



EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Inquiry into Shared Education and Integrated Education

October 2014

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 We welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Education Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly, to assist in their Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.
- 1.2 The Commission's response is confined to those areas of the inquiry that are core to our remit, responsibilities and expertise¹.
- 1.3 The Commission intends the positions set out in this paper to be forward facing, mindful of the past but not bound to it. The Commission has referenced evidence on sharing in education and educational inequalities throughout the submission. The submission also makes some suggestions as to how existing education policy may afford additional opportunities to advance shared education.

2 Summary of Recommendations

- 2.1 The Commission considers that societal mixing and social cohesion is limited by separation in our education provision. It is the Commission's view that a system of shared education has a central role to play in advancing a shared society. The Commission also recognises the important role that education can play in cultural development.
- 2.2 Aligned to the focus of the enquiry our submission, in summary, includes:

With regards to a definition and obligation in statute:

- The Commission's recognises the benefits of an **agreed definition of 'shared education'**, supported by clarity on the **inter-relationship between 'shared' education and 'integrated' education**; and how they will collectively interact to achieve overarching policy goals.
- We consider that such a definition and policy framework must:
 - Ensure that sharing **impacts meaningfully and substantively on every learner**
 - Ensure that a shared experience should be **central to the education system as a whole**, encompassing at **all stages of educational provision** – pre-school;

¹ See **Annex 1** for further information on our remit.

early years; primary; post-primary; special needs; and tertiary levels.

- routinely teach learners together via **a shared curriculum in shared classes**.
- better provide learners with **shared awareness**, understanding and experience of the **value and range of diverse cultures, identities and backgrounds** in Northern Ireland; while also enabling learners from different cultures/communities to **experience a shared society**.
- We **recommend** that the above is taken into account in the development of a definition of 'shared education'
- We recommend that any definition providing for a continuum of sharing ensures that sharing is central to the system of education as a whole and that it impacts meaningfully and substantively on every learner.
- We consider that 'Shared Education', once appropriately defined, and its inter-relationship with 'integrated education' made clear, **is likely to benefit from an appropriate obligation in statute, supplementing but not replacing the existing Article 64 obligation** on integrated education.

With regards to barriers,

- we **highlight separateness** in the education system and summarise research regarding **a range of barriers to shared and integrated education**. We recommend that the Department **utilises lessons** drawn from the existing body of research² regarding sharing in education
- we recommend action to address wider issues linked to sharing in education (including **academic selection** at age 11; **teacher training** to advance shared education; the removal of the **teachers' exemption under FETO**; and to gain a better understanding of the reasons for, and impacts of, any **differential patterns of enrolment** to education providers).
- that action is taken to ensure **coordination** across relevant policies and programmes.

² Our 2012 Submission to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education summarises a range of research regarding integrated education and the QUB Shared Education Programme.

With regards to **enablers**, we continue to highlight the clear opportunities to **build upon existing education policy** – including:

- How **Area Learning Partnerships** / Communities might effectively encourage sharing between providers from different sectors / management types – including those not already involved in community relations work.
- How funding can be used to incentivise increased sharing on cross-sectoral and ability lines, including via the common funding formula.
- The importance of key school level enablers including high-quality contact; school leadership; links between teachers; a focus on the curriculum and the sharing of resources between teachers.
- The importance of **guidance** for schools who wish to embark on shared education and for those who wish to move toward greater interdependency.
- The importance of **Indicators and Evaluation** to measure and review sharing and collaboration in education provision and governance – both to acknowledge success and promote improvement.
- The importance of **data collection, across all Section 75 grounds** and FSM eligibility, for all educational projects, including key Delivering Social Change projects.

With regards to the specific areas raised in the Inquiry terms of reference

- We note the potential offered by the **Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy** and the calls for it to be reviewed. We **encourage** steps to maximise the effective use of CRED and available funding to support the advancement of equality of opportunity and good relations, via CRED and the school curriculum.
- We reiterate the importance of **engaging with pupils, parents, education providers and wider stakeholders** to communicate the rationale for the proposed system - to take account of barriers and enablers; to improve associated policy proposals and to incentivise any moves.
- We reiterate our recommendation that the Department explore how a shared experience can be central to the education system as a whole, encompassing at all stages of educational provision – including **routine sharing and**

collaboration between pupils and staff at special and mainstream schools.

3 Advancing Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations via Education

- 3.1 The Commission is mindful that any consideration of the role of the education system in maximising good relations must also take account of the important role of education in maximising equality of opportunity across the full range of equality grounds, including the need for a particular focus being on the steps required to assist those groups identified as being at particular disadvantage³ to facilitate delivery of improved educational attainment for particular groups.
- 3.2 While this submission focuses on the importance of education in advancing good relations it also recognises that sharing in education, across the full range of equality grounds, not only has the potential to provide meaningful and sustainable relations between pupils of different cultures and backgrounds, but also has the potential to tackle inequality and improve educational outcomes for pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds and abilities.
- 3.3 As part of our ongoing work to highlight key inequalities, we have commissioned Queens University to undertake in-depth research into educational inequalities in Northern Ireland which we hope to publish early in 2015.

4 Inquiry into Shared Education and Integrated Education

- 4.1 The Equality Commission has long advocated support for a shared system of education in Northern Ireland. In the Commission's (November 2008) publication "Every Child an

³ See Annex 2 for a summary of key findings from ECNI (2010) 'Inequalities in Education: Facts and Trends 1998-2008'. The Commission also notes 2014 research undertaken by the University of Ulster which highlights access and performance inequalities in post-primary education between grammar and secondary schools, between Catholic and Protestant Schools and for those on FSM; and which also highlights the potential for shared education to address a range of educational inequalities. (Borooah and Knox (2014) Access and Performance Inequalities: post primary education in Northern Ireland. Journal of Poverty and Social Justice - vol 22, no 2, 111–35).

Equal Child: An Equality Commission Statement on Key Inequalities in Education and a Strategy for Intervention”⁴ the Commission noted that it was:

‘hard to escape the conclusion that educating children of different backgrounds together has the potential to reduce the fears and tensions between communities that are founded on ignorance. It is equally difficult to avoid the conclusion that the long experience of separate educational provision has represented a lost opportunity for everyone in Northern Ireland.’

- 4.2 In our February 2012 response⁵ to the consultation on “Building A Better Future: Draft Programme For Government 2011-2015” we recognised *“the steps taken in terms of shared resources, including the schools estate and teachers, and shared programmes”* and endorsed:

*“the development of a clear focus on shared education so as to maximise equality of opportunity and good relations, recognising that this will be facilitated through the teaching of a shared curriculum in shared classrooms”.*⁶

- 4.3 The Commission remains of the view that the overall system of education provision in Northern Ireland has an important role to play, not only in the development of the child, but in advancing cohesion, sharing and integration across all equality grounds, with particular reference to promoting good relations. We have also made it clear that we are committed to using our full range of powers across equality and anti-discrimination statutes *‘to ensure that all children and young people in Northern Ireland have the opportunity to flourish and succeed to the best of their abilities’.*⁷

- 4.4 The Commission considers that societal mixing and social cohesion is limited by separation in our education provision. It

⁴ECNI (2008): Every Child an Equal Child – An Equality Commission Statement on Key Inequalities in Education and a Strategy for Intervention, pages 5 and 6. Available at <http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/ECkeyinequalities.pdf>

⁵ECNI (2012): Consultation response to the draft Programme for Government 2011-2015. Available at http://www.equalityni.org/archive/word/PfG_ECNIResponse_PfG220212.docx

⁶ ECNI (2012): Consultation response to the draft Programme for Government 2011-2015, page 3. Available at http://www.equalityni.org/archive/word/PfG_ECNIResponse_PfG220212.docx

⁷ ECNI (2008): Every Child an Equal Child – An Equality Commission Statement on Key Inequalities in Education and a Strategy for Intervention. Available at <http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/ECkeyinequalities.pdf>

is the Commission's view that a system of shared education has a central role to play in advancing a shared society and that children should have the opportunity to be educated together regardless of faith or background.

- 4.5 This is not to undermine the rights of parents to make choices regarding their child's attendance at specific schools, or for the provision of faith-based schools. However such considerations cannot overshadow the importance of a system of education seeking to maximise equality of opportunity and good relations. The Commission also recognises the important role that education can play in cultural development – providing immersion in literature, language, sport, activities, art, music etc.
- 4.6 It is for this reason that the Commission recommends a move towards a system of sharing across the full spectrum of education providers which teaches a diverse range of pupils together via a shared curriculum in shared classes. The Commission considers that sharing in education must impact meaningfully and substantively on every learner and we have highlighted the importance of sharing at all stages of educational provision – pre-school; early years; primary; post-primary; special needs; and tertiary levels.
- 4.7 We set out below a number of further key points, aligned to the specific terms of reference of the Inquiry. As noted at the outset, we confine our response to those areas of the inquiry that are core to our remit, responsibilities and expertise.

5 'the nature and definition of Shared Education and Integrated Education as it applies across all educational phases'

- 5.1 We draw attention again to our detailed advice to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education and earlier recommendations, which we summarise below.
- 5.2 In our November 2012 Submission⁸ to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Advancing Shared Education we advocated:

⁸ ECNI (2012) Submission to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education

“a move to a system of sharing across the full range of education providers at each level of provision; one which routinely teaches students together via a shared curriculum in shared classes.

The Commission considers that such an approach could better provide children with shared awareness, understanding and experience of the value and range of diverse cultures, identities and backgrounds in Northern Ireland; while also enabling children from different cultures/communities to experience a shared society.

The Commission considers that sharing in education must impact meaningfully and substantively on every child and that a shared experience should be central to the education system as a whole”.

5.3 The Commission also noted in that response that it considered that a shared system of education was aligned to the delivery and aims of a range of government strategies and programmes (for example, the Programme for Government; Good relations strategies; Every School a Good School etc) and maximising efficiencies in the school system and estate.

5.4 We specifically highlighted:

- The need to see improved equality of opportunity and educational outcomes across all equality grounds, in particular taking account of particular circumstances (e.g. Travellers; Protestant working class boys; children with disabilities and/or special educational needs; and those for whom English is an additional language etc).
- The need for advancement of sharing in education to maximise good relations across all relevant equality grounds, including community background.
- That a future based on cohesion, sharing and integration should seek to maximise sharing in a range of areas, including in education; and that we would expect to see Government investing in a shared educational experience as a route to increased social cohesion in society.
- The importance of sharing at each stage of educational provision – pre-school; early years; primary; post-primary; special needs and tertiary levels.

- The importance of sharing across the full range of education providers (ethos; identity or management / governance arrangements etc).
- That promoting equality and good relations within a school should complement school ethos and reinforce the importance of promoting equality and good relations in education.
- The importance of the rights of parents to choose individual schools (within appropriate economic constraints) - but in a context that does not impact on the development of a shared system as a whole.
- The potential to enhance existing mechanisms (e.g. the Entitlement Framework, Area Learning Partnerships, Area Based Planning; Common Funding Formula etc) using lessons learnt to date (such as from the Integrated Education Model and that emerging from the QUB Shared Education Programme), while providing appropriate mechanisms to incentivise and advance partnership working and shared delivery (e.g. via funding mechanisms etc).
- The importance of engaging with pupils, parents, education providers and wider stakeholders to communicate the rationale for the proposed system and model(s) - to improve associated policy proposals and to incentivise a move.
- The importance of agreeing and mainstreaming indicators to measure and review on sharing and collaboration in education provision and governance – both to acknowledge success and promote improvement.
- The importance of addressing wider issues linked to sharing in education – including academic selection at age 11; teacher training and the need for ‘greater sharing and collaboration between teacher training colleges’; the teacher’s exception under FETO; and better understanding the reasons for, and impacts of, any differential patterns of enrolment to education providers.

‘a) consideration of the need for a formal statutory definition’

5.5 We note that there is no agreed definition of shared education in Northern Ireland and note the concerns raised by some stakeholders around the absence of a definition e.g. that the language of ‘shared education’ has introduced ambiguity in

terms of what this aims to achieve in practice. For example, a 2013 report by Hansson et al⁹, noted that *‘for policy implementation to be effective a much clearer distinction between ‘integrated’, ‘mixed’, and ‘shared’ schooling needs to be drawn’*¹⁰.

5.6 We note that the terms of reference, which was provided by the Department of Education to the Ministerial Advisory Group on the Advancement of Shared Education, asked them to adopt the following broad 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 learners, promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.”

5.7 We also note the May 2014 High Court decision by Judge Treacy (the ‘Drumragh’ judgment¹¹) where he considered that, upon analysis, **“integrated education”** was a standalone concept; and that the type of education that is to be supported is *“integration between Protestant and Catholic Pupils as opposed to integration within school of any other distinct sets of pupils. The provision plainly envisages education together at the same school”*; and that integrated education was *“education that is integrated throughout and not education that is delivered by a partisan board”*;

5.8 We also note the ‘continuum’ arguments that have been advanced regarding the potential inter-relationship between shared and integrated education. DENI, for example, have advised *‘Sharing across schools is at different levels along a continuum, and integrated education should be at the upper end of that continuum’*¹². Knox¹³ has also set out the

⁹ Hansson, O’Connor and McCord (2013): *Integrated Education – A review of policy and research evidence, (Children and Youth Programme, UNESCO, University of Ulster)*. Available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/education/docs/ief_2013_report_unesco.pdf

¹⁰ Ibid, page 3

¹¹ http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Judicial%20Decisions/SummaryJudgments/Documents/Court%20Delivers%20Ruling%20on%20Department%20of%20Education's%20Approach%20to%20Long%20Term%20Planning/j_j_Summary%20of%20judgment%20-%20In%20re%20Drumragh%20Integrated%20College%2015%20May%2014.htm

¹² Hansard (2014): *Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education Inquiry – DENI Briefing*. Available at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of->

consideration that *‘shared education’ can be seen as part of ‘a graduated journey towards greater inter-dependence between schools’* and that *“there are opportunities for schools here depending on where they are now, where they want to take this and the extent to which they want to broker interdependencies with other schools’*.

- 5.9 In the context of current debates now comprising discussions regarding discrete concepts of ‘integrated’ and ‘shared’ education, **the Commission recommends** that a clear definition of ‘shared’ education is set out, supported by clarity on the inter-relationship between ‘shared’ education and ‘integrated’ education¹⁴; and how they will collectively interact to achieve overarching policy goals (including the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations).

Developing a Definition of Shared Education

- 5.10 In so far as it may assist with the development of a definition, we set out the following points for consideration:
- 5.11 While it is neither the Commission’s intent nor remit to advocate a specific model or models of education, we have set out the broad equality and good relations goals that we would expect a system to deliver.
- 5.12 Reflecting our advice to the Ministerial Advisory Group, we recommend that sharing in education must:
- Ensure that sharing impacts meaningfully and substantively on every learner
 - Ensure that a shared experience should be central to the education system as a whole, encompassing at all stages of educational provision – pre-school; early years; primary; post-primary; special needs; and tertiary levels.
 - routinely teach learners together via a shared curriculum in shared classes.

[Evidence/Session-2013-2014/July-2014/Inquiry-into-Integrated-and-Shared-Education-Department-of-Education-Briefing/](#)

¹³ Hansard (June 2014): *Sharing in Education and Shared Education Programmes: International Fund for Ireland, Education and Training Inspectorate and University of Ulster*. Available at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2013-2014/June-2014/Sharing-in-Education-and-Shared-Education-Programmes-International-Fund-for-Ireland-ETI-and-UU/>

¹⁴ We note the definition of integrated education contained in The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, with the interpretation as confirmed in the ‘Drumragh Judgement’

‘b) An obligation in statute to facilitate and encourage Shared Education’

- 5.17 We note that Article 64(1) of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 (“the 1989 Order”) provides a duty on the Department of Education to “*encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education, that is to say the education together at school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils*”.
- 5.18 As noted earlier, the May 2014 ‘Drumragh’ judgment set out that “integrated education” was a standalone concept, and did not extend to what is currently being referred to as shared education.
- 5.19 The **Commission considers** that ‘Shared Education’, once appropriately defined, and its inter-relationship with ‘integrated education’ made clear, is likely to benefit from an appropriate obligation in statute, supplementing but not replacing the existing Article 64 obligation on integrated education.

6 ‘Key barriers and enablers for Shared Education and Integrated Education’

Barriers

Separateness in the Northern Ireland Education System

- 6.1 In Northern Ireland, the majority of children are educated separately with little opportunity to mix with children from a diverse range of backgrounds. Recent research¹⁷ supports that post-primary provision in Northern Ireland remains mainly one of separate provision. As highlighted by Borooh and Knox, Department Statistics from 2013/14¹⁸ show that:
- In the primary sector: 6.2% of Catholics attend controlled primary schools; 1% of Protestants attend maintained primary schools; and 5.7% of primary school children attend integrated schools.
 - In the secondary (non-grammar) sector: 2.8% of Catholics attend controlled secondary schools; 1% of Protestants

¹⁷ Borooh and Knox (Nov 2012) Delivering Shared Education: Knowledge Exchange Seminar

¹⁸ Borooh and Knox (October 2014): Briefing to the Education Committee

attend maintained secondary schools; and 14.9% of secondary (non-grammar) pupils attend integrated schools.

- In the secondary (grammar) sector: 8.3% of Catholics attend controlled grammar schools; and 0.9% of Protestants attend voluntary Catholic grammar schools
- Overall, 6.7% of primary and post primary pupils attend integrated schools.

6.2 While all publicly funded schools are technically open to pupils from any background, the general pattern of school enrolment is not one of diversity and while integrated schools *‘represent a highly significant and distinctive approach to integrated education...only the minority of the school population attend them’*¹⁹. Tertiary education, where formal separation is not a feature, may thus be the first place for many students in which informal mixing occurs among people from a diverse range of equality backgrounds²⁰.

6.3 As the general pattern of school enrolment is not one of diversity, work to understand the reasons for, and impacts of, differential patterns of enrolment to education providers may therefore in itself suggest factors of relevance in the development of a more shared system of education in Northern Ireland.

Barriers impacting on Shared Education

6.4 A number of research reports and evaluations have highlighted the barriers to shared education across providers. For example, practical challenges to school collaboration include matters such as timetabling, transport and curriculum planning²¹. Some schools have also experienced challenges around the presentation of their cultural ethos or in relation to discipline policies.

6.5 Research by ARK²² in 2013 on Shared Education has highlighted concerns from Children and Young People including

¹⁹ Bain (2006): Schools for the future – funding strategy and sharing, para.13.11, page 179. Available at http://www.deni.gov.uk/review_of_education.pdf

²⁰ Hamilton, Hanson, Bell and Toucas (2008) Segregated lives: Social Division, Sectarianism and everyday life in Northern Ireland. Available at http://www.conflictresearch.org.uk/950B59D2-CE1A-4AEB-8F79-E8CF9CC61C2A/FinalDownload/DownloadId-9B96BC7D0BD0D77E405CD06536A6CAEE/950B59D2-CE1A-4AEB-8F79-E8CF9CC61C2A/Resources/Documents/P2_%20-%20Segregated%20Lives.pdf

²¹ Ministerial Advisory Group for the Advancement of Shared Education (May 2013). Report

²² ARK (2013): Shared Education - Views from Children and Young People

concerns around being bullied; having to mix with children from a different religious background; and concerns about pupils from grammar and non-grammar schools engaging in shared activities and classes. NICCY research (2013)²³ also found that whilst many pupils recognised the value of shared education for some their experiences had been a “*shared but separate experience...*”.

- 6.6 A 2013 evaluation by the Education and Training Inspectorate²⁴ of the International Fund for Ireland’s Sharing in Education Programme has also stated that there are challenges in sustaining and embedding learning on shared education. These include insufficient funding for collaboration, and for CPD; the perception from within schools around competing priorities and initiatives from DE; and changes in staffing arrangements and the loss of staff. The Commission’s response to the Ministerial Advisory Group also noted that, based on available research, there also appeared reticence to collaborate across school management types and even greater reluctance to collaborate with schools that have a different approach to academic selection. The ETI evaluation concluded that *‘much remains to be done to ensure the experience is effective, sustained and progressive, particularly in schools that have not yet begun the process’*²⁵.
- 6.7 The Commission **recommends** that the Department utilises lessons drawn from the body of research²⁶ regarding sharing in education – including that relating to Integrated Education Model and the QUB Shared Education Programme²⁷ to overcome already identified barriers.

²³ NICCY (2013) Shared Education: The Views of Children and Young People 2013

²⁴ ETI (2013): A final evaluation of the International Fund for Ireland’s Sharing in Education Programme. Available at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/international-fund-for-irelands-sharing-in-education-programme/a-final-evaluation-of-the-international-fund-for-irelands-sharing-in-education-programme.htm>

²⁵ Ibid, page 33

²⁶ Our 201 Submission to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education summarises a range of research regarding integrated education and the QUB Shared Education Programme.

²⁷ The SEP encourages schools to make cross-sectoral collaborations an integral part of school life, creating enhanced educational and personal development opportunities for everyone involved. The SEP has, since 2007, involved over 100 schools at Post-Primary and Primary level in cross-sectoral collaboration concentrating on substantive, curriculum based activities. In the year beginning Sep 2010, SEP2 partnerships involved over 4,000 students across Northern Ireland. See <http://www.schoolsworkingtogether.co.uk/>

Barriers impacting on Integrated Education

- 6.8 While only a minority of children attend integrated schools, the integrated sector has raised a number of key concerns in relation to the Department's approach to encouraging and facilitating integrated education including a perceived failure to take into account parental demand for integrated schooling²⁸ (as evidenced by opinion polls) or to actively seek opportunities to increase the number of integrated schools places.
- 6.9 A 2013 report by Hansson et al, commissioned by the IEF²⁹, has highlighted how *'key policy documents now no longer make explicit reference to integrated education despite the statutory duty to support and facilitate it'*.
- 6.10 Representatives of the integrated sector have also raised concerns that *'public support for integrated education remains extremely high, but education policies are based on maintaining separate schools'*³⁰. For example IEF has raised concerns around the area based planning process and have criticised proposals to establish a single Education and Library Board as *'copper-fastened segregation'*³¹.
- 6.11 The Commission also notes the judgement of Mr Justice Treacy in the 'Drumragh' judicial review which highlighted that *'using an analytical tool to plan for an area is both flexible and necessary however, the inflexibility of the projections used [in relation to area based planning] will have the effect of making it difficult to accommodate the section 64 duty in future day to day decisions. The Department need to be alive to the Article 64 duty at all levels'*³².
- 6.12 We **highlight** the importance of ensuring fulfilment of the Article 64 provisions of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 to 'encourage and facilitate' integrated education at

²⁸ However, as the Committee will be aware, in recent evidence to the Committee the University of Ulster stated that the number of school places in the integrated sector "slightly exceeds demand", leaving "about 2000" places unfilled, although there are pressures in particular areas due to parental preference.

²⁹ Hansson, Bones and McCord (2013): *Integrated Education – a Review of Policy and Research Evidence*. (University of Ulster for Integrated Education Fund)

³⁰ ETI (2013): A final evaluation of the International Fund for Ireland's Sharing in Education Programme. Available at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/international-fund-for-irelands-sharing-in-education-programme/a-final-evaluation-of-the-international-fund-for-irelands-sharing-in-education-programme.htm>

³¹ IEF (2014): Streamlining should mean eliminating division: the latest education plans reinforce it.

³² **Drumragh** Integrated College's Application for a Judicial Review [2014] NIQB 69.

all levels; and again **recommend** using lessons drawn from the body of research on integrated education to overcome already identified barriers.

Barriers in wider educational policy

6.13 In 2010 the Commission jointly published a challenge paper entitled “*Ensuring the Good Relations Work in our Schools Counts - A Strategy to meet our needs for the 21st Century.*”³³ The paper also included, inter alia³⁴, a number of wider recommendations to progress sharing and good relations in education, including:

- continued concern about the system of academic selection at eleven years old;
- that all teachers should be able to enjoy the same legislative protection as other workers and the exemption in FETO should be abolished at secondary level, as previously recommended, with early consideration given to urging the removal of the exemption at all levels; and
- the need for ‘greater sharing and collaboration between teacher training colleges’³⁵.

6.14 We again highlight the need to address wider issues linked to sharing in education - including academic selection at age 11; teacher training; and the teachers exemption under FETO.

Academic Selection

6.15 School collaboration is set in the context of the wider political debate on education. There is currently no agreement on academic selection with 2009/10 having seen the introduction of unregulated tests in which some 7,000 primary school pupils took part in exams set by the Association for Quality Education (largely Protestant students) and 6,700 children sat the GL assessment tests (largely Catholic students)³⁶.

³³ The Good Relations Forum (2010): Ensuring the Good Relations Work in our Schools Counts – A Strategy to meet our needs for the 21st century. Available at <http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/EnsuringGoodRelationsWorkinourSchoolsCountsApr2010.pdf>

³⁴ A wider summary of relevant recommendations can be seen in Annex 3.

³⁵ Ibid, page 17

³⁶ Knox (2010) *Sharing Education Programme – Views from the White Board*, page 12. Available at <http://www.schoolsworkingtogether.co.uk/documents/Views%20from%20the%20White%20Board%20May%202010.pdf>

6.16 The Commission reiterates our continued concern about the system of academic selection at eleven years old.

Teacher Training and Employment

6.17 In 2003, the Commission funded research by QUB which concluded that:

‘A significant barrier, identified by teachers, to their wider professional development in these areas was the relative lack of opportunity to teach or work outside their own community background. Aligned with this, was a concern about the unequal access for employment across the Controlled and Maintained school sectors for all teachers.’³⁷

6.18 This issue is inextricably linked with the maintenance of the teacher’s exception within the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (FETO). In 2004³⁸, the Commission undertook a formal investigation and called for the removal of the teacher’s exception from posts in secondary level education. In 2008, the Commission reiterated this position and further called for *early consideration to be given to the question of urging the removal of the exemption at all levels*”.

6.19 In our 2013 response to the Review of the initial teacher education infrastructure in Northern Ireland, we noted *“we consider that sharing in education must impact meaningfully and substantively on every participant and at all stages of educational provision – including tertiary levels. The Commission is mindful that, in 2013, teacher training in Northern Ireland represents the sole segregated area in the provision of third-level education in Northern Ireland.”*

6.20 The Commission remains concerned about the impact that the separate provision of teacher training has on job opportunities, professional development and the promotion of good relations; and considers that closer collaboration between all initial teacher training providers in Northern Ireland would have a range of benefits, including in relation to good relations.

6.21 There is a compelling need for placing equality of opportunity and good relations at the heart of education structures.

³⁷ [Equality Awareness in Teacher Education and Training in Northern Ireland 2003 QUB](#)
³⁸ [Formal investigation under Art 41 \(FETO\) on the Teachers Exception \(2004\)](#)

Improvements to teacher education are an essential part of moving to the Commission's vision of a society where all children and young people are valued equally and allowed the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

6.22 We also consider that teachers should be equipped with a curriculum, resources and skills to deal with contentious issues in the classroom and note the evidence already given to the Inquiry that *'Developments on teacher training and teacher development will ultimately lead to the embedding of shared education as a concept in the mainstream education system'*³⁹.

6.23 We reiterate our **recommendation** that the exemption in FETO should be abolished at secondary level, as previously recommended, with early consideration given to urging the removal of the exemption at all levels; for greater sharing and collaboration between teacher training colleges; and for teachers to have the support and training to embed shared education in the classroom.

Alignment of Government Policies

6.24 Academics from Queens University have highlighted the need for greater alignment in relation to policies on education and on good relations. For example, the University of Ulster recently highlighted⁴⁰:

"We have the review of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), area planning, the Education and Skills Authority (ESA), the common funding formula, school closures, shared education and the 'Together: Building a United Community' document. To us, there does not seem to be any real alignment between some of those areas. They almost seem to be undertaken as separate processes, yet there is an interrelationship between some of them"

6.25 The Commission **recommends** that action is taken to ensure coordination across relevant policies and programmes so as to facilitate and encourage shared and integrated education.

³⁹ Hansard (2014): *Evidence to the Education Committee - Sharing in Education and Shared Education Programmes: International Fund for Ireland, Education and Training Inspectorate and University of Ulster*

⁴⁰ See <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2013-2014/January-2014/Area-based-Planning-Queens-University-Belfast-and-University-of-Ulster/>

Enablers

- 6.26 We welcome the indication in T:BUC Strategy that the key aim relating to education is *‘to enhance the quality and extent of shared education provision, thus ensuring that sharing in education becomes a central part of every child’s educational experience’*⁴¹ and the commitment to pilot 100 shared schools by 2015.
- 6.27 The Commission considers that there are clear opportunities to build upon / extend existing education policy and **recommends** that consideration is given to how this might be achieved.
- 6.28 Research⁴², for example, has pointed to the possibility of *‘incentivising Area Learning Communities to deliver the entitlement framework on a cross community basis; incentivising the delivery as part of the core curriculum; promoting the reconciliation benefits as having wider societal value; and argue for the economic benefits when set alongside the costs of separate denominational provision’*⁴³.

Area Learning Partnerships / Communities

- 6.29 Research in 2008⁴⁴ showed that collaboration through the Area Learning Partnerships offered many benefits such as the opportunity to share expertise amongst teaching staff; a wider range of curricular opportunities for young people and the opportunity to break down barriers and build informal relationships, particularly between grammar and secondary schools.
- 6.30 Despite this generally positive assessment of collaboration *‘participants indicated that sustainable collaborative relationships were difficult to establish and a range of factors were reported to have an impact on the process of school collaboration’*.⁴⁵ Of relevance is that schools were more hesitant about establishing collaborative links outside of their

⁴¹ Together Building a United Community (May 2013), page 29. Available at <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community-strategy.pdf>

⁴² Bain (2006): Schools for the future – funding strategy and sharing. Available at http://www.deni.gov.uk/review_of_education.pdf

⁴³ Knox (2010) Sharing Education Programme – Views from the Whiteboard, page 55. Available <http://www.schoolsworkingtogether.co.uk/documents/Views%20from%20the%20White%20Board%20May%202010.pdf>

⁴⁴ Queens University School of Education (2008) *School Collaboration in Northern Ireland – Opportunities for Reconciliation*, page 5. Available at <http://www.schoolsworkingtogether.co.uk/documents/School-Collaboration-in-NI.pdf>

⁴⁵ Ibid, page 5

sector than those within it (only 35% of schools suggested that they had established collaborative links with a school which took a different approach to academic selection) or between State maintained and Catholic Controlled; or integrated and non-integrated schools. The research also suggested that schools placed *'considerable emphasis on cultural issues and sought to establish collaborative relations with schools where the culture was deemed to be compatible with their own'*⁴⁶. Further, Borooah and Knox note, in their submission to the Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education⁴⁷, that *'it is claimed that ALCs are putting in place shared education. There is no evidence to support this assertion. DE claims that they do not gather evidence on the extent of sharing in ALCs, their impact on educational outcomes, and the value for money of these collaborative arrangements'*.

- 6.31 **The Commission recommends** that consideration is given to how best Area Learning Partnerships/Communities might effectively encourage sharing between providers from different sectors / management types etc in a way which could serve to advance good relations.

Sustainability and Funding

- 6.32 Those involved in shared education have highlighted the importance of funding in sustaining collaborative partnerships. As highlighted in evidence to the Committee recently, *'the uncertainty which exists around funding for the entitlement framework is unhelpful - senior Leaders and Governors need clear direction and information relating to funding which is required to sustain our collaborative arrangements'*⁴⁸.
- 6.33 An evaluation by the ETI of the Sharing in Education Programme highlighted that while the programme promoted effectively links between schools in shared education partnerships, *'the extent of the sustainability of these partnerships without additional funding remains to be seen'*⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ Ibid, page 5

⁴⁷ See <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Education/Inquiries-and-Reviews/shared-and-integrated-education/Knox-and-Borooah-2.pdf>

⁴⁸ Written evidence to the Shared and Integrated Education Inquiry from both Ballycastle High School and Cross and Passion College

⁴⁹ Education and Training Inspectorate (2013): *An evaluation of the International Fund for Ireland's Sharing in Education Programme*, page 32.

6.34 Further, where viability criteria put local education provision at risk, sharing between and/or merging existing schools, may both advance good relations and help ensure that a school provides an anchor point for the wider community as envisaged in the Extended Schools Initiative.⁵⁰

6.35 We understand that the Common Funding Formula Review is still under consideration. Our response to the Ministerial Advisory Group noted that Common Funding Formula

“along with area based planning creates further room for ‘creative thinking’ in relation to directing funds so as to reward sharing between schools (of different management type etc) in a way that would advance Good Relations”.

6.36 Our 2014 response⁵¹ to the review of the funding formula for schools noted

“The Commissions vision is to create an education system where children are routinely educated together, in inclusive environments, regardless of their background or ability.⁵² It will be important that the common funding formula is able to take account of the outcomes of the above considerations”

“Any funding mechanism can have a transformative effect on an education system and this is a clear opportunity to incentivise increased sharing of educational resources on cross-sectoral and ability lines”.

6.37 We are aware that while the Ministerial advisory group recommended⁵³ a shared education premium within the common funding formula, the Minister has reserved his position

⁵⁰ Education and Training Inspectorate Report (2006). Available at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/the-extended-schools-initiative-in-northern-ireland-a-baseline-survey-by-the-education-and-training-inspectorate.pdf>

⁵¹ <http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Consultation%20Responses/2012/DEdCommonFundingFormula-2012.pdf>

⁵² Every Child an Equal Child(2008) see also Ensuring the good relations work in our schools counts (2010)

⁵³ Recommendation 3 of the MAG Group report states that “As part of the proposed revised common funding formula ... a ‘shared education premium’ should be incorporated into the funding formula for schools and other educational institutions. This premium would recognize the added value of shared education and should be weighted in terms of: The number of children and young people that are engaged in shared education activities, as defined in this report; and the proportion of school time that children and young people are engaged in such activities.”

on whether that is the most appropriate way to fund shared education⁵⁴.

- 6.38 The **Commission recommends** that consideration is given as to how best to incentivise increased sharing of educational resources on cross-sectoral and ability lines, including via the common funding formula.

School Level Enablers

- 6.39 As highlighted by the Commission in its 2012 submission to the Ministerial Advisory Group, school leadership and school ethos will be important drivers in future collaborative work as well as the schools relationship with the local community. The overall goal will be to create a system of shared education and collaboration which is curriculum- focused; has a shared educational experience at its core and is integral to the way all education is delivered in Northern Ireland.
- 6.40 A number of research reports have highlighted key school level enablers in advancing shared education including the importance of high-quality contact; school leadership links between teachers; a focus on the curriculum and the sharing of resources between teachers.
- 6.41 The report of the Ministerial Advisory Group⁵⁵ highlights that *“Research evidence from a range of studies carried out in Northern Ireland over the years ... suggests that limited contact resulting from bringing children together for short periods of time – either in school or elsewhere – has little or no long-term effects on their attitudes”* and notes *“support for longer term-sustained contact between learners”* (aligned to inter-group contact theory - Hewstone et al. 2005; Hughes et al. 2007⁵⁶), summarising that *“the contact literature makes a clear distinction between superficial and intimate contact in respect*

⁵⁴ NI Assembly (Hansard – 2nd July 2014): Inquiry into Integrated a Shared Education – Department of Education Briefing.

⁵⁵ Connolly, P., Purvis, D., O’Grady, P.J., (2013) Advancing Shared Education: Report of the Ministerial Advisory Group pp49-50

⁵⁶ Hewstone, M., Cairns, E., Voci, A., Paolini, S., McLernon, F., Crisp, R. et al. (2005) Intergroup contact in a divided society: Challenging segregation in Northern Ireland, in: D. Abrams, J. M. Marques, and M. A. Hogg (Eds) The social psychology of inclusion and exclusion, pp. 265–292 Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.

Hughes, J. and Donnelly, C. (2007) Integrated schools in Northern Ireland and bi-lingual/bi-national schools in Israel: Some policy issues. In Z. Bekermann and C. McGlynn (Eds) Sustained peace education in post-conflict societies, pp. 121–134. London: McMillan.

of positive outcomes. The latter refers to encounters where individuals have a more positive emotional disposition towards others and trust them enough to “self-disclose”, thereby creating an opportunity for perspective-taking and out-group empathy’ (Hughes and Donnelly, 2012: p. 191). 2010)”.

- 6.42 Research has also highlighted the importance of local solutions to cross-sectoral working; the need for shared education to enhance the delivery of core curricular activities or meet real educational need (e.g. increased access to specialist teaching).
- 6.43 Factors such as geographical proximity, levels of cross community integration and interface areas have also been highlighted as important all factors in the workability of Shared Education Programmes⁵⁷. ETI have also noted⁵⁸ that a key challenge remains “*to engage schools/ organisations not already involved in community relations work*”.
- 6.44 We **reiterate our recommendation** that the Department utilises lessons from the body of research⁵⁹ regarding sharing in education – including that relating to Integrated Education Model and the QUB Shared Education Programme⁶⁰ etc.

Guidance

- 6.45 The Commission recognises the importance of guidance for schools who wish to embark on shared education and for those who wish to move toward greater interdependency.
- 6.46 Both the Ministerial Advisory Group on shared education and academics from Queens University have stated that there is a lack of guidance for schools who wish collaborate to sustain a federation, a confederation or shared communities of

⁵⁷ Knox (2014):

⁵⁸ ETI (2013) A Final Evaluation of the International Fund for Ireland’s Sharing in Education Programme <http://www.etini.gov.uk/international-fund-for-irelands-sharing-in-education-programme/a-final-evaluation-of-the-international-fund-for-irelands-sharing-in-education-programme.htm>

⁵⁹ The Commission’s 2012 Submission to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education summarises a range of research regarding integrated education and the QUB Shared Education Programme.

⁶⁰ The SEP encourages schools to make cross-sectoral collaborations an integral part of school life, creating enhanced educational and personal development opportunities for everyone involved. The SEP has, since 2007, involved over 100 schools at Post-Primary and Primary level in cross-sectoral collaboration concentrating on substantive, curriculum based activities. In the year beginning Sep 2010, SEP2 partnerships involved over 4,000 students across Northern Ireland. See <http://www.schoolsworkingtogether.co.uk/>

learning⁶¹. Queens University highlighted that *‘even where the post-primary area-based plans have suggested that x number of schools should work together in a certain town for the betterment of education outcomes for all the pupils.... there is no real assistance or support for them to do that, be it actual resource or even just advice and guidance about how they would grow that particular partnership’*⁶².

- 6.47 We welcome the work being undertaken by the Department to provide guidance on the different models of shared education. ETI has also highlighted that *‘in helping to address these challenges DE officials need to work more collaboratively to ensure that school improvement policies signpost connections to, and opportunities for, shared education’*⁶³.

Indicators and Evaluation

- 6.48 In order to acknowledge success and promote improvement, sharing and collaboration between schools should be evaluated. Bain (2006)⁶⁴ recommends that all models of sharing and collaboration, from the locally evolving partnerships to the more formally structured arrangements of sharing and collaboration, can be evaluated against a set of indicators⁶⁵.
- 6.49 Evaluation of existing barriers and enablers to a shared system of education will be important. Focus will need to be placed on lessons learned to date – for example the reported difficulties encountered by teachers in teaching in shared classes, or the reported anxiety of some pupils about participating in the Shared Education Programme.
- 6.50 Over time, the relative effectiveness of different types of partnerships and activities will need to be evaluated, including establishing what type of collaboration is most effective in

⁶¹ Hansard (2014): Area Based Planning - Queens University and the University of Ulster. Available at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2013-2014/January-2014/Area-based-Planning-Queens-University-Belfast-and-University-of-Ulster/>

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Education and Training Inspectorate (2013): *An evaluation of the International Fund for Ireland’s Sharing in Education Programme*, page 32.

⁶⁴ Bain (2006): Schools for the future – funding strategy and sharing. Available at http://www.deni.gov.uk/review_of_education.pdf

⁶⁵ Ibid, page 170 - Bain recommended indicators covering: quality and effectiveness of provision; equality and accessibility; diversity and choice; community well being and cohesion; economy and efficiency (including matching provision to need and reducing overprovision); and cross-community and cross-sector sharing and collaboration. Source:

delivering good educational outcomes and experiences as well as promoting good relations.

- 6.51 Evaluation should be through both self-evaluation and through inspection and should take account of both the distinctive character of the school and the community environment. Systems of measurement and rolling evaluation of policies/programmes will be important. Involvement of the Education and Training Inspectorate would likely provide an effective means to mainstream this process.
- 6.52 The Commission **continues to recommend** indicators to measure and review sharing and collaboration in education provision and governance – both to acknowledge success and promote improvement. The Commission therefore recognises the potential for the indicators being developed by the Education and Training Inspectorate, on behalf of the Department for Education, to assist schools in evaluating programs of shared education and inform future guidance in this area.
- 6.53 The Commission is also of the view that there is a real opportunity to progress and mainstream learning from the sharing in education and shared education programs through such projects as the recently agreed Delivering Social Change (DSC) signature project. Data should be collected on the educational impacts on Section 75 Groups and children on FSM as part of the DSC and other programmes.

Areas of Specific Interest to the Inquiry

- 6.54 Aligned to the specific terms of reference to the inquiry, we also make the following comments:
- The effectiveness of the relevant parts of the CRED policy
- 6.55 Aligned to our remit and expertise, the Commission has not undertaken a detailed consideration of the effectiveness of the CRED policy
- 6.56 The Commission however recognises the crucial role that schools have in contributing to the reconciliation of our society. This is not solely a job for schools, but schools do play a critical

role⁶⁶. The current policy environment provides a further opportunity to address persistent inequalities in education and make a substantial contribution to improved social and community cohesion within our society.

- 6.57 We note that the Department's Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy commits to *"encourage greater sharing and collaboration across and between all educational settings on a cross community basis"*⁶⁷. We **welcome** that the intended outcomes set out in CRED policy; namely *"to develop learners who understand and respect the rights, equality and diversity (including linguistic diversity) of all S75 groups"* have the potential to promote equality of opportunity and good relations across the full range of equality grounds.
- 6.58 We however note that the NIHRC has recommended⁶⁸ that *"there is therefore arguably a need to align curriculum content more carefully with CRED aspirations"* and that recommendation 10 of the Ministerial Advisory Group recommends *"an independent review should be undertaken of current practice... The review should consider the effectiveness of the current Community Relations Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy and also include consideration of the opportunities that are provided for children and young people to discuss and explore issues associated with divisions, conflict and inequalities in Northern Ireland."*
- 6.59 We also note the reply given by the Minister for Education⁶⁹ indicating that following the closure of the International Fund for Ireland's Sharing in Education Programme in December 2013, schools were encouraged to apply for CRED funding but that some schools did not apply and that in some Boards the Scheme was under-subscribed. We would **encourage** steps to maximise the effective use of the CRED policy and available funding to support the advancement of equality of opportunity and good relations via CRED and the school curriculum.

⁶⁶ The Good Relations Forum (2010): Ensuring the Good Relations Work in our Schools Counts (2010), page 11. Available at <http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/EnsuringGoodRelationsWorkinourSchoolsCounts.pdf>

⁶⁷ Department of Education (2011): *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education*, page 25. Available at <http://soap.tibus.com/credni/filestore/documents/Final%20CRED%20Policy%20-%20March%202011%20-%20English%20PDF.PDF>

⁶⁸ Education reform in Northern Ireland: A Human Rights Review, QUB, commissioned by NIHRC, 2013 www.nihrc.org.uk

⁶⁹ Assembly Question - AQW 30553/11-15

Engagement, including with parents and carers

- 6.60 The Commission reiterates the importance of engaging with pupils, parents, education providers and wider stakeholders to communicate the rationale for the proposed system and model(s) - to improve associated policy proposals and to incentivise any moves.
- 6.61 We recommend, in line with our consistent call for effective engagement with Section 75 groups, that the Department and other key bodies also take steps to ensure effective engagement with children & young people (C&YP) in the design, delivery, implementation and review of shared education initiatives. We note that a recent NICCY report⁷⁰ has revealed an absence of robust systems by Departments for recording, analysing, evaluating and providing feedback to C&YP on the outcomes of engagements.
- 6.62 Further NICCY research (2013)⁷¹ into the views of C&YP on shared education has also reported that whilst many pupils recognised the value of shared education and its objectives, for some their experiences of sharing had been less positive; with some pupils indicating that the collaborative activities and joint classes had been a *“shared but separate experience...”*.
- 6.63 Gallagher and Duffy (2012) have also noted the importance of parental support and involvement in their analysis⁷² of the Shared Education Programme (SEP):

“Some of the schools talked about cross-sector collaboration needing parental support and involvement. Those schools situated in contested space appeared to experience the most resistance from parents; perhaps due to concerns about safety moving through contested space or their children mixing with young people from the other side of the community. According to some Coordinators, parents were also dealing with the legacy of the conflict themselves.”

⁷⁰ NICCY (2014) 'Walking or Talking Participation - evidencing the impact of direct participation with children and young people in the development of departmental policies, strategies, legislation and services

⁷¹ NICCY (2013) Shared Education: The Views of Children and Young People 2013

⁷² Duffy, G., Gallagher, T., (2012) Sustaining Cross-Sector Collaboration: An examination of schools involved in the first cohort of the Sharing Education Programme - <http://www.schoolsworkingtogether.com/documents/Sustainability%20Report.pdf>

- 6.64 The recent evaluation of Sharing in Education Programmes, noted that when projects involved parents/carers, it lead to a more enriched experience for participants. The Commission has also noted that sharing between and/or merging existing schools, may both advance good relations and help ensure that a school provides an anchor point for the wider community as envisaged in the Extended Schools Initiative.⁷³
- 6.65 As highlighted in our response to the Ministerial Advisory Group - without unduly delaying progress, there will be merits in looking at lessons learnt from the Integrated sector; the Sharing in Education and Shared Education Programmes; and other similar initiatives to identify key lessons regarding engagement.

The Role of Special Schools

- 6.66 Aligned to the terms for reference for the inquiry, we reiterate our view that sharing in education, across the full range of equality grounds, not only has the potential to provide meaningful and sustainable relations between pupils of different cultures and backgrounds, but also has the potential to improve educational outcomes for pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds and abilities.
- 6.67 We consider that sharing in education must impact meaningfully and substantively on every participant and we have highlighted the importance of sharing at all stages of educational provision – pre-school; early years; primary; post-primary; special needs; and tertiary levels.”
- 6.68 We note that the Ministerial Advisory Group report quotes the ETI as reporting *“Other key benefits included improved social and personal skills for all learners; children from mainstream schools developing a better understanding of those with SEN and the transmission of special education staff expertise to their mainstream colleagues.”*
- 6.69 The Commission supports action that encourages routine sharing and collaboration between pupils and staff at special and mainstream schools, or actions which promote positive attitudes and challenge negative stereotypes.

⁷³ Education and Training Inspectorate Report (2006). Available at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/the-extended-schools-initiative-in-northern-ireland-a-baseline-survey-by-the-education-and-training-inspectorate.pdf>

6.70 We **recommend** the Department explore how a shared experience can be central to the education system as a whole, encompassing at all stages of educational provision – including **routine sharing and collaboration between pupils and staff at special and mainstream schools.**

7 ‘Alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of policy interventions and programmes’

7.1 Aligned to our remit and expertise, the Commission has not undertaken work to evaluate education policy interventions from other jurisdictions.

7.2 This submission, and the further detail set out in our submission to the Ministerial Advisory Group in 2012, has however sought to point to and reference a range of literature and research regarding lessons to date from the Northern Ireland experience.

8 ‘Priorities and actions to be taken to improve sharing and integration’

8.1 The Commission recognises the potential for shared education to tackle inequality and promote equality of opportunity and good relations across the full range of Section 75 groups

8.2 We consider that any priority actions to advance shared education should be aligned to achieving these goals.

8.3 We summarise below the key recommendations developed across this paper.

A Legal and Policy framework

8.4 **The Commission recommends** that a clear definition of ‘shared’ education is set out, supported by clarity on the inter-relationship between ‘shared’ education and ‘integrated’

education⁷⁴; and how they will collectively interact to achieve overarching policy goals (including the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations).

- 8.5 Reflecting our advice to the Ministerial Advisory Group, we recommend that sharing in education must:
- Ensure that sharing impacts meaningfully and substantively on every learner
 - Ensure that a shared experience should be central to the education system as a whole, encompassing at all stages of educational provision – pre-school; early years; primary; post-primary; special needs; and tertiary levels.
 - routinely teach learners together via a shared curriculum in shared classes.
 - better provide learners with shared awareness, understanding and experience of the value and range of diverse cultures, identities and backgrounds in Northern Ireland; while also enabling learners from different cultures/communities to experience a shared society.
- 8.6 We consider the above to be relevant to the development of policy aims associated with ‘sharing’ in education, and thus **we recommend** that it is taken into account in the development of a definition of ‘shared education’ that would seek to advance those aims. **We recommend** that any definition providing for a continuum of sharing ensures that sharing is central to the system of education as a whole and that it impacts meaningfully and substantively on every learner.
- 8.7 We consider that that the allocation of responsibility for mainstreaming shared education needs to be explicit, and therefore **consider** that ‘Shared Education’, once appropriately defined, and its inter-relationship with ‘integrated education’ made clear, is likely to benefit from an appropriate obligation in statute, supplementing but not replacing the existing Article 64 obligation on integrated education.

⁷⁴ We note the definition of integrated education contained in The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, with the interpretation as confirmed in the ‘Drumragh Judgement’

Addressing Barriers to the Advancement of Shared and Integrated Education

- 8.8 The Commission **recommends** that the Department utilises lessons drawn from the body of research⁷⁵ regarding sharing in education – including that relating to Integrated Education Model and the QUB Shared Education Programme⁷⁶ etc. We also **highlight** the importance of ensuring fulfilment of the Article 64 provisions of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 to ‘encourage and facilitate’ integrated education at all levels.
- 8.9 With regards to barriers in wider education policy, we continue to **recommend** action to address wider issues linked to sharing in education (including academic selection at age 11; teacher training to advance shared education; the removal of the teachers’ exemption under FETO; and to gain a better understanding of the reasons for, and impacts of, any differential patterns of enrolment to education providers).
- 8.10 The Commission remains of the view that, for shared education to be mainstreamed, it needs to be facilitated and promoted through the wider policy context. There is a need for a joined-up approach to sharing and alignment of the policies to promote and facilitate it. The Commission **recommends** that action is taken to ensure coordination across relevant policies and programmes.

Better Utilising Existing Enablers

- 8.11 The Commission continues to highlight the clear opportunities to build upon / extend existing education policy to be used to better advance shared education and **recommends** that consideration is given to how this might be achieved.
- 8.12 We **recommend** that consideration is given to how best Area Learning Partnerships / Communities might effectively

⁷⁵ Our 201 Submission to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education summarises a range of research regarding integrated education and the QUB Shared Education Programme.

⁷⁶ The SEP encourages schools to make cross-sectoral collaborations an integral part of school life, creating enhanced educational and personal development opportunities for everyone involved. The SEP has, since 2007, involved over 100 schools at Post-Primary and Primary level in cross-sectoral collaboration concentrating on substantive, curriculum based activities. In the year beginning Sep 2010, SEP2 partnerships involved over 4,000 students across Northern Ireland. See <http://www.schoolsworkingtogether.co.uk/>

encourage sharing between providers from different sectors / management types in a way which could serve to advance good relations.

- 8.13 We note the importance of sustainability and the role of funding in that regard and therefore welcome the Departments commitment to use the shared education programme to determine how best to mainstream shared education funding for schools.
- 8.14 We continue to **recommend** that consideration is given as to how best to incentivise increased sharing of educational resources on cross-sectoral and ability lines, including via the common funding formula.
- 8.15 A number of research reports have highlighted key school level enablers in advancing shared education including the importance of high-quality contact; school leadership links between teachers; a focus on the curriculum and the sharing of resources between teachers. ETI have also noted⁷⁷ that a key challenge remains “*to engage schools/ organisations not already involved in community relations work*”. We **reiterate our recommendation** that the Department utilises lessons from the body of research⁷⁸ regarding sharing in education to advance key enablers.

Guidance

- 8.16 The Commission recognises the importance of guidance for schools who wish to embark on shared education and for those who wish to move toward greater interdependency and we **welcome** the work being undertaken by the Department to provide guidance on the different models of shared education.

Indicators and Evaluation

- 8.17 The Commission **continues to recommend** indicators to measure and review sharing and collaboration in education

⁷⁷ ETI (2013) A Final Evaluation of the International Fund for Ireland’s Sharing in Education Programme <http://www.etini.gov.uk/international-fund-for-irelands-sharing-in-education-programme/a-final-evaluation-of-the-international-fund-for-irelands-sharing-in-education-programme.htm>

⁷⁸ The Commission’s 2012 Submission to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education summarises a range of research regarding integrated education and the QUB Shared Education Programme.

provision and governance – both to acknowledge success and promote improvement.

- 8.18 The Commission is also of the view that there is a real opportunity to capture and mainstream learning from projects such as the recently agreed Delivering Social Change (DSC) signature project. Data should be collected on the educational impacts on Section 75 Groups and children on FSM as part of the DSC and other programmes.

Areas of Specific Interest to the Inquiry

- 8.19 Aligned to the specific terms of reference to the inquiry, we also make the following comments:

Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy

- 8.20 Aligned to our remit and expertise, the Commission has not undertaken a detailed consideration of the effectiveness of the CRED policy

- 8.21 We **welcome** that the intended outcomes set out in CRED policy; namely *“to develop learners who understand and respect the rights, equality and diversity (including linguistic diversity) of all S75 groups”* have the potential to promote equality of opportunity and good relations across the full range of grounds, but **we note the recommendations** from the NIHRC and the MAG calling respectively for alignment and review of CRED. We **encourage** steps to maximise the effective use of CRED, and available funding to support the advancement of equality of opportunity and good relations via CRED and the school curriculum.

Engagement, including with parents and carers

- 8.22 The Commission reiterates the importance of engaging with pupils, parents, education providers and wider stakeholders to communicate the rationale for the proposed system and model(s) - to take account of barriers and enablers; to improve associated policy proposals and to incentivise any moves.

The Role of Special Schools

- 8.23 We consider that sharing in education must impact meaningfully and substantively on every participant.

8.24 We reiterate our recommendation that the Department explore how a shared experience can be central to the education system as a whole, encompassing at all stages of educational provision – including routine sharing and collaboration between pupils and staff at special and mainstream schools.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

October 2014

9 ANNEX 1: The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

1. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (the Commission) is an independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission is responsible for implementing the legislation on fair employment, sex discrimination and equal pay, race relations, sexual orientation, disability and age.
2. The Commission's remit also includes overseeing the statutory duties on the Department to promote equality of opportunity and good relations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75) and to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
3. The Commission's general duties include:
 - working towards the elimination of discrimination;
 - promoting equality of opportunity and encouraging good practice;
 - promoting positive / affirmative action
 - promoting good relations between people of different racial groups;
 - overseeing the implementation and effectiveness of the statutory duty on relevant the Department;
 - keeping the legislation under review;
 - promoting good relations between people of different religious belief and / or political opinion.
4. The Equality Commission, together with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, has been designated under the United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as the independent mechanism tasked with promoting, protecting and monitoring implementation of the Convention in Northern Ireland.

10 ANNEX 2: Inequalities in Education: Facts and Trends 1998-2008

10.1 The Commission's 2010 publication "*Inequalities in Education: Facts and Trends 1998-2008*"⁷⁹ sought to consider patterns of educational attainment in Northern Ireland. Key findings included:

- Community background: Amongst school leavers, there has been considerable improvement in the highest level of educational attainment of both communities, although the gap between highest educational attainment of Protestant and Roman Catholic school leavers has widened. When the different equality groups are compared, community background is the area where fewest differences exist in 2007/08.
- Gender: Some differences are notable when looking at gender, particularly with regards to levels of highest educational attainment and subject choices within Further or Higher Education. While there has been considerable improvement in the highest level of educational attainment of both male and female school leavers, this improvement has been markedly more evident for females than for males.
- Those with / without a declared disability: There are still considerable differences in the highest educational attainment and in participation in Further or Higher Education between those with and without a declared disability. With regards to participation in third-level education, while those with a declared disability remain under-represented at this level, an improvement has occurred in the proportion who are accessing institutes of Higher Education in Northern Ireland.
- Irish Travellers: There has been a noticeable gap between the highest education attainment and destinations of Irish Traveller and non-Traveller school leavers. The majority of Irish Travellers left school with no GCSEs, while the majority of non-Travellers left school with GCSE or higher qualifications.

⁷⁹ ECNI (2010): *Inequalities in Education – Facts and Trends 1998-2008*. Available at http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/InequalitiesinEducation_ResearchReport.pdf

11 ANNEX 3: “Ensuring the Good Relations Work in our Schools Counts” (2010): Relevant recommendations

“i) Greater focus on sharing and collaboration within service delivery - the Department, ESA and other key educational stakeholders to focus on maximising value for money and avoiding duplication of educational provision, by placing a greater focus on existing drivers, policies and practices that encourage greater sharing and collaboration, particularly on a cross-community basis. These include:

- ***Every School a Good School – a Policy for School Improvement*** – with a focus on the best educational interests of all children, whatever the identity. This should particularly include the needs of those most at risk of not reaching their potential, such as the children of new residents and Travellers.
- ***Adding good relations conditions to budgetary allocations criteria***, particularly in relation to capital builds and development plans, so there is a greater focus on cross-community relationship building.
- ***The Review of Public Administration and Community Planning*** – by encouraging greater local and regional clustering of services, particularly with respect to school and community resources, based on whole community need and not upon continued separate community provision. Good relations must be a direct underpinning principle within this planning process. Education should be seen in the broadest sense of the word
- ***a holistic approach*** which takes account of external family and community life as well as the school environment.
- ***The Entitlement Framework*** – encouraging schools to see what actions they can take to collaborate on a cross-community basis to meet the Entitlement Framework requirements.
- ***Area Learning Communities*** – the Department of Education to add a cross-sectoral and cross-community element to the funding criteria for the Collaboration Element, and to support the roll out of ALCs to all areas.”

SOURCE: The Good Relations Forum (2010): Ensuring the Good Relations Work in our Schools Counts – A Strategy to meet our needs for the 21st century.