

Promoting Shared Education

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'None of us is born intolerant of those who differ from us. Intolerance is taught and can be untaught, though often with great difficulty. But in this area, as in others, prevention is far preferable to cure. We must work to prevent intolerance from taking hold in the next generation. We must build on the open-mindedness of young people, and ensure that their minds remain open.'

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The Institute for International Education New York, 27 November 2001.

Introduction

Developing an appropriate education system is considered crucial for the resolution of conflict in divided societies. The decision as to what constitutes an appropriate policy in this regard is, however, subject to dispute. The need to address inequalities between the members of different communities often leads government policy-makers to adopt an education system that is premised upon segregation. Or, to put it another way, when it comes to managing conflict one typical response is to afford communities a significant amount of self-government in education and ensure that they receive funding on a proportional basis. The reasoning behind this approach is not hard to discern. It is a widely held assumption that the transition from violence to peace depends, at least in part, on guaranteeing communities control over their own internal affairs (Hadden & Craig 2000, p. 23). Education is critical to the perpetuation and transmission of culture and identity within and across generations. But since culture and identity are often the very things perceived to be at most risk in divided societies, so it follows that education becomes a salient political issue (Wright 1988, p. 6).

By contrast, the need not only to protect communities so as to manage conflict, but also to reconcile them so as to ensure that conflict does not recur, favours the adoption of an education system that promotes integration. Again the rationale here is straightforward. To move beyond conflict people must share more and divide less. According to this argument, a necessary conduit for building sustainable peace is the creation and maintenance of an education system through which sharing is experienced on a daily basis as a lived reality. Integrated schools, further education colleges and universities can provide a social context within which inter-communal networks are built and broader identities and cross-cutting interests fostered at an individual level. They are places where differences in identity are not merely tolerated, but also celebrated as a valuable societal resource for the benefit of all (McGlynn, Niens, Cairns, Hewstone 2004, p. 158).

The choice of education system in a divided society points, therefore, in at least two possible directions, firstly, towards the protection of communities, cultures and identities through segregation and, secondly, to the promotion of inter-communal engagement by encouraging and facilitating integration. There is a tendency to view this choice as involving mutually exclusive options. But this does not have to be the case. On the contrary, rather than engaging in a laboured debate over which option is best, education can be conceived as a continuum with segregated schools, colleges and universities at one end of the spectrum and integrated schools, colleges and universities at the opposite end. In between these two poles there are an indeterminate number of policy options. The choice of an education system covers issues such as curriculum, course content, ethos, citizenship teaching, religion, language, sport and history. It determines the student profile and how it is managed. It also includes the staff profile, teacher training and governance. In any given context there will be a necessary variety of educational choices required to meet the demands made by parents and students. There are a myriad of possibilities that can incentivise sharing and which allow for much more flexibility than is often thought.

This paper has been commissioned by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council. It aims to assist the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), Department of Education (DE) and Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) with the implementation of *A Shared Future: The Policy and Strategy Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland* (ASF). The paper outlines the aims and objectives of promoting shared

education as detailed in ASF. It summarises the current situation in terms of segregation and mixing within Northern Ireland's schools and teacher training colleges. It reviews the policies and practices which have sought to promote good relations within the education system and makes a number of recommendations on possible ways forward.

What A Shared Future says

ASF commits government to set the pace on movement towards a shared society and to lead by example (OFMDFM 2005, 3.1.8, p. 49). Central to this leadership is the development and delivery of commensurate educational provisions by the Department of Education (DE), the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and a number of associated public bodies and non-governmental organisations.

Senior representatives of both DE and DEL are charged with helping to coordinate the work of a cross-departmental group (a Good Relations Panel) chaired by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (OFMDFM 2005, 3.1.4, p. 48). This group will identify a series of long-term actions for the delivery of ASF, and will provide advice on the targeting of resources and the monitoring of outcomes. In addition, DE and DEL will present a series of actions to be included in triennial action plans, the first of which will be delivered in spring 2006. The implementation of the triennial action plan will be reviewed annually with progress reports submitted to Ministers, the Northern Ireland Assembly or the Northern Ireland Select Affairs Committee, in the absence of devolution (OFMDFM 2005, 3.1.6, p. 48).

The general areas of DE and DEL responsibility for delivering ASF are:

- to demonstrably promote sharing in all levels of education;
- to develop opportunities for shared intercultural education at nursery, primary, and secondary levels;
- all schools should ensure through their policies, structures and curriculae, that pupils are consciously prepared for life in a diverse and inter-cultural world;

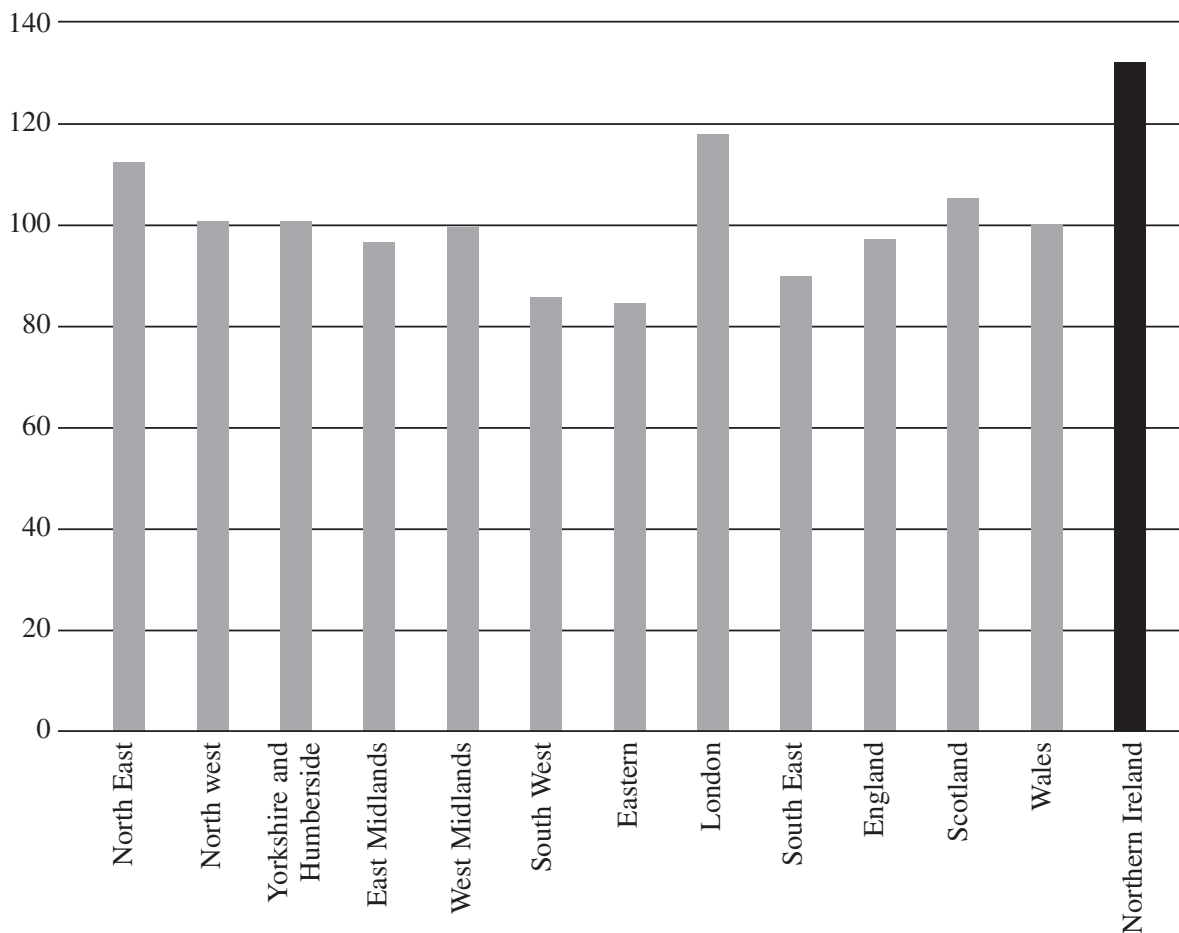
- to encourage understanding of our complex history;
- to prepare teachers to educate children to be effective and responsible members of a shared society (OFMDFM 2005, 2.4, p. 24).

Northern Ireland's segregated education system

Community divisions in Northern Ireland are costly in terms of both social values and public resources. There is an unquestionable imperative to tackle these costs, particularly when the government has to face up to making the hard decisions needed in order to ensure a more efficient distribution of finances and the delivery of public policies that will build a better society for everyone. ASF is unambiguous 'Separate but equal is not an option. Parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically' (OFMDFM 2005, 1.4.1, p. 15). Statistics from HM Treasury 2004-2005 indicate that public expenditure on education and training in Northern Ireland is 30% higher than the indexed average per capita within the rest of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom average is 100, Northern Ireland receives 130 compared to 107 in Scotland, 100 in Wales and 98 in England (Figure 1). This relative over-spend in Northern Ireland has taken place during a period of demographic downturn with 50,000 empty places in schools and a projected figure of 80,000 empty places by 2015 (Hain, 2006, p. 19).

The challenge for an education system, presently characterised by the prohibitive financial and social costs associated with community divisions, is to identify those areas where segregation has been typical and develop a series of innovative solutions that will protect the identity and culture of the members of different communities whilst simultaneously incentivising an increased amount of sharing that will deliver tangible economic and social benefits. Delivery of this agenda requires far-reaching reform.

Figure 1: UK Identifiable expenditure on education and training by country and region, per head indexed 2004-2005



Source: Public Expenditure Analysis 2005. Norwich: HMSO

Segregation in schools

The education system in Northern Ireland is diverse. It consists of state controlled, Catholic maintained/other maintained, integrated, grammar and Irish medium sectors as well as a number of independent schools. A large majority of this system is segregated. In other words, children and young people attend schools where a substantive number, or all, of the pupils are nominally of a Protestant community background or a Catholic community background. In addition to religious segregation pupils are often divided according to gender, academic ability and (by default) social class (Tomlinson and Benefield 2005, p. 13; Arlow 2004, p. 271; Gallagher and Smith 2000; NICVA 2006). DE statistics collected through the schools census exercise 2003-2004 show that from a total of 340,633 pupils, 144,575 (42.5%) attended state controlled schools, 157,166 (46.1%) attended Catholic maintained/other

maintained, 16,494 (4.8%) attended integrated schools and 22,285 (6.5%) attended schools under other management, the majority of which were voluntary grammars (Figure 2).

Further analysis of DE statistics according to religious background demonstrates the extent of community segregation. Secondary data analysis of the schools census shows that the Catholic maintained sector is subject to the greatest amount of segregation with 154,636 (98.4%) of pupils nominally Catholic. This is followed by the controlled sector where 115,567 (80.4%) of pupils are nominally Protestant. Schools under other management, a majority of which are within the voluntary grammar sector, are 15,799 (70.9%) Protestant. By contrast, 7,356 (44.5%) pupils in the integrated sector were designated Protestant, 6,564 (39.8%) were designated Catholic and 2,479 (15%) were designated as other Christian, non Christian, other/no religion/not recorded.

Figure 2: Religion of pupils by school type 2003-2004 (Nb: Data is subject to limited suppression in accordance with the requirements of Data Protection Act 1998)

	Catholic	Protestant	Christian, non Christian, other/no religion/ not recorded	Supressed	Total
Controlled schools	8181	115567	20108	832	144688
Catholic maintained /other maintained schools	154636	1309	1199	22	157166
Integrated schools	6564	7356	2479	95	16494
Schools under other management	2036	15799	4381	69	22285
Total	171417	140031	28167	1018	340,633

Source: <http://www.deni.gov.uk> (accessed 16/02/2006)

ASF acknowledges that both formal integrated education and denominational schools have an important role to play in preparing children to become adults in a shared society (OFMDFM 2005, 2.4.5, p. 25). Although not all schools will be integrated in the future, the stated aim of government policy is to guarantee that all educational institutions ‘demonstrate their organisational commitment to promoting sharing over separation’ (OFMDFM 2.4.11, p. 26). The implementation of such a challenging educational agenda requires teachers who are appropriately trained. Northern Ireland’s universities and colleges with responsibility for training teachers have a key role to play in preparing them to teach about living and working in a shared society and to help children and young people to respect each other’s values and differences.

Segregation in teacher training

ASF recognises that teacher education requires joined-up policy and practice and recommends that collaborative efforts be made between the local universities so as to ensure that the curriculum prepares new teachers and provides opportunities for them to share training in schools of different types. The situation within Northern Ireland’s teacher training institutions, however, is currently inadequate. Indeed, it might even be argued that teacher training is to an extent a parallel of the segregated school system. DEL statistics show that from a total of 1,169 first year student enrolments on initial teacher training courses in 2004-2005, 205 (17.5%) attended Queen’s University Belfast, 187 (15.9%) attended University of Ulster, 481 (41.1%) attended Stranmillis University College and 296 (25.3%) attended St Mary’s University College (Figure 3).

Further analysis of DEL statistics according to religious background demonstrates the extent of community segregation. In 2004-2005, 89 (43.4%) Protestants, 65 (31.7%) Catholics and 51 (24.9%) Unknowns enrolled in initial teacher training courses at Queen’s University Belfast. Data for the University of Ulster indicates 83 (44.4%) Protestants, 71 (38%) Catholics and 51 (17.6%) Unknown.

Analysis of the two largest teachers training colleges, Stranmillis University College and St Mary’s University College, indicates a somewhat greater level of segregation. 288 (59.9%) Protestants, 74 (15.4%) Catholics

and 106 (22%) Unknowns enrolled in initial teacher training courses at Stranmillis. At St Mary's University College the student profile was 5 (1.7%) Protestants, 233 (78.8%) Catholics and 68 (11.4%) Unknown.

Figure 3: First year enrolments on initial teacher training courses at Queen's University and University of Ulster by religion 2004-2005

Institution	Protestant	Catholic	Other	Unknown	Total
Queen's University Belfast	89	65	0	51	205
University of Ulster	83	71	0	33	187
Stranmillis University College	288	74	13	106	481
St. Mary's University College	5	223	0	68	296
Total	465	433	13	258	1169

Source: www.delni.gov.uk (accessed 23/02/2006)

The failure to meet parental demand for integrated and mixed-religion education

The Belfast Agreement gave welcome support to the integrated education movement and confirmed that an essential aspect of the reconciliation process in Northern Ireland 'is the promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and encourage integrated education' (The Agreement 1998, p. 18). Public opinion polls have consistently shown that this position is endorsed by the adult population, the vast majority of which approves the further establishment of integrated schools (Gallagher and Smith 2002). A series of omnibus surveys conducted by Millward Brown Ulster, 2001-2003, found that 82% of respondents personally supported integrated education and 81% thought that integrated education was important to peace and reconciliation (Figure 5). When asked for reasons as to why they did not send their children to an integrated school over half, 52%, of the 2003 sample responded, because there was none in their area.

Figure 5: Reasons for not sending children to integrated school

Reasons	2000		2001		2003	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None in the area	123	39	164	39	241	52
Want to but can't find a place	6	2	6	1	13	3
Don't Know enough about it	33	11	55	13	60	13
Personally opposed in principle	12	4	8	2	13	3
Lower academic standards	10	3	7	2	2	0

Source: Public Opinion Survey: Integrated Education in Northern Ireland, Millward Brown Ulster 2003

The support for integrated education by the government has consistently failed to meet parental demand. In the past seven years 5772 children and young people have been turned away from integrated schools due to a lack of available places. This is a conservative estimate, however, since the actual number of parents that would have applied had there been sufficient provision in their local area cannot be determined. The lack of available places in integrated schools was noted in 2003 by the special Rapporteur for the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), Katarina Tomaseveski. Reporting to the fifty-ninth session of UNCHR, Tomasevski maintained that it 'is an immensely positive sign that the demand for integrated schools exceeds their supply, but an equally worrisome sign that government support lags behind the popular demand' (Tomasevski 2003, p. 6). The Rapporteur concluded that the 'pledge of the 1998 Agreement to facilitate integrated education has not led to a statistically visible dent in segregation' (Tomasevski 2003, p. 16).

The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey indicates that a majority of respondents would prefer to send their children to a mixed-religion school. It might be asked, however, as to what conditions must be created so as to meet this preference. There is a large disparity between the approximately 5% of children who attend integrated schools (OFMDFM 2005, 2.4.3, pp. 24-25) and the 61% of respondents to the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey who in 2004 indicated that they would favour some equivalent provision (Figure 6).

One reason for this disparity is that respondents have not actually been asked to express their support for integrated education per se, but rather they have been asked to express their support for mixed-religion schools. The two concepts may not necessarily have been interpreted by the respondents as meaning the same thing. It is both reasonable and appropriate, therefore, to examine the extent to which the preference for mixed-religion schooling is met is outside of the formal integrated sector.

Figure 6: If you were deciding where to send your children to school, would you prefer a school with children of only your own religion, or a mixed-religion school?

	Own religion only	Mixed religion school	Don't know	Other (specify)
1999	23%	66%	12%	0%
2000	35%	55%	2%	8%
2001	31%	60%	2%	7%
2002	32%	60%	2%	6%
2003	36%	59%	1%	5%
2004	34%	61%	1%	3%

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey

The amount of sharing currently available

DE statistics demonstrate that in 2005 there were a total of 1,278 schools in Northern Ireland consisting of 100 (7.8%) nurseries (including prep departments), 903 (70.7%) primaries, 230 (18%) post-primaries and 45 (3.5%) special schools. 56 (4.4%) schools were integrated- 37 (2.9%) primaries and 19 (1.5%) post-primaries. There were 1,222 (95.6%) schools outside the formal integrated sector. Further analysis of the schools that were not integrated shows that 28 (2.1%) had a pupil balance in which the minority community was 30% or more of the school population. 23 (1.7%) were Controlled schools- 3 (0.2%) nurseries, 4 (0.3%) primaries, 4 (0.3%) post-primaries (2 secondary and 2 grammars) and 10 (0.8%) special schools. 2 (0.2%) were Catholic maintained-1 (0.1%) primary and 1 (0.1%) post-primary

secondary. 2 (0.2%) were voluntary sector (including Dominican college) -2 (0.2%) post-primary Grammar schools. There was also 1 (0.1%) other maintained special school. This statistic falls far short of the 61% of respondents to the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey who in 2004 indicated that they would favour mixed-religion schooling for their children.

Figure 7: Schools outside the formal integrated sector where the designated minority community (Protestant/Catholic) is 30% or more 2005 (Nb: These figures are not definitive as there are a number of small schools where the designated majority community may not exceed 90%. DE have suppressed the data set minimally in accordance with the requirements of Data Protection Act 1998).

School	School name	Education and Library Board	Management type	Protestant	Catholic	Christian, non Christian, other/no religion/not recorded	Total
2116265	Omagh North Nursery	Western	Controlled	30	40	8	78
5116236	Dungannon Nursery	Southern	Controlled	37	29	9	75
5116237	Cookstown Nursery	Southern	Controlled	35	17	0	52
1010863	Suffolk PS	Belfast	Controlled	59	45	7	111
2012095	Ballougry PS	Western	Controlled	26	40	0	66
2012298	Ballykelly PS	Western	Controlled	197	191	25	413
2012708	Strabane PS	Western	Controlled	102	121	19	242
4036148	St Malachy's PS	South Eastern	RC Maintained	184	117	71	372
2410048	Limavady Grammar School	Western	Controlled	551	316	32	899

School	School name	Education and Library Board	Management type	Protestant	Catholic	Christian, non Christian, other/no religion/not recorded	Total
2410096	Stranbane Grammar School	Western	Controlled	266	127	17	410
3210149	Crumlin High School	North Eastern	Controlled	152	128	114	394
3420058	Rainey Endowed School Grammar	North Eastern	Voluntary	438	234	34	706
3420068	Dominican College Grammar	North Eastern	Voluntary	158	256	64	478
4230107	St Columbanus School	South Eastern	RC Maintained	173	252	94	519
5210186	Newry High School	Southern	Controlled	302	202	48	552
1310017	Greenwood House Assessment Centre	Belfast	Controlled	21	23	11	55
2316234	Erne Special School	Western	Controlled	35	73	0	108
2316601	Elmbrook Special School	Western	Controlled	20	38	0	58
2316661	Arvalee School & Resource Centre	Western	Controlled	61	75	6	142
3316271	Dunfane Special School	North Eastern	Controlled	83	59	7	149

School	School name	Education and Library Board	Management type	Protestant	Catholic	Christian, non Christian, other/no religion/not recorded	Total
3316511	Loughan Special School	North Eastern	Controlled	32	27	18	77
3316609	Riverside Special School	North Eastern	Controlled	27	21	12	60
334002	Jordanstown Special School	North Eastern	Other Maintained	28	37	8	73
4310008	Beechlawn Special School	South Eastern	Controlled	124	94	25	243
4316515	Parkview Special School	South Eastern	Controlled	66	55	14	135
4316614	Lakewood Special School	South Eastern	Controlled	8	8	6	22
5316523	Ceara Special School	Southern	Controlled	33	47	11	91
5316577	Lisanally Special School	Southern	Controlled	39	57	0	96

Source: <http://www.deni.gov.uk> (accessed 01/03/2006)

Developing a policy framework for shared education in schools

There appears to be a tentative agreement among the various educational stakeholders in Northern Ireland on the need to increase sharing within and between schools. For example, the Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland, maintain that a Catholic education ‘does not exclude and should not exclude other children’. In principle, therefore, Catholic schools are open to all

children of all denominations. Indeed, the Bishops have maintained that ‘the presence of children from other denominations is seen as an enrichment of the education experience offered by the school and as a practical expression to the commitment to inclusivity’ (The Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland 2001, p. 8).

In its response to the ASF consultation the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) drew attention to the ‘open and inclusive’ admissions policy of Catholic schools. St Columbanus College and St Malachy’s Primary School were deemed illustrative of ‘how children from different religious backgrounds can learn to work and play together when they are enabled to do so within the ethos of the Catholic school, and when inter-church and community trust allows this to happen’ (CCMS 2004, 2.3). The problem, however, is that despite such positive sentiments the examples given are not typical of the majority of Catholic schools in Northern Ireland. Thus, the challenge in implementing ASF is to build upon the best practice identified within each sector, as well as identifying new opportunities to promote sharing.

Although the encouragement and facilitation of integrated education must be central to DE commitments to ASF, it must also be recognised that shared education does not necessarily mean the same thing as integration. Nor, indeed, should it do so. A pluralist and inclusive society, as opposed to plural and exclusive society, demands an education system premised upon the sharing of space and resources. But it also acknowledges and respects the legitimate boundaries between the right to a distinct cultural and religious outlook and the responsibility to share. Where legitimate boundaries should be drawn within the Northern Ireland education system needs discussion and clarification. A priority for DE in developing its commitments to ASF must be for it to act, therefore, as the facilitator of a debate on how policies for sharing can be developed in partnership with the key educational stakeholders from each of the sectors. ASF commits the government to taking forward ‘a strong public service agenda that takes the duty to promote and foster good relations seriously’ (OFMDFM 2005, 1.3.16, p.). The duty on DE to act as the authoritative facilitator of a debate about how education might be reformed so as to incentivise sharing is encapsulated in the commitment to ‘establish greater clarity on the respective roles of all key stakeholders (OFMDFM 2005, 3.1.2, p. 47).

At a general level a discussion on developing a framework for shared education must address two principal concepts.

1. Quantitative – in essence, this is an issue of the actual contact and mixing that takes place within a school in terms of the pupil balance, staff profile and board of governors.
2. Qualitative – in essence, this is an issue of the curriculum and the extent to which children and young people are engaged in issues of diversity in a structured programme of work, as well as on a more informal basis, including the hidden curriculum and extra curricular activity.

The successful implementation of ASF by any government department, including DE, depends on it being treated not as a policy in isolation, but rather as a framework to be mainstreamed. Put another way, it should be the touchstone for all other policies and permeate both their conception and their outworking. In this respect ASF is as much an ethos as a specific policy framework.

Transformation to integrated status

ASF recommends that DE considers, in particular, the implementation of its draft report, *Towards a Culture of Tolerance – Integrating Education (TOCOTIE)*. This provides a useful starting point for developing a strategy for shared education in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, DE must be mindful of the fact that *TACOTIE*, although not yet implemented, was first published in 1998 (DENI 1998). Many of the recommendations made in this document have continued relevance and should now be lifted off the page and applied. Still, others have limited relevance for an education system that has witnessed significant changes since 1998. For this reason *TACOTIE* must be implemented where relevant, revised where needed, and strengthened to reflect the centrality of education within ASF, and indeed, of ASF within education.

In terms of existing policy recommendations, the promotion of a culture of tolerance, as referred to in the Belfast Agreement, must embrace all schools, both formally integrated schools and other schools. More specifically,

integrated education must be reconsidered within a new strategic approach planned so as to meet the needs of local communities (DENI 1998, Article 10). One possible way of achieving this aim is for DE to engage in a proactive policy of transforming existing schools to formal integrated status through the use of community audits.

In the absence of other information TACOTIE acknowledged that the only means by which the demand for integrated education could be assessed would be to conduct a survey in the form of community audits. One suggested option was to ‘target these assessments initially in areas where there is likely to be support for transformation’ (DENI 1998, Article 12). Further work was recommended, involving all partners, to consider how these might be carried out and, in particular, what quality assurance controls would apply to ensure objectivity (DENI 1998, 13.). This recommendation should now be implemented, perhaps through an initial pilot study with a view to extending the process throughout Northern Ireland if successful. Conducting community audits would add significantly to the monitoring and evaluation of ASF (OFMDFM 2005, 4.1, p. 58). Such audits would help identify geographical areas for potential growth in integrated education and changes in public attitudes, thus, providing a strategic context within which the transformation of schools might take place.

Effective transformation requires cultural change in a school and this is inherently difficult to achieve. There are major implications for management, appointment of teachers, the curriculum and the pastoral system. Advice and support are necessary if effective transformation is to take place. Transformation should be a central element of the ASF commitment to ‘encourage and facilitate integrated education and greater integration in education’ (OFMDFM 2005, 2.4.29, p. 28). The following TACOTIE recommendations should be revised and implemented:

- an agreed information pack which covers all options and offers clear guidance on what is necessary to qualify for integrated status should be drafted centrally by a group representative of all partners using the present DE draft as a starting point and issued by DE;
- roles and responsibilities of all interested parties should be clarified and co-ordinated;

- more resources should be available to support curricular changes, staffing pressures and improved pastoral provision;
- the concerns of the teaching staff affected by transformation and the key role of the principal also need to be considered and addressed; in particular, adequate training is necessary for principals, staff and governors to prepare them for transformation, and for their leadership roles in bringing it about (DENI 1998, Article 36).

New models of shared education

In the vast majority of schools in Northern Ireland building upon a pre-existing mixed-religion pupil base is not an option. ASF may be advanced to a limited extent through the small number of mixed-religion schools that already exist outside of the integrated sector, in much the same way that it will be advanced by integrated schools. However, offering a truly comprehensive shared education system will require new and innovative models of sharing within and between schools that are effectively segregated at present. Once again, the delivery of this aim will depend, at least in part, on DE taking the lead and facilitating critical discussions between the key educational stakeholders from each of the sectors.

The need to widen the discussion on shared education was recognised when TACOTIE was drafted in 1998. In particular, the document noted that there ‘would be merit in exploring and assessing the relevance to Northern Ireland of evolving partnership and co-operation arrangements in other countries’ (DENI 1998, Article 15). There are, for example, 19 schools jointly managed by different Christian Churches in the United Kingdom and 1 in Ireland. New models of sharing have also been developed in Scotland, where local schools share resources. No research has been provided by DE on the possibility of transferring such models to the Northern Ireland context. This omission should now be reassessed with the objectives of ASF in mind, and more specifically linked to the Strategic Education Review led by Sir George Bain, the requirements of Post-Primary Review of Education and the introduction of the Entitlement Framework.

Falling demographic trends, especially in many rural areas, coupled with the multiplicity of educational provision by 5 sectors has resulted in 50,000 empty places in schools. The Secretary of State has charged the Strategic

Education Review to ‘look particularly at how we can develop a new model of schooling, ensuring that we share resources in the best way, giving young people the best environment in which to be educated’ (NIO 2006). As the government’s agenda for rationalisation is realised the danger for ASF is that the various educational sectors, and in particular the Catholic maintained and Controlled sectors, will choose to rationalise their own estates internally. In turn, this may result in a more streamlined but continuing segregated education system. In committing to the implementation of ASF the challenge for DE is to prevent any movement that favours this segregated approach when rationalising the schools estate.

One possible alternative is for the education sectors to reach an agreement on amalgamating schools, when local support can be guaranteed and where the conditions are appropriate. Schools created through amalgamations would have to deal with particular logistical problems. For example, the position of the Trustees of the Catholic Church, the Transferors, the local ELB and CCMS in the school’s management would need discussion and clarification. Agreed solutions to these structural difficulties would not, however, be impossible provided there was, first, a willingness to engage seriously and, second, clear leadership given by DE. Perhaps a more difficult issue to effectively address would be the question of protecting and transferring the existing schools ethos into the identity and culture of the newly amalgamated school. The loss of a Catholic ethos in particular may be unacceptable for many parents and would likely be opposed by the Trustees and CCMS. Nevertheless, innovation coupled with the lessons learned from jointly managed church schools in the United Kingdom and Ireland indicates that the specific difficulty of protecting ethos in a shared environment can be resolved to the satisfaction of all the parties concerned (Chadwick 1993).

Perhaps one obvious starting point with which to open this necessary debate is in the realisation that all grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland (other than nurseries) must include provision for the religious education of all registered pupils (ERO 1989, Article 5). The board of governors and principal of a school are obligated to ensure that this requirement is complied with. Moreover, as argued by Laura Lundy, schools in Northern Ireland are ‘required to follow the core syllabus for religion which was prepared by the main church bodies’ (Lundy 2000, p. 151). This syllabus is of a Christian nature but not of any particular denomination. Accordingly, there is a fundamental common theme of Christianity found in all Northern Ireland

schools upon which the future amalgamation of Catholic and Controlled schools could be premised. Such a development would arguably build upon the positive attributes of a Catholic education, summarised by the Bishops of Northern Ireland as aiming to nurture: ‘moral values and personal responsibility, respect for diversity, concern for other people, positive and outwards looking attitudes’ (Building Peace Shaping the Future 2001, p. 4). It would also be consistent with a decree by the second Vatican Council, 1962-1965, which embraced the belief that, through education, people ‘should be open to dialogue with others and willing to devote themselves to the promotion of the common good’ (CCMS 2005, 2.1).

Another way of encouraging increased sharing is through the introduction of the Entitlement Framework. The Entitlement Framework includes a pupil’s right to access a menu of at least 24 courses at Key Stage 4, of which one third must be vocational and one third must be academic. At post-16 this right will increase to a menu of at least 27 courses of which one third must be vocational and one third must be academic (www.deni.gov.uk accessed 08/03/2006). Delivering The Entitlement Framework will depend upon developing models for local collaboration and partnership. Regardless of the number and range of institutions available in a particular locality, a much richer and more varied educational provision could be offered, cost-effectively, through much higher levels of cooperation and collaboration between the schools. Examples of this already exist in the Learning Partnerships established in Limavady and Ballycastle. These novel approaches to educational provision are making valuable contributions to the learning experience of all children in local areas, whilst facilitating contact between pupils who may attend otherwise segregated schools. By creating a culture of co-operation, the partner schools and colleges can bring considerable resources and skills that both add value to the learning experiences of children and young people, and crucially, help schools to do things differently. A development of this kind could potentially meet the general policy objective in ASF to afford new opportunities for shared intercultural learning in primary and post-primary education (OFMDFM 2005, 2.4, p. 24).

The curriculum

The ERO 1989 introduced the compulsory conjoined cross-curricular themes of Educational for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural

Heritage (CH) for all schools. However, cross-community links between otherwise segregated schools have, as McGlynn et al, argue, been ‘voluntary and interpretation and implementation of the cross-curricular themes varied greatly’ (McGlynn, Niens, Cairns, Hewstone 2004, pp. 150-151). In particular, difficult issues that attach to community divisions such as religion and politics have often been avoided by teachers who feel insufficiently trained for such work and who are already struggling with an overloaded curriculum (Smith and Robinson, 1996).

The Post-primary Review of Education and the introduction of the Education Reform (Northern (Ireland) Order 2006 (ERO 2006) should lead to an increase in the promotion of good relations within the formal school curriculum. Provisions relating to the revised curriculum will come into operation on 1st August 2006. This includes, crucially, the requirement that all schools teach mutual understanding in the local and wider community at foundation stage and key stages 1 and 2 to age 11, and local and global citizenship at key stages 3 and 4 to age 16 (ERO 2006, Schedule 1, pp. 28-32). Article 7 of the ERO 2006 requires schools to teach the minimum content in each area of learning for each key stage. In order to help achieve this DE is required to specify, as soon as is practicable, what is considered to be an acceptable minimum content (ERO 2006, Article 7, p. 5). The guidelines set by DE will act as a base line for delivering the formal curriculum in every school. A question remains, however, as to whether the minimum content will guarantee that difficult questions associated with diversity and community conflict are addressed. The revised curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 includes 8 areas of learning, at least 4 of which—modern languages, the arts, environment and society (incorporating history and geography) and physical education—are sources of community division in Northern Ireland.

Mutual understanding in the local and wider community at key stages 1 and 2 and local and global citizenship education at key stages 3 and 4 are positive developments, but they cannot be expected to deliver good relations in isolation. The failure to mainstream policy within the curriculum is a weakness identified in the current Schools Community Relations Programme (SCRIP). A review of SCRIP conducted for DE in 2002 by O’Connor, Hartop and McCully found that a coherent definition of community relations was absent, that SCRIP was considered to be of low strategic importance at all levels, that there were deficiencies in the provision of training and that pupil involvement was selective. Recommendations made by the review team

included the need for greater co-operation between the Curriculum and Community Relations Branches in DE, encouraging schools to place a community relations ethos within their mission statement, and a statutory community relations dimension within the formal curriculum, developing the potential for a relationship between active citizenship, EMU and SCRP (O'Connor, Hartop, McCully 2002, pp. 6, 10). Addressing this set of recommendations must be visible in the development and delivery of the DE implementation plan for ASF.

Depending on how it is delivered, the introduction of citizenship education in the ERO 2006 may be interpreted as having met the recommendation made by O'Connor, Hartop and McCully to develop a community relations dimension within the formal curriculum. Yet, this can only represent a minimalist understanding of how the curriculum might be conceived from a good relations perspective. The only satisfactory approach would be for the entire curriculum to be good relations proofed, at least in those subject areas where it is both relevant and appropriate to do so. This work might be led by the community relations unit within DE and should include at least 5 of the 8 areas of learning identified within the revised curriculum:

1. modern languages;
2. the arts;
3. environment and society (incorporating history and geography);
4. physical education;
5. local and global citizenship.

Developing a policy framework for shared teacher training

Teacher training in Northern Ireland takes place within five institutions—Queen's University Belfast, University of Ulster, Stranmillis University College, St Mary's University College and the Open University. Two of these institutions, Stranmillis and St Mary's, experience relatively high levels of segregation with less than 30% of their first year enrolments in 2004-2005 from the designated minority tradition. At the same time the two colleges accounted for 777 (66.5%) students from a total of 1169. St Mary's and

Stranmillis are colleges of Queen's University. They cater mainly for the primary sector, although they also provide a limited number of courses directed at post-primary schools. St Mary's states that it makes a particular contribution 'within the Catholic tradition' to higher education. Queens University provides teacher training for post-primary level. The University of Ulster makes provision for training both primary and post-primary teachers. The Open University, according to the Policy Review of Teacher Training Education drafted for DE and DEL by Douglas Osler, 'makes a distinctive contribution' available across Northern Ireland 'through provision of post-primary courses by distance learning' (Osler 2005, p. 7).

The Osler report noted that, just as it is hard to justify the number of schools in Northern Ireland, so too, it is hard to argue that an area the size of Northern Ireland requires the existing number of teacher training institutions, particularly when 3 of these are in Belfast (Osler 2005, p. 9) This conclusion follows a report conducted for DEL by David Taylor and Rod Usher in 2004 which found that the key stakeholders in teacher education offered no suggestion as to how a fuller sharing of resources might be developed. The researchers recommended that this issue merited further investigation (Taylor and Usher 2004, pp. 19-20). In this regard the drive to deliver ASF by DEL could replicate the argument made by DE on the necessity to rationalise the schools estate. This should probably be considered in the context of a wider strategic review of the teacher training, in consultation with the universities and colleges. Initial evidence would suggest that there is a financial imperative to address the issue of multiple public service provision in the teacher training sector. As with the issue of ethos in schools, the protection of culture and identity appears, however, to be a crucial consideration in developing any proposed rationalisation agenda that would favour sharing. Specifically, there is a question surrounding St Mary's provision of teachers for the Catholic education sector and how such provision might be preserved in any alternative arrangements.

One option that would ensure increased sharing within initial teacher training and simultaneously address the issue of multiple service provision would be to name the 3 universities – Queen's University Belfast, University of Ulster and the Open University – as the providers of initial teacher training leading to the closure of Stranmillis and St Mary's. This option has to be seen as the most cost-effective, if no other considerations are taken into account, and the one most likely to cater sufficiently for expected future demands for

teacher supply. But as Osler correctly points out, this option would also likely cause deep distress, ‘particularly in the Catholic community’ and perhaps more correctly from within the Catholic church (Osler 2005, p. 12) Having said this, the integration of St Andrews College into Glasgow university in Scotland has demonstrated that an appropriate ring fencing arrangement of the particular characteristics in the training of Catholic teachers can relieve many of the concerns surrounding a integrationist approach of this type.

A second option for promoting increased sharing within local teacher training colleges would be to leave the 3 universities as they are and amalgamate St Mary’s and Stranmillis. This would result in a lesser degree of rationalisation within the sector, but would significantly reduce the physical segregation currently experienced by St Mary’s students in particular. For example, an amalgamation based upon a direct transfer of DEL enrollment statistics for 2004-2005 in the two colleges indicates that a new college might expect to have student profile somewhere in the region of 37.7% Protestant, 39.5% Catholic, 1.6% Others and 22.4% Unknown. The amalgamation of St Mary’s and Stranmillis would face many similar difficulties to the proposed amalgamation of Catholic maintained and controlled schools, most notably that of protecting the Catholic tradition and satisfactorily addressing the question of management. There is, however, a successful precedent to this type of approach set in England by the amalgamation of three teacher training colleges in Warrington and Liverpool City Centre – St Katharine’s, Notre Dame and Christ’s College. In 1980 these Colleges joined in an ecumenical federation under the holding title of Liverpool Institute of Higher Education (LIHE). In 1995 a new Instrument and Articles of Government established a single, unified, ecumenical College, and a new name of Liverpool Hope.

The mission statement of Liverpool Hope is to ‘provide opportunities for the well-rounded personal development of Christians and students from other faiths and beliefs, educating the whole person in mind, body and spirit, irrespective of age, social or ethnic origins or physical capacity, including in particular those who might otherwise not have had an opportunity to enter higher education’ The strategic goals of the institution include ‘to enhance and develop Hope’s distinctive profile as a unique ecumenical partnership between the Catholic and Anglican churches in higher education, open to those of all faiths and beliefs’ (www.hope.ac.uk accessed 10/03/2006). Regardless of whether the Liverpool hope model is implemented in Northern Ireland, the lessons learned from this example should be made available to teacher training

institutions in Northern Ireland. DEL may consider developing opportunities to enter discussions with the management of Liverpool Hope and act as a facilitator for St Mary's, Stranmillis and Queen's University Belfast.

Promoting shared teacher training between existing institutions and within professional development

It is recognised that Stranmillis University College has a growing number of Catholics following its courses and St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College both have a growing number of international students. In 2004 Taylor and Usher also noted that there are examples of 'constructive cooperation and exchange' in a science, history and geography module of the primary BEd course (Taylor and Usher 2004, p. 25). Such positive examples of sharing are not, however, typical. On the contrary, for the most part St Mary's and Stranmillis fail to reflect the assertion in ASF that further and higher education provides a wide range of education and training provision for people drawn from various community backgrounds, in a neutral and harmonious environment (OFMDFM 2005, 2.4.14, p. 27). In the absence of a rationalisation drive to effectively bring about increased sharing the implementation of ASF will depend on a guaranteed enhancement of student exchanges and the development of arrangements to encourage the sharing of space and resources on degree courses. More specifically, this will be an important route for St Mary's students to have the opportunity to experience religious and cultural diversity within an academic environment on a daily basis. Rather than duplication of courses within the universities and colleges, different courses could be offered at each college. This has already occurred in the joint colleges Masters in Education programme, but should now be extended with direction and support provided by DEL.

The promotion of an 'integrated partnership' across Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs) and Curriculum and Advisory Support Services would be of benefit to ASF aims and objectives. Students should be required to reflect on their own background and experience, exploring diversity and prejudice and their role in creating 'safe enough' spaces in the classroom to give opportunity to their subsequent students to do the same. This process of learning should be managed in initial teacher education to ensure that it is actually carried out and carried out in a consistent and regulated manner. It is reasonable to assume that a newly qualified teacher who has not been encouraged to embrace the issues

of diversity and the methodologies required to handle sensitive issues in school, will be less likely to prevent conflict between children, young people, staff and parents. The absence of appropriate community relations training may stifle learning or, worse. It can lead to judgements based on personal experience. Knowing when to intervene appropriately requires a set of skills learned through experiential methodologies. It would be relevant under ASF to encourage teacher educators to be required to participate in diversity education through experiential methods.

ASF recognises that teacher education requires joined-up policy and practice with a lead taken by DE and DEL. More specifically, ASF recommends that collaborative efforts are made with the local universities so as to ensure that in future the curriculum prepares new teachers and provides opportunities for them to share training in schools of different types (OFMDFM 2.4.20, p. 28). In addition, ASF recommends that early professional development training for existing teachers be focused so as to ensure collaboration between those who teach in different types of schools (OFMDFM 2.4.20, p. 28). Such recommendations require strategic direction from the two lead bodies, DE and DEL, but a useful addition may be to establish a working group to include DE, DEL, CRU, CRC, CNaG, CCMS, NICIE, ELBs and representatives from the School of Education at Queen's University Belfast, Stranmillis University College, St Mary's University College and the School of Education at the University of Ulster should be tasked with developing future policy and practice in this area, with recommendations presented to the relevant government Ministers.

Teacher employment

ASF has nothing to say directly concerning the employment of teachers. Yet the situation regarding the teacher exception from The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 is in a state of flux. In 2004 an investigation by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI)—The Exception of Teachers from the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998— found that not only was removal of the exception a 'preferred option of all those who responded to the Commissions request for public views. But that the majority of respondents also felt that retaining the exception would 'do little to further equal opportunity for employment of teachers' (ECNI 2004, p. 28).

The ECNI investigation further noted ‘the particular value which shared education provides to Northern Ireland as our society grows in diversity of cultures and traditions’. CRU, DEL and DE may wish to take further advice on this issue, so as to ensure that employment opportunities for teachers will reflect the vision of sharing promoted by ASF.

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