

SHARED / INTEGRATED EDUCATION
INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM THE NORTH
EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY
BOARD

OCTOBER 2014



INTRODUCTION

The North Eastern Education and Library Board has, since its inception, been at the forefront of educational innovation and development. Among the responsibilities which it discharges have been those in respect of promoting Community Relations and indeed contributing to the reconciliation process both during and after decades of inter-communal conflict in Northern Ireland.

As a learning organisation, it has remained aware of and involved in many of the significant initiatives which have sought to further these societal purposes and indeed have had significant implications and benefits for our schools. Some of these are as follows;

- (i) The Cross Community Contact Scheme (CCCS), initiated by DE in 1987 and the re-launching of the above scheme as the Schools Community Relations Programme (SCRIP) in 1996 and continuing in this form until 2010
- (ii) The DE working group paper on the strategic promotion of EMU, entitled 'Towards a Culture of Tolerance: Education for Diversity', 1999
- (iii) The NEELB Policy and Action Plan on 'Promoting a Culture of Tolerance', 2001
- (iv) The NEELB Action Plan to Promote Cultural Diversity, 2006
- (v) The Dunclug Initiative 2006 – 2010. This initiative provided funding for the two main post primary schools in the locality to extend and deepen their collaborative work and thus provide an initial template for 'Shared Education' between post primary schools.
- (vi) The implementation of a new Northern Ireland Curriculum in 2007, including as it did for the first time, discrete areas of study which pertained to this field, notably Personal Development and Mutual Understanding at Primary age (4-11) and Local and Global Citizenship at Post Primary age (11-16)
- (vii) The development of Integrated Education, and more specifically Controlled Integrated provision in the NEELB area, in conjunction with our educational partners
- (viii) The PIEE (Primary Integrating and Enriching Education) Project, 2009 – 2013 which was operational in the NEELB area. This project represents an established model for Shared Education at primary level which has been validated by external evaluation. As such it has provided much evidence which is relevant to this inquiry

- (ix) The PIRCH (Partnership, Inclusion, Reconciliation, Citizenship and History) Project, 2011 – 2013 which was operational in the NEELB area. This project represents an established model for Shared Education at post-primary level which has been validated by the Education and Training Inspectorate. As such it has provided much evidence which is relevant to this inquiry
- (x) From 2008 to 2010, DE initiated and facilitated a working group which led to the formulation and publication of the DE Policy on ‘Community Relations, Equality and Diversity’ (CRED) in 2011. The NEELB has been at the forefront of the implementation of the policy in schools and youth facilities since that time.

Based on the experience and learning which have accrued from involvement in and the management and delivery of the above, we would therefore propose to submit evidence to the Committee premised upon the bullet points which have been set out in the terms of reference of the request.

SUMMARY

The North Eastern Education and Library Board has a long history of participation in programmes that have involved young people and schools engaging in shared education.

As a consequence of this extensive experience the Board has learned a great deal about the key factors that contribute to the success of shared education programmes. In recent times the Board has been engaged in innovative work involving sharing at a local community level which, based on rigorous evaluation, has proven to have a significant impact on communities.

Experience of this work has emphasised the need for engagement to be carefully planned and set very firmly in the context of the history and culture of the local area. The importance of providing support to assist school partners to address the issues that present in such work has been pivotal in ensuring success.

The Board believes there is a need to bring clarity, through definition, of Shared Education and for such definition to support the local contextualisation of shared working. Evaluation of Board projects has identified the benefits for learners and communities of shared education. The key enablers outlined in the submission have been identified through experience and practice.

CONTENTS

This paper will collate and outline evidence sequentially based on issues 1-4 of the Terms of Reference as set out in the request from the inquiry as follows;

- *Review the nature and definition of Shared Education and Integrated Education across all educational phases – including consideration of the need for a formal statutory definition and an obligation in statute to facilitate and encourage Shared Education;*
- *Identify the key barriers and enablers for Shared Education and Integrated Education;*
 - (a) Barriers and enablers for Shared Education in the Primary context in terms of learning from the PIEE Project
 - (b) Barriers and enablers for Shared Education in the Post Primary context in terms of learning from the PIRCH Project
- *Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of policy interventions and programmes;*
- *Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve sharing and integration – including the effectiveness of the relevant parts of the CRED policy; the need to engage more effectively with parents/carers; and the role of Special Schools*

Terms of Reference issue 1.

- *Review the nature and definition of Shared Education and Integrated Education across all educational phases – including consideration of the need for a formal statutory definition and an obligation in statute to facilitate and encourage Shared Education;*

1. The PIEE Project at primary phase, and the PIRCH Project at post-primary phase, were direct examples of models of ‘Shared Education’ and as such offer the clearest opportunity for providing evidence in relation to the purpose of this paper.

Both of these ‘Shared Education’ projects were heavily influenced by potential benefits which they would bring to stakeholders. Three benefits of Shared Education in particular were identified in the devising of the two projects which may be summarised thus;

- (i) **Educational Benefits;** To provide an enhanced quality of educational provision and experience to the schools and young people involved
- (ii) **Societal benefits;** To improve community relations, reconciliation and community cohesion in light of a divided and troubled past
- (iii) **Economic benefits;** To maximise educational provision and resourcing in light of a diverse and often rural schools estate which has experienced pressures, particularly in times of economic downturn

These benefits as concepts may well serve to focus the direction of Shared Education and to influence the decision making of those who are seeking to establish the efficacy of Shared Education.

- 2 In working toward a definition of Shared Education the PIEE Project upon inception in 2009 termed it to be “**regular and sustained engagement between pupils and teachers from two or more schools of different management types**”. (‘How to Create and Maintain a Primary Partnership’, NEELB, 2013)

3 The Project Vision, Project Aim and Project Objectives for PIEE were as follows;

- **Project Vision:**

To establish sustainable, partnering relationships at primary level to enhance the quality of the educational experience and contribute to community cohesion.

- **Project Aim:**

To provide support to small schools of different management types within a geographical area by developing cross community clusters of primary schools.

- **Project Objectives:**

(i) To enhance the quality of the cross community educational experience;

(ii) To encourage schools from different sectors to participate in a partnership model of Shared Education

(iii) To ensure the sharing of resources and facilities for mutual benefit.

4 The PIRCH Project which was developed somewhat later and implemented from 2011 onward, consistently referred to Shared Education as being **“a collaborative working relationship between two or more schools, whereby each retains its own identity and ethos, but that provision, practice, expertise and resources are managed in a shared and mutually beneficial way”**. (Various related documents, NEELB, 2013)

5 The strategic aims for the PIRCH Project were as follows;

- To enhance and improve reconciliation and community relations in areas where large numbers of the two main traditions are living in close proximity using education as the primary agent of change

- To enhance and improve community cohesion in areas where large numbers of the two main traditions are living in close proximity using education as the primary agent of change

- To improve educational opportunities for children who are socio-economically disadvantaged and who are at risk of marginalisation or exclusion using a cross community and partnering approach to inclusion and education

- To build practical, sustainable partnerships between pairs of Post Primary schools of differing religious traditions whose relationships bring about improved educational experiences and life chances for the young people concerned
- To promote and facilitate shared education on the themes of peace building and reconciliation in the post primary setting

STATUTORY DEFINITION

- 6 Based on experience the Board considers that a formal statutory definition of Shared Education is required. This is fundamental to accountability in respect of resources allocated to achieve the Programme for Government commitments in respect of Shared Education. It is also essential that there is clarification in respect of the distinction between Shared Education and Integrated Education and a definition will contribute to this understanding.

The Board acknowledges the work of the Ministerial Advisory Group and would endorse the definition provided in the Minister's terms of reference:

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 the efficient and effective use of resources, and promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.

The Board's experience has demonstrated that Shared Education can contribute to the aim of improving educational outcomes for learners. A statutory obligation to facilitate and encourage Shared Education would acknowledge this contribution, place value on it and ensure its potential is fully utilized.

In addition our experience has demonstrated how Shared Education contributes to the improvement of community relations. The Board has worked closely with the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education in the development of controlled integrated schools within its area and also recognizes the contribution that Integrated Education has made. However, our evidence has shown that a fully integrated system of schooling is not achievable province wide and there is much to be gained from

supporting and developing collaboration within existing structures.

Terms of Reference Issue 2

- *Identify the key barriers and enablers for Shared Education and Integrated Education;*

(a) Barriers and enablers for Shared Education in the Primary context in terms of learning from the PIEE Project

- 7 Unlike many previous initiatives, which focused on pupils alone, PIEE's intention was to impact at all levels within the school communities, i.e. pupils, staff, parents and governors as part of what may be termed a 'whole school' sharing model.
- 8 Ultimately the PIEE project aimed to influence a move away from competition between small primary schools towards collaboration. In the context of partnerships between schools of different management type this process supported enhanced community cohesion without compromising the existing ethos of any school.
- 9 As a result of the project partnerships collaborated on planning and professional development for staff and provided opportunities for pupils to experience a broader curriculum through shared classes, both within school hours and during after school and summer school activities.
- 10 Building capacity amongst principals to manage sharing within schools and partnerships was recognised as being critical to the successful delivery of PIEE
- 11 Similarly, shared staff development for the wider group of teachers from the partner schools was viewed as crucial to the underpinning of relationships and thus the project as a whole.
- 12 The appointment of a 'Shared Teacher' to each partnership in the PIEE Project was both ground breaking and successful. This demonstrated that a joint appointment could be managed effectively across a number of schools and that there were clear educational and social benefits to having a shared teacher.

- 13 As sharing between partnerships evolve, this growing formality could be represented by a Partnership Agreement. The Partnership Agreement represented schools' individual and collective commitment to long term collaboration. These were prefaced by an agreed vision and outlined the aims and objectives of the partnership. An exemplar Partnership Agreement is included in 'How to Create and Maintain a Primary Partnership – A Handbook for Schools'.
- 14 Many unexpected or external factors can also affect shared arrangements between schools, for example, the appointment of a new principal, staff illness, new education initiatives and the impact of wider education policy. During the course of the project two PREE schools closed and the introduction of area based planning had an impact on schools as issues of viability and sustainability came to the fore.
- 15 The PREE Project Steering Group embraced representatives from the other education sectors, namely CCMS, NICIE and CnaG. This lent credibility to the project and ensured that there was full cross-sectoral support for project activities.
- 16 From the outset the PREE schools were acutely aware of the need to secure parental and governor support for PREE processes and activities.
- 17 PREE's experience shows that those partnerships comprising a controlled and maintained school of similar enrolment size and in close proximity to each other were able to maximise sharing opportunities across all levels of the school.
- 18 Data relating to pupil contact time demonstrated a significant number of hours spent in shared classes across the four years of the project. Without PREE, this sharing, with pupils, side by side in a classroom, would not have taken place. The data for shared hours in Year 4 illustrate that for some partnerships the shared teacher was utilised in a way that lead to very significant increases in shared classes. This was particularly true of partnerships which were closest in terms of geographical distance between schools.
- 19 Planning for pupil 'team building' activities is important before embarking on regular shared classes. Like staff, pupils need time to get to know each other and schools need to consider what is manageable in terms of shared classes. Residential visits often helped to accelerate the relationship-building process. Having built relationships

between pupils it is important to maintain these as any prolonged gaps between visits can have a detrimental effect on fledgling friendships.

- 20 The sharing of resources and facilities was one of the most immediate benefits identified from the PIEE project. Data collected from schools showed clearly that schools quickly took advantage of being able to share physical resources with their partners.
- 21 The PIEE project offered a unique approach to promoting cross community links between schools by encouraging schools to develop whole school connections. Through this process many schools reached the conclusion that interdependency provided an essential platform for enhanced educational practice.
- 22 It should be noted that entry to the PIEE Project for schools was premised upon various criteria, one of which was that each school should have no more than 105 pupils. This was particularly advantageous in promoting 'sharing' between small rural schools for whom that was often the case. Indeed, this model lent itself well to bringing about 'sharing' on a whole school level. This does however raise the issue of how similar arrangements might be brought about for medium or large sized Primary schools for whom whole school 'sharing' may well be more complex and indeed difficult to achieve.
- 23 The collaborative work of the partnerships and the individual schools was both successful and commendable. However it should not be underestimated the role that was played both by the host body of the project, namely the NEELB and indeed the project Steering Group which included members from different employing authorities e.g. NEELB, CCMS, CnaG and NICIE. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that in initiating and sustaining such work, the role of local educational authorities in providing strategic direction, governance and support is of key importance.

(b) Barriers and enablers for Shared Education in the Post Primary context in terms of learning from the PIRCH Project

- 24 Entry into the PIRCH Project for schools was through application which required them to meet a number of criteria. This process required them to apply in pairs. Hence at the

outset, the impetus to be part of this undertaking had to come from the schools themselves. Moreover, the onus was on them to assess the situation in their local community and to identify a 'sharing partner' with whom they were keen to collaborate and work with. This aspect of the process thereby allowed them to work with the issues of local 'politics' and to come forward with their own solutions. This was crucial to ownership, self-determined commitment and future success of the partnership.

- 25 Proximity between partner schools, based on knowledge of previous projects and initiatives, is very likely to have a significant impact on the quality and practicalities of the work. A criterion for entry was therefore that partner schools were no more than six miles apart. As well as relating to issues of practicality in implementing the project e.g. the transportation of children, it was also intended to insure that the children attending the schools were almost certainly living in the same or nearby neighbourhoods. Relationships formed were therefore likely to continue outside of school in the other significant aspects of the lives of both the young people and their parents and families.
- 26 For a project such as this which involved large post-primary schools, with understandable limitations on finance, manpower at school level and support, it was not possible to bring about 'sharing' on a completely whole school level. However, structures and practices were established between partner schools which provided both a working model and a template for future development and expansion toward 'whole school' involvement, should conditions allow for this in the future.
- 27 A key feature of the initiative between each pair of schools were the relationships which were built between staff members at various levels. These were developed firstly between the Principals of the two schools and next, as far as possible, between the two teams of Senior Managements. It was also desirable, as will become evident below, for the two Heads of Pastoral Care to form a close working relationship. Ever broadening the staffing base, Heads of Department from various subjects also worked together intensively and indeed in time brought subject teachers from their Departments into the equation. The result of this process over a near three year period, was that a staffing spine of mutuality was formed between the two schools. By the end of the project, a considerable number of staff from each partner school had worked closely with their counterparts and lasting sustainable relationships had been formed. In short, capacity had

been built for future sustainable 'sharing. Such a process by whatever means may be viewed as fundamental to promoting 'sharing' between Post Primary Schools.

- 28 It perhaps goes without saying that staff development in various aspects of the project was implemented on a joint basis. The majority of the large numbers of teachers involved were new to this kind of work. However, it is therefore even more notable, that there were few problems or issues in facilitating teachers to become operational in both the practical and educational aspects of the project. This facilitation and staff development was provided by the NEELB. A key lesson from this process was therefore that it need not be onerous or overly time consuming to initiate and develop teachers in this area if the support and facilitation is of sufficient quality and focus.
- 29 A main feature of the project activities between partner schools were curriculum / subject based programmes. This typically involved a class of children from each of two partner schools using an area of the curriculum from their subject studies which they then studied together using a variety of learning contexts. Some of these were classroom based while others were workshops or visits to educational locations. Fifty four such projects were implemented during the three years of the overall initiative. The PIRCH Project compelled schools to use History and Citizenship as the two main subject areas, promoting as they did, the best opportunities for young people to deepen their understanding of issues in relation to the past, culture, identity, conflict and reconciliation. However it also allowed schools to choose their own subject areas for these purposes. Among these were Drama, Music, Art and Physical Education. This 'shared' use of the curriculum to promote reconciliation proved to be a major success. Moreover it is in keeping with a key recommendation of DE's CRED Policy which cites the curriculum as being a major driver in educating children about these issues. The nature, quality and variety of the curriculum based projects were favourably commented upon by ETI as part of their overall inspection of the project.
- 30 While the implementation of the projects outlined above was highly successful, it should be noted that this was possible in certain subject areas due to the external funding which the project was receiving through the International Fund for Ireland. Such programmes have a cost implication which would not be inconsiderable. Similarly this meant that only certain subject areas were able to be utilised for these purposes. While not all

subject areas between two post primary schools would lend themselves to such a shared approach, linking those all of those which would benefit would be a major undertaking.

31 For each of the 12 Post Primary schools involved in the PIRCH Project, funding allowed the appointment of an 'Inclusion Teacher' for two school years. This teacher fulfilled a variety of roles, both pastoral and academic. In the first instance, in collaboration with senior staff, they served to promote Inclusion in the sense of insuring that potentially marginalised children or those facing specific challenges, were supported significantly to be in school and fully engaged in meaningful academic study. However they also worked intensively with their counterpart in their partner school to make sure that much of the work was undertaken on a shared basis. Often working with support agencies and community groups, they sought to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable children in the community. Bringing those children together, often to look at issues of personal and social significance, e.g. drugs education or community safety also formed a key part of the shared relationship and reconciliation process. The Inclusion Teachers also played a pivotal role in co-ordinating shared activities between the partner schools, further augmenting community cohesion. Such appointments were radical in the sense that they moved away from the traditional post-primary appointment process of appointing on the basis of subject specialism. Again this 'Inclusion' work was favourably commented upon by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

32 In concluding evidence in relation to Shared Education which has accrued from the PIRCH Project, it is timely to again reinforce the significance of the role played by the local education authority, in this case the NEELB, in driving, co-ordinating and supporting the advances made by the schools. Curriculum and management support was crucial in providing direction into what is almost always new territory for schools who are willing to make such a commitment.

33 **SUMMARY OF KEY ENABLERS**

- Involvement of all key stakeholders – pupils, parents, staff and Governors
- A culture of openness and collaboration
- Capacity building
- Building relationships

- Understanding and taking account of the community context
- Trust, equality, mutual understanding and shared responsibility
- Effective planning
- Effective facilitation and support
- The provision of time and funding for substitute cover to enable teachers to plan together
- Funding to support shared education development
- Effective use of technology
- A focus on enhancing the education experience

Terms of Reference Issue 3

- *Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of policy interventions and programmes;*

34 The NEELB would not wish to offer specific evidence in terms of this issue, having not had direct experience of ethos and practicalities in this regard from other jurisdictions. However it would wish to suggest that comparable evidence is sought from experts on jurisdictions which could provide valuable relevant evidence to the local context, namely;

- (i) Scotland, where issues of religious division and sectarianism have impacted upon the education system and which has a similar socio-economic demographic to our own exists
- (ii) Macedonia, with whom a number of comparison studies have been made and indeed is a place where a healthy accommodation in education seems to have been approached while working within the context of a divided society

Terms of Reference Issue 4

- *Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve sharing and integration – including the effectiveness of the relevant parts of the CRED policy; the need to engage more effectively with parents/carers; and the role of Special Schools*

- 35 Terminology such as Community Relations Education, Integrated Education and Shared Education do not enjoy a great level of understanding by the public in general. Consideration may well therefore be given as to how a better level of understanding might be brought about, particularly in relation to parents, carers and others with a direct interest or involvement in school aged education.
- 36 However, even within the structures of the formal educational community itself, the third of these concepts, ‘Shared Education’ has a low level of appreciation. It is both a relatively new concept and one in which formal definitions and structures have yet to be established. Above has been evidence accrued from projects whereby a small number of schools were involved in Shared Education initiatives. However, apart from schools such as these, it would seem that a considerable job of education and familiarisation needs to be undertaken in order for the greater number of schools to gain a basic awareness of the nature of Shared Education and the potentialities it may hold for them. In-service training and development for Governors, Principals, Senior Managers and Teachers at the various levels would therefore be required.
- 37 Assuming that understanding of Shared Education did increase to a level whereby schools were coming forward (preferably by self-selecting) and an established need had therefore arisen, the following would then need to be in place to allow for meaningful implementation;

- (i) A clear definition of Shared Education and indeed accompanying categories and parameters of clarification as to what does and does not meet the definition
- (ii) Structures and staffing within the statutory educational bodies which would advise, co-ordinate, support and part manage at least the initial phases of schools wishing to enter in to Shared Education arrangements.
- (iii) Significant resourcing of at least the initial phases of transforming the culture of local education to one of Shared Education. (This refers to educational processes and staffing and does not refer to the cost of capital builds or other ‘bricks and mortar’ elements of progression). As a result, funding would need to be available to schools through the statutory bodies to allow for uptake and engagement.

38 The current DE Policy on CRED (2011) alludes to much of the philosophy and many of the principles and concepts of Shared Education. It is worth considering as to whether any substantive developments in relation to Shared Education can be accommodated within this existing policy or indeed a new and separate policy for Shared Education is necessitated in itself.

39 The CRED Policy advocates use of the curriculum as a key vehicle in achieving reconciliation and education in relation to other concepts such as Equality and Diversity. This has shown to be appropriate and successful in both the PIEE and PIRCH projects outlined above. In this respect, use of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding at Primary age was particularly relevant and more so in the context of ‘shared classes’. At Post Primary age, the subject areas of History and Citizenship offer an excellent opportunity to allow students to study issues relating to a contentious past and indeed ways of dealing with an ever evolving present, with ‘shared classes’ again having the greatest potential for impact. Other subject areas at both Primary and Post Primary can also contribute significantly in this respect.

However, a much more widespread understanding of the ethos and practicalities of how this might be done needs to be achieved if it is to become common practice both in individual schools and in the context of Shared Education. Aware as ever of resource limitations, it is nonetheless probable that a major training process would be required to initiate teachers into the philosophy and practicalities of shared curriculum delivery and shared classes

The out workings of this suggestion are alluded to in (34) (ii) above.

- 40 Shared classes, while high on the scale of positive outcomes of Shared Education, obviously require a degree of organisation. This entails a workload for those concerned, most specifically at Post Primary where elements of shared timetabling have been in evidence. Practicalities are also a significant issue. Where schools are in extremely close proximity, pupils can move easily from campus to campus. Such a situation is often where we find Shared Education working at its best. However where schools are not in close proximity, even when only one or two miles apart, a transportation cost will be involved from a source which is yet to be established. Some of the proposals for resourcing / funding in this paper could be structured to allow for this ongoing expense.
- 41 The CRED Policy advocates meaningful interaction between different groups of children in achieving reconciliation and education in relation to other concepts such as Equality and Diversity. This has been recognised over time in recent projects such as PIEE and PIRCH as well as through statutory funding streams such as the Schools Community Relations Programme and the CRED Enhancement Scheme. While we are not at the stage of fine detail on Shared Education practice, programmes such as this would almost certainly play a role in future arrangements.

The resourcing of such 'meaningful interactions' though would not be insignificant. It may be suggested that such resourcing should be available to all of those who wish to use it as one of the elements of establishing and continuing Shared Education arrangements. As such it may require a considerable level of funding which encourages those who may wish to undertake such a process and thus could assume large scale proportions.

Again the out workings of this suggestion may be entailed in (34), (ii) and (iii) above.

- 42 Special Schools provide a unique form of educational provision for our children. Involvement by many of them in initiatives such as the Schools Community Relations Programme (1996-2010) show that they have much to offer in terms of peer education and that their participation in such schemes need not be hindered by philosophical or practical barriers. There is therefore every reason to hold to the conviction that Special Schools are just as well placed to be part of any future Shared Education arrangements as any other type of school. This may serve as a guiding principle when undertaking strategic consideration of possible developments.
- 43 Some elements of ‘sharing’, while not overtly aimed at reconciliation, have emerged over the years, arising out of a variety of educational and practical necessities. One example of this has been the work undertaken in relation to the Entitlement Framework and the Area Learning Communities. One proposal therefore which may be useful is that an audit of current ‘sharing’ could be undertaken at local level so that existing good practice can be recognised and built upon.
- 44 Whatever decisions are made as to how this issue is approached, experience and learning from initiatives outlined above would suggest that any path of development will require a long term commitment. In the sense that any strategic objectives would undertake to change the whole culture of an educational system toward collaboration and interdependency rather than separateness, this may indeed necessitate support, resourcing and external part-management for the best part of a generation.