



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Education

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Education Bill: Integrated Sector Briefing

5 December 2012

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

## Committee for Education

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#### **Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)  
Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Michaela Boyle  
Mr Jonathan Craig  
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson  
Mrs Brenda Hale  
Miss Michelle McIlveen  
Mr Sean Rogers

#### **Witnesses:**

Mr Nigel Arnold	Glengormley Integrated Primary School
Ms Marie Cowan	Integrated Education Fund
Ms Noreen Campbell	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
Dr Ian McMorris	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education

**The Chairperson:** You are very welcome. Thank you for coming. I apologise that we are running a bit late, but you have had the opportunity to listen to other comments. We are in your hands. If you make your submissions, members will ask questions.

**Ms Marie Cowan (Integrated Education Fund):** Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to address the Committee. I am chair of the Integrated Education Fund (IEF), which is an independent financial trust. Along with Nigel Arnold, who is principal of Glengormley Integrated Primary School, we will address the issue of representation on the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) board. Noreen Campbell is CEO of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and, along with Ian McMorris, acting vice-chair of the NICIE board and chair of Lagan College, will address the duty of the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate integrated education and also area board planning.

I will talk for IEF first of all. IEF has strong reservations about the proposed breakdown of membership on the ESA board and sees it as a backward step. The needs model, which seems to be a new policy coming from area board planning, outlines three subsets: sector A, the controlled sector; sector B, maintained; and sector C, integrated and Irish-medium. Although subsets A and B are allocated four reps each on the board of ESA — four persons to represent the interests of transferors of controlled schools and four to represent the interests of trustees of maintained schools — there is no such provision for schools in subset C.

Since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, the number of integrated schools has nearly doubled from 33 to 62, and the number of pupils has increased from just over 8,000 to over 21,000. We are

confident that those numbers will grow significantly in future years. It is, therefore, surely inconceivable that there is no representation for those schools on the board of ESA.

The present breakdown suggested for the ESA board appears to be pandering to the legacy of the past and is certainly not taking into account the new needs of Northern Ireland and the growing support for inclusivity in education. That growing support for inclusivity is clear from several recent surveys, including a very recent LucidTalk poll that is published in the 'Belfast Telegraph' today, which could not have come at a better time for us. I do not know whether you had an opportunity to see it.

**The Chairperson:** I try to leave the 'Belfast Telegraph' to late at night.

**Ms Cowan:** Well, it was good for us that it came early this morning.

**The Chairperson:** I am not getting mauled in it today, am I? I got mauled in it yesterday.

**Ms Cowan:** Question 7 in the poll asked:

*"With education budgets under pressure, if any of the following options were being considered to save money, which would have your most support?"*

The options were: A) cutting back on maintenance on existing schools; B) merging Catholic maintained, state controlled, integrated and Irish-medium schools; C) raising taxes and rates; D) abolishing free school transport for children whose parents are in work. The summary results were as follows: A) 10.2%; B) 60.8%; C) 9.4%; D) 19.6%. So, option B, the merging of schools, is overwhelmingly the most popular choice.

In the past year, the Integrated Education Fund organised seven community events throughout Northern Ireland. These were very well attended and showed an overwhelming support for community involvement in the future of education. A commissioned report on these community events by Professor Colin Knox also made this clear. I will point to one of his findings:

*"there needs to be much more active engagement between the Department of Education, schools' managing authorities and their 'customers': parents, pupils, teachers and governors."*

This desire for community involvement is also clearly demonstrated by question 5 of the LucidTalk report. Question 5 is here, but it is difficult to read it as the writing is too small. It says:

*"In view of falling school rolls, many schools in Northern Ireland are likely to be closed or merged in the coming years. Who do you think should have the main say in how this is carried out?"*

The options were: A) politicians and civil servants, because they have an overview of the whole education system; B) principals and teachers, who work on the ground in schools day to day; C) the whole community, because this affects everyone. The results were as follows: A) 15%; B) 32.8%; C) 52.2%. I think that those results really speak for themselves.

To me, it is abundantly clear that there is strong support for community representation, which should be represented on the board of ESA.

Another area that the Integrated Education Fund has been looking at closely is the business community. We have had a lot of discussions and talks with people in the business community, and we feel that they are not represented on the ESA board. If Northern Ireland is to succeed in the future, it surely must build a strong infrastructure with a skilled work base. The skills needs of the business community are imperative in achieving that. The business community should be consulted, and education must keep abreast of their future needs skills. If that is done, surely that is the way to ensure that there are jobs for our children and that they stay in Northern Ireland.

The Integrated Education Fund suggests that there is a more realistic, flexible and 21st century approach to the make-up of the board as follows: two representatives each for the transferors of controlled schools; two representatives for the trustees of maintained schools; two representatives for integrated schools; one representative for Irish-medium schools, and, very importantly; three to represent the community in Northern Ireland, and three to represent the interests of the business community in Northern Ireland. We also say that the board should be reviewed every three years.

This would give ESA a truer, more realistic and, indeed, more effective board. I will pass over to Nigel, who will continue the presentation.

**Mr Nigel Arnold (Glengormley Integrated Primary School):** I have one key question, which is from three points of view. I am here in a kind of triple role, and I will take each in turn.

First, as a principal, I represent about 300 children of preschool and primary school age in integrated education this year. These families represent thousands of parents and grandparents across the borough of Newtownabbey. Therefore, my question is this: given the current proposal for ESA board membership, who will represent these families on the board?

I move to my second role, and my second point of view. I am also a member of the committee of the Association of Principal Teachers in Integrated Schools (APTIS). I am part of a 10-strong committee, which is made up of principals from 62 primary schools and post-primary schools that have in excess of 20,000 pupils in this year, 2012-13. Their families, and extended families, through the past, present and future, represent hundreds of thousands of people, young and old, who have been schooled through an integrated education system for over 30 years. APTIS is the collective voice of the management of those schools. The question is this: who will represent these families and APTIS in ESA?

Thirdly, and perhaps this is the one that is closest to my heart, as a parent of two young children who are in an integrated primary school in Northern Ireland, and coming from a mixed cultural and mixed religious marriage, and having a strong desire for a shared future in Northern Ireland, with education being the foundation of this process, I am asking this question: who will represent my family within ESA? I think that is clear and to the point.

**Dr Ian McMorris (Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education):** We are asking that the statutory obligation on the Department to facilitate and encourage integrated education, which exists under Part VI of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, in article 69, is enshrined in the Education Bill. The Statutory recognition for integrated education in the 1989 Order is as follows:

*"It shall be the duty of the Department to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education, that is to say the education together at school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils."*

In order that the statutory obligation is enshrined in the Education Bill, we are seeking these three amendments: Clause 2(5) states:

*"ESA shall ensure that its functions relating to grant-aided schools are (so far as they are capable of being so exercised) exercised with a view to encouraging and facilitating the development of education provided in an Irish speaking school."*

We would like to see "or integrated school" added. That is simply adding in after "Irish speaking school" "or integrated school".

Chairman, our amendments are in our paper, which we will leave behind for the Committee.

Our second amendment relates to clause 60, which states:

*"60. For Article 3 of the 1989 Order substitute -*

*"General duty of the Department and DEL*

*3. -(1) It is the duty of the Department -*

*(a) to promote the education of children and young persons in Northern Ireland;"*

We would like to add:

*"and to facilitate the development of integrated education at primary and secondary levels".*

Similarly, substituted provisions at clause 61(1) of the Bill providing for substitution of provisions in article 115 of the Order 1986 should make the provision for the payment of grants to persons in respect of an expenditure to be incurred by them.

We would like to add a fourth paragraph at clause 61(1) to read:

*"(d) for the purpose of or in connection with the promotion or encouragement of integrated education at nursery, primary or secondary level."*

Those are the changes that we are seeking. I would like to talk briefly about why we are seeking them. Recognition of the singular importance of integrated education was set out in the 1998 Agreement, which states at paragraph 13:

*"The participants recognise and value the work being done by many organisations to develop reconciliation and mutual understanding and respect between and within communities and traditions, in Northern Ireland and between North and South, and they see such work as having a vital role in consolidating peace and political agreement. ... An essential aspect of the reconciliation process is the promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society, including initiative to facilitate and encourage integrated education".*

We note with concern that nowhere in the Bill is there a reference to that duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education. We ask that this omission be rectified and that this obligation be expressly stated in the Bill. Specific reference to integrated education was written into both of those important documents in recognition of the role that integrated education plays in healing division, breaking down barriers and promoting cohesion. It is worth remembering that, prior to the successful establishment of the first integrated school in 1981 — Lagan College, of which I am chairman — followed by three other integrated schools in 1985, it was contested by the main sectors — the political parties and the churches — that there was neither the demand nor the need for such integration. That was in spite of a background of ongoing civil unrest and violence fuelled by the divisions in society. Parental demand for integrated education has proved otherwise.

Brian Mawhinney, who was then Minister of State with responsibility for education, saw the need for those schools and ensured that protection for integrated education was written into the Education Reform Order 1989 as well as a mechanism for funding and developing such schools. The importance of that type of education to supporting the peace-building process was further recognised in the Belfast Agreement. The obligation was written into both the legislation and the international agreement because of the deeply segregated system of education that existed in Northern Ireland, a segregation that reflected the deep divisions that were played out in the violence endemic on the streets. Those divisions still exist and must be addressed if we are to build a shared future.

Thirty-six years on from the inception of integrated education, we are now educating 22,000 children, which is about 7% of the student body. More than 90% of children are still educated in single-identity schools. This year, more than 500 children were denied a place in an integrated school, and the number of children being educated in integrated schools would be significantly higher if schools had been allowed to grow to meet demand. As Marie said, public opinion as expressed in opinion polls is overwhelmingly in favour of integrated education, and I point out the Ipsos MORI poll of 2011, and the 'Belfast Telegraph' poll of 2012. It is the concern of NICIE that, over the intervening years, the statutory obligation as outlined has not been fully addressed by the range of education bodies, resulting in a failure to challenge adequately the status quo, as evidenced by the contrast between those supporting integrated education and actual places available. In addition, official figures do not take into account special schools, which are, by their nature, integrated, in that selection is not on the basis of culture or ethnic or religious background. Under the statutory regime, those schools are prevented from formal designation as part of the integrated sector. That does not, and should not, obscure one of their defining characteristics. That hidden integration is not recognised. An overt commitment to facilitating and encouraging integrated education will enable those issues to be addressed as of right. NICIE argues that to redress the situation, the Education Bill must contain reference to the statutory obligation to facilitate and encourage integrated education. I will now pass over to Noreen.

**Ms Noreen Campbell (Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education):** Good morning, everybody. My colleagues have shown clearly that the moral and societal case for integrated education has been made. The public preference is clear: people want their children to be educated together. The legal obligation to encourage and facilitate integrated education is enshrined in law. I want to refer to a point made earlier by Trevor. He suggested, or seemed to suggest, that that legal right was to support a sector. It is not; it is to support a concept. Historically, because of how our schools developed, they have been pigeonholed into a sector, but integrated education is a concept, and we might well describe it as the concept that is full-immersion shared education. When we talk

about shared education — and we are totally in support of it — we do so because we have full immersion sharing. We have developed the model that ensures that it works, and we want to ensure that that is reflected in the Bill so that the legal obligation can be translated into reality in the outworkings of the Bill.

I want to look in more detail at some of those outworkings, particularly in relation to area-based planning. There are some proposed amendments that we would like to make, and, again, I will speak to them briefly, but the actual wording is on paper.

We want clause 25(3) modified. At the moment, it says:

*"The Department may approve a plan or revised plan."*

We want that modified to say that the Department may not approve a plan unless it has satisfied the facilitation and encouragement of integrated education. In other words, the test against area planning should be to what extent it supports the future and creation of a shared future.

We also want to add to that, and this comes back to the point that was clearly illustrated in today's poll. We would like to see added in there evidence that an area education plan qualifies as satisfying those conditions, and it must include material evidence that the parents of children in an area and children attending schools in an area have been consulted and that their preferences have been accommodated to the greatest possible extent. In other words, we want changes to area-based planning to come from areas up, not from the top down, and we want those done through consultation.

Finally, clause 28(3) refers to the ESA being able to make decisions without reference to the Department of Education. We would like to see added to that that any such decision will only be taken after consideration of the Department of Education's statutory duties and consultation with the Department.

The ESA has been delegated the duty of planning education provision. Area-based planning could shape a new education estate fit for purpose and meeting the needs of children, not institutions, and areas, not sectors, as directed by the Minister. To date, however, the model used to frame the area-based planning process is deeply flawed, based on a sectarian headcount of children in the straightjacket of existing sectors. Not surprisingly, innovative and creative solutions have not been forthcoming.

NICIE had no place as of right at the area-based planning table. We feel that that omission has impacted detrimentally on the process, and we want to see that situation rectified under the ESA. We feel that it will be rectified if we have representation on the board as of right and if the statutory obligation is written into the board.

NICIE is concerned that the duties outlined in the Bill do not allow sufficient strategic powers to enable future decisions based on the principles outlined by the Minister in 'Putting Pupils First: Shaping Our Future'. Such a framework was developed at government expense in 2006 through the Bain report, which was well received by all. NICIE argues that the framework for area-based planning should be defined in the Bill and that it should be based on the recommendations of the Bain report, along with the sustainable schools policy and the statutory obligation referred to. In particular, we ask for the following recommendations of the Bain report to be considered:

*"We acknowledge that integrated schools make a highly significant and distinctive approach to educating children and young people together... In light of our thinking on integrating education and improving collaboration, we believe that the time is right for the Department of Education to make clear that in discharging its duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education, it is committed to facilitating and encouraging an inclusive strategy with a variety of meaningful approaches. We also advocate in undertaking these functions in relation to the planning of the schools estate, there should be a duty on ESA to maximise opportunities for integrating education in a system of sustainable schools."*

The Bain report provides a framework on which decisions on area-based planning should take place, one being the educational case and the other being the societal case, that is, the importance of promoting sharing and cohesion for the future.

The Bain report provides a useful definition of areas that should be adopted.

*"Local areas should comprise coherent sets of nursery, primary and post-primary schools, and, as appropriate, special schools, as well as successful further education provision, and, as far as possible, should lie within single local council boundaries."*

Had the Bain principles underpinned area-based planning to date, I think that we would have seen a more radical set of plans. NICIE has concerns about the apparent absence in the Bill of a mechanism under the ESA for establishing new integrated schools. Schedule 7(4) refers to the powers to open new controlled schools, other than integrated, and new Catholic maintained schools. There must be a mechanism under the ESA to open new integrated schools, whether those emerge as a result of the closure of schools and the foundation of a new integrated school or because of the need to ensure integrated provision in every area.

It is our concern that the mechanism that exists under the 1989 Order has been superseded by the process of area-based planning, which resides with the ESA.

The amendments that we have suggested would ensure that consideration is given to the promotion of the integrated model. The Education Bill allows for a consultation process on any development proposals, and Bain in recommendation 3 states that:

*"in area-based planning, the Education and Skills Authority would have the option of consulting directly with communities to ascertain views and options for educational provision"*

The amendment that we propose would ensure that such consultation took place.

I would like to finish by welcoming the extension of the consideration of the Bill because there is an opportunity to further enhance the Bill by looking at a mechanism for creating a new type of school management. At the moment, we are in a straightjacket with regard to the type of school management that we have, and until we can find a type of management that is beyond sector and which allows us to create the type of schools that we want for the future, I think that even in the ESA we will not move forward as quickly as we would like.

I would like to think that between now and April, NICIE will come back with proposals on how such a new type of management might be written into the Bill, thus advancing change in the educational system.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much for your presentation. I declare an interest as a member of the board of governors of a controlled integrated school and also place on record the appreciation of the work of the schools that you represent. That is right and proper. Ian will be particularly pleased with the recent announcements on a long-awaited newbuild.

**Dr McMorris:** I cannot wait, Chairman.

**The Chairperson:** I want to pick up on a point that Nigel made and, if I may be rhetorical, answer a question with a question. You asked who would represent the three elements in the ESA. In your view, who currently represents those three views?

**Mr Arnold:** As it currently stands?

**The Chairperson:** Yes.

**Mr Arnold:** The people here: NICIE, the IEF and like-minded individuals. However, they do not have that position. It is not being recommended in the current proposals.

**Ms Cowan:** Until now, the Department has had a statutory duty to encourage the growth of integrated education. Therefore, as a retired principal, I felt quite happy to go to the part of the Department that was designated to integrated education, where I got a lot of help. Because the Department puts a duty on the boards to give the same facilities to integrated schools as to other schools, I could also have gone there. I could go to the solicitor for all five area boards in Belfast for any help that I needed. Therefore, because the Department had a statutory duty, I felt that we were well supported.

**Mr Arnold:** I am speaking as a parent here, which is difficult to separate from my other roles at times. I am speaking as a parent on behalf of parents in my school and in other integrated schools. On that third point, I would go to me as a principal or to my colleagues, as other principals, in the Association of Principals in Integrated Schools (APTIS). We seem to be protecting and looking after ourselves and speaking on one another's behalf. My worry is that in the ESA we will not have a spokesperson. Perhaps you might consider APTIS as part of my answer.

**Ms N Campbell:** The absence of representation for integrated education as a duty on the boards has prevented representation of the voices that Nigel mentioned. I would add another voice: those who have been denied an integrated education, who, over the past 30 years, sought one and could not get one, either because there was no integrated school in their area or because the school that was in their area was oversubscribed. Each year, up to 500 families are denied an integrated education. NICIE argues that point all the time. However, we are a very small body, and we have no statutory responsibility. IEF also argues that all the time as evidence to fund raisers of the need for outside support for integrated education. However, we should not be seeking outside support for something that is patently such a good idea for society. We should be saying clearly through statutory bodies that it is an important part of our education system and that it should be represented.

**The Chairperson:** NICIE will have a view on the announcement that was made yesterday by the North Eastern Education and Library Board, which impacts on an integrated school in Ballymena. You may have seen it. It indicates that even though the board took a view, it did not take a view outside giving due consideration to an integrated school, because it has gone as far as saying that it would make provision to have a site owned by a controlled school made available to an integrated school.

**Ms N Campbell:** Thank you for sharing that with me, Mervyn. We are NICIE, the body that promotes integrated education, but because of how area-based planning has taken place, we have not seen the final plans that have gone to the board. Therefore you are telling me something that I did not know. Frankly, it is shameful that we do not know; it is shameful that our schools do not know, and unless we get the Education Bill correct, that situation will continue to be replicated under the ESA.

**Dr McMorris:** Chairman, going through the Bill, I found it breath-taking how little mention there was of the sector that has probably been the biggest force for change and development in education in Northern Ireland. Irish-medium education, which is a much smaller sector than ours and which has far fewer pupils — and, I would say, on the basis of opinion polls, it has lower overall support — is mentioned and we are not, neither as a sector nor as a movement. There are one or two mentions. I found it extraordinary.

**The Chairperson:** Marie referred to the increase in the number of integrated schools over recent years. This is probably a loaded question. From your point of view, is the increase in the number of parents having or wanting access to an integrated school due to, first and foremost, its being an integrated school or, secondly, because it is a good school? I know from experience in my constituency — you know the school I am referring to in Ballymena —

**Ms Cowan:** I totally agree.

**The Chairperson:** How do we, as a Committee, square that with all the other paths?

**Ms Cowan:** As a parent, I believe that it is crucial that an integrated school be a good school. Both my children went to the school that I ran, and they would not have been there had I not known that it was a good school. First and foremost, it has to be a good school.

Perhaps that is what the Integrated Education Fund is about. We try to ensure that when the Department of Education does not provide funding for our schools as we want — for example, many of our schools are looking for play groups and nurseries, and some of our schools were recently turned down for the development of sixth forms — we try to provide funding. We do not have enough funding.

I agree with you: nobody will send their child to an integrated school unless it is a good school. Many parents want integrated education for their children and they then balance that against the school. I was talking to somebody only this morning who is in the lucky position of having more than one



integrated school to choose from. That is at second level, and I am afraid that I am very second-level orientated. One of the schools has a good reputation, whereas the other, although closer, does not. You can guess which school that person put their children down to go to.

**Dr McMorris:** Chairman, as the chairman of Lagan College, I absolutely go along with what you have implied. Parents will, first and foremost, look for good education. Other things being equal, many parents in Northern Ireland — I would say the majority — if they can get a good integrated education for their children would prefer that over an equivalent non-integrated school. I think that that is the preference.

At our school, we drive academic performance, which is why we have a selective stream. That allows us to be properly comprehensive and replicate, and we find that that attracts parents, as they know that if they have a brighter child, his or her needs will be looked after just as much as a child who is less academic.

**Mr Arnold:** I am the primary school teacher here, and I want to add to that on behalf of the primary sector. I will use my school as an example. I think that it is a combination of factors. First and foremost, schools have to be good schools to attract parents. If the reputation of a school, holistically and from every angle, is damaged in academic performance and ability, that is detrimental to the development of the school. However, that is dovetailed with parents' demand for an integrated future for their children. My school has doubled its enrolment in the past five years, and I have no doubt that that was because of a combination of those two factors.

**Dr McMorris:** I totally agree. Integrated schools tend to be very strong on the holistic aspect of education. It is not just about academic performance, although you do need that; it is about a broader education for pupils. It is not that other sectors do not do that, but I think that there is an even stronger emphasis on that in most integrated schools.

**Ms N Campbell:** Integrated schools are also inclusive. Therefore as they strive to ensure that the brightest child can reach the highest level, they are also concerned that the needs of youngsters with special needs will be met to the highest standards. For the full range of parents and children, the integrated option is very attractive, provided that it is the best school. NICIE, through the Association of Principals in Integrated Schools, in partnership with the Regional Training Unit (RTU) and other partnerships that we are developing, is working to ensure that we have the strong leadership that we need in our schools and a continuous programme of school improvement to make our schools the best.

**Ms Cowan:** We are talking about integrated schools. As a principal, I always said that I knew why pupils came to my school. An Austrian did some research, and she reckoned that 30% to 40% of the children who came to our school were sent there because it was not a secondary or grammar school but was somewhere in between. Therefore nobody knew whether the children who were wearing our uniform had passed the 11-plus or not. That was a very cynical way of looking at it, but I always said that once we get children into a true integrated setting, we will integrate them and ensure that when they leave us they move into an inclusive society where they can take their place comfortably. That is what integrated schools are about.

**The Chairperson:** Noreen, you referred to amendments that you wish for. They will be left with the Committee Clerk so that we will have them for members' consideration.

**Mr Kinahan:** Thank you very much for your presentation. When you talked about a possible new layout for ESA membership, I did not hear where in it we keep principals or teachers.

I was intrigued as to how we get parents involved. I have been trying to find out how we get consultation to happen properly with parents, as there does not seem to be a system. How do you get parents into the same thing so that it represents them?

The three-year review that you mentioned is quite tight; a longer period may be better. Why chose three years? The biggest question of all: we are exploring the difference between shared and integrated education. We are discussing a framework that will set the line for our education system for a long time, so we have to get it right, yet we seem to be dividing into sectors, excluding yours, which is wrong. We need to find a way of pushing, if I understand it right, the sharing — which happens in the maintained sector and everywhere — so that you are nudging and massaging it along at the best

speed we can get so that it becomes integrated. Shared is the goal, but integrated, I sometimes find, we lose because it has become a third sector. We lose our aim there.

**Ms N Campbell:** The concept of integrated education has suffered by being pigeonholed into a sector. Integrated education was educating children together in an ethos that promoted parity of esteem and mutual understanding and respect. That is what our integrated schools do.

How do we get from where we are to where every child can benefit from that right? I see it as a human right for them to be educated alongside their friends, peers and neighbours. In recent years, the concept of shared education has come in as a means of moving towards that. We are still a highly segregated society, but the question is how we move from A to B. It will be a journey, and there may be different ways of doing it, but any progress has to be good.

My concern is that shared education becomes a sticking plaster to conceal the fact that we are still segregated and bi-sectoral. All the evidence from education for mutual understanding and the collaboration that is going on shows that such partial contact does not have a deep impact. We have to find the means of ensuring maximum sharing and impact. NICIE has a project funded by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) called 'Sharing Classrooms: Deepening Learning'. It is about enabling teachers who are teaching in a more diverse classroom than they normally teach in to engage young people in real discussions about their society.

The example that we use is poppies. If you have children from two uniforms in your classroom, and one set is wearing the poppy and the other is not, there is a huge opportunity for discussion. Young people love to discuss such issues; they are completely open and willing to learn about one another. However, because the teachers have come through a segregated system, including third-level education, they do not have the confidence to deal with those issues. A huge amount has to be done to give teachers the confidence to deal with the diversity in their classroom and the increasing diversity that we hope they will see in their classroom.

It is also our belief — and I am sure that Marie would agree — that, no matter how you describe your school, the children in that school are all individuals. There is huge diversity in any school, and when you put a single identity label on a school, you penalise those young people, because they do not have an opportunity to develop their full range of identities. The best example is of children from a mixed marriage: if those children are in a Catholic area going to a Catholic school, they are de facto Catholic; similarly, if they are in a Protestant area going to a state school, they are Protestant. No recognition is given of their double belonging, and that is not the way for our children to be developed.

**Ms Cowan:** I want to go back to representation. I mentioned community engagement events that IEF held over the past year — seven in total. Very few politicians came to them, although we had some, and we had a representative from CCMS at every one — somebody from the boards. However, most were parents or members of the community who expressed the desire to be involved in education. That is why we have been having follow-up events. We had one not long ago in Derry, at which parents came out very strongly in favour of different choices for their children. Not every parent wants integrated education, nor would we force integrated education on people against their will, but parents want opportunities for their children to be educated together. That is why I feel that the Department of Education, and perhaps the Committee, should be involved. We should not have to do community engagements, but we are doing them because nobody else is. However, we have been amazed at their success and the number of people who have come along and said what they want. The Department of Education has shown a bit of interest; it has asked us to say how we set about doing them and how they succeeded.

However, there should be much more engagement with parents. I talked earlier about three community representatives. I think that we were thinking about parents as being one of those community representatives. Why not? Three businesses — again, business people may be parents as well. That is crucial. It is interesting that that has hardly been mentioned. We talk about trying to develop basic skills in Northern Ireland, and we have STEM and all the rest of it. There has been a great deal of talk recently about the fact that universities may not always be the right place for people and that children need other skills, but we need our business people to tell us what those skills are, as we do not know. We all need to take much more account of that before we set statutory rules that would tie us all in a straitjacket. We need to take our time; it is too important not to get it right.

**Dr McMorris:** You were saying, Deputy Chairman, that there is a very strong representation of the churches and the politicians and that the rest of us are not getting much of a look in. We totally agree. It needs to be more pluralist, and it needs to represent society as a whole.

**Mr Arnold:** I want to go back briefly to Noreen's point and mention the risk that I think is apparent in the different models that are coming on to the marketplace — for the sake of another phrase. I am worried that the concept of the integrated education model is being watered down massively in a shared model. I am not suggesting for a moment that any of the models of shared education are not useful, and, for that reason, my school, although it is fully integrated, also participates in many of those mechanisms. I have had more than 20 years of working through education for mutual understanding and community relations and equality diversity (CRED) and similar models. However, I still feel that they often just scratch the surface. I found that, after all the energy and work that went into CRED, it is very disappointing at a chalk-face level, and the delivery of that model does not meet the agenda that was set out. That is my personal view. Yet, we participate; we apply for funding to assist us with projects and we involve ourselves with other schools outside the integrated sector because we see that there is value in that. However, it is not the fully immersive model that Noreen referred to, which, essentially, is a 24/7 concept that, over time, seeps out into the community and into the society where those schools are located. I do not think that any of your models of shared education will have that same impact, particularly at the moment, when CRED is looking at a bigger picture beyond the two main traditions and looking very closely at trying to accommodate section 75 groups, which I welcome. However, the agenda is there for a steered and slightly wider, different direction, and the focus on what is at the heart of integration is gone, and the eye has been taken off the ball.

**Ms Cowan:** We have been running the promoting a culture of trust (PACT) programme. It was set up by George Mitchell in 2000, and we have been running it since then. It has been very successful in bringing schools together. However, it is costing a lot of money, and that is the problem with it. Let us look at the economics of it. I am not very good with figures, but I think that £12 million has been spent on PACT, to date. That is a lot of money. The sharing education programme (SEP), which has been running for the past three years and which is still running, has cost millions upon millions. I go back so far that I was an EMU co-ordinator 30 years ago. I know how successful it was at the time, but, once we separated from the school that we were working with, that was it. On an economic level, all of this money is useful at the time, and it does do a little bit, but it does not do enough. Two or three years down the road, once it is over, it is gone. We should be looking at the economics and at the cost of having children in a single school and the cost of having them coming out for such programmes as PACT and SEP. We should look at the cost of that to our community, which is not a very wealthy place.

**The Chairperson:** No other members have questions. Noreen, you said that you wanted to bring back to the Committee more information around a model.

**Ms N Campbell:** At the moment, one of the problems is that the legislation does not allow for the creation of a new type of school. I might be completely wrong on this, of course, and this might be wishful thinking on my part, but it seems to me that if there were a wee bit more time to get the Bill right, there might be an opportunity to rectify that now. Otherwise, how many years will it take to get that legislation in place?

I will give you an example. One of the proposals that, I think, has gone, or is going, from the South Eastern Education and Library Board to the Minister, relates to the Ards peninsula. There, you have Strangford integrated college, Glastery controlled school and St Columba's. The proposal is that the Ards peninsula will have one school serving the community. I do not know if this is being replicated in the South Eastern Education and Library Board, but it is certainly our ideal. That school would be a bilateral school, which would give parents assurance that academic interests were being looked after, so that children did not have to go outside the area to grammar school. It would be co-educational and integrated. What management would that come under? It could be a grant-maintained integrated (GMI) school. However, you might then have such questions as, "Why should we be given up?" There is all of that history that we have of giving up. We need to create a mechanism in which people are not giving up but creating and collaborating together to create something new.

There is a type, which I have been putting in inverted commas — a "new model school". It is post-primary, but it is the same as your best primary school. It serves the community, it is co-educational and it is bilateral. Hence, it takes away all of that argument about grammar schools, selection and academic ability. It is also integrated in ethos. By that I mean that there is parity of esteem for the different traditions in the school, and there is a development of mutual understanding about where

young people are coming from, their traditions and cultures and why they may be controversial. There will be the capacity to deal with that. There will also be mutual respect, and it is an environment in which people learn to live with each other, respect differences and diversity, celebrate it and not be frightened by it.

**Dr McMorris:** The board can represent the contributory interests.

**Ms N Campbell:** The board can represent that.

**The Chairperson:** Would you call it a community school?

**Dr McMorris:** In the true sense of the word.

**Ms N Campbell:** We do have some community schools, and, essentially, it would be a community school. I would like to think that there is hope, since there is a bit more time to get that into the legislation.

**The Chairperson:** I want to give clarity on time. We went to the Assembly for an extension, and it was approved, albeit until 8 April. It is not our intention to run the Committee Stage until then. The sooner that we can have any information on your idea or model, the better, because it can be part and parcel of the deliberations that we are going to have. Our intention is to have all of the evidence gathered by Christmas and to go through the Bill, line by line, after Christmas. That will be very detailed. By that stage, we will want to ensure that we have sight of all the amendments that people have. We basically have those at this stage. We also want to have any other ideas or suggestions, so that people have confidence that we have not merely given them tea and sympathy and moved on because we had our own agendas. We want them to have confidence that it was not done and dusted behind closed doors. We do not want them to have the impression that we were engaged in such tasks. The sooner that we have any information that you have, the better.

**Ms N Campbell:** I will do that. I appreciate that it may not be appropriate for the Bill at this time.

**The Chairperson:** Due consideration should be given.

**Ms N Campbell:** I will get that to you.

**Mr Arnold:** I want to go back to Danny's mention of the consultation with parents. You are working towards a part solution on that. You are working with such bodies as PTANI. I know that they are making contact; they made contact with me to get small groups of parents in. Obviously, you are getting the active parents within the school community; you are not going to tap into those inactive or passive parents. They are harder to get. We have that problem too. I am delighted that you have used that mechanism, and I think that Jayne Thompson is going to bring you quite an audience for January. I am glad to see that that is happening.

**The Chairperson:** We have endeavoured to ensure that people are listened to, regardless of whether it is about area planning or the youth. We had what I thought was a very successful event here last Wednesday. Those who took part genuinely believed that they were being listened to and that there was an engagement process. We are keen to build on that. We can do it better, and, clearly, the interaction with the parents association and others is part and parcel of what we are about. There will be interaction with others, but we have not yet finalised details on who else we need to be involved with. Nigel, have you any ideas or suggestions to add?

**Mr Arnold:** That was very apparent at the area based planning meeting that I was at. There are mechanisms, and electronic and social media, for example, are able to capture those audiences much better than anything previously.

**Ms Cowan:** You made a very important point, Mervyn, about being listened to. I think that that is what it is all about. We had a programme last week in Belfast, and it was very well attended. They had great ideas. When I was leaving, my worry was about what was going to happen to all of the ideas of those students and young people from youth clubs. They had great ideas, but where do they go with them? We have done a report on that, and we can let you have that. You will see what the youth came up with, because they had some brilliant thoughts.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. I hope that you do not feel that you have been constrained in time. We have an agenda that we are trying to follow as best we can. I make it very clear to all the groups that come that they should not believe that being here is the last opportunity that they can have to represent themselves, albeit it might not be, physically. If anything else comes up, following on from your presence here today, please communicate with us, and we will be only too glad to ensure that that is considered. Noreen, it would be very helpful if you could forward that information to us.