

Report commissioned by the  
Integrated Education Fund

# **A Review of Policy Areas Affecting Integration of the Education System in Northern Ireland**

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UNESCO Centre Ulster University  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This scoping exercise, carried out by the UNESCO Centre at Ulster University for the Integrated Education Fund, provides an analysis of current education policy and practice in Northern Ireland across four key areas. The review involves an analysis of legislation, policy and practices within the existing system of education where change might lead to better integration of the education system as a whole. The study focuses on the following policy areas:

- Ownership and financing of the school estate;
- Area based planning of education provision;
- School governance arrangements; and
- Policies related to teacher training, recruitment and deployment

The review provides a succinct summary of the current position with regard to the ownership, funding and capital value of schools in Northern Ireland. It outlines the current enrolment and distribution of school pupils and the range of providers – Catholic Maintained, Controlled, Controlled Integrated, Grant Maintained Integrated, Voluntary Grammar and Irish Medium. The majority of school pupils in Northern Ireland continue to be educated in schools primarily associated with one of the two largest communities and that despite a statutory duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate integrated education for more than twenty-five years integrated schooling still only caters for 7% of the total school population. This suggests that the obstacles to integration may be deeply imbedded within the education system itself since we know from public surveys that parents are highly supportive of their children being educated together.

The review looks closely at the history of area based planning of education provision in Northern Ireland and highlights a number of deficiencies raised by educational stakeholders, politicians and local communities in both the planning and implementation of the process. These include concerns around the approach to consultation and stakeholder engagement, the Needs Model, the attitude and approach of the various educational providers, the failure of the process to fully take into account the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education, and the entire process taking place during a time of wider educational uncertainty and political disagreement relating to the ultimately failed attempt to establish an Education and Skills Authority for Northern Ireland. This has led to a deeply unsatisfactory situation in which opportunities for real change to the educational landscape have not been taken and retrenchment of resources has become a hallmark of the process.

School governance is another policy area where the composition of Boards of Governors reflects historical and political interests associated with separate school sectors. In Northern Ireland the composition of Boards of Governors varies depending on school management type as does the various categories of governors. It has been noted that the approach taken in Northern Ireland can be best described as a stakeholder model, where the governing body represents a range of interests, including parents, the school founders and the employing authority. The review notes that challenges exist with regard to the role of Governors, the recruitment and active participation of parents on Boards of Governors, and the relationship between Governors and the churches. The growing cooperation between Governors from different schools and sectors, particularly with regard to shared education, is also discussed alongside a short discussion on school governance models in other contexts, for example, the establishment of School Boards in Scotland or the more decentralised Finnish delivery model.

The final section of the review focuses on policies related to teacher education, recruitment and deployment in Northern Ireland, outlining and reflecting on the distinctive elements of the education system as well as on the factors which have contributed to shaping it. The section also discusses policy approaches and initiatives which have aimed to reform the system of teacher education in Northern Ireland, including issues such as overall student numbers and providers, Fair Employment Legislation, the Certificate in Catholic Education, and opportunities for deeper cross sectoral collaboration.

This short scoping study draws a number of conclusions, mainly in terms of where more research is needed to identify potential policy changes in each of these areas that could be beneficial for the development of a more integrated system of education in Northern Ireland and one that takes account of multiple stakeholder expectations. The main conclusions are:

1. There may be a case for a more thorough analysis of ownership and financing of the school estate. The current arrangements have evolved over many years to take account of changing relations between the state, churches and other providers. However, the current situation is that virtually all capital and revenue funding to education comes from the taxpayer via the state. Rationalisation could include a study of the feasibility of the transfer of school property into common ownership by the state. Apart from revealing any cost benefits from an economic perspective, this could have benefits in terms of removing anomalies between different school sectors and emphasise education as a common public good for the benefit of all. This might include a similar process to the Forum for Pluralism and Patronage in the Republic of Ireland.
2. The current Programme for Government commitment to shared education includes significant capital as well as recurrent expenditure. There are competing arguments about the cost benefits of these initiatives, particularly where the intention is to build new separate schools that only share some facilities. There is also an unaddressed question of how much shared education would cost to roll out to every school within the current structures. So far there has been little analysis of how shared education will be 'mainstreamed' after the initial tranches of philanthropic and European funding run out.
3. There is general consensus that area based planning has not worked well. It has been criticised on at least three fronts. Firstly, in the absence of ESA was driven by sectoral interests, rather than exploring opportunities for rationalisation across sectors. This suggests there is a case for establishing an overarching authority for education planning that is more representative of multiple stakeholder interests. Secondly, more effective processes for ascertaining parent and community preferences for schooling are required as part of area based planning. Some models such as deliberative polling already exist, but much clearer guidance is required. Thirdly, the current approach to area based planning highlighted weaknesses in the Needs Model, including a failure to take account of the statutory duty to facilitate and support integrated education.
4. In terms of governance, the establishment of the Education Authority appears to replicate the sectoral representation that existed in the Education and Library Boards. At school level, different permutations for school governance are still largely based on historical and political associations with separate school sectors. However, all schools are now funded from public finance and there is a case for greater diversity to be represented in the governing bodies of all schools, perhaps through revised arrangements for membership based on individual merit rather than representative rights of sectoral interests.

5. There have been numerous reviews of teacher education in Northern Ireland over recent years. A key issue is that there are multiple providers, providing more teachers than can find employment within the system. Rationalisation seems a logical course of action, but there are concerns that faith-based provision needs to be protected and proposed changes have become highly politicised. Nevertheless, there are additional issues that could be addressed. Data related to employment and movement of teachers across sectors is out of date and we would benefit from better understanding of the experiences of teachers teaching across the traditional sectors. Given separate teacher education, the system would also benefit from better understanding of how teachers could be incentivised to teach across sectors so that all children can benefit from being taught by teachers from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
  
6. There appears to be a consensus that the employment of teachers should no longer be exempt from Fair Employment Legislation, but action has yet to be taken to implement this. There is a case for reviewing freedom of conscience issues with regard to schools in Northern Ireland given that all are financed through public funding. The implications of requirements to hold a Certificate in Catholic Education would also need to be reviewed if it is the intention of the policy commitment to shared education to include teachers being shared between schools. Any review would also need to examine how this requirement affects policies to encourage and increase teacher employment and mobility across all sectors.

## INTRODUCTION

The education system in Northern Ireland is characterised by separate schooling in a number of ways. Most children attend either predominantly Protestant ('controlled') schools or Catholic ('maintained') schools; and are separated by ability; by social background; and, to an extent at second level education, by gender. The history of the Northern Ireland Education system goes back to the formation of the state in 1921. The 1923 Education Act established a Ministry of Education containing local education committees, however, it was clear from early on that reaching a consensus between churches and the state proved difficult. Catholic authorities made clear that they would not participate in any deliberations, and the Protestant Churches were critical of the Act as they felt it meant the introduction of a secular system. Byrne and Donnelly (2008: 19) write:

*Ultimately, however, in exchange for significant representation on the management boards of existing schools (and those founded in the future) the main Protestant Churches began the transfer process during the 1920s and 1930s. This was not completed until the late 1960s when they believed that all of their demands were being met and these schools are now known as 'controlled' (state) schools.'*

However, the Catholic Church resisted attempts for further state involvement in education, particularly in the light of education authorities being dominated by '*...unionists steadfast in their determination to protect the interest of the Protestant Majority in Northern Ireland.*' (2008: 19). Gradually in the intervening years funding for the Voluntary (Catholic) schools increased and by the late 1960s with the adoption of the Education (Northern Ireland) Act 1968, funding was raised to 80% (later 88%) for capital expenditure and 100% funding for maintenance. Under the 1968 legislation, the arrangements for the so called county schools were changed as they came under the ownership of education and library boards, but any new ones were treated as if they had been transferred. As a result, the Protestant Churches were given automatic membership rights on the school committees of all controlled schools.

Over the past 30 years, a number of initiatives have been developed to redress the *de facto* segregated nature of the education system. In broad terms, these represent interventions in the *process* of education, through increased contact between Catholic and Protestant pupils, through curriculum reforms, and through the creation of new, integrated schools founded by parents and funded initially by charitable donations. During the Troubles a range of initiatives, ranging from common textbooks and cross-community contact programmes were introduced to facilitate and improve relationships between pupils from the controlled and maintained sectors. While programmes and initiatives have been welcomed and acknowledged and allowed for some meaningful engagement, there have also been concerns that partial and tokenistic delivery has limited the opportunity for proper integration between pupils from diverse backgrounds (O'Connor et al., 2009; Wardlow, 2003). Integrated schools provide an opportunity for Catholic and Protestant children to be educated together on a daily basis and they have developed workable procedures for the teaching of religion. They have been characterised as providing, '*... constitutional and structural safeguards to encourage joint ownership by the two main traditions in Northern Ireland*' (Leitch and Kilpatrick, 2004; 564). Whilst opinion polls consistently demonstrate high levels of parental preference for all children to be educated together, there is criticism that despite a statutory responsibility to facilitate and support integrated education fewer than 7% of children currently



attend integrated schools. One dilemma is that integrated schools have come to be defined as a school sector, and not simply examples of 'common schools' where children from different backgrounds can be educated together on a daily basis. This is problematic because the highly 'sectoral' nature of schooling in Northern Ireland means that all schools get drawn into a divisive political discourse. For example, a call by the First Minister for the establishment of a 'single education system' where 'all five education sectors are brought into common ownership and management type,' was perceived by some as an attack on Catholic schools. Conversely, a call by CCMS for the Department of Education to 'dispense with its statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education', was perceived as an attack on integrated schools. This suggests that education divisions in Northern Ireland run deeper than lack of contact and understanding between children, but are rooted in more deeply embedded, systemic challenges.

This review is an attempt to examine some of these structural issues that may impede the integration of the education system in Northern Ireland. The review is informed by research findings and lessons learnt from both integrated and shared education interventions.

The review focuses on four key areas:

1. Ownership and financing of the schools estate;
2. Area based planning of education provision;
3. School governance arrangements; and
4. Policies related to teacher training, recruitment and deployment.

Each of these will be explored in the following sections.

## 1. OWNERSHIP AND FINANCING OF THE SCHOOLS ESTATE

This section outlines the current position in relation to the ownership, funding and capital value of schools in Northern Ireland, and considers funding arrangements for 'shared education'. The education system in Northern Ireland caters for approximately 337,908 pupils in 822 primary schools<sup>1</sup>, 142 secondary<sup>2</sup> schools and 68 grammar schools.<sup>3</sup> In addition, there are eight Irish language schools, supported by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) and mostly grant-aided from government, and ten independent Christian schools associated with the Free Presbyterian Church, and the Holywood Rudolf Steiner School largely financed through fees paid by parents.

The government funded Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) is the statutory co-ordinating body for the maintained schools which are under the auspices of five diocesan authorities. It consults with and advises the Department of Education (DE) and the ELBs (up until April 2015 when replaced by the Education Authority (EA) on all matters pertaining to Catholic maintained schools. CCMS is the employing authority for teachers in this sector and draws up guidelines for diocesan education committees and Boards of Governors concerning teacher appointments. The government also provides funding to the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), which, co-ordinates the development of 62 integrated schools. In 2014/15, the total enrolment in integrated schools was 21,956 pupils, or 7% of the total pupil population.<sup>4</sup> Figures for 2014/15 also show that:

- 6% of Catholic children attended controlled primary schools and 1% of Protestant children attended maintained primary schools.
- 2% of Catholic children attended controlled secondary schools and 1% of Protestant children attended maintained secondary schools.
- Catholic children make up 8.3% of the controlled grammar schools population and Protestant children make up 0.9% of the voluntary Catholic grammar school population.
- 4% of Catholic children and 6% of Protestant children attended an integrated primary school.
- 5% of Catholic children and 7% of Protestant children attended an integrated secondary school.
- 5.7% of pupils attend an integrated primary school and 8% of pupils attend an integrated post-primary school.

### 1.1 Ownership and Funding of Schools

There are different types of schools in Northern Ireland, something which also impacts on issues surrounding ownership and funding. The education system can be divided into the following types of schools:

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<sup>1</sup> 370 Controlled, 381 Maintained and 42 Integrated schools (19 Controlled and 23 Grant-maintained).

<sup>2</sup> 51 Controlled, 68 Maintained, 5 Controlled Integrated and 15 Grant-maintained schools.

<sup>3</sup> 18 Controlled Grammar, 29 under Catholic and management and 21 under other management (Voluntary grammar).

<sup>4</sup> See Department of Education (20105) Statistical Bulletin 3/2015 Enrolments at schools and in funded pre-school education in Northern Ireland, 2014/15.

- **Controlled schools and Controlled Integrated schools.** Controlled schools are run on a non-denominational basis and the main Protestant churches have representation on the Boards of Governors. However, the umbrella organisation, the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC), has not had a statutory basis or management powers such as those given to CCMS. These schools are managed by a Board of Governors, but owned and funded by Education Authority (EA) which is also the employer.
- **Catholic Maintained schools** are owned by trustees who have core ownership and planning responsibilities for all Catholic maintained and voluntary grammar schools. The Trustees are normally the Bishops of Dioceses and/or their nominees, or senior members of the religious orders or congregations that have provided the school. CCMS is the employing authority and has a statutory role in relation to planning for the Maintained sector. It also co-ordinates certain activities on behalf of the Trustees, including promoting effective management and control by Boards of Governors, and assisting and advising Trustees on matters of planning and provision. The EA provides funding for the running costs of the schools as well as maintenance and management services. Capital costs are funded directly by the DE.
- **Grant Maintained Integrated schools.** New planned, integrated schools are owned by Trustees or the Board of Governors. The Boards of Governors are responsible for all maintenance in respect of their premises (including grounds) and receive funding for both 'landlord' and 'tenant' elements. NICIE is the contracting authority in the provision of accommodation to establish the school. The role of contracting authority for capital projects and services transfers to the Board of Governors of these schools once the viability of the school is established and it qualifies for capital funding from DE. Their buildings and land become owned by the Trustees and are vested in the names of the Trustees and DE.
- **Irish Medium schools.** Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta is the contracting authority in the provision of accommodation to establish a new Irish Medium school and the Board of Governors is the employing authority. There is also one Catholic maintained Irish-Medium school.
- **Voluntary grammar schools.** Voluntary grammar schools are owned and managed by Boards of Governors or Trustees, or the school's founding body. The Boards of Governors are responsible for all maintenance in respect of their premises and receive funding for both 'landlord' and 'tenant' elements, under the terms of DE's 'Common Funding Scheme' for Local Management of Schools. For DE to pay capital grants to a voluntary school, the school premises must be 'vested' in the names of trustees and DE. This means that the premises cannot be disposed of without the consent of DE.<sup>5</sup> The Board of Governors is the employing authority.

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<sup>5</sup> There are also a number of professional bodies and associations such as the Governing Bodies Association (GBA) which represents the interests of grammar schools within the system.

**Table 1: School type and ownership**

School type	Ownership	Funding
Catholic maintained	Trustees	Revenue: EA Capital: DE
Controlled	EA	Revenue and capital: EA
Controlled integrated	EA	Revenue and capital: EA
Grant-maintained integrated	Trustees or the board of governors	Revenue and capital: DE
Voluntary grammar	Trustees or the school's founding body	Revenue and Capital: DE, some contribute to capital costs

Figures from the DE indicate that the aggregated value of the Northern Ireland schools asset, including land, is in excess of £3 billion<sup>6</sup>. With regard to operational assets, the value of the land (where applicable) is estimated at £6.47 million, whilst the value of non-operational property, including assets under construction and assets held for sale, is estimated at £45.8 million.<sup>7</sup> The total value of the controlled schools estate is estimated at £1.7 billion (Perry, 2012) and information on schools not vested or not owned by the schools' estate would need to be sought from the Trustees or Boards of Governors from the individual schools. A 2010 report by Oxford Economics (2010) identified that an estimated £3.6 billion would be required for investment in the schools estate, including major and minor works and refurbishments.<sup>8</sup> Oxford Economics (2010) concluded that any reductions in the schools capital budget should lead to more sharing of resources, rather than building new schools and estimated that up to £100m was needed for essential maintenance work.

With regards to the value and funding of the school's estate, it stated that '*... a more strategic, area-based approach to education could help to address community needs more effectively*' (Oxford Economics, 2010: 36). Deloitte (2007) reported that the cost of a divided society in Northern Ireland amounted to an estimated £1.5 billion per annum, which '*...could be considered to be the upper limit of the cost of the divide in NI*' (2007: 88). However, with regards to education Deloitte (2007: 89) stated that, '*...quantification of conflict related costs within the education sector was particularly problematic.*'

<sup>6</sup> Total value is £3,042,571,487.

<sup>7</sup> E-mail correspondence from DE, 6 October 2014.

<sup>8</sup> The estimated maintenance spend by the ELBs in 2013/14 was £48,616,000. This does not take into consideration properties not in public ownership, that is, Voluntary Grammar Schools (VGS), Grant Maintained Integrated (GMI) schools or schools not vested or not owned by the schools' estate. Information on schools not vested or not owned by the schools' estate would need to be sought from the Trustees or Boards of Governors from the individual schools

While it is not possible to estimate the direct costs of education associated with separate provision, previous reports have indicated a potential for significant savings. Recent studies have estimated that greater collaboration across school sectors and consolidation of the schools estate could result in savings ranging from £15.9 million to £79.6 million (Boroohah and Knox, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Deloitte, 2007). This is based on the presumption that any reduction in the schools capital budget should be targeted at sharing resources rather than building new schools. Similarly, Borooha and Knox (2012a; 2012b; 2012c) identified possible savings in the region of £35M (out of total budget of £1.126B) if there was a more integrated system.<sup>9</sup> However, they also made the point, that as a result some 50,000 school children and young people would be ‘displaced’ and claim that a ‘shared approach’ (see below) would incur no extra cost beyond the status quo position.

## 1.2 Shared Education

The Shared Future strategy published in March 2005, and later Executive documents, such as the Strategy for Cohesion Sharing and Integration Consultation Document (July 2010) and the Northern Ireland Programme for Government (2011-2015) have all emphasised ‘shared education’. The Ministerial Advisory Group on Advancing Shared Education (MAG) established in 2012 as part of the Programme for Government (2011-15) referred to the following working definition of shared education:

*Shared education involves two or more schools or other educational institutions from different sectors working in collaboration with the aim of delivering educational benefits to all learners, promoting the efficient and effective use of resources, and promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.*

The MAG proposed shared education as a contribution to education in Northern Ireland, including improved delivery of the entitlement framework.<sup>10</sup> Shared education can be described as the promotion of a more integrated system of education rather than a system of integrated schools (Boroohah and Knox, 2012; Knox, 2010). It implies schools will maintain their distinct and separate identities whilst entering into an interdependent, collaborative relationship (Duffy and Gallagher, 2014). The DE (2015: 1) stated that:

*While integrated education provides for the education together at school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils (as per wording of Article 64 of the 1989 Education Reform Order), shared education has dual aims of improving educational outcomes through collaboration as well as providing for education on a cross community basis to improve reconciliation outcomes. While integrated schools largely meet the latter aim, they do not on their own meet the former.*

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<sup>9</sup> See Vani Boroohah and Colin Knox, Knowledge Exchange Seminar, 1st November 2012, Delivering Shared Education. [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/knowledge\\_exchange/presentations/boroohah\\_knox.ppt](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/knowledge_exchange/presentations/boroohah_knox.ppt)

<sup>10</sup> From December 2013, all post-primary schools have to provide a minimum number of 24 courses at Key Stage 4 and 27 at post-16 level, of which one-third must be academic and at least one-third vocational. All post-primary schools are members of an Area Learning Community (ALC), which maximises the opportunity to meet the needs of pupils across the area. However, Knox and Boroohah (2014) are critical of the DE and the extent of educational outcomes of the ALC’s; to what extent they are being used and whether or not they provide value for money (2014: 6).

As part of the Programme for Government and the *Together: Building a United Community* policy devised by OFMDFM, commitments include proposals for the development of shared campuses, which are seen to represent (2013: 46); *'...a model of collaboration that involves the consolidation of school premises, facilities and services. The Programme is aimed at providing capital assistance to schools to facilitate and deliver the following types of sharing:*

- *shared educational facilities – where new facilities are built to allow for shared educational use by all schools within the model;*
- *enhanced educational facilities – where current facilities are improved to allow for shared educational use by all schools within the model;*
- *shared educational campuses – where schools are co-located and share infrastructure, that is, the Lisanelly model.*

The Stormont House Agreement of December 2014, also made references to a contribution of up to £500m over 10 years of new capital funding to support shared and integrated education. While the Programme for Government refers to the Lisanelly Shared Campus Project in Omagh as a *'...valuable model for how shared learning opportunities could be structured'*, the exact nature of that sharing is a matter for decision by each school and the final educational delivery model for Lisanelly has yet to be developed. DE is still working with the schools, respective authorities, trustees and the Departmental Solicitors Office to reach an acceptable solution on the issue of ownership.<sup>11</sup> The initial estimated cost of the project was £110 million (Perry 2012) with 'substantial construction on the first phase' taking place by 2014/15. In 2014, the estimated cost had risen to approximately £125 million, and with an envisaged completion of the campus for 2018/2019.<sup>12</sup> Three further shared campuses were announced in July 2014. St Mary's Limavady and Limavady High School will have a shared sixth form centre on the St Mary's school site and a shared Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) centre on the Limavady High School site. The Moyle Shared Education proposal between Cross and Passion College and Ballycastle High School involves the construction of two new 'core schools' with two shared centres, one for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and the other for performance and creativity-related aspects of the curriculum.<sup>13</sup> Finally, a single, 12 classroom school is to be constructed on a new site to accommodate the Moy Regional Controlled Primary School and St John's Maintained Primary School, with each school retaining its own distinct ethos and identity, retaining separate entrances to the building, but sharing facilities such as the multi-purpose hall, play areas and library. In their submission to the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Education Enquiry into Shared and Integrated Education the schools stated:

*'The management bodies of all three institutions [including Moy Area Playgroup] decided from the early stages that the retention of our own distinct ethos was essential. Also it was of paramount*

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<sup>11</sup> E-mail from Department of Education 6 October 2014.

<sup>12</sup> See Roads Service (2014) Divisional Roads Manager's Report to Omagh District Council 12th June 2014. The Report states that 'The Department of Education has indicated that the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus project programme provides for the completion of the new campus in year 2018/19 and has stipulated that the Strathroy Link road must be operational prior to this date.' (2014: p 11). <https://applications.drdni.gov.uk/publications/document.asp?docid>.

<sup>13</sup> See Committee for Education OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard) Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education: Ballycastle High School and Cross and Passion College 15 October 2014.

*importance that we respected difference and promoted a culture of inclusion, tolerance and diversity.’<sup>14</sup>*

Schools in Northern Ireland all receive funding, to a greater or lesser extent, from the Department of Education, however, as highlighted above ownership differs. For example, in the Maintained Sector, the Catholic church retains all Catholic maintained schools in private voluntary ownership. Controlled schools are ‘owned’ by the Education Authority, something, which, for example, has made an impact with regards to ownership of schools in shared campus settings about ownership of the buildings on the shared campus site and shared schools. With regards to the Lisanelly site, the plan to bring together six separate schools on one site in Omagh will cost approximately £125m, however the logistical challenges of bringing 4,000 pupils together on a single campus, but attending separate schools, each with its own principal, staff, arriving daily to enter separate buildings, sharing some facilities and departing on buses at the end of the school day are huge. The project will therefore be under considerable scrutiny to make significant improvements in learning outcomes that have been promised, but also demonstrate what the added value will be in terms of community cohesion. Similarly, in the case of Moy, comparisons have been made to what has been labelled ‘two schools under one roof’ and experiences in Bosnia, where similar initiatives have heightened animosities leading to the Bosnian Supreme Court declaring them illegal (November 2014). The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has also been highly critical of the concept as a means of addressing community divisions (OSCE, 2005).

In September 2014, the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) announced a £58 million funding package from the Executive and Atlantic Philanthropies for three signature projects,<sup>15</sup> of which one is the shared education Signature Project, under the Delivering Social Change programme<sup>16</sup>. The shared education Signature Project has been created to contribute to the Programme for Government commitments and receives funding from OFMDFM (£10m), Atlantic Philanthropies (£10m) and DE (£5m) over a 4 year period from 2014/15 to 2017/18. The overall aim of the project is to scale up the level of sharing throughout schools in Northern Ireland by targeting 762 schools (65%) and is open to all schools which already have some experience of working in a cross-community partnership with other schools. The EA is responsible for taking forward implementation of the shared education Signature Project.<sup>17</sup> The DE’s business plan estimates that scaling the programme up to apply to the entire system would cost £44 million, but there is no plan for sustainability beyond a commitment from the current Education Minister that the costs will be ‘mainstreamed’ after four years. However, if the focus is solely on contact programmes between schools there may be less priority on institutional and systemic change, unless the learning and

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<sup>14</sup> The response was submitted by the joint management committee of (Moy Area Playgroup, Moy Regional Primary School and St. John’s Primary School) See

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Education/Inquiries-and-Reviews/shared-and-integrated-education/Moy-Area-Playgroup-Moy-Regional-PS-and-St-Johns-PS.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news-de-011214-ministers-launch-call>

<sup>16</sup> The Delivering Social Change (DSC) framework was established by the Executive to tackle poverty and social exclusion. It represents a new level of joined-up working by Ministers and senior officials across Executive departments to drive through interventions which have a genuine impact on the ground.

<sup>17</sup> One advisor has been appointed to co-ordinate the programme across Northern Ireland, together with 3 people within each ELB to provide administrative as well as school support, CPD, monitoring and evaluation of the programme. There is also an independent Expert Advisory Committee has been established to guide service design, implementation, evaluation and performance measurement.

practice is strategically supported by the Department and becomes financially sustainable (ETNI, 2013, DE, 2014). On previous occasions when the Department has cut funding for a range of programmes the result has been a dramatic drop in school participation.<sup>18</sup> While shared education has been assigned as a target area in Peace IV Funding, this is not yet guaranteed and will have a limited time span.<sup>19</sup>

The argument for shared education is based on no fundamental institutional or structural change to the education system in Northern Ireland, which is quite different from arguments for integrated education:

*'In Northern Ireland, 'integrated' schools for all children are not a realistic option. Nor is it conceivable that education could ever become secularized. In this context, if government is serious about its social cohesion objectives, it is clear that a more coherent and targeted approach to relationship building is needed. Based on research evidence, sustained contact between Protestant and Catholic children should be considered a core component in such a strategy'* (Hughes, 2011: 847).

Evidence is cited of educational benefits to shared education (Knox and Borooah, 2015) as well as increased cross-group friendships, reduced intergroup anxiety and better intergroup relations (Hughes, 2012, 2014), but as it currently stands, this 'umbrella term' can be characterised as any form of activity as there is no clear set guidelines from the Department of Education, which in turn has led to a lack of guidance with regards to activities (see DE 2013).<sup>20</sup> While there are undoubtedly positive outcomes of shared education programmes, such as those described by Duffy and Gallagher (2014), and while DE has referred to schools possibly moving along the continuum to a more fully integrated model,<sup>21</sup> it is not clear how this would happen in practice. Knox and Borooah (2015: 202) make the point that shared education focuses on educational collaboration and that while such a collaboration could lead to an 'integrated' school', they suggest that this may not be *'...acceptable to parents unwilling to concede on the issue of identity'*. This will undoubtedly be the case in some contexts, for example the Primary Integration and Enriching Project (PIEE project), where participants were in favour of sharing and partnership but rejected the idea of the future amalgamation or integration of schools.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, in the case of Moy, parents voted in favour of the creation of 'two schools' under one roof, rather than one large integrated school. However, there have been discussions surrounding the establishment of 'jointly managed schools' (as seen in England, between Catholic and Anglican churches). This led the Department of Education to issue guidelines for such schools in Northern Ireland. The guidelines (DE, 2015) state that such a school is likely to be managed as a voluntary maintained school. However, the Transferors' Council, in their submission to the Education Committee's enquiry into shared and integrated education stated:

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<sup>18</sup> For example, when the Department of Education cut funding for inter school contact from £4.5 to £1.1 million in 2009, the number of pupils participating dropped from 10% to 3.8%.

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/a\\_policy\\_for\\_shared\\_education\\_jan\\_2015.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/a_policy_for_shared_education_jan_2015.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> School Omnibus Survey is designed to collect a range of information for the Department of Education's policy teams. Questions were issued to school principals in March 2013 covering seven issues – one of which was shared education.

<sup>21</sup> Sharing works [http://www.deni.gov.uk/a\\_policy\\_for\\_shared\\_education\\_jan\\_2015.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/a_policy_for_shared_education_jan_2015.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/knowledge\\_exchange/briefing\\_papers/series3/hunter241013.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/knowledge_exchange/briefing_papers/series3/hunter241013.pdf)



*It is not envisaged that many jointly managed schools will emerge in the future; however it might be considered in certain rural situations for example in a situation where the Controlled and Maintained schools may have separate challenges to their sustainability. Instead of a village losing both schools, a jointly managed school with pupils from both religious communities might have greater viability and enable a school to be retained in the community.*

Joint schools would not be integrated schools in the technical sense under Part VI of and schedules 5 and 6 to the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, but maintained schools as defined by article 2 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. There are therefore important legal differences, not least that the employer of teachers is different; the funding authority is different; the owners of the estates are different. Responsibility for rates, landlord maintenance, non-teaching payroll and purchasing are all different. Whilst there is nothing to preclude a maintained school from transforming to become an integrated school, this would require a further development proposal.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of the Republic of Ireland, there have been some interesting developments with regards to patronage and school ownership. This is discussed below.

### **1.3 The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism**

By the beginning of the twentieth century, most state-supported primary schools in Ireland had come under denominational church control and management (Drudy and Lynch, 1993). The Catholic Church exercised considerable power and control over policy formation and ideology in education, including primary education (Coolahan, 1981; Akenson, 1970), largely stemming from the investment made by the Catholic Church in education (Drudy and Lynch, 1993). Religious socialisation was further encouraged by the 'new' primary curriculum introduced in 1971 that encouraged the integration of subjects, both religious and 'secular', resulting in a denominational ethos permeating the whole school day (Hyland, 1996).

As a result the majority of primary schools (96%) were owned by religious patrons, of which 90% remained under the patronage of the Catholic Church.<sup>24</sup> The Programme for Government 2011-2016 (Government of Ireland, 2011) included a commitment to establish a Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the primary sector. Its purpose was to allow all stakeholders, including parents, to engage in open debate on change of patronage in communities where it was considered appropriate and necessary (Children's Rights Alliance, 2015). At the same time, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the '*slow progress in increasing access to secular education*', recommending that the State '*ensure that there are diverse school types and curriculum options available ... to meet the needs of minority faith or non-faith children*' (UN, 2014). The report of the Forum's Advisory Group, 'The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector' (2012: 1), notes that '*there is now a mismatch between the inherited pattern of denominational school patronage and the rights of citizens in the much more culturally and religiously diverse contemporary*

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<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the Education Committee (2015) also struggled to understand the material differences between a Jointly Managed Church school and a Controlled Integrated school.

<sup>24</sup> According to the report on school patronage (Coolahan *et al.*, 2012), out of 3,169 primary schools, 2,841 or 89.65% are Catholic.

*Irish society*’ and acknowledges the challenges involved in re-shaping the structure of primary school provision to bring it in line with recent changes in society. An update was published on 1 July 2014 and the Catholic Schools Partnership (CPS) has published guidelines to facilitate children who wish to ‘opt out’ of faith formation. These include providing an *‘interesting, educationally appropriate and child-friendly activity’* where alternative supervision is not feasible (CPS, 2015).

The first group of schools under the patronage divestment process opened in September 2014, under Educate Together<sup>25</sup> patronage in areas of growing populations. One Church of Ireland school has transferred to Educate Together; although the Catholic Church has yet to transfer a primary school to another patron, it did merge two Catholic schools to create a vacant property for Educate Together.<sup>26</sup> However, the Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA) (2015: 43) referred to the process of divestment as lacking a ‘clear roadmap’ and that the process had more or less ‘stalled’ and called for the Department of Education and Skills to *‘...clarify its intentions in driving this process forward in terms of the pace of divestment and the nature of reform needed’*. However, in September 2015 four new schools opened under the patronage divestment process. Three of these schools operate under the patronage of Educate Together and the fourth, a Gaelscoil operates under the patronage of An Foras Patrúnachta. This development will bring to nine the number of new schools opened under the patronage divesting process to date.<sup>27</sup> Discussions are continuing with the main Catholic patrons to make further progress for 2016 and beyond. In addressing the costs involved, it was claimed that the *‘... arrangement ensuing from the work of the Forum should be cost neutral’* (2012: 103) and that compensation to patron bodies for the use of their property following divesting or transferring patronage to the State or other patron body would not arise. Whilst the Forum did not carry out a detailed costing exercise, it provided ‘indicative costs’ based on usage of existing school stock, costs for new buildings, the development of a curriculum for the Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics programme for all primary schools and associated continuing professional development programmes for primary teachers.

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<sup>25</sup> Educate Together is an independent NGO and management group that runs a network of schools across Ireland, guaranteeing equality of access to children irrespective of their social, cultural or religious background. See <http://www.educatetogether.ie/>

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Irish Times <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/forum-head-calls-on-church-to-speed-up-schools-handover-1.2052481>.

<sup>27</sup> [http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/\(indexlookupdail\)/20150331~WRU?opendocument#WRU00150](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/(indexlookupdail)/20150331~WRU?opendocument#WRU00150). Written answer, 31 March 2015, Minister for Education and Skills

## 2. AREA BASED PLANNING OF EDUCATION PROVISION

### 2.1 Rationalisation and Sustainability

Within the discussion surrounding the schools estate, references are often made to a 'rationalised education system' and what this might look like. The identification of low pupil enrolments in the Strategic Review of Education (the Bain Review) (DE, 2006) has been reiterated by the DE. The Detail (2013) reported that there were over 78,000 unfilled places across nursery, primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland.<sup>28</sup> In The Bain Review (2006: 180) a series of arguments were made for a more inclusive education system, stating that:

*'Our argument for this more inclusive and pervasive approach is three-fold: first, the educational case – access for pupils to the full range of the curriculum, to high quality teaching, and to modern facilities; second, the social case – societal well-being by promoting a culture of tolerance, mutual understanding and inter-relationship through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning; the economic case – through cost-effective provision that gives good value for money'.*

The Bain Review (2006: 147) also advocated *'a more pervasive and inclusive approach, focused on the dynamic process of integrating education across the school system, in which sharing and collaboration are key features'*. A role was also identified for the DE to explore ways in which education could better facilitate and encourage *'... an inclusive strategy with a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools'* (2006: 160). The identification of recurrently low pupil enrolments in the Bain Review highlighted a lack of coordination between sectors on planning and development matters, and called for the introduction of area-based planning to take account of the overall projected need for provision in an area.

In response to the Bain Review, the DE published its policy for Sustainable Schools in January 2009. The policy (2009: 6) states that it:

*'...sets out criteria and indicators for use by the Department, the education authorities, school Boards of Governors and the wider community, to help assess whether a school may be considered as fit for purpose, or whether action is required to address emerging problems of viability. The objective is to improve the quality of education offered to pupils of all ages and backgrounds. The criteria should also have a role in helping a school to monitor and self-review its current position and consider how it might be strengthened and improved.'*

The DE also set out a number of quantitative and qualitative criteria and indicators linked to consideration of the longer-term viability of a school: quality educational experience; stable

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<sup>28</sup> See Supply and demand for places: check out your local schools <http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/235/school-transfer-data/supply-and-demand-for-places-check-out-your-local-schools>. However, the 'robustness' of these figures have been highlighted by amongst others Gallagher (2015), who in a paper for the Education Committee, refers to the calculation of surplus places as a 'general estimate' and that the figure for post-primary education is closer to some 1,500 based on projected need for 2025. The Northern Ireland Audit Office (2015) also that the calculation of surplus places is not accurate and that *'...the management information in this area is not sufficiently robust'* (2015: 3).

enrolment trends; strong leadership and management by Boards of Governors and Principals; accessibility; and strong links with the community. The policy (2009: 42) concludes:

*‘..given surplus capacity and falling rolls, it is important that opportunities for sharing both across and within sectors are fully considered and evaluated to improve current educational standards, to make better use of resources and to serve even better the needs of young people and those who teach them.’*

This led to the initiation of area based planning, which has been a key-feature in the discussion surrounding rationalisation and sustainability of education in Northern Ireland.

## **2.2 Area Based Planning of Education Provision in Northern Ireland**

The Area Planning process, announced in September 2011, was initiated by the Minister for Education as he endorsed the establishment of *‘... a network of strong sustainable schools that command the confidence of the communities they serve’* and commissioned the then ELBs and CCMS to develop strategic plans for the future schools estate on an area basis.<sup>29</sup> The Minister also commissioned the five ELB’s together with the CCMS and other sectors to initiate the planning process with viability audits for all schools so as to establish what was referred to as stress indicators, for example, the quality of education, enrolment trends and the financial position of the schools. The Department guidelines (2012: 6) stated:

*‘Area planning is the process through which a network of viable and sustainable schools will be developed. This process is an important driver for achieving the Departmental vision for education since it is about identifying future education needs and planning to meet those needs on an area basis.’*

In the summer of 2012, the ELBs published for consultation their draft plans for restructuring post-primary education in each of their areas. The consultation closed on 26 October 2012. The proposals covered Controlled, Maintained, Integrated, Irish Medium and Voluntary Grammar provision and were produced with the help of CCMS and the ELBs. The Education and Library Boards (ELBs) published the primary Area Plans in early July 2014. In the sections below, the emphasis is placed on particular aspects of the area planning process, i.e. the approach to consultation or stakeholder involvement; the Needs Model; the inter-sectoral approach and finally, the area planning process in the absence of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA).

## **2.3 Consultation Process**

In July 2012 the Education and Library Boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, in discussions with other providers launched for public consultation draft area plans on the future of the post-primary education estate. With regards to the post-primary consultation, Knox (2012: 21),

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<sup>29</sup> Putting Pupils First: Shaping Our Future. The Next Steps for Education A statement by John O’Dowd MLA, Minister for Education, to the Assembly 26 September 2011 <http://www.deni.gov.uk/putting-pupils-first-shaping-our-future-the-next-steps-for-education-english-version.pdf>. See <http://www.deni.gov.uk/INDEX/85-SCHOOLS/AREA-PLANNING/AREA-PLANNING-TERMS-OF-REFERENCE.HTM>

while acknowledging the large public consultation response (50,000), found that the consultation process ‘*was inadequate*’ and needed to have been more ‘*comprehensive*’, noting that there was a ‘*...public sentiment for a more inclusive system. Managing authorities are stuck in a time warp, protecting their vested interests and unable to think creatively about change.*’ The Integrated Education Fund (IEF), working with the Rural Community Network and local community partners, also held a number of community engagement events throughout Northern Ireland, between November 2011 and June 2012, to increase awareness of the challenges facing education in Northern Ireland.<sup>30</sup>

The draft plans for the restructuring of primary education was concluded in June 2013 and published in July 2014, and in comparison to the post-primary consultation, the number of responses was not high, 7,800 responses and some 3,400 signatories to petitions.

The Education Committee (2015), in its position paper on area planning, referred to the DE and ELBs having been ‘*...unimaginative and ineffective in this policy area (and others) in respect of how consultation is undertaken or overseen.*’ The Committee felt that the Department and its Arms-Length-Bodies (ALBs) should consider how governments in other jurisdictions explain their policies and persuade stakeholders of their efficacy. The Education Committee also recognised that that this may require supporting activities such as wide-ranging policy development pre-consultations linked to community planning activities at local government level including e.g. community audits and a more formal parental consultation platform. The Committee recommended:

*‘...the Department and its Arm’s Length Bodies review their consultation practices and consider the use of other processes and supporting activities including policy development pre-consultations and linkages to community planning activities in order to actively explain policies and persuade stakeholders of their efficacy.’*

This point was also made by Professor Tony Gallagher to the Education Committee (2015) who stated that there was no real opportunity for community conversation or deliberation to inform this process. This point was also made by the Rural Community Network (RCN) (2014), who referred to the need for to involve ‘the whole community’ and to the limited knowledge amongst stakeholders of what the area planning process actually involved.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (2015) highlighted what it saw as limited support and guidance for individual schools as part of this process.

## **2.4 Parental and stakeholder involvement**

It is clear that area planning described above was imperfect. The Northern Ireland Audit Office (2015) described the process as ‘top-down’ and ‘led by the sectors’ and whereas the consultation response was large, it did not serve parents and other stakeholders well, and affected schools that were deemed to be unsustainable. With regards to parents, it is clear that there have been enormous changes to the extent to which parents now can involve themselves in the education of their children (Minogue and Schubotz, 2014). Indeed, it is one of the key factors in securing higher

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<sup>30</sup> See Community, <http://www.ief.org.uk/community/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/education/inquiries-and-reviews/shared-and-integrated-education/rural-community-network.pdf>

student achievement and sustained school performance (Harris and Goodall 2007). However, with regards to parental influence on other aspects of education, the reality in Northern Ireland is more problematic. For example, a recent OECD report (Shewbridge *et al.*, 2014: 175) found that Northern Ireland lacked a ‘... *consultation platform for parents to provide input into system evaluation and policy development*’ and recommended that the DE should support the development of a service comparable to that already available in other OECD countries. This point was noted by DE officials in giving evidence to the Education Committee in 2014:<sup>32</sup>

*‘We are not in a position to say that the Department is taking a particular position on any individual recommendation. We need to engage with stakeholders on all the recommendations. The point about engagement with parents is valuable and important, and it has certainly registered in the Department. It is not the first time that it has been observed. We are aware of other education systems in which a stakeholder group or stakeholder representation of the parental voice has been demonstrably valuable.’*

This matters in the context of area planning, particularly with regards to the legislative basis for parental preferences, and the need to better facilitate such a discussion in a way that provides insight into parental preferences for common or separate schools.

## **2.5 Parental Preferences and the Planning Process.**

Crucially, there is a legislative basis for parental choice in education<sup>33</sup>, which states that the DE and the EA should have regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training, and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, that pupils should be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents and to make arrangements for child to attend a particular school (The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, Article 44; Education Order 1997). In the case of Northern Ireland references are often made to Article 18(4) of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which obliges States parties to respect the liberty of parents to ‘*ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity of their own convictions*’ (see also Article 13(3) ICESCR). Similarly, references are also made to Article 2, Protocol 1 ECHR, which obliges States to respect the right of parents to ensure that education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.<sup>34</sup> However, the UK has entered a reservation in respect of the latter stipulating that this is accepted ‘*only so far as compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training, and the avoidance of unreasonable expenditure*’.<sup>35</sup> In the case of Northern Ireland, it is also worth noting that the

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<sup>32</sup> Official Report (Hansard), Session: 2013/2014, Date: Wednesday, 19 February 2014.

Committee for Education, Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process — PISA Tests and OECD Report (DE Briefing). References in this context were made by DE officials to the use of Parenting NI as a way of engaging with parents, such as getting views and opinions of parents heard in consultations, such as the Ministerial Advisory Group for Advancing Shared Education and also for the Education Committee in its enquiry into shared and integrated education. See <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Education/Inquiries-and-Reviews/shared-and-integrated-education/Parenting-NI.pdf> and <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Education/Inquiries-and-Reviews/shared-and-integrated-education/Parenting%20NI%201.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Article 44, the Education and Libraries (NI) Order, 1986

<sup>34</sup> 19 European Convention on Human Rights, 1950 Protocol 1, Article 2

<sup>35</sup> 20 Human Rights Act, 1998 Schedule 3, Part II

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) did not uphold the argument that integrated education is a philosophical conviction that should be protected under the parental right to choice.<sup>36</sup> However, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) make the point that the '*...ECHR is a living instrument and subsequent cases at the ECHR have demonstrated a broadening of the interpretation to protect beliefs that are 'worthy of respect in a democratic society' and 'attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance'*'.<sup>37</sup>

The EA is required to process parental preferences with regards to schools until an application is successful; the only limit constraining the degree to which the admissions process may meet parental preference is the physical capacity of schools, defined for the purposes of admissions, by school numbers set annually by the DE in accordance with the legislative framework, through the Needs Model. This limit means that some parents' preferences cannot be met. Figures show that the first preferences of parents are being met in 98% of admissions to primary schools and 88% of admissions to post-primary schools.<sup>38</sup> However, this also makes it difficult to forecast and plan the future supply and demand for places in a particular school, and in the light of the discussion surrounding sustainability, a school, which might have been singled out for closure, or in danger of closing, would hardly attract potential pupils (see Northern Ireland Audit Office, 2015). Another issue with regards to parental preference is the cost of transport, as was highlighted in the Bain Review (2006). The current policy of transporting large numbers of pupils to schools of choice does not assist Area Planning and has led to an increased cost (DE, 2014). Although the number of pupils using public transport has dropped, the cost has gone up by 16 per cent since 2005/2006 (Northern Ireland Audit Office, 2015).

It is clear, that area planning as it materialised tended to look at sectors and the need within each sector. This highlights a series of issues, one is of the course what guides parents to a particular school. One aspect of this is highlighted by Knox and Borooah (2015), who refer to the unfilled places in primary and post primary integrated schools and suggest that parents primarily opt for schools which perform well academically, rather than having children educated together. However, this is not totally compatible with research, such as the Northern Ireland Life and Times (1999) and Young Life and Times (2003- 2010) surveys which found that over one-third of respondents would like to send their children to an integrated school if there was one in the vicinity.

What is clear for many is that another means of determining parental needs/demand is required. References have often been made to deliberative polling where a representative sample within a geographical area is first polled on the issue, then provided with balanced briefing material and invited back to discuss their positions further. This allows participants to enter into a dialogue with experts and political leaders based on questions they develop in small group discussions with trained

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<sup>36</sup> 26 X v UK (app no. 7782/77) (1978) ECHR 14 DR 179. 27 Young, James and Webster v UK (app no. 7601/76) (1981) par. 63 28 Campbell and Cosans v UK (app no. 7511/76) (1982) par. 36

<sup>37</sup> Submission of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to the Committee for Education Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education, see [http://www.nihrc.org/uploads/publications/Submission\\_of\\_the\\_NIHRC\\_inquiry\\_into\\_shared\\_and\\_integrated\\_education.pdf](http://www.nihrc.org/uploads/publications/Submission_of_the_NIHRC_inquiry_into_shared_and_integrated_education.pdf) References in text to Young, James and Webster v UK (app no. 7601/76) (1981) par. 63 And Campbell and Cosans v UK (app no. 7511/76) (1982) par. 36

<sup>38</sup> Education: Parental Choice, Northern Ireland Assembly debate on 7 Jun 2011. See <http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2011/110607>.

moderators. This has been used successfully in Omagh with regards to educational provision in the area (Fishkin et al, 2007). In the case of Omagh, out of 556 invited parents, 127 attended the deliberation session, sessions in which participants formulated and worked on questions to a panel of experts and policy makers. With regards to outcomes there are three things which stand out: it changed the perceptions amongst different groups of their 'opposite' numbers, e.g. communities were seen after polling to be more trustworthy; participants were better informed about the various issues and were allowed to ask questions which mattered to them; and finally it highlighted that parents were open to solutions other than the traditional and sectorised provisions. Fishkin et al (2007) found that parents wanted more sharing and that just under three-quarters (71%) stated they would support integrated education. This research also highlighted that the current system 'failed to reflect what parents actually want' (2007: 38) and that as such the exercise highlighted that 'current communication and consultation methodologies' did not adequately cater for parents and the range of views and wishes that may exist. Such an approach could also be interpreted to be in line with the Education Committee's findings in its enquiry into shared and integrated education (2015: 3) where it stressed the need for the department to further explore and promote '*...natural mixing of children from different backgrounds in non-integrated schools.*'

The discussion surrounding parental input was also highlighted in the case of Clintyclay Primary school, and the wishes of the parents to transform the school from a Maintained school to an Integrated School. The CCMS found in its review of maintained provision in the Parish of Dungannon in December 2012, that there was no significant increase in the enrolment at Clintyclay, something which it felt would lead to further financial difficulties and constraints on meeting the legal demands of the statutory curriculum, and as such advocated for a closure. In the summer of 2014 the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) published two proposals, one of which was to change the school's management to grant-maintained integrated status, which the Minister turned down, and the other was to close the school.<sup>39</sup> The Minister acknowledged the support for a transformation amongst staff, governors and parents but expressed concern regarding the long-term sustainability, particularly as the number of enrolled pupils (26) was below the enrolment threshold outlined in the Department's Sustainable Schools Policy and consequently its ability to achieve a successful transformation. He stated that '*the school's long-term unsustainability ... means that transformation to integrated status is not a feasible option. In making this decision I would emphasise that I am not suggesting that there is no demand for integrated provision in the area.*'

However, within the school a majority of parents supported transformation to integrated status. Similarly in a survey undertaken by Lucid Talk, opinions were gathered from a representative sample of 530 parents within a 12 mile radius of the school. Just over three quarters of parents stated they were *very likely* or *likely* to send their child/ren to the school.<sup>40</sup> In light of this, a pupil at the school sought judicial review and the judge in his High Court verdict found that '*...the minister clearly and mistakenly made both important decisions on the basis the school was under financial stress*' and that '*...the advice given to the minister was infected by the erroneous CCMS report and by this material financial inaccuracy.*' Mr Justice Treacy was critical of the approach taken by the Minister and emphasised how Clintyclay's attempt to transform its status could have '*a galvanising*

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.deni.gov.uk/news/news-de-161014-odowd-approves-closure.htm>

<sup>40</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/dp\\_315\\_clintyclay\\_ps.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/dp_315_clintyclay_ps.pdf) Development Proposal



*impact*'. In the spring of 2015, the education minister appealed a High Court decision to quash his closure order on the school.<sup>41</sup> The Education Committee's (2015) later recommended that DE initiate a strategic review of its approach to integrated education.<sup>42</sup>

The Education Minister has also referred to the publication of the Department's shared education policy, but also *a review of the future planning and development of integrated education*.<sup>43</sup>

## **2.6 Consolidating 'within' versus 'between' sectors**

The approach to area planning was also characterised by a strong sectoral approach, despite the guidelines (2012: 6) which stated:

*Area planning provides the opportunity to consider all potential options to maximise the accessibility of high quality education in local areas. Realistic, innovative and creative solutions may be considered and may include options that increase sharing of education provision and infrastructure in line with Departmental commitments in the Programme for Government.*

This process was also hampered in the absence of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) which was envisaged by Bain to assume operational responsibility for Area Planning. In the absence of ESA the ELBs assumed this role. ELBs planned for controlled schools and the CCMS planned for Catholic Maintained schools. Knox (2012) has highlighted that CCMS and the ELBs respectively, produced their plans essentially independently of each other. Consequently the plans included limited examples of cross-sectoral co-operation. In the spring of 2013, the ELBs published, for consultation, their draft plans for restructuring primary education in each of their areas. Knox (2012: 21) refers to '*vested interests being protected*' and '*unable to think creatively about change*'. This was also highlighted by the Education Committee (2015) in their position paper on area planning which found that:

*The Committee felt that the application of separate projections of demand for each sector would inevitably tend to promote separate planning for each of those sectors. Thus as a consequence, all of the Area Plans were, in almost all cases, in fact 3 separate sectoral plans for the area in question. The Committee therefore believed that the Needs Model as currently formulated does nothing to support true cross-sectoral Area Planning.*

At the same time, concerns that sectoral interests dominate planning rather than a more cross-sectoral approach, has led to criticism that area planning is an unduly narrow approach with references to 'twin track approaches' existing (Rural Community Network, 2014; Borooah and Knox, 2013, 2014; NICIE, 2013). Rather than area-based solutions, the process was characterised by what Gallagher (2015) calls 'parallel tracks', i.e. that although there was '*...a connection between the different sectors, the examination or diagnosis of the situation was carried out along parallel tracks*

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-32693301>

<sup>42</sup> The terms of reference of which should include (2015: 2): the effectiveness of its actions in encouraging and facilitating this form of education in particular its assessment and treatment of parental perceptions and demand for Integrated Education in the Area Planning and Development Proposal processes; the roles of the sectoral bodies; and the relevance of minority community designation in the enrolment of integrated schools.

<sup>43</sup> See <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-08-09-2015.pdf>

*between the sectors. That did not lead to a terribly joined-up search for solutions.'* The Northern Ireland Audit Office (2015: 3) states:

*The Bain Review recommended that the ESA would assume operational responsibility for Area Planning. In the absence of ESA the ELBs assumed this role. ELBs planned for controlled schools and the CCMS planned for Catholic Maintained schools. The other sectors have not been full participants in the process. Because of this approach, many stakeholders within the Area Planning process feel disconnected with the decision-makers and this has led to resistance to change in many areas.*

A key component of the area planning process was the use of the Needs Model, as a way to assess demand for educational provision both within primary and post-primary schools. The model was designed to provide the DE with long term projections of the need for places in grant-aided primary and post-primary schools across all sectors within defined geographical areas. Rather than estimating the demand for places within a particular school, the data focuses on aggregate demand in a geographical area.<sup>44</sup> However, the point has been made that a sectoral approach limits choice for those parents who want to send their children to an integrated school. The Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (2014: 8) contended that:

*There is no mechanism for planning for integrated schools. CCMS plans provision for Catholic schools and ELBs plan provision for controlled schools, but parents seeking an integrated school must achieve this by their own efforts, either by establishing a new school or through a process of transformation, a process which has not been supported by NICCE, resulting in only controlled schools using this process. This is discriminatory and unequal.*

Area planning clashed with the DE's statutory duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education when Drumragh integrated college's request to increase its number of pupils in 2012 was turned down by the Minister for Education, who referred to the need for an intake which was suited to local demand. He also stated,

*'While Drumragh Integrated College is undoubtedly a popular and oversubscribed school, an increase in the approved enrolment of almost 30% would clearly have a significant impact on other provision in the area.'*<sup>45</sup>

This led the College to seek a judicial review and in the spring of 2014, the judge delivered his deliberations.<sup>46</sup> The judgement by Mr Justice Treacy highlighted three aspects with relevance to area planning.<sup>47</sup> One was that integrated schooling cannot be delivered by schools with a predominantly

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<sup>44</sup> The Needs Model does not calculate separately for gender nor does it provide separate totals for Years 8-12 and post-16 projections.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-de/news-de-october-2012/news-de-121012-minister-turns-down.htm>

<sup>46</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/dp\\_226\\_drumragh\\_ic\\_-\\_published\\_submission.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/dp_226_drumragh_ic_-_published_submission.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> See

[http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/enGB/Judicial%20Decisions/SummaryJudgments/Documents/Court%20Delivers%20Ruling%20on%20Department%20of%20Education%27s%20Approach%20to%20Long%20Term%20Planning/\\_j\\_Summary%20of%20judgment%20%20In%20re%20Drumragh%20Integrated%20College%2015%20May%2014.htm](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/enGB/Judicial%20Decisions/SummaryJudgments/Documents/Court%20Delivers%20Ruling%20on%20Department%20of%20Education%27s%20Approach%20to%20Long%20Term%20Planning/_j_Summary%20of%20judgment%20%20In%20re%20Drumragh%20Integrated%20College%2015%20May%2014.htm).

Catholic or Protestant ethos and that integrated education is a standalone concept different from other forms of education and, as such, the statutory duty applies to constituted integrated schools only. Secondly, the judgment clarified that the planning process, based on the existing schools estate, needs to take account of the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate integrated Education. Particularly important was Judge Treacy's comment that the DE *'...needs to be alive to the Article 64 duty at all levels, including the strategic level.'* These points are relevant not only to this specific development proposal but to all future proposals relating to new or existing integrated provision. The last issue, which has been highlighted above, is the impact of the Needs Model and area based planning. Mr Justice Treacy (2014) referred to area plans as a guide for making decisions about the development of individual schools and highlighted in particular that the Needs Model assumed no growth in the integrated sector. He said that it was observed that *'any change in one sector has an impact on the overall provision in the area'* and it is then *'a matter for the school planning authorities to work within the control totals to ensure that the sum of the parts does not exceed the total'*. He also stated:

*'Using an analytical tool to plan for an area is of course acceptable and necessary, however the inflexibility of the projections used will have the effect of making it difficult to accommodate the Article 64 duty in future day to day decisions.'*

Despite this, in March 2015, the Minister of Education turned down the application from Drumragh Integrated College.<sup>48</sup> Commenting on his decision, Mr O'Dowd said:

*As Minister I must ensure that education provision reflects the full range of needs in the local area and that we maintain a network of sustainable schools. It would not be right for me to make a decision that benefits one school and which also carries a strong risk of negatively impacting other nearby schools unduly.*

The Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee has acknowledged the shortcomings of the Needs Model to recognise an increasingly diverse school population and stated *'traditional designations and so as to promote increased mixing in schools'*. Adviser to the Committee, Professor Tony Gallagher stated:

*The Needs Model has been judged to be too rigidly applied and, in consequence, to make it difficult for the Department to fulfil its obligations under Article 64 of the 1989 Education Reform Order. That said it remains unclear how much of an adjustment to the process would be required to meet this legal obligation.*

The events surrounding the area planning process also highlighted the shortcomings of the area plans with regards to the development and promotion of shared education. Gallagher (2015) refer to the limited references and examples of shared education in the various proposals put forward by the then ELBS. Similarly, Knox and Borooah (2015) also refer to the lack of acknowledgement within the process of such proposals and suggestions, despite being put forward by *'grass-roots'*.

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<sup>48</sup> O'Dowd turns down proposal to increase capacity at Drumragh Integrated College, Omagh  
<http://www.deni.gov.uk/news/news-de-270315-odowd-turns-down-3.htm>

## 2.7 The Attempt to Establish an Education and Skills Authority (ESA)

In the discussions on area planning there have also been references to the lack of a functioning Education Authority, something highlighted by the Education Committee (2015a):

*The Committee agreed that the process was impeded and greatly complicated by the ongoing and delayed re-organisation of the Education and Library Boards and their replacement by the Education Authority. As such, there was no single planning authority and in a process characterised by uncertainty.*

The area plans for primary and post-primary schools are to be reviewed and consulted on by the Education Authority. They will then be published together for all regions by July 2016. The plans will be reviewed on a three-year cycle. The Northern Ireland Audit Office (2015: 36) has stated:

*Without full participation of all major education sectors, Area Planning will not produce solutions which are complete and appropriate to all localities. We would therefore urge the Department to do more to include all sectors in the Area Planning process as well as securing the support of all stakeholders.*

An Independent Review of the Common Funding Scheme (2013) ('The Salisbury Report') proposed rationalisation and amalgamations as potential solutions in revised area plans alongside the closing down of some smaller schools, although the accuracy of estimated savings has since been queried.<sup>49</sup> Critics also highlighted the limited evidence that larger, amalgamated schools increase the attainment of pupils (Estyn, 2013; Knox and Borooah, 2013). The Northern Ireland Audit Office (2015) referred to ETI inspections over a three-year period and was unable to establish a link between the size of a school and educational attainment. With regards to the financial argument, it was claimed found that (based on research in Wales) potential savings from school closures were small in comparison to the removal of surplus places.

The discussion in this context has often had a particular emphasis on the delivery of the curriculum and the 'limitations' of small schools to do so. What is also worth highlighting is the limited success of the area planning process. As it stands, for the period since 2010, 37 schools had been given notice for closure; there have been 20 proposals for the amalgamation of 46 schools, and 17 schools are involved in mergers. However, only a small number of these are as a result of the Area Planning process.

The discussion on area planning highlights the divisions in the Northern Ireland education system, particularly the impact of a sectoral approach to planning and challenges with regards to surplus places. The Northern Ireland Audit Office (2015) referred to figures from the Department of Education, that in 2014-15, there were 71,000 (20 per cent of capacity) surplus school places, a reduction of 12,000 since 2009. However, it also makes the point that the methodology for the calculation of surplus places has changed since the Bain Review and that data for many schools is based on out of date information. As a result, there is no assurance that information on surplus places is accurate and needs to be clarified. References have also been made to the implementation

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<sup>49</sup> Savings of £35 million and 50,000 displaced pupils.

of sustainable schools and area planning, particularly in the light of no identified outcomes of a successful delivery and whether the approach to area planning will impact positively on educational outcomes Borooah and Knox (2012).

### 3. SCHOOL GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

In Northern Ireland governance of education is closely linked with the ownership of schools, denominational ethos and how these relate to the constitution of Boards of Governors (BoG). In this section the emphasis is on school governance with some references to developments elsewhere with regards to school governance.

#### 3.1 Background and Overview

The education system in Northern Ireland is administered by a central Department of Education, whose statutory role is defined as:

*‘..to promote the education of the people of the north of Ireland and to ensure the effective implementation of education policy. The Department’s main statutory areas of responsibility are 0-4 provision, primary, post-primary and special education and the youth service.’<sup>50</sup>*

There is also the Education Authority (EA), which in April 2015 replaced the five Education and Library Boards and the Staff Commission for the Education and Library Boards. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) is a non-departmental public body reporting to the Department of Education, to advise Government, monitor standards and award qualifications. There is also a statutory Council for Catholic Maintained Schools as well as the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) which receives some government funding. The education system also includes Irish language schools, some of which receive grant-aid from government, and independent Christian schools associated with the Free Presbyterian Church which are funded independently.

Ambitious plans for education were initiated in 2008, when the Minister for Education announced the introduction of a new body, the Education and Skills Authority (ESA), as part of a reform to *‘...ensure equality and raise standards in education for all children and young people. Education is a public service that has the potential to shape and guide the development and life chances of our young people; to build strong cohesive communities and to drive and fuel our economy.’<sup>51</sup>* This new body was to be given the core functions of planning, supporting and challenging education.

The plans for a new co-ordinating body were seen as a serious attempt to bring coherence to the fragmented administration of education by significantly streamlining the governance of the school system, thereby freeing up more resources for school support services. The creation of a single authority was expected to replace the five ELBs, the CCMS (as an employing authority), the Youth Council, the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards and the CCEA, and to play a more active role in the appointment of school governors while also giving governors further autonomy, such as setting their own admission criteria. Throughout this process political disagreement primarily between Sinn Féin and the DUP developed amidst fears that the main Protestant churches (transferors) would lose their influence. Birell (2013: 5) summarised the challenges and concerns:

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<sup>50</sup><http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/about-the-department/department-of-education.htm>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news/news-de/news-de-081208-assembly-supports-new.htm>

*These did not relate to any principle about quangos as a suitable form of public administration but concerned issues of church representation on the quango board, the powers of individual schools and unionist hostility to the Sinn Féin minister. The consequence is that by 2013 the Education and Skills Authority has not yet been established, despite expenditure to date on preparation of £12 million.*

Political concern also meant that the originally proposed composition of the Board of the ESA was altered to include political party membership. However, in 2014, because of continuing political disagreement, the Northern Ireland Assembly decided against the implementation of ESA. Some seven years later and an estimated £17 million poorer, the body that materialised, the Education Authority (EA), was a more minimal compromise. EA developed as a reworking of existing legislation to allow for the current five education and library boards to be amalgamated into one, but with employment responsibilities solely for the controlled sector and not for the maintained sector; a statutory basis and place on the 20 person strong board for the Transferor Representatives' Council, integrated schools, Irish medium schools and grammar schools as well as political representation.<sup>52</sup> Initiated as a way of improving educational outcomes, ESA never came to fruition. It is too early to say how the establishment of EA will impact on educational achievement. It is however clear that the lack of progress had negative impacts on areas such as planning, something which led the Education Committee (2015) to state that *'...the process [area planning] was impeded and greatly complicated by the on-going and delayed re-organisation of the Education and Library Boards and their replacement by the Education Authority.'* The Committee also acknowledged that the Education Authority would have a 'key role in tackling the inefficiencies and promoting a more consistent approach for Area Plans.' This was also highlighted in the Northern Ireland Audit Office report (2015: 9) which stated that:

*'...the implementation of the Sustainable Schools policy and Area Planning has been taken forward in an environment where the creation of a single planning authority was uncertain and Area Planning was operating in a more fragmented way to that envisaged by the Bain Review.'*

However, despite all of these concerns, the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 refers to the Functions of the Authority,<sup>53</sup> and its duties to include amongst other things, *'...to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education'* and *'...to encourage, facilitate and promote the community use of premises of grant-aided schools.'* However, the Minister, when introducing the Bill,<sup>54</sup> also stated, *'The provisions on shared education will not be commenced until after my proposed stand-alone Bill on shared education has provided a legal definition of the term.'*<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Eight of the board members are nominated by the four largest political parties according to the d'Hondt system, e.g. three each for the DUP and Sinn Féin, and one each for the SDLP and UUP. The Controlled sectors has four representatives and the Catholic Maintained Schools four as well. Integrated, Irish medium, voluntary grammar and controlled grammar schools each have one member.

<sup>53</sup> Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, Chapter 12, [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2014/12/pdfs/nia\\_20140012\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2014/12/pdfs/nia_20140012_en.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Shared Education Bill, December 2014, [http://www.deni.gov.uk/draft\\_shared\\_education\\_bill.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/draft_shared_education_bill.pdf) *The draft Shared Education Bill refers to shared education as '...the education together of—*  
*(a) those of different religious belief or political opinion, and*  
*(b) those who are experiencing significant socio-economic deprivation and those who are not. The Bill also refers to duty of Education Authority to '...encourage, facilitate and promote shared education.*

<sup>55</sup> Northern Ireland assembly, Official Report (Hansard), Monday 17 November 2014, Volume 99, No. 5 <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-17-11-2014.pdf>

This short overview highlights how closely education is to political alignment and how an attempt to bring coherence to the system, took over 7 years and cost over £17 million to only partially put in place. In the next section the emphasis is the structure of school governance, and in particular the structure and set up the Boards of Governors (BoG) within the Northern Ireland education system.

### **3.2 School Governors in Northern Ireland**

In Northern Ireland, all schools must have a governing body, e.g. a Board of Governors (BoG) consisting (depending on the type and size of school) of specified numbers of various categories of governors – including parents, staff members, local authority representatives, members of the local community, and of any sponsor/founding body involved (see appendix 1). The membership of Boards of Governors is stipulated under the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, which gave stakeholders, such as transferors (on the controlled side), trustees (on the maintained side) and parents, the opportunity to become involved in the running of their local school and to have a meaningful role in the education service. Subsequent Orders, especially the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 have increased greatly the powers and responsibility of Boards of Governors. The 1989 Order also provided for a new category of schools - controlled integrated schools - whereby an existing school could, with the approval of two-thirds of the BoG and three-quarters of the parents, apply for a change of status.

In the case of Northern Ireland the composition of BoGs varies depending on school management type as does the various categories of governors. The various categories aim to ensure that there is representation of all main stakeholders including professional educators, parents, the EA and the Department of Education. The categories are as follows:

- Department of Education Governors: the Department recruits governors through public advertising and a network of organisations;
- EA Governors: typically a member of the EA or someone invited by them on the basis of having an interest in education and the particular school;
- Transferors: nominated by the three transferor churches;
- Trustees: nominated by the legal trustees of a privately owned school in accordance with the scheme of management to represent those who own the premises (all voluntary maintained and many Voluntary Grammar Schools);
- Foundation Governors: represent those who originally established the school through private funds and also reflect the school's ethos;
- Parent Governors: parents or guardians of a child registered at the school and elected by other parents of children attending the school;
- Teacher Governors: permanent teachers in the school elected by their colleagues; and
- Co-opted members: Any Board of Governors may co-opt up to three people from the local business community to bring additional skills; however co-opted governors do not have a vote

The approach taken in Northern Ireland can best be described as a stakeholder model, where the governing body represents a range of interests including parents, the school founders and the employing authority (Perry, 2011).



### 3.3 Role of Governors

With the introduction of the 1989 Education Reform Northern Ireland (1989) Boards of Governors became legally responsible for the running of schools and the overarching responsibility for the conduct and direction of the school, such as managing the school's budget, recruiting staff and regulating staff conduct and discipline. DE (2011: 1) stated that the role of a BoG is '*... to manage the school with a view to providing the best possible education and educational opportunities for all the pupils.*' Similarly, the Department of Education<sup>56</sup> refers to governors bringing '*...their experience, life skills and common sense to this task. In everything they do, they should aim to raise expectations of what can be achieved by all pupils and strengthen the involvement of parents and the community.*' Perry (2011) refers to a range of statutory duties, particularly in setting the strategic direction for the school and providing support for the principal. Broadly, these are three defined 'areas of governance' in schools:

- Strategic governance, which deals with the vision and aim of the school; establishing and maintaining the school's ethos; setting plans and policies; monitoring and evaluating school performance and promoting self-evaluation to sustain school improvement.
- Corporate governance, which has an emphasis on school performance measures; curriculum planning; employment issues; pupil pastoral care and protection issues; publication of information regarding the school and its pupils and the management of school premises and relations with the community.
- Good governance, which is defined as being a critical friend but also supporting pupils, parents and staff.

The role played by BoGs also differ depending on type of school, for example, the BoG of a non-Catholic voluntary maintained schools (including an Irish medium school) as well as voluntary grammar and grant maintained integrated schools are the employing authorities of teachers. Similarly, with regards to ownership, voluntary grammar and maintained schools are in most cases owned by trustees. For DE to pay capital grants to a voluntary school, the school premises must be 'vested' in the names of trustees and DE. With regards to Grant Maintained Integrated (and Irish Medium) schools which have satisfied DE's criteria for long-term viability, become eligible for capital grant-aid. Their buildings and land become owned by their Trustees and become vested in the names of the Trustees and DE, in the same way as other voluntary schools.

Perry (2011) also reiterated the need for more clarity on the roles of governors, particularly in terms of their legal responsibilities and the power they have to fulfil them. Research (PWC, 2010) found that the role of governors had become 'increasingly strategic', with an expanding number of roles and responsibilities. Many participants in the PWC research expressed a concern that the role had become too demanding. Similarly, informal networks and word of mouth tend to be the most common form of recruitment to the position of governor and there have been calls for a more

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<sup>56</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/schools-management/79-school\\_governors\\_pg/schools\\_79\\_governor-roles-and-responsibilities\\_pg/schools\\_79\\_chapter-3-overview-of-roles\\_pg.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/schools-management/79-school_governors_pg/schools_79_governor-roles-and-responsibilities_pg/schools_79_chapter-3-overview-of-roles_pg.htm)

formalised process of appointment. Whilst participants in the PWC research referred to training programmes for governors, they were not mandatory and attendance varied (PWC, 2010).

### **3.4 Representation on Boards of Governors**

What is striking with regards to representation on BoG's (see Appendix 1) is the limited presence of parents. The Report on the Management of Schools (DENI, 1979) recommended that parents should be included in the membership of decision making structures. While policy documents such as *Every School a Good School* (ESGS) (DE, 2011) has advocated for greater representative links between schools and parents having a statutory representation on BoG's, research, such as PWC (2010) has highlighted challenges, for the recruitment and active involvement of parents (and also their input once elected on the BoGs). Maguire (2014) found that in Northern Ireland, parents tended to feature less within educational governance, compared with other parts of the UK, where the role and expectations of parent governors are clearly defined.

With regards to representation on BoGs, links to the education sectors in Northern Ireland remains historically strong. As highlighted earlier, the four main Churches have a strong representation on BoGs, particularly in the Controlled and Maintained sectors. Lundy (1998: 68) states that through these positions on the BoGs of schools churches have been able to '*...exercise a significant influence on the development of the education system and indeed the legal provisions which govern it.*' This also has an impact on how schools are being managed. The OECD (2007: 40), for example, highlighted that in schools with a 'religious character', '*...the foundation governors must preserve and develop this [character]. It is important that the principal forms a good relationship with the foundation governors, and with the local priest, minister or leader of the faith community...*'. For example, CCMS (2013: 6) refer to BoGs in Catholic Schools having the '*...responsibility for maintaining and developing the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school.*'

Donnelly (1999; 2000: 165) found that governor relationships both reflected and reinforced each school's distinctive ethos and governors were expected to '*...endorse, reinforce and protect Christian values and assist in the provision of a distinctive religious and moral ethos therein.*' This is also echoed in the findings from research by PWC (2010: 17) which found that while governors perceived their role as '*primarily strategic in nature*' references were often made to '*establishing and maintaining the culture and values of the school*'. PWC research found that Trustee and Transferor Governors, for example, were nominated by their respective churches and also tended to represent an older age profile and greater experience in governorships. However, Donnelly has highlighted the sometimes fraught relationship between BoGs, particularly parents, and the churches. Donnelly (2000: 170) refers to the '*...little support for the Church exercising authority at the governing body level.*' However, Donnelly (2000: 170) also found that although there was sometimes an 'uneasy' relationship on the governing body level, parents were however willing to '*...use the bargaining power of the churches at central government level to fight their corner...*'.

While there is church representation on the Boards of Controlled and Maintained Schools, other school types normally do not have any statutory representation of the churches on their Boards. For example, integrated schools, special schools and Irish Medium schools do not have a particular relationship with specific religious denominations. With regards to grant maintained integrated

schools, Macaulay (2009) refers to Presbyterian Ministers playing a 'full part'. Macaulay also makes the point that while places were allocated on BoGs of transformed Controlled Integrated Schools to Catholic governors, Bishops did not take up the invitation to appoint governors to these schools.

The role of governance has also come to the forefront in discussions surrounding 'joint faith schools' or 'jointly managed schools' (as seen in England, between Catholic and Anglican churches). This led DE to issue guidelines for such a school in Northern Ireland particularly with regards to issues such as employment, ownership as well as composition of the BoGs.<sup>57</sup> The guidelines (2015: 9) state that management of such a school would be set up along the lines of a voluntary maintained management but being distinct from a Catholic maintained school as it would not be part of an agreement between the CCMS and DE (Article 141(3) of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989). Governors of the school would be appointed by the Trustees, reflecting both the Catholic and Transferor Churches. A comparison can be made with the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) Statement of Principles, in which it states that a board of Governors should comprise at least 40% members from a perceived Catholic background and 40% from a perceived Protestant background.

There are some signs that shared education has led to more engagement between governors from different. For example, the appointment of a shared teacher in Moneynick Primary School and Duneane Primary School (NEELB) saw governors from the controlled and maintained school meet in a combined session to establish a joint subcommittee for the recruitment and selection process (QUB, 2012). The proposed establishment of a Brookeborough shared campus in County Fermanagh had the support of the respective Boards of Governors and that the governors, have formed a joint committee with the idea to move towards a joint board of governors.<sup>58</sup> In the case of Ballycastle High School and Cross and Passion College, governors of both schools have been involved in forming collaborative sub-committees, dealing with issues, such as planning.<sup>59</sup> In this context references have also been made to alternative or revised models of school governance, such as federation governors (see Perry, 2011).

### **3.5 Alternative Approaches to School Governance**

With regards to school governance, the experiences in the Republic of Ireland and the establishment of the Forum for Patronage is interesting, as it highlights how attempts have been made to alter school governance to better respond to significant societal changes and demand for new forms of multi-denominational and non-denominational schooling that reflect greater community diversity. All stakeholders, including parents have engaged in open debate on change of patronage in communities where it was considered appropriate and necessary. However, as highlighted earlier there have been criticisms of the lack of progress with the process (CRA, 2015).

While the situation in the Republic of Ireland is perhaps similar to Northern Ireland, with regards to religious patronage, other examples are slightly different. In Scotland previously established School

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<sup>57</sup> JOINTLY-MANAGED SCHOOLS, Circular Number:2015/15 Date of Issue: April 2015. See [http://www.deni.gov.uk/updated\\_circular\\_2015\\_15\\_-\\_jointly\\_managed\\_schools.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/updated_circular_2015_15_-_jointly_managed_schools.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/committee-12853.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/education/inquiries-and-reviews/shared-and-integrated-education/ballycastle-high-school-and-cross-and-passion-college.pdf>

Boards were replaced in 2007/2008 by Parents Councils.<sup>60</sup> These councils are designed to be more flexible and responsive to parents' needs, and together with schools being given new duties to promote parental involvement, it was seen as a way of better representing parents' views to schools. There are some indications that the new structures are attracting a wider group of parents than their predecessors, the School Boards (Consumer Focus 2009). However, Bradshaw et al (2012) highlighted that while parental participation was common in schools involved in the research, less formal arrangements operate elsewhere, for example in Finland governing bodies are not required. Municipal authorities appoint heads, and hold them to account for their performance (sometimes appointing paid boards to fulfil this function). In Finland, education governance is highly decentralized, giving Finland's 320 municipalities' significant amount of freedom to arrange schooling according to the local circumstances. The role of central government is to issue legislation, provide 'top up' local funding of schools, and provide a guiding framework for what schools should teach and how (OECD, 2013).

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<sup>60</sup> The Scottish Schools (Parent Involvement) Act 2006.

## 4. TEACHER TRAINING, RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT

This section outlines and reflects on the particular characteristics of teacher training, recruitment and deployment in Northern Ireland. It looks at the distinctive elements of the system as well as factors which have contributed to shaping it. The section also takes into consideration attempts to revise teacher education in Northern Ireland, so as to better prepare student teachers and teachers to deal with the changing and evolving situation in Northern Ireland, in terms of further sharing and integration.

### 4.1 Teacher Education in Northern Ireland

Securing a place at a teacher education college in Northern Ireland has become increasingly competitive with anything between six and twelve candidates competing for each place (Shewbridge, 2014). Similarly, Deloitte (2007) referred to eight times more applicants than there are places available. Teacher training in Northern Ireland is mainly provided by four institutions: Stranmillis University College; St Mary's University College; Queen's University Belfast; and Ulster University. Two main courses leading to qualified teacher status are offered: a one-year postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE) and a four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree. DE determines the number of teachers to be trained each year using its Teacher Demand Model (TDM). While the two universities are the de facto 'secular institutions', St Mary's is an ITE institution with a Catholic ethos and Stranmillis is religiously influenced (Nelson, 2010). At QUB and Ulster University the religious education course is taught in a shared way to all students in preparation for teaching the Core Syllabus for Religious Education.

Stranmillis was originally intended as a common teacher education institution in line with a reformed education system of the 1920s, but it became instead a training institution for the controlled sector, becoming a college of Queen's University in 1968 and achieving university college status in 1999. By 2005, the college moved from being controlled directly by the DE to being an incorporated body with a large measure of legal and financial independence while the Protestant churches lost their positions of authority on the College's governing body. There was also a proposed merger between Stranmillis and Queens University in 2010. The merger had the backing of the Board of Governors of Stranmillis College and also the full backing of the Senate of Queen's University. However, there was not enough support within the Assembly for such a move, the First Minister Peter Robinson objected, as he saw it as a dilution of the ethos of Stranmillis and stated that *'...when considered in conjunction with the absence of similar proposals relating to St Mary's, neither I nor my party could support the proposed merger.'*<sup>61</sup>

St Mary's College was established in 1900 to train young women to teach in Catholic schools and has a mission statement which states:

*Our purpose is to make a distinctive contribution of service and excellence, in the Catholic tradition, to higher education in Northern Ireland... We work for the development of the whole person in a*

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<sup>61</sup> Belfast Telegraph, 28/11/2011, Belfast teacher training college in jeopardy as Stormont row stalls merger plan. <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/belfast-teacher-training-college-in-jeopardy-as-stormont-row-stalls-merger-plan-28685713.html>.

*Christian, values-sensitive environment in preparation for a lifetime of learning, leadership and service.*<sup>62</sup>

Since 1999, the College has been academically integrated with Queen's University. The College operates an open admissions policy. In practice, Stranmillis and St Mary's draw their student intake 'predominantly from one or other tradition' whereas the universities (UU and QUB) 'have a more balanced intake' (ETI 2007: 7). With regards to Stranmillis, the intake has reportedly been more mixed, with an estimated 100 Catholic student teachers out 565 (17.7%) compared to St Mary's where there were no Protestants amongst the 580 student teachers.<sup>63</sup> It is worth noting that students at any of the institutions mentioned above can choose to do their placements in any of the major school types in Northern Ireland, and as such come into contact with teachers and schools from different sectors.

As a result of the current intake in Northern Ireland - 580 for the academic year 2015/16 - there is also a surplus of teacher graduates in Northern Ireland every year.<sup>64</sup> Data shows that approximately 1,500 teaching students (primary and post-primary) who had graduated since April 2012 had failed to find permanent or temporary teaching employment (Grant Thornton, 2013).<sup>65</sup> The General Teaching Council (GTCNI), referred to having 26,689 teachers registered in March 2014, and of those 19,584 had an open employment record, leaving 7,105 (27%) not employed.<sup>66</sup> The International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education in Northern Ireland (International Panel) (2014) reiterated concerns on the '*substantial pool*' of unemployed teachers, identifying '*... serious difficulties for recent graduates to find employment*' (2014: 21) making '*... estimates of the projected size of the teacher education sector extremely hazardous, if not impossible.*' (2014: 40).

## **4.2 The Employment of Teachers**

In 2014/2015, there were just over 17,000 teachers in primary and post primary schools in Northern Ireland, with the largest number employed within the Controlled and Maintained sectors. With regards to employment, there are three aspects with particular pertinence to the teaching profession in Northern Ireland; the exemption of teachers from fair employment legislation; the conscience clause for teachers, and finally, the Catholic Certificate in Education.

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<sup>62</sup> <http://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk/mission/default.asp>.

<sup>63</sup> See Irish News <http://www.irishnews.com/news/2014/11/25/news/no-protestant-trainee-teachers-at-st-mary-s-university-college-108939/>

<sup>64</sup> The number of students at the various ITE providers for 2015/16: Stranmillis 160 students; St Mary's 165, QUB, 138 and Ulster University, 117. See [http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/school-staff/teachers-teachinginnorthernireland\\_pg/teachers\\_-\\_teaching\\_in\\_northern\\_ireland-4\\_approved\\_intakes.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/school-staff/teachers-teachinginnorthernireland_pg/teachers_-_teaching_in_northern_ireland-4_approved_intakes.htm)

<sup>65</sup> See also <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-21242036>, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/new-teachers-fill-dole-offices-as-supply-vastly-outstrips-demand-28756952.html>

<sup>66</sup> The General teaching Council (GTCNI), was established in October 2004 with the aim to enhance '*...the status of teaching and promoting the highest standards of professional conduct and practice*' (<http://www.gtcni.org.uk//index.cfm/area/information/page/AboutUs>). GTCNI advises that it cannot be assumed that the difference between the number of registered teachers and those with an open employment record (amounts to the number of unemployed teachers).

Starting with employment, it is worth bearing in mind that there are different employing authorities for teachers. Teachers in Maintained schools are employed by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) whereas the Education Authority (EA) is the employing authority for teachers in controlled schools. In Irish Medium Schools, Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated schools, the employing authority remains the respective schools Board of Governors. Employing authorities hold the contract of employment with teachers, although day-to-day management of issues such as discipline, supervision and dismissal of staff are delegated to the Boards of Governors. In controlled schools, the EA must set up a Teaching Appointment Committee and a recruitment scheme; posts are advertised by the EA, the Boards of Governors oversee the interview process and submit the most suitable candidate(s) to the EA for approval. In Catholic maintained schools, the CCMS has responsibility to set up a recruitment scheme and the appointment process involves the Boards of Governors, the Diocesan Office and CCMS representatives. In other school types, including Voluntary Grammar and Grant-Maintained Integrated Schools, the Board of Governors takes full responsibility for the recruitment process.

Under Fair Employment legislation introduced in 1976 as a recognition of the *de facto* denominational divide between schools, and particularly the explicit recognition of the denominational character of schools under Catholic management (Fair Employment Act, 1976)<sup>67</sup> teachers are not protected against discrimination on the grounds of religious belief. In effect, this means that in recruiting teachers, schools may give preference to candidates whose religious beliefs are in accordance with the tenets of the religious character of the school, and require a willingness on their part to teach Religious Education (RE). While, for example, the European Union Framework Directive on Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation (EU Council Directive 2000/78/EC (Employment Framework) prohibits discrimination in schools on the basis of religion or belief unless deemed to be a genuine occupational requirement, it excludes Northern Ireland, and Article 15 (2), states:

*'In order to maintain a balance of opportunity in employment for teachers in NI while furthering the reconciliation of historical divisions between the major religious communities there the provisions on religion or belief in this Directive shall not apply to the recruitment of teachers in schools in Northern Ireland in so far as this is expressly authorised by national legislation.'*

Lundy et al (2013) make the point that the exemption tends to only 'apply in practice' in relation to employment in Catholic schools, as Controlled schools fall under EA employment legislation. Anyone regardless of community background can apply for a post in any school. However, research (ECNI, 2004) has confirmed that religion remains a significant consideration in teacher appointments, not least in relation to job applicants' contribution towards the ethos of the school. Dunn and Gallagher (2002) reported that widespread recognition that any change to the teacher exception would have consequences for all schools but found 'little evidence' of desire for change with the exception of trade unions and that the exception was '*....an inevitable consequence of an educational system that permits separate denominational schools, while others, most notably the Catholic authorities, support the exception as a positive endorsement of diversity in education.*' (pp.29-30). Under this legislation there is therefore no obligation to monitor the community background of teachers, so it is difficult to establish the religious identity of teachers in each sector. An Equality Commission for

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<sup>67</sup> Renamed Part 111 of The Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998)

Northern Ireland survey (ECNI, 2004) found that in the controlled sector, approximately 85% of teachers were from the Protestant community, 5% were from the Catholic community and 10% were from neither community. In the maintained sector, 98% of teachers were from the Catholic community and less than 1% was from the Protestant community. Gallagher and Dunn (2002) refer in this context to perceived 'chill factors' e.g. a reluctance for Catholics to apply for posts in non-Catholic schools and a reluctance for Protestants to apply for posts in Catholic schools.

However, since the publication of Dunn and Gallagher's research and the ECNI research, there has been further support for the exception to be removed, with both the ECNI and CCMS concurring that teachers should be able to enjoy the same legislative protections as other workers and similar consensus within Teaching Unions and among political parties.<sup>68</sup> At the time of writing, the matter is under discussion between DE and OFMDFM which has legislative responsibility for fair employment matters (although responsibility for developing any policy proposals rests with the DE).

### 4.3 Religious Education in Schools

Statutory requirements on Religious Education are contained in the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 which requires all grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland to provide a daily act of collective worship. The Order also requires that every pupil attending a grant-aided school shall receive Religious Education in accordance with a specified core syllabus, although pupils may be withdrawn from collective worship and/or religious education in accordance with parental wishes. The core syllabus is drawn up by the four largest Christian denominations, the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Church of Ireland (Anglican) and the Methodist Church.

All teachers have a right to freedom of conscience under Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights, yet religious education is an area which '*continues to provoke discussion and debate in terms of its statutory position in the curriculum and the content of the syllabus*' (Montgomery and Smith, 2006: 54). While religious tests are not directly utilised in the recruitment process, Lundy et al (2013) refers to candidates being asked indirectly, for example, how they as teachers would contribute to the ethos of the school. Teachers working within the Controlled sector can make a request to the school's Board of Governors to be exempt from conducting or attending collective worship or the teaching of RE, provided the request to the Board of Governors is made solely on the grounds of conscience. Teachers who are exempt are should not be paid at a lesser rate or placed at a disadvantage with regards to promotions (see The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 - Article 22). There is no equivalent statutory protection for staff in other schools.

It is generally accepted that teachers who wish to teach in primary schools are expected to hold a Religious Education (RE) certificate. Teachers applying to work in Catholic primary schools are required to hold a Certificate in Catholic Education that enables them to contribute to the ethos of the school. The CCMS as well as St Mary's University College have both referred to the certificate as 'a professional qualification' and '*...an occupational requirement for teaching in a Catholic primary*

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<sup>68</sup> See for example CCMS evidence to the Education Committee <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/official-report/committee-minutes-of-evidence/session-2012-2013/may-2013/certificate-in-religious-education-ccms-briefing/>



*school*. The certificate is also referred to as '*...guaranteeing the ethos*' of a Catholic school and to provide '*...the knowledge, skills, understanding and capacity to be a teacher in a Catholic primary school.*'<sup>69</sup>

Students undertaking the post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE) at Ulster University obtain the Certificate as an integral part of their course although it is not offered at Stranmillis. A DE (2013) review of the Certificate concluded that it did not constitute an inequality for employment, although it recommended improved options to access relevant courses and greater collaboration between Stranmillis and St Mary's. The review however, found that few student teachers at Stranmillis opted to obtain the Certificate mainly because they could not access the training on campus and they did not intend to apply for posts within the Catholic Maintained sector. The point was made that a removal of the Certificate would not necessarily increase the number of Protestants taking up teaching posts within the Maintained sector due to the perceived 'chill factor' amongst Protestants, making them reluctant to apply for a post within a Maintained school. Previously, students at Stranmillis undertook studies for the Certificate at St Joseph's Teacher Training College, however there is now a partnership arrangement which has been established with the University of Glasgow which enables students to acquire, through part-time, distance learning a certificate, offered by Glasgow Faculty's Religious Studies Department. The International Panel (2014:24) referred to this as an anomaly, that '*...students attending Stranmillis University College must complete a programme provided by the University of Glasgow, if they wish to be qualified to teach in Catholic primary or nursery schools. The Panel questions whether such variation is acceptable or fair.*' In 2013, the CCMS stated that teachers, regardless of their community background, could be redeployed within the maintained sector, providing they obtained the certificate within three years of being appointed.<sup>70</sup> Discussions surrounding the certificate have been subject to debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly on numerous occasions, often framed within the context of being a discriminatory practice for Protestant teachers wanting to teach within the Maintained sector.<sup>71</sup>

#### **4.4 Reviews and Reform of Teacher Education**

Historically, a series of studies have been commissioned by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the DE, as the former is responsible for policy, intake and the evaluation of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) teacher courses, and the latter responsible for the financing and administration of ITE. The first of these, the Chilver Report (1980) proposed the amalgamation of St. Mary's, St. Joseph's teacher training college for men and Stranmillis Colleges with Queen's University

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<sup>69</sup> See <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/official-report/committee-minutes-of-evidence/session-2012-2013/may-2013/certificate-in-religious-education-ccms-briefing> and <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/committee-9672.pdf>

<sup>70</sup> CCMS Circular 2013/06, 12 April 2013, Re:Teachers certificate in religious education. [http://www.onlineccms.com/filestore/documents/publications/CCMS\\_Circular\\_2013-06\\_-\\_Teachers\\_Certificate\\_in\\_Religious\\_Education\\_-\\_12.04.13.doc](http://www.onlineccms.com/filestore/documents/publications/CCMS_Circular_2013-06_-_Teachers_Certificate_in_Religious_Education_-_12.04.13.doc). The CCMS is also undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) looking at the requirement for the Certificate to teach in Catholic Maintained Primary and Nursery schools, and is looking to consider options for the current blanket requirement for all posts and the need to possess the Certificate prior to appointment. This, when finalised, will be open to consultation.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example in (2013), <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/official-report/reports-12-13/22-april-2013/> and in 2015 <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-13-04-2015.pdf>.

to create a Belfast Centre for Teacher Education. While ambitious, the proposals were immediately resisted by both the Catholic and Protestant churches and the plans for a merger between St Mary's and Stranmillis were shelved, however, St. Mary's College did merge with St. Josephs' College. In a more recent report, Taylor and Usher (2004) based their recommendations on the changing demographics of Northern Ireland as well as the long-term viability of current teacher training arrangements and outlined four strategic options for the future of teacher education, one of which included a fully integrated or federated structure, with overarching responsibility for all ITE provision. The Review identified an over-supply of teachers in Northern Ireland and a corresponding decline in the proportion of newly qualified teachers who secured posts. Around the same time, the Osler Report (2005) concluded that for an area the size of Northern Ireland it was hard to justify the economic cost of four providers, three of which were in Belfast and proposed the three Universities (Queen's University, the Ulster University and the Open University) as the ITE providers, with the consequent closure of the two University Colleges. A review of provision was recommended and several options were put forward to cater for and acknowledge the legitimacy of diversity (Osler, 2005).

#### **4.5 The 2011 Review of Teacher Education Provision**

More recently, a review of teacher education provision in Northern Ireland was initiated in 2011, with the first stage completed in 2013 by Grant Thornton (DEL, 2011). Significant concerns were again raised about the financial viability of the two university colleges and the report established that the costs of teacher education in Northern Ireland were significantly higher than in comparative institutions elsewhere in the UK. This was also directly attributed to premia paid to the colleges, so as to accommodate the diseconomies of scale associated with their small size, but also to take into account their specialist function, and to enable them to meet the additional costs associated with older premises. The report also found that such premia were not paid to any other teacher education institution in the UK.

In the second phase of the review, an international team of experts looked at the case for reform of teacher education in Northern Ireland and analysed how funding could be more appropriately used if the training institutions moved to a more shared or integrated system. This phase was completed in June 2014 and a series of options were proposed and framed around a pluralist approach based on best international practice (DEL, 2014). Crucially, it highlighted the need for increased collaboration between teacher training providers, where current provision was seen as inefficient and involved significant duplication and fragmentation. The review of teacher education proposed four options:

- Collaborative partnership involving all four current providers, with St Mary's and Stranmillis continuing to exist as autonomous colleges but in an enhanced partnership. Queen's University would continue to exercise its role as the validating University in the collaborative delivery of a comprehensive programme of initial teacher education, induction and in-service training.
- A Belfast Institute of Education, with a two-centre model involving Queen's University and the University Colleges. The two colleges would continue to exist in their current locations, albeit with a somewhat changed role and constitutional status. The Institute would offer a

single undergraduate B.Ed programme through the two colleges, allowing them to develop a majority of their undergraduate teaching in ways appropriate for their particular ethos and mission. All other teaching, including Masters and research would be conducted under the supervision of the Institute.

- A Northern Ireland Teacher Education Federation that would co-ordinate initial teacher education across Northern Ireland, essentially a supra-institutional agency.
- A Northern Ireland Institute of Education where initial teacher education would be the responsibility of a single institution. The Institute would have a single budget, a single suite of academic programmes, and a single set of academic and support staff, along with responsibility for coordinating and quality assuring the delivery of initial teacher education and in-service provision across Northern Ireland. The governance of the Institute would be constituted to ensure the long-term protection of the historic mission and ethos of existing institutions. This would include the provision of a separate religious pathway in the B.Ed. degree, capacity for the activities of chaplains and the continued availability of a chapel for worship.

The DEL minister, Stephen Farry, upon presenting the report, stated: *'As previously indicated, in the autumn, I intend to use the report, and the options, for discussions with the institutions and other stakeholders with a view to finding agreement on a configuration of institutions that delivers world-class standards, achieves financial sustainability and promotes greater sharing and integration.'*<sup>72</sup>

Initially, the DEL Minister Stephen Farry, proposed to withdraw £2m from the budgets of St Mary's and Stranmillis University Colleges, increasing the pressure for a merger between the two colleges. However, the proposal was voted down in the Northern Ireland Executive.<sup>73</sup> References were made in the aftermath to further consultations and reviews of teacher training and with regards to teacher training, DE referred to the development of a *'new teacher professional development strategy'* in which there would be opportunities to *'...learn together, including preparation for teaching through shared education.'*<sup>74</sup>

The Department (2015: 19) stated that it was awaiting, *'...the outworking of the independent review of teacher education infrastructure...'*. The Department also stated that it wanted to ensure that, *'student teachers and teachers returning for professional development can be provided with opportunities to learn together, including preparation for teaching through shared education.'*<sup>75</sup>

The teaching union ATL, (2013: 4) was critical of what it saw as providers working in 'silos' and the need for ITE providers to work within an environment with high quality research facilities. Similarly, the NASUWT referred to the need for *'...a strategic approach to teacher education'* (2013: 5), highlighting that, *'...It is essential that the implications of potential decisions to cut, close or merge institutions are considered carefully'* (2013: 6). The Ulster Teachers Union (UTU) emphasised the

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<sup>72</sup> <http://www.delni.gov.uk/ite-statement-1-july-2014.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> References were made to further consultations and further review of teacher training in Northern Ireland.

<sup>74</sup> The DE also referred to liaising with ITE providers and others so as to better prepare teachers for shared education practices. See <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/committee-13552.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/a\\_policy\\_for\\_shared\\_education\\_jan\\_2015.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/a_policy_for_shared_education_jan_2015.pdf) page 19.

need for shared programmes between teacher colleges. References were also made to the CREDIT Programme (see below) as a successful way in doing so.<sup>76</sup>

While the recommendations from the latest review of teacher education are still being considered, it did highlight examples of mergers of teaching colleges which have taken place elsewhere with mixed outcomes. In Ireland, government policy has advocated the location of teacher education within university settings, describing the move in terms of integration and the creation of centres of excellence (Higher Education Authority, 2013). St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and the Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines are due to merge in September 2016 to form the key components of a new Institute of Education, based at Dublin City University (DCU). While the core curriculum at the new college will be denominationally neutral, the new structures will prepare teachers to work in schools of different religious traditions and none. The Institute will also have two centres of denominational education, the Centre for Catholic Education and the Church of Ireland Centre, to ensure that the distinctive identity and values of teacher education in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions are maintained. Elsewhere in the Republic of Ireland, it has been suggested that teacher education at Mary Immaculate College and Limerick Institute of Technology integrate into the University of Limerick to form one centre for teacher education (International Review Panel, 2012). Similar references were also made to Roehampton University in London and Liverpool Hope University, which both have combined more than one religious tradition. Both universities also offer a single integrated programme of teacher education while protecting a plurality of religious commitments.

The cost-effectiveness of maintaining the existing levels of provision and the feasibility of individual courses are just two issues which would have to be addressed in the context of teacher education in Northern Ireland. Equally pertinent is the considerable homogeneity in the educational experiences of those enrolling, particularly in the case of Stranmillis and St Mary's, and with limited opportunity to encounter peers from social, religious and cultural backgrounds different from their own. It also raises the question whether or not the current arrangements best prepare the workforce for a shared future in Northern Ireland.

#### **4.6 Shared Teaching**

Government has highlighted the need for greater sharing in teacher education in Northern Ireland, advocating that training institutions provide '*...opportunities for their students to share some training with their peers in other institutions and to work with experienced teachers in schools of different types*' (OFMDFM, 2005: 27) and that measures are taken to incentivise ways of integrating education and shared teacher training. More recently, the Together Building a United Community (TBUC) policy referred to the need for '*...more opportunities for sharing within teacher training, which will build on those initiatives already underway involving the two teacher training colleges here*' (OFMDFM, 2013: 50) stating that there is a need to teach community relations and to address '*...issues of intolerance and prejudice... [in a] a systemic approach throughout the education system*' (OFMDFM, 2013: 52). The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) (2010) has also referred to similar needs (2010: 45):

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<sup>76</sup> <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/education/inquiries-and-reviews/shared-and-integrated-education/ulster-teachers-union.pdf>

*We consider that all student teachers should be given an appropriate amount of time and opportunity to exchange learning opportunities between the various sectors. We also consider that all new teacher training courses/programmes should encompass an element of teaching in another sector.*

However, research has identified that whilst teachers are interested in collaboration, they often lack *'... the experience, skills or training to allow them to negotiate and navigate their way through the rough terrain of deeply held, but often tacit, identity allegiances that are embedded in schools in Northern Ireland'* (Donnelly, 2012: 549). In this regard, the preparation of teachers and pupils to work in a shared environment is a pivotal consideration (Hughes, 2014; Duffy and Gallagher, 2014). At the same time, challenges for teachers working within the integrated schools have also been highlighted, particularly the lack of any formal training or preparation. With regards to teacher education the Ministerial Advisory Group (2013: xxvii) emphasised the *'...professional development of teachers that encourages its delivery through shared education and thus via effective collaboration between schools and other educational institutions'*. The Education Committee (2015) in the report on its enquiry into shared and integrated education also asked for the DE and EA to provide consistent support for shared education collaborations with a tailored programme of training and guidance for teachers, parents, children and communities.

At the teacher training level, there is also on-going collaborative work between the various ITE providers. This can be illustrated by the Inter-College Diversity and Mutual Understanding (DMU) programme and the Classrooms Re-imagined: Education in Diversity and Inclusion for Teachers (CREDIT) Programme between St Mary's and Stranmillis. The DMU Programme allows for students from the two colleges to collaboratively work on cross-community issues and to better prepare them to deal with issues around identity, diversity and the creative handling of difference in society and in schools. The programme aims to prepare student teachers *'...for the challenges of living and teaching in a still divided and increasingly diverse Northern Ireland'* and to *'...offset some of the obvious disadvantages of nominally separate teacher education and schooling...'* (Stranmillis, 2014).<sup>77</sup> Practically, this involves joint seminars and interactive workshops for B.Ed. (1 and 2) and PGCE students which challenge them to think through personal and professional issues surrounding identity, diversity and the creative handling of conflict. This programme is designed and organised by the Colleges' Joint Liaison Group (CJLG), which is made up of members of academic staff from both colleges and incorporates a range of activities and diverse methods of delivery. However, the programme only reaches a certain number of students and previous research (Richardson, 2008) has referred to the 'separateness' of the two institutions and that issues such as logistics and time-commitments make it difficult to co-ordinate. While there is a commitment by the two institutions to the programme, reference is made to what he calls 'resistance amongst some of the student body' to engage with the programme and that some students opt out.

The CREDIT (Classrooms Re-imagined: Education in Diversity and Inclusion for Teachers) project<sup>78</sup> was developed jointly and delivered by the two colleges between 2011 and 2013 and funded by the International Fund for Ireland (£839,000) to help all qualified teachers develop skills and confidence

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<sup>77</sup>See

<http://www.stran.ac.uk/informationabout/departments/learningstudentservices/functionsofeducationservices/diversitymutualunderstanding/> See also <http://www.stran.ac.uk/mods/prim/SCS2012.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> See <http://www.stran.ac.uk/credit/>

in dealing with issues of diversity, inclusion and community cohesion in the classroom and on a whole-school basis. The Colleges also developed a Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) module for Senior Managers and Board of Governors as well teachers and youth workers. With regards to CRED, DE (2015: 7) refers to the uptake of CRED training and that:

*Over two thousand school leaders, Boards of Governors, youth service management, teachers and youth workers attended awareness sessions. Additionally, in excess of four thousand teachers and youth workers availed of training to improve their knowledge and skills relating to community relations, equality and diversity as well as one in four Principals having engaged in training on dealing with controversial issues within the classroom.*<sup>79</sup>

There are examples of cross-sectoral collaboration between schools often involving shared classes as well as shared teachers. Research (QUB, 2008) suggests these initiatives provide overall positive experiences, such as challenging stereotypes. However, logistical challenges have been highlighted in the form of arrangements for shared lessons and activities, perceptions of limited interest and a concern that religious influences might continue to hamper fuller collaboration (QUB, 2008). Findings from shared education programmes, such as the Primary Integration and Enriching (PIEE) Project, also highlighted challenges such as a reliance on external funding as well as more practical employment issues.<sup>80</sup> With regards to shared teachers, the PIEE project highlighted the need for the teacher in question to be aware of schools' different ethos and details of religious and/or cultural events. This also raises the question of whether a teacher in a primary partnership is then also required to possess the Catholic Certificate for teaching in a maintained school.

Outside of schools collaborating, there have been examples of teachers working together. Knox (2010) and Duffy and Gallagher (2014) have highlighted professional networks of committed teachers who found it beneficial to work with colleagues from different sectors. Another example of a collaboration was the Sharing Classrooms, Deepening Learning (SCDL) programme, funded by The International Fund for Ireland (IFI) and run by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, which was open to all post-primary schools and aimed 'to enrich and deepen learning through developing teachers' skills for creatively using the range of diversity found in shared classrooms'.<sup>81</sup> The project used the Entitlement Framework (EF) for collaboration to teach classes comprised of students from different schools. The project provided professional development for teachers working in shared classrooms, which also highlighted the need for teachers to receive support and training, as well as resources to deal with issues of diversity.

Within the context of preparing teachers to deal with diversity, the Department of Education's role has been criticized, and seen as lacking a coherent policy framework and insufficient professional

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<sup>79</sup> References are also made to five hundred education settings availed of CRED enhancement funding to reinforce learning involving in excess of twenty five thousand children and young people.

<sup>80</sup> See

[http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/knowledge\\_exchange/briefing\\_papers/series3/hunter241013.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/knowledge_exchange/briefing_papers/series3/hunter241013.pdf). Also, see

<http://www.schoolsworkingtogether.co.uk/documents/SELF%20Conference%20Report%20December%202012.pdf>

<sup>81</sup> See <http://scdl.co.uk/research-evaluation/>. The project involved 24 Area Learning Communities; 140 schools; 542 teachers; 50 PGCE students; and 608 young people.

development training for teachers (ETI, 2009). The perceived inertia on the preparation of student teachers to deal with controversial and sectarian issues has been identified as a policy issue (Beauchamp et al., 2013) whilst other research (Montgomery and McGlynn, 2009) has recommended a sustained institutional approach and meaningful, joint engagement that better prepares students for dealing with challenging issues in the classroom. DE (2015: 12) also referred to the need for a strategy to increase the capacity of teachers and other practitioners by liaising with *'Higher Education Institutions and other relevant education providers on aligning their approaches to professional learning for practitioners in shared education with the vision and aims of this policy.'* References are also made to further support for networks of teachers and other practitioners within shared education. While DE acknowledges responses calling for a more integrated approach to teacher training, it refers to this falling under the remit of the Department for Employment and Learning.

A common system of teacher education could be accommodating of religion, encourage dialogical engagement around concepts of faith and cultivate a sense of community. This links up well with what has been suggested by the Council of Europe, which in its White Paper (2008: 32-435) referred to the important role played by teacher training institutions to *'...teach educational strategies and working methods to prepare teachers to manage the new situations arising from diversity, discrimination, racism, xenophobia, sexism and marginalisation and to resolve conflicts peacefully, as well as to foster a global approach to institutional life on the basis of democracy and human rights.'*<sup>82</sup>

For many teachers their experiences of schooling, ITE and employment may be confined largely to one sector, with the expectation that they are likely to be employed in the sector associated with their own tradition. From a faith based point of view, experiences elsewhere have shown that common teacher education can be pursued in settings which allow for religious values and practices, but that such practice does not necessarily have to be housed within a religious institution.

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<sup>82</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/WhitePaper\\_InterculturalDialogue\\_2\\_en.asp#P196\\_67971](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/WhitePaper_InterculturalDialogue_2_en.asp#P196_67971)

## CONCLUSIONS

This short scoping study draws a number of conclusions, mainly in terms of where more research is needed to identify potential policy changes in each of these areas that could be beneficial for the development of a more integrated system of education in Northern Ireland and one that takes account of multiple stakeholder expectations. The main conclusions are:

1. There may be a case for a more thorough analysis of ownership and financing of the school estate. The current arrangements have evolved over many years to take account of changing relations between the state, churches and other providers. However, the current situation is that virtually all capital and revenue funding to education comes from the taxpayer via the state. Rationalisation could include a study of the feasibility of the transfer of school property into common ownership by the state. Apart from revealing any cost benefits from an economic perspective, this could have benefits in terms of removing anomalies between different school sectors and emphasise education as a common public good for the benefit of all. This might include a similar process to the Forum for Pluralism and Patronage in the Republic of Ireland.
2. The current Programme for Government commitment to shared education includes significant capital as well as recurrent expenditure. There are competing arguments about the cost benefits of these initiatives, particularly where the intention is to build new separate schools that only share some facilities. There is also an unaddressed question of how much shared education would cost to roll out to every school within the current structures. So far there has been little analysis of how shared education will be 'mainstreamed' after the initial tranches of philanthropic and European funding run out.
3. There is general consensus that area based planning has not worked well. It has been criticised on at least three fronts. Firstly, in the absence of ESA was driven by sectoral interests, rather than exploring opportunities for rationalisation across sectors. This suggests there is a case for establishing an overarching authority for education planning that is more representative of multiple stakeholder interests. Secondly, more effective processes for ascertaining parent and community preferences for schooling are required as part of area based planning. Some models such as deliberative polling already exist, but much clearer guidance is required. Thirdly, the current approach to area based planning highlighted weaknesses in the Needs Model, including a failure to take account of the statutory duty to facilitate and support integrated education.
4. In terms of governance, the establishment of the Education Authority appears to replicate the sectoral representation that existed in the Education and Library Boards. At school level, different permutations for school governance are still largely based on historical and political associations with separate school sectors. However, all schools are now funded from public finance and there is a case for greater diversity to be represented in the governing bodies of all schools, perhaps through revised arrangements for membership based on individual merit rather than representative rights of sectoral interests.
5. There have been numerous reviews of teacher education in Northern Ireland over recent years. A key issue is that there are multiple providers, providing more teachers than can find employment within the system. Rationalisation seems a logical course of action, but there are concerns that faith-based provision needs to be protected and proposed changes have



become highly politicised. Nevertheless, there are additional issues that could be addressed. Data related to employment and movement of teachers across sectors is out of date and we would benefit from better understanding of the experiences of teachers teaching across the traditional sectors. Given separate teacher education, the system would also benefit from better understanding of how teachers could be incentivised to teach across sectors so that all children can benefit from being taught by teachers from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

6. There appears to be a consensus that the employment of teachers should no longer be exempt from Fair Employment Legislation, but action has yet to be taken to implement this. There is a case for reviewing freedom of conscience issues with regard to schools in Northern Ireland given that all are financed through public funding. The implications of requirements to hold a Certificate in Catholic Education would also need to be reviewed if it is the intention of the policy commitment to shared education to include teachers being shared between schools. Any review would also need to examine how this requirement affects policies to encourage and increase teacher employment and mobility across all sectors.

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## Appendix 1: Representation on Boards of Governors<sup>83</sup>

<b>Controlled Schools – Public Ownership</b>	<b>Number of Governors</b>	<b>Foundation Governors</b>	<b>EA &amp; DE Governors</b>	<b>Parent Governors</b>	<b>Teacher Governors</b>
Primary & Secondary	9, 16 or 24	4/9ths or 3/8ths Transferors	2/9ths or 2/8ths	2/9ths or 2/8ths	1/9 <sup>th</sup> or 1/8th
Integrated Primary & Secondary	14 or 21	1/7 <sup>th</sup> Transferors & 1/7 <sup>th</sup> Trustees	2/7ths	2/7ths	1/7ths
Nursery, Grammar, Special	8,16 or 24		5/8ths	2/8ths	1/8th
Integrated Grammar	14 or 21		4/7ths	2/7ths	1/7th
<b>Schools (Private Ownership)</b>	<b>Number of Governors</b>	<b>Foundation Governors(Trustees)</b>	<b>EA &amp; DE Governors</b>	<b>Parent Governors</b>	<b>Teacher Governors</b>
Primary & Secondary (Voluntary Maintained 100% capital grant)	9, 18 or 27	4/9ths Must include 1 parent	3/9ths	1/9th	1/9th
Primary & Secondary (Voluntary Maintained 85% Capital grant)	10, 18 or 27	3/5ths or 5/9ths Must include 1 parent	1/5th or 2/9ths	1/10th or 1/9th	1/10th or 1/9th
Primary & Secondary (Grant Maintained Integrated 100% capital grant)	16 or 24	3/8ths	2/8ths	2/8ths	1/8th
Voluntary Grammar (100% Capital grant)	9,18,27 or 36	4/9ths Must include 1 parent	3/9ths	1/9th	1/9th
Voluntary Grammar (85% Capital grant)	10, 18,27, or 36	3/5ths or 5/9ths Must include 1 parent	1/5th or 2/9ths	1/10th or 1/9th	1/10th or 1/9th.
Voluntary Grammar (no capital grant)	13 or fewer 14 or more	Not regulated-must include 1 parent	0 0	1 2	1 2

<sup>83</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/chapter\\_2\\_membership\\_2.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/chapter_2_membership_2.pdf)

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