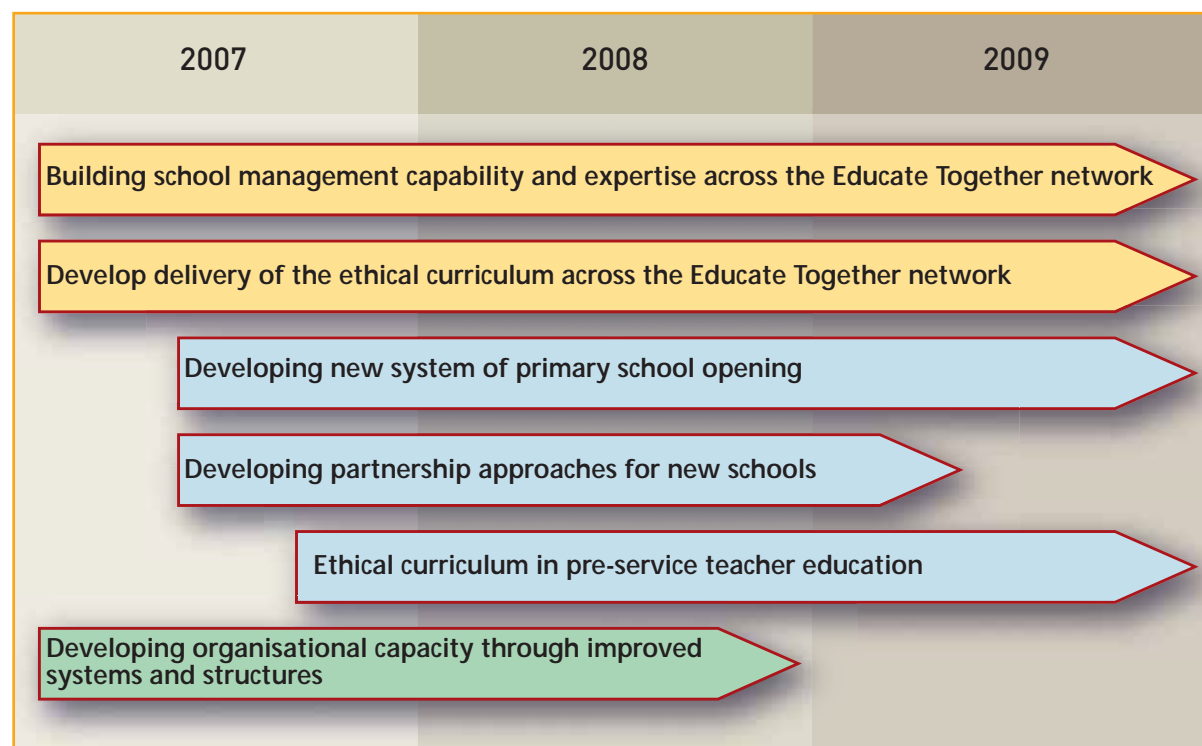
Priority Options

The plan also identifies a set of exciting priority options that can be achieved if and when additional funding becomes available to the organisation. These options are those programmes that will accelerate Educare Together's progress to achieve its goals. We are actively seeking supporters and investors to assist us in developing these programmes.

Programme	Outline Cost
10. Enhanced School Support Programme	€200,000 p.a.
11. Enhanced Ethical Curriculum Development	€150,000 p.a.
12. Ethos Assessment Tool for Schools	€50,000 p.a.
13. Enhanced System of Primary School Opening	€75,000 p.a.
14. Piloting the Educare Together Ethos at Second-level	€350,000 p.a. (5 years)
15. Develop Transformation Model for Schools	€10,000 p.a.
16. Membership Promotion (expanding the network)	€10,000 p.a.
17. Pre-school and After-school Facilities	€50,000 p.a.
18. Enhanced Advocacy & Lobbying Package	€50,000 p.a.
19. Enhanced Communications Package	€60,000 p.a.
20. Research Programme	€50,000 p.a.

Operational Plan

A full set of key performance indicators, progress benchmarks and cost estimates are provided for each of the Core Objectives. This will provide a robust framework, which will be used by our board to monitor progress. This information will be made available to our membership and supporters.



Critical Factors for Success

This strategy sets out realistic and attainable targets for Educate Together during the next three years. In order for this strategy to be effectively implemented and to achieve the strategic objectives, a number of critical success factors have been identified:

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication within the organisation Time and effort (staff and volunteers) Organisational structures Governance and management Evaluation, monitoring and review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External communications Funding and fundraising Stakeholder relationship management

Appeal for Support

The implementation of this plan over the next three years will position Educate Together for major development and growth. Strengthening the Educate Together Model of education and making it widely available throughout Ireland will make a real difference for future generations. This plan will allow us to play our part in ensuring that Ireland's future social space will be one of equality, respect and stimulating engagement of a diverse populace. The staff, directors and members of Educate Together are committed to this task and we invite you to join us in this exciting work.

Paul Rowe, CEO, Educate Together

Introduction and Background

Background to Education in Ireland

Education is key to Ireland's future social and economic prosperity.

ECONOMY

We are a small open economy dependent on a global trading environment. In the past 10 years, we have made great strides forward, generating prosperity and a wide range of employment opportunities. We are finding our place in a diverse Europe and world. After many years of emigration and decline, our economic future is being built on an inward flow of new workers and their families.

DIVERSITY AND CONFIDENCE

Ireland is now a vibrant, confident place. People of many cultural backgrounds work and live in our rapidly expanding towns and cities. A new social landscape is developing which is diverse, modern, demanding of high-standards and outward looking.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Our social infrastructure must promptly catch up with the best world standards and after a century of restricted budgets, we now have the resources to plan and build for a bright future. However, despite some progress, there still exist deep structural inequalities within society and many issues to address.

ROLE OF EDUCATION

Our education system must rise to meet the challenges of a diverse modern country. It must be configured to ensure equality of access and participation for all. It must equip the next generation with the skills and knowledge that they will need to enjoy a happy and productive life in this exciting multi-cultural environment.

STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION AND THE NEEDS OF A DIVERSE SOCIETY

For many historical reasons, Irish education has been overwhelmingly owned and controlled by religious bodies. Now there is an increasing demand from parents all over the country for an alternative to faith-based schools. Internationally, there is much evidence to show that systems that do not provide a balanced choice between faith and non faith-based schools cannot meet emerging social demand. Increasingly in Ireland, parents, teachers and educationalists see that it is an educational imperative to prepare the next generation for a world of diversity that was unimaginable to their parents. There are indeed significant human rights and legal issues in a situation in which increasing numbers of families are unable to access schools in which their beliefs, cultural and ethical persuasions are treated equally.

LACK OF STATE INITIATIVE AND SUPPORT

Ireland has no system for the State to take the initiative in providing new schools for a growing and diverse population. At a time when it is no longer appropriate for the traditional religious providers to exclusively perform this role, it has fallen to small charities like Educate Together to take on this task.



At the same time, there has been a huge increase in the legislative, financial and regulatory burden on the management of primary schools in Ireland. This role is carried out by volunteer Boards of Management who have to work with little or no State support. This lack of State initiative and support is a key factor restraining the efficiency of the system as a whole.

In Ireland today, there are approximately 3,200 State funded primary (National) schools. 98% of these are privately owned and controlled by religious bodies (93% Catholic, 6% Protestant, one Jewish and two Muslim). There are 163 Gaelscoileanna and 41 Educate Together schools. The total pupil population is approximately 425,000. After many years of decline this school going population is now increasing – especially in urban areas.

This current Business Plan aims to chart out a path in which Educate Together can play its full part in this process of development and reform.

Educate Together

Educate Together is a small educational charity that has emerged in Ireland over the past 30 years. It has developed a model of education management that encompasses a philosophy and curriculum that is inclusive of all learners irrespective of belief system, race, ethnicity, class, culture, gender, language, lifestyle and ability. It is based on human-rights concepts, promotes democratic participation, active citizenship, personal development and respect for diversity. It is an inclusive, inter-cultural and inter-faith model of education that has evolved to meet the needs of 21st century Ireland.

This model has gradually become more and more popular. It has been well tested and since 2000, the network has been one of the fastest growing in Irish education. In the past few years, Educate Together has struggled to develop an appropriate response to this escalating demand. Its resources at national level have consistently lagged behind those needed to properly provide the number of Educate Together schools that modern Irish society is demanding.

THE ORGANISATIONAL REALITY

Educate Together maintains a small office in Dublin with a current full-time staff compliment of 4. In 2006, it operated on an annual budget of approximately €450,000, the majority of which was raised through private donations. It had a membership of 41 schools, with 450 teachers, 7,500 children and approximately 10,000 parents.

Educate Together represents this network of schools on major policy negotiations with the Department of Education and Science (DES) and with the media. Educate Together develops and trains teachers to deliver its ethical education curriculum (the “Learn Together” curriculum). It provides a School Support Service for all its established schools and provides a Development Service to all Educate Together schools from their first start up meeting until the time that they are fully established in a permanent building.

Since 2000, Educate Together has opened 23 new schools. 80% of which have been in areas of rapid housing growth. All of these schools have encountered major difficulties with accommodation due to inadequate State planning and timely action. Only one of these schools has a permanent building and there are now 26 (or 62%) of Educate Together schools still in temporary accommodation – mainly prefabs.

The Educate Together Model

The Educate Together Model is based on the following principles:

The ‘Multi-denominational’ Principle: All children have equal right of access to Educate Together schools. Children of all social and cultural groups and of all religious and non-religious backgrounds are equally respected.

The Co-education Principle: All children are encouraged to fulfil their potential in a school setting that is committed to equal opportunities for girls and boys

The Child-centred Principle: The schools promote a child-centred approach to the curriculum in which the teacher guides and facilitates the child's learning through both formal and informal methods, while encouraging the child to be an active participant in their own learning. This principle obliges the Board of Management of a school to take decisions primarily based on the broad educational and developmental needs of pupils over and above other external factors.

The Democratic Principle: School patrons and boards are committed to work in such a way as to embrace the input of parents, teachers, supporters and children and to enable the highest level of participation and respectful partnership.

This model places the responsibility on the school to ensure that all learners are able to learn in atmosphere of equality and respect and to positively interact with others of different cultures and beliefs. It places the responsibility for faith formation on the family and faith community. In this model, schools facilitate any group of parents who so wish to operate religious formation classes outside the school hours. This is an “opt-in” facility that avoids placing any pressure on families or children to participate in any specific faith formation.

These principles define the Educare Together “ethos”. To ensure that this ethos is lived out in such a school, a curriculum with guaranteed time in the teaching programme must be in place. In the member schools of Educare Together, such curricula have been developed over many years and the organisation has recently published its ethical education curriculum - “The Learn Together Curriculum”.

Whilst the elements above define the Educare Together Model, it is a fundamental belief of this document that these elements can be implemented by other educational providers and that Educare Together should be looking to build partnerships in Irish education to ensure that the choice of this type of education is available to all.

Educare Together believes that this model of education is ideally matched to the needs of modern Ireland. In particular, it meets the overriding imperative to empower future generations with the attitudes and skills to work and live in harmony with those of differing faiths and cultures.

In the context of this document, the term “Educare Together Model” refers to educational facilities that encapsulate the principles defined above. It is used in this document to include schools currently outside the membership of Educare Together that may operate according to these principles.

The Business Planning Process

This plan was developed during the three-month period from June to August 2006; Educare Together undertook an intensive strategy development and business planning process with the support of Prospectus Strategy Consultants. The process involved a consultation phase where we obtained the views of many stakeholders both within the Educare Together network and across the wider national education environment. In developing the business plan, we brought together the knowledge and experience of people across the Educare Together network and followed the four stages shown in the diagram below.



Vision, Mission and Values

Educate Together's Vision

We are working towards an Ireland in which all people have access to an excellent education that is inclusive of all, irrespective of belief system, race, ethnicity, class, culture, gender, language, lifestyle and ability.

Mission

Educate Together will be an agent for change in the Irish State Education system seeking to ensure that parents have the choice of an education based on the inclusive intercultural values of respect for difference and justice and equality for all.

In Educate Together schools, every child will learn in an inclusive, democratic, co-educational setting that is committed to enabling and supporting each child to achieve their full potential while at the same time preparing them to become caring and active members of a culturally diverse society.

Values and Commitments

Educate Together is committed to:

- Placing the child at the centre of the educational process.
- Respecting and celebrating the different and unique identities of all.
- An educational philosophy that promotes the values of justice, equality and human rights for all children and challenges injustice and unfair discrimination.
- Providing children with the knowledge, skills, dispositions and attitudes that they need, enabling them to make informed moral decisions and preparing them to become caring members of society.
- Empowering children to take an active role in society and in the stewardship of the environment.
- Working in a democratic way that embraces the input from children, parents, teachers, and supporters to enable the highest level of partnership and participation.
- Working together and with other educational partners in a consultative and collaborative way.
- Building school communities that engage with, and work meaningfully with the local community.
- Ensuring that this type of education is provided by the State and available to all families who wish to access it.

These commitments are reflected in the following mottos

“Learn Together to Live Together” – “No Child an Outsider”



1 In this document, it is acknowledged that the term “child” can be replaced by pupil, student or learner in different educational settings

Once we clarified our fundamental commitments, we then adopted a methodology to analyse our situation and strategic options.

Theory of Change/Action

We decided to use a well-tested methodology called “Theory of Change” which is an approach first popularised in the US amongst community-based organisations. It attempts to define the building blocks in a given social environment that will bring about a specified social change.

The elements of the “Theory of Change” approach are as follows:

- A clear statement defining the problem that the organisation is aiming to solve
- A graphical map of the factors or actions that influence the problem and which shows the interactions between them
- The identification of specific pathways to solving the problem

Statement of the Problem

We have been long working to provide the choice of Educate Together schools for all families in Ireland. The problem we are trying to solve is that:

“Schools that encompass the Educate Together Model and philosophy are not available to all families in Ireland.”

This statement identifies a profound structural problem that exists in the Irish education system.

In 98% of cases, families in Ireland have no option but to send their children to a faith-based school. Such schools can discriminate on religious grounds in order to preserve their ethos. Places on Boards of Management of faith-based schools are reserved for nominees of the particular faith. Staff may be selected on religious grounds and current regulations require that the particular religious ethos should permeate the whole school programme. There are very strong protections for faith-based schools in the Irish Constitution. The fact that almost all faith-based schools are owned by religious institutions also cements their nature. Whilst many teachers and boards in such schools are making extraordinary efforts to accommodate the increasing number of children whose families do not hold majority beliefs, inequality on religious grounds is embedded in the curriculum, structure and fundamental nature of faith-based schools.

The problem is not in the nature of faith-based schools. Families have the right to choose a faith-based school if this is their preference. However, this right can only be real if families have the ability to choose an inclusive, secular alternative. In other jurisdictions, such alternatives exist and have been provided by the State. In Ireland, such an alternative in primary education only exists in the Educate Together Model. The problem lies in the failure of the State to respond to the preference of a growing number of families in Ireland, to recognise that the model of multi-denominational education developed by Educate Together is ideally suited to the need of modern Ireland and to ensure that this model of education is available to all families in the country. The State’s failure to act in this matter has put pressure on many families to accept whatever school happens to be



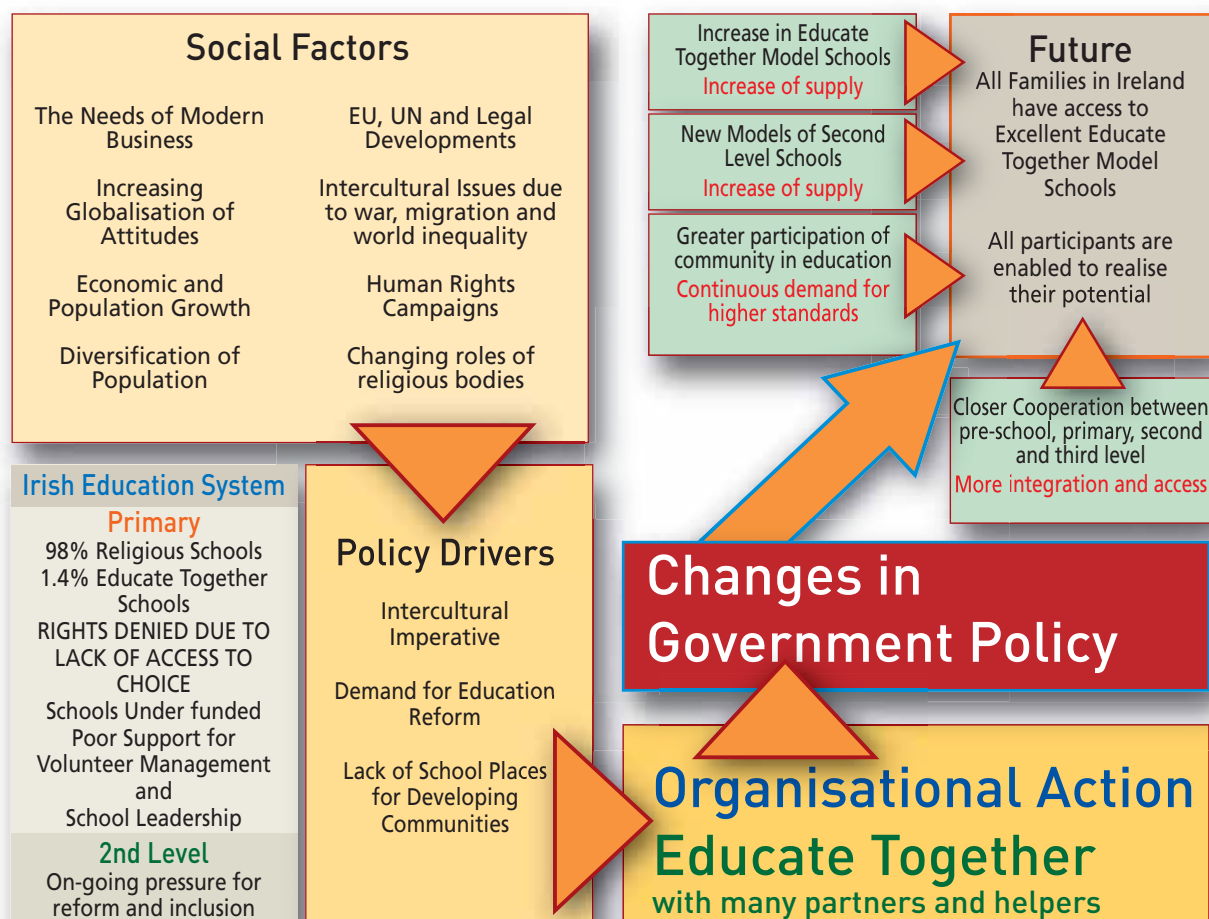
available instead of one that reflects their conscience and preference. This failure effectively disregards the rights and preference of an ever-increasing number of parents for multi-denominational education. This is incompatible with the Irish Constitution and a wide range of human rights obligations undertaken by the State.

The State's continuing failure to act on this vital issue ignores the growing diversification of our population that will continue for many years to come. It also ignores the stated preference of a large percentage of parents for a school that has the characteristics of the Educate Together Model. As the State falters at this critical point in the development of our society, it misses the opportunities to properly resource the Educate Together Model and contribute to promoting awareness and respect for difference.

This problem has been highlighted by Educate Together in many fora over recent years. Presentations have been made to the Oireachtas (2003, 2004), Department of Education and Science (1977 to date), the United Nations Committees of the Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Geneva (2005) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Geneva (2006). Both United Nations Committees who have heard this case and have issued recommendations to the Irish government to act "to promote non-denominational and multi-denominational" education. This recommendation has now been strongly echoed by the Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe, under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

The step necessary to resolve this problem is to radically increase the number of schools in Ireland that offer the same principles that are embedded in the Educate Together Model. This solution is encapsulated in the objective that "No family should have to travel more than 30 minutes from their home to access a school in which their identity is guaranteed equality and respect". Our calculations indicate that to do so will require a network of approximately 400 Educate Together Model schools, a total that will vary according to future demographic trends. It will also require a fully integrated educational service in which students and families can be assured that this choice is available from 'cradle to grave' including in particular, pre-school and second-level education.

It is this lack of choice in Irish education that is the problem that Educate Together is committed by its members and supporters – and its legal articles – to address.



Mapping the Factors and Actions

The lack of readily available Educare Together Model schools is caused by:

- Lack of government policy, planning and provision for such a service and the inability of Educare Together or any other organisation to adequately compensate for this failure by the State. Educare Together is a small educational charity sustained by a small government grant and private donations; it currently lacks the resources to make the scale of change that is required. Irish society urgently needs government initiative in this area.

The factors driving demand for Educare Together schools in Ireland are:

- The natural evolution of social attitudes in Ireland, including a re-evaluation of the role of religious bodies and their relationship with the education system.
- The influence of a growing economy raising expectations amongst the population.
- The growth of the population, especially in the suburban periphery of urban centres.
- The globalisation of culture, politics and economy.
- The concerns of the population about intercultural issues on the global scale, with war, migration and economic inequality becoming increasingly significant.
- The demands of modern business for employees who are competent in inter-cultural matters and educated to very high levels.
- Continuing pressure to improve Irish standards in inclusion.

These factors are sustaining three major imperatives growing within Irish education:

- A strong intercultural and inter-faith imperative is demanding that the education system encourages positive attitudes towards social diversity.
- There is an impetus towards educational reform to increasingly modernise and improve curriculum and practice.
- There is an on-going demand for additional capacity in the system especially in areas of rapid housing growth.

These factors are driving educational policy debate and influencing change in government policy. They are also inducing policy changes in traditional educational providers. They are the important features of the external environment in which Educare Together is working to create a network of schools based on its model.

The organisation and its resources

A large part of this business planning process consisted of a detailed analysis of the organisation's resources.

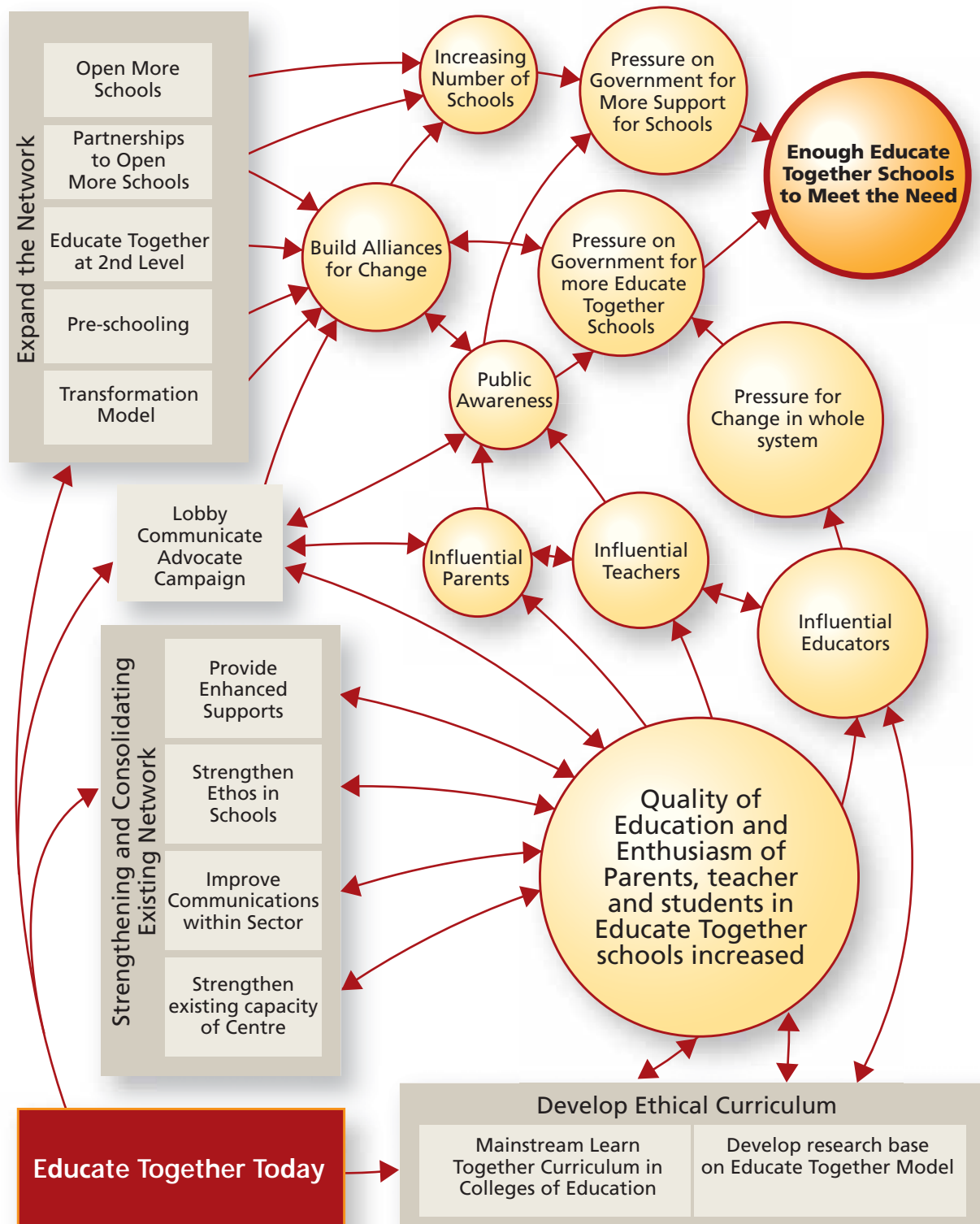
During this review, it became clear that the organisation was encountering severe difficulties in continuing to open schools within the current system. Educare Together has been opening new schools in good faith and with considerable efficiency but the State has not been able to respond to this growth with a workable system to provide buildings for these schools. Neither has the State been able to provide the funding necessary for a patron body to properly support such developments. This has led to an increasing drain on the organisation and to reductions in the level of services it has been able to provide to rapidly growing schools.

Without a well planned system of providing buildings for new schools and the funding necessary to ensure that patrons are able to properly support the communities involved, it will be very difficult for Educare Together to open the number of schools that are indicated in this plan.

The planning group highlighted as a matter of urgency the need to achieve reforms in the new school opening process and rapidly reduce the number of our schools without permanent buildings.

Achieving this reform is therefore a core objective of the current plan.

Pathways to Change



The fundamental change that needs to take place is to increase the number of Educate Together Model schools throughout Ireland. As shown in the above diagram there are many ways in which Educate Together can influence change in the system.

The table overleaf summarises the range of options that are open to Educate Together in addressing the problem and influencing change.

Strategic Options

The strategic options below are not set out in any particular order of merit or importance. They list the main options that the planning team considered.

Strategic Options	Rationale
Open new Educare Together schools	Educare Together has proven its ability to successfully open and run primary schools according to its model. In conjunction with the reforms we are calling for in the new school opening process, continuing to open schools with Educare Together's patronage is a simple and obvious way in which to increase the access to this type of school for parents.
Build partnerships with other educational bodies to increase number of Educare Together Model schools	It is recognised that there is a limit to the impact that Educare Together can have by opening a small number of schools each year. The development of partnerships and alliances with other education providers would accelerate the growth of the network as long as the quality of delivery could be guaranteed.
Develop a transformation process that could be used by schools wishing to adopt the Educare Together Model	Other school communities are seeking to adopt many of the key elements of the Educare Together Model. The development of a transformation process to support such developments will also accelerate the growth of the network.
Expand into provision of the Educare Together Model at second level	The Educare Together Model is applicable throughout the system. In particular, we believe it should be implemented in the second-level environment, and that this could be a key strategy for Educare Together over the coming years. Educare Together is currently carrying out a feasibility study regarding the provision of an Educare Together second-level school. The output of this study will assist Educare Together's board in deciding the most appropriate approach to this strategic option.
Work with Colleges of Education to have the "Learn Together" ethical education curriculum taught as standard part of teacher education	The "Learn Together" ethical education curriculum is entitled to the same level of State support that is available to the religious curricula of faith-based schools. Ensuring that it is taught in Colleges of Education is essential to the provision of fully qualified new teachers to Educare Together schools. It will also raise the profile of the network amongst the teaching profession and encourage the adoption of key elements of the Educare Together Model in other schools. Developing partnerships with the foremost educational experts in the State will ensure the continuous improvement of the Educare Together Model. It also may facilitate the establishment of a dedicated curriculum development unit for Educare Together.
Lobby for change in the education system	It is widely recognised that the current system for planning, delivery and support of the new schools needed in today's Ireland is seriously ineffective. Ireland's education system is under-funded, especially at primary level and its regulatory framework is antiquated and inefficient. If certain elements of the education system were to be influenced and changed, it could allow for Educare Together have a greater impact, in particular through enabling the easier opening and running of schools.

<p>Enhance delivery of the Learn Together curriculum and the strengthening of the Educate Together Model within the current network</p>	<p>Educate Together's ethical curriculum and other core principles of the model define the quality of education provided in Educate Together schools. It is essential to ensure that these are delivered to the highest standard. Therefore, a key strategy involves building and maintaining the 'excellent' delivery of the model across the existing network.</p> <p>A demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement of delivery within the Educate Together network will mark out the Educate Together schools as leaders in education and will encourage others to increasingly adopt elements of its ethos and approach.</p>
<p>Enhance member services in the Educate Together network (= raise the bar in primary education)</p>	<p>Educate Together (as well as most other providers) face many challenges in maintaining high standards of support for the leadership and management of schools. State supports in this area are extremely poor. A key strategy option is to radically enhance current levels of support for principal teachers, boards of management and school communities.</p> <p>If Educate Together schools have best in class levels of such support services, high levels of enthusiasm and commitment can be maintained and the attraction of the job of Principal or the role of volunteer can be increased. The status and profile of the model will also be enhanced. These factors are recognised as central to the successful delivery of the Educate Together Model of education.</p>

Key Strategic Judgement

The planning team took a key strategic judgement when examining these options:

Educate Together has dramatically increased the size of its network over the past 6 years. Its resources have become over-stretched and with this has emerged a significant danger to the cohesion of the network as a whole.

Our review has clearly shown that the network cannot efficiently 'scale up' without major changes to the State's regulations governing the provision of buildings for new schools and support for the school opening process.

It also has shown that further growth of the network can only take place if the Educate Together schools retain high-quality support from their national organisation, especially in their early years and in areas of ethos, curriculum, leadership and community building. The quality of the Educate Together Model or 'brand' must be maintained and grown as the network expands.

To fail to do so will lead to dissipation of support and will make further growth increasingly difficult.

To succeed in delivering these enhanced services will strengthen the network, build its reputation, garner friends and alliances and bring increased support and resources.

This is a major lever available to Educate Together in ensuring the future rapid growth of its network.

Ambition for the Future

Goals

Having defined Educate Together's vision and mission and keeping in mind the core issue that we are addressing, namely the lack of access to Educate Together Model schools, we have set out our ambitions for the future.

Educate Together will address the lack of availability of 'Educate Together Model' education through either directly or indirectly providing schooling at a number of levels, ranging from pre-school to second-level school. Further, Educate Together places a key emphasis on quality of education and commits to the continuous improvement of the Educate Together Model for the benefit of education in general.



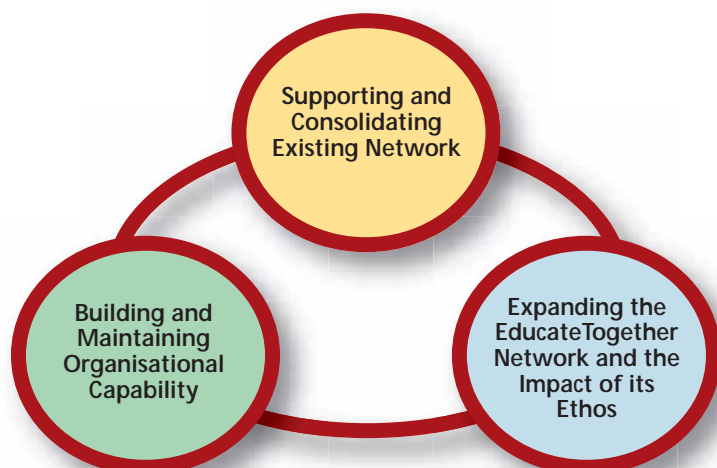
Long Term: There will be sufficient Educate Together Model schools to allow everyone in the country to have access to such a school within a 30-minute commute. Current estimates indicate the need for approximately 400 schools. This network will be configured in clusters with enhanced support services and be integrated with complementary pre-school and second level provision.

In 10 Years: There will be an Educate Together Model primary school in every urban area with a population greater than 20,000 or with growth of more than 2,500 people since the last census. The growth of Educate Together will be designed in clusters of schools. That enhanced support services will be in place and integration with pre-school and second level schools will be in place in at least 3 clusters.

In 5 Years: Educate Together schools are of perceived high quality. There will be a major improvement in State policy towards new schools. There will be at least 50 Educate Together primary schools, 1 pilot Educate Together Model second-level school and a feasibility study completed for the establishment of Educate Together Model pre-schools.

Areas of Focus

Considering Educate Together's desired impact on the network and the range of strategic options available to the organisation, three areas of focus emerged as key to the next three-year phase of development.



Supporting and consolidating the existing network

As a patron of schools and a management support body, Educate Together has obligations to fulfil in supporting its schools and ensuring that its model of education is delivered at the highest levels of quality. To date, Educate Together has very successfully offered this choice in 41 specific areas of the country. It is imperative that these existing school communities are supported on an on-going and consistently improving basis.

Expanding the Educate Together network

All parents and children are entitled to the choice of an Educate Together Model school. Achieving changes in the new school opening process, working with partners to open more schools, establishing a transformation process to allow schools to adopt the model and enhancing the reputation of the existing schools will enable the efficient growth of the Educate Together network.

Building and maintaining organisational capability

In order to succeed as an organisation and to meet defined goals and objectives, a number of functions supporting organisational capacity must underpin all operations. The organisation must ensure that it meets all of its legal requirements, that staff development is effectively managed, that good governance, management and communications systems are put in place and that finance and fundraising enables the organisation to follow and realise its strategic objectives.

Strategic Objectives

Following from these areas of focus, the objectives identified fall into two categories.

- Firstly nine core objectives that can be achieved within the current projected income of the organisation and will propel it forward to a stage in which it can begin to significantly scale up.
- Secondly, eleven further priority options that have the potential to dramatically enhance this progress but which can only be initiated if and when additional funding becomes available.

Core Objectives

Area of Focus: Supporting and consolidating the existing network

- Strategic objective 1: Develop a full training programme for members of Educate Together school Boards of Management.
- Strategic objective 2: Strengthen Educate Together's role in supporting the leadership and management of its schools.
- Strategic objective 3: Train all teachers in the Educate Together network in the 'Learn Together' ethical education curriculum.

Area of Focus: Expanding the Educate Together network and impact of its ethos

- Strategic objective 4: Work with the Department of Education and Science and other partners to bring forward an efficient system of new primary school opening.
- Strategic objective 5: Pursue potential partnerships with other providers with the view to increase the number of Educate Together Model schools.
- Strategic objective 6: Work with the Department of Education and Science and the Colleges of Education to introduce the 'Learn Together' ethical education curriculum as a formal element of all teacher education.

Area of Focus: Building and maintaining organisational capability

- Strategic objective 7: Provide appropriate and high quality administrative, logistical and other support services and functions for the Educate Together organisation.
- Strategic objective 8: Develop and implement focused and aligned communication, PR and lobbying strategies to enable the achievement of these objectives.
- Strategic objective 9: Develop and implement a robust fundraising strategy so that these objectives can be achieved.

Priority Options

Programme		Outline Cost
10.	Enhanced School Support Programme	€200,000 p.a.
11.	Enhanced Ethical Curriculum Development	€150,000 p.a.
12.	Ethos Assessment Tool for Schools	€50,000 p.a.
13.	Enhanced System of Primary School Opening	€75,000 p.a.
14.	Piloting the Educare Together Ethos at Second-level	€350,000 p.a. (5 years)
15.	Develop Transformation Model for Schools	€10,000 p.a.
16.	Membership Promotion (expanding the network)	€10,000 p.a.
17.	Pre-school and After-school Facilities	€50,000 p.a.
18.	Enhanced Advocacy & Lobbying Package	€50,000 p.a.
19.	Enhanced Communications Package	€60,000 p.a.
20.	Research Programme	€50,000 p.a.

Operational Overview

Educate Together Operations

The implementation of the organisation's business plan will be driven by the National Office staff with direction and leadership from the Board of Directors. This section outlines the actions that will be taken by Educate Together during the three-year period from January 2007 to December 2009.

The key areas of operational activity to be performed by the National Office are:

- **Member services**

Supporting schools in day-to-day school management issues, development and implementation of the ethos and curriculum, training and support for Boards of Management, providing expertise across the network.

- **Strategic initiatives and organisational development**

Activities such as business planning, research and development and the promotion of innovation, helping Educate Together to develop its role as an organisation in Irish education.

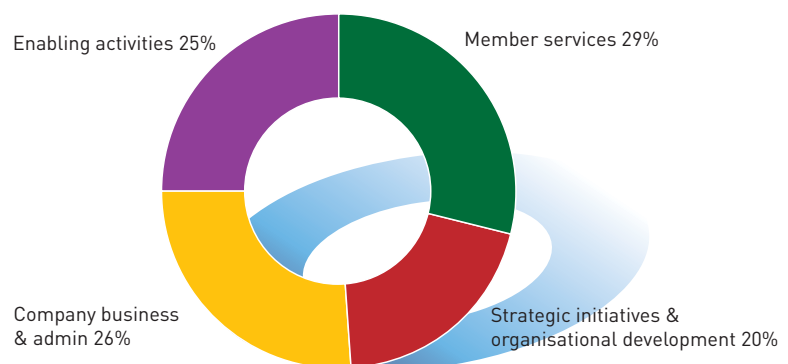
- **Company business and administration**

Fulfilling the organisation's legal obligations and logistically supporting and managing the office, the network and the staff.

- **Enabling activities**

Interacting with and influencing elements of the external operating environment so as to make it easier for Educate Together to succeed. These include activities such as engaging with the Department of Education and Science, lobbying, communications, PR and fundraising.

Educate Together Activity as a Proportion of total time available (2007 Projection)



The operational plan is laid out in the following sections:

- The actions and the desired outcomes for each strategic objective,
- Priority programmes for the organisation based on further funding,
- Measures of success for our strategic objectives,
- An outline timeframe for the implementation and completion of the plan,
- The resource implications for the organisation.

Strategic Objective 1

A formal and structured training programme will be put in place for members of Educate Together school Boards of Management.

Ref	Actions	Outcomes
1.1	Review current training for Boards of Management (BOM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified and agreed training needs
1.2	Identify and explore potential sources of funding to meet the costs of providing enhanced BOM training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified funding sources Level of funding secured Agreed evaluation of project for funders
1.3	Develop materials for BOM training, including general and role specific content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training materials developed, including trainer and participant packs Greater confidence levels amongst BOM members in dealing with complex issues
1.4	Organise scheduling and logistics for 3 regional BOM programmes (each year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% attendance by Chairpersons and Treasurers 75% attendance by all BOM members Smooth logistics and good attendance
1.5	Run BOM training programme in 3 regions (each year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More efficient, effective and confident school management Quality Programme delivery High scores obtained in participant evaluation sheets
1.6	Run "Staff Recruitment for BOMs and Potential Independent Assessors" training in 3 regions (each year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schools fulfilling all legal recruitment obligations (less chance of legal challenges) A strong recruitment competency across network A list of experienced Independent Assessors
1.7	Run training on "Building an Educate Together Community" in 3 regions (each year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong parental involvement and participation in practical programmes
1.8	Train up 6 volunteers per region to run BOM training in key regions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of BOM training days run by volunteers e.g. 10% in Year 1, 15% in Year 2, 25% in Year 3) A pool of trained volunteers available to train others
1.9	Develop peer-to-peer support structures for schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive Forum and FAQ system implemented on website Clusters established to allow greater cooperation between schools National and Cluster based events held to improve peer-to-peer interaction

Strategic Objective 2

The Educate Together National Office will offer phone and email support to Principals and Board of Management members across the Educate Together network.

Ref	Actions	Outcomes
2.1	Assess school support needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw up schedule of support needed and agree levels of delivery possible in light of existing resources
2.2	Develop and launch web support service for schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of mail queries to be dealt with within 2 working days. 100% within 5 working days • A reduction in the volume of phone calls and routine queries to the National Office as a result of the provision of web based FAQ's, fora and shared documents online • Greater levels of networking between schools and sharing of expertise across network without National Office input
2.3	Develop and implement new 'triage' system for phone support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone queries answered within 3 days • A proportion of calls re-directed to FAQ's/Web • Improved retention of Chairpersons & Principals
2.4	Support developing schools in securing improved/permanent accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall improvement of Educate Together brand and education • Improved relations with Department of Education and Science • More Educate Together schools in permanent buildings • Reduced stress for school communities
2.5	Support schools and BoMs through their specific crises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upskilling of school management, allowing them to deal with situations better in future • Strengthening of BoMs • Improved retention of staff/BoM • Improved school dynamics & profile • Avoidance of damage to Educate Together brand
2.6	Identify and explore potential sources of funding to meet the costs of providing enhanced services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of funding secured • Improved focused services to schools.
2.7	Develop and implement a Quality Assessment tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and BoM needs and levels of service captured and measured • Improved services across network • Two-way feedback system developed for continuous improvement

Strategic Objective 3

A formal in-service training programme will be put in place to train Educare Together teachers on the Learn Together Ethical Education Curriculum on an annual basis.

Ref	Actions	Outcomes
3.1	Establish and support Ethical Education Curriculum in-service Group (EECISG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee established composed of mix of Volunteers, National Staff, Board of Directors
3.2	Negotiate with DES for increased support for Ethical Education Curriculum (EEC) In-service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured funding
3.3	Apply to other funders for resources to support EEC In-service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured funding
3.4	Train Trainers for In-Service Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team of 8 trainers educated Standardised course design including materials, selection, delivery, evaluation
3.5	Design In-Service Courses (Teachers and Principals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal course design document
3.6	Develop Materials (Teachers and Principals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials list and pack produced
3.7	Deliver Principals' In-service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 sessions per year delivered A basic level of experience created across Principal network and developed links for individuals to support each other
3.8	Deliver Teachers In-service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 sessions per year delivered A basic level of experience created across teacher network and developed links for individuals to support each other
3.9	Deploy on-line resources for EEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources available from Educare Together website Reduced time that volunteers and national staff will need to provide to support this initiative
3.10	Develop Evaluation Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple evaluation tool developed for schools Self evaluation by schools EEC implemented and continuously improved
3.11	Develop Summer Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal documented course available Standard content and materials designed
3.12	Deliver Summer Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 courses per annum Elements of EEC being implemented in non-Educare Together schools

Strategic Objective 4

Work with the Department of Education and Science(DES), and other partners to bring forward a workable system of new primary school opening.

Ref	Actions	Outcomes
4.1	Engage DES, and other partners in discussion of changes needed in process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key decision-makers informed of issues and the need for action
4.2	Research comparative systems and framework for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Educate Together informed on all major issues involved in reform of the current process • Research available to validate case statements
4.3	Develop public advocacy campaign on the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key case statements published. • Political and media opinion-formers informed of need for reform in this area • Commitments from major political organisations sought • Potential for partnership on this issue with other school providers maximised
4.4	Develop membership advocacy campaign on issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign organisation developed within the Educate Together network • Campaign developed to include those seeking Educate Together schools but unable to do so • Clear messaging of key objectives of campaign developed
4.5	Explore other opportunities to advance this reform objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal framework of entitlements of parents in this area researched • Board of Educate Together sufficiently informed to take a decision to pursue other approaches to achieve reform

Strategic Objective 5

Educate Together will pursue partnerships with the other providers with the view to increasing the number of Educate Together Model schools.

Ref	Actions	Outcomes
5.1	Develop policy base for Educate Together to enter a potential partnership with appropriate organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource implications evaluated • Approach sufficiently developed to allow Board of Directors to decide whether to proceed with partnership • Engagement with a number of key organisations to explore potential partnership across a range of areas
5.2	Develop a primary school model in consultation with at least one partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership agreement with clear guiding principles developed
5.3	Identify potential sites for a pilot primary school and implement model in one location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear project plan in place • Regular review and monitoring
5.4	Further develop partnership model so that this could be rolled out with other partners and in other areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of Department of Education and Science (DES) for model obtained • Maximum 'buy-in' from partners obtained • Standardised model as a result of link with other organisations.
5.5	Explore other opportunities with potential partners – e.g. campus sharing with second-level schools, pre-schools, community facilities etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement reached • Model developed • Pilot examples assessed

Strategic Objective 6

Educate Together will work with the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the Colleges of Education to introduce the Learn Together ethical education curriculum (EEC) as a formal element of all teacher education.

Ref	Actions	Outcomes
6.1	Participate in Working Group with DES and Colleges of Teacher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Meetings per year Educate Together's reputation as mainstream provider continued to be built and re-enforced Related DES and Colleges of Teacher Education links developed and sustained
6.2	Develop policy framework for Educate Together's inclusion in teacher pre-service education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy framework approved by Board of Directors
6.3	Develop model programme with at least one Colleges of Teacher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal programme launched in college Greater awareness and knowledge of the Educate Together programme among teachers from all sectors
6.4	Select team of lecturers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team appointed and/or approved by Educate Together
6.5	Develop assessment tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness of programme in measured knowledge amongst final year students Continuous development of programme and outcomes as a result of annual assessment
6.6	Develop specialist elective module for at least one Colleges of Teacher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module introduced into at least one college Greater demand for Educate Together teaching places Teachers in other sectors implementing elements of Ethical Curriculum as a knock-on effect
6.7	Monitor progress of programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing improvements

Strategic Objective 7

Provide appropriate and high quality administrative, logistical and other support services and functions to the Educare Together organisation (office administration company support, national representation, patronage and research).

Ref	Actions	Outcomes
7.1	Continue to provide appropriate office administration services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly reporting procedures Ongoing development of operations around Accounts, Payroll, Purchasing, HR, ICT, Legal, Knowledge Management, Basic Communications etc.
7.2	Review of current office administration processes, procedures, allocation of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost savings/ efficiency improvements achieved Potential areas/activities for streamlining identified, achieving efficiency & quality improvements, outsourcing etc.
7.3	Continue to provide company support services to the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing strategic development: reports & research, policy development, director's meetings Strategic use of meetings/events (directors meetings, AGM, members meetings etc.) for capacity building, communications, planning and review.
7.4	Continue to perform a national representation function on behalf of Educare Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educare Together ethos, brand and support developed through attendance at meetings, etc
7.5	Meet Educare Together's school patron obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School and BOM duties effectively fulfilled National patron duties fulfilled - Identifying & appointing patron nominees, dealing with queries from boards, making emergency interventions when necessary, assisting in negotiations with local interests.
7.6	Review and evaluate governance and management structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater efficiency for board of directors and national staff (and interface between them)
7.7	Develop and implement a staff/management development plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved staff skills, knowledge, ability More effective internal communications

Strategic Objective 8

Develop and implement focused and aligned communication, PR and lobbying strategies to facilitate and enable the achievement of Educate Together's strategic objectives.

Ref	Actions	Outcomes
8.1	Develop internal communications plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current structures/systems reviewed • Strong system for all types of communication built
8.2	Implement internal communications plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback channels to allow for continuous improvement implemented across Educate Together network
8.3	Develop external communications plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A communications/ PR strategy that supports the needs of the entire organisation and the achievement of the strategic goals set out in the business plan
8.4	Implement external communications plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on Educate Together's external profile, political support etc. to gauge effectiveness and make changes as necessary • Improved positioning of Educate Together across all areas
8.5	Develop branding plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools identifiable as being Educate Together schools • Sense of belonging to national movement • Improved national identity • Clarity of purpose for everyone involved in the organisation will lead to more focussed support and greater national awareness
8.6	Use 06/07 election as opportunity to focus mind or role of State in education (i.e. that it is the State's legal obligation to provide education which respects the backgrounds and beliefs of all its citizens)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent messages for increased political profile at local and national level • Government challenged by other organisations & by Educate Together to provide choice in education • Increased government & political support for Educate Together • Educate Together's reach broadened through engaging with other groups
8.7	Hold Educate Together PR-type events (Document and product launches, seminars etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesion of network and sharing of information • Increased media/profile
8.8	Conduct mid-point evaluation of communications, PR and lobbying strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact assessed

Strategic Objective 9

Develop and implement an explicit and robust fundraising strategy to enable the core strategic objectives to be achieved.

Ref	Actions	Outcomes
9.1	Define fund-raising requirements to support strategy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund-raising requirements defined
9.2	Develop fundraising strategy e.g. Hold fund-raising forum with outside expertise to identify strategies & supports required for implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define funding sources and fund-raising approaches Agreed fund-raising strategy
9.3	Identify and source appropriate skilled fund-raising resources and structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task Force set up at national level to harness expertise and contacts across the network Professional fund-raiser hired for National Office
9.4	Implement and monitor fund-raising strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance tracked against targets
9.5	Conduct mid-point evaluation of the fund-raising strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and results assessed and any appropriate changes identified

Priority Programmes for Educate Together

Educate Together needs to attract significant additional resources in order to move quickly towards its stated goals. A careful appreciation of the preceding sections of this plan will lead to the conclusion that this is an under-funded organisation with great potential to make a real difference in Ireland.

The following section details the programmes for which we are determined to win investment from both public and private sources.

The programmes are grouped according to our three strategic areas of focus



Supporting and consolidating the existing network

10. Enhanced School Support Programme

Context: This programme will provide a best-in-class school support programme that will be a radical improvement on current levels of support. This will enthuse parents, teachers, supporters and investors.

Benefit: Developing support mechanisms above and beyond what we currently offer, such as providing online resource (integrated virtual networks, fora, e-learning platforms, etc), soft-skill training programmes or running issue-specific learning networks will help to create a culture of excellence in our schools, leading to better school management, development of a further enhanced learning environment for our children, and generally helping to support and develop our entire school community.

Outline Cost: €200,000 per annum

11. Enhanced Ethical Curriculum Development

Context: This programme will deepen the scope of Educate Together's ethical curriculum and ensure that it meets or exceeds world standards in this area.

Benefit: Further developing our successful Ethical Curriculum will allow us to truly become national (and international) leaders in the provision of an equality-based, participative learning focussed programme. The further development of this programme would allow us to prove its validity and continuously improve the ways in which we are developing our children (and wider school communities) to deal with a diverse and competitive society.

Outline Cost: €150,000 per annum

12. Ethos Assessment Tool for Schools

Context: Demonstrating an effective method of assessing the atmosphere and ethos of a school will allow Educate Together schools to pave a way to genuine accountability in education.

Benefit: Accountability and evidence-based research in education is fast becoming a key issue for modern Ireland, and we in Educate Together want to prove that our schools are offering a type of education that is relevant, beneficial and giving children a great start in life. The development of an ethos assessment tool will firstly allow schools in the Educate Together network to measure their success and constantly improve their standards, but is also something that could be used across the education sector to assess how we deal with specific issues.

Outline Cost: €50,000 per annum

Expanding the Educate Together network and the impact of its ethos

13. Enhanced System of Primary School Opening

Context: Whilst the thrust of this plan is towards quality improvements with the network, communities all over Ireland urgently need Educate Together schools, if we have the resources and the new schools process allows, we will continue to meet this demand.

Benefit: Employing more staff to assist communities to open Educate Together schools and represent their case to the DES, will allow us to offer more families the opportunity of educating their children in the system and environment that we believe offers them the best start in life. The growth of the Educate Together school network will support our aim to increase access to the Educate Together Model of education. The level of funding outlined here will allow us to ensure that this work is carried out to a consistently high standard.

Outline Cost: €75,000 per annum

14. Providing the Educate Together Ethos at Second-level

Context: Children successfully learning in Educate Together primary schools must be able to continue their education with the same ethos of equality and respect. The model will only be fully vindicated if it can be shown to operate at all levels of an education system.

Benefit: We are confident that our primary school system offers children the opportunity to learn in an environment that encourages them to develop and grow into confident individuals who can really make an impact. We believe that the Educate Together ethos and approach should be available at second-level, giving children the opportunity to further develop themselves not only academically but socially in preparation for becoming active members of society in 21st century Ireland.

Outline Cost: €350,000 per annum over a five year period

15. Develop Transformation Model for Established Schools

Context: The pressure for change within Irish primary education will inevitably see schools wishing to transform towards the Educate Together Model. It is essential that a transparent and fair means be developed between patrons to allow such change.

Benefit: It is a reality of the Irish primary education system that there is a desire from some those working in other sectors to adopt some or all of the features of the Educate Together Model. Educate Together believes the ethos and ethical curriculum is one that can be of value at many levels and that the network should react positively towards this trend. If Educate Together were to get the support to create this transformation process (in conjunction with partners in education) it could lead to an opportunity for schools across the community to adopt some of the elements of the Educate Together Model.

Outline Cost: €10,000 per annum

16. Membership Promotion

Context: Providing clear criteria for membership of the Educate Together sector will not only allow the sector to reinforce its quality standards but also facilitate any school from other sectors to successfully join the movement.

Benefit: Educate Together would like to formalise the standards of education that it sets for its membership so as to allow our own schools to ensure highest levels of performance and to offer other schools the opportunity to measure themselves against the same standards.

Outline Cost: €10,000 per annum

17. Pre-school and After-school Facilities

Context: As schools become increasingly integrated into the local community and with other educational facilities, it is essential that a model be developed to allow pre-school and after-school care to be deployed on the same site as an Educate Together school. For such a model to develop, it is necessary to conduct a feasibility review and carry through a pilot programme.

Benefit: The Educate Together ethos is one which we believe is of great value for learning at all stages and building an Educate Together Model for pre-school and after-school facilities can not just provide a service to our school communities, but also help to further develop the children taking part in these services.

Outline Cost: €50,000 for initial feasibility study and pilot programme.

Building and maintaining organisational capability

18. Enhanced Advocacy & Lobbying Package

Context: There are many policy changes necessary to enable the growth of the Educate Together network. We urgently need additional resources to lobby for and advocate such changes.

Benefit: The lack of direct provision of education by the State is a huge issue for Ireland. For far too long the State has been 'let off the hook' by the Churches who have for years been opening and running excellent faith-based schools. However, with the changing relationship between Churches and society and with large population growth it is inevitable that the State must play a greater role in opening new schools. Educate Together could be involved in this change at many levels and understands many of the specific challenges and needs.

Outline Cost: €50,000 per annum

19. Enhanced Communications Package

Context: This package will provide a professional branding and communications audit for the organisation and ensure that it has clear messages addressing the most influential audiences.

Benefit: How Educare Together is positioned in the education sector and in our wider communities is of the utmost importance to the organisation. Greater awareness of our approach and our aims will alert more people to their entitlement to this type of education and also encourage people to push for elements of the Educare Together Model to be adopted in their children's learning – wherever that may take place.

Outline Cost: €60,000 per annum

20. Research Programme

Context: Major social change must be sustained by accurate research. If we continue to attract the investment of major public and private funds we must put our work open to peer review and develop sound systems of self-evaluation.

Benefit: It is necessary for Educare Together to prove the validity of its model of education. This would be an exciting and innovative process, whereby; Educare Together can further develop and support the development of education by creating a base of evidence to set out the best practice in delivery of its model.

Outline Cost: €50,000 per annum

10 Measuring Our Success

Key performance indicators (KPIs) have been developed for each specific action within our strategic objectives. However there are some areas that are of specific importance when looking to measure success over this plan. These are outlined in the table below.

Strategic Objective	KPI – Direct Outputs	KPI – Desired Outcomes	Target/measure
1. A formal and structured training programme will be put in place for members of Educate Together school Boards of Management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers attending training Quality of training programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better equipped and more confident school management (particularly around management of finance and recruitment) Less reliance on National Office for support or fire-fighting There will be greater co-operation between BoMs and Principals therefore schools run more smoothly A larger pool of volunteers will be able and willing to support and train others to take on BoM responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% attendance at training 20% decline in volume of BoM related queries by Year 3 A minimum of 3 local support networks established by year 3
2. The Educate Together National Office will offer phone and email support to Principals and Board of Management members across the Educate Together network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of queries dealt with Time taken for response Quality of advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools/BoMs have access to expert help to support the best running of their school The National Office will streamline support activities, making the support function work as effectively as possible, freeing up time for programme activity There will be a significant reduction in number of basic or routine queries allowing National Office to focus their time elsewhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of queries dealt within 2 working days 50% reduction in routine enquiries received
3. A formal in-service training programme will be put in place to train Educate Together teachers on the Learn Together Ethical Education Curriculum on an annual basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers taking part in programme Quality of programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased and embedded knowledge of the ethical curriculum and its implementation will result in the curriculum being implemented to a greater level across a greater number of schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All teachers in network trained by Year 3 40% of Educate Together schools receiving a very good or excellent rating in the practical application of the curriculum in their schools by year 3
4. With the Department of Education and Science, and other partners to bring forward a workable system of new primary school opening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers involved in campaign Level of engagement on issue of senior policy makers in DES Numbers of statements and opinions of support reported in media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement at senior level in Government and DES for the need for improvements in this area Improved planning and support for new schools from the point at which the need for their existence is agreed 	<p>All new schools have credible commitments to permanent accommodation from their day of opening</p> <p>All new school communities have the necessary development funding available</p>

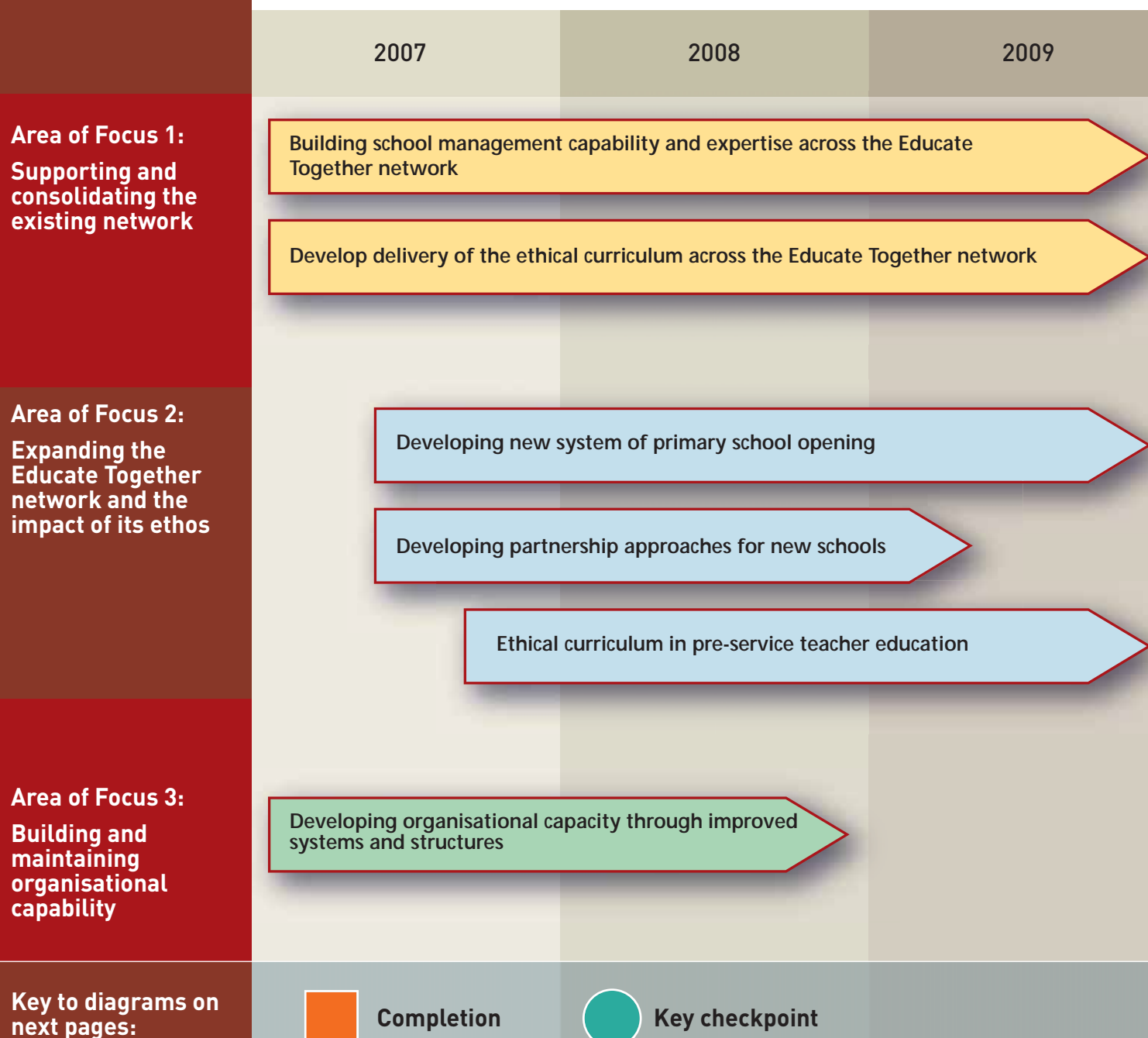
Strategic Objective	KPI – Direct Outputs	KPI – Desired Outcomes	Target/measure
5. Educate Together will pursue a partnership with other providers to increase the number of Educate Together Model schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of partnership developed school places available Time taken to implement model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate Together will be able to scale-up the amount of access to Educate Together Model education without needing the level of resources demanded by opening and supporting own schools Having other providers use the Educate Together Model will bring Educate Together and the State closer and brings the organisation closer to the aim of the State fulfilling their obligation re. Provision of education for all If this approach was to become the standard way by which Educate Together Model schools were opened, Educate Together as an organisation could concentrate more on the quality of the ethos and delivery, therefore continuing to develop the ethos and ensure its implementation 	<p>Depending on a suitable partnership agreement put in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 partnership school opened by Sept 2008 3 additional schools opened by Sept 2009
6. Educate Together will work with the DES and the Colleges of Education to introduce the Learn Together ethical education curriculum as a formal element of all teacher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of trainee teachers getting 'Learn Together' training Number of colleges implementing course/s Quality of teacher understanding of the Educate Together Model post-learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across the board inclusion of the ethical curriculum in teacher education should result in the Educate Together curriculum, or elements of it, being introduced in other types of schools Trainee teachers will develop an understanding of, and hopefully an interest in, the ethical curriculum before they apply for jobs, so this should result in higher quantity and quality of applications for Educate Together teaching posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal agreement with Colleges of Education and DES for the delivery of this element in initial teacher education courses 80% of colleges of teacher education and 90% of trainee teachers to have basic understanding and training in the Learn Together and Educate Together Model
7. Provide appropriate and high quality administrative, logistical and other support services and functions to the Educate Together organisation (office administration company support, national representation, patronage and research)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction of amount of time spent on general admin (efficiency) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having the National Office run efficiently and effectively will enable the staff and volunteers to concentrate their efforts on members and programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case officer involvement in routine administration reduced to less than 10% of allocated time and total expenditure on routine admin reduced to less than 10% of expenditure

Strategic Objective	KPI – Direct Outputs	KPI – Desired Outcomes	Target/measure
8. Develop and implement focused and aligned communication, PR and lobbying strategies to facilitate and enable the achievement of Educate Together's strategic objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of press coverage (positive) • Level of government funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a good internal communications plan will provide greater clarity to the entire organisation allowing the national organisation and individual schools to better present themselves and their aims in their respective communities • Implementation of a good external communications plan will help Educate Together to develop networks, supporters and increased support and therefore focus strongly on the programme aims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal and External Communication plan approved by Board (year 1) • Evaluation system in place year 2
9. Develop and implement an explicit and robust fundraising strategy to enable the above strategic objectives to be achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds secured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing funding will result in Educate Together being able to do more in working towards their aims and better resourcing programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of evaluation targets met year 3 • €300k in year 1 • €350k in year 2 • €375k in year 3

Overview of Key Implementation Milestones

Key Milestones

This section outlines the key phasing of activity over the three years of the business plan. The illustration below is an overview of what Educate Together's focus will be over the three years, developing internal capacity first followed by expanding the ethos whilst all of the time continuing to develop the Educate Together network. The following pages each show key activity checkpoints and completion dates for each of the three strategic areas of focus.



Area of Focus 1: Supporting and consolidating the existing network

Ref.	Key Actions	2007				2008				2009			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1.1	Review of current training for Boards of Management (BoM) complete	■											
1.3	Board of Management training materials developed		■										
1.5	Run BoM training programmes (1 per school year)		●				●				■		
1.6	Run recruitment training for BoMs (1 per school year)		●				●				■		
1.7	Run "Building an Educate Together Community" training (1 per school year)		●				●				■		
1.8	Train up volunteers to run BoM training in key regions		●				●				■		
2.1	Complete school support needs assessment				■								
2.2	Launch web support service for schools					■							
2.3	Launch new 'triage system' for phone support					■							
2.7	Develop and implement a QA assessment tool										■		
3.3	Applications made to funders for resources for in-service programme	●				●				●			
3.4	Trained up volunteers for in-service ethical curriculum programme			■									
3.5	Final in-service ethical curriculum course (+materials) designed					■							
3.6	In-service ethical curriculum course materials produced					■							
3.7	Principals in-service delivered (3 sessions per year)		●				●				■		
3.8	Teachers in-service delivered (3 sessions per year)		●				●				■		
3.9	Launch online resources for ethical curriculum training			■									
3.10	Evaluation tool for schools developed							■					
3.11	Summer course developed		■										

Area of Focus 2: Expanding the Educare Together network and the impact of its ethos

Ref.	Key Actions	2007				2008				2009			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
4.2	Engage DES and partners in discussion of changes needed	■											
4.3	Research comparative systems and framework for change		■										
4.4&5	Develop public and membership advocacy campaigns		●		●		●		●				■
5.2	Develop policy for Educare Together to enter a potential partnership		■										
6.2	Develop policy framework for Educare Together pre-service education							■					
6.3	Develop model programme with at least one college of education							■					
6.4	Team of lecturers for Educare Together pre-service training selected							■					
6.5	Assessment tool for effectiveness of pre-service training developed										■		
6.6	Specialist elective module for at least one college of education developed										■		

Area of Focus 3: Building and maintaining organisational capability

Ref.	Key Actions	2007				2008				2009			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
7.6	Governance and management structures review carried out	■											
7.7	Staff/management development plan developed	■											
8.1	Internal communications plan developed	■											
8.2	Internal communications plan implemented				●				●				■
8.3	External communications plan developed	■											
8.4	External communications plan implemented				●				●				
8.5	Branding plan developed							■					■
8.6	Specific pre-election lobbying campaign implemented		■										
9.1	Fund-raising requirements identified	■											
9.2	Fund-raising strategy developed		■										
9.3	Fund-raising structures and resources in place		■										

Critical Success Factors

In implementing a strategic plan there are many factors that may be out of control of the organisation and staff. This section outlines:

- Critical success factors for implementation: these are internal and external factors that the organisation must manage so as to allow the smooth implementation of strategy; these include managing resources, attitudes, structures and systems.
- Risk management: identifying key areas of risk that are mainly out of Educate Together's control but could have significant impact on the organisation and the achievement of its goals and aims. Risks must be assessed and an appropriate risk management strategy put in place so that if any of these risks should arise the organisation is prepared and can act quickly.



Critical success factors for implementation

This strategy sets out an ambitious direction for Educate Together. In order for this strategy to be effectively implemented and to achieve the strategic objectives, a number of critical success factors have been identified as follows.

INTERNAL

Communication within the organisation
Time and effort (staff and volunteers)
Organisational structures
Governance and management
Evaluation, monitoring and review

EXTERNAL

External communications
Funding and fundraising
Stakeholder relationship management

Communication within the organisation

Effective communication is critical to the successful implementation of this strategy. We believe that communication must come from board-level down and must be inclusive of the national staff, schools and volunteers. Communication from the CEO in particular will be vital in:

- Ensuring this strategy is visible and communicated to all members of staff as well as principals, teaching staff and volunteers of Educate Together.
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of those identified in the implementation plan that will bring each action forward and ensure its completion.

Time and effort

Significant time and effort will be required from National Office staff and the board of directors to progress the actions identified in the implementation plan. It is envisaged that a number of different working groups may need to be established to work on and/or oversee specific actions.

The continued support and input of many volunteers is also of the utmost importance to Educate Together. The organisation is acutely aware of its dependence on volunteers and values the commitment greatly.

Clear organisation structures

For the effective implementation of the business plan the roles and responsibilities of everyone within the organisation (including national staff, board of directors and volunteers) and the working relationships between the different groups/individuals must be clearly defined.

Governance and management

The ongoing implementation of the business plan will be the responsibility of both the National Office staff and the board of directors, but will ultimately be the responsibility of the CEO, to deliver on the plan and report performance against the plan to the board, and of the board of directors to oversee and hold the CEO accountable for delivery of the plan. The organisation's governance arrangements will play a very strong role in shaping the implementation (and ongoing review) of the business plan and it is essential that management, decision-making and communication systems and structures are clearly defined, appropriate for the organisation and agreed by all parties.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

The CEO will be ultimately responsible for tracking the progress of the strategic objectives and actions. An owner has been identified for each action. The owner of an individual action is responsible for:

- Driving the action forward
- Ensuring meetings are held to discuss progress on the action, and agreeing subsequent activities/tasks to keep staff on track for completing the action
- Ensuring completion of the action within the agreed timeframe

External communications

It is important that Educare Together carefully considers how it is portrayed in the press, through partners, in the education sector and in society generally. It must do what it can to manage such messaging. Having a clear communications plan which focuses on a small number of key messages through key channels will help the organisation to focus on gaining profile and support in a positive manner.

Funding and fundraising

Almost all of the actions identified rely heavily on appropriate funding, from the DES or otherwise. Therefore, the extent to which the actions can be implemented, and the timeframe for that implementation, will be determined to a large extent, by the funding that is made available.

It is necessary that a robust fundraising plan underpins all of the organisation's activity and there should be constant review of achievements against fundraising targets.

Stakeholder relationship management

Many of the objectives and actions proposed in this plan will involve working closely with other parties. These stakeholders could be working in partnership with Educare Together, could be providing a resource or support to the organisation or may be receiving support from Educare Together. It is vital that Educare Together ensures that clear expectations are set, that a professional working relationship is maintained and that there is two-way feedback.

Risk management

As part of the detailed working through of the operational aspects of this Business Plan it will be necessary to carry out a full risk assessment and to set out our responses for minimising the risks identified. This will be carried out within the first quarter of 2007. There are a number of over-arching risks facing the organisation including:

Failing to secure sufficient funding to maintain core services and required expansion of our programmes: setting up a Fund-Raising Task Force and engaging professional assistance for this function will be the most critical determinant of the Business Plan. Operationally it will be necessary to ensure that activities can be scaled up or scaled back depending on financial progress, and that no commitments are entered into that cannot be supported.

The danger of **losing expertise as a result of staff turnover** needs to be addressed through ensuring as far as possible that staff are properly supported and that workloads and expectations are managed properly.

As for all NGOs, there is an equal danger of **losing volunteer expertise and interest**. This requires that we ensure that volunteer expectations and workloads are managed properly and that fresh blood and new perspectives are actively sought and valued by the organisation.

Inevitably, any plan setting out our intended areas for future focus is going to come under **pressure for us to extend activities in response to crises** and pressure from our members, our board and our frontline staff. If we are to operate strategically in furtherance of our objectives a cultural shift is needed involving the recognition that we cannot be simply a 'demand-led' organisation. Instead, we must plan what we do and do what we plan.

Safeguarding the reputation of the network requires having contingency plans in place lest actions involving any members bring the network into disrepute. Risks here would include industrial relations disputes, or allegations of financial irregularities or failures in relation to child protection.

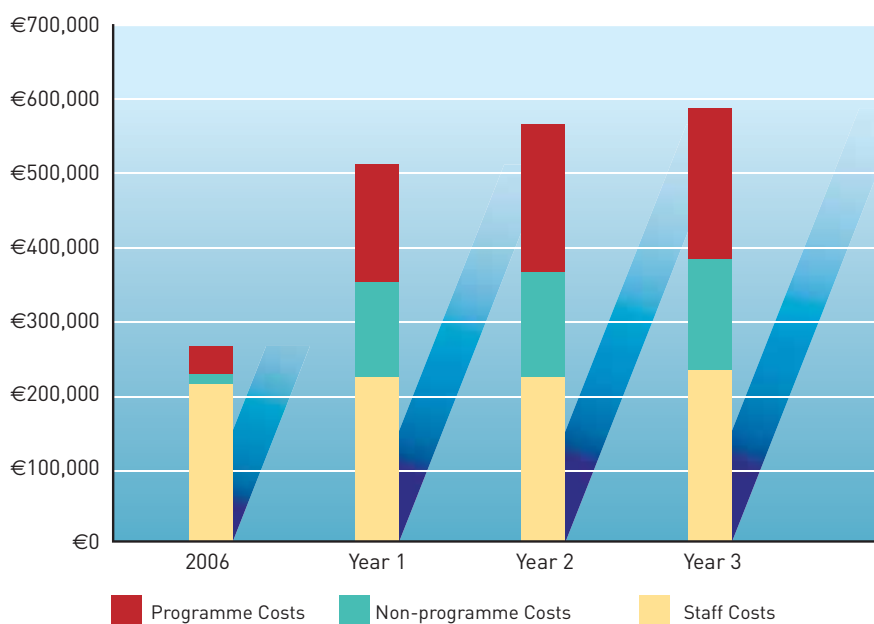
In any national organisation, there can be **tension between the competing interests of members and the over-all development of the network**. Proper leadership and support is required for members in order to encourage collegiality rather than dependence, and a shared vision for the future of the network.

Resource Implications

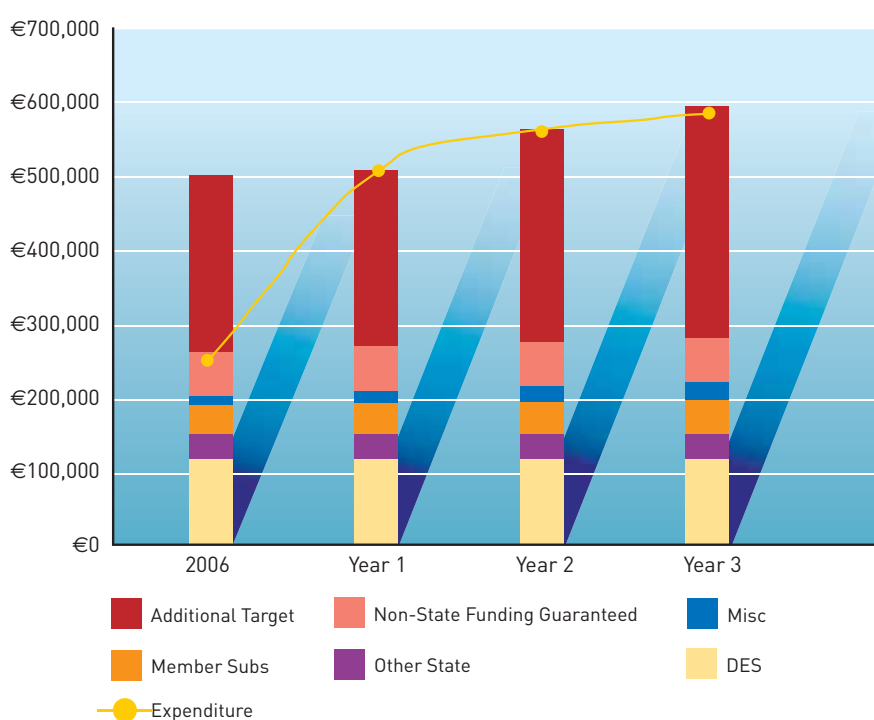
Financial implications for the organisation for 2007-2009

A rigorous analysis of Educate Together's current resources and allocations has been carried out and a baseline of resourcing (both people and financial) has been decided.

ET Estimated Costs (by type)



ET Projected Income (by source) showing Projected Expenditure



14 Measuring Our Success

ET PROJECTED EXPENDITURE

	2006	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	Totals (4)	%age of total
Staff Costs	€ 213,279	€ 224,000	€ 222,705	€ 233,840	€ 680,545	40.89%
Non-programme costs (1)	€ 12,411	€ 128,000	€ 142,328	€ 149,444	€ 419,771	25.22%
Programme Costs (2)	€ 40,102	€ 158,900	€ 200,683	€ 204,367	€ 563,950	33.89%
Reserve/Contingency (3)	€ 237,208	€ 236,308	€ 236,592	€ 245,941		
TOTALS (4)	€ 265,792	€ 510,900	€ 565,716	€ 587,651	€ 1,664,267	

ET PROJECTED INCOME

	2006	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	Totals (4)	%age of total
DES	€ 120,000	€ 120,000	€ 120,000	€ 120,000	€ 360,000	21.52%
Other State	€ 30,000	€ 30,000	€ 30,000	€ 30,000	€ 90,000	5.38%
Member Subs	€ 43,000	€ 45,000	€ 46,000	€ 47,000	€ 138,000	8.25%
Misc	€ 10,000	€ 15,000	€ 20,000	€ 25,000	€ 60,000	3.59%
Non State Funding Guaranteed	€ 60,000	€ 60,000	€ 60,000	€ 60,000	€ 180,000	10.76%
Additional Target	€ 240,000	€ 240,000	€ 290,000	€ 315,000	€ 845,000	50.51%
TOTALS (4)	€ 503,000	€ 510,000	€ 566,000	€ 597,000	€ 1,673,000	

Funding Gap € 900 € 285 € 9,349

Total Fundraising Req. € 300,000 € 350,000 € 375,000

2006 figures are the expected outturn based on performance to date and realistic estimates.

(1) Non-programme costs refer to those costs not associated with staff employment. There is a significant increase from the 2006 figures to the projected amounts for the following years, this is due to the fixed-term employment of a fund-raising manger being considered as a non-programme cost.

(2) Programme costs are those non-human resource costs that are directly related to particular strategic activities, these increase during the timeframe of the plan due to the increased activities across a range of programmes.

(3) Reserve/contingency refers to funds allocated against emergency situations, legal cases and other unforeseen liabilities.

Total figures exclude the reserve funds and the 2006 figures.



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