

THE IRISH NATIONAL TEACHERS' ORGANISATION'S  
(INTO) RESPONSE TO

THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE FOR  
EDUCATION

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
INSPECTORATE AND THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT  
PROCESS

**into**



**Irish National Teachers' Organisation**  
***Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann***

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) is the largest teachers' union in Ireland, with approximately 7,000 members currently in Northern Ireland. The INTO has members in nursery, primary, post-primary and special schools, including teachers at all stages of their career, from student teachers through to principals, and across all sectors of education in Northern Ireland.
2. The INTO, along with the other recognised teacher unions in the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have had a longstanding arrangement with previous chief inspectors, Tom Shaw, Marion Matchett and Stanley Goudie for regular meetings to discuss relevant issues. There was initial resistance from the new chief inspector, Noelle Buick to continue this arrangement but we recently agreed that ETI meet with NITC once a term to discuss issues of concern to teachers in Northern Ireland.
3. INTO members withdrew co-operation from inspections from January 2012 to July 2012 as part of our campaign of industrial action on workload, pay and terms of condition of teachers.
4. Resolutions passed at recent INTO Northern Conferences

### 2012

Conference notes the on-going review of the ETI complaints procedure and is concerned that there is currently no facility to appeal the overall outcome of a school inspection.

Conference calls on Northern Committee:

- (i) through the NITC, to work to ensure that a mechanism to formally challenge the findings of a school inspection, before it is published, is built into the procedure;
- (ii) to seek to ensure that ETI does everything it can to engender increased levels of confidence in the proposed procedure such as including an element of independent oversight at the internal investigation stage;
- (iii) to ensure that all ETI visits are formally planned.

### 2013

Conference notes the on-going NITC discussions with the ETI in relation to school inspections.

Conference calls on Northern Committee through the NITC, to work to ensure:

- (i) An inspection system which is supportive and developmental;
- (ii) The inspection teams comprise inspectors with relevant and recent experience of the sectors / subjects being inspected;
- (iii) The role of the district inspector is one of support and assistance;

- (iv) The abolition of the grading system for inspection outcomes;
- (v) The removal of the social class bias which is evident in inspection outcomes.

5. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) introduced a new risk based approach to inspections using performance indicators and monitoring to determine how often a school should be inspected. This coincided with the retirement of the chief inspector, Stanley Goudie.
6. A new chief inspector, Noelle Buick, formerly of OFSTED in England took up post in May 2012.
7. The INTO were a major contributor to the GTCNI/NITC document 'Striking the Right Balance, Towards a Framework of School Accountability for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning'. A copy of which is appended to this document and details comprehensively the views of INTO.
8. Also appended to this document is a paper prepared by the NITC and tabled for discussion with the ETI in November 2012.

#### ETI'S CURRENT APPROACH IN RESPECT OF INSPECTION/IMPROVEMENT

9. INTO members have reported a change in inspections in recent years with an increase in workload in preparing documentation for the inspection and increased stress associated with the process for principals and teachers.
10. The manner in which inspections are currently carried out is increasing pressure on schools to perform for the inspection and then go back to doing what they have been doing. There is a very real sense among teachers that what is expected of them in inspections is unsustainable throughout the rest of the time. It is true that to an extent teachers put themselves under pressure too but that is because the climate in schools and inspections is such that to do any less would be to receive a poor inspection report.
11. The reality of day to day teaching and management in schools is not what is observed by the ETI when they visit. Principals and teachers do not feel able to carry on as normal in front of the inspectorate or raise issues with them in case it leads to a poor or average report.
12. A consequence of the nature of the current inspections is that schools feel under pressure to do whatever they think, or they have heard, the ETI wish to see. This therefore leads to a distortion of the school's development plan with ETI driving the school's agenda rather than the actual needs of the pupils and the school. Innovation or trying a different approach, which may actually be more beneficial for their pupils, is viewed as too risky, particularly if they think an inspection is due.

13. The potential impact of the inspection report has increased in recent years. Within a system of education where funding is based on pupil numbers, schools have to compete for pupils and in such circumstances a poor/bad or even average report can have a detrimental impact on school numbers.
14. In addition the use of school inspection reports as indicators of a sustainable school also means that schools have to fight for their survival. In this situation principals/teachers and even Boards of governors are reluctant to raise issues in relation to the inspection process or the report of their school in case it backfires on them.
15. The role of the District Inspector (DI) is one that was highly valued not just by schools but also by the DIs themselves. This role of advice and support to schools has changed in the last few years. Previously the principal was able to contact the DI in relation to school improvement issues in the confidence that seeking advice and support on areas of identified weakness would not be detrimental to the school and in fact was viewed by the DI as a strength and support duly given. That role has now changed, the DI is no longer a source of advice and support. In fact schools have reported where they have raised issues with the DI they very soon find those issues the subject of an inspection.

#### SCHOOLS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

16. In recent years the level of support available to schools has decreased. Where schools have identified issues requiring support they have been informed that unless the school has a poor inspection report or a teacher is in the formal procedure there is no support available. Essentially schools or teachers have to fail before they can avail of support. This approach is detrimental to school improvement and undermines the ability of schools to address issues when they identify them.
17. A relevant and appropriate menu of support is required for teachers and schools to enable issues to be addressed early and minimise any detrimental effects on performance and school improvement.

#### ALTERNATIVE INSPECTION/IMPROVEMENT APPROACHES.

18. The Scottish inspection system emphasises cooperation and collaboration and where inspections are carried out in a constructive, positive and professional manner. It is very much viewed as a 'two-way process'.
19. The only written feedback given to schools is the report issued to the school, the parents and published on the ETI website. This is a short document with a few bullet points indicating the school's strengths, weaknesses and areas for development. This document is of little or no real use to a school in addressing the issues due to the lack of detail contained in the report.

20. In the Scottish system two reports are issued. A short report for parents and publication and a longer report for the school, detailing the areas for improvement and what they need to do to effect improvement. This is a more professional approach and is valued by teachers, principals and governors.
21. Further information on the Scottish system and the Finnish and New Zealand systems are in the appended GTCNI/NITC document, Striking the Right Balance.

#### ACTIONS TO IMPROVE ETIs APPROACH TO THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

##### 22. Appeals Procedure:

There is no appeals procedure in relation to school inspections. The complaints procedure currently in place has no element of independent oversight. All complaints are dealt with internally by the ETI with the Chief inspector being the final arbiter. There is no independent appeal mechanism, despite repeated requests from NITC to this effect. An independent appeals procedure is particularly important in instances where schools have reported changes between the oral feedback given to them by the reporting inspectors and the written document they receive.

##### 23. Makeup of the ETI

Currently the ETI are appointed on a permanent basis. This means that inspectors become further removed from classroom/school experience the longer they remain in the inspectorate.

Associate Assessors are appointed for a 3 year cycle and remain in their schools, taking part in inspections two to three times per year.

A system whereby inspectors are seconded to the ETI for a period of three to five years would enhance the inspectorate and the schools the secondees return to. This process would also enhance the confidence of the profession in the inspectorate and ensure that appropriately qualified and experienced teachers/principals were inspecting their schools.

## 24. Powers of ETI

The Education Bill proposes new additional powers for the ETI. It is the view of INTO that the powers of the ETI do not require enhancement. Currently there are restrictions on what the ETI can access within a school, in relation to data, documents, etc. The proposals would give ETI the right to demand children's books and other information which is used by the school and teachers to inform their work but which may not be easily understood out of context. The proposals if implemented would effectively place the ETI in charge of schools as opposed to Governors, not a role INTO believes they should have. Given the issues outlined above and in the appended documents, INTO is clearly of the view that the role of the ETI needs to be changed and the powers they currently hold reviewed, certainly not expanded as proposed in the Education Bill.

## ETI Towards a shared NITC position – the High Road or the Low Road?

**Introduction:** It is the view of NITC that, at minimum, the way in which teachers view Inspection has changed. This is partly because a poor inspection grade can start a downward spiral leading to closure of a school. Viability audits associated with the school rationalisation process make this so. Lurid headlines in local or regional press can provoke parental ‘stampedes’ away from a school placed in “intervention”. In addition, the school performance policy, ‘Every School a Good School’ is increasingly seen as a crude tool for a data-driven system of *hyper-accountability* in education.

The manner and mode of inspection is perceived by many teachers to be moving towards the high stakes “name and shame” style of OFSTED, the English inspectorate, rather than in the two-way, supportive and developmental emphasis of the inspection systems of Scotland or Ireland. This philosophical cleavage – of the “Low Road” versus the “High Road” - is at the heart of NITC concerns about inspection.

Broadly, the low road to educational success is characterised by systems of micro-accountability, league tables, excessive testing and assessment, tightly prescribed central curriculum, data driven, appraisal based on micro targets. In short, teaching as a middling skill, low discretion, craft.

The high road would characterise teaching as a reflective, high skill, high autonomy profession, with teachers recognised for their knowledge, expertise and judgement, at the level of the individual pupil and in articulating the wider role of education. Within light regional parameters, development of the education system collaboratively, the curriculum developed in partnership with local stakeholders; assessment should be carried out through local professional networks, with schools encouraged to work collaboratively across local learning partnerships.

So where does the Inspectorate sit within this “high road” vs “low road” spectrum?

We know that a sharp social class bias exists in inspection outcomes. You would expect that if the Inspectorate really took account of social class, and the advantages or disadvantages that particular schools face, that you’d find that schools in each social band would show the same broad range of inspection grades. If they really took account of social disadvantage, that is.

What you actually find, is that schools with the most advantaged intake band are to get an “Outstanding” or “Very Good” inspection grade than those from the least advantaged – and that schools from the least advantaged social band are four twice as likely times more likely to receive an “Inadequate” or “Unsatisfactory” grade than those from the most advantaged intake band.<sup>1</sup>

**Main issues for NITC:** In the table below, we set out the range of issues relating to Inspection, together with an NITC view.

Inspection Issue	NITC View
General Ethos	NITC considers that inspection should, fundamentally, be a supportive and <b>developmental</b> experience, rather than a <b>judgemental</b> one. As such, we believe there is more to learn from the Scottish or Irish inspection systems than the English (OFSTED) system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualifications of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NITC considers that the current qualification requirement of a</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Letter, Education & Training Inspectorate to the NITC on 2 November 2012

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualifications of Inspectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NITC considers that the current qualification requirement of a Degree + a teaching qualification is appropriate. However, NITC sees merit in working towards a substantial <b>majority</b> of Inspectors having <b>recent relevant</b> experience, at minimum within the past 5 years. The ETI and Education Minister have been reluctant to disclose the recent experience of current inspectors. One source considers that 38 of 59 full-time inspectors have no classroom experience.<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
Constructive Engagement with Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Termly ETI-Teacher union meetings</li> <li>• Work stream sub-groups on agreed priority areas</li> <li>• Work-shadowing: union personnel to work-shadow ETI inspectors to increase awareness of the total inspection process, across all phases</li> <li>• CPD Work Shadowing: Teachers to work-shadow ETI inspectors to increase awareness of the total inspection process</li> </ul>
More Teachers in ETI, creating a two way system	NITC considers that significantly increased numbers of serving teachers should experience spells of 2-4 years within the Inspectorate as Associate Inspectors. Facilitated as a CPD opportunity through secondment, we believe this would increase confidence and trust in the ETI, create a “two way” system, as well as increase movement to ‘aerate’ a rigid and ossified teaching workforce. Secondments could be organised through the ESA professional development unit and should be open to both teachers (on reaching the Upper Pay Scale) as well as Principals/Managers
Social Class Bias	NITC is shocked by the degree to which social class of the pupil intake correlates with Inspection results. The current situation whereby schools with the most advantaged intake band are twice as likely to get an “Outstanding” or “Very Good” inspection grade than those from the least advantaged – and that schools from the least advantaged social band are four times more likely to receive an “Inadequate” or “Unsatisfactory” grade than those from the most advantaged intake band is shocking. This issue requires immediate attention.
Grading System	NITC supports a <b>review</b> of the current grading system to consider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Status Quo</li> <li>• A 5 grade system</li> <li>• A 4 grade system</li> <li>• A 2 grade system</li> </ul> The NITC formal position is for a 2 grade system.
Inspection Notice	NITC considers that the current notice for inspection should be two weeks for standard and focussed inspections.
ETI status	Although NITC has no formal viewpoint, the Council supports a <b>review</b> of the status of the ETI, to consider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Status quo</li> <li>• Independent of the Department of Education (as an Agency or Non Departmental Government Body)</li> </ul>
Reporting Period	NITC considers that the current reporting period of up to 3 months

<sup>1</sup> UUP spokesperson, Danny Kinahan in NI Assembly debate on the Chief Inspector’s Report, 13 November 2012



	should be <b>reduced</b> to a maximum of 8 weeks, as in Scotland. This 8 week period should include time for reasonable, evidence based, professional challenge of the professional judgement of Inspectors. We do not support the quick response time of the English OFSTED system of 15 days as adequate for appropriate reflection.
Type of Report	NITC considers that the type and nature of Inspection reports have changed, negatively, over time. In the past, an Inspection report offered a richer, more rounded, picture of the school inspected. Today's practice is for significant levels of pre inspection data to 'pre-judge' the actual inspection, with the report more truncated and likely to "follow the stats" <sup>2</sup> NITC considers
Data / Evidence	NITC accepts that data relating to inspections does need to be held. For instance, the Supporting Effective Principals/Teachers procedure allows for the challenge of such evidence. NITC therefore supports the storing of evidence relating to inspection for a period not exceeding three years.
Right to seize data	The Education Bill allows for the ETI to assume draconian powers to seize data relevant to inspection. NITC opposes this clause within the Bill and will refer it to the Information Commissioner.
Inspection of Sub-Teachers	Substitute/Supply teachers should not be inspected / observed unless on a substantive temporary contract of one year

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<sup>2</sup> In regard to Inspection report style and content, the Northern Ireland system appears to be moving in the same direction as OFSTED in England. For fuller treatment of this evolution and shift in the emphasis of report writing, see Warwick Mansell: Education by Numbers, 2010 at <http://www.educationbynumbers.org.uk/>



General Teaching Council  
for Northern Ireland

Promoting Teacher Professionalism

# Striking the Right Balance

Towards a Framework of School  
Accountability for 21st Century Learning



GTCNI and NITC Response to the NI Assembly's Committee for Education *Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.*

*Endorsed by Northern Ireland Teachers Council (NITC)*

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## Introduction

This paper is submitted on behalf of The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) and The Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC).

**GTCNI** is the professional and regulatory body for teachers, responsible for establishing and maintaining a register of teachers; approving qualifications; promoting professional development and a code of ethics; regulating professional conduct and competence; and providing advice to the Department of Education and the employing authorities on all matters relating to teaching.

**NITC** is the teacher union side of the Teachers Negotiating Committee (TNC) with representation from: the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL); the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO); the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT); the National Association of Schoolmasters/ Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT); and the Ulster Teachers' Union and is responsible for negotiating on pay and seeking agreement on procedures to regulate conditions of service, as well as advising on educational policy.

The main author, Dr. Carmel Gallagher, Registrar of GTCNI, has undertaken comparative research into curriculum and assessment policy making in Northern Ireland, the UK and internationally. Additional research insights have been contributed by Mark Langhammer, Director of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and by Gerry Murphy, Northern Secretary the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO).

## Preface

GTCNI and NITC emphasise that any policy change should be informed by insights from research and professional practice and should take account of teachers' voice. On behalf of the profession we, therefore, warmly welcome this important inquiry and commend the Education Committee for initiating it. While the inquiry is focused on the effectiveness of the Education and Training Inspectorate and its role in School Improvement, in the words of the Education Committee's own research, the key issue is about achieving a *'balance between holding schools to account and allowing innovation and supporting school improvement'* (Perry, C. 2012, P1, NIARIS).

**This inquiry, therefore, has much wider implications for the entire ethos and culture of our education system, the focus of schools' work and the measures by which they are held accountable and supported. This in turn has major implications: for Department of Education policies in relation to school improvement; for ELB/ESA structures and processes for supporting schools; and for CCEA processes and mechanisms for assessment and examinations.**

**At the core of this chain of cause and effect is the Northern Ireland Programme for Government Targets and how these are monitored and reported by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and subsequently reported within the media.**

In order to stimulate debate across the profession about the central issues being raised by the inquiry GTCNI and NITC a) wish to provide advance notice of their intention to publish this evidence for wider discussion and b) would welcome the opportunity to present oral evidence to the Committee.

## Summary

### 1.1 The current approach to inspection / school improvement:

- ‘incentivises schools to prioritise compliance... over innovation’ (*Perry, C. 2012*);
- has an ‘in-built’ social bias, due to lack of socio-economic & other base-line data;
- is overly data driven, which may serve to ‘pre-judge’ outcomes;
- exacerbates fear that a poor inspection outcome may trigger a downward spiral;
- is at variance with inspection models in other successful education systems;
- produces a range of undesirable practices with unintended consequences;
- gives rise to a form of ‘blame culture’ which holds schools to account for failure to overcome the absence of family and community cultural capital (*McBeath 2012*);
- places intense pressure on young people (*McBeath 2012*) resulting in ‘compliance without engagement’ among Northern Ireland’s pupils (*Harland et al, 2002*); and ‘disengagement’ by many (*Purvis et al. 2011*)

### 1.2 The current approach to value-added is flawed because:

- it lacks sufficient base-line measurements and fails to analyse effect sizes and correct for student intake (*Mc Beath 2-12*);
- there is no solid evidence that investing in increasingly sophisticated measurement devices drives change (*OECD –Scotland report -2007*);
- performance indicators lose their usefulness when used as objects of policy (*William, 2001*);
- reducing attainment to a single figure or grade, while attractive to politicians and the public’... masks complex nuances in ability and performance. (*Gipps, 1994*);
- statistical differences .... tend to conceal more than they reveal (*i Mc Beath 2-12*);
- trying to achieve multiple objectives with a single policy instrument is not feasible’ (*Hanushek & Raymond, 2004*).

### 2.1 Key Issues for schools and gaps in support include:

- insufficient base-line measures to take account of factors which most influence variations in pupil attainment (*Sammons 2007*);
- selective systems exacerbate these differentials (*OECD 2011*)
- a deficit model of support; delays in the review of teacher education; and concern about lack of research and planning for a future school support strategy.

### 3 Alternative approaches/models that should be considered include:

- Finland, which does not have a school inspection regime at all.
- Scotland and Ireland, which emphasise a two-way collaborative approach
- New Zealand, which uses census information to stratify schools

#### 4 Recommendations to improve approach to school improvement

- 1 **Undertake a cost benefit analysis** of the relationship between inspection and school improvement ( *Whitby, K. 2010 in Perry, C. 2012, P21*)
- 2 **Develop a 'two-way' supportive model** (Scotland/Ireland) aligned to support services, widening the composition of the Inspectorate to include seconded teachers to 'aerate' the teaching workforce and increase ETI credibility;
- 3 **Stream-line inspection processes** to provide clearer guidance on pre-inspection data requirements; permit verbal (and written) challenge; reduce reporting timescales; improve the qualitative detail of the report back to schools.

#### Recommendations to improve the assessment of value-added

- 4 **Use NISRA census information** and to stratify schools according to socio-economic intake, catchment areas and journeys to school in order to allocate resources more effectively, target social need and calculate value-added.
- 5 **Use geographic information system (GIS)** to analyse the social characteristics of schools; to explore the effect of social and academic selection; and to work towards socially balanced school intakes.
- 6 **Assess productive language (oracy) on entry to school** as a key indicator of future educational potential and as a base-line measure of school value-added (*Stothard, Snowling, Bishop, Chipchase, & Kaplan, 1998*).

#### Recommendations to improve system monitoring

- 7 **Use light sampling** to provide robust and independent monitoring data over time, disentangling teacher assessment from accountability;
- 8 **Use International data** (PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA) to provide additional quantitative and qualitative information as a broader comparative measure.

#### Recommendations for alternative measures of achievement

- 9 **Develop and use wider indicators:** combining information of different kinds' to 'enable progress in all important learning goals to be reported' (*Tymms & Merrill, 2007; Assessment Reform Group, 2008*) and to provide 'value-added' insights.
- 10 **Use standardised testing data sensitively** for diagnostic, formative and value-added purposes. Establish comparability ratings between different test instruments but avoid prescribing a specific test to prevent teaching to the test.
- 11 **Use pupil attitudinal and 'well-being' surveys sensitively** to gain insight into the correlation between 'motivation', 'liking' and achievement (*Sturman, 2012*).
- 12 **Develop 'unseen' thinking skills assessments** 'to ensure that important 21<sup>st</sup> century skills become valued in the education system' (*OECD, 2011: 19*).
- 13 **Develop new qualifications for N. Ireland** which reflect needs of young people, the economy, employment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (*CBI 2012*).

- 14 **Commission international research and development** to assist CCEA in developing innovative 21<sup>st</sup> C assessment and examinations.
- 15 **Introduce a measure to reduce the number of pupils leaving school with no qualifications** by an agreed percentage.
- 16 **Revise Programme for Government Targets** to reflect the foregoing recommendations, based on a proper understanding of current performance and targeted investment in appropriate support and professional development.

## **Recommendations for additional powers, governance. transparency**

- 17 **Obtain powers to ban media publication of simplistic school league tables** which ignore school intake characteristics and proper value-added calculations.
- 18 **Ensure that any potential review of ETI status** is subject to robust, evidence-led tests alongside extensive debate and consultation with stakeholders
- 19 **Ensure that all future educational policy and measurement is based on sound research**, taking account of the complexity of education, the link between background, motivation and learning; leadership, professional development and school improvement; and respect for teaching as a complex profession committed to adding value to young people, society and the economy.

## **1 Review of current approaches to inspection, school improvement and assessing value-added**

### **1.1 ETI's current approach to school inspection / improvement**

- 1.1.1 **A 'risk-based' approach to inspection:** was introduced by ETI in 2010 (Perry, C. 2012) which prioritised school performance indicators and ongoing monitoring as the major determinant of when schools should be inspected. As the Education Committee's own research evidence highlighted, there are *'concerns around the pressures for organisations undergoing inspection, and ...that evaluation can incentivise schools to prioritise compliance with requirements over innovation'* (ibid). Other concerns about the current ETI approach to inspection which GTCNI and NITC wish also to highlight include concerns about:
  - 1.1.2 **Socio-economic bias:** Research has verified that *'Socio-economic status is the most important difference between individuals'* (OECD –Scotland report -2007:15) and the greatest determinant of educational performance. If inspection took appropriate account of social advantage and disadvantage in terms of value-added, then schools in each social band should be able to achieve the same broad range of inspection grades. Instead, analysis of inspection outcomes over the last few years suggest that schools from the least advantaged social band are four times more likely to receive an "inadequate" or "unsatisfactory" grade than those from the most advantaged intake, which are twice as likely to get an "outstanding" or "very good" inspection outcome (Irish News, 26 February 2013).
  - 1.1.3 **Pre - Inspection data requirements:** The inspection notice period given to schools varies from two to four weeks (ibid), to give schools time to provide necessary data. While the evidence which informs inspection judgements includes classroom observation, interactions with pupils, and parent and staff, considerable emphasis is placed on written evidence. The

perception is that pre-inspection data may serve to 'pre-judge' the actual inspection process (Mansell, W, 2007). In addition:

- There is no clear directions on the ETI website about what documentation schools are expected to provide;
- C2kni guidance to schools on formatting pre-inspection reports runs to 52 pages;
- A GTCNI analysis of support documentation revealed a confusing array of policies and guidance that require stream-lining; and
- Teacher Union case study data suggests, for example, that it is now the 'norm' in standard inspections for schools to be required to return data in the range of 2 gigabytes (around 700 pages).

1.1.4 **The ethos of ETI inspection:** Although NISRA's post-inspection survey of schools that underwent inspection in 2011-12 revealed largely positive attitudes to the process, (Perry. C. 2012, 3) viability audits associated with school rationalisation have exacerbated fears that a poor inspection grade can lead to negative media reporting, provoking parental 'stampedes' away from schools placed in "intervention", beginning a downward spiral to potential school closure. For many, the school performance policy 'Every School a Good School' is perceived as a crude tool for hyper-accountability.

1.1.5 **ETI Reporting:** In the past, an Inspection report offered a richer, more rounded, picture of the school inspected. Today's practice suggests that pre inspection data may serve to 'pre-judge' the actual inspection process, with the report more truncated and likely to "follow the stats" (Mansell, W, 2007). Concern has been expressed also about inconsistencies in the judgements made by different inspection teams. As a result the Inspection process is no longer perceived by the profession as positive and constructive but rather, more akin to a narrowly judgemental, OFSTED-inspired, model. This approach is at variance with inspection models in other more successful education systems both within these islands and beyond. Evidence from other jurisdictions, including Finland, where there is no inspection process and Scotland, where the Inspectorate has been aligned with the support services to provide a joined-up approach, suggests that a supportive and development quality assurance culture is more likely to instil confidence, win respect and reap rewards.

## 1.2 How ETI assesses value added

1.2.1 **Over-emphasis on numerical value-added:** Although ETI undertake inspections using 15 indicators, the strong emphasis on meeting numerical targets (i.e. *the % of pupils achieving designated levels at specific key stages or 5A\* to C at GCSE*) is perceived as the dominant indicator when judging value-added. In the absence of more finely tuned base-line measures of each school's intake profile reliance on numerical data primarily is an insufficiently robust basis on which to assess school quality or value-added. A wide range of research has questioned the value of Levels of Attainment in particular, as a robust numeric, highlighting that:

- *Use of assessment evidence for accountability is based on the idea that measuring itself leads to improvement...Over the last 20 years there is no solid evidence from research or practice that investing in increasingly sophisticated measurement devices drives change (OECD –Scotland report -2007, p15).*



- *'Any progression is a construction. What it demonstrates will depend on how the "ruler" (the measure of progress) is defined' (Darr & McDowall, 2008).*
- *Performance indicators lose their usefulness when used as objects of policy.... When used as the sole index of quality, the manipulability of these indicators destroys the relationship between the indicator and the indicated' ('Goodhart's Law' - former chief economist at the Bank of England quoted in Wiliam, 2001: 2).*
- *...Put bluntly, the clearer you are about what you want, the more likely you are to get it, but the less likely it is to mean anything' (Wiliam, 2001: 2).*
- *Reducing attainment to a single figure or grade while attractive to politicians and the public' as a form of shorthand' in which to report performance masks complex nuances in ability and performance (Gipps, 1994: 27)*
- *Trying to achieve multiple objectives with a single policy instrument is not feasible' (Hanushek & Raymond, 2004)*
- *Assessments should be treated as approximations, subject to unavoidable errors (Gardner 2008)*

1.2.2 **School perceptions of the lack of usefulness of value-added measures:** In a recent independent survey conducted by GTCNI June 2013 (responded to by almost 50% of schools) the following views were expressed about the usefulness of numerical Levels to inform:

- Boards of Governors judgements of value-added (% to be added)
- Parents' understanding of their child's progress
- Receiving Schools about what a pupil knows and can do
- ELBs of the support a school may need
- ETI to understand the value added by schools
- DE and Politicians to understand system performance

## 2 Key Issues and Gaps

### 2.1 Key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties

2.1.1 **Insufficient base-line measures:** The cardinal rule of accountability is to hold people accountable for what they can control.

Over three decades of research into school effectiveness and improvement in a range of countries (Sammons, P. 2007) highlights that the factors which most influence variations in pupil attainment are:

- Individual characteristics (age, birth weight, gender);
- Family socio-economic characteristics (particularly family structure, parental background: qualification levels, health, socio-economic status, employment/unemployment, and income level);
- Family cultural capital, (particularly the powerful impact of the child's home learning environment, especially in the early years, as a predictor of attainment);
- Community and societal characteristics (neighbourhood context, cultural expectations, social structural divisions especially in relation to social class); and last of all, educational experiences, where teachers and schools can add value.

Of these, the two most influential factors are socio-economic status and the quality of parenting.

- 2.1.2 **A deficit culture:** It is a well known that the cause of 'differentials in educational performance lie largely outside schools and the classroom' (*Purvis et al., 2011, 7*) and that affecting change in schools can prove futile against the culture of the surrounding community, its attitudes, values, traditions and beliefs (Vollmer 2010 in *McBeath 2012: P42*) Since very little account is taken of the factors that influence variations in pupil attainment, the 'blame' for failure to overcome family and community cultural capital tend to be placed at '*the door of schools and on the shoulders of teachers*' (*ibid P21*).

*'If children are not succeeding, it is obviously the fault of teachers, their low expectations or incompetence, the malign influence of unions on teachers, or failures of leadership to raise standards... There may be a nodding acknowledgement to social and economic factors but successive governments have regarded any reference to these as excuses and insisted that background factors can be overcome by good teachers and inspirational leaders, This ignores the growing body of evidence about the crucial influences [for example, during pregnancy of the effects of smoking, drugs and foetal alcohol syndrome, poor stimulus and bonding in the first nine months after conception and poor child care in the early years] that are beyond the repair of even the most enlightened teacher' (ibid, 21-2).*

*'The task facing teachers and other professionals who work with children from disadvantaged backgrounds is, for these reasons, much more challenging now than it was a generation ago'. (Alexander and Hargreaves, 2007, 3).*

- 2.1.3 **Unintended effects of narrow accountability:** International research by the OECD confirms that strong accountability systems (such as narrowly focused inspections, exam focused quasi-league tables and cumbersome end of key stage assessment processes) produce a range of undesirable practices with unintended consequences, such as: teaching to the test; spoon-feeding the patients; 'nursing the coursework'; gaming the grade boundaries; and twisting the system generally. A recent paper from the OECD, as well as a range of other UK and local NI research, suggest that:

- *'The higher the stakes are for school leaders and teachers, the more these unintended/undesired effects are likely to occur.'*  
(Hooge et al 2012, 10)
- *'Children are under intense and perhaps excessive pressure from the policy driven demands of their schools and the commercially-driven values of the wider society' (McBeath 2012, 22)*
- *There is persistent evidence to challenge the belief that school improvement strategies in general, and literacy and numeracy strategies in particular, can affect the level of change needed to address the endemic long tail of underachievement* (Gallagher, C, 2012)

2.1.4 **Pupil 'compliance without engagement':** The Northern Ireland Cohort Study (1996-2002) of 3,000 pupils over 7 years revealed a culture among young people of 'compliance without engagement' even among high-performing grammar school pupils (Harland et al, 2002). School was described by pupils as only useful for jumping hurdles to pass exams, but with little relevance to real life. As a result of their feedback and wide consultation with teachers and wider society the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum was introduced in 2007. Unfortunately a revised assessment system has not kept pace with its 21<sup>st</sup> Century thinking.

2.1.5 **The peer effect:** We have significant evidence that young people from a disadvantaged background, separated at age 11 from the positive aspirations of their 'better-off' peers, switch off from exam-focused schooling altogether (Purvis et al. 2011).

*The power of the 'compositional' or peer effect has been shown to be one of the strongest determining factors of achievement and attitude, but is also mediated by the strength of cultural capital within the family. The weaker the social and intellectual capital in the family, the stronger the influences of peers, which tends to find its level at the lowest common denominator (Mc Beath 2012; 47)*

*Dominant forces in childhood and adolescence can be ascribed to 'significant others' who shape values and character often more insidiously and powerfully than parents and teachers which play out in school and classroom life on the one hand and in street and neighbourhood culture on the other hand (Harris J 1998 in ibid, P47)*

'Neighbourhoods' and their impact on educational outcomes is being explored locally through the Iliad Project (Ruth Leitch, Education, QUB) See also van Ham and Manley's research.

2.1.6 **Wider differentials in attainment in NI:** Thus in Northern Ireland, a 20% underachievement problem doubles into a more serious 40% problem, mainly of social class failure and disenchantment. It is foolhardy to ignore the consistent international evidence that selective systems create wider differentials of

achievement and stack greater odds against the economically disadvantaged. The outcomes of this policy are evident on our streets.

## 2.2 Gaps in the ETI review process

**2.2.1 *Lack of analysis of effect sizes and correction for student intake:*** School quality is the degree to which a school scores better than other schools, corrected for student intake characteristics. An effect size is no more than a relative measure subject to considerable margins of error. Researchers are cautious about quantifying the language of effects, pointing out that statistical differences are often marginal and tend to conceal more than they reveal. This, however, has not prevented DE and ETI conflating the term 'effective' (a statistical term borrowed from economics) with the perception of 'good' (which is a value judgement) (*Mc Beath 2-12: 44*).

**2.2.2 *Understanding the school effect:*** The comparative importance of various factors in influencing pupil performance has been researched for many years and within a number of research traditions. An important categorisation is between factors internal and external to the school. The larger the sample under investigation, the smaller the influence of school factors has been found to be. The huge 'Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey' conducted in the United States for President Johnson in 1966 was an early example, which concluded that the school effect was very small. A more recent tradition in the United States is for econometric studies (see e.g. Hanushek) which have reached the same conclusion.

As a counter to the fatalism which might derive from such findings, the school improvement movement in Britain sought to identify characteristics of effective schools, on the assumption that the generalisation of effective techniques would raise overall achievement. However, a review of this work by one of its most eminent practitioners (Mortimore) also confirmed that such internal factors were much less influential than external ones. A review of related studies (Chevalier, Dolton and Levacic, 2005) concluded that the variance in pupil performance due to schools ranged between 5% and 18%. A more recent study (Cassen and Kingdon) of a population of half a million pupils found the secondary school factor to be 14%.

*Consistent among studies since the 1966 Coleman Report has been the identification of the school effect as being between 8 and 15 per cent, While this is a statistic to be treated with much caution and qualification, the interplay of school with family, neighbourhood and community needs to be taken into account in any judgement about teaching quality and effect (Mc Beath, 2012: 45).*

Given the high degree of agreement between researchers from different traditions, a judgement that approximately 85% of the variation in pupil achievement is due to factors external to the school is secure and conservative. The major gap in the DE policy of 'Every school a Good School' and in the ETI school review process is,

therefore, the lack of analysis of effect sizes, which may be marginal, and the lack of appropriate correction for student intake. The review process also prevents schools from challenging findings that may be *'no more than a relative measure subject to considerable margins of error'*.

## 2.3 Gaps in the support services provided by the Department

- 2.3.1 ***Delay in the Review of Teacher Education:*** While it is accepted internationally that *'No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers'* (McKinsey Report, OECD, 2007) and that *'Change is based on building the expertise of the profession'* (Hayward et.al: 2012) yet the DE Review of Teacher Education has been on-going for over a decade.
- 2.3.2 ***Absence of provision for career-long professional development:*** The most-highly regarded education systems in the world: sustain a very high respect for teaching as a profession; attract able and committed people into it; provide quality research-informed initial teacher education linked to up to date classroom practice; support all professionals throughout their careers with effective career-long professional development; and provide effective and appropriate training for leadership positions. The reality in teaching, unlike other professions, is the lack of coherent and sustained provision to support career-long professional development and leadership so that teachers have opportunities to continually re-refresh their skills, confidence, capacity and motivation. There is a pressing need in Northern Ireland to provide a policy framework and to allocate sustainable resources to support the career-long professional development of teachers, aligned to professional competences and to the processes of school development planning, school self-evaluation, PRSD and external quality assurance.

## 2.3 Gaps in the support services provided by the ELBs

- 2.4.1 ***Deficit model of support:*** ELB support is now targeted almost exclusively on schools identified by the ETI and management authorities as failing to meet the required academic standards. This approach has emerged, not as part of any strategic shift in the thinking but, rather, as a consequence of the vacancy control policy related to ESA. Schools which have not been identified as failing academically are now struggling to effect meaningful change due to shortfalls in expertise within their own staffs and a shortage of finance to purchase this expertise from outside, even if it was available. Many ELB officers report that their task, post-inspection, is as much about restoring confidence and motivation after inspection trauma, as improving teaching and learning.
- 2.4.2 ***Concerns about future support strategy planning:*** From the limited information available at this time, this appears to be the main strategy for how future support will be prioritised to schools in future. The limitations of such an approach are already manifest. This is a serious issue because as time moves on schools will not have the necessary knowledge and skills available to them to exploit developments in educational thinking and approaches into the future. While there is a growing

acceptance that the best professional development is school-centred, collegial and focused on the core skills of better teaching learning and assessment, this will not happen overnight or without a proper strategy and support. There is a need to 'pump-prime' and sustain a professional development initiative, centred on effective classroom practice.

### 3. Alternative approaches / models of good practice

**3.1.1 Finland**, which has sustained its position at the top of the international leagues tables for many years, does not have a school inspection regime at all. This insight would appear to support the Education Committee's own research findings that: *'There is relatively little proof of the relationship between school inspection and school improvement, although it is known that school accountability links to student outcomes (other accountability measures include the use of examination results and market choice)'* (Perry, C.2012, 5)

**3.1.2 Scotland's** inspection service increasingly emphasises a two-way collaborative approach, aiming to work with staff in a *"constructive, positive and professional manner"* (ibid). Several changes have happened over the past 2-3 years, the most significant of which is the much closer alignment of the Scottish Inspection Service with the school support service within a new amalgamated structure, under the banner of 'Education Scotland'.

- **Revised inspection arrangements in Scotland:** place a stronger focus on: school self-evaluation; analysis of a wider range of outcomes; and a wider range of "continuing engagement" or "improvement visits" carried out by non-HMI development officers and/or senior education officers who work within Education Scotland. (Such visits can involve HMI from time to time). This engagement aims to offer support more directly or to capture and publish innovative or creative work noted on inspection.
- **The PRAISE framework** (a self-evaluation tool used by HMI, individually and as a team) is used after each inspection to evaluate HMI performance on inspection.
- **A New Scottish Benchmarking Tool** is a new approach to assessing added value has been piloted and will be introduced from August 2014. It aims to help local authorities and secondary schools to analyse, compare and improve the attainment and achievement performance of pupils in the new senior phase (Secondary 4 to 6) and
  - takes into account a wider range of qualifications and learning programmes, including post-school participation, than has previously been the case. It provides
  - provides an intuitive, easy to use range of data brought together on the national dashboard
  - promotes a richer understanding of information to help raise attainment (e.g. the virtual schools methodology designed for schools to use for comparison purposes.)

- **Scottish School Improvement Partnerships** programme led by Education Scotland working with local authorities and professional associations have been set up to tackle the link between socio-economic deprivation and low educational attainment.

### 3.2 Assessment of value added / school improvement in other jurisdictions

- 3.2.1 **New Zealand's socio-economic 'decile system'** informs school base-lining, value added, resource allocation and other services: Census information is used to place schools into ten deciles. Student addresses are assigned to the smallest Census areas, called mesh-blocks, which contain about 50 households. The mesh-block is examined against five socio-economic factors drawn from census data, including: *parental educational qualifications; parental occupation; household occupancy; household income; and Income support*. The five census factors are weighted by the number of students from each mesh-block so that those where only a few of students live will have little impact on a school's decile, while those having more will have a greater impact. The five scores for each school are added together (without any weightings) to give a total, which gives the overall standing of a school in relation to all other schools in the country. Each school receives a score according to the percentile that they fall into. This enables the Ministry to place schools into ten groups, called deciles, each having the same number of schools. Decile 1 schools (10%) have the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 10 schools' are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students. Analogous contextual information– with the exception of household income – is available in Northern Ireland not only from the 2001 and 2011 Census but also other administrative sources (see ward-level benefit information on [www.ninis.gov.uk](http://www.ninis.gov.uk)). There are potential linkages here to the recommendations contained in the Salisbury report.
- 3.2.2 **Australia:** Some Australian states, for example Victoria, have developed similar models to New Zealand that merit further research.

## 4 Recommendations and Priorities for Action

### 4.1 ...To improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process

**4.1.1 Research into the cost/benefits of inspection service:** Given the current pressures on the education budget, further research should be conducted into the value-added by inspection services, given the research insights that: *'Holding schools accountable is known to contribute to improved student outcomes. However, there is relatively little proof of the relationship between inspection and school improvement'* (Whitby, K. 2010 in Perry, C. 2012, P21).

**4.1.2 Devise a constructive 'two-way supportive inspection process' (Scotland/Ireland) closely aligned to support services:** to ensure joined up, consistent and supportive messages utilising a 3 point supportive, as opposed to deficit, grading system, for example 'Confident', 'Partially Confident' or 'Not confident'. Professional views on the merits of a 'credit' rather than 'deficit' model of inspection are supported by the CBI whose Director, John Cridland, in a recent speech to launch the CBI's 'First Steps' called for:

*'a rigorous and demanding accountability regime that assesses schools' performance on a **wider basis** than the narrow measure of exams. We need to define 'a new performance standard based on the whole person'...and 'a shift to new style [inspection] reports which will assess both academic rigour and the broader behaviours and attitudes that young people need to get on in life'.*(CBI First Steps Report 2012)

**4.1.3 Widen the composition of the Inspectorate:** Increase the numbers of serving teachers seconded as Associate Inspectors for between 2-4 year periods and open to both teachers (on reaching the Upper Pay Scale) and Principals. This "two way" system would serve to increase movement, 'aerate' the teaching workforce and increase confidence and trust in the ETI.

**4.1.4 Streamline the inspection process:** Provide clear guidance on the ETI website of pre-inspection data requirements; encourage a constructive verbal (and written) challenge process; and reduce reporting timescales to a maximum of 8 weeks, as in Scotland, but avoiding the OFSTED 15 day schedule (which is considered inadequate for appropriate reflection).

**4.1.5 Encourage Local Learning Partnerships and Sectoral Bodies** to progressively assume a lead role in Inspection.

## **4.2 ...To improve calculation of value-added**

**4.2.1 Socio-economic base-line data:** explore the potential to use NISRA census information to calculate the socio-economic intake of schools to:

- stratify schools (into deciles) according to the socio-economic intake
- map school/pupil catchment areas and journeys
- allocate resources more effectively to target social need
- calculate value-added on the basis of better baseline data (see also recommendation 2 about base-lining pupil's productive language on entry to school)

**4.2.2 School catchment analytics:** Develop a GIS system (geographic information system) to capture, store, manipulate, analyze, manage, and 'map' all types of statistical analysis and databases to produce detailed educational analytics; to compare actual with expected school catchments and to consider daily spatial moves for different groups by gender, FSM status, social class and so on. The data could be collected through existing administrative procedures<sup>3</sup> or using the 2011 Census to calculate school catchments and pupil journeys to school. Spatial information of this kind could make a useful addition to a multilevel framework that includes individual and household level information.

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<sup>3</sup> These data are available already. It is surprising they have not been mapped by DENI and the results made publicly available already.



4.2.3 **Educational baseline data:** Undertake oracy assessments (productive language on school entry) on entry to school as a key determinant of ability to learn. There are a whole range of baseline measures that might be used to assess spoken language on entry. One well-known example is The Renfrew Bus Story (RBS) - a short screening assessment of receptive and expressive oral language for young children age 3 years to 6 years 11 months. Using 'narrative re-tell', the RBS provides a quantitative and qualitative assessment of each child's oral language skills based on rich language data. It has been shown to be able to identify children with language impairments, as well as to be predictive of later language and academic skill (Stothard, Snowling, Bishop, Chipchase, & Kaplan, 1998). The assessment is quick to administer and enjoyable for children, using a technique that is familiar to most children – storytelling. Other comparable examples might be researched and trialled for suitability.

4.2.4 **System monitoring through sampling data:** Develop a system relying on 'light sampling' of a percentage of schools, for example 10% each year to provide stable and robust information for the purposes of accountability and policy formation. Virtually all of the research into the use of teacher assessment (and levels of attainment in particular) advises against the use of numerical assessment outcomes for target setting and accountability purposes. Instead, it advises that school evaluation should be disentangled from accountability, and that monitoring standards over time should operate outside an accountability framework. Recent advice in Scotland (Hayward et al., 2012) endorses this and suggests the potential for enhanced targeted sampling in areas where there are concerns, to provide robust and independent data.

#### 4.2.5 **System monitoring from International data (and objective interpretation)**

The Department already has a wealth of quantitative and qualitative sampled data from international testing, together (PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA) with detailed qualitative information on the sampled population. This needs to be properly analysed and fed back to participating schools as part of the improvement process – as well as a broader comparative measure for the whole system. Care needs to be taken in data analysis and reporting so as to avoid simplistic rank ordering and the tendency to misinterpret significance.

### 4.3 **Alternative measures of achievement**

4.3.2 **Develop and use wider indicators:** Experts in the field have called for the gathering of 'multiple indicators of standards by combine information of different kinds' to 'enable progress in all important learning goals to be facilitated and reported and should) Assessment Reform Group 2008: 5; Tymms and Merrill, 2007: 14; Gardner et al, 2008: 5) and, to inform decisions about expenditure, the allocation of time and resources and to provide potential 'value-added' insights.. The following suggestions, which are not exhaustive, illustrate the potential for improving the range and quality of data that might be garnered to facilitate a more sophisticated analysis of the value-added by schools

- 4.3.1 Sensitive use of standardised testing data:** Most schools use standardised tests of literacy and numeracy (for example NFER and Durham tests) for diagnostic and formative purposes, precisely because the level system provides no specific information about what a pupil knows, understands and can do. The tests allow pupils to be compared with a large, UK wide representative sample. The standardised score is on a scale that can be readily compared and combined with standardised scores from other tests; to give a percentile rank order based on the population as a whole. The tests can also detect learning difficulties in aspects of literacy and numeracy which schools can then focus on. Data from such tests would need to be anonymous and used in a very sensitive way, for example combined with other baseline and sampling data, to prevent schools from teaching to test. There is benefit therefore in not prescribing a specific test but comparability ratings could be established between different test instruments.
- 4.3.2 Attitudinal data:** Attitudinal surveys are a potential proxy for actual measurement. There is a well-established correlation (for example, in PIRLS & TIMSS 2011) between being a 'motivated or somewhat motivated reader' and between those who 'liked learning Mathematics/Like Learning Science bands' and the highest achievement in the subject. The better readers, for example, were also the more confident readers. The pupils who reported being most confident in mathematics and science were also the pupils who had higher average achievement scores. If we could teach towards motivation and enjoyment then achievement (and life-long learning dispositions) would follow. There are also a number of measures of social, emotional and personal well-being which might be investigated (for example the ACER scale) and of creativity and dispositions to learn (Bristol University and Antidote) which also could be considered in any holistic assessment of a quality education.
- 4.3.3 Proportionate focus on the 'old' literacies:** The relentless focus on literacy and numeracy, while important, ignores the evidence that 80% of the school population is doing relatively well (Tymms, 2004) and that pupils are in danger of being turned off by too much drill and lack of creativity in education. The proportions of pupils in Northern Ireland who do not like reading was higher than the international mean (Sturman et al., 2012).
- 4.3.4 Greater focus on the 'new' literacies:** Concerns are increasingly being expressed about preparing young people for what has become known as the 'knowledge era'. reflecting the exponential growth, ease of access to, and speed of flow, of all kinds of knowledge via the world-wide web and social media. This knowledge revolution has had a profound impact on our access to knowledge and our potential to learn. There is a need for a profound shift in conceptions of learning and knowledge 'rigour' that moves away from memorisation of traditional knowledge towards more creative conceptions of learning associated with research, information management, knowledge construction and creativity across traditional subject boundaries, which in turn require more complex forms of assessment that are not readily achieved through traditional examinations.

A recent OECD report (2011) highlights how already high-performing countries like Japan and Korea have taken action 'to ensure that 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that are considered important become valued in the education system' (OECD, 2011: 19). The outcomes of these changes in assessment policy are believed to be already bearing fruit a decade later (ibid.).

A recent survey of seventeen countries (OECD, 2009) found that most countries or regions cover 21st century skills and competencies in their regulations, guidelines or recommendations for compulsory education. However, there are few specific definitions of these skills and competencies at national or regional level and virtually no clear formative or summative assessment policies for these skills. The only evaluation regarding their teaching is often left to external inspectors as part of their whole school audits. (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009: 4).

Northern Ireland is an exception, having put in place specific definitions of these skills and competencies and valuable support materials at national/regional level.

The recently published *OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Synergies for Better Learning - An International perspective on evaluation and assessment* (April 2013) recommends that countries should align assessment with educational goals, designing fit-for-purpose evaluations and assessments, and ensuring a clear understanding of educational goals by school agents. The opportunity should be taken in the review of GCSEs and A levels to develop new qualifications for N.Ireland to be taken at the appropriate age (17-18) which reflect the 21st century needs of young people, the economy, employment and life-fulfilment.

- 4.3.5 Research and Development in innovation assessment and examining:** The recently published OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Synergies for Better Learning - An International perspective on evaluation and assessment (April 2013) recommends that countries should align assessment with educational goals, designing fit-for-purpose evaluations and assessments, and ensuring a clear understanding of educational goals by school agents.

The opportunity should be taken in the review of GCSEs and A levels to develop new qualifications for N.Ireland to be taken at the appropriate age (17-18) which reflect the 21st century needs of young people, the economy, employment and life-fulfilment. Proactive research should be commissioned, possibly from the OECD or from leading international assessment organizations (for example the Australian Council for Educational Research - ACER) to assist CCEA in identifying, trialling and evaluating innovative 21<sup>st</sup> C assessment and examinations mechanisms to move the field forward.

- 4.3.6 21<sup>st</sup> Century 'unseen' thinking skills assessment** at Key Stages 2 and 3 (and possibly also as a synoptic overview assessment of skills at GCSE/A Level similar to Queensland) should focus on the promotion of 21<sup>st</sup> Century thinking skills, (possibly as an 'unseen' assessment of information management, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity. This would mean that assessment and examining serve the curriculum (and the skills needs of the economy) and drives pedagogy in the direction of developing student thinking skills. If, therefore, teachers were 'teaching to the test' they would be teaching towards the skills, identified by the OECD and the CBI as key to 21<sup>st</sup> C competence which are already central to the revised curriculum.

**4.3.7 Monitoring standards over time** must be undertaken outside an accountability framework; otherwise the accountability pressures distort the processes of learning and the outcome data. CCEA moderation processes should therefore support the development of better assessment literacy while ETI processes should monitor and support standards of teaching and learning.

**4.3.8 Teacher assessment for learning only:** Quality feedback to pupils is considered one of the most effective strategies to improve learning (The Sutton Trust). The clear recommendation from assessment experts (Assessment Reform Group; Gipps; Tymms etc) is that processes of teaching learning and assessment should focus on improving learning only and should not be over-burdened with bureaucracy or exposed to potential manipulation for accountability purposes.

**4.3.9 Revise Programme for Government Targets** to reflect the foregoing recommendations, based on a proper understanding of current system performance and future capacity and investment.

## **4.4 Additional powers, improved governance, transparency**

**4.4.1 Powers to ban media publication of school outcome data:** Some states make it an offence for newspapers to publish school outcome information which allows the construction of false rank orders which take no account of intake, as in a number of other countries.

**4.4.2 Ensure that any potential review of ETI status** is subject to robust, evidence-led tests alongside extensive debate and consultation with stakeholders.

**Conclusion: - Mark Langhammer ATL**

The purpose of this submission has been is to stimulate school and stakeholder discussion and influence policy thinking on the development of a new accountability system for schools in Northern Ireland, based on multiple data sources to better meet the Department of Education's vision of "*Every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development*"<sup>4</sup>. An important dimension is to inform future (and better) Programme for Government targets for education and associated accountability arrangements.

In recent years in Northern Ireland, a conflict of educational philosophies has tended to divide opinion between (to borrow a Scots analogy) the "High Road" and the "Low Road". The "Low Road"

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<sup>4</sup> Department of Education Vision for Education 2012-15, at [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)

is characterised by systems of micro-accountability, league tables, excessive testing and assessment, tightly prescribed central curriculum, , data driven, appraisal based on micro targets. The “High Road” is characterised by a reflective, high skill, highly autonomy profession, where teachers recognised for their knowledge, expertise and judgement as a low skill, low discretion, craft<sup>5</sup>.

The evidence<sup>6</sup> from international research is that narrowly focused hard targets can get a system from ‘Poor’ to ‘Average’, but developing from ‘Average’ to ‘Good’ or ‘Great’ requires more than a ‘low road’ deficit model of managerial accountability<sup>7</sup>. Northern Ireland is not a ‘Poor’ or even ‘Average’ educational system. Some parts of our system work very well. Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international comparison study of reading achievement at ages 9-10 while Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is a parallel study of mathematics and science at the same age. The results for 2011<sup>8</sup>, the first year in which the cycles of the two studies coincided, were announced in December 2012, showing Year 6 students in Northern Ireland have been found to have the best English and maths skills of any English-speaking nation in international comparisons.

To progress from ‘good to great’ or indeed from ‘great to excellent’ research<sup>9</sup> advises that we need to build a high trust, high autonomy, high discretion professional system with multiple and nuanced forms of accountability. This requires a fresh look at the accountability system for education. The NI Executive and the Department of Education need system level accountability and data which is sufficient to assess trends between, for example, sectors, gender, rural, urban communities etc, to adequately meet equality and regulatory needs.

A new accountability system should seek to better identify need; enable resources to be better channeled toward need; and develop value-added measurements that can motivate and encourage staff in challenging environments. However, targeting need is not the whole answer. Directing more and more resources at the most challenged schools can help a little, but can only help at the margins and is not a real alternative.

In the medium to longer term, the aim must be to move towards social integration in schools, towards socially balanced intakes. The UK has the most socially segregated education system in the

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<sup>5</sup> For a comprehensive account of the “low road” vision see “Education by Numbers, the tyranny of testing: Warwick Mansell [www.methuen.co.uk/](http://www.methuen.co.uk/) June 2007

<sup>6</sup> Mourshed, M, Chijioko, C. and Barber, M. (2010) How the world’s most-improved-school-systems-keep-getting-better (McKinsey Report)

<sup>7</sup> IPPR, The Relational State, 2012, <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/9888/the-relational-state-how-recognising-the-importance-of-human-relationships-could-revolutionise-the-role-of-the-state>

<sup>8</sup> DENI (2012) [PIRLS 2011 and TIMSS 2011: Achievement of Year 6 Pupils in Northern Ireland](#)

<sup>9</sup> McKinsey 2010; OECD (2012) – Hooge, E. Burns, T. Wilkoszewski, H. Looking Beyond the Numbers: Stakeholders and Multiple School Accountability

developed world<sup>10</sup>. We believe that Northern Ireland's schooling is likely to be amongst the more socially segregated within the UK, as a consequence of our selective system. Why does this matter? It matters because socially balanced systems perform better<sup>11</sup>. And socially balanced system will require much less 'special case' TSN funding.

Movement towards a socially de-segregated education system and towards a socially balanced intake for all schools will require political will, not additional funding *per se*. Until then, we can do no other than to support differentiated funding in accordance with need, but should not kid ourselves that this approach (in anything other than truly enormous 'dollops') will make real difference in the long term.

Accountability matters because more weighing and measuring, more testing and drilling for exam hurdles will not serve us, or our economy, well. The recent 'First Steps' report by the Confederation of British Industry encouraged a broader vision –to develop young people with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Here, Northern Ireland is ahead of the game, having put in place specific definitions of these skills and competencies at regional level. So the 'leap' now required is that these 'new literacies' find their way into the accountability system, alongside better use of socio-economic data and appropriate base-lining to assess value-added.

We commend this paper and these recommendations to the Education Committee, schools and wider stakeholders for discussion, serious consideration and action.

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<sup>10</sup> Ref OECD 2012

<sup>11</sup> There is a long trail of local, UK and international evidence to support the proposition that social segregation is a key characteristic of underperforming systems. The 'Call to Action' published by Dawn Purvis et al, March 2011 on Educational Disadvantage and the Protestant Working Class' provides a selection of references at [pX](#)

## **Appendix 1**

### **5.1** *GTCNI Survey of Teacher Perceptions of the Usefulness and Manageability of End of Key Stage Assessment Arrangements June 2013*

## References (and broader reading)

Assessment Reform Group (2002a) [Testing, Motivation and Learning](#)

<http://www.aaia.org.uk/content/uploads/2010/06/Testing-Motivation-and-Learning.pdf>

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