

## **Suggested amendments/additions to the Education Bill on behalf of the Shared Education Programme at Queen’s University Belfast**

The following represents the perspective of the Sharing Education Programme in relation to suggested amendments and additions to the committee stage of the Education Bill.

The concept of sharing should play an integral role in shaping the new Education Bill and more specifically the role that ESA has in encouraging and supporting schools to develop collaborative partnerships.

By “Shared” we are referring to the sharing of facilities, staff, resources and activities between schools at all levels and across all sectors. There exists a large and growing body of evidence that supports the role of sharing in between school as a key mechanism for improving educational outcomes, allowing schools to devise new methodologies for delivering key curricular provision for learners of all abilities.

Sharing also allows schools to use their existing resources much more effectively in terms of reducing duplication and increasing the range of curricular pathways available to pupils without the requirement for additional funding. Additionally sharing facilitates the bringing together of children, young people, teachers and parents together where in the past these opportunities would have been limited.

In general the Bill, in its current form makes no reference to the support, encouragement or development of shared education; in our view the absence of “shared” options is severely detrimental to the achievement of DENI’s targets on shared education as set out in the Programme for Government.

Specifically there are a number of points and additions that we suggest are included in the Bill; these additions or amendments are in bold italics, with relevant page and article number:

### **Point 1**

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#### **Employment schemes for grant-aided schools**

15 4. – (2) An employment scheme –

***(c) Shall make provision for the sharing of staff and resources between institutions where applicable.***

#### **Rationale**

Significant benefits arise through the employment of shared teachers, namely:

- Subject specific teachers spent a greater percentage of their teaching time teaching their specialist subject across a number of schools rather than having to fill their timetable with other subjects if teaching in one school.
- By sharing the cost of employing a teacher a partnership can offer a greater range of subject choice to pupils across the board.
- The employment of a shared teacher provides more opportunities for schools within a partnership to take a consistent approach to raising standards and may also lead to the development of new strategies involving improving educational outcomes.
- By sharing teacher(s) schools can reduce duplication of provision and increase the extent of provision across the partnership.
- Sharing resources significantly reduces duplication across schools, allowing schools to direct resources across a much wider range of activities and provision.

## **Point 2**

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### **ESA to provide or secure provision of training and advisory and support services for schools**

14.–(1) It is the duty of ESA to provide or secure the provision of–

(a) such training, and

(b) such advisory and support services,

for the Boards of Governors of grant-aided schools as ESA considers necessary for the effective discharge of their functions on a ***shared basis where applicable***.

#### **Rationale**

By participating in shared training, Governors will have the opportunity to exchange expertise and ideas on areas of common need across the schools that they serve – this will lead to closer links between the schools in terms of identifying efficient means of improving educational outcomes. Additionally networks will be created that will provide further opportunities for governors to more fully contribute to the management of their schools and the improving of educational outcomes.

14. – (2) It is the duty of ESA to provide or secure the provision of –

***(c) such training and advisory and support services for teachers in grant aided schools on a shared basis where applicable for example shared INSET Training***

#### **Rationale**

By participating in shared training, teachers will have the opportunity to share expertise and ideas on how to address issues regarding educational outcomes. Shared training will also be the first step in creating a network between teachers that will continue to develop and grow after the initial training session is finished – our experience demonstrates that these networks are **key** to the development of next practice, for example a number of partnerships now have sustainable

institutional links that were based on initial work between teachers and shared activities between pupils but are now advanced in terms of senior leadership and governor sharing.

### **Point 3**

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#### **ESA to secure provision of educational and youth services and facilities**

16. – (1) It is the duty of ESA to secure the provision of -

***(a) adequate facilities for educational services and activities carried out in connection with those services on a shared and collaborative basis where applicable.***

***(b) adequate facilities for youth services and activities carried out in connection with those services on a shared and collaborative basis where applicable.***

#### Rationale

The provision of new facilities should be considered in the first instance on a shared basis in order to ensure the reduction of unnecessary duplication with regards capital spend.

### **Point 4**

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#### **10 Responsibilities of ESA in relation to controlled schools**

19. In relation to a controlled school ESA is responsible for –

***(e) Encouraging, supporting and developing collaborative partnerships between schools of all type where applicable for the purpose of improving educational outcomes.***

#### Rationale

There is significant research evidence to support the claim that by working in collaborative partnership schools can improve educational outcomes. The improvement of educational outcomes should be central to the new Education bill.

If we look at the English context, the last decade has seen a significant increase in the practice of and popularity of school collaboration, to the extent where over half of schools in England were involved centrally funded network initiatives (Chapman et al. 2006). The motivations to collaborate are numerous, including: offering wider curricular choice; a strategy to motivate students (especially disengaged students); combat negative effects of competition; economic efficiencies (achieving economies of scale) and as part of wider 14-19 educational reforms designed to modernise education. Political pressure on schools has also grown to demonstrate innovation (Chapman et al. 2009). School improvement is also cited broadly as significant motivator for schools who wish to improve, (Mujis, et al. 2010; Chapman et al. 2011; Chapman et al. 2009; Hadfield and Jopling, 2012; Harris & Jones, 2010; Ainscow et al. 2006).

A number of papers and reports based on the Northern Ireland context devote time to understanding the logistics, benefits and impact of sharing and collaboration, (Hughes et al. 2010; Duffy and Gallagher, 2012; Duffy and Gallagher, 2012a; Gallagher et al. 2010; Donnelly and Gallagher, 2008; Knox, 2010; FSG McClure, 2010). Common themes emerge in this literature, namely how schools negotiate issues such as: timetabling; travel time between schools; ethos and resources or funding. As a counter-balance, this literature also highlights how schools innovate and develop solutions to logistical challenges. The concept of shared education is supported by a number theoretical perspectives; one such perspective, inter-group contact theory, explores the context and the quality of contact between pupils who engage in shared educational activities. This body literature (Hughes, 2010; Hughes et al. 2012; Hughes, 2012; Hughes 2012a; Hughes and Donnelly, 2012; Hughes and Donnelly, 2012a) indicates a number of important findings:

- Separate schooling can be divisive whereby minimal and superficial contact between pupils can lead to physical and cultural isolation.
- The Sharing Education Programme offers a potentially more effective contact model than previous educational initiatives.
- Sharing offers significant community relations benefits and improved intergroup relations
- Pupils who engaged in shared education demonstrated reduced levels of anxiety; demonstrated positive action and more trust towards one another other’.

Much of this research outlines, as a consequence of schools collaborating, pupils benefit in terms of enhanced curricular delivery and access to a broader range of subjects and resources. This literature base also highlights how teachers benefit from collaborative practice with other schools both in terms of professional development through shared practice but also personally where, like pupils, teachers involved in delivering shared learning have the opportunity to work with other teachers across sectors - teachers report valuing this opportunity. Schools also benefit in terms of developing

## **Point 5**

Page 13

### **Area Education Plans**

**24.** – (1) An area education plan is a document which contains –

(b)

***(iv) Options for increased collaborative working between schools where applicable.***

### **Rationale**

As above there is a significant body of research that supports the claim that educational outcomes are increased through schools working collaboratively. Additionally by working in partnership schools can make efficiencies in terms of staffing, resources and facilities.

## **Point 6**

Page 17-18

### **Preparation and approval of schemes of management**

34.– (2) The Department may, with the approval of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, issue such guidance as the Department thinks fit as to the provisions it regards as suitable for inclusion in schemes of management; and such guidance–

***(a) shall include model schemes regarded by the Department as suitable for particular descriptions of schools, including, but not limited to: collaborative partnerships and various forms of federated models.***

#### **Rationale**

It is essential that the new legislation explicitly provides a framework and language that enables schools to continue to develop their collaborative partnership in the most effective manner in order to improve educational outcomes for all stakeholders. As the research outlined above demonstrates, through close collaboration, schools can improve education outcomes.

## **Point 7**

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### **Management of controlled schools**

***(2) Two or more controlled primary or post-primary schools (other than controlled integrated primary or post-primary schools) may be grouped under one Board of Governors if ESA, with the approval of the Department, so determines.***

#### **Rationale**

The above point is incredibly significant regarding the development and support for the creation of collaborative, shared partnerships between schools. In our view the concept of two or more schools grouped under one Board of Governors must be extended to include post-primary schools.

## **Point 8**

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### **PART 3**

#### **INSPECTIONS**

##### **Inspections on behalf of the Department**

(4) It is the duty of inspectors to promote the highest standards of education and of professional practice among teachers in establishments mentioned in subsection (2) which provide education by–

(a) monitoring, inspecting and reporting on the standard of education being provided in those establishments and the standards of professional practice among teachers on the staff of such establishments;

(b) advising the Department on any aspect of any of those establishments which the Department may refer to them or on which they think advice is appropriate.

***(c) comment on and disseminate all examples of best or next practice arising from schools across the school system in order to contribute to the raising of educational outcomes***

***(d) where schools are engaged in collaborative working, particularly in the provision of curricular activities, the inspectorate should make explicit reference to this and provide detail of how the partnership functions.***

#### Rationale

In our view ETI can legitimise the work carried out in schools by making explicit reference to best practice and evidence of emerging “next practice”. Although it is important that this is acknowledged in an individual school’s inspection report, where schools work in partnership it should be highlighted in both reports. Additionally ETI/DENI should develop a mechanism whereby best/next practice can be disseminated more effectively throughout the wider education system, particular where specific methodologies and practice could be replicated across the majority of the primary or post-primary estate.

### **Point 9**

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Appointment of staff

(3) The scheme shall provide for the procedures to be followed by the Board of Governors in selecting a person for appointment.

***(a)Where applicable, governors from a number of schools will be empowered to appoint a shared teacher between their respective institutions.***

#### Rationale

Significant benefits arise through the employment of shared teachers, namely:

- Subject specific teachers spent a greater percentage of their teaching time teaching their specialist subject across a number of schools rather than having to fill their timetable with other subjects if teaching in one school.
- By sharing the cost of employing a teacher a partnership can offer a greater range of subject choice to pupils across the board.

- The employment of a shared teacher provides more opportunities for schools within a partnership to take a consistent approach to raising standards and may also lead to the development of new strategies involving improving educational outcomes.
- By sharing teacher(s) schools can reduce duplication of provision and increase the extent of provision across the partnership.