

VIEW

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What sort of education future should we give our children?



A range of voices look at shared and integrated options

Guest editor for this issue is columnist and commentator Alex Kane

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We need to listen to young people

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People Koulla Yiasouma told **VIEW** magazine that: “Kids have far greater imagination about the world than we do, they are looking forward and we are looking back.”

Her job is to safeguard the rights of children, and when it comes to education she would like to see lawmakers “promoting shared education over segregated education and integrated over everything else”.

The Commissioner wants young people’s voices to be heard in the education debate and she will call leaders to account “when they get it wrong”.

The right to education is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child “no matter who they are, regardless of race, gender or disability”.

This edition of **VIEW** seeks to give an



By Una Murphy

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insight into how a so-called ‘post-conflict’ society educates its children, with insights from Northern Ireland and Bosnia.

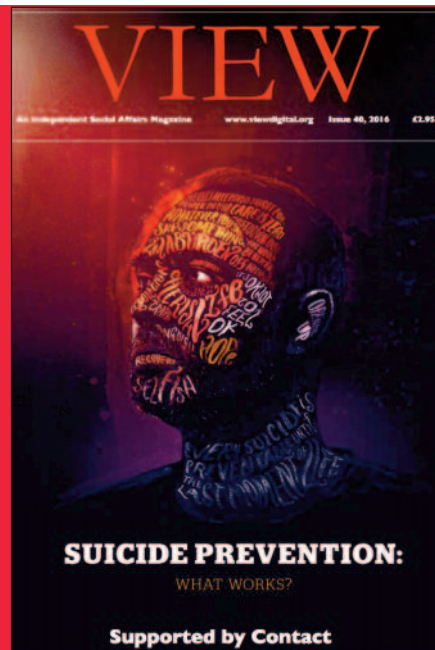
In particular, we investigate ‘shared’ and ‘integrated’ education models in Northern Ireland; we look at Omagh, Co Tyrone, where in August 1998 the town centre was devastated by a bomb which killed 29 people.

The spotlight on education also moves to Bosnia, where last year a group of pupils in the town of Jajce raised their voices against segregation by protesting in the streets, jointly displaying Bosnian and Croatian flags. We asked a local reporter for an update.

Teachers, as well as politicians, academics and campaigners have given us their views on educating children in Northern Ireland today.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this edition of **VIEW**.

Especially our guest editor, columnist and commentator Alex Kane.



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Editorial

VIEW, an independent social affairs
magazine in Northern Ireland



**By guest editor,
columnist and
commentator
Alex Kane**

In a poll for LucidTalk in March 2016 over 1,000 respondents were asked how important “educating children of all communities within one common system” was? Eighty-two percent of Protestants/Catholics agreed that it was either important or very important.

The poll didn’t specifically mention integrated education, but “within one common system” can, for all intents and purposes, be taken to mean that.

In a poll three years earlier 68 percent said that the issue of segregated education should be a priority for the Executive, with 57 percent saying that a target date be set for complete desegregation. Sixty-three percent agreed that the education system perpetuates division, with 77 percent believing our international image would be improved with a single education system.

These figures are nothing new. In the early 1970s research indicated similar levels of support for integrated education. Yet almost 50 years on and integrated education provision accounts for less than 10 percent of school places. Why is that?

Why are politicians seemingly unwilling to push for reform when all of the polling evidence suggests overwhelming public support for it?

Why, with the exception of Alliance and some smaller parties, is integrated education not a manifesto or Programme for Government priority?

It may be something to do with the fact that the politicians don’t believe the polls. I don’t mean that the pollsters have got it wrong – they are reporting what they’ve been told; but I think some parties believe that people are giving an answer which they believe to be the ‘socially correct’ answer. In other words, ask people if they think educating children together is a good thing and they probably will say yes.

What would be more interesting, though, is answers to questions like:

- In what ways would Northern Ireland change if there was integrated education?
- Do you think it would create the



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circumstances in which new non-sectarian parties would emerge?

- Do you think it would lead to the parking of the constitutional question?
- Do you think it would lead to greater social/housing integration?
- Do you think integrated education could be a form of 'engineering' designed to make NI a better place?
- Do you think integrated education would lead to consensus on our understanding of Northern Ireland and help to heal divisions?

My personal view is that integrated education is broadly misunderstood.

Those who champion it regard it as a ‘good thing’, the sort of ‘good thing’ which would, inevitably, make Northern Ireland a better place.

But it seems to me that those champions have failed to address the sort of questions I set out above.

I think they have failed to grasp a brutal reality, too: namely, unionist and nationalist parties will be concerned by anything which they think will do them electoral damage further down the line.

If the purpose of integrated education is to change how we think about each other, then how we think about each other say, in 20 years time, could have an electoral impact on existing unionist/ republican parties.

A simple rule of politics: don't endorse anything that could undermine you at some point.

And that's why I think we've ended up with that splendid fudge known as 'shared education'. We already have a form of that – with education spread across a number of providers.

'Shared education' is not integrated education, and nor is it a means of addressing, let alone resolving, the issue of separating our children into specific community blocs (although I accept there is now some mixing in schools) from when they can barely talk.

But one thing we do know from the last 20 years: fudge never works.



Peter Osborne, the chair of the Community Relations Council, tells **VIEW** why he believes that segregation in education is socially and morally bankrupt as a concept

There are two villages just over two miles apart. They have a population of nearly 4,000 people between them, 760 of whom are under 16 years of age. They have fewer than 300 children of primary school age.

Yet, these two villages are served by four primary schools.

The villages will remain nameless. But segregation in education will have major and lasting impact on these children as they grow up; as they develop interests and friendships, habits and life-long attitudes. These villages, like every other hamlet, village, town and city in Northern Ireland are being condemned to another generation of people living parallel lives, coming together too rarely and sometimes in conflict.

Segregation in education is socially and morally bankrupt as a concept because it reinforces societal segregation and puts strain on how people live their lives, promoting a separate psyche.

Segregation in education is helping to economically bankrupt how Northern Ireland is governed with millions invested in duplication of buildings, resources and services. A 2015 Ulster University Cost of Division study showed the number of surplus places in the Controlled and Catholic Maintained sector (32,000 and 35,000 respectively) was costing between £14 million and £93 million each year – and that was for primary school

provision alone. Yet we regularly hear about lack of money within the education sector including delays in infrastructure investment and schools shaving a few thousand pounds off their budgets by making classroom assistants redundant.

That is not to advocate a particular system. There is much to be positive about in all forms of education in Northern Ireland, although too many young people are still left behind; often those young people are living in the most disadvantaged communities and in the most segregated areas.

The duplication and waste of the existing system, the moral and social dysfunction that it causes, requires change.

Those who advocate ending segregation in education are often accused of social engineering. Yet the greatest practice of social engineering is that which keeps young people apart in their formative years, a segregation which is then easier to sustain in succeeding years.

There is even segregation in teacher training. Imagine if your child wanted to be a GP. Would you say to them: if you want to cure Protestants then you'll go to this college but if you want to cure Catholics then you'll go to this different college? Would you add: you can't actually treat Catholics as well as Protestants – can you?

How absurd would that be?

Yet it effectively happens in teacher training, costing over £2 million additional public subsidy annually to keep segregated teacher training colleges open; and with significantly more teachers trained each year than we actually need. No wonder many unemployed young teachers emigrate to get a job.

Sharing makes a positive difference but all programmes and systems should demonstrate a continuum of moving children and young people from segregation to meaningful learning and developing together, sustainable beyond the latest round of funding.

It is systemic change that is needed.

In the USA 50 years ago Martin Luther King did as much as anyone to end segregation in education. He once said true compassion isn't tossing a few coins to a beggar you pass in the street; true compassion acknowledges that the system giving rise to beggars needs changed.

True wisdom in Northern Ireland is realising that the systems giving rise to segregated living over many years need to change; true courage is then speaking out for change.

Acknowledging the cost of maintaining segregation in education is a first step. More people from all walks of civil society need to speak out to recognise the wrong being done to our children and our collective, shared future.

COMMENT

A struggle to provide shared learning



Chris Donnolly, vice-principal of Holy Cross Boys' Primary School in north Belfast, argues that Northern Ireland remains a deeply divided society with little sign of movement towards genuine reconciliation and integration

In a few short months, the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement will be marked, a seminal date in Irish history which provided a political and constitutional framework enabling us as a society to move (albeit slowly) towards a better future.

The past 20 years have been dotted with historic occasions, developments and setbacks – including the present stalemate which has seen the institutions established through the Agreement suspended for more than a year.

But whilst there is a consensus that things have gotten better than they were during the dark years of the Troubles, in reality Northern Ireland remains a deeply divided society with little sign of movement towards genuine reconciliation and integration.

In his autobiography entitled *The Sash He Never Wore*, the legendary east Belfast born footballer Derek Dougan, wrote about how the first time he actually met a Catholic was when, aged 12, he played a Schools' Cup football match for Mersey Street school against Holy Cross Boys' School (the school of which I happily serve as vice-principal). That was in 1950.

Sixty-eight years later, it remains the case that many children born and raised in our most rigidly segregated towns, villages and working class communities are still able to reach adolescence without meeting children from the other religious and cultural background.

Integrated and shared education models exist in parallel but work towards the same objective of seeking to provide shared learning opportunities for children with the purpose of breaking down the rigid lines of division that continue to define this society.

Integrated education developed as a grassroots movement against the existing order but, whilst it has become well embedded as a sector in its own right, in reality the overwhelming majority of children continue to be educated at primary and post-primary level in schools that are identifiably Catholic or from a Controlled sector, historically acting as shorthand for Protestant.



Many children born and raised in our most rigidly segregated towns, villages and working class communities are still able to reach adolescence without meeting children from the other religious and cultural background

Shared Education was born out of a desire to design a more pragmatic means of encouraging co-operation at an institutional level between schools, but it remains a considerable challenge to believe it can effectively ensure that all of our children will meet, never mind forge strong and meaningful personal relationships, with children from the other religious and cultural backgrounds prior to becoming teenagers.

The existence of our multiple education sectors – from Controlled, integrated, Catholic and Irish-medium to grammar and non-grammar secondaries – continues to mitigate against using education as a method of promoting integration in northern Irish society. Indeed, the triumph of shared over integrated was a nod to what was deemed doable at NI Executive level in recognition of that fact.

The normalisation of our peace has led to subtle changes in school enrolments, with many schools firmly anchored in a respective education sector still managing to attract significant numbers of pupils from what typically would be regarded as the other community.

This trend of almost incidental integration (of pupil intake if not school ethos) is likely to continue to grow, most markedly in the grammar sector, as parents opt for schools they regard as best fitted for their children's educational prospects regardless of reservations about the school ethos.

This development would be consistent with patterns in many other countries, where (for instance) Catholic schools attract pupils from all religious backgrounds in spite of their defined Catholic ethos.

But these subtle changes are limited in number and scope. In the absence of significant developments with regard to the promotion of integrated education or a more assertive departmental policy on expanding the scope and reach of the existing shared education model, there will continue to be more potential in housing, and not education, delivering a more integrated society in the north of Ireland.



Shared education produces positive community impacts

Professor Tony Gallagher, above, tells Jane Hardy that the future direction of the education system in Northern Ireland is up to what parents want

A leading academic at Queen's University has traced the start of the shared education movement to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

Professor Tony Gallagher, director of research at the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work at QUB, said: "It arose from the beginnings of the peace process that presented Northern Ireland with an opportunity to look back at 25 years of education initiatives to see what their impact had been."

Prof Gallagher listed the different strategies used to unite school students from Catholic and Protestant communities. These included work on the curriculum, producing common history textbooks and new subject programmes in religion and history; the development of integrated schools; contact programmes, bringing pupils together for joint projects, and the equal opportunity approach which led to equal funding for Catholic schools.

Yet the impact had been disappointing, he said. "Every one of those (approaches) achieved something but there was little evidence of any real systemic change."

In discussions between interested parties, the idea of school collaboration began to gain ground. "Just like in many divided societies, there was a debate for years about whether we should have

separate schools, to privilege identity, or integrated schools, to privilege cohesion."

Prof Gallagher added that collaborative education was a way of neatly side-stepping that argument, adding: "If you could create a situation where schools work collaboratively in local areas, students move between schools to take classes, teachers work together, you could create something like a type of integrated experience and do it in a way everybody would be comfortable with as they weren't losing their basic foundations."

"You would also provide crucial new opportunities for dialogue between both sides of the religious divide."

On the Queen's University website, Prof Gallagher has noted that there was interest in the model of shared education from Macedonia, Malaysia and Israel, with a collaborative project in Israel already in receipt of some funding support.

Exponents of fully integrated education, though, regard the shared approach as integration lite, I pointed out.

Prof Gallagher replied: "Some people on the integrated side of the argument are hostile because they think we're providing a fig leaf to faith schools."

Prof Gallagher, who while complimentary about the parent-led integrated movement had a

counter-argument. "Integration grew to a certain size, then stalled. I was involved in early discussions when a figure of 15 percent would have been a tipping point, with the whole system moving in that direction."

Currently, integrated schools account for only seven percent of the Northern Ireland total. The reason why isn't clear, although Prof Gallagher refers to a reliance on piggyback survey data, meaning questions on education were included in general market research.

He quoted examples of good practice in the sector in schools such as Limavady High and St Mary's and Ballycastle High and Cross and Passion. But he admitted there have been problems. "There were some sectarian fights at a couple of schools but the principals of the schools made statements. There are challenges, you work with solutions. It's a very can-do approach."

Prof Gallagher said the future is up to parents. "We don't know whether in 10 to 20 years' time we'll have integrated or collaborative schools."

He added that he remains optimistic about the role of education in Northern Ireland's future, noting that shared education produces "very positive community impacts".



May Blood with pupils at Killyleagh Integrated Primary School in Downpatrick

May Blood: Donating time and effort to the cause of integration

A veteran activist for the integration movement in Northern Ireland said she initially dismissed the campaign as she believed it was aimed at middle class people – “those who could afford to choose” when it came to education.

But in 1999 May Blood, who was born and raised in Belfast and who once worked in a linen mill, presented the prizes at Hazelwood Integrated College and found she had to re-evaluate her initial opinion. “I discovered there were kids from Sandy Row, kids from the Shankill, kids from the Falls. I couldn’t believe it.”

Ms Blood, who in 1999 was offered a life peerage and a seat in the House of Lords, was invited to join the Northern Ireland Integrated Education Fund and went on to become a champion for the sector.

“I said I’d do it for a year – that was 17 years ago.” But she pointed out that it was not a panacea: “It’s not the answer to the problem of Northern Ireland, it’s part of the answer. We have to grow a whole new community so we don’t keep looking back. I think our young people who come through integrated education, and the whole education system, are beginning to

open their eyes to the world. Our education system is superior but the problem is it’s sectarian. State schools are predominantly Protestant, church schools are almost all Catholic with a few Protestants going. In the Troubles housing was split up, education was split up – it was the norm. None of the communities ever met each other.”

This has made it tough to bring Northern Ireland’s post-conflict society together, she added.

Recalling her own upbringing in the 1940s as a Protestant in west Belfast, May described a gentler world. “I was brought up in a mixed housing area. The family next door was Catholic, the family across the road was Catholic. We all went to different schools but we played together on the street. Social integration clearly worked and there was a sense of shared values. We all helped each other out, that was how I was reared.”

On the question of why integrated education has not flourished numerically, she said. “I’d love to get to 15 percent, not be at seven percent, but it’s all about fundraising.

“In 25 years the Integrated

Education Fund (IEF) has raised about £25 million, that’s a lot of fundraising.” Baroness Blood also refers to battles, even a couple of court cases, with the Department of Education over integrated status for schools.

On the question of shared education, Baroness Blood remains adamant that it is not enough.

“The problem with shared education is that students share a project or music lesson, then go back to their own schools. To me it smacks of class. Schools, who I don’t blame, have received a lot of money for this, up to £100,000 for three years. With integration, pupils stay in the same school and work out who has horns and who doesn’t. I can’t understand why people accept shared education but think integrated education is a step too far.”

May finished off the interview by recalling words said by former Democratic Unionist Party leader Peter Robinson.

“I remember seeing Peter Robinson about this when he was First Minister. He said: ‘It’s about evolution, May, not revolution’. And I thought: ‘What about revolution?’ We need a revolution in Northern Ireland.”

A passionate belief in integration

By Brian Pelan

At an Integrated Education Fund dinner in the House of Lords in November 2015, a young woman from Northern Ireland called Hilary Copeland gave a speech. In it she said: "When I look back now as an adult, I think about how brave we all were to take this huge leap of faith on a school with no academic record, no alumni, no reputation, no established rules or policies or records, at a time when our country seemed to have little faith in the notions of peace and co-operation."

Hilary, who is the general manager of arts organisation the John Hewitt Society, was referring to New-Bridge Integrated College in Loughbrickland, Co Down. "The school opened in 1995 and I started in 1997. I was among the first intake at New-Bridge. Its intake has grown but it had very humble origins when I went.

"As a child, I attended a local controlled primary school in Loughbrickland. The majority of the pupils, like me, were from a Protestant background. It was very much my choice to go to New-Bridge. I was very academic and got an A in my transfer test and I had a place at Banbridge Academy. I went to an open day at the Academy and also at New-Bridge. The Academy was a much bigger school, but I didn't get the same sense of warmth and welcoming that I got when I visited New-Bridge."

Since leaving the integrated college, 32-year-old Hilary has gone on to champion its ethos. "I got involved with Integrated AlumNI (a voluntary network of past pupils of integrated schools who want to support the growth of integrated education in Northern Ireland).

"We are advocates and ambassadors for the cause of integrated education."

As our interview drew to an end I asked Hilary why integrated education was still only a relatively small section in terms of the overall education system in Northern Ireland.

"Most of the integrated schools I know are over-subscribed," replied Hilary. "There is a question of places available. There is also a reluctance, when we had an Assembly, to support integrated education.

"If integrated schooling is part of the Good Friday Agreement why is it today that we have only seven percent of representation in the education sector in Northern Ireland?

"I also view shared education as still segregating pupils and highlighting the fact that they can't be educated together and that they have to wear different uniforms when they pass each other in the hall. Those pupils should be integrated together in the same school.

"But even the term 'integrated' means that we're still talking about two communities. I love the idea of us having an 'inclusive' education where everyone, faith or non-faith, can take part."

I can understand why Hilary is a good choice as an ambassador for the integrated argument. She is passionate and eloquent. We are likely to hear more about her in the future.

Advocate:
Hilary
Copeland





Principal Scott Naismith: “We create a safe space for pupils to interact”

We're naturally integrated, says **Methody** head

Journalist Jane Hardy inhales the smell of ‘polish and privilege’ as she enters Methodist College Belfast to talk to its principal Scott Naismith about his vision of ‘real equality’ for all its pupils

Once you enter the doors of Methodist College on the Malone Road in Belfast, you could almost believe you were in a private school. Its Victorian architecture and the smell of polish and privilege stands out

But 55-year-old principal Scott Naismith, who has held the position for the past 11 years, maintains that his school is about “real equality”.

He said the school valued all its nearly 2,000 students from whatever background – “some for their academic success, some for other qualities that they bring”.

The school is multicultural, with more than 13 ethnic groups represented among its intake. He pointed out that Quakers are represented, as well as students from all the main religions.

He argued that the school is in a sense “naturally integrated”.

But in Department of Education terms, the Methodist Church-funded

college, which pulls in yearly contributions of £140 from parents, plus £560 per annum towards extra-curricular activities, is a selective grammar school.

Families who haven't got this extra cash for school trips or music lessons can apply to a fund set up by former Methody students. The discretionary fund is disbursed by the principal and financed by annual contributions from the former pupils' association.

We discuss the question of compulsory religious education and how that fits the needs of his mixed student body. Mr Naismith said: “We're required to have a religious message. At the start of each term, we look at themes representing universal ideas and values.”

The school has a chapel of unity which Mr Naismith emphasised is open to pupils of all faith backgrounds.

“We wrote to parents of Muslim students when Ramadan coincided with the examination period, saying that the

chapel was open to their children as a quiet space.”.

Does he feel that education, even the informally integrated secondary education version on offer at Methody, can actually change society here?

The answer from Mr Naismith, who is from Motherwell near Glasgow, was a passionate “yes”.

He recounted how during a report in the last few years to an education committee, a group of Methodist College students was apparently asked how they viewed students from the opposite camp, ie Protestants or Catholics. “They said: ‘We don't care, we really don't care.’”

Mr Naismith revealed that one of the reasons he took the job was because of his belief in the transformative power of secondary education in Northern Ireland. He said: “My vision for the college aspires to modelling how Belfast and Northern Ireland should be. We create a safe space for pupils to interact.”



An artist's impression of the new Strule shared campus in Omagh, Co Tyrone

New **flagship schools** project hit by delays and rising costs

By Brian Pelan

One of the most visible signs of the shared education project is the building of the new Strule campus in Omagh, Co Tyrone.

It was reported in the media in September last year that the opening of the campus, which will cost almost £60 million more than first estimated, will now be delayed by a year.

The campus, which will involve six schools, had been due for completion before September 2020 but it will not be finished until up to 12 months later due to "procurement issues".

Last year it emerged that converting the former Lisanelly military barracks would cost almost £160 million compared to original estimates of £100 million.

A mix of grammar, non-grammar, Catholic, state and special schools will occupy the site. Each will have their own buildings, but will share other facilities in an attempt to increase opportunities for collaboration.

So far just one school has opened – Arvalee School and Resource Centre – which was built at a cost of £8.2 million.

In addition to Arvalee, the five schools signed up to the project are Loreto Grammar, Omagh High, Sacred Heart College, Omagh Academy and Christian Brothers Grammar.

Drumragh Integrated College had been invited to be part of

the proposed shared campus at Lisanelly but instead opted for a building of its own.

Former West Tyrone Sinn Fein MP Barry McElduff said in a news report in the Irish News: "This is indisputably an iconic project which will help to meet the best educational interests of many people in the Omagh area for generations to come."

"There is strong political and community consensus around the development of six schools on a single site – it has been consistently identified as a programme for government priority with ring-fenced capital funding."

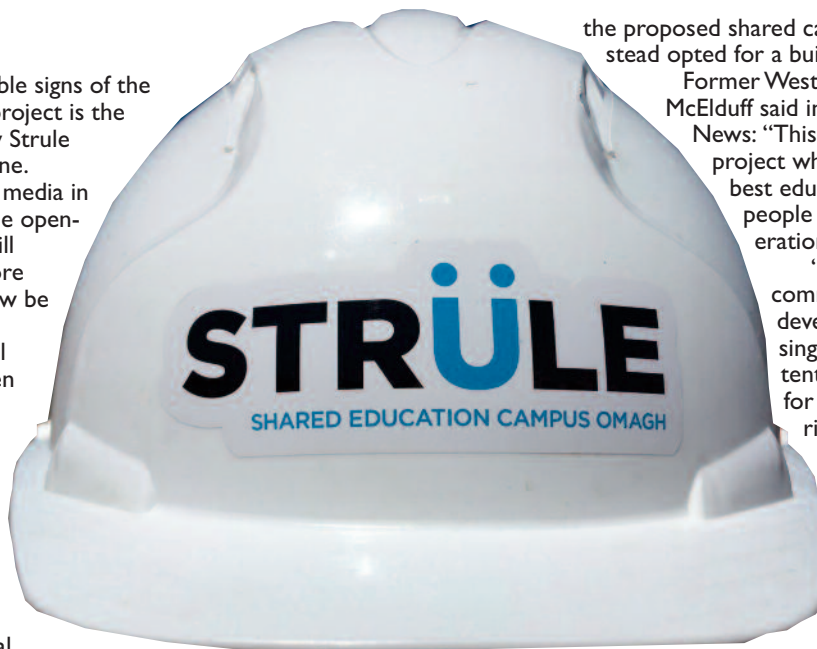
A spokesman for the Department of Education spokesperson said the completion date had been revised in order to resolve a "number of important, emergent issues".

About 4,000 pupils will eventually go to school on the campus, which includes some shared areas, such as sports facilities.

Education adviser Seamus Bradley told the Tyrone Herald the Strule campus was likely to be the first of its kind globally.

"We have not seen anything of the scale, size and level of investment anywhere before. It really is going to be a completely different and unique model for the provision of education."

• For more information go to <https://strule.org/>



VIEW asked people in Omagh for their opinions on shared/integrated education



Eileen McGale: “I think integrated education is great. It should have been in years ago.”



Sinead McParland: “Yes. I think integrated education is good. It’s moving things forward.”



Mary McParland: “Integrated education should have been done 100 years ago.”

Words: Anton McCabe Images: Jim Dunne



Maebhe McMullan: “I think schools can overcome community divisions. I don’t know if they’re the main contributing factor. I had friends who went to an integrated school and they loved it. They do so much and celebrate so many different events.”



John McGarvey: “I think integrated is part of the educational offering out there. It’s what best fits your child. A lot of times it comes to what does the school offer from a point of view of pastoral care?”



Marian McGarvey: “Integrated is part of what is on offer. We come from a Catholic background, and for us, that’s an important factor. That’s why we chose to send our children to the Christian Brothers and the Loreto. It’s where we went to school.”

STRULE CAMPUS

A possible blueprint for combined schooling



Professor Bob Salisbury, who had a distinguished career in education and now lives near Omagh, argues that political and religious leaders must move with speed towards a combined system which educates all of our young people together

I am delighted that the educational village is being developed: with vision and courage this has the potential to become a blueprint for combined schooling in Northern Ireland.

Our current educational structure has to change because it is failing too many of our young people, is unaffordable and divisive. Segregated education is one of the root causes of the social unrest, mistrust 'of the other side', and is a crucial factor in prolonging the ongoing tensions which exist in this small country.

Political and religious leaders must move with speed towards a combined system which educates all of our young people together. As trust grows and pragmatism prevails, the Strule campus should become a pathfinder for this aim which, hopefully, others will follow.

Our present school system is not fulfilling the needs of our young people for the next 20 to 30 years; we are still looking back to a world which is no longer relevant. Flexibility and adaptability, global awareness, co-operation and networking, confidence in meeting ever-changing circumstances, technological competence and high-quality communication skills are vital attributes for all children who are currently moving through our schools.

Unfortunately, many of our schools are stuck in the past and are still preoccupied with putting the traditions of their institutions, in an 'exam factory' environment, before the 21st century needs of all of our young people.

If our schools were highly successful there might be some virtue in maintaining the status quo, but sadly this is not the case. Some students do achieve high academic results but there is still a long tale of underachievement, especially in the inner city areas, where outcomes are among the worst in the whole of Europe.

Consideration of the future shape of our schools must also take into account the current financial situation. Government funding will continue to decline and already far too many schools are running deficit budgets, cutting extra-curricular activities and reducing opening hours in order to make ends meet (it seems inconceivable that parents will put up with



Logistically 'shared' educational schemes have a finite limit because planning joint timetables, arranging transport of staff and students quickly begins to exert a negative influence on the rest of the school

schools reducing contact time – this is an easy way out and the only ones who suffer are the students, as always.) We are now living beyond our means because there are too many small schools and too many 'types' of school, so the overall pot of money is spread too thinly. Combined schooling on the Strule campus has the capacity to be a more workable and affordable option.

Duplication of courses in post-16 schools and colleges is also wasteful and limiting for students. School sixth forms generally offer restricted curricular packages (if you take this, you can't take that, etc); they compete unashamedly with neighbouring schools for students and are not cost-effective.

Developing a combined post-16 system on the Strule campus would give a much wider choice of modern subjects, would be economically sustainable, but above all, would be of greater benefit to the students.

'Shared education' is a start but is certainly not a long-term solution. Some schemes are clearly designed as a survival device to protect small schools which may be under threat from closure, thus prolonging the issues raised above.

Educational outcomes are usually reported as very positive, though are often ill-defined and difficult to quantify. This prompts the obvious question: if these schemes work so well on restricted contact, why not fully combine?

Logistically, 'shared' educational schemes have a finite limit because planning joint timetables, arranging transport of staff and students quickly begins to exert a negative influence on the rest of the school.

Furthermore, there is usually a substantial financial cost involved in this process and it is reasonable to ask if the funding ceases, as seems likely, will these initiatives survive?

For years now I have been asking the question: 'What do we actually lose if we have combined schooling?' And so far I have been unable to get any rational response. Hopefully, as the Strule campus develops, it will prove that in working together we lose nothing and gain plenty.

DRUMRAGH INTEGRATED COLLEGE



Nigel Frith, head of Drumragh Integrated College in Omagh

Image: Jim Dunne

‘Complete respect for all pupils’

Drumragh Integrated College in Omagh recently submitted its third request to expand to the Department of Education, after two refusals. Journalist Anton McCabe talks to its head Nigel Frith

Nigel Frith, head of Omagh’s Drumragh Integrated College, believes the town needs both Drumragh and the proposed shared education complex on the site of a former Army camp, where the town’s other five second-level schools will be located.

“If the town’s other second-level schools can share meaningfully on the new site “then that’s brilliant, and I hope that the site thrives. The more these children are going to be mixing together – and hopefully, this is what the shared campus is going to achieve in the long term – the more they will actually start to develop friendships.”

However, integration is a different model. “We have children from all backgrounds, faiths and cultures coming through the front door,” Mr Frith said.

“They are here all day, every day, so there is difference number one.

“Drumragh’s children are Protestant, Catholic, Hungarian, Polish, Northern Irish – all together. We’re not even into the word ‘tolerance’. This is about something a great deal more positive, about mutual respect.”

He knows subjects such as Religious Education (RE) and History can be difficult. “The staff here are trained and skilled in delivering RE, History and any other subject in a way that is completely embracing, and there is no bias, and they are simply saying to the children: ‘Let us understand what has happened,’” he said.

“Let’s understand these different faiths and religions, let’s understand how Protestants operate, how Catholics operate, how people of other faiths operate, let’s respect it, let’s ask the really big questions of life, and you be sure of what you believe in your own values, and that’s one of the outcomes of the journey.”

Drumragh deals with potentially contentious issues. “Our approach to



We have children from all backgrounds, faiths and cultures coming through the front door

Remembrance and Ash Wednesday is very strategic,” Mr Frith said. “If we take Remembrance first, we take part in the ceremony on the Sunday morning of Remembrance Day. We have the Drumragh wreath as well, and we lay the wreath at the Cenotaph.

“Our approach to Remembrance within the school is we define Remembrance for the entire student body. Remembrance means two things, basically. One is that anyone who has defended our freedom and lost their life in doing it, we owe them a debt of gratitude.

“And secondly, the history of mankind is not a great one in terms of conflict. Surely, we can learn the lessons of history and do a better job. Let’s learn those lessons of history through Remembrance.

“For Ash Wednesday, we don’t have

separate ceremonies. The entire school meets together. We invite both Protestant and Catholic clergy to come in and take part in our services. We don’t use the words Protestant or Catholic. We begin the ceremony by saying let’s all reflect today on the way we live our lives. If there are changes to be made, let’s make those changes. And halfway through the service we say: ‘If you would like to receive the ashes today you’re welcome to do so. If you would rather not, equally, simply remain in your seat’.

“We play some music, have a powerpoint presentation with some images and quotations, and we simply ask the children to think, to reflect, to pray – which ever they choose.”

Another strength of the integrated model is that Drumragh is all-ability. “We have a thriving special needs department here,” Mr Frith said. “A lot of children, who are the most amazing young people, are helped with the difficulties that they have in their learning.

“Equally, we have a gifted and talented programme. One of the most exciting things is that you can have children who are on both the gifted and talented programme and the special needs register at the same time, and where else could you find a school system that can achieve both. I find that really exciting.”

Drumragh Integrated College has recently submitted its third request to expand to the Department of Education, after two refusals.

Within a decade, Mr Frith is looking at Omagh having an integrated campus, with Omagh Integrated Primary School beside the college.

“We will still be two separate schools, with separate governance, but this overarching umbrella that is the integrated ethos will be what unites us in practice.”

CRIS – helping to construct **bridges** between schools and communities



Lisa Dietrich, director of CRIS, with her award, after the Buddy Up project was honoured at the Intercultural Innovation Awards at the United Nations headquarters in New York

Community Relations In Schools (CRIS) is a charity that has been involved in innovative peace-building work since 1982.

The organisation was born out of the context of a contested society, yet its work is just as relevant now as it was in the early 1980s.

CRIS's work is – and always has been – firmly rooted in the belief that relationship and trust-building is at the core of creating change.

Schools are located at a critical and unique position within communities and therefore provide a great opportunity to further this goal.

As well as being a capacity-building support agent for schools, (including practice and skills development to work with Good Relations themes and developing collaborative partnerships), CRIS increasingly focuses its attention on co-developing creative and innovative ways of engaging families in shared education and peace-building activities.

This whole school community approach enables safe encounter of one another to happen; it supports the normalisation of sharing; movement between communities, and respect and understanding for cultural diversity.

For over a decade now CRIS has been at the forefront of championing Good Relations and Collaborative Education (GRACE) as a model for the furtherance of a reconciled society. A conference to launch this model and digital training resource will take place in March and will showcase several case studies across Northern Ireland.

A key example of this practice is a

ground-breaking initiative named 'Antrim and Randalstown Schools: Moving Forward Together' partnership – an education and community partnership comprised of 19 nursery, primary, post-primary and special schools from the maintained, controlled, and integrated education sectors.

Since its establishment in 2014 the partnership has delivered numerous inter-school community relations, sports, music, special education and shared education programmes for hundreds of children, young people, parents and school staff from the Antrim town and Randalstown areas.

At a recent school/community fun run event involving hundreds of young people, Philip Lavery, chair of Moving Forward Together (MFT) and vice-principal of Mount St Michael's Primary School, Randalstown, said: "The name of the partnership says it all, really – this is about us all moving forward together. And for that to happen it takes more than just one individual, organisation or school. It takes all of us – meeting, talking, learning, sharing and achieving together."

CRIS has been delighted its practice has been recognised by policy makers and others involved in the education and peace-building sector. In 2013, the Together Building a United Community (TBUC) strategy highlighted the 'Buddy System' in one of its headline actions to be rolled out to nursery and primary schools across Northern Ireland.

More recently the Buddy Up project, a collaborative venture between CRIS and two nursery schools in north and west Belfast (Holy Cross Nursery School in

Ardoyne and Edenderry Nursery School in the Shankill) scooped third place in a highly competitive global competition. Held at the United Nations headquarters in New York, the Intercultural Innovation Awards were born from a partnership between the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC) and the BMW Group.

This cutting-edge Buddy Up project was selected from more than 1,300 applications from across 130 countries by an international jury of experts. It is the first time a project from Northern Ireland has received this award.

Buddy Up is a journey that spans 20 years, when the two school principals first met to see what they could do to help build bridges between their communities.

Two parents involved in the Buddy System said: "It's hard to put it down in words. For us, the Buddy System is inspiring. It built our children's confidence and it built our confidence. It allowed us to open up to who we are. It has given us great hope for our children's future."

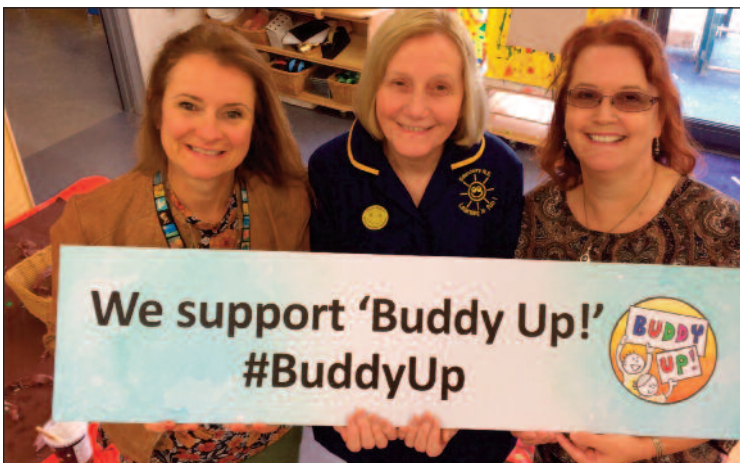
The website www.buddyup.org provides resources and support for schools and other groups who are keen to get involved. It also puts forth a call for action to 'buddy up for peace'.

CRIS would like to sincerely thank the Community Relations Council and its staff for their continued support and encouragement.

• If you would like to learn more about CRIS, please look up our website: www.crisni.org or join us on Facebook at 'Community Relations In Schools'.



Friendship: Buddies from Nursery School Year 2016-2017 posing for CRC's Community Relations and Cultural Awareness Week last September 2017



Clockwise, from above, left: Nancy Magrath, principal of Edenderry Nursery School (left) with Anne McLaren, shared parent worker and Nuala Gallagher, former principal of Holy Cross Nursery School. Philip Lavery, chair of MFT and the MFT shared choir at the Dunadry Hotel, December 2017. This event was supported by Shared Education Signature Project. And school principals and parents at Holy Cross Nursery School in north Belfast

Community Relations Council

The funding and development agency for community relations



- **We want you to get involved**

The Council has always believed that individuals and local communities have a vital role in peace building and has developed a range of practical support that groups and individuals can access.

- **Development Support**

Do you have an idea but aren't quite sure what the next steps are in making it a reality? Dedicated CRC staff are available to discuss your proposals and to offer practical advice in how best you can take your idea forward.

Practical Resources

CRC has a range of practical resources and training materials that are available at little or no cost. (Please see CRC web site for more information)

- **Funding Support**

The CRC operates a range of grant schemes, which open at various times in the year. Full details and application forms are available to download from the CRC website on www.nicrc.org.uk.

One of the most popular grant schemes is the Community Relations/Cultural Diversity (CR/CD) Scheme. The CR/CD scheme is aimed at increasing opportunities for people from differing traditions to develop relationships of trust and understanding and the confidence to address issues of difference between them.

Grants of up to £10,000 are available per application and approximately 180 grants are awarded each financial year. Most grant applications awards would fall between £2 and £5k.

- **For further information on this and all of the services available from CRC, please refer to our web site, www.nicrc.org or contact us on Tel: +44 (0) 28 9022 7500 Email: info@nicrc.org.uk**

COMMENT

It's time to link education and housing



Professor Paddy Gray, who has worked extensively in the area of housing policy, argues that it's time to consider an integrated approach to ending segregation in Northern Ireland

I recently attended an event at the House of Lords in London to celebrate 25 years of the work of the Integrated Education Fund

Tony Carson, whose father was the late comedian Frank Carson, had invited me to the event. Frank was a great supporter of integrated education in Northern Ireland.

During the evening I was introduced to people who were genuinely interested in my work as a professor of housing.

However, when asked questions about shared education, I had to reply that whilst I knew about the good work that was being done, I wasn't up to date with key policy areas on the subject. But on the other hand, many of those I met knew very little about housing policy. Which got me thinking about why are we working in silos?

We talk about shared education and shared housing but there is little overlap to my knowledge, on policies and practices in these two crucial areas post conflict.

In 2013 the Stormont Executive published Towards Building a United Community (TBUC) with an aim to taking down all peace lines by 2023 and to strengthen the supply of mixed social housing across Northern Ireland.

The Department for Communities (DfC) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) are working with a number of housing associations to create 10 purpose-built mixed religion neighbourhoods, and to date are making progress with five of these completed. The same document set out proposals to establish 10 shared education campuses and five of these have been identified with work under way.

But it appears that there is very little overlap and the campuses are not located in areas where shared housing is being built. Would it not be more appropriate to consider areas where people are prepared to live together as areas that might attract children to shared education?

The TBUC strategy even deals with education and housing in separate sections again with little overlap.

In early 2016 the first peace line was



Would it not be more appropriate to consider areas where people are prepared to live together as areas that might attract children to shared education?

demolished in north Belfast. The NIHE was instrumental in brokering a deal with local communities which demonstrated how housing organisations have been, and are, a major influence, when it comes to our divided communities.

Not only are new housing estates being built by housing associations to cater for those who want to live in integrated housing but the NIHE itself is working across neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland to develop cohesion and integration on existing estates.

Where people may not actually live together they may wish to share activities, what we would call 'activity integration'. Many of these activities could be developed in the new integrated schools that are being developed or indeed within existing segregated schools.

This does happen in some areas but more could be done across the education and housing spheres. Today the terminology in housing, right across the United Kingdom, is dominated by community investment and social enterprises. There has been a consensus that social housing should aim to deal with disadvantage and not create it.

The NIHE and housing associations are well placed to invest in their communities and to encourage community development initiatives. They can tackle high unemployment rates in neighbourhoods by helping people into work through boosting knowledge and skills. Where better to do this than working in partnership with education through courses within schools as well as providing work placements for those in secondary and higher education.

Housing organisations are creating community spaces and neighbourhood services to improve well being and help people live happier and healthy lives and working with education establishments would provide a perfect combination.

Let's not talk about integrated education and integrated housing separately.

Let's instead have an integrated approach to tackling segregation.

VIEWS from The Hill

Jane Hardy asked the main political parties for their take on the shared/integrated education discussion in Northern Ireland and where should funding best be allocated?



Peter Weir, DUP education spokesperson and former Education Secretary, said:

We have a mixed education model in Northern Ireland, with a range of sectors. While that probably wouldn't be the case if we were starting afresh today, we are not starting from a blank page.

We need to respect the rights of parents to make their own choices. There is, however, a caveat that I would put to this, which is driven by a level of practicality, as obviously you can't and shouldn't have a street on every street corner.

At a certain level there is a false level of dichotomy between shared and integrated education, and you can have a level of shared education that can lead to fully integrated education.

The emphasis in education has got to be on a number of things, including the needs of pupils and of the schools estate as a whole, particularly in the current stringent financial context.

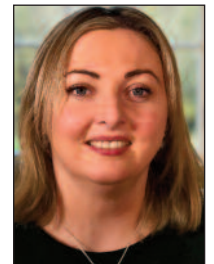
I introduced a review of the funding formula in terms of distribution. Areas of social deprivation get extra funding, but the question is how you balance funding across the system in a fair and equitable manner?



Sinn Féin MLA and education spokesperson Karen Mullan said:

Sinn Féin recognise the importance of parental choice in education. We recognise the valuable role that integrated education plays within our diverse education system.

Sinn Féin have shown our active support for integrated schools under several Sinn Féin education ministers. Where demand for an integrated school is established we will continue to support the provision of integrated schools.



Rosemary Barton, Ulster Unionist MLA and education spokesperson, said:

Northern Ireland's education system remains deeply divided and this is something I believe has to change. It's not productive socially and it's causing a duplication of services which we simply can't afford to go on paying for indefinitely.

I believe shared education, in which children and schools are brought together in a meaningful and pragmatic matter, does have an important role to play in bringing the differing school sectors together.

However, I also believe to secure the real benefits of educating children together, shared education has to be part of a longer term process leading ultimately to a single education system for Northern Ireland.

Of course, whilst I recognise this will not happen today or tomorrow, I believe it is something Northern Ireland should be working towards.





SDLP children and young people spokesperson Colin McGrath said:



The SDLP believes that a high-quality education system is the cornerstone of a progressive society and that it plays a vital role in preparing children and young people for the future. We believe that an investment in educating children is an investment in our economy and in our ability to compete globally. Equipping our pupils with cutting-edge skills will create a sustainable, vibrant economy able to generate modern jobs in the future.

The SDLP is committed to parental choice and access for pupils to faith-based, integrated, Irish-medium and state education. We want to see local schools based within and supported by local communities. To that end, the SDLP believes that pupils should be supported, and funded, in the route that they choose to go down. There has been a systemic failure to provide schools with the funding that they require. Principals and teachers have had to do a lot more with a lot less over the last number of years.

In terms of education funding, we are at breaking point – the SDLP is hearing that message again and again. School budgets have already been cut to the bone and any further reductions will have a disastrous impact on the quality of education that our young people receive.

Alliance Party spokesperson on integrated education, Kellie Armstrong MLA, said:



Alliance is committed to an integrated school system. This means enabling parents and schools: to transform an existing school to become integrated, to develop and grow integrated schools to ensure they can provide a place for every child and family who wish to attend, and to review the shared education provision to ensure children who attend other schools have an opportunity to come together in an effective education programme – “not just to kayak or climb walls” as one group of pupils have highlighted to me.

The reason integrated education is stuck with the seven percent figure is because we have reached the current capacity available to integrated schools. For many parents, it is not appropriate to expect our children to attend a non-integrated school. Many of the so called ‘mixed schools’ do not have an integrated ethos with young people confirming their minority identity was ignored, not nurtured, in their controlled school. If Northern Ireland is to respect the parental choice, then the Department of Education and its minister has to enable more provision of integrated education to meet demand.

Alliance remains committed to integrated education. We would like to see measurement of the outcomes being achieved by shared education and a deliberate move towards the Fermanagh Trust model of shared education that brings not only the local students together but has a whole community development at its core. Too many people in education and politics have a vested interest in educating children apart.



Steven Agnew, Green Party leader, said:

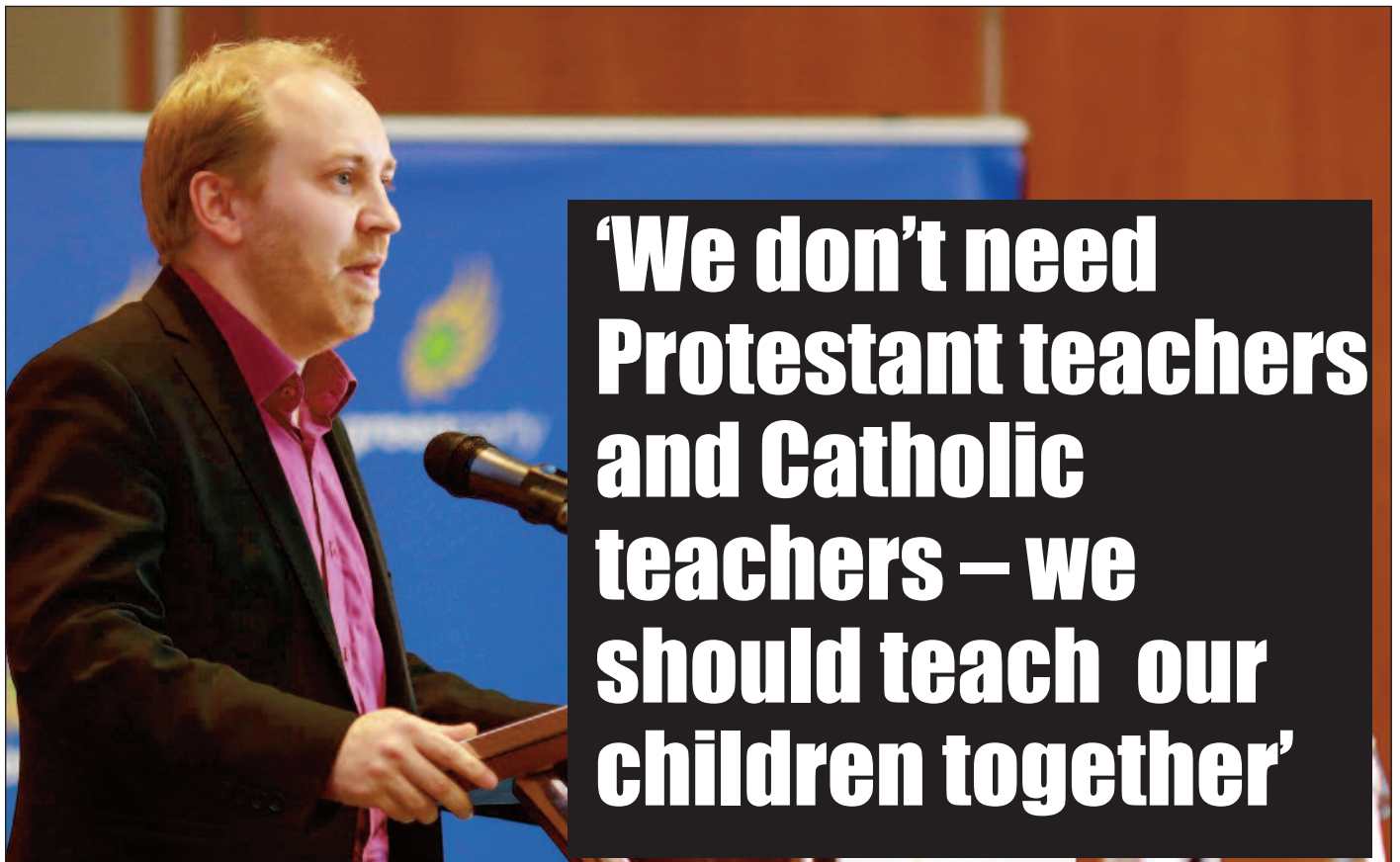


We cannot expect to heal the divisions in our society while we continue to divide our children from the age of four years old.

The Green Party believes that integrated education should be given priority. In my view at its worst, the so-called ‘shared education’ model is nothing more than a way of condemning another generation of children to segregation. It is time for the Department of Education to step up and meet its obligation to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education.



• **Read our interview with Steven Agnew on page 20**



Green Party leader Steven Agnew, above, tells Brian Pelan why he firmly rejects the argument for shared education

Green Party leader Steven Agnew didn't mince his words when he wrote about shared education in 2014 for the Belfast Telegraph.

"Imagine... children from both a Protestant and Catholic community background going to the same school building for their education. Imagine them going to the same classrooms (at different times), using the same sports facilities (at different times) and going to the same assembly hall (at different times) in different uniforms.

"To paraphrase Martin Luther King: I have a dream that my two little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by their perceived religious background but by the content of their character.

"I have a dream today. But the reality of shared education is a nightmare."

I went to Stormont recently to talk to Steven about why he held such strong views on the subject.

Since the collapse of the Assembly the building has the air of an empty ghostly vessel, patiently awaiting the return of its inhabitants.

Amidst the eery silence, I sat down to interview the Green Party leader in his office. And unsurprisingly, he hadn't changed his opinion in the slightest.

"I was fairly academic when I was at school so on the whole it was a fairly positive experience. I briefly had DUP MP Sammy Wilson as my economics teacher.

How did you find him, I asked.

"As I always say: 'He was a good teacher, he should have stuck to it.'"

I got the feeling that Steven has been asked this question before and laughs as he gives his reply.

"Economics always made sense to me despite some people's perception of the Greens."

Given that he was educated in the state sector – mainly attended by Protestants, one of his first interactions with Catholics was donating blood at one of their schools. "It was an initiative set up by the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service. Catholic pupils would come to our schools to donate blood and vice versa."

We then went on to discuss his description of the "reality of shared education as a nightmare".

"I think there is a spectrum when it comes to shared education," said Steven.

"There will be good and bad practice as it evolves. I think at its worst it will be two schools – one Catholic, one Protestant – going into two different ends of the same building, wearing different uniforms with different principals and each having a different ethos.

"To me, that is worse than what we have now. If you put a bunch of kids in the same space together but put on different ties – then that is the symbol – they are different than us.

"The 'nightmare' scenario is that

instead of what I think integration does, which is educating children together, shared education, at its worse, will educate children separately in the same space.

"If you bring children together, without bringing them together under the same ethos, you are saying that these people are different from you."

He rejected the argument that shared education, whilst perhaps with a much slower progress, will in time lead to more integration.

"You have to go back to the context of why did shared education happen? Said Steven. "We received report after report saying we had empty school desks, empty classrooms, too many schools for the number of pupils. We need a solution and realise that this is unsustainable.

"The reason why I think that it is a nightmare, because that was the opportunity when we should have had integrated education.

"Instead of the powers-that-be (the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), Protestant churches, the DUP and Sinn Fein), who wanted to retain having different schools, supported the concept of shared education.

"We don't need Protestant teachers and Catholic teachers – we should teach our children together."

However, he remains optimistic about the future for integrated education despite the challenges.



Barbara Ward:
the chair
for the
Shared
Education
Learning
Forum
(SELF)

‘Shared education is not a **halfway** house to integrated education...’

Barbara Ward, former principal of a Catholic school, tells Una Murphy why she is excited about the plan to build a new shared campus in Ballycastle in Co Antrim

By Una Murphy

We want shared education to have impact, Barbara Ward, the chair for the Shared Education Learning Forum (SELF), told VIEW magazine.

She was the principal of Cross and Passion College in Ballycastle, Co Antrim, for 17 years before taking up the post with SELF. Her former school will be part of a new shared campus with Ballycastle High School in a few years' time.

“We want children who can participate in a culturally diverse society,” she told me when we met in Belfast. “It is not a halfway house to integrated education.”

Shared education will have a generational impact in Ballycastle from school pupils from Cross and Passion College and Ballycastle High School forming friendships to their grandparents, Ms Ward said. “The two schools are enabling pupils to get to know each other as people,” she added.

The planned shared school campus in the Co Antrim town will be the culmination of years of working together by the two schools – which have been described as a “width of a road” in distance

from one another; this includes amending school timetables and holidays.

The two schools share GCSE and A-level subjects including Religion and History classes and the teaching staff “have to deal with issues which could have created divisions in the class”, she said.

“Teaching skills are essential to devising learning experiences to break down barriers and to look at challenges that they (the teachers) and the children might face.”

In a sense the Ballycastle shared school campus is the poster child for shared education in Northern Ireland, as the two schools took part in the announcement by the Northern Ireland Department of Education about the shared school campuses in July 2014.

The shared school campus in Omagh, Co Tyrone, is discussed on page 10 in this edition of VIEW. Another shared school campus is planned for Limavady, Co Derry.

“Stereotypical myths are being challenged by young people who can go into a Catholic school with its symbolism such as the GAA roll of honour and controlled schools with their roll of honour for the war dead of World War One,” she said.

“It is not just about ticking boxes, shared education is a passion and belief in what it can offer a community.”

Ms Ward, along with the principal of Ballycastle High School Ian Williamson, told Northern Ireland politicians at Stormont in October 2014 how their two schools shared lessons and even allowed their sixth formers into the town at the same time for lunch.

Politicians in the education committee heard evidence from the principals during an inquiry into shared and integrated education in October 2014.

Ms Ward told them that shared learning started with teenagers in both schools studying for GCSE exams “but each school has its own identity and ethos. This offers parents a choice of their child receiving a faith-based education or not”.

Mr Williamson told the politicians that “the initial desire to build on meeting an education need has grown and developed over decades into a symbiotic relationship which has resulted in the success story that the arrangement in Ballycastle has become.”

Ms Ward is now taking the shared education message beyond Ballycastle, with more events planned by SELF this year.

Joe Kenny, who is blind, tells **VIEW** why he is a huge supporter of fully integrated education



Proud parent: Joe Kenny, who works in the voluntary sector in Belfast, with his children Struan, Oisin and Niamh

I'm now 40 and I have never heard one convincing argument yet for educating young people in anything but a fully integrated environment. I'm totally blind, as blind as it gets, really, and I was educated in a special school for children with visual and hearing loss for all but the first year of my formal education.

I lost my sight aged five due to complications from congenital glaucoma. Back then, in the early 1980s, a rural primary school simply couldn't cope with a child who was blind or who had poor sight.

My remaining memories of Primary One involve me sitting in the corner under a bright lamp, away from the rest of the class, tracing shapes in a book with a really thick crayon. During that year I developed an eye infection and lost my sight – more or less overnight – in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast.

I now joke that as disabled kids needing educated in the 1980s, we weren't even entitled to segregated education like our sighted siblings and peers. We were all sent to a special school and that was that.

Over the years I've made no secret of the fact that I believe our standard of education was low compared to that of my sighted peers who attended mainstream education. I don't believe we were pushed enough academically. I left there in 1995, a year later than mainstream school leavers, with only six GCSEs to show for my time.

At 17 when I was finishing school, everyone else was halfway through their A-levels or already starting work.

All that said, we had an integrated school, we were educated in a totally

integrated and non-denominational environment. Yes, we had separate Religious Education classes and every so often a priest would appear to say Mass and half of us stayed and the other half didn't. The rest of the curriculum and recreation time was spent with Protestant and Catholics and any other faith or religion all together, and guess what, we all survived and our souls have as much chance of Heaven or Hell as they ever did.

Green or Orange, and those who couldn't see the difference anyway, laughed and ran, fought and played together, wearing the same uniform and not giving a



Every time another child is treated differently... another brick is added to that wall

thought to how unusual this was in terms of wider Northern Ireland society. When I grew up a bit and learnt the darker, more adult ways of the world, I knew how lucky we'd been, and still carry this with me today.

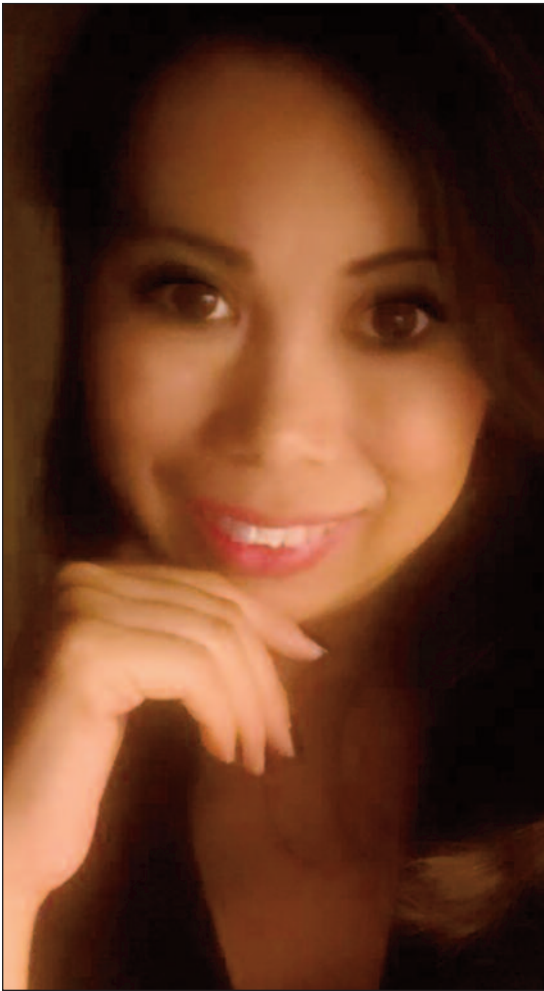
To me there was a lot lacking in terms of our formal education, but whether by accident or design, they got a little functioning pocket of cultural integration in a small school outside Belfast. Given that it was the 1980s/1990s, I still thank my lucky stars that I managed to duck at least one attempt at brain washing tribalism along the way.

Whether we're talking about integrated education in terms of religion or physical/sensory disability, our expectations and our future outlook are absolutely shaped by those early school years.

If we want our adults of tomorrow to be well adjusted, outward looking, go-getters, then surely by now we should have realised the benefits of inclusive and integrated education.

Every time a child is treated differently or forced to take a separate path, or is told "no you can't", because of their disability or background, another brick is added to that wall and when they grow up, climbing back over that wall can be tricky, sometimes impossible.

You don't get a second crack at school. Yes, you can go back to education in later life. School is so much more than academic achievement, though. It's where a little person learns to be a big person and where we learn what it means to belong to a tribe.



‘A long way to integration, but I live in hope’

Eileen Chan Hu, executive director/founder of CRAICNI, which focuses on integration, cohesion and inclusive action, argues that her experience of going to school as an ethnic minority child has led her to the belief that the education system must treat every pupil or student as a person

When I heard that **VIEW's** next publication was about shared/integrated education, I was very interested.

We are all aware that Northern Ireland is not a country with only two main religious groups, with many nationalities and mixed nationalities living in our 1.83 million population (Census 2011). Approximately 10 percent of the population is from an ethnic minority background. Do we have 10 percent inclusiveness in 'integrated' education?

As a child growing up, I attended my primary school as the first black, minority and ethnic child and the only one throughout my primary school years. By the time I reached grammar school, I was the second only ethnic minority pupil. The same happened at grammar school where I remained the only ethnic minority child for most of my school years there and visible in terms of colour.

What does the word 'integration' mean? In Chinese, the word literally means putting different cultures together, based on positive moral concepts. To highlight 'integration', CRAICNI is working on a Diverse Murals Project from this year and in consultation with young people, one of our participants said:

"Some of them show what people find precious about their homeland, while others show hatred of some sort to the opposing side, which I disagree with. Both parties are humans, hatred only appears from different,

conflicting values. We need more of these murals which represent the country and other people in a positive light, while keeping a bond which stops hate."— David Boriceanu

There are many excellent examples of initiatives, projects and programmes striving to work better for all our children, regardless of race, religion, faith and background. The Integrated Education Fund's reports on, 'A Primary School Good Practice Guide for Newcomer Integration and Support', 'Supporting Newcomers in Malone College', and 'A Citizens' Panel Toolkit for Schools' cite good practice and comments from young people today about what is needed.

From the focus groups with pupils, one quote sticks in my mind: "The racist taunts began in earnest. The person who made up the rhyme 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me' didn't know what they were talking about."— from an 18-year-old female student at Hazelwood Integrated College in north Belfast.

While the vision for integrated education remains for a peaceful society between Catholics and Protestants, we must not forget that sectarianism is a form of hatred, as is racism, and in Northern Ireland they sit hand in hand.

I picked the above quote as it resonated with me that as a young girl in primary school, I survived the name-calling because of the leadership of an amazing headmaster who tolerated no hatred or

bullying of any nature and the whole assembly had to learn 'Sticks and Stones will...!' after I encountered this harassment.

Today this would be known as zero-tolerance.

The fact that racism still hurts and hurts other generations below me, makes me feel very uncomfortable and shows there is a long way to integration, but I live in hope.

Integration is not about giving up our own characters, nor to focus on their differences. The hope I have is that integrated education concentrates on viewing any child, pupil or student as a person. Finally, I leave you with a positive experience from Malone College,

"This type of racism hasn't happened to me in Malone College. I have found most people to be tolerant and friendly. I have been treated with respect by the teachers, pupils and other members of staff. I find that everyone is quite interested to find out about my life, culture and religion. I get lots of opportunities to help other newcomers from Somalia with their development of the English language in our new bilingual centre. I also help out at my local youth club and my work involves bringing people from different communities together. I am happy that I have come to Northern Ireland and I am determined to work hard and make the most of the opportunities that come my way."—

Year 10 female student from Somalia.

COMMENT

Poll results show little *appetite* for change



Ulf Hansson, a politics lecturer at the School of Education, Dalarna University, Sweden, argues that there has still not been a massive change of heart when it comes to implementing integrated education in Northern Ireland

In 2013⁽¹⁾, we noticed there had been very little 'movement' regarding policies enhancing Integrated Education, we stated that Integrated Education '...has received little, if any, direct references in subsequent broad policy and specific education documents. (2013, p 51).

By 2014, however Integrated the Committee for Education had agreed to undertake an inquiry, which focused on Shared and Integrated Education.⁽²⁾

In its conclusions, the Committee – regarding Integrated Education (and its limited uptake) – urged the Department of Education (DE) to undertake an independent review of its relevant actions to-date relating to Integrated Education.

The review, presented in November 2016 contained 39 recommendations, of which the key ones emphasised the need for a more structured approach particularly regarding the transformation of schools and in area planning, engaging with local communities around innovative integrated, jointly managed and shared options.

Another recommendation was to place a duty on Department of Education (DE) and the Education Authority (EA) and a power on all other arms-length bodies to encourage, facilitate and promote integrated education.⁽³⁾ It is in the light of this, that the DE launched its new guide for the transformation of schools.⁽⁴⁾

Politically there has not been a massive change of hearts, of the larger parties the Alliance Party is still the strongest advocate of integrated education.

Its election manifestos from 2016 and 2017 refer to the placing of Integrated Education at the centre of its education policy platform. In 2017 the party referred to a detailed plan for the expansion of integrated education in Northern Ireland, wanting the next Executive to make a very clear commitment to integrated education.⁽⁵⁾

While parties such as SDLP and UPP were indifferent in 2013, by 2016 the SDLP referred to the ending of segregation in education, and in 2017 the party promoted an approach, labelled the SDLP model for integration, and in which 'all children wearing the same uniform being taught by



It is hard to envisage further movement politically as long as the DUP and Sinn Fein remain the two largest parties

the same teachers in the same classroom.

Within this framework, it is still possible to have a diversity of religious elements built into the students' weekly schedule.⁽⁶⁾ However, the UUP has remained tepid and while in 2016, referring to 'integrating' education in 2017 references were made to greater mixing within and between different schools and sectors.⁽⁷⁾

Amongst the two largest parties, Sinn Fein has referred to parental choice and has not fully endorsing Integrated Education, whereas the DUP – has remained critical of Integrated Education.⁽⁸⁾ None of the two parties referred to or discussed integrated education in their manifestos from 2016 and 2017. It is clear – based on this short resume - that while there is not an exuberance surrounding

Integrated Education, there has been some minor policy moves.

However based on election results in 2016 and 2017 it is hard to envisage further movement politically as long as the DUP and Sinn Fein remain the two largest parties, none of which exactly are ardent 'supporters' of Integrated Education.⁽⁹⁾

1: See Hansson, U., O'Connor Bones, U. & McCord, J. (2013b) Whatever happened to integrated education?. Shared Space, 15,47–62.

2: The Terms of Reference for the Committee's inquiry were, amongst other things, to review the nature and definition of Shared Education and Integrated Education across all educational phases, but also to identify the key barriers and enablers for Shared Education and Integrated Education, etc.

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/reports/education/inquiry-into-shared-and-integrated-education-vol-one.pdf>

3: Integrating Education in Northern Ireland: Celebrating Inclusiveness and Fostering Innovation in our Schools. The Report of the Independent Review of Integrated Education to Mr Peter Weir MLA, Minister for Education, Northern Ireland by Prof Margaret Topping and Mr Colm M Cavanagh November 2016
<https://www.ief.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Integrating-Education-Report.pdf>

4: Integration Works – Transforming your School Guidance
<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/integration-works-transforming-your-school-guidance>

5: Alliance Party (2017) How to change Northern Ireland. For good. Manifesto 2017

<https://allianceparty.org/document/manifesto/2017-assembly-manifesto#document>

6: SDLP (2017) Education <http://www.sdlp.ie/issues/integrating-education/>

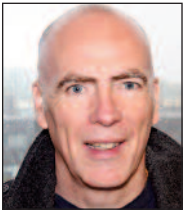
7: UUP (2017) A manifesto for real partnership. A plan for a better Northern Ireland. Manifesto 2017. See
<https://uup.org/assets/policies/uup%20ae17.pdf>

8: Its election manifesto 2009 referred to '...special privileges for integrated and Irish Medium schools, which consequently drain resources away from other sectors.' In 2015 the party referred to '...no school sector or ethos should be afforded extra statutory protection within the law'.

9: It is worth referring to the Stormont House Agreement (2014), in which there was a contribution of up to £500m over 10 years of new capital funding to support shared and integrated education (see
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/390673/Stormont_House_Agreement_Financial_Anne_x.pdf)

COMMENT

Religious *diversity* lacking in our schools



Matthew Milliken, who is conducting PhD research at Ulster University, argues that there is a risk that investing in shared education may only produce limited peace-building outcomes

Twenty years have passed since the signing of the Belfast Agreement, yet it would appear that the physical separation of the two communities that was symptomatic of the previous three decades of the Troubles is as apparent now as it had been prior to Good Friday 1998.

Peace walls are still in place. Public housing is predominantly 'single-identity'. And, in spite of a commitment included in the Agreement to "facilitate and encourage" integrated education, only around seven percent of pupils currently attend schools that have a consciously and deliberately mixed body of students and staff.

It could be argued that the integrationist zeitgeist heralded by the peace process has been replaced by a pragmatic acceptance of the status quo of community division and that the shared education policy is consistent with that mind shift; the enduring community division of schools has been accepted by the policy makers.

Significantly, whilst shared education actively encourages co-operation between schools across the divide, the focus of such initiatives is primarily upon school improvement – improvement in community relations is afforded only secondary status in the policy.

If pupils merely sit alongside one another in class without ever really engaging in discussion around the difficult issues that still affect inter-community relations, there remains a very real risk that the investment in shared education (and for that matter integrated education) will produce only very limited peace-building outcomes.

Over the years of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU), Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy and strategy (CRED) and other community relations policies in education, studies conducted with teachers have consistently indicated that they felt unprepared for engaging in the exploration of contentious issues.

This should come as little surprise to those familiar with the mechanisms that are in place for the training and deployment of teachers in Northern Ireland. These systems are singularly ill-suited to equipping teachers with the skills and mindset necessary to support the next generation to understand and



The system of division is self-sustaining – teachers are encouraged and supported to remain within 'their own side'

engage with 'the other side'. School staffrooms are, on the whole, homogenous. Schools lack the religiously diverse workforces that would be expected in other organisations.

It is also wholly plausible to expect that many in the teaching profession will have had fewer opportunities to engage with colleagues across the community divide on a daily basis than those in other places of work – at any stage of their career.

The employment of teachers in community consistent settings is underpinned by a series of policies, practices and perceptions that preserve the community division evident in the deployment of the teaching workforce.

All primary schools are required to teach Religious Education (RE) – those schools within the auspices of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) require that any teacher seeking employment have a Catholic Church-approved teaching certificate.

Whilst this is provided as a matter of course to the almost exclusively Catholic

cohort of trainee teachers that attend St Mary's, it is offered only as an optional extra at the predominantly Protestant Stranmillis. Northern Ireland has long standing Fair Employment laws, nevertheless schools are one of very few places of work here that can still use Religion as a legitimate selection criteria for employment and promotion.

The system of division is self-sustaining – teachers are encouraged and supported to remain within 'their own side'. It is wholly plausible that many teachers follow a wholly community consistent path; that they remain within a homogenous setting from primary school, to post-primary, to teaching college, to teaching practice and into employment.

Teaching is a heavily unionised profession and even the unions that teachers elect to join may reflect patterns of separation. The Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), an all-Ireland union, is strongly represented in CCMS schools, whilst the Ulster Teachers Union (UTU) (which broke away from INTO in the run up to the partition of Ireland) operates only in Northern Ireland and draws its membership predominantly from the controlled sector. Interestingly, relations between the two unions have improved in recent years and they are currently collaborating on a number of issues of common concern.

It is a bizarre paradox that whilst the cultural encapsulation evident in the teaching profession is rarely present in any other workplace, there are very few other occupations that require the worker to reach as consciously and actively across the community divide.

A combination of employment policies and practices, curriculum requirements and patterns of teacher education contribute to this separation.

If generations of teachers are to be in a position to develop the capacity to effectively prepare pupils for participation in an ever more inclusive and accepting society – through shared and/or integrated education – then they will need opportunities for meaningful cross-community professional contact, sharing and cross-over at all stages of their career.

This will require a review of the factors as outlined above that collectively serve to maintain their separation.



A school building in the town of Travnik in central Bosnia with a fence in between. The building hosts a primary school and grammar school for Croats/Catholics, while the yellow part of building is the secondary school for Bosniaks

‘Two schools under one roof is a crime equal to apartheid’



Bosnia-based journalist Katarina Panić examines a deeply-divided education system in her country which led to a year-long protest by students against ethnic segregation

When I visited Northern Ireland five years ago, my Belfast guide said that people living there are pretty certain if someone is either a Catholic or a Protestant by asking three simple questions: What is their name? Where do they live? And which school did they attend?

Today in Bosnia we don't have to go so far. Someone's name is usually enough to find out whether they are a Serb (Orthodox), Croat (Catholic) or Bosniak (Muslim).

It wasn't like that in 1991 before war broke out in the former Yugoslavia. I was 15 years of age at the time when the teachers in the grammar school I attended in my hometown of Prijedor asked pupils

to identify which ethnic group they belonged to.

Up until then I thought we were all Yugoslavs. But some teachers refused to accept such answers, claiming that was citizenship only. I had to ask my parents what was my nationality as well as my religion. Not being aware of these identities was a product of communism. It is debatable whether it was an advantage.

Communism in this part of the Balkans ended in the 1990s – splitting up former Yugoslavia into seven countries.⁽¹⁾

The concept of 'brotherhood and unity', the greatest boast of President Tito's regime (the former leader of Yugoslavia), disappeared in the bloodiest conflict on European soil since World War Two.

Strong divisions have been generated

along ethnic and religious lines in post-conflict Bosnia ever since. It took 26 years before a new generation came out and refused to be separated by their nationality. Last year, a group of pupils in the town of Jajce raised their voices against segregation by protesting in the streets and jointly displayed Bosnian and Croatian flags.

“Two schools under one roof is a crime equal to apartheid. Do we have to pass through the same horror as we did in primary school? One divided school costs a lot, we don't want to have another one,” one of the pupils said.

The local government had decided to separate two high schools, but it reversed this decision after pupils protested and with strong pressure also from the



One of the signs at the June 20 rally last year in Jajce depicted a drawing of apples and pears, with the words, 'We can do it together'. It was in reference to much-criticised comments by the former education minister Greta Kuna, who once said that students from different ethnic backgrounds could not attend the same schools because you can't mix "apples and pears"

WNV/Anela Ibraković

international community.⁽³⁾ "Most fascinating is that those are the pupils who were completely separated through their primary education. Bosniaks and Croats have been attending separated primary schools in Jajce and even though they are products of segregation, they are now completely opposed to segregation and fight against new divisions the government tried to impose.

"It surely gives us hope for the future," Mervan Miraščija from Open Society Fund, Bosnia Herzegovina, told local media.

The battle by pupils in Bosnia instantly became viral. It attracted the media from all over the world and gathered support from human rights activists, musicians, athletes and a non-governmental organisation. "The idea of unity is incredible in society which celebrates every single sort of divisions, in a society full of prejudices. Dear pupils, your action is so inspiring," said Bosnian rapper Edo Maajka.⁽⁴⁾

Contrary to this almost romantic aspect of the story comes a much more realistic one in a deeply divided education system. For more than two decades since the end of the war it was stable, institutionalised and mostly untouchable. Although the international supervisors and civil society organisations have been trying to minimise the divisions, local politicians have been desperately trying to keep them alive counting on the ethnic homogeneity which keeps them in power.

A colleague from Croatia once said that the education system in Bosnia is so complicated that even local experts hardly understand it. And even if you try to simplify it as much as possible, it is hard not to start with the parallels in the political system where power is divided in a relatively weak state level run by a

three-member presidency (one Bosniak, one Serb and one Croat), two entities and one district, and 10 cantons in one of two entities.⁽⁴⁾

There is no state level ministry for education, rather there are 13 lower level ministries and consequentially a wide variety of different education systems and curricula.

The divisions appear through several models. Firstly, there are schools physically separated, in completely separated buildings. Secondly, there are literally two schools under one roof and among them two types: those with parallel, separated administration (two principals, two secretaries, two assembly halls) and those with common, shared administration but two different curricula. Thirdly, there are schools where pupils are separated only during classes of so-called national group of school subjects (mother tongue, literature, history, geography, religious and art – topics where no shared views are possible).

Finally, there are schools where one ethnic group is the majority and pupils from different ethnical background are simply in it. Those who advocate the last type call it either inclusion or integration. Minority groups who oppose such a system call it assimilation. If there is a certain percentage of pupils from a non-dominated ethnic group, the school is obliged to organize separated classes for them, but in real life that is not always the case.

A few years ago this led to a street protest from pupils and parents from eastern Bosnia. They boycotted the school and spent a few weeks in the capital Sarajevo sleeping in tents in front of the Office for High Representative (OHR) building. Sometimes it happens that pupils

from one ethnic group are not going to the closest school, as is the rule, but commuting to the closest school where their ethnic group dominates.

"In the town of Travnik pupils are separated with a fence. I don't know if it is barbed wire, and what to expect from the children growing up in a way they cannot play football with other children and looking at each other through the fence," said MP Aleksandra Pandurević in Bosnia's parliament during a discussion on segregated education. But other politicians, who advocate segregation, believe that this is the only way to keep one's national identity and freedom.

1. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia.

2. SCE, Council of Europe, US embassy, EU Mission, Office of the High Representative (body established by Dayton Peace Agreement which has the power to impose and to abolish the laws and to dismiss local officials).

3. Bosnian rapper Edo Maajka was a victim of hate speech after he married a Jewish woman.

4. Decisions have to be made by consensus and therefore all the reforms are pretty slow. There is a mechanism of so-called vital national interest protection – a type of veto every ethnic group may apply in order to avoid being outvoted.

COMMENT

A message to *shout* from the rooftops



Mark Langhammer, director of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, argues that the integrated sector needs to make the strength of its socially-mixed intake a key calling card to effectively grow its numbers

Around seven to eight percent of school pupils in Northern Ireland attend integrated schools. This segment is large enough to constitute 'challenger' status to the more communally segregated controlled and maintained sectors, but runs some way behind the repeated popularity of the integrated option in societal and parental opinion polling.

Notwithstanding the statutory responsibility within the Education Reform Order 1989 on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate integrated schooling (known as the Article 64 duty), numbers at integrated schools have effectively plateaued.

With the financial crash, and years of subsequent planned austerity, capital funding for new-build schools has atrophied. Coupled with movement towards school closures and rationalisation from the 2006 Bain Report onwards, it is clear that growth within integrated education won't come through new integrated schools, but from growing pupil numbers at existing schools, or from processes like school-transformation.

Some integrated schools have successfully pushed the boundaries. Hazelwood Integrated College in north Belfast will stretch to around 1,000 by 2018. Drumragh Integrated College in Omagh successfully secured a High Court judgement against the Department of Education in 2014 to grow pupil numbers through a development proposal. Progress through this route, however, remains slow, even glacial.

Transformations are more likely to come from the controlled sector, usually from schools with falling rolls attempting to stay open.

As a young Newtownabbey councillor, I was one of the first to spearhead an attempt at transforming a Catholic maintained school to integrated status. My efforts with the brave parents of Stella Maris Primary School (on the edge of Rathcoole estate) saw parents force, and win, a ballot only to see the then direct rule Minister of Education Richard Needham back closure over transformation. It was years before



One tool that the integrated movement has been slow to embrace is the status of the sector as the most socially-mixed

another effort to transform a Catholic school to integrated – at Clintyclay Primary in Dungannon – was attempted by parents in 2014, under threat of closure. Whilst transformation has not occurred, despite a successful parental ballot, parents, through a court action, did frustrate efforts by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and the minister to close the school.

One tool that the integrated movement has been slow to embrace is the status of the sector as the most socially-mixed. All integrated primaries are comprehensive in intake. Most integrated secondaries are either non-selective or use 'grammar streams' to ensure a reasonable social balance in enrollment.

Social balance should be a big selling

point. Why? Because socially mixed school intakes improve educational performance. The integrated sector, for reasons best known to itself, don't scream this from the rooftops. Instead, they hide their socially-mixed ace-card under a bushel. The integrated sector need to think again on this and make social-balance their key calling card.

It has long been generally accepted academically, if not acted upon by policymakers, that overall school performance improves with balanced intakes. In schools with balanced intakes, pupils from wealthier families improve a bit, but pupils from poor backgrounds improve radically. Everyone is a winner.

Decades of research evidence demonstrates that the one key factor in raising performance at school for the most, the middle and the least able, is a mixed intake of pupils. In schools with mixed intakes pupils learn about each other; they see different dispositions to learning; they recognise each others' skills – and those pupils who suffer the most deprivation and exclusion see that education can provide them with the skills and knowledge to make a different life for themselves.

In schools lacking that social mix, where the only examples of other ways of life are teachers – the jump is too big, the gap too wide.

For the most disadvantaged young people, the most important role model is someone who looks like them, who is their age, who mucks about on the same social media platforms, listens to the same music, follows the same Premiership teams, but who has different attitudes to learning and different aspirations for life.

So, if we are really to make a difference, if standards really are to rise for all, we need schools which are socially mixed, in which peer group pressure can be used effectively to open minds, change outlooks and raise aspirations.

Socially balanced intakes leads to better educational outcomes. The integrated sector must shout this message from the rooftops and watch its numbers grow.

COMMENT

We need to *fight* for secular education



John McAnulty, former teacher and ex-chairman of the Northern Committee of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), argues that a call for integrated education should be a call for secular education

Our local integrated school system boasts 42 primary schools and 20 secondary sector schools. Where schools are established they are routinely over-subscribed. A council to promote integrated education is well established, as is a charitable fund to provide seed funds for new schools. A March 2000 survey showed 85 percent of parents supporting integration. The Good Friday Agreement pledged to encourage and support integrated education.

Yet Sinn Fein organised street protests to block the suggestion that two tiny teacher training colleges, situated within a mile of each other, be merged into one. Before Stormont collapsed a DUP minister managed to return to Westminster almost £50 million which had been earmarked for integrated education.

The majority of the political parties and the trade unions are enthusiastic supporters of "integrating" or "shared" education, where segregated schools share sites and/or resources. Hundreds of millions of pounds have been diverted to this approach. As local columnist Newton Emerson pointed out some time ago, this is a pretty transparent way of opposing integration.

The movement for integrated education is like a punch-drunk boxer with tunnel vision. As the blows rain in from all directions, they focus on the next school, hoping that in the time of our children's children we will see an integrated school system.

Yet this is impossible within the current dispensation. The most recent attempt at modernisation was the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). The aim was to combine all five education boards into a single authority and, more widely, to pull together the different sectors.

After years of sectarian wrangling the ESA was finally established. Rather than replacing the various sectors all the old divisions were bolted together in the new structure. In fact state secondary schools claimed that they were being discriminated against and were duly given a representative body and added to the pile.

It should be evident that accepting sectoral designation is simply a way of



We want a society that allows each child to reach their full potential, where no one has special privilege and where adults can live in comfort and dignity

allowing integrated education to be penned in a middle class ghetto with no real challenge to the status quo.

So what is the alternative? Any teacher will tell you that the many attempts to reform society through school programmes have limited effect. Progressive societies produce progressive schools to a much greater extent than the converse.

The history of educational reform in Britain and Ireland is one of mass political movements, not glacial administrative adjustment.

A call for integrated education should be a call for secular education. Bowing to all points on the religious compass will leave one dizzy. Integration of religious groups is largely meaningless outside a broader movement for social justice. We can hardly support integration while supporting ongoing discrimination on grounds of social class.

We should not fudge on history and culture. An agreed Irish history may not be immediately available. An inclusive one certainly is. It is the duty of schools to provide grounding in basic elements of the Irish language and to provide space so that anyone who wishes to can achieve fluency.

Applying these axioms means building a movement for social justice that rejects absolutely bigotry and discrimination in all areas of society. It means absolute separation of church and state.

It means comprehensive education that aims to overcome educational disadvantage rather than amplify the effects of social class.

Most of us have an inbuilt reflex when it comes to naked bigotry. We avert our eyes and declaim our neutrality. That is the foundation of the "equality of the two traditions" position.

That's what has led to growing and more systemic sectarianism, to greater and greater barriers to integrated education and to the corruption and decay of political institutions.

We want a society that allows each child to reach their full potential, where no one has special privilege, and where adults can live in comfort and dignity.

And if we want that, we'll have to fight for it.

COMMENT

Shared education needs to **widen** its aims



Dave Thompson, who was a teacher at Forge Integrated Primary School in Belfast, believes that education in this part of the world has to contribute to building peace

We'll get to shared and integrated education in a minute; the bigger question is, what is education actually for? For now, I'm going to stick with equipping pupils with personal skills, an understanding of the world, and preparation for employment. These are overlapping, and interdependent. We all know talented people who don't work well with others. Nobody wants a dentist who really gets diversity, but has a happy-go-lucky attitude to root canal. There's room for all three.

Integrated education came about at a time in Northern Ireland when pupils were being prepared for work through a content-based curriculum that often taught them about 1066 and the Tudors, tsunamis and oxbow lakes, but was scant on more pressing issues such as why are we a segregated society? Why are we killing each other? Or more personal questions, such as, what's my part in all of this? We weren't spending much time talking about the State we were in.

Integrated education was an effort to educate pupils of all backgrounds together, in order to understand and appreciate each other and help us move closer to an integrated society.

Until recently, I taught in a controlled integrated school, with an integrated ethos that permeated every subject and every system. We talked about our similarities and differences. We learned to articulate our identities, and appreciate the identities of others. We compared religions. Parents were welcomed. We discussed what was on the news (in an age-appropriate way). We talked about how we wanted this place and the world to be. Yes, other schools do that too, though in my experience not to the same degree.

The statistics show that we remain heavily divided in education, integrated education is still only seven percent of the sector and it's a key component of moving towards an integrated society. Change comes slowly.

As I write, we still haven't agreed on a



I hope, no matter how we label education, it gifts pupils an understanding and the experience of mediation and resolving conflict

government, so if shared education is the best we can do right now, fair enough.

I don't mean that to sound dismissive. If shared education encourages a state school and a Catholic school from opposite ends of the town to meet regularly, and, who knows, maybe even move next door to each other, then that's progress. Maybe one day those children will be able to share all classes together, without any loss of who they are.

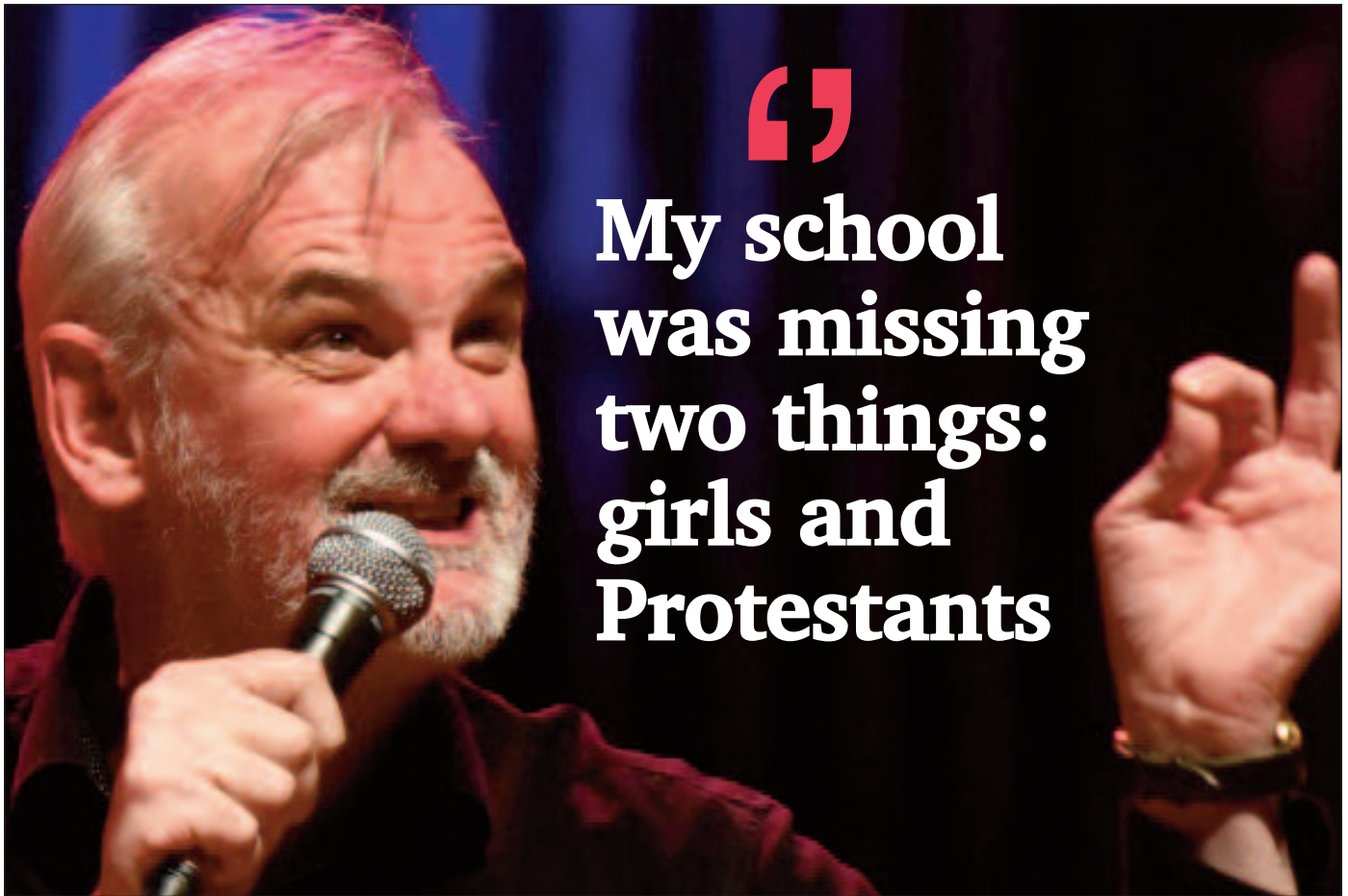
I do have some concerns, however. For shared education to achieve maximum change, it can't only be about sharing subjects. That's a great starting point, but then comes actually understanding each other; politics, languages, skin colour, religious belief, sexuality, flags and emblems, culture, stereotypes and prejudices. The whole shooting match. In our case, literally. I heard one principal involved in a shared education project sum it up well, "we stopped going out on trips, because we wanted to spend time with each other."

Secondly, younger teachers have entered a system overly concerned with data and results. That's for another time, but the effect can be that scores are prized above all else. Have we returned to a funnelled focus on grades (which are important) with personal skills and understanding of the world squeezed in order to get there?

As well as achievement of grades, I believe education in this part of the world has to contribute to building peace. Integrated education allowed me to be a tiny part of that. Shared education needs to be about encouraging our teachers and school leaders of the next 20 years to equip pupils to be peace builders, confident in their own identity in a multicultural society.

I hope, no matter how we label education, it gifts pupils an understanding and experience of mediation and resolving conflict, the ability to see other perspectives, and the creativity to imagine what a better, more integrated society looks like.

And now for *another thing*



My school was missing two things: girls and Protestants

Comedian Tim McGarry, above, who was educated at St Malachy's College, Belfast, tells journalist Jane Hardy why he is a huge supporter of integrated education

Comedian Tim McGarry opened our interview by saying: "There were two things wrong about my excellent education at St Malachy's, Belfast. That was the lack of girls and Protestants, both very important elements, as I later discovered." He gave me one of his trademark wry smiles as he finished his lines.

The actor and presenter of *The Blame Game* (BBC NI) knows where he stands, or sits, as we drink coffee in a Belfast cafe. Tim attended a Catholic primary before going to the grammar school. He said that he "saw through the religious education part of the curriculum" fairly early on.

"I was about 15 years of age. I read Bertrand Russell who wrote that 'God didn't create man, man created God'. I thought: 'That's interesting'."

Fifty-three-year-old McGarry later added that he would like to enforce secular education in Northern Ireland.

In 2012 he fronted a short promotional film for the Integrated Education Fund. He said it was a labour of love. "Oh no, I wasn't paid," he laughed.

McGarry and his wife have two sons, neither of whom have attended integrated schools. "Oh, call me a hypocrite," he declared dramatically. "The reason is simple – both boys wanted to play soccer and the school their father wanted them to go to, Belfast Royal Academy, is a rugby-playing institution."

Tim, who is a patron of the Northern Ireland Humanist Society, is firmly against what he sees as the "education cop-out of shared education" – it's nothing but educational apartheid".

He said that in this country we not only mainly go to different schools, we also get different versions of the news.

Tim also has strong views on the cultural ghettoisation of the Northern Ireland variety. "We even read separate papers," he added. I did notice though that he came to the interview with a copy of *The Irish News* under his arm.

Tim added that there were one or two entertaining side-effects of the divided cultural and education system. "Jamie Bryson wouldn't be Jamie Bryson without that."

He put forward the argument that one of the main reasons why integrated education had not taken off in Northern Ireland – as it should – is the lack of choice, illustrated by his sons' inability to find a football-friendly, integrated secondary in Belfast.

Tim, who before we met, was working on a BBC Radio Ulster programme *The Long And The Short Of It* with historian and Orangeman Dr David Hume, feels that a revised education system is crucial to the future of our country.

He noted that the history he learnt at school didn't touch any English history, but that making this programme had given him new insights into the other side of his birthplace.

The comedian, who once worked as a lawyer for the Equal Opportunities Commission in the 1990s, made a final point as we finished the interview. "Every election we circle the wagons, but in integrated education you meet at the other side. In a society where the two chief religious groupings tend to live in different areas, this is an important move."



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