

1. The NITC represents all five of the recognised teacher unions in Northern Ireland.
2. The NITC believes that it is essential that the Bill be amended to allow for specific trade union representation on the Education and Skills Authority. Those who work within ESA deserve to have two representatives who are aware of their needs sitting on the body that will make decisions that will impact directly upon them.
3. The NITC welcomes the fact that there is to be one employing authority for all staff, however it has grave concerns that the present legislation may not allow for the employee mobility that will be required into the future. The NITC would like the legislation to be amended to specifically state that such mobility will be permitted without veto from Boards of Governors who, under the concept of maximised autonomy, may try to draw up Schemes of Management that would prevent this from happening.
4. Further, the NITC believes that rather than “have regard for” Schemes of Management and Employment Schemes, Boards of Governors should be required to adopt a standard model policy. The over-riding consideration should be the need for equality within the Education Service. If schools are permitted to design their own Schemes then it will be less likely that there will be equality for all, including staff and pupils.
5. If the above recommendation were to be incorporated into the Education Bill then there would be no need for the already stretched Education Budget to expend finances on funding tribunals.
6. The NITC welcomes the inclusion of the function for Area Planning. It is unfortunate that the process of Area Planning has commenced prior to the setting up of ESA as NITC feels that an opportunity has been missed to plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century on a province-wide basis. The NITC would suggest that the work done to date in this regard should be reviewed by ESA before any decisions are made on rationalisation of the schools estate. NITC would request that consideration be given to inclusion of a clause within the Bill to reflect this. In addition, the NITC believes that representatives of the workforce should be included as of right in the consultation on the planning process.
7. While NITC understands that it is important for Boards of Governors to be actively engaged in promoting high standards for schools, it is concerned that the drive to make Boards of Governors more accountable will actually reduce their effectiveness.

At present members of Boards of Governors give willingly of their time and the relationship between most Boards of Governors and the Principal and Staff is excellent. The increased accountability may well lead to friction and a change in the balance of the relationship between staff and governors. It may also be necessary to review the levels of representation staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have on Boards of Governors.

8. The NITC believes that the inclusion of a requirement for ESA to appoint governors who are “committed to the ethos” of the school is a very difficult one. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we should be committed to breaking down barriers between communities and promoting equality for all, not perpetuating the divisions of the past. All schools should have a similar ethos based on the vision of developing each pupil to the maximum of their potential. It should therefore not be necessary to match governors to ethos, but to merely appoint governors based on their commitment to delivery of a first-class education programme that provides equality of opportunity to all.
9. The NITC is particularly concerned about the inclusion in the Bill of increased powers for the Inspectorate. There should be no need for them to have the power to “inspect, copy and take away documents” or obtain access to computers put into legislation. There should be a positive relationship between schools and the Inspectorate that would lead to openness in the sharing of information. To put such powers in the Education Bill will only serve to further alienate schools from the Inspectorate and will do nothing to mend the already fragile relationships that have recently developed between schools and the ETI.
10. The NITC opposes the inclusion in the Bill of legislation to ensure that sectoral bodies are perpetuated and supported by the already over-committed Education Budget. The NITC acknowledges that such bodies have much to contribute to the Education debate, but believes that they should do so from outside the Education system.
11. NITC broadly welcomes the introduction of the Education Bill in order to move forward. NITC does, however, have concerns that the legislation has been written in such a way as to fragment an already fragmented Education Service even further. NITC does not believe that allowing “maximised autonomy” will do anything to improve provision – more safeguards need to be built in to ensure uniformity.