



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Inquiry into the Education and Training
Inspectorate and School Improvement
Process: GTCNI Briefing

23 October 2013

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Education

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement
Process: GTCNI Briefing

23 October 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
Mr Chris Hazzard
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Robin Newton
Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Ms Sharon Beattie	General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
Mr Colm Davis	General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
Mr Gerry Devlin	General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
Dr Carmel Gallagher	General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

The Chairperson: I welcome Dr Carmel Gallagher, the registrar general of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI); Colm Davis, the principal of Tor Bank School; Sharon Beattie, the principal of Dromore Nursery School; and Mr Gerry Devlin. Thank you, Carmel, for the extremely useful report that was provided to us, which is a response to the evidence. It is always good for members of the Education Committee, particularly the Chair, to have pictures instead of words. Your presentation will help us to understand these things better. Please make your comments, after which members will ask questions. I apologise for the fact that some members are away on other business, which means that our numbers are slightly depleted, but that in no way lessens the importance of the issue that you are presenting to us.

Dr Carmel Gallagher (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland): Thank you very much, Chairman. You have introduced my colleagues, but I want to say that I am very grateful to the members of my council: Sharon Beattie, who is a nursery principal from Dromore; and Colm, who is the principal of Tor Bank School, which is a special needs school. We had hoped to be joined by a primary and a post-primary representative, but they are too busy doing the real work back at school. Gerry, however, has very kindly come along to support us.

I am the registrar, obviously. There is a leaflet in your packs that outlines the five important things that we do and our message to schools. We are involved with registration, and we hope that, as we become an independent body in a few months or a year, we will be involved in regulation. We do research, and we want to be heavily involved in professional development. In particular, we want to be the voice of the profession on professional issues.

I will talk about my own background. I have been with the council for a just year. I was a history teacher during probably the worst years of the Troubles and was the author of the first multi-perspective history book on Northern Ireland and its neighbours since 1920. So, I know a lot about this Building. My background is in curriculum development; I led the development of the revised Northern Ireland curriculum, which I hope you are familiar with. I would have liked to have led on the assessment front; unfortunately, I was not able to do so, but I still hope that we can help you influence that agenda. Most importantly, my PhD is in the development of policy on curriculum and assessment back from Mrs Thatcher's time right up to the present day. I am passionate about the potential of the Northern Ireland education system to be a great system. We are just the right size and have really talented teachers, and if we cannot do it here, I do not think that we can do it anywhere. We are all here today to give that message.

I thank the Committee for initiating the inquiry. We think that it is a hugely important undertaking, and that is why we spent so much time on our submission, which is a 50-page literature review. We do not expect you to read it all, although we hope that Peter and the research team have read it. We provided you with a two-page summary and a little summary that we sent out last week to schools. It is a complex issue, which is why, as Mervyn said, I produced a few pictures and a few slides. I am mainly a visual learner and think that pictures and diagrams help. I promised Peter that we would have only five, but that was a wee bit of a lie, and we have slightly more at 19. We will skip through some of them very quickly. We hope to keep you for about only 15 or 20 minutes.

Before I begin, I want to register the fact that this submission is endorsed by the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council, and many of my union colleagues are sitting behind me. I am very grateful that they are here, and they will give you a separate presentation shortly. It is also endorsed by the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) in Northern Ireland — in other words, all the universities and the teacher training colleges — and it is also now endorsed by virtually every school in Northern Ireland. Over the past three days, we conducted a survey into the perceptions of inspection and school improvement. During that time, we received 1,383 responses and counting, which is phenomenal. We asked for only one per school, so I suggest that we have the voice of everyone. In a sense, we hope that we are speaking today on behalf of the whole profession. The Committee has touched a raw nerve, and we hope that your deliberations will help to soothe some of those frayed nerves in the future.

I will take you to slide 2 of my presentation, which is a nice infected slide with a germ as the picture. The term GERM, or Global Educational Reform Movement, was coined by Pasi Sahlberg, who was the last chief inspector of Finland and is now an internationally renowned thinker and adviser. In fact, we are delighted to say that he is heading up the current Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) review of teacher education. We hope to have him as a GTCNI speaker fairly soon, and we imagine that the Committee would also like to hear him speak. In his view, coming from the country that leads the international league tables, GERM has spawned a global virus of measurement, so much so that international assessments are treated as a measure of the health of education systems through things such as the progress in international reading literacy study (PIRLS) and the trends in international mathematics and science study (TIMSS). We are very healthy in that sense, though those are quite traditional assessments. The one that we really want to be best at is the programme for international student assessment (PISA), which is the more 21st-century thinking assessment done by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Frighteningly, success in those assessments is not so much about what happens in schools as it is about the equity in the school system and how fairly the system provides for all young people.

I will move to slide 3 and use a football analogy to try to get some of the points across. The slide presents you with a world cup of 20 countries. I could provide you with PIRLS, TIMSS or PISA slides, but they would all just relate to that one assessment. The source of this slide is McKinsey and Company for 2010, and it takes into account the World Bank educational statistics, International Monetary Fund (IMF) figures, UNESCO figures as well as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS. You can see how those 20 countries are doing. The United States has the highest investment in education per head but has relatively low performance, whereas heading up the league table is Finland, which is the third highest in investment, followed by Ontario, Hong Kong, Germany etc. Interestingly, one place that is not on the slide, because this is a 2010 slide, is Shanghai in China, which has, I believe, overtaken or is alongside Finland. The interesting thing is that Shanghai is just one city in China, as is Hong Kong. We have to be careful, because these league tables are not gospel or rocket science; in fact, they are open to a whole lot of questions. Indeed, people might have even questioned whether the OECD should have allowed Shanghai figures to be published as a representation, and there are suggestions that there has been a lot of practising for exams in Shanghai. In Wales, which did not do terribly well the last time round, there are suggestions that there has been a lot of practising for PISA.

Hugh Morrison — you might know him from Queen's University — has challenged the whole validity of all those international figures. However, the message is that often they are not interpreted properly. For example, Michael Gove keeps on talking about England slipping down the league tables when, in fact, its performance has not changed; it is just that more countries have come in. So, it might be number 26, but that is because we have small places such as Liechtenstein and goodness knows where else coming in that are performing slightly better. The other thing to remember is that these are not league tables either; they are not ordered by rank. For example, in 2002, we came fourth in PISA, but when I discussed it with Professor Tony Gallagher at Queen's, he said that we were between fourth and fourteenth, because there was no statistical difference in the measures. So, the message is to take everything that is measured with a large pinch of salt.

Turning now to the international league tables on what is known as the standard bell curve where you always get the outliers at the front and those who are dragging behind at the back, you will see that Finland and Shanghai are in the premier league. Ontario heads up division 1, but note the places that are in division 2 — Japan and Germany, which are leading industrial nations. I suggest that we are in fairly good company; we do not have anything major to worry about. There is the whole business about the fact that we are not top of the world. We would need a massive investment to get to Finland's position, along with a whole change in ethos and attitude. So, we must remember that the measures are constructs. They are all approximations, and they need to be treated with a huge amount of caution.

Slide 5 details what I call the Northern Ireland primary and post-primary league. This information comes from the chief inspector's report for 2010-12. You will see that the primary sector is in the premier league and that 78% to 82% of primary schools, by our chief inspector's reckoning, are doing very well. That is the good news story.

If you look at the post-primary sector, you will see that 68%-plus are doing fairly well. If we look at the negative side — the red lines — we see, reported by the Department of Education (DE), a growth in special educational needs, and that 20% to 25% of children will, at some stage in their education, have a special need. Contrast that, gentlemen, with the idea that we have to get 100% of children performing well.

The chief inspector's reckoning is that 18% of the primary schools inspected are not doing well, which is potentially quite a small number, and 32% of post-primary schools. I am not saying that we should congratulate ourselves for doing very well, but we need to take the whole thing in the perspective of the whole system. Although it may be said that schools need to be pressurised to improve, I suggest that we are hardly in a crisis. We have to acknowledge that we have a fourth division problem, down there at the bottom, which tends to involve controlled secondary schools with pupils from highly deprived areas.

I will now get to the uncomfortable message, which is on the next slide in my presentation, that talks about player power, children power and whether they can get themselves out of the relegation zone. We have to realise that the largest differential in performance lies outside the school field. It is basically down to family and socio-economic community background, particularly parenting and, most of all, the educational qualifications of parents as role models. That affects children's language, their ability to learn at school and the development of all their aspirations. Add to that the peer effect, which is what we call the "significant others", in children's lives — the young ones who they run around with, so to speak. My mother used to say, "Show me your friends and I'll tell you who you are". The message here is that, if they are separated from better-off peer influences at the age of 11, you are relegating those children to low aspirations. They end up, as the phrase goes, being influenced by the lowest common denominator.

As we put pressure on our schools, the uncomfortable and shocking fact is that, statistically, the school effect is between only 5% and 18%. So, we have all this massive pressure when, in fact, the influence is really in the early years through parenting and in neighbourhoods. However, we do not want to be totally depressed by that because the good teacher effect, or, I should say the great teacher and the great school effect, can be up to 50%. However, it is all about the mix in the school, which is an uncomfortable message for some parties.

Slide 6 represents what I call the selection zone — you know what selection means in this society — or the transfer window or the fixed transfer window at age 11. The slide shows the problem to be in the central zone — the iris of pupil, that is, the pupil, their parents and peers. That is the issue that we need to try to fix. Moving outwards, the white zone is the system and all its interconnected components. The message here is that these systems do not stand alone. In other words, curriculum

and thinking skills within the curriculum, assessment, examination, Programme for Government targets and inspection are interconnected and they all affect each other. So, tinker with one and you affect the others.

I would say — would I not? — that we had great curriculum reform, that is, a great revised curriculum that is hugely successful and popular with our schools. At its centre, we put 21st-century thinking skills and personal capabilities, and we then went and distorted it all by narrow assessment, a focus on targets and forgetting the things that we wanted to promote. We have an examination system that needs to move into 21st-century mode, and it is all driven by narrow league tables, inspection and government targets that are driven by the Assembly and DE. What I am saying is that the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is a symptom of a larger global problem.

Slide 8 is about what we are trying to do about the problem. People have to try to get their head around the fact that we have a promotion/relegation zone there in the middle. No matter what you do to the system, the bell curve always stays. There will always be somebody doing better and somebody doing worse. You cannot cut off the bell curve; it will always be there.

So, what do we do to improve the bell curve? Right now, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) initiative is working — represented at the middle line, which I call the promotion/relegation zone — at trying to push children at level 3 over that line and into level 4, or push children who are at level D in school at GCSE into level C. However, people have not grasped that pushing against that effort is a range of inhibitors that are to do with comparability criteria in exams; the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) upholding standards; Mr Gove's demands that exams are made harder; and moderation systems, which are there to ensure that children do not get a level 5. So, basically, you can push all you like, but there is a reverse push that says that those standards cannot improve.

I sit on the advisory group for the OFMDFM initiative. On a number of occasions, I asked whether the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) could make a statement to say that the exam standards will rise in line with these efforts. However, the exam standards have to be kept in line with the English exam standards etc. We do not realise that, often, what we are trying to do is to game the system; when, if you look at the yellow part of the diagram, you can see that the fourth division is being neglected. Those are the children who are not going to make it over the line. They are the children who need all the help, and we say that those children need that help from their very earliest years. Some would say that it starts in the womb.

I will outline Goodhart's law. Goodhart was a former Governor of the Bank of England, so I hope that you will believe him when he says:

"If you make the target the object of accountability people will find ways to meet the target ... The clearer you are about what you want, the more you are likely to get it, the less likely it is to mean anything."

It is no guarantee of improvement. In other words, we can game the numbers, but we are not necessarily changing the system.

I will move on to the issue at hand, which is ETI and the tensions between inspection for improvement — the model of ETI — and inspection for accountability. The issue here is that it is very difficult to square that circle. If you want to improve, you need to be a little more gentle regarding accountability. A very good report has just been published by Andy Hargreaves and Boston College, which looks at the effective use of data. It says is that it all depends on the nature and scope of the data considered. Here, we have no baseline data; our data is too narrow. We need much broader data, which the Committee has called for in its report. The culture of how that data is used also matters. Here, it is used to make judgements and hold people to account. The fairness of the indicators used to compare institutions or schools is also a factor. It is not an even playing field, so it is not fair. The way that the data is collected, interpreted and acted on is another factor. Schools have been telling you, particularly regarding assessment, that it has become very bureaucratic and burdensome. Most important of all are the consequences attached to performance. As you will see in the little leaflet that I gave you, we did a survey on that. Basically, if you are going to hold schools to account on the basis of their levels, schools will be in a position of feeling that they might, could or should manipulate those levels. Many schools do not do that, but the issue is that we create distrust. The shocking figure from that assessment survey was that less than 1% of schools believe that the levels are reliable. You cannot put in a moderation system that is going to make that any better; you would be moderating from now to kingdom come. So the tension can be resolved only when there is a consensus about the

accurate, meaningful, fair, broad and balanced use of data and the collaborative use of data for improvement. Improvement is not only the responsibility of schools but the responsibility of everyone, including DE and the Assembly, which provide the resources.

It is little wonder that we got 1,383 responses and counting to our survey. In fact, the number was going up so fast that I thought that there was a glitch in the system, and I had to contact the researcher to ask whether the figure was not simply multiplying itself. The responses are still coming in online. We know that teachers are responding to the survey at 2.00 am, 3.00 am and 6.00 am because the times show up. That is our hard-working profession.

I will bring you a full summary of the survey in due course. Yesterday, I went through about 200 comments. The survey was not leading, as far as we could do that, and we did not ask schools how they had come out of their inspection surveys. We did not want that to influence what they were writing. We had 15 or 20 positive comments about inspection, and it was clear that those schools had done outstandingly well. However, the vast majority of responses expressed concerns about the attitude of the inspectors or their experience; the lack of an opportunity to challenge the inspectors; the fact that they felt that the inspection was contrived; there was inconsistency in the judgements; the inspection was data-driven; there was insufficient feedback and follow-up support; and there was a general lack of transparency and value added.

I will round off with our recommendations on the terms of reference. When we submitted the report to you, we said that there were only perceptions in the system about inspection. We now have the evidence to say that, according to the schools, inspection appears to be risk-based and data-driven. There is a fear that there is a deficit model. I felt enraged when I read the new proposals for formal intervention, which state that if a school remains "satisfactory" and does not improve to "good", it will virtually be relegated to "unsatisfactory".

We want to point out the deficit language of "unsatisfactory". Indeed, I would almost call it the deficit language of Every School a Good School. What school would not want to be a good school? We want every school to be a great school. In the 21st century, Count, Read: Succeed is not really hugely aspirational when we see Scotland talking about its Curriculum for Excellence and 21st-century confidence. There is an image of a surfer on slide 10 because, at the heart of the curriculum, we put the idea that our young learners would be surfing the 21st-century knowledge era, managing information, problem solving and decision-making, being creative, managing themselves and working with others. Those skills are at the heart of our curriculum, and they are the skills that the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and Invest NI want. The First Minister and deputy First Minister are bringing companies to Northern Ireland to get those skills. Those are the skills that kids want to get on with. Last Friday, I spent the evening with 150 teachers at TeachMeet, which is a self-generated in-service course that is all about young people learning programming language and ICT boot camps. There is great energy among our teachers if they could just get on with it.

The terms of reference ask about the approach to value added: basically, it is absent. We do not have proper baseline measures. I spoke to representatives from one school where its free school meal figures have gone down from 42% to 36% simply because parents were not filling in the forms. The school says that, if it were judged properly, its free school meals potential is nearer to 60%. Parents are not filling in the forms because they have to do so every year, and they have to go to a social security office and so on, and kids are saying that they do not eat the meals anyway. It is not a reliable figure, nor is using grades A to C at GCSE a fair measure for all schools when some schools are taking in children scoring 132 in an intelligence quotient, and other schools are taking in children with a score of 68. If you were to look at the census figures, you are talking about levels of deprivation with a difference of from one to 871.

We also worry about how value added is or is not calculated and the effect sizes of one or two children distorting the figures. I was on a board of governors, and one or two children performing at a lower level skewed the entire performance level of the school.

The third term of reference asks about gaps in the system. We use the analogy of the Underground as a joined-up system. We say that we need to "mind the gap" because there is a huge gap in early diagnosis and parenting; insufficient support for early years; and insufficient link-up between curriculum, assessment, thinking skills — you will notice that that is my mantra — examinations, inspection and funding. We are making a plea for a change management strategy. We understand that things have to change and that the system is in transition, but we want some joined-up thinking and a proper school support strategy. Do we have to wait for the Education and Skills Authority (ESA), or can we consult on it now and get into gear, whether or not ESA happens? Most of all, we

want a teacher development strategy because the view is that a system is only as strong as its teachers.

The fourth term of reference asks for alternative approaches, and I have given you a balance analogy between what seemed to be a right-wing punitive approach by Ofsted — I may be unfairly placing ETI along that spectrum, but some commentary from schools is that they feel that inspection is done to them and not with them — and, on the other side of the balance, we have Ireland, Scotland, which is seen as a much more supportive system, and Finland, where, as you know, they do not have an inspection system at all.

Finland may be a bridge too far for you, Danny, in particular. Last week, I heard you say that you very much supported inspection, and we understand that there has to be accountability, although some systems can have self-evaluation agencies. If we are to retain inspection, we want inspection alongside support, very much as is the case in Scotland. The ETI is partly aligned with the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS). Can it be fully aligned with CASS and the regional training unit (RTU) for leadership, and with C2k, in a Learning Scotland scenario, either as part of or separate from ESA? The danger is that if ESA is delayed much longer, we will be sitting with nothing, so something could be done in the meantime.

I will now turn to our recommendations. I will not go through them all, because you have our submission and our summary. We are looking for a supportive model and a much more streamlined process with supportive language. We want to take away the language of inadequacy and dissatisfaction and move towards the language of being "very confident", "confident" or "lacking in confidence", which is used in Scotland, because that is all about schools driving themselves forward. We think that we could have a much better baselining system if we were to use the information that we have from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), the census and geographical information systems to put schools into a decile system, which is used in New Zealand.

On monitoring, we think that you can get all the information you need by doing a light sampling process, using international data, but we will bring positive proposals to you on broader assessment measures.

The issues of governance, accountability and transparency go back to the question of cause and effect, and the symptoms. The cause is the global education reform movement, which tells politicians that you must measure everything that moves, but the targets are far too narrow. Those targets are then monitored by the Northern Ireland Audit Office, which beats up you, the schools and everybody else for not meeting them, and we are not sure whether they mean anything. We therefore want better judgements all round, based on broader targets.

On policymaking, I have included a little diagram, which, I have to say, is not mine; it was designed by Mortimer in 1999. He states that policymakers have very short-term memories and policy drives because they have been elected, but researchers and practitioners are there to give you all the information that the system needs. We need joined-up policy thinking. I do not see the same interference in medicine. You are not telling doctors how to manage their patients. Our message as professionals is this: trust us and let us get on with the job that we know how to do.

We need a framework for teacher professional development. I have produced a diagram on our linking up with the GTCNI competences. If you want us to be regulators, we have to regulate on the basis of competence, and those competences have to be built into school development planning, school self-evaluation and school inspection. We need a core programme of development for all teachers, and we need — as you can see from the little passports in slide 17 — a range of modular support systems that teachers can dip into to develop themselves throughout their career. We are hoping that we — a bit like the medical service — will have a professional development portfolio.

Our appeal is that we move from a deficit model that is data-driven, with everything directed and monitored to within an inch of its life, that focuses on old literacies, narrow targets, assessment for accountability and moderation for policing, and that breeds systemic distrust and compliance without engagement, to a growth model that is data-informed, professionally trusted and focuses on the new literacies. Eighty per cent of our children are fully literate, so they need to be stimulated and engaged by 21st-century thinking. We want broader measures and moderation for capacity building, not policing. We want systemic empowerment, and we want to breed 21st-century autonomous learners.

In conclusion, we think that you are at the apex of the tipping point. We thank you for instituting this inquiry. We hope that you can influence a major shift in our education culture, which we think is

moving in the wrong direction. We want joined-up policies, supportive 21st-century learning, broader measures, value added and a big investment in teachers as professionals so that you can trust us to get on with the job.

The Chairperson: Carmel, that is the shortest 15 minutes that I have ever heard, but it was very valuable. I am sure that there are many people who wish that I was pushed over the tipping point rather than being at its apex. You spoke positively about the Committee.

There is a lot in your submission, and it covers various strands and issues. We will try to focus on the inspectorate, because we could go off on other discussions about other things, and I do not think that that would be healthy or profitable. Is there an issue when the GTC says that schools can have only a small impact on the variation in pupil attainment? How do you marry that with the good outcomes obtained in our schools as a result of the process and the position that our schools are currently in? How do you marry those two things? Anywhere in the world, people want to be sure that they are getting value and worth. Whether you are in Singapore, Shanghai or Stranocum, parents want to know whether outcomes will be beneficial for pupils. Is there not a contradiction in what you say about the levels of attainment that can be achieved?

Dr Gallagher: I know that it is counter-intuitive. I think that the view is that, if the influence of the lowest common denominator is allowed to thrive, the impact is only around 20%. We believe that the challenge that great schools can offer in certain neighbourhoods can be as much as 50% and more. Where does that challenge function come from? The suggestion is that inspection is driving improvement, but there has yet to be a research study that proves that. Education is changing all the time, and people are getting better at analysing what needs to be done. Schools are becoming more energetic and focused on what they need to do. There is a lot of drive and commitment in the system. Your question is: how can you be sure as politicians? Do you need an inspection service that tells you that? I can understand why you would think that. Alternatively, have we got to the stage now at which you can have a self-evaluation culture that is being measured by schools themselves and reported to a local authority whereby you have a supportive insight into schools?

In the survey results, there is no doubt that schools — some more than others — think that inspection helps them to focus on certain issues. However, they feel that they would prefer a different system that acknowledged that they were doing their best and identified some of the issues that inspectors thought that the school could valuably focus on. Inspectors could then come back in six, 12 or 18 months to see how a school was tackling that, as opposed to a situation in which the problem is identified and the school is told, "Fix it now — or else". Among the shocking things you see from the comments from schools is the stress and tension that there is; the feeling that they are performing in an abnormal way; and the fact that, sometimes, teacher is set against teacher, because one person is dragging the others down. We are not questioning the accountability or the need to look into schools; we simply question the mode of doing it.

I suppose the message is a bit like parenting. If you bring up a child and terrorise and criticise them for every wrong move and threaten sanctions if they do not adhere to a regime within a specific period, you know what you produce: distrust, disempowerment, fear and, eventually, resentment. However, if you have a system that says, "We know you are trying to do your best. There are problems, and we know what they are, but we are here to help you to analyse them and to support you", you empower someone to help themselves.

The Chairperson: Carmel, you also need some regulation. I do not accept that analogy. I am not going to get into parenting skills, because my children would probably think that I am the last person who should give advice on that, but if they are not disciplined —

Dr Gallagher: You need both.

The Chairperson: A minister of mine used to say that, if a child does not know that hand in love, you should not use it in discipline. That is a rule that I have always tried to apply.

Everyone holds Finland up as a great example of how it is done. They have no inspection. They dispensed with the inspectorate. However, what confidence have parents that what they get is what it says on the tin? Self-evaluation is good, provided that it is within a parameter that can be assessed and independently verified. Schools were raising concerns about the computer-based assessments, because the books could be fiddled. You could make things look better than what they were if you were in the right place at the right time. That is not what we want to get to either.

Everyone says that we should use the Scottish model; however, when we were in Scotland we picked up that not all teachers thought that the inspectorate was a wonderful thing. There were concerns there too, even though it was seen to be more independent than our regime. How do you get a combination of both rather than it being one or the other? Is that what you are saying is the model that would be useful for our own system?

Dr Gallagher: Going back to the parenting analogy, you set expectations and you have values to which you expect people to live up. Any business self-evaluates; it knows where its problems are, and it fixes them. You do want an element of trust. The difference in Finland is that they trust their teachers and their schools. I can understand the conundrum. However, I will reflect on my experience of inspection, even though it gives my age away. I had the highest regard for inspectors who inspected me when I was a teacher. People will remember them: John Birch and Vivian McIver. They were the top two history inspectors. I had a healthy fear and respect for them. Equally, they came in with supportive, constructive suggestions, and they led our in-service training. One of the things that our teachers are saying is that, because inspectors see so much good practice, they particularly value the district inspector. A district inspector can behave in a supportive and analytical way as a critical friend; they do not morph into something else when they come in as part of an inspection team. It does not have to be either carrot or stick; there can be both.

The Chairperson: Carmel, how is different now than it was when you were inspecting? What is the fundamental difference between the way the inspection took place in your time? I take the point about the district inspectors, who always seem to have a good rapport with schools. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) did a customer review of ETI. We quizzed and queried the reason why there were only seven appeals in recent years and why none was upheld. What is different now than a few years ago?

Dr Gallagher: I asked schools about that survey, and they said, "We have been through an inspection process. We are exhausted and stressed out, and we suddenly get this survey. Our name is on it even though it is anonymous, and we do not believe it is anonymous." I do believe that it is anonymous, but schools feel that they just want to get it over with and do not want anybody to come back at them.

I was looking at our survey yesterday. It is relatively positive, only when you get down to the detail. Schools are compliant; they understand and will go along with it. The difference is that you come in with a supportive attitude, and I believe that many of the inspectors have that, but it should not be so narrowly data-driven. We will have to bottom that out, and, in our survey we will try to find out whether there is a socio-economic fairness in inspections. Is the 'Irish News' right in saying that you are four times more likely to get a poor inspection because of your socio-economic background? It is all about the judgement of value added. You are not on a level playing field. You might be doing a great job up the Shankill Road, where all the principals are out on stress, and dedicating your whole life to it, but you are up against that 80% community lack of aspiration and are being held to account for something that you cannot fully influence. The first law of accountability is to be held to account for that which you can control. Some schools cannot control that, and beating them up will not help. We want a more supportive and constructive approach.

For example, everything is not rosy in Scotland, but the inspectors come in, and if they think that things are going relatively well, they are only there one or two days and they clear off and send in their support team. If they think that there is a problem, they stay, bottom out the problem, give detailed feedback on it and then bring in the support team. That is supposed to happen in our system, but our support team is being steadily diminished. The feedback in the commentary section of our survey showed that schools feel that they are not getting enough feedback to tell them what to do next. There is a great deal of respect in our schools for inspectors, as they know their job and do it well. If they have those insights, they should share them more fully.

Ms Sharon Beattie (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland): As a practitioner who is a principal and has taken her school through inspection twice, I have respect and had a very positive inspection. However, competition between schools has crept into our system without clear indicators on how you get over the bar. You get a "good", but nobody tells you how to get to "outstanding". Principals have lost faith in it. We have some outstanding practice, and that is overlooked in Northern Ireland. Why are we not using the outstanding practitioners as a model for practitioners who are having difficulties? I totally support Carmel: some schools with the baseline that will never achieve what my school achieves because of the area I sit in. There has to be a system that acknowledges

that and takes it into account rather than just beats up hard-working principals because they cannot get their children over the bar.

I have met you before, and you know that I am passionate about early years. That is where we can make a lot of change, and, at its core, the Learning to Learn policy will provide that. However, if we are not provided with the systems, and if we think that someone is going to come and beat us with a big stick because we are trying to target that school, we know that we will not get the same success. That does not stop us as good practitioners from working with that child and trying our best with that family, but it reflects in league tables because we cannot move that child. We are not miracle workers. There are children with difficulties and difficult socioeconomic backgrounds who will never be able to achieve that measure in the present system unless we are given flexibility as good practitioners. It needs to be acknowledged that some of our work is much slower; it might not show at the end of one school year and it might not show at the end of an educational phase, but we must be allowed to try with those children. I fear that the present system is what puts people off doing that as a practitioner.

Mr Colm Davis (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland): Mervyn, I have probably spoken to you about this before, possibly years ago, but it is very important. I endorse what Sharon and Carmel are saying. I think that we now have a culture of almost beating people up if they cannot achieve the A to C measure or level 4 or level 5, but we have got to look at other ways of embracing other data that is equally important. Likewise, we need to turn the culture of parents around to realise the importance of vocational qualifications and alternative qualifications. Schools are afraid to do that at times, because when inspectors come out to inspect, if the school is not moving up to the A to C measure, they are criticised. However, special schools do not have the A to C measure, so questions are asked about how inspections are done there.

We have a great deal of outstanding practice going on. We help one another quite a bit in the special schools culture. We work with one another in close proximity and, even though there is distance between the 43 schools, we have good partnerships. We exchange good practice. We look at each other's self-evaluations, for example, which are based on the 'Together Towards Improvement' indicators. All of that is taken in as part of the inspection process when the inspectors come in to look at how to measure, report and monitor improvement, and, for us, the kids make excellent gains. The problem is finding a way. The district inspector has a crucial role to play in building a relationship up with the school; of knowing the culture of the school, knowing the area and building that relationship up with teachers.

I can give you an example in my school whereby if a district inspector was coming up the road, he might drop in for a cup of coffee, although you might think that that is too familiar, but when he comes in, I will fill his head with everything that is happening in the school. We had a nurture group for a few children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), for example, and I asked what he thought about the idea. I told him that we were trying this out, we had not done this before, and asked him whether he wanted to come down and have a look. The teachers are open to this, although perhaps in some schools they are not, but we are always open to celebrating achievement and I think that, for us, it is about building a relationship up with the inspectorate. They need to be able to go out and share that good practice, and as Carmel said, it is the training element that needs to be built in to support our colleagues. At present, when criticisms are made, the infrastructure is not there to support them to a sufficient standard. As a result, they are running about like headless chickens trying to find out where they are going to get the support from.

At this moment in time, the mechanism is not there for schools to exchange staff in order to enable a mentoring, tutoring or shadowing concept to be set up as well. It is important to look at that, because if the expertise is in those schools, that is something that we need to think about. There are lots of things; that was a brainstorm.

The Chairperson: I want to get to members' questions because there are so many things coming out of that. Is the district inspector allowed just to drop by? Is that still a common practice? Has it been frowned upon?

Mr Davis: It is still common practice. I cannot really say too much. I do not really want this to be recorded. I am not sure whether I have been given a different line of direction from above, but it does still happen. We have had four or five inspectors in since the beginning of September for meetings on various issues. It is good; you have got to build a relationship up and establish a context. They may not do you any favours, but the good thing is that they are being kept up to date with what is going on in the school. They can see the problems that you have and know outlets where you can get the

additional support if required. They may know models of good practice elsewhere and say, "If you give that principal a ring, he will be able to help you out." As a professional and one who has got very little leadership training over the last number of years because of a lack of training, I have had to rely on my colleagues. For any of my colleagues who have been rated as "outstanding", I have looked at how they have got that grade and what they are doing that I have not done. Special schools are all so different; what they are doing there may not necessarily apply to my school. However, I take good practice and tweak it to suit the needs of our school.

The Chairperson: In our system you have a variety of special schools. I worry about the socioeconomic argument that if you put everybody into one big pot they will somehow all come out the same. You need to recognise that there are issues in special schools that require different types of schools. That is why, whatever level you designate the school at, you should judge it on the basis of what that school says it is.

That is the difficulty that we have got ourselves into. We have set a standard that everybody has to meet. It does not recognise differences; that is why there are some in the fourth division. That is not to say that that is where they should be staying; they should always be aspiring to improve. However, I still have a concern about trying to change the outcome socially and economically by simply saying, "We will send all the patients to the one hospital." That does not work either. You need a variety of specialities and skills that address the particular and individual needs of patients.

Mr Kinahan: Carmel, thank you very much. There is a hell of a lot in that document from a different point of view, including many good things. I want to pick out one or two before I go on to a question. You are concentrating on the fourth division, which is absolutely the right place to work, but the bell always seems flawed because it works on an average. Whatever way you work it, there will always be a fourth division, so the issue is getting the fourth division to the middle. Therefore we need a different measurement system.

I take on board the point about joined-up thinking and getting our silos working together, particularly early years. I also accept what you say about stimulation and looking at better ways forward in the twenty-first century. I particularly take on what Sharon said about needing to find a better way of doing things.

I would like to see your questionnaire to see what questions you asked and see where you have come from. Laced all the way through this is politics, because politics and education are so integrally linked.

Mr Hazzard: That is the problem.

Mr Kinahan: There lies a great problem, but you probably need someone on your shoulder who totally disagrees with you so that you are coming at it from a non-political point of view. The document is laced with your own views, and I would probably do the same but in another direction. Can we see the questions so that we can look through them?

What is not in the document, and I was intrigued by this, is an incentive system. Everything we do at the moment involves the stick; there does not seem to be a way of using resources to get a comfortable way forward. You mentioned that I seem to be for inspection; I am, but it has to be done in a nice way so that you all work with it. We need a way of judging whether a school is good or bad. What do you have in mind? How do you feel about trying to look for incentives so that we get the carrot?

Dr Gallagher: Well, I certainly do not think that payment by results is an incentive. That is proving disastrous in the United States, and I cannot believe that Michael Gove is thinking of having it in England. It goes back to the same idea that there is a homogenous group that you can teach and get results, when children are all terribly different. Five A* to C grades is a good thing, as Mervyn said, to aspire to, but there are schools with intakes of children that should be aspiring to achieve eight A* to C grades. We need a relative measure and relative aspiration. One of the things that appals me is the fact that you have children who pass the transfer zone, end up in a grammar school, do not get five grades at A* to C and are not let back in, because they are supposedly not fit for the work. Actually, they have been failed. In a sense, the system has failed them, and it is making sure that those children are not on their register because they might bring the A-level performance table down.

I turn to incentives. As professionals — I will let my colleagues speak here — we are all incentivised enough. People do not become teachers for the money or the ease of the job. Let me tell you; the job

is getting worse because of stress and workload. I blame computers, in a sense, because everybody expects everything to be done much faster. I am not terribly sure about incentivisation. As professionals, we are dedicated; we have a vocation, like nurses. The incentive for us would be, "trust us".

Mr Kinahan: We had a discussion about this at our party conference at the weekend. One of the points that came up was about levelling things up and trying to get everyone sharing to get the best resources. Resources and incentive are important. We are always judging how people have failed, but the ones who do really well —

Dr Gallagher: Again, that could work out unfairly. One of the incentives at the moment seems to be that if you get an outstanding inspection, you will be told that you will be visited again after a shorter interval to make sure that you are still outstanding. The message of that incentive is that we will all just want to be good, not better, because we do not want the inspector to come back. The incentive might be, "Go away and leave us alone and let us get on with the job".

Ms Beattie: As a practitioner I support what Carmel is saying. The incentive for me is trusting me and using the practice that I have worked hard to instil in my school to disseminate that. I do not just want the children in the Dromore area who go to Dromore Nursery School to experience excellent preschool; I want every child in Dromore, regardless of the setting they go into, to have that experience. My incentive is that if you declare me to be outstanding, then trust me and allow me to take that out. My incentive is the acknowledgement of the work that I do and the trust in the person that I am for leadership.

Mr Davis: The big incentive is feeling valued, not undervalued; respected, not disrespected. The teacher should be able to celebrate the achievements of a child; we have moved away from that quite a bit. The teacher is so happy when a child makes progress; that does not necessarily need to be in examinations. It is about finding ways to celebrate achievements. I know that some schools are fantastic at that. That is equally important to me.

Yes, we have the examination route to think about and the types of examinations that we have. However, we look at developing the whole person, including thinking skills, to make our young people more effective contributors to the society in which they are expected to live, whether they work as a mechanic, a doctor or a lawyer. It is about equipping them with those all-round skills. We should be able to measure that, in a way, by celebrating achievement.

Folks, I have to head on; I have an external performance review waiting for me at 11.30. *[Laughter.]*

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr Sheehan: It is interesting that every public service organisation complains about external inspections. The Chief Constable was complaining about it a couple of weeks ago, but when his director of finance was in last week he was full of praise for the HMIC that had pointed out that he could save £2 million. That is just a fact of life.

I am not so sure that self-regulation is the best way. The vast majority of our teachers do an excellent job; however, there are some bad teachers. If we go back to your concentric circles and the influences on children's educational achievements, 80% is down to parental involvement or peer influence. I totally agree with what. You find, particularly in schools in deprived areas, that there is very little parental involvement. Not long ago I went to a meeting in a school that is on the point of amalgamating with another school. There was a meeting for parents, but very few turned up. That was a sign that very few of them cared one way or another about what was happening.

However, a lack of parental involvement in a child's education is, in some ways, part of a vicious circle, because when teachers are not challenged, they tend to lower their aspirations or expectations. It does not happen so much in more affluent areas, where parents come from professional backgrounds or have qualifications themselves. If there is an issue with their children in the school, they are quickly on the phone or up to the principal's door asking what is happening. You do not have that so much in disadvantaged areas with kids from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, so there is a lowering of aspiration among teaching staff. The question is how we rectify that, or, to take it back a step further, how do we increase parental involvement? Increasing parental involvement would make the biggest change of all in educational outcomes.

Ms Beattie: Personally, I would say start with the early years. Even in deprived areas, you will get 60% outcomes for parents' meetings for three- and four-year-olds. It is harder in certain areas, but you still get it at that age if you have an open and welcoming environment, because some parents have had a very poor experience of education, are afraid of going back, and do not want their child to experience what they experienced. It has to be all-embracing. It has to start with the early years. That is my passion. We need to get parents engaged and to re-engage with those whose poor experience led them to disengage completely at 16 or 17. The answer is definitely in the early years. Go beyond that and they disengage further.

As a practitioner, I am not opposed to somebody looking at my practice. I am not opposed to being accountable to someone for what I do, how my children are treated and how my teachers operate. It is about how that is done, using a system that is supportive and, if it is a good self-evaluating school, sharing that practice, taking it out and allowing it to be part of the inspection, not just an external force coming in. Neither my colleagues nor I have a problem with being accountable; we have no problem with someone coming in to see our work and share our practice. In fact, many of us would welcome more opportunities to do that, but it is the system that is set up. As Carmel said, we should be joining up all the systems so that we have a shared baseline, a shared goal, we know what we want to achieve and we move in a uniform way towards it, not compete with one another in sectors but move forward so that the child is back at the centre. That is what we lose. It is not about which practitioner is the best or which is the best head teacher; it is about the child. If we do not come back to the child, we will lose completely. We have to come back to the children and to disengaged parents and start there.

Dr Gallagher: One of the big issues is the nature of examinations. They say that if you can get the exam system right and get it to do what you want it to do, everyone will be motivated, because everyone aspires for children to succeed, but some of our exams are just not suitable. Some radical thinkers even ask how much any of us ever need a mathematics GCSE. There should be a mathematics-for-life qualification. There should be forms of communication through ICT or social media, as they energise young people. I agree that there is no way that we should accept that any school should lower its expectations. Every community should have a school that drives the expectations of young people. If you saw the young kids that those Teach Me teachers had out on ICT programming boot camps, you would have seen kids just dying to get at learning. It is all about really energising our qualifications system to deliver for young people, particularly those in socially deprived areas. We need to get away from the boring old GCSE textbook stuff and give them examinations that really motivate them.

I am a former CCEA person. I drove curriculum reform and hoped that we would have a very vibrant assessment and examinations system. That is happening around the world. It is hard to change, because you are always looking at comparability and whether we are OK. We have the entitlement framework and the opportunity to do our own thing. I hope that the Province has the courage to do its own thing. I think that Michael Gove is driving England back to the 19th century with his focus on content, knowledge and learning. In fact, learning is all now at a touch of a button on the internet, and we need to give kids information management skills, problem-solving skills and creativity for the 21st century.

Kids want to get at it and teachers want to get at it, if we were not measuring them with old yardsticks. We really need to energise the debate around the nature of assessment and examinations. Scotland and Ireland do their own thing. Northern Ireland has a very good reputation for education and, if we have the courage to do our own thing, our qualifications will travel. Universities in England break their backs to get students from Northern Ireland. I do not think that we should ever fear our comparability and, therefore, we should really go for it, particularly with our young men. Girls tend to toe the line and jump the hoops because they are generally more compliant, although I do not know why.

The Chairperson: I will pass no comment. The wife might be listening.

Dr Gallagher: Girls tend to be more compliant in their learning. Boys need to be motivated from primary school. They are motivated by ICT and exciting things. That is what we need to give them.

Mr Sheehan: I have one other question. Earlier, Chris suggested that we should rename the inspectorate as an education support service, teacher support service, or something like that. It would maybe cast a whole different light on inspections. Even if the inspectorate was renamed, what would be the practical outworking? What would be the differences between what you envisage and what exists?

Dr Gallagher: I think that the inspectorate is moving in the right direction. This inquiry is probably incentivising the thinking, but I am aware that the inspectorate has been looking at its format of inspection and is focusing more on self-evaluation. You said that everybody needs some form of monitoring. We have an audit committee that scrutinises everything we do, and we report, in governance terms, to our council, which trusts us to get on with the job. Of course, the Department then comes in with its governance accountability review meeting, and we do that also. Everybody needs something, but the culture has to be one of self-evaluation and driving towards your own targets.

It might be better if we changed the name from inspection to evaluation and looked at self-evaluation alongside support. The suggestion would be a bit like the one that I gave earlier. Those involved should not go into schools and say what is wrong and what needs to be fixed. They should ask what people are doing and ask them for their priorities and targets, and how they are getting on. They should also ask about the focus on improvement, take note of that, ask what supports people need and tell them that they will be back to evaluate how they get on on the basis of their own self-evaluation.

It is a bit like the peace process. When we started to use the right language we got out of the conflict zone. I know that that covers —

Mr Sheehan: We may be getting into dodgy territory.

The Chairperson: I do not think that that is the best analogy.

Dr Gallagher: No. However, language can change perceptions and the way that people deal with one other.

Ms Beattie: It is more about partnership working and working to address a shared goal, rather than two people working and someone else coming in. Partnership is really what we need to get to.

Mr Gerry Devlin (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland): When I was teaching in the early days, inspectors were seen as being senior professionals who carried enormous amounts of wisdom. They had been in the system, had great status in the system and carried great practical wisdom into schools. If that energy and sort of ethos could be re-harnessed and redirected into a growth model of inspection that nurtures schools and teachers and that is closely aligned with professional development opportunities, I think that the outcome of this inquiry would be very beneficial for the profession. We could then move forward together in partnership rather than with these jagged edges that exist between the ETI and the various other sectors.

Mr Hazzard: Thank you Carmel, Gerry and Sharon. This is such a huge issue and I really do not know where to start sometimes. Carmel, you made the point that it is about culture or ethos; and, very often, that is what we hear. Speaking as the Committee member who was sitting in a classroom most recently, it has always struck me that inspections —

Mr Kinahan: I cannot remember when I was — *[Laughter.]*

The Chairperson: I was in a classroom yesterday. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Hazzard: I meant sitting at a desk.

Pupils play no part in inspections. This process is over the heads of the people who are, or who should be, at the very centre of our education system. As far as I am aware, pupils do not have a say in it. That is something that I would love to be fed in.

Carmel, you mentioned exams, and I often ask: who do exams actually serve? Again, our young people are not at the centre of that. Recently, the Minister said that we are going to have a real look at exams and who they serve. I am delighted with that. Hopefully, young people will be included.

I am going to ramble for a while, so apologies. We said that it is not so much a school issue but a wider societal issue. I definitely buy into that, although I think that the former can inform the latter. We need only look at the social missions or at the recent changes in schools in Venezuela that have had such a huge influence on wider society.

If anyone heard some of the things I said lately on the Floor of the House, they will know that I am a great disciple of Richard Kahlenberg's work on social integration in America. A long time after the Coleman report in the 1960s, parts of America are finally seeing that a social mix in schools is so important. I think that this feeds into the wider cultural thing, and I hope that through the review of what we now call inspection, we will move away from the term "inspection". I think that we need to see a support service for teachers. In saying that, the most important thing is building the self-evaluation capacity of teachers. I am really rambling here, but that involves continuing professional development and putting self-evaluation at its very heart.

I would love to hear your thoughts on whether that is the right way to go, and how we get to that point. For me, this is a huge process. I do not know if we will ever get to the Finnish-type model. We are not going to get the right answer now, but we need to plant the seeds. What are the most important steps in that path. Sorry for rambling to get to that point.

Ms Beattie: For me, you should start with teacher training. The problem is that you have beginner teacher training and then no continuing professional development (CPD). If we had that, and if self-evaluation were taught from teacher training onwards and practiced from day one in the classroom, it would become part of ethos of teachers and they would not be afraid of it.

For some teachers there is a fear factor in evaluating themselves and holding that evaluation up for someone else to look at. They have to highlight the bits that they are not good at, and, for some, there is a fear factor in doing that. Self-evaluation needs to be built into our culture. It has to start with teacher training. You cannot have a big gulf in the middle where teachers are stuck in their classrooms and never get out, never have any continuing professional development, do not see other teachers teaching, and lose the skills that they had.

When you are doing teacher training, you do not have a choice: you have to have people watching you teach all the time. However, suddenly you go into a classroom and close the door, and you could be there for 10 years. So, we have to have continuing development. It has to start at the grass roots and continue, through self-evaluation, until it becomes part of teaching culture. It will then become a part of school culture, supported by someone coming in and taking self-evaluation forward, rather than producing a big tick-list of what you cannot do.

Mr Hazzard: Let me move on to analysis and self-evaluation. I am a great believer that it has to start at school, even for the pupils themselves. That is the danger in what Gove is doing across the water; he is removing self-analysis and critical thinking in favour of the three Rs.

Ms Beattie: He is taking us right back to the beginning.

Dr Gallagher: Let me just add to that. Thank you, I will give you that £20 later. *[Laughter.]* That is the core of what the GTC wants to do, the framework for teacher professional development. In a few years' time, you will expect us, as the regulator, to regulate the competence of teachers. There is the "big stick", hard regulation which says, "If you are incompetent, you are out." I hope that that will not be used much. Certainly, there will be issues if someone has broken the law, or God forbid, child protection measures. Those are hard regulation issues.

However, competence issues are about competence being built throughout your career, from school and initial teacher training, through induction, early professional development, and throughout your career. We are in charge of competence standards and are about to review them to ensure that they are up-to-date, robust and easy to work with. In order for a principal or any teacher to self-evaluate against those competences, they have to be built into the following: school development planning; school self-evaluation; personal review, which is otherwise known as performance review and staff development (PRSD); and continuing professional development (CPD).

We will have what we call a "soft regulatory role" in the coming years, where we are going to have to be almost an in-service unit, helping schools to understand how to build in competences and work with self-evaluation. So I could not agree with you more.

The issue is that there has been a review of teacher education for 10 years. What does that say about valuing the profession? We have had a Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS) and those people have worked very hard, but I suppose that it has led to a kind of dependence mode, and now we want an independence mode. We want schools to be doing it for themselves. However, in order

for them to do that, we need to do exactly what you say. We must develop all the tools for them to do it and put in a resource, so that they can run courses or bring people in to help their development.

For example, in the Republic of Ireland right now, the equivalent of the CCEA, which is called the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is putting up £100,000 worth of teacher bursaries for PhD students in assessment because they realise that they have a real problem with assessment capacity. And what is their response to that problem? They want to get a couple of hundred people really up to speed to be capacity builders within the system. So we need to think outside the box. We are fretting at the fact that the change management strategy, ESA, is stuck, and where is the plan? We are anxious to push on with helping to design the plan. After all, if it is for the profession, we should have an opportunity to influence it.

Mr Hazzard: At the start of your presentation, you showed us a "World Cup" of 20 countries' educational performance. Among the systems, you differentiated between "done to" and "done by" models. Can you run through that?

Dr Gallagher: The United States system is a terribly "done to" system at the moment. Teachers there are in complete despair and are being measured by results. "No child left behind" is the great phrase used, but it is disastrous in implementation. Finland is a "done by" system, where there is total self-evaluation. Ontario is a complete partnership. Hong Kong has a new online self-evaluation tool from its evaluation service, so I think that it is a "done by" or "done with" system.

Our resident expert in thinking skills, Professor Carol McGuinness, did all our work, invented the whole progression on thinking skills in 2003 before the OECD even mentioned it. She went to Singapore to help with the development of their thinking skills. We call them "the other skills". South Korea has a hugely energetic system where a lot of our young people go to teach and gain experience. Poland has quite a self-evaluative system as well. Ontario is the one that we need to be —

Mr Hazzard: The key word for me, and, I am sure, for a lot of people, seems to be "partnership".

My final question is on the use of free school meals. Your work refers to it being inadequate for addressing the direct legacy of poverty in our schools. The Minister has said umpteen times that it is the best that we have, but that he is more than happy to look at alternatives. You alluded to the ten-point system in New Zealand, and I know that Vermont and Ontario were very successful at doing that as well. Do you have an idea of what we should be doing in the short term here?

Dr Gallagher: Yes, we have been lobbying quite a bit on this issue, and we were going to commission work, if no one else was going to do it, because we have experts here in Northern Ireland. A report has gone to the Committee from Borooah and Knox from the University of Ulster. They have already developed a system and applied it, and they have given you a fairly strongly value-added measure. So, there are experts at UU and Queen's who could run the system quite easily.

The Chairperson: Could it all be done by Friday?

Dr Gallagher: Probably.

The Chairperson: I think that the world comes to an end on Friday. I was told that on Wednesday.

Mr Hazzard: I have one last comment, which may be tongue in cheek. We talked about wanting to extend consultation on the common funding formula because we need more time, yet we hear that there are thousands of replies coming into it too. I thought that point was interesting.

The Chairperson: What they are saying is the issue.

Dr Gallagher: I will just make one point in relation to funding, which has been hugely controversial. It is not our territory because it is a money issue and not a professional issue. The professional issue is that you can throw money at things, but it does not necessarily mean that it makes it better. It has to be research-informed funding, and Sharon will tell you that. If you want to throw money at anything, throw it at the early years.

Mr Moutray: Thank you for your presentation. As a relatively new member of the Committee, I find it all very interesting.

The Chairperson: It is a long time since you have been in the classroom.

Mr Moutray: It has been quite a while, and I was glad to get out of it at the time. One of your recommendations on school improvement makes reference to using positive language around inspections. You refer to what is being done in Scotland. Will you expand on that? Is Scotland better because of that? Why should we not continue to call it as it is? If there is an unsatisfactory inspection report, why do we not say that, because it is a fact, rather than dressing it up in more positive language?

Dr Gallagher: The General Teaching Council (GTC) is the oldest general teaching council in the world. It is also one of the most respected and highly developed inspection systems in the world. It makes a lot of noise about that, and it is visited all the time. If it does something, then I think it is worth doing, because there is a huge amount of research going on at the moment into inspection processes around the world, and they say that it is all very well giving inspection outcomes, but, if someone cannot hear the message, you might as well not give it. So, it is all about language. If you are destroyed in the process, you cannot hear the message. It builds up your resentment and your resistance. So, this is about delivering the message.

What we really need to know is who is doing brilliantly, who is doing well and who needs support. We also need to know the person who has a lack of confidence on certain issues. That lack of confidence could be severe or little, but it means that we know where to focus the report; whereas if you actually tell someone that they are completely inadequate, they cannot work with you. What happens — we have seen it already — is that schools get a terrible inspection report; parents say, "Right, we are pulling our kids out of the there"; and you start a downward spiral that is often impossible to repair.

Ms Beattie: As a head teacher responding to the question: if you came to me and told me that I was unsatisfactory and that you were outstanding, I would immediately feel like a failure. If I were going to look at your practices, I would be doing so cap in hand because I would be a failure. However, if you told me that I needed a wee bit of development in an area because there are things I could be doing, and that another person is really good at it, I would be more willing. It is easier to say, "I want to develop this", than, "I have been declared unsatisfactory, I am a failure and you are wonderful. How am I going to put it right?"

Head teachers are real people. We might take a lot of flak sometimes, but we are human. It is very difficult, especially if you think that you have been working very hard. I am not undermining somebody's comment that we could have poor teachers in the system: we could. We could also have poor head teachers. However, there are many very hardworking people out there. Their confidence and self-confidence is being trodden into the ground. If someone says that I need to develop something and shows me a way to do it, I will try to do it.

Mr Moutray: Absolutely. I accept what you say about the many good teachers that we have. However, sometimes, if someone is told that something is unsatisfactory and that there is a way out, that can act as a motivator. At the end of the day, if something is unsatisfactory, it is still unsatisfactory.

The Chairperson: Going back to the World Cup page; where is Scotland in that? With the dread of making Alex Salmond cringe; is it in with England?

Dr Gallagher: Yes.

The Chairperson: Oh dear.

Dr Gallagher: In fact, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland have, relatively, the same performance. Wales's performance dipped a little bit. There was a bit of a crisis recently, which is apparently why they are practicing for their PISA results. England performed terribly well in 2000. However, the results were not published because they reckoned that the sample was skewed. All sorts of things can happen that can cause a blip. A blip is not a pattern.

Mr Newton: I apologise for being late, I was at another meeting. In many ways, my questions have been answered as explanations to others have been given.

I noted, Carmel, when you were reporting on the situation in the classroom, you indicated that it was not getting better but was getting "worse and worse", which I think were the words you used. If you were from east Belfast, you would have said, "worse and worse". My background is in vocational training, and I come at this very much from the positive measurement as opposed to the negative measurement; positive in the sense that you encourage improvement rather than being punitive with regard to where the person is at that time.

Stephen made the point that if something is unsatisfactory, it is unsatisfactory. However, I find the term "intervention" to be a very negative term. It has particular relevance in east Belfast at present, where, at secondary level, there are three schools in intervention: Dundonald High School, Orangefield High School and Knockbreda High School. I think that Ms Beattie was the first to use the expression "partnership approach".

I will go back to my own background of vocational training. Partnership would have been the ethos when you were working with candidates in vocational training. Indeed, it is critical that we get back to "child-centred education", which, I think, was also your expression, Ms Beattie. I find it very difficult to disagree with the information provided to us and your GTC recommendations on school improvement on measuring the value that is added by schools. It is difficult to disagree with that. On the measurements of achievement, I might have some issues, but they would be minor as opposed to major. I think that, if we do not reach that governance and transparency level, we will continue to be in our current situation and will find it more difficult to reach the heights that we want to achieve. So, I really do not have a question as such, Chair; I just have those comments.

The Chairperson: Thank you. There are no other questions from members. Carmel and Sharon, thank you very much. Undoubtedly, this has brought about a degree of interest. I am just looking at the number and content of the responses that we have had. They are varied and wide. Your contribution has been extremely helpful. Thank you for what you have presented to us this morning. I wish you well and look forward to working with you in the future.