



**INDEPENDENT STRATEGIC REVIEW
OF EDUCATION JUNE 2006**

**RESPONSE OF THE
NORTHERN IRELAND
TEACHERS' COUNCIL**



NITC RESPONSE

Overarching View

- ❑ NITC believes that any vision for an education system for the 21st century must be based on the theme of “A Shared Future”. NITC considers the Independent Strategic Review of Education within the prism of the Government’s “A Shared Future” and the TACOTIE (“Towards a Culture of Tolerance by Integrating Education”) policies. The NITC regards the Independent Strategic Review of Education as being the first serious challenge for the Government’s “A Shared Future” policy.
- ❑ Have an educational focus on “Excellence in Education” and “pupils’ achieve full potential”.
- ❑ Ensure the enhancement of educational standards by implementing the recommendations of the Curran Report into the salaries’ and conditions of service of teachers and by enhancing the school estate.
- ❑ Guarantee existing numbers of teaching jobs in the primary and post primary sectors.
- ❑ Ensure transparency in teacher transfer across sector and phase, a facility that shall be available with the creation of a single employing authority – Education and Skills Authority (ESA).

Planning at Local Level

NITC favours:

- ❑ Area planning with all schools included and no exceptions for any school type.
- ❑ Planning to be centralised with a local input.
- ❑ No return to local council control.

Sharing of Facilities and Resources - Primary and Post Primary

NITC favours:

- ❑ The inclusion of the Further Education sector in 14-19 provision, under agreed arrangements with schools.
- ❑ Opportunities for every pupil to reach their full potential and continued opposition to academic selection at 11.

New build must have facilities which are inclusive to the community. Though welcoming the concept of the Extended School and facilities being more available to communities, it is essential that the focus remains educational.

Estate Planning

- ❑ NITC remains opposed to the use PFI in school building/planning.
- ❑ Any model should take into account the existence of urban and rural communities.
- ❑ NITC supports the role of the ESA as an estate/school property owner.
- ❑ NITC envisages the ESA as having the lead role in any commissioning consortia.
- ❑ NITC envisages any commissioning consortia (in line with proposals emanating from the Review of Public Administration) as being co-terminous with proposed new Council boundaries.
- ❑ Issues of funding, staffing and career structure need to be factored into the equation.
- ❑ The existing building regulations for schools need to be revised to take account of provisions in the Enriched and Revised Curriculum.
- ❑ NITC considers that the movement towards “contestability” undermines the desired movement towards collaboration. “Contestability is the theory that public services work more efficiently when there is competition for contracts or services – where public services are contested”. This mitigates against the concerted collaboration necessary between schools and colleges to deliver the breadth of the pupil entitlement. Against this, “contestability” promotes damaging, time consuming, bidding scandals for extended schools or specialist schools

Parental Choice and Surplus Places

NITC favours:

- ❑ A 10% overprovision of school places to facilitate parental choice, population shift and the emergence of migrant communities.
- ❑ Flexible structures that would facilitate future curriculum and any demographic change.
- ❑ The reduction of current unacceptable levels of teacher workload and bureaucracy are reduced through the employment of additional teachers and the creation of small classes.
- ❑ A statutory maximum for all classes in the primary and post primary sectors.

Post Primary and Further Education Can Best be Planned Together

NITC views:

- ❑ Education is a 3-19+ process. The Early Years, Primary Years and 11-14 are as important as the 14-19 age range.
- ❑ The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 in Para. 6 places a duty on each Education and Library Board to secure provision of primary and secondary education in its area. This statutory responsibility for the securing of education for all pupils should be transferred to the ESA.
- ❑ The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 in Para. 27 places a duty on each Education and Library Board to provide for further education provision within its area. This statutory responsibility for the securing of education for all students should be transferred to the ESA. This would require the end of Further Education College incorporation.

- ❑ It is essential there is one overarching government education department, which would combine DE and DEL.
- ❑ The Department of Education should adopt a strategic role in relation to the school estate.
- ❑ GTC NI registered teachers only can deliver the 14-19 curriculum in schools. Currently FE teachers are excluded from GTC (NI) registration and are ineligible to teach in schools.

Promoting Integrated Education and Integrating Education

- ❑ Use of capital funding as a direct lever to reward sharing and incentivise integration, and as a means of rewarding movement towards delivering the pupil entitlement.
- ❑ Community audits as an indicator of parental demand and community facility needs.
- ❑ Use of “Service Level Agreements” to lock in collaborative arrangements for the length of facility management contracts.
- ❑ Favouring facilities and building development on community neutral accessible sites.
- ❑ Favouring multi-school/shared site partnership developments.
- ❑ Favouring inter-school federation, collegiates and partnerships.

Education Funding

- ❑ LMS has failed to fund schools adequately.
- ❑ LMS was designed to perpetrate historic patterns of school funding into the future with the consequent imbalance between primary and post primary funding.
- ❑ Teaching and support staff costs should be removed from local schools’ budgets and held centrally through the ESA.
- ❑ LMS is market driven and fosters division and competitiveness between schools and militates against school collaboration. The post primary collaborative agenda to deliver the Entitlement Framework will only be meaningful when collaboration is incentivised through the funding system.
- ❑ The current LMS model, which allocates funds to schools based on pupil numbers, is not appropriate. One short-term solution may be to create “campus schools” where a range of school types can be catered for within one management structure. There could be sharing of existing resources e.g., sporting facilities, and all new builds could provide for centrally shared resources for use by all schools on the shared site.
- ❑ More money needs to go directly into the NI schools’ budget.

Staffing

- ❑ Teachers and support staff are recognised as a critical resource in enhancing pupils’ teaching and learning.
- ❑ Teachers should be allowed to return to teaching and learning and free from the bureaucracy of school initiatives.

- ❑ Funds released through the more effective planning of the schools' estate could be utilised to guarantee existing teaching numbers in the primary and post primary sectors.
- ❑ Greater opportunity to centralise teacher/support staff planning and successful redeployment.

Potential for Realignment of the Teaching Force

- ❑ Management tools such as a winding-down scheme needed to release teachers at the end of their careers and facilitate the appointment of newly qualified teachers.

CONCERNS

- ❑ *Workload and Bureaucracy.* The non-implementation of the Curran Report has created a crisis in Northern Ireland schools, which needs to be addressed urgently.
- ❑ *Work/Life Balance.* There is a potential for the new employing authority the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) to be more strategic in facilitating modern and flexible working practices to accommodate different employment options at different stages of a teacher's career as well as implementing a teacher-friendly welfare service.
- ❑ *Training.* There will be additional training required to implement the post primary proposals on the curriculum, classroom management and the pedagogy of mixed ability teaching will require additional resources.
- ❑ *Insurance and Off Site Travel Issues.* Clarification is needed on insurance and off-site supervision.
- ❑ *Negotiating Machinery.* The need to embed significant educational change as set out in the Education Order 2006, the significant administrative change proposed in the Review of Educational Administration and funding/school estate change will require more commitment to the Teachers' Negotiating Committee than that afforded by the Management Side within the current arrangements.

July 2006