

# Integrated education: a review of policy and research evidence 1999-2012

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# Foreword

It is just over 30 years since the establishment of the first planned, integrated school in Northern Ireland. The literature suggests that there have been three distinct periods of development. The 1980s was characterised by parent-led initiatives supported by charitable trusts and foundations such as Nuffield and Joseph Rowntree to establish a number of new integrated schools, initially without statutory funding. A decade later, the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 placed a responsibility on the Department of Education 'to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education' and included statutory funding for integrated schools, but the policy emphasis during the 1990s shifted to 'transformation' of existing schools and this process has only been activated by controlled schools. Following the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in 1998 responsibility for education policy was eventually devolved to local politicians within a Northern Ireland Assembly and by 2006 a Strategic Review of Education (the Bain Report) highlighted a decline in pupil enrolments (currently there are 1,070 schools and 85,000 unused places) and the need for greater integration within the education system. Opinions differ, however on how best to achieve greater integration. There would seem to be three broad strategies that could form the basis for education policy:

Firstly, there are those who argue for a system of common schools, attended by pupils from all traditions. The establishment of 62 integrated, 'common' schools serving 21,747 pupils (7% of the school population) is a considerable achievement in the midst of conflict and within a divided society. Those who advocate for planned integration argue that a separate school system is one of the key institutions that helps reproduce 'two communities' from generation to generation, and fundamental structural change to separate schooling is needed to achieve the future goal of greater social cohesion. But to date government has interpreted its statutory responsibility 'to encourage and facilitate integrated education' as a requirement only to be responsive to parental demand, rather than education authorities actively seeking opportunities to increase the number of integrated or common schools.

A second argument is that integration need not be planned, but will happen organically as all schools become more inclusive and open to enrolment from other traditions. In 2002 the Department of Education (DE) indicated that there were 42 'mixed' schools (7 under Catholic and 35 under other management) each with at least a 10% enrolment of 'the other community'. However, more recent DE figures show that almost half of Northern Ireland's

school children are still being taught in schools where 95% or more of the pupils are of the same religion. As a strategy for social change this seems like a passive approach with no real incentives for schools to become more inclusive beyond maintaining school numbers. Neither does the strategy necessitate any change to diversity in staff or joint management by diverse stakeholders.

A third argument is that separate schooling is inevitable and will continue for the foreseeable future and the best strategy may be to promote more contact and collaboration between schools of different traditions. This is not a new concept as schools have been involved in cross-community contact over the past 30 years. However, there has been greater emphasis on the concept of 'shared' education since the Bain Report in 2006, devolution in 2007 and significant funding from non-statutory sources such as the International Fund for Ireland and Atlantic Philanthropies.

This report was commissioned by the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) as a contribution to this debate. Its purpose was to review policy and research evidence related to integrated education in Northern Ireland (1999-2012). The review analysed existing documentation in five main areas: political party manifestos; key education policy documents; social surveys; academic research on the educational, societal and economic benefits of integrated education; and lessons from other international contexts. The findings and conclusions are provided in more detail later in the report, but it is worth highlighting three major implications arising from the review:

**Firstly, political and policy discourse has shifted towards the concept of 'shared education' despite public support for 'integrated education' remaining extremely high.**

The current discourse on shared education assumes that the vast majority of our children will continue to be educated in separate schools for the foreseeable future. By accepting this political parties move towards education policies that plan for separate development rather than structural change and reform of the separate school system. This shift is now reflected in key education policy documents. For example, the new Education Bill (2012) makes no direct reference to integrated education despite government having a statutory responsibility to encourage and facilitate. No formal representation for integrated education is proposed in the establishment of the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) and there is no reference to integrated education in the Programme for Government (2011-15). Political manifestos and policy initiatives in Northern Ireland do not reflect many of the preferences expressed by parents and the wider population as represented in survey data. Over the last decade this data consistently reports that public support for formally integrated schools remains very

high in terms of its contribution to peace and reconciliation, promoting a shared future, and promoting mutual respect and understanding.

**Secondly, we need a sharper definition of terminology, particularly the distinctions between policies to support ‘integrated’, ‘mixed’ and ‘shared’ education and how we prioritise investment in education to create an economically viable and socially cohesive society.**

For policy implementation to be effective a much clearer distinction between ‘integrated’, ‘mixed’, and ‘shared’ schooling needs to be drawn. This would help determine whether limited resources will be concentrated mainly on supporting integrated education (common schools attended daily by children from diverse traditions); mixed schools (separate schools with a significant minority from other traditions); or shared education (separate schools with some shared resources, pupil contact and collaboration between them). It may not be possible to pursue these simultaneously, since prioritisation of one will have an impact on the others given that there are finite resources available. Estimates of the economic benefits of changes to the education system have proven difficult. A fully integrated system of common schools would clearly be less costly in terms of school estate and could secure the viability of schools in small rural communities, but the economic savings have not been fully researched. Alternatively, it may be possible to prioritise policies that incentivise existing schools to become more ‘mixed’ by attracting greater numbers from other traditions. This route has been explored to some extent by ‘transforming’ schools, but we do not know what the full costs would be in extending financial incentives and support across the whole system. In terms of ‘shared’ education we have many years experience of supporting cross-community contact and movement of pupils between schools. However, in recent years the Department of Education has actually reduced its financial commitment to these activities. The current initiatives on shared education are supported by more than £10 million funding from philanthropy and extending arrangements to the whole system would cost significantly more. The challenge will be whether there will subsequently be sufficient commitment of statutory funding to sustain sharing policies once charitable sources disappear – the experience of previous cross-community schemes suggest that school involvement falls away without sustained, additional funding.

**Lastly, Northern Ireland is not unique in looking to education as a means of developing social cohesion.** Each context is different but even this brief review highlights some key issues relevant to education policy in Northern Ireland. In Britain, for example, there are schools jointly managed by the churches, which is not an option that has been explored actively by the churches in Northern Ireland. In the Republic of Ireland the majority

of schools are owned or managed by the Catholic Church, but multi-denominational schools have also been established and the recent Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector (2012) has made recommendations for changes to the patronage of schools and divesting of ownership to the State to reflect movement towards '*a more culturally and religiously diverse contemporary Irish society*'. And, whilst the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is even more fragmented along ethnic lines than Northern Ireland, the examples of 'two schools under one roof' suggest caution about pragmatic approaches to share school premises if there is no deeper commitment to structural and social change within society.

This review coincides with the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Group on Advancing Shared Education which is due to report in February 2013. The Advisory Group's terms of reference refers to the need to take into account issues such as '...preferences of learners and parents in relation to shared education' but also 'the effectiveness and value for money of existing approaches, and of best practice, locally and internationally'. The mandate also asks the group to look at 'how the advancement of shared education might address issues such as ethos and identity' as well as 'barriers to the advancement of shared education'. There is no reference to integrated education within the document.

There is an urgent need for much deeper public engagement in these issues and for clearer thinking about the long term implications of distinctions between integration, mixed and shared education. We suggest there is the need for an informed debate on where current education policies are leading us and what our ultimate destination as a society might be.

I hope this brief review is a useful contribution.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Alan Smith'.

Professor Alan Smith  
UNESCO Chair  
University of Ulster

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# Executive Summary

The purpose of this report, 'Integrated Education: A Review of Policy and Research Evidence 1999-2012', is to undertake a critical analysis of policy development and research evidence into the educational, societal and economic benefits of integrated education in Northern Ireland since 1999. The analysis has the following key objectives:

- To review the manifestos of Northern Ireland political parties in relation to integrated education and to report any significant changes in education policy positions during the period 1999-2012;
- To identify any key changes in education policy in Northern Ireland towards the provision of integrated education during the period 1999-2012. This should include references to changes in education policy which impacted on other sectors;
- To review surveys on attitudes in Northern Ireland towards integrated education and to demonstrate clearly any changing trends in attitude during the period 1999 – 2012;
- To review research evidence on educational, societal and economic benefits of integrated education in Northern Ireland and identify where the evidence indicates any significant changes in those areas;
- To review relevant research into the impact of integrated and other similar models of education in other countries.

## **Northern Ireland party political manifestos and integrated education**

The review of party political manifestos highlights a shift in policies regarding integrated education amongst the Northern Ireland political parties over the last decade. Collectively, the manifestos reflect a wider trend to promote the idea of 'shared' education whilst putting less emphasis on the concept of 'integrated' education. For example, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) moved from being critical of integrated education in earlier manifestos to more recent calls for a strategy for 'sharing and integration' within the education system. Similarly, the Alliance Party which has historically been the strongest advocate of integrated education in Northern Ireland has widened its statements to include more references to 'shared' education opportunities. This pattern is repeated in other party manifestos and would seem to point to a wider trend to promote the idea of 'shared' education and less emphasis on the structural and institutional changes implied by 'integrated' education. It is hard to pinpoint exactly when this change occurred, but the evidence from the manifestos



suggests that it has accelerated since the publication of the Independent Strategic Review of Education (The Bain Report) in December 2006 and devolution in May 2007. The shift has also taken place within a changing economic climate, with the view that increased sharing of resources among and between schools in Northern Ireland will save money.

### **Key changes in education policy**

In terms of education policy, the concept of integrated education was endorsed in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, 1998 and the subsequent Shared Future document published in March 2005, but later Executive documents, such as the strategy for Cohesion Sharing and Integration Consultation Document (July 2010) and the Northern Ireland Programme for Government (2011-2015) avoid any direct references to integrated education and the role it will play in future policy. Current educational reform, such as the Education Bill (2012) and the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) do not refer directly to integrated education or to the duty of the Department of Education to 'encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education'. Instead, there is an emphasis on sharing in education and 'integrating education' rather than a policy to increase the number of integrated schools. A Ministerial Advisory Group on Advancing Shared Education was established in 2012 as part of the Programme for Government (2011-15), but there is no explicit reference to integrated education within its mandate.

### **Attitudes towards integrated education**

Attitudinal data, based on surveys such as Millward Brown Ulster (2008, 2003); Ipsos MORI (2011); Young Life and Times Survey (YLTS) (2003-2011); and Northern Ireland Life and Times survey (NILT) (1999-2010), indicates that support and preference for integrated schools remains high. For example, in 2003 a majority of people surveyed (82%) personally supported integrated education in Northern Ireland and in 2011 this had increased to 88% of those surveyed. The proportion of respondents who viewed integrated education as 'very important to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland' increased from 60% in 2003 to 69% in 2011. The Northern Ireland Life and Times (1999) and Young Life and Times (2003-2010) surveys found that over one third of respondents would like to send their children to an integrated school if there was one in the vicinity. Further surveys, such as Millward Brown (2008) and MORI (2011) also found that a majority of people also support schools sharing facilities, partnering or collaborating across the traditional school sectors. Crudely aggregating recent data from Ipsos MORI (2011) with the Northern Ireland Life and Times

Survey (NILT 1999 and 2001) suggests that support for 'mixed schooling' has increased from 74% in 1999 to 81% in 2011.

### **The educational, societal and economic benefits of integrated education**

There has been little research on educational attainment in integrated schools beyond analysis of examination results in comparison with other school types (DEL, 2008; Gallagher *et al.*, 2003). The evidence suggests that pupils perform at least as well academically at GCSE and A-level as pupils from other non-selective schools.

In terms of societal benefits, attendance at an integrated school is claimed to be important in shaping identity without a loss of community or social individuality (Niens *et al.*, 2003; Montgomery *et al.*, 2003). Research evidence formulated around the contact hypothesis, particularly the role of intergroup contact in fostering good relations suggests that integrated schooling has a significant and positive social influence on the lives of those who experience it, most notably in terms of fostering cross-community friendships, reducing prejudicial attitudes and promoting a sense of security in religious, racial, or ethnically diverse environments (Stringer, 2009, 2000; Montgomery *et al.*, 2003; McGlynn, 2001; Irwin, 1991). Other research (Stringer *et al.*, 2009, 2000) has found that the intergroup contact of integrated or mixed schools can influence social attitudes, with pupils adopting more positive positions on key social issues such as politics, religion, identity, mixed marriages and integrated education and less positive positions on segregated education although the extent to which it impacts on individuals' religious or political identities is less clear (Hayes and McAllister 2009; Hayes, *et al.*, 2006). Further studies (for example, McGlynn, 2003; Montgomery *et al.*, 2003) lend support to these findings where cohorts of past pupils felt that integrated education had a significant positive impact on their lives.

There have been two main studies on the economic impact of a more integrated education system (Oxford Economics, 2010; Deloitte, 2007) and both suggest that sharing and integration bring economic benefits when compared to the cost of separate schooling. An education system characterised by shared facilities may offer some financial savings, but there are also additional costs in maintaining a system based on sharing between separate schools (such as transport and movement of pupils between schools). A unified system of common schools is likely to offer greater savings in terms of necessary infrastructure, maintenance costs, staffing, reduction in transport costs to separate schools and potential viability of small schools in rural communities.

## Other contexts

From the short analysis of the case studies outlined in the report it is clear that Northern Ireland is not unique in looking to education as a means of developing social cohesion. Each context is different but even a brief review highlights some key issues relevant to education policy in Northern Ireland. In Britain, for example, there are schools jointly managed by the churches, which is not an option that has been explored actively by the churches in Northern Ireland. In the Republic of Ireland the majority of schools are owned or managed by the Catholic Church, but multi-denominational schools have been established and the recent Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector (2012) has made recommendations for changes to the patronage of schools and divesting of ownership to the State to reflect movement towards '*a more culturally and religiously diverse contemporary Irish society*'. The experience of desegregation in the United States raises questions about the impact and sustainability of statutory approaches to desegregation when compared to policies to support voluntary integration. The education system in Bosnia-Herzegovina is even more fragmented along ethnic lines than Northern Ireland and the examples of 'two schools under one roof' suggest caution about pragmatic approaches to share school premises if there is no deeper commitment to structural and social change within society.

# 1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to undertake a critical analysis of policy development and research evidence on the educational, societal and economic benefits of integrated education in Northern Ireland since 1999. The analysis has the following key objectives:

- To review the manifestos of Northern Ireland political parties in relation to integrated education and to report any significant changes in education policy positions during the period 1999-2012;
- To identify any key changes in education policy in Northern Ireland towards the provision of integrated education during the period 1999-2012. This should include references to changes in education policy which impacted on other sectors;
- To review surveys on attitudes in Northern Ireland towards integrated education and to demonstrate clearly any changing trends in attitude during the period 1999 – 2012;
- To review research evidence on educational, societal and economic benefits of integrated education in Northern Ireland and identify where the evidence indicates any significant changes in those areas;
- To review relevant research into the impact of integrated and other similar models of education in other countries.

In Northern Ireland, the first integrated, post-primary school with a planned enrolment of Catholic, Protestant and other religions opened in 1981. The impetus behind the establishment of the first and subsequent integrated schools came from cross-community development processes initiated by parents (Smith, 2001).<sup>1</sup> The Department of Education (DE) currently states that a new integrated school ‘...must attract 30% of its pupils from the minority community in the area where the school is situated’.<sup>2</sup> The DE further states that existing schools, transforming to integrated status, must demonstrate the ability to achieve a minimum of 10% of their 1st year intake from the minority tradition (Protestant or Roman Catholic) within the school’s enrolment, and the potential to achieve a minimum of 30% in the longer term.

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<sup>1</sup> For a good overview of the background to integrated education and growth of schools, see O’Connor (2002).

<sup>2</sup> See Department of Education [www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/schools-management/10-types\\_of\\_school-nischools\\_pg/16-schools-integratedschools\\_pg/16\\_schools\\_-\\_types\\_of\\_school\\_criteria\\_pg.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/schools-management/10-types_of_school-nischools_pg/16-schools-integratedschools_pg/16_schools_-_types_of_school_criteria_pg.htm) Accessed 12/12/2012.

<sup>3</sup> Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE). Statement of Principles <http://www.nicie.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Statement-of-Principles1.pdf>. Accessed 12/12/2012.

<sup>4</sup> This figure includes two with conditional approval.

<sup>5</sup> See Department of Education [www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/schools-management/10-types\\_of\\_school-nischools\\_pg/16-schools-integratedschools\\_pg/16\\_schools\\_-\\_types\\_of\\_school\\_criteria\\_pg.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/schools-management/10-types_of_school-nischools_pg/16-schools-integratedschools_pg/16_schools_-_types_of_school_criteria_pg.htm) Accessed 12/12/2012.

The Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) Statement of Principles identifies four core principles for an integrated school ethos, namely Equality; Faith and Values; Social Responsibility; and Parental Involvement. With an emphasis on ‘... equality in sharing between and within the diverse groups that compose the school community’, the Statement advocates that integrated schools aspire to the following:

- (a) an annual intake of at least 40% pupils from a perceived Catholic background and at least 40% pupils from a perceived Protestant background;
- (b) a Board of Governors comprising at least 40% members from a perceived Catholic background and 40% from a perceived Protestant background; and
- (c) the active recruitment of teachers whose cultural or traditional background reflects that of existing or potential pupils.

There are two types of integrated schools. New planned, integrated schools are grant maintained integrated (GMI), whereas existing controlled schools that transform to integrated status are known as controlled integrated (CI). Grant-maintained integrated schools are owned and managed by Boards of Governors, supported by NICIE and funded directly by the DE. Controlled integrated schools are managed by a Board of Governors, but receive their budget allocation from an Education and Library Board (ELB) which also employs the school staff. Six parents are entitled to sit on the Board of Governors in a grant maintained integrated school, with four parents on the Board in a controlled integrated school.

NICIE describes integrated schools as places where children from diverse backgrounds are educated together on a daily basis in the same classrooms (NICIE, 2012). An overarching goal of integrated schools is to foster an understanding of the two dominant traditions and to overcome negative stereotypes, underlining the definition of integrated education as:

*‘Education together in a school of children and young people drawn mainly from the Protestant and Catholic traditions, with the aim of providing for them an excellent education that gives recognition to and promotes the expression of these two main traditions. The integrated school, while essentially Christian in character, welcomes those of all faiths and none, and seeks to promote the worth and self-esteem of pupils, parents, staff, governors and all who are affected by the presence of the school in the community. The core aim is to provide children and young people with a*

*caring and enhanced educational experience thus empowering them as individuals to affect positive change in a shared society’.*<sup>3</sup>

The DE has a statutory duty ‘to encourage and facilitate integrated education’ (DE, 1989) and the growth of integrated schooling has taken place in parallel to other initiatives such as, Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU), Cultural Heritage, the Schools Community Relations Programme and Local and Global Citizenship. These initiatives have been primarily designed to facilitate and improve relationships between pupils from the controlled (nominally Protestant) and maintained (nominally Catholic) sectors. Whilst the intention behind them has been generally welcomed and has enabled some meaningful engagement, there have also been concerns that partial and tokenistic delivery has limited the opportunity for proper integration between pupils from diverse backgrounds (O’Connor *et al.*, 2009; Wardlow, 2003).

There are currently 62 grant-aided integrated schools in Northern Ireland, including 61 with full approval and one with conditional approval from the DE. The total enrolment, including pupils at pre-school facilities, and pupils with statements of special educational needs, is over 23,000, accounting for circa 7% of the school population. Forty-two of the schools are primary and 20 are post-primary. In terms of management type, there are 38 GMI schools and 24 CI schools (see Table 1).<sup>4</sup>

**Table 1: Integrated schools by management type**

| Type of school   | Primary | Post-primary |
|------------------|---------|--------------|
| Grant maintained | 23      | 15           |
| Controlled       | 19      | 5            |
| Total            | 42      | 20           |

The number of pupils attending integrated schools has increased year on year between 2004 and 2011.<sup>5</sup> Figures compiled by NICIE indicate that there has been a relatively steady incline between 2004 and 2010, demonstrating an average long-term trajectory of 3% growth annually, although the medium to long-term growth in numbers has been nominal between 2009 and 2011. There has been an increase in the number of cases involving transformation of existing schools and opening of new integrated schools since 1984, most markedly between 1994 and 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE). Statement of Principles <http://www.nicie.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Statement-of-Principles1.pdf>. Accessed 12/12/2012.

<sup>4</sup> This figure includes two with conditional approval.

<sup>5</sup> Figures for Rathernraw IPS are not included.

## **2. Methodology**

The methodology involved review of both qualitative and quantitative sources, including a literature review and secondary data analysis. It reviewed, synthesised and evaluated research undertaken since 1999 into the educational, societal and economic benefits of integrated education in Northern Ireland.

In developing this report, the literature and data sets available for integrated education in Northern Ireland were identified, drawing from a diverse range of government, policy and academic sources. The research was undertaken as a desk-based exercise. Such an approach enabled the systematic synthesis of all relevant information (Punch, 2005) that included existing documents and data, reports, policy and legislation, models of good practice and conclusions based on the evidence appraised.

A literature review usually entails examination of selected empirical research, reported practice and identified innovations relevant to the particular area under study, specifically because it 'provides better insight into the dimensions and complexity of the issue' (De Vos, 1998). Building on the principles of integrated education, the research reviewed the development of the integrated school sector and identified its influence on educational as well as wider societal and economic change. It considered the Northern Ireland context of policy development and implementation, including shifts in education policy as well as wider party political manifestos on its provision. The research also reviewed domestic, national and international approaches to integrated education, identifying distinctive features in each context. In addition to the literature review, secondary data analysis provided added value to the exercise in terms of time efficiency, cost-effectiveness, data quality and sample size (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006). Analysis from a range of sources (for example, Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT), Young Life and Times (YLTS), Ipsos MORI, and Millward Brown Ulster, from 1999 to the present offered a range of perspectives over time – including from young people themselves – that could meaningfully inform the literature, providing an insight into attitudes towards integrated education in Northern Ireland. Academic sources were identified from a range of data bases, the main one being the British Education Index (BEI) which provides bibliographic references to over 300 British and selected European English language periodicals in the field of education and training but also covering reports and conference literature.

### **3. Integrated, mixed or shared education?**

The terminology used in the literature is diverse and can be somewhat confusing. Some research (for example, Cairns *et al.*, 2008) refers to integrated schools as 'desegregated' while other studies (for example, Hayes *et al.*, 2009, 2007, 2006) refer to 'formally integrated schools', 'fairly mixed schools' and 'not attending either a mixed school or integrated school'. The term 'mixed' was suggested by Stringer *et al.*, (2009, p.244) to describe schools that had '... significant numbers of the other religious group, but which were not formally integrated'. It is therefore important to bear this in mind when approaching the literature, particularly where questions about mixed schools produce similar results to questions about integrated schools (Stringer *et al.*, 2010, 2009). In this literature review we have, as far as possible, sought to distinguish integrated schools from 'mixed' or 'informally integrated schools' in order to better highlight the impact of integrated education. There is also a need to distinguish between planned integrated schools, mixed schools (separate schools but with significant numbers of other traditions enrolled) and 'shared education' (separate schools but with arrangements for contact and collaboration between them).

Recent studies have suggested that 'a more strategic, area-based approach to education could help to address community needs more effectively' (Oxford Economics, 2010, p.36) and that greater collaboration across the schools sector and consolidation of the schools estate could result in savings of between £15.9m and £79.6m (Deloitte, 2007). At the same time, the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2010) have called on the DE to disseminate experiences of sharing and collaboration on a cross-community basis in order to establish good practice. In this context, it is contended that the potential benefits of 'shared education' could:

- Deliver 'more for less' by sharing resources and assets;
- Deliver long-term savings through lower maintenance costs;
- Correct excess capacity in the long-run;
- Allow for the sharing of expertise amongst staff; and
- Provide students with access to wider choice of subjects (Oxford Economics, 2010).

Recent debate has tended to focus on the broader aspects of sharing. For example, the Good Relations Forum (2010) has recommended that good relations become a compulsory part of the school curriculum, with local schools encouraged to work together, on a cross-



community basis.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, joint ownership and acknowledgement of different cultures and traditions have been identified as pre-requisites for successful sharing in education if schools are to move forward with confidence in the building of an overarching school identity' (O'Sullivan and Russell, 2008, p.64). Describing this as nested identities, where one identity sits comfortably within another, such approaches are perceived to strengthen both the distinctiveness and the commonality of each school. Appraisals of 'shared education' (Borooah and Knox, 2012; Knox, 2010) have advocated the development of a more integrated system of education rather than a system of integrated schools, where collaboration would accommodate the maintenance of separate identities. Further qualification of this position has stated that *'in Northern Ireland, 'integrated' schools for all children are not a realistic option. Nor is it conceivable that education could ever become secularized. In this context, if government is serious about its social cohesion objectives, it is clear that a more coherent and targeted approach to relationship building is needed. Based on research evidence, sustained contact between Protestant and Catholic children should be considered a core component in such a strategy'* (Hughes, 2011, p.847). In this context, the potential of collaborative working arrangements between schools located in proximity to one another as a means towards reconciliation requires a broad review of school provision, not least in relation to teacher training and curriculum delivery (Kelly, 2012).

The Bain Report referred to six broad forms of sharing and collaboration:

1. A **confederation**, where schools in an area work in partnership, sharing pupils or staff, while retaining their own principal and governors.
2. **Co-location**, where schools within a short distance of each other collaborate, regardless of sector.
3. A **shared campus**, where two or more schools share the infrastructure but by all means and purposes retain their autonomy. A recent example of this is the Lisanelly site at Omagh.
4. A **federation**, where schools combine, for reasons such as improving standards, to form a single school.
5. **Amalgamation**, where a new school replaces two or more schools.
6. A **largely integrated system**, with multi-sector schools and an essentially streamlined system.

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<sup>6</sup> Similar ideas were funded by DE in the 1980s, see for example The Inter School Links project (1986-1990) which created area partnerships based on curriculum cooperation in Enniskillen, Limavady and Strabane over a four-year period. An evaluation highlighted the importance of sustained contact, but questioned whether schools would sustain the collaborations once funding ended. Further details can be found at: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/csc/reports/extend.htm>

The Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education referred to Shared Education<sup>7</sup> in its mandate as the ‘...organisation and delivery of education so that it:

- meets the needs of, and provides for the education together of, learners from all Section 75 categories and socio-economic status;
- involves schools and other education providers of differing ownership, sectoral identity and ethos, management type or governance arrangements; and
- delivers educational benefits to learners, promotes the efficient and effective use of resources, and promotes equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion’.

More recent programmes, such as the Sharing Education Programme (SEP) at Queen’s University<sup>8</sup> and The Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme (FSEP)<sup>9</sup> involve schools collaborating in a number of ways, including learning partnerships, shared delivery of parts of the curriculum and pupils taking exam class subjects in another school. Findings so far have suggested that participatory experience of increased cross-community contact, improved collaboration and knowledge sharing, and increased opportunity for pupil friendships across school types engendered positive pupil response to the other community. Hughes *et al.*, (2012, p.535) state that, ‘involvement in the Sharing Education Programme improved intergroup attitudes mainly by increasing the number of outgroup friends and reducing intergroup anxiety’. Other findings also indicated that shared cultural activities were least referred to amongst some participating schools (Clarke, 2010; Hughes *et al.*, 2010; FGS, 2009; QUB, 2008). Although there have been a few reported incidents around sensitive issues, in each case this had been ‘...addressed directly and publicly, and the collaborative work continued’ (Gallagher, 2010, p.72). Research has indicated that the best models of sharing require ‘institutional buy in’ from teachers, managers and governors as well as parents and the wider community (Duffy and Gallagher, 2012). This implies that a shared approach is not based on ‘..one-off extra-curricular events but ...cross-community working at the heart of the process’ (Borooah and Knox, 2012, p.3). Given the external nature of funding for the shared initiative, schools have expressed some concern about its

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<sup>7</sup> Terms of Reference of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education.pdf Available at: [http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/shared\\_education/shared-education-ministerial-advisory-group.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/shared_education/shared-education-ministerial-advisory-group.htm) Accessed 12/12/2012.

<sup>8</sup> The Sharing Education Programme (SEP) at QUB and co-funded by the International Fund for Ireland and Atlantic Philanthropies commenced in September 2007 and supports schools in the formation of cross-sectoral partnerships in order to provide enhanced educational opportunities for the students involved. Between 2007 and 2010, the programme involved over 5000 pupils from over 60 schools.

See <http://www.schoolsworkingtogether.co.uk/index.html>. Accessed 12/12/2012.

<sup>9</sup> The Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme (FSEP) provides small grants to schools to deliver elements of the curriculum jointly with a partner school from a different sector. Over 90% of primary schools and five post-primary schools in Fermanagh participated in the FSEP in 2009-10 (Clarke 2010).

See also <http://www.fermanaghtrust.org/cms/publish/sharededucation/index.shtml>. Accessed 12/12/2012.

longer term sustainability, although there is evidence to suggest that the development of strong institutional relationships has 'spurred schools on to explore ways in which they could sustain collaborative activity within their current budgets' (Duffy and Gallagher, 2012, p.3).

It would appear that a clear definition of 'shared education' as an education policy is lacking in Northern Ireland. The current definition would seem to conflate any activity which involves collaboration between schools whether the purpose is educational, societal or economic; the terminology is vague about the extent to which 'shared education' is envisaged as a policy that will lead to structural reform of the education system or whether it is premised on maintaining the existing system of separate schools. In terms of pupil contact, there is limited detail on the nature and extent of sustained contact and how many pupils out of the total school population are offered this opportunity. Finally, community relations goals are not made explicit and it is not clear what change theory is being applied – for example, will contact lead to attitudinal or behavioural change, or will it involve incremental change in trust to the extent that schools might eventually merge, as suggested in the Bain Report. Ultimately it does not clarify whether it is envisaged that 'shared education' policies will ultimately lead to fundamental structural reforms of the education system, or whether it is predicated on the assumption that the desired future for education policy is to maintain the current system of separate schools.

#### **4. Manifestos of the Northern Ireland political parties in relation to integrated education during the period 1999-2012**

The main political parties in Northern Ireland have, to various degrees, individually outlined their approach to integrated education in successive manifestos.<sup>10</sup> This section assesses material and policy statements from each party's election manifesto for elections (Assembly, Westminster and European) held between 1999 and 2012, with emphasis on their stated approach to integrated education. Each party with representation in the current Northern Ireland Assembly mandate (2011-2015) has been included in the analysis. From this, some general points about the political environment in which the debate around integrated education currently sits and how this environment has changed over the past decade have been identified.

##### **Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)**

In its election manifestos in the period up until the United Kingdom General Election of 2010, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), tended to refer to integrated schools as being 'treated differently' (2001, p 10) with regards to funding (2003, p.19 and 2007, p.45) and the party perceived this to be a form of discrimination against state sector schools (2003, p19). Similarly, the party in its 2009 European Election manifesto referred to '...special privileges for integrated and Irish Medium schools which consequently drain resources away from other sectors' (2009 p.32), and '... existing privileges for integrated and Irish medium schools', which had '...a detrimental impact on other schools' (2010, p.23).

However, in its 2011 Assembly Election manifesto, a marked difference in approach towards education policy can be ascertained. Under the heading 'SHARING', the DUP referred to the need to establish a '...Commission harnessing international expertise to advise on a strategy for enhancing sharing and integration within our education system' (p.12). References are also made to schools as 'shared spaces' (p.7, p.12) and that the sharing of resources and assets should be promoted. The party also advocates that school development proposals should '...demonstrate that options for sharing have been fully explored' (p.12).

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<sup>10</sup> Note that this review was limited to analysis of manifestos of political parties – these are printed in the lead up to elections and may therefore not always reflect broader views or policy statements made, for example, in response to Assembly questions or as part of political debates.

## **Sinn Fein**

In the election manifestos analysed, Sinn Fein does not explicitly refer to integrated education but to 'choice', whilst maintaining that the integrated schools should be properly resourced (2007, p.9). As with other parties, in its manifesto for the United Kingdom General Election in 2010, Sinn Fein refers to the Lisanelly educational village at the former British military base in Omagh (p.23), and in its Assembly Election manifesto in 2011 to the promotion of 'collaborative schools' (p.16).

## **Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)**

Whilst there is little reference to integrated education in the manifestos of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), in its 2007 Assembly Election manifesto the party referred to the need for 'Flexible, local programmes to facilitate shared educational initiatives between sectors – delivering increased efficiency and opportunity, and preparing our children for citizenship in a shared community' (p.10). This was echoed in the 2010 United Kingdom General Election manifesto (under the Ulster Conservatives and Unionists – New Force (UCUNF), where the party referred to the promotion of '...voluntary collaboration between the different sectors and schools to provide long-term sustainability in the education system, value for money and a shared future, while meeting the needs of local communities, young people and the economy' (p.51). In the 2011 Assembly Election manifesto, the UUP advocated Area Based Planning and Area Learning Communities but also '...organic collaboration, sharing of facilities and/or the merging of schools into Community Schools' (p.17). References were also made to the development of shared campuses in order to better utilise resources and also promote '...shared education as a contributing factor to a shared future' (p.17).

## **Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)**

The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) in its 2003 Assembly Election (p.19) and 2005 United Kingdom General Election manifestos (p.23) stated that, 'Greater co-operation is required between schools' and in its 2007 Assembly Election manifesto the party highlighted the need for '...opportunities for integration and cooperation between schools, community groups, youth clubs and amateur sport teams' (p.44). In the 2011 Assembly Election manifesto, the SDLP refers to the need for 'maximum sharing possible' (p.13) and that 'There is much that can be done in education to encourage cohesion, sharing and integration without the loss of diversity' (p.13).

## **Alliance Party**

The Alliance Party has recurrently placed integrated education at the centre of its policy platform, not just as a driver in education policy, but also as a means of promoting social and cultural cohesion in Northern Ireland. In the party's 2003 Assembly Election manifesto (p.7), for example, Alliance supported a target of '...10% of children being educated in integrated schools by 2010'. This manifesto also refers to the party's strong commitment to integrated education, including an expansion of the sector as it was felt it had '...made a significant contribution to social cohesion in Northern Ireland' (p.16). Alliance also published a 9-point plan in the 2003 manifesto (p.16), repeated in the manifesto for the United Kingdom General Election in 2005 (p.14), in which the party pledged to:

- Support the creation and maintenance of new build integrated schools.
- Set a target of 10% of children being educated in integrated schools by 2010.
- Place a duty upon the Education and Library Boards to encourage the development of integrated education. This duty exists upon the DE, and goes beyond mere facilitation.
- Survey local residents, by the Department, when new schools are being built (for example, to service new housing developments), with a presumption that they will be integrated or inter-church; as far as possible, new schools should be sited to service mixed catchment areas.
- Encourage the transformation of existing schools to 'transformed' integrated status.
- Reform and relax the criteria for the creation and maintenance of integrated schools, giving recognition to those children of mixed, other or no religious background.
- Give formal recognition to the contribution being made to the process of reconciliation by 'mixed' schools, those that have a mixed enrolment but no formal integrated status.
- Oppose any creation of an established 'right' in a Bill of Rights to a guarantee of public funding for segregated schools, as this could forever entrench segregated schools and frustrate the process of integration.
- Advocate the de-segregation of teacher training courses and facilities, and the familiarisation of integrated education policies and practices in such institutions.

In the 2005 UK General Election manifesto, Alliance also referred to the failure to realise commitments made in the Good Friday Agreement with reference to integrated education (p.6). In each manifesto analysed, Alliance refers to the benefits of integrated education, for

example, being ‘...an excellent example of actual reconciliation, benefiting children and adults alike’ (2005, p.14 and 2007, p.19). Similarly, up until 2007, the party also referred to the duty of the DE to better encourage and facilitate integrated education and to strategically plan for the future provision of integrated education, including identifying where additional provision needs to be situated.

After the publication of the Bain Report in 2006, Alliance identified itself in its 2007 Assembly Election manifesto as ‘...the only party to engage with the Bain Review, pushing for sustainable, shared local schools’ (p.1). In the same manifesto reference to pressures on the education budget is used to demonstrate how ‘...the attraction of shared and integrated schools becomes even more obvious’ (p.2). The party referred to the Bain review recognising the role of integrated education ‘...as the optimal approach to sharing in schools’ (p.19), and the 2007 manifesto called for increased sharing within education, including facilities and ‘ultimately campuses’ (p.20). Again in 2007 the party advocates financial and economic reasons for shared education whilst arguing that this provision should allow for ‘...children to mix and interact with one another, in particular within extracurricular activities’ (p.20).

In the manifestos after the Bain Report, the party continued to advocate integrated education although in the 2010 UK General Election manifesto, it acknowledges that ‘...there can be a number of different models of sharing between sectors that are all of considerable value’ (p.17). The party still however, refers to integrated education as ‘...the most economically and financially sustainable form of education, as well as delivering educationally and socially’ (p.17). The 2011 Assembly Election manifesto refers to the party promoting ‘...a full spectrum of models for integrating education, including the integrated education model itself’ (p.26). While integrated education is acknowledged, references are also made to the development of shared education and the better use of resources. The manifesto for 2011 is of interest as the party does not advocate a single education system, but rather ‘...a menu of options that work toward integrating education’ (p.64) where integrated education ‘...in the pure sense is only one aspect of a range of options’ (p.64) along with mixed classes, shared schools and campuses. In the manifesto Alliance updates its commitment from a target of 10% of pupils in integrated education by 2010 to a new target of 20% by 2020 (p.64).<sup>11</sup>

The 2011 manifesto also refers to the introduction of a ‘Shared and Integrated Education Bill’ (p.66) which should ‘...provide a clear framework and system of support for the

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<sup>11</sup> This review was completed just before release of the Alliance party document, ‘For Everyone’ in January 2013 which reaffirms these commitments to integrated education.

implementation... and ensure that the desire from the public for integrated and mixed education is followed through by the next Assembly' (p.66).

### **The Green Party**

In its 2011 Assembly Election manifesto, the Green Party comments that, 'Students should be educated at the school closest to them with courses being shared between different schools in the area for efficiency and choice' (p.17). There is also a reference to the promotion of 'a cooperative education system through the sharing of resources between schools in all sectors, such as teachers, teaching materials' (p.18).

### **The Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV)**

In its 2011 Assembly Election manifesto, the Traditional Unionist Voice does not raise the issue of integrated education.

### **Summary**

The period covered by this manifesto analysis has seen momentous changes in politics and governance in Northern Ireland. The end of direct rule and the establishment of local devolved institutions have brought more focus onto issues of sharing and integration, not just in education but also in a wider social sense. Collectively, the manifestos reflect a wider trend among Northern Ireland's political parties to promote the idea of 'shared' education whilst perhaps putting less emphasis on the notion of structural reform and 'integrated' education. It is difficult to be certain how this change has occurred, but the evidence from the manifestos suggests that it has accelerated since the publication of the Bain Report in December 2006 and devolution in May 2007. The analysis suggests a need for greater clarity between the concepts of 'integrated', 'mixed' and 'shared' education, how these concepts are understood by political representatives, and importantly what each might mean in terms of more explicit education policy goals and concrete targets for implementation.



## 5. Education policy and integrated education

Broadly, integrated education has been affected at policy and policy-related levels by a series of documents, most notably:

- The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement (1998)
- A Shared Future (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister [OFMDFM], 2005)
- The Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy (OFMDFM, 2011)
- Draft Programme for Government (2011)

More specifically, educational policy affecting integrated education includes:

- The Review of Public Administration (RPA) (initiated 2002)
- The Independent Strategic Review of Education (The Bain Report) (DE, 2006)
- The Education (Northern Ireland) Order (DE, 2006)
- Towards a Culture of Tolerance: Integrating Education (DE, 2007)
- Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools (DE, 2009)
- Every School a Good School - a Policy for School Improvement (DE, 2009)
- Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Policy (DE, 2011)
- Putting Pupils First: Shaping the Future – the next steps for education (DE, 2011)
- Area Planning Guidance (DE, 2012)
- The Education Bill (DE, 2012)

In the **Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement** (1998), reference to integrated education is made in the context of reconciliation whereby *‘An essential aspect of the reconciliation process is the promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and encourage integrated education and mixed housing’*.

The subsequent introduction of a Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland, **A Shared Future** (OFMDFM, 2005), was intended to provide direction to address community segregation and sectarianism. Overall, the framework advocates for *‘sharing over separation’* and *‘cultural variety’* rather than the existence of a range of separated cultures. In relation to education, the document refers to the promotion of *‘shared’* and *‘inter-cultural education’* at all levels and for schools to ensure, *‘...through their policies, structures and curricula, that pupils are consciously prepared for life in a diverse and inter-*

cultural society and world (OFMDFM, 2005, p.24). In this context, the document draws attention to the DE's draft report 'Towards a Culture of Tolerance – Integrating Education' (2007) in which it is stated that the Department will '... encourage and facilitate integrated education and greater integration in Education' (*ibid*). Although 'A Shared Future' recognises the potential of integrated education to act as a '*barometer of good relations*' between and within communities in Northern Ireland, it also refers to the need for '*greater sharing in education*'. And, although parental choice is acknowledged, there is a cautionary caveat of the need to strike a balance between, '*...the exercise of this choice and the significant additional costs and potential diseconomies that this diversity of provision generates, particularly in a period of demographic downturn and falling rolls*' (OFMDFM, 2005, p.25).

The **Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) Consultation Document** (OFMDFM, 2010), was published as part of the process of developing a new strategy for cohesion, sharing and integration, which would replace 'A Shared Future'. It is noteworthy that the document, while acknowledging that an integrated school provides '*... equal recognition to, and promotes equal expression of, the two main traditions and other cultures*' (p.16), is almost devoid of any additional references to integrated education. Reflecting a shift in emphasis, the strategy instead advocates the duty of schools to promote good relations, regardless of sector and highlights the responsibility of the DE to better promote the wider use of school premises. Acknowledgement is given to the International Fund for Ireland's (IFI) Sharing in Education Programme (2009), for which the DE was the managing agent.

When the Northern Ireland **Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015** was published, there was no reference to integrated education and only three references to shared education:

- Firstly, in the establishment of the Ministerial Advisory Group tasked with exploring and bringing forward recommendations to the Minister of Education to advance shared education so that by 2015 all children would have the opportunity to participate in shared education programmes;<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The Ministerial Advisory Group on Advancing Shared Education was established in July 2012 and is chaired by Professor Paul Connolly (QUB) who together with the other members: Dawn Purvis and PJ O'Grady will report their findings to the Minister by February 2013.

- Secondly, in relation to the establishment in 2013 of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA); and
- Thirdly, in the Executive's stated commitment to develop the Lisanelly Shared Education campus in Omagh as a key regeneration project. Overall, policy documents in this period reflect a shift from the language of integrated education to that of shared education.

The following section looks at specific departmental policy documents in respect of education.

The **1989 Education (Northern Ireland) Order** provided for two new categories of integrated school – Grant Maintained Integrated (GMI) and Controlled Integrated (CI), the latter also known as transformed integrated schools. In both school types, the religious balance of pupils, staff and governors was to be a key consideration. This meant that those schools seeking to transform to integrated status should enrol at least 10% of pupils from the minority religion in year one whilst working towards an overall balance in the school of at least 70:30; all GMI schools should have a pupil balance of at least 70:30 from the outset (DE, 2005). Under the **1989 Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order**, the government has a duty to meet the needs of parents requesting the establishment of integrated schools where it is feasible; as such, the Order places a statutory duty on the DE to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education. A similar statutory duty, identified in the Agreement and enacted in the **Education (Northern Ireland) Orders** (1998, 2003), is also in place for the development of Irish medium education<sup>13</sup> and the subsequent recommendation of the Bain Report led the Department to initiate a Review of Irish-medium Education. The Review made a number of recommendations, such as to better equip the expansion of Irish-medium pre-school provision and to address deficiencies in the accommodation of existing Irish-medium schools.

The **Review of Public Administration** was initiated in 2002, with the intention that a new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) would be established by April 2008. The new authority was meant to bring together all the direct support functions currently undertaken by the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Regional Training Unit (RTU). It would also have responsibility

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<sup>13</sup> One of the main purposes of the 2003 Order is to provide the Department of Education with an enabling power to introduce a single common formula for the calculation of school budgets for all schools funded under Local Management of Schools (LMS) arrangements (*Articles 3-9*).

for frontline and related functions currently undertaken by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG). On 16th November 2011, the First Minister and Deputy First Minister announced that the Executive had agreed the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). The creation of ESA was identified as a priority within the Executive's Programme for Government 2011–2015 which states, 'We will make the Education and Skills Authority operational in 2013'. More recently, the passing of the **Education Bill** (2012) will further progress the establishment of ESA and its replacement of the five ELBs; the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards, the CCMS and the Youth Council for Northern Ireland. The Bill requires ESA to appoint school governors who are committed to the ethos of the school (and in the case of Irish-medium education, to the viability of the school) along with enhanced functions and powers for inspectors. There is no direct reference to integrated education in the Bill and the duty of the DE to '*... encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education*' is not replicated in the document.

**The Bain Report** made a series of arguments for a more inclusive education system, stating:

*'Our argument for this more inclusive and pervasive approach is three-fold: first, the educational case – access for pupils to the full range of the curriculum, to high quality teaching, and to modern facilities; second, the social case – societal well-being by promoting a culture of tolerance, mutual understanding and inter-relationship through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning; the economic case – through cost-effective provision that gives good value for money'.*  
(DE, 2006, p.180)

The Report adopted a broad perspective, making clear that its particular focus was not solely on limiting integration to '*...the different ethos that parents and others want to see in schools, but to focus attention on developing thinking about new ways of working together, and of envisaging approaches to schooling that share resources*' (p.3). However, it is of interest to note that a distinction is made between integrated education and integrated schools and the Report advocates '*a more pervasive and inclusive approach, focused on the dynamic process of integrating education across the school system, in which sharing and collaboration are key features*' (p.147). A role is also identified for the DE to explore ways in which education could better facilitate and encourage '*... an inclusive strategy with a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools*' (p.160). This implies that the Department should not only support existing integrated schools, but should also find alternative ways of integrating education. In July 2006, the **Education**

**(Northern Ireland) Order** provided the broad legislative context for a number of reforms, including the Entitlement Framework, which aimed to provide pupils aged 14 and over with greater choice and flexibility in the learning options available to them. The document stated that it was ‘unlikely’ that individual schools, by themselves, would be able to provide the Entitlement Framework and that schools therefore needed to collaborate with other schools and providers.

The **Towards a Culture of Tolerance: Integrating Education** (TACOT:IE) Working Group was established soon after devolution to consider how integrated education could be progressed, leading to agreement that a more structured strategic planning process was required involving all sectors of education (DE, 2007). Importantly, the TACOT:IE report recommended that a ‘... *strategic direction for the integrated sector, rather than be considered in isolation, should form part of the overall planning process that will be established to take forward, and implement the post-primary proposals*’ (p.11). Although the document commented on the concept of mixed schools, the addition of another school type was considered unnecessary in an already complex education system.

A statistic frequently cited from the Bain Report was that 53,000 surplus pupil places existed in schools. This led to recurrent calls for rationalisation of the schools estate, increased sharing and area-based planning. In light of this, the DE made a number of recommendations in **Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools** (DE, 2009)<sup>14</sup> including enrolment trends and the quality of education (DE 2009). The policy also referred to the role played by the DE in ‘...*encouraging a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools*’ (p.17). This policy also reiterates the statutory duty of the DE to encourage and facilitate integrated and Irish-medium education. Referencing the Bain Report, the sustainable schools policy reiterates the recommendation that the DE should discharge its legislative duty to integrated education and that it ‘... *should explain that it is committed to facilitating and encouraging a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools*’ (p.17). In a similar vein, **Every School a Good School - a Policy for School Improvement** (DE, 2009) advocates that principals should share experience and expertise across the wider system, encouraging the creation of communities of best practice, where teachers themselves share what has worked with their colleagues as well as with other schools. In **Putting Pupils First: Shaping the Future – the Next Steps for Education** (DE, 2011), reference was again made to the increased number of spare places in schools (estimated as high as 85,000), with a

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/a\\_policy\\_for\\_sustainable\\_schools-2.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/a_policy_for_sustainable_schools-2.pdf). Accessed 3/12/2012.

corresponding need to carry out viability audits within the ELBs and in conjunction with the sectors. More recently, **Area Planning Guidance** (DE, 2012) re-visited the implementation of the Sustainable Schools policy and the process of strategic planning on an area basis, advocating that these should take *'...account of commitments outlined in the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent legislation in relation to Integrated and Irish medium provision'* (p.5).

**The Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Policy** (DE, 2011) is intended to make community relations *an integral part* of education that should align with increased sharing and collaboration within the education system to enable children and young people to come together in a more consistent manner. The CRED policy represented an implicit intention to address criticism from the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) (2009) on the absence of a clear policy on community relations work in education, particularly limitations in the level of support and access to continuing professional development that teachers receive in this area.

The most recent development in July 2012, came as a result of a commitment in the Northern Ireland Draft Programme for Government (2011-2015); **The Ministerial Advisory Group on Advancing Shared Education** was established with a mandate to further investigate shared education. The Advisory Group's terms of reference refer to the need to take into account issues such as *'...preferences of learners and parents in relation to shared education'* but also *'the effectiveness and value for money of existing approaches, and of best practice, locally and internationally'*. The mandate also asks the group to look at *'how the advancement of shared education might address issues such as ethos and identity'* as well as *'barriers to the advancement of shared education'*. There is no reference to integrated education within the document.

## Summary

Although the concept of integrated education was advocated in the Agreement and in 'A Shared Future' it receives little, if any, direct references in subsequent broad policy and specific education documents. In its place, there is an increased emphasis on 'shared education', something also reflected in documents starting with the Bain Report where – while acknowledged – integrated education seems to have been superseded by an emphasis on sharing in education with references to 'integrating education' rather than integrated schools becoming more prevalent. This takes place in the context of a debate around 'sustainable education' as an economic argument, a new Education Bill (2012) that

includes no direct reference to integrated education, no formal representation for integrated education in the establishment of the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA), no reference to integrated education in the Programme for Government (2011-15) and the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Group for Advancing Shared Education that has no reference to integrated education in its remit.

## **6. Attitudes to integrated education**

A number of sources of evidence exist in Northern Ireland pertaining to public attitudes to education which consistently demonstrate positive trends in attitudes towards, and experience of, integrated education and which can be disaggregated by, *inter alia*, religion, gender and age. The sources of research include: Millward Brown Ulster (2003) (2008)<sup>15</sup>; Ipsos MORI (2011)<sup>16</sup>; Young Life and Times Survey (YLTS) (2003-2011)<sup>17</sup>; and Northern Ireland Life and Times survey (NILT)<sup>18</sup> (1999-2010). However, when using and interpreting this research and data, unless the question explicitly relates to a 'planned integrated' school, it is important to bear in mind that questions relating to 'mixed' or 'integrated' schools often use these terms interchangeably to refer to schools with fairly large numbers of both Catholic and Protestant children.

Collectively, research and data reveal a willingness and strong preference for educational change and more contact between children of different backgrounds. Survey data also highlights high levels of awareness of and support for integrated education and mixed schooling. This section focuses on integrated education in terms of public knowledge and experience. It also examines the perceptions of integrated education including attitudes towards schools sharing facilities and mixed schools. Where possible, the views and opinions of young people relating to integrated education are included, with rudimentary comparisons presented between results from longitudinal and attitudinal surveys from 1999 to 2011, in an attempt to identify and gauge how attitudes have changed over time.

### **The importance of integrated education to Northern Ireland**

According to research by Millward Brown Ulster (2003), a majority (81%) of the parents and grandparents surveyed considered integrated education to be 'important' to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, with 60% considering it to be 'very important'. Follow-up research by Millward Brown Ulster in 2008 indicated that this belief had increased to 84%, with almost two thirds (64%) believing that integrated education was 'very important' for peace and reconciliation (Figure 1).

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<sup>15</sup> The sample for the 2003 survey comprised 1,018 individuals selected using quota controls to be representative of the Northern Ireland population. The sample for 2008 comprised 1,001 individuals.

<sup>16</sup> The MORI research involved 1,007 adults aged 16 and over who were interviewed via the Ipsos MORI Northern Ireland Omnibus. All interviewing was conducted between 7th and 26th February 2011.

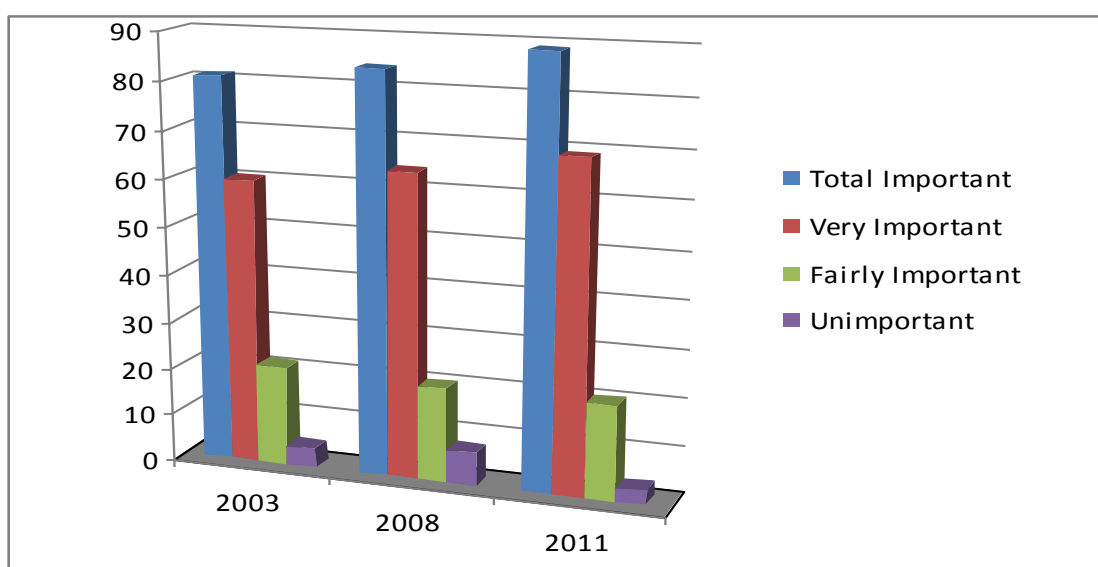
<sup>17</sup> Survey sample was taken from the Child Benefit Register. All young people who celebrated their 16th birthday during February and March for respective year were invited to take part in the survey. Sample size varies from year to year.

<sup>18</sup> The Northern Ireland Life and Times survey involves face-to-face interviews with adults aged 18 years or over. Sample size varies from year to year.



Similar findings have been observed in more recent research conducted by Ipsos MORI (2011) who found that 89% of respondents considered integrated education to be important for peace and reconciliation.

**Figure 1: The proportion of respondents who perceived integrated education to be important to peace and reconciliation.**



**Source:** Millward Brown Ulster 2003, 2008; Ipsos MORI 2011.

Smaller surveys (for example, Montgomery *et al.*, 2003)<sup>19</sup> looked at – among other things - considerations which had most influenced parents in their decision to send their child to an integrated school. The most popular response was a commitment to integrated education (83%). Other popular choices were the relatively ‘*small class sizes*’ (39%), the ‘*school’s reputation*’ (34%), their ‘*own educational experiences*’ (32%), ‘*siblings already pupils*’ (27%), ‘*recommendation*’ (25%) and ‘*convenient location*’ (16%). Montgomery *et al.*, 2003 also surveyed pupils from integrated post-primary schools, of which, a majority (65%) said they would send their children to an integrated school and made reference to mixed education as being important.<sup>20</sup> The majority of pupils (65%) stated that an integrated school was their first choice, whilst 10% had listed a grammar school as their first choice and 5% had listed an integrated school as second choice after a grammar school. Ninety-three percent of these pupils either ‘*really liked*’ school (29%), think that school is ‘*OK*’ (32%) or ‘*like some things*’ (32%). A small number commented that they particularly like the ‘*atmosphere*’ or the fact

<sup>19</sup> The survey involved 142 parents, (94 with primary school children and 48 with post-primary children).

<sup>20</sup> Questionnaires were completed by 400 Year 8 and Year 10 pupils from 11 integrated post-primary schools.

*'that it is mixed'*. The final question asked pupils if they would consider sending any children they might have to an integrated school. A clear majority (65%) of pupils in the sample said that they would send their child to an integrated school because, *'it would help him or her to mix well'* (20%), *'it's good'*, *'mixed education is important'* or because *'it might help bring peace'*.

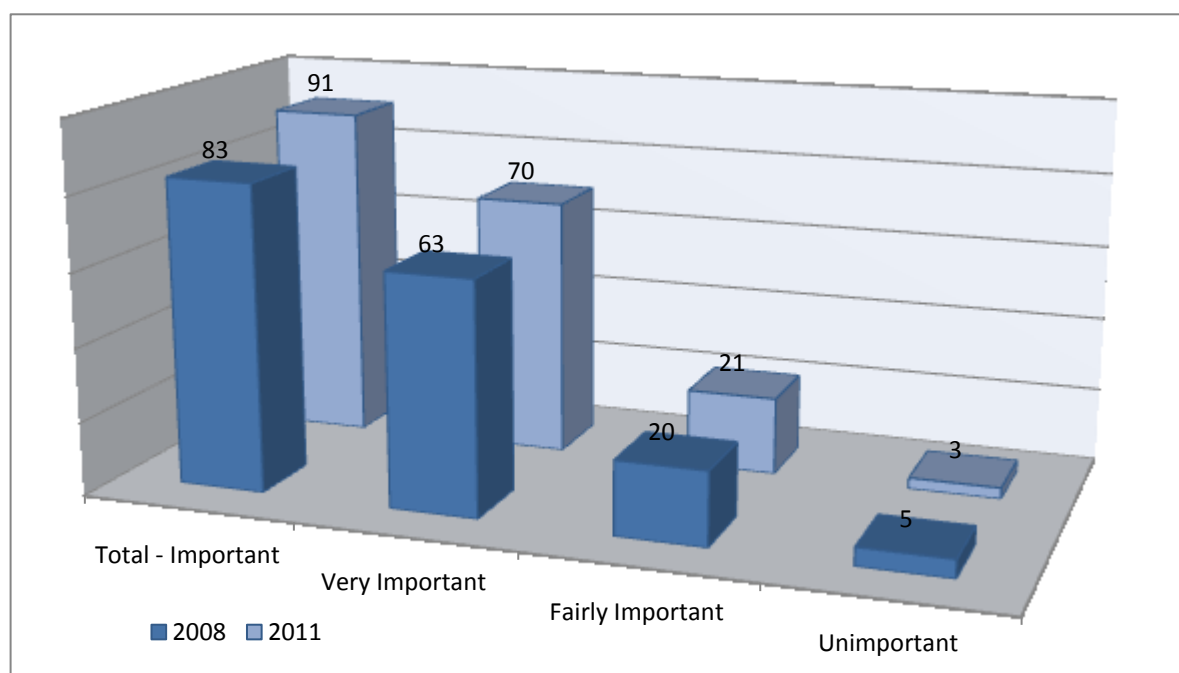
The collective analysis ostensibly illustrates that the perception towards integrated education as important to peace and reconciliation has steadily increased since 2003 (Figure 1). It is also pertinent that the proportion of those people who believe that integrated education is very important has also increased between 2003 (60%) and 2011 (69%). Notably, the 2011 figures indicate that 93% of people with direct experience of integrated schooling believe that it is important, compared with 88% who did not have this experience. Of similar importance is the emphasis placed by the general public on integrated education in terms of its contribution to promoting mutual respect and understanding. According to Fishkin *et al.*, (2007), the idea that mixed education promotes mutual respect and understanding is high amongst parents (79% T1 and 82.3% T2).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Fishkin et al., (2007) involved 565 door-to-door interviews across the Omagh District Council area.

Similar results were reported in 2008, where analysis conducted by Millward Brown Ulster found that more than 8 in 10 respondents (83%) perceived integrated education to be important for the promotion of mutual respect and understanding within a post conflict society (Figure 2). Their findings showed that 63% of respondents identified mutual respect and understanding as ‘*very important*’ to societal reform. More recently, attitudinal research conducted by Ipsos MORI (2011) indicates that this figure has increased to 91% with 7 in 10 people viewing integrated education as ‘*very important*’; this figure is higher amongst those who have direct experience of integrated education (80%) compared with those who do not (65%).

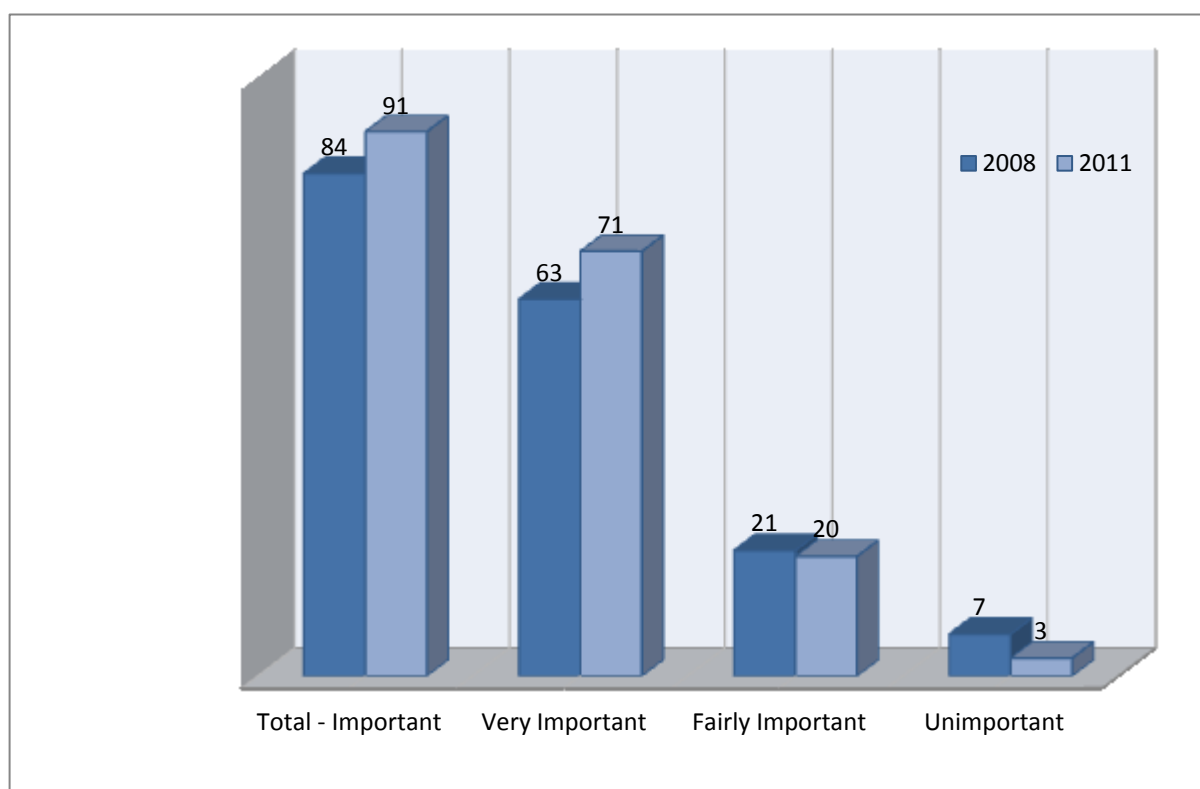
**Figure 2: The proportion of respondents who perceived integrated education to be important in promoting mutual respect and understanding.**



**Source:** Millward Brown Ulster 2008; Ipsos MORI 2011.

Public opinion and perception of integrated education is also pronounced in relation to the importance of promoting a shared and better future for Northern Ireland (Figure 3). In the study undertaken by Millward Brown Ulster (2008), the results reveal that 84% of all respondents consider that integrated education is important in promoting a shared and better future, with 63% considering it to be *'very important'* and a further 21% stating it was *'fairly important'*. More recent statistics produced in 2011, suggest that this attitude has increased significantly, with 91% of respondents deeming integrated education to be *'very important'* in promoting a better and shared future and 91% considering it to be important overall. These figures underline the high and growing levels of perception amongst the general public that integrated education is essential and beneficial for Northern Ireland society in the present and future.

**Figure 3: The proportion of respondents who perceived integrated education to be important for promoting a shared and better future for Northern Ireland.**



**Source:** Millward Brown Ulster Limited 2008; Ipsos MORI 2011.

## Experience of integrated education in Northern Ireland

Public survey data can highlight and advance knowledge about the general population in relation to integrated education and schools. Over a number of years, social attitudes and public opinion data have shown that public support for formally integrated schools remains high and, according to research undertaken by Millward Brown Ulster in 2003, a majority of people surveyed (82%) personally support integrated education in Northern Ireland. Research by Fishkin *et al.*, (2007) also found that the overwhelming majority of parents (72.1% T1 and 69% T2)<sup>22</sup> supported increasing the number of formal integrated schools. Disaggregating this further, figures from Ipsos MORI revealed that support for integrated schools is higher amongst those who have experience of integrated education (93%) compared with those who have not (86%). More recent research by Ipsos MORI (2011) revealed that 88% of people were in favour of integrated schools, with a marginally higher level of support amongst Catholics (90%) compared with Protestants (85%).

Research by Ipsos MORI (2011) found that 36% of survey respondents have had direct experience of a school with integrated status. When disaggregated by age, it was observed that 48% of 16-24 year olds sampled had direct experience, compared with 36% of 25-64 year olds and 24% of those who were over 65 years old. Although attitudinal trends generally indicate that Catholic respondents are more likely to support integrated schools and sharing facilities, existing research reveals that Catholics are slightly less likely to attend integrated and mixed schools (Hayes, McAlister and Dowds, 2006).<sup>23</sup> This observation is supported by the findings of Ipsos MORI (2011) who in their sample found that experience of integrated education is lower amongst Catholics (31%) compared to Protestants (36%). Although there is some statistical evidence that direct experience of integrated schools is more likely among higher social classes and those with a third level education (Ipsos MORI, 2011), research (Montgomery *et al.*, 2003; McGlynn, 2003) has disputed this thesis, finding that former pupils came from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Similarly, statistical evidence provided by the DE confirms that integrated schools have a higher percentage of pupils on free school meals than grammar schools and an equivalent percentage to non-grammar schools.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> This research was a deliberative poll. Significant pre-deliberation (T1) to post-deliberation (T2) opinion changes among participants.

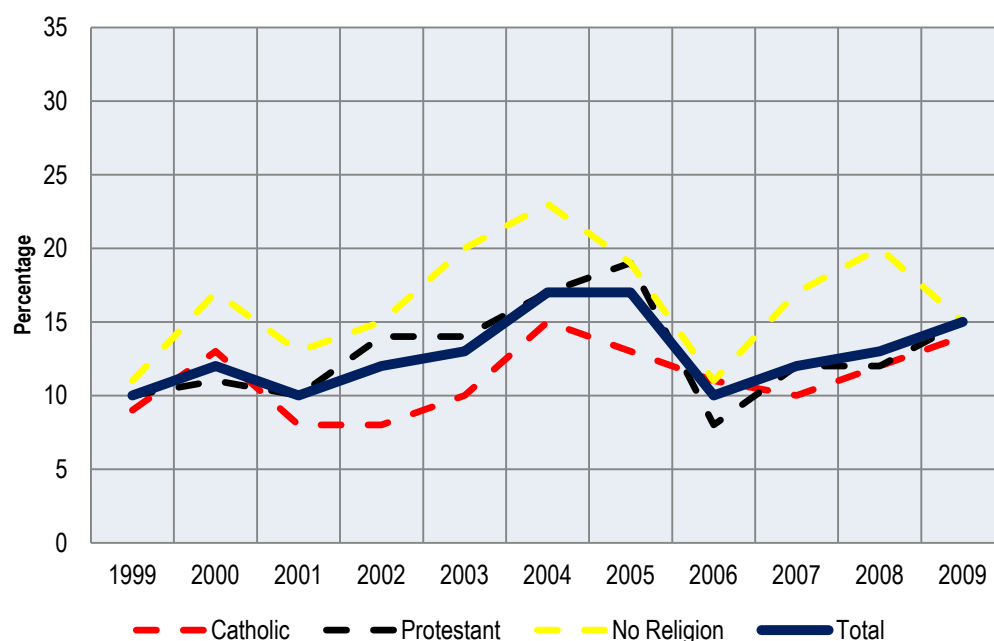
<sup>23</sup> Hayes et al used a pooled dataset, combining the Northern Ireland Social Attitudes surveys (1989-1996), the Northern Ireland Life and Times surveys (1998-2003), the 1998 Northern Ireland Referendum and Election Survey and the 2003 Northern Ireland Election Study. Total sample was based on 15,214 respondents.

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/facts-and-figures-new/education-statistics/statistics\\_and\\_research\\_-\\_statistics\\_on\\_education-school\\_meals.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/facts-and-figures-new/education-statistics/statistics_and_research_-_statistics_on_education-school_meals.htm). Accessed 12/12/2012.

Longitudinal data extracted from the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey (1999-2009) also provides further insight into direct experience of integrated schools (Figure 4).

The data reveals that over the ten year period between 1999 and 2009, there has been an overall increase (5%) in the proportion of young people who attended a mixed or integrated school.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 4: The proportion of respondents who attended a mixed or integrated school.**



**Source:** *Northern Ireland Life and Times 1999-2009.*

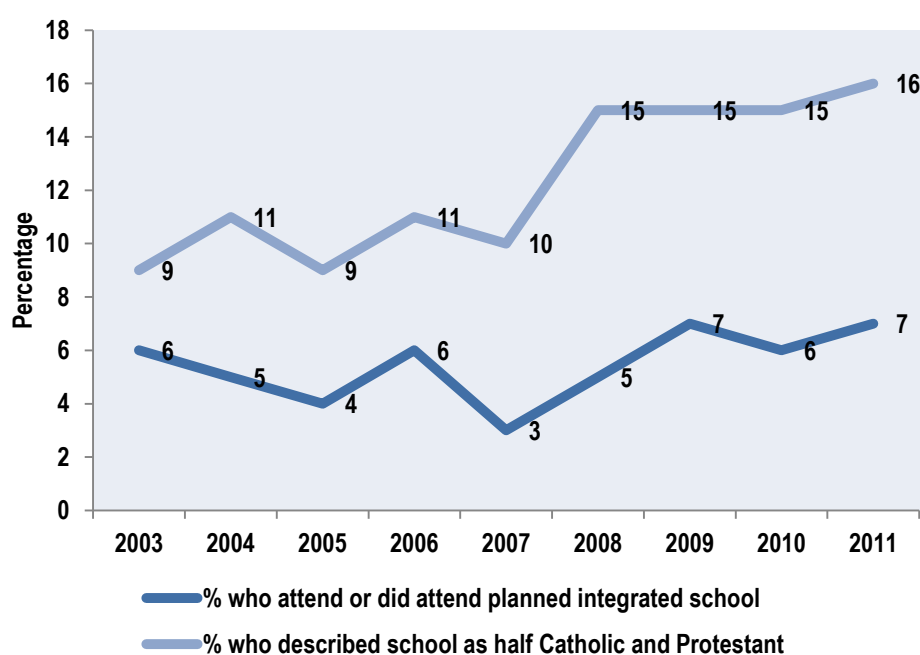
NILT data reveals that in 2010, 16% of children in the sample claim to have attended a mixed or integrated school and, importantly, that there has been an overall increase of 10% over the decade. Also noteworthy is the sharp percentage decrease between 2006 and 2007 which correlates with a similar sharp decline in the attitudes of adults at the same period of time. The statistics suggest that those children of No Religion (21%) and Protestants (17%) are much more likely to attend mixed or integrated schools than Catholics (11%). Significantly, this trend replicates that espoused by Hayes, McAlister and Dowds (2006), Ipsos MORI (2011) and trends observed in figures from the NILT survey relating to attendance and attitudes to mixed schools.

<sup>25</sup> The respondents in the Northern Ireland Life and Times were asked whether they had attended a mixed or integrated school and if they indicated integrated, they were asked if this was a 'formally integrated school'.

## Young people's experience of integrated education

When considering attitudes towards integrated education, it is also important to examine the views of young people themselves. Data from the Young Life and Times Survey (YLTS) (Figure 5) indicate that in 2011 approximately 7% of young people reported that they attended or did attend a planned integrated school, a figure which is consistent with DE statistics (5%).<sup>26</sup> Although an increasing number of young people described the school they attended as approximately half Catholic and half Protestant, educational data from 2011/12 confirms that almost half of Northern Ireland's schoolchildren are being taught in schools where 95% or more of the pupils are of the same religion.

**Figure 5: The proportion of young people who attend(ed) planned integrated schools between 2003 and 2011.**



**Source:** *Young Life and Times 2003-2011.*

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/enrolments\\_1112\\_-\\_february\\_release\\_-\\_final\\_revised2-2.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/enrolments_1112_-_february_release_-_final_revised2-2.pdf). Accessed 14/12/2012.

## Attitudes to mixed schooling

For many years social attitudes and public opinion surveys in Northern Ireland have shown that a majority of respondents would like to send their children to, or see an increase in the number of, mixed religion or formally integrated schools (Fishkin *et al.*, 2007). The survey data has sampled the attitudes of people about whether the government should encourage more 'mixed' schooling. Crudely aggregating recent data from Ipsos MORI (2011) with the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILT 1999; 2001) to present a temporal comparison, the findings indicate that the majority of people believe that the government should encourage more mixed schooling. Indeed, the figures suggest that support for mixed schooling has increased from 74% in 1999 (NILT, 1999) to 81% in 2011 (Ipsos MORI, 2011).

Schubotz and Robinson (2006) used the Young Life and Times survey results between 2003 and 2005 and looked at attitudes to community relations – cross-community projects and integrated education - among 16 year olds across Northern Ireland. They found that a significantly higher percentage of young people who had attended integrated schools (24%) considered that school was a main factor influencing their views on community relations compared with (9%) in the overall sample. In a later study Schubotz and Devine (2011) found that 16 year olds who took part in the research, regardless of what school they attended in Northern Ireland expressed less support than their older counterparts regarding integrated housing, workplaces and education.

Moreover, between 1999 and 2011 the trend highlights overall growth in support for encouraging more mixed schooling amongst both Catholics and Protestants. Whilst research data from 2011 indicates that support amongst Catholic respondents has increased slightly from 80% in 1999 to 83% in 2011, it appears that there has been a greater increase in support among Protestant respondents towards mixed schooling between 1999 (67%) and 2011 (77%). The figures also reveal that there has consistently been greater support for encouraging more mixed schooling amongst Catholic respondents than Protestant respondents, a trend observed in 1999, 2001 and 2011 (Table 2).

Figures from Ipsos MORI (2011) also indicate that support for more mixed schooling is higher amongst those with direct experience of integrated education (90%) compared with those who have no direct exposure to integrated schooling (76%).

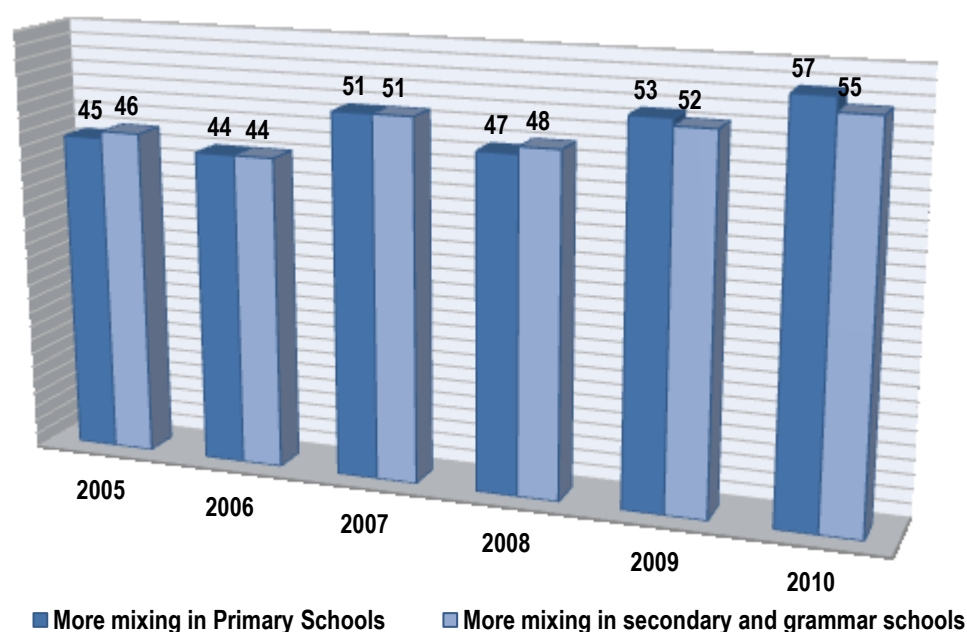


**Table 2: Support for encouraging mixed schooling.**

| %           | Overall-<br>Encourage More | Catholic-<br>Encourage More | Protestant –<br>Encourage More |
|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>1999</b> | 74                         | 80                          | 67                             |
| <b>2001</b> | 73                         | 78                          | 67                             |
| <b>2011</b> | 81                         | 83                          | 77                             |

Statistics from the NILT survey also highlight that there has been an overall growth in favour of more mixing in both primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland (Figure 6). This trend generally reflects the growing support for integrated education in Northern Ireland, but may also reflect the need to provide an increased capacity to accommodate shared education spaces.

**Figure 6: The proportion of respondents who are in favour of more mixing in primary, secondary and grammar schools.**

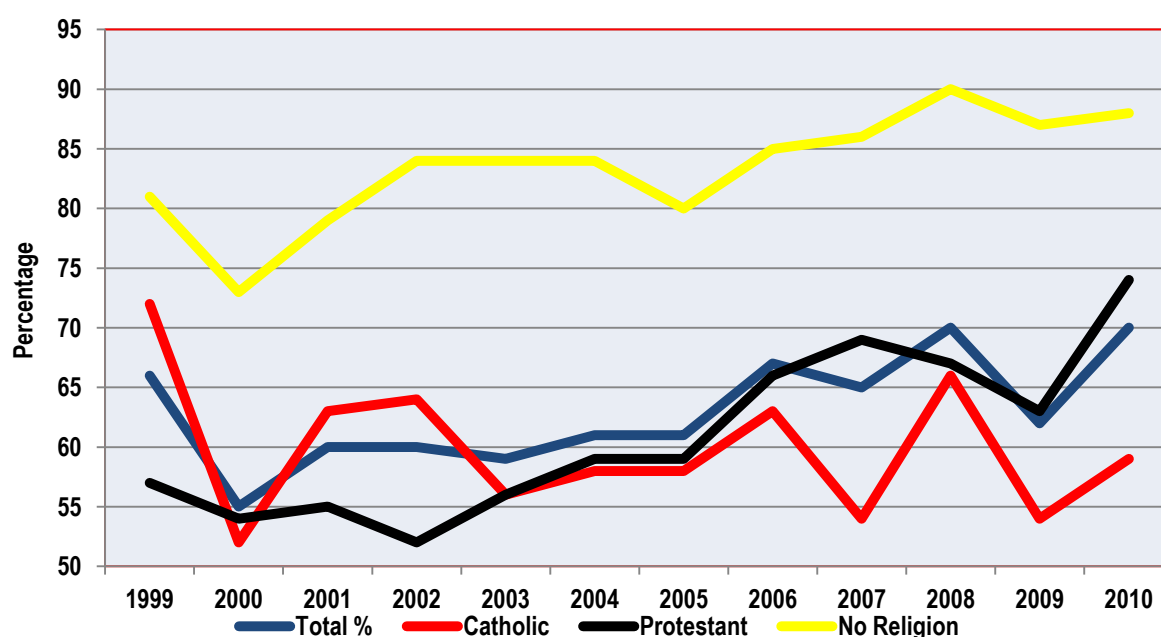


**Source:** *Northern Ireland Life and Times 2005-2010.*

## Preferences for mixed-religion education

Research by Fishkin *et al.*, (2007) indicates that parents of school aged children are in favour of change, with the majority unsupportive of retaining the status quo in the education system. They found that the majority of parents (63% T1 and 63.8% T2) believed that children should attend schools that have a balanced enrolment of Protestant and Catholic pupils. Elsewhere, research undertaken by Millward Brown Ulster (2008) highlights that 43% of participants showed a preference that their children attend an integrated school. Similar information collated by Ipsos MORI (2011) also notes that 81% of people were in favour of schools with mixed enrolment with a lower level of support amongst Protestants (78%) compared with Catholics (82%), findings also evident in NILT analysis (Figure 7).

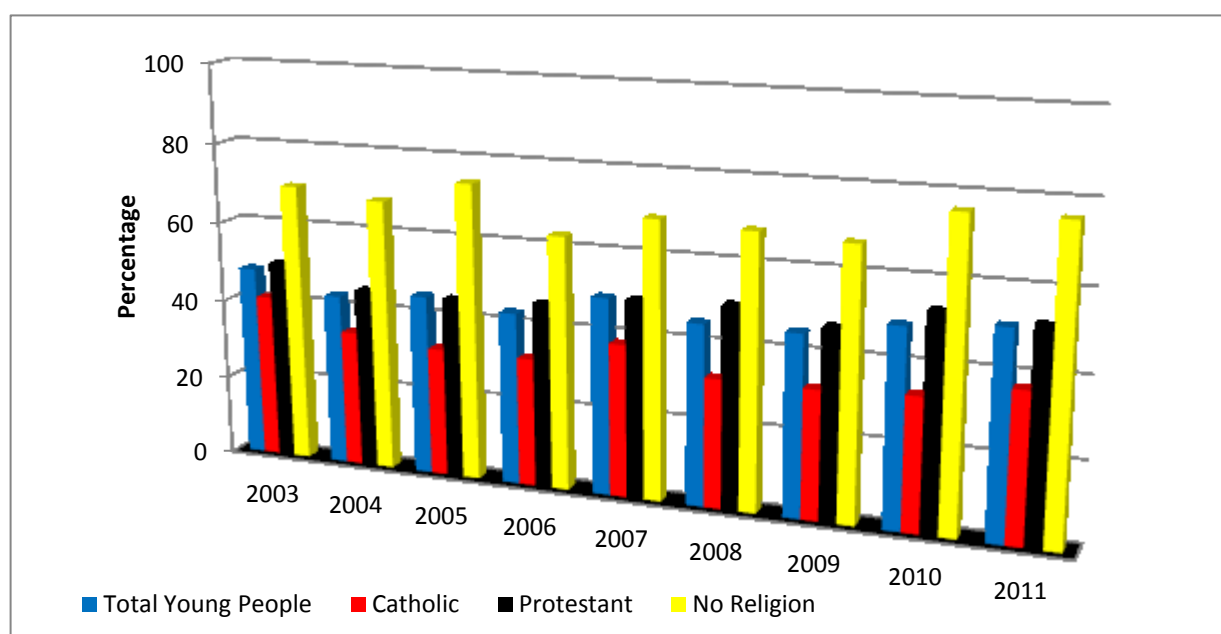
**Figure 7: Proportion of respondents who would prefer to send their children to a mixed-religion school.**



**Source:** Northern Ireland Life and Times 1999-2010.

Examination of attitudes amongst young people reveals that between 2003 and 2011 there has been a nominal overall increase (3%) in preference to send children to a mixed-religion school (Figure 8). There has been a pronounced increase since 2009, rising to a high of 51%. The statistics further highlight that in 2011 young people with no associated religion (76%) are significantly more likely to have a preference for mixed schooling than Protestants (52%) and Catholics (37%), a trend evident from 2003 to 2011.

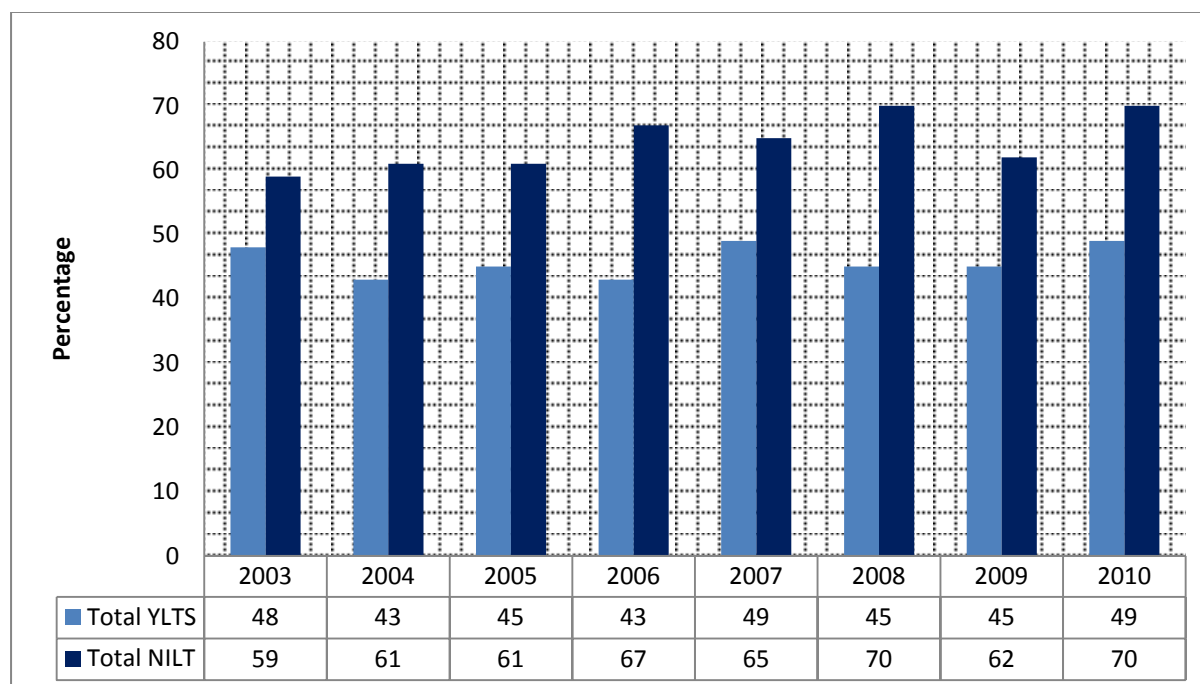
**Figure 8: Proportion of young people who would prefer to send their children to a mixed-religion school 2003 to 2011.**



**Source:** *Young Life and Times 2003-2011.*

Comparing the trend data from the NILT (adults) and YLTS (16 year olds), it is notable that there is a large difference in the preferential attitudes of adults and young people in relation to sending children to a mixed-religion school (Figure 9). The trend suggests that adults are much more likely to state a preference for sending children to a mixed-religion school.

**Figure 9: The comparison of preference of young people (YLTS) and adults (NILT) to send children to a mixed-religion school.**



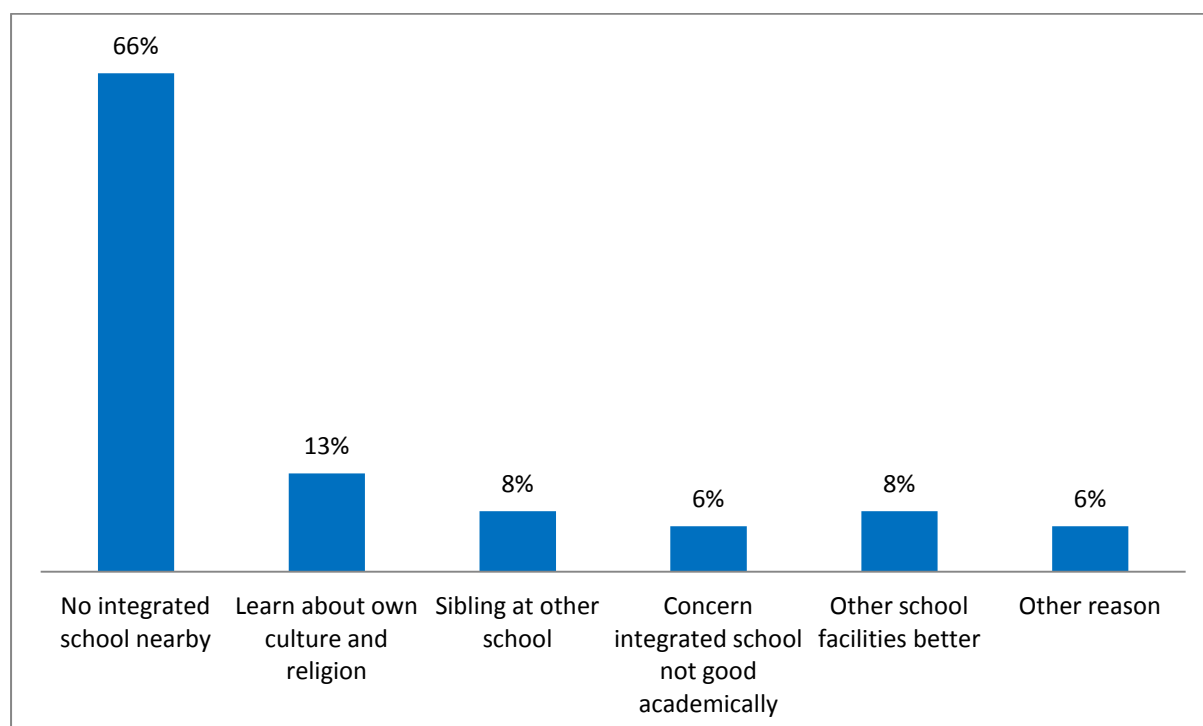
**Source:** Northern Ireland Life and Times 2003-2010; Young Life and Times 2003-2010.

## Reasons for not sending a child to an integrated school

The surveys indicate that support for integrated education is high and further that the majority of adults, and to a lesser extent young people, would prefer to send their children to a mixed-religion school. However, it has also been observed that the proportion of adults and young people who attend or have attended a mixed-religion school or planned integrated school is relatively low, although increasing. This raises the question of why more children do not attend integrated schools.

Combining information from the NILT survey (1999) with more longitudinal research from Millward Brown Ulster in 2001-2003 and 2008 goes some way to explaining some of the reasons for this. In 1999, figures from the NILT (Figure 10) revealed that two thirds of respondents (66%) did not send their children to integrated schools because there was no integrated school in the surrounding locale. Only 13% identified a preference for a school of their own religious persuasion as a reason to discount integrated schooling.

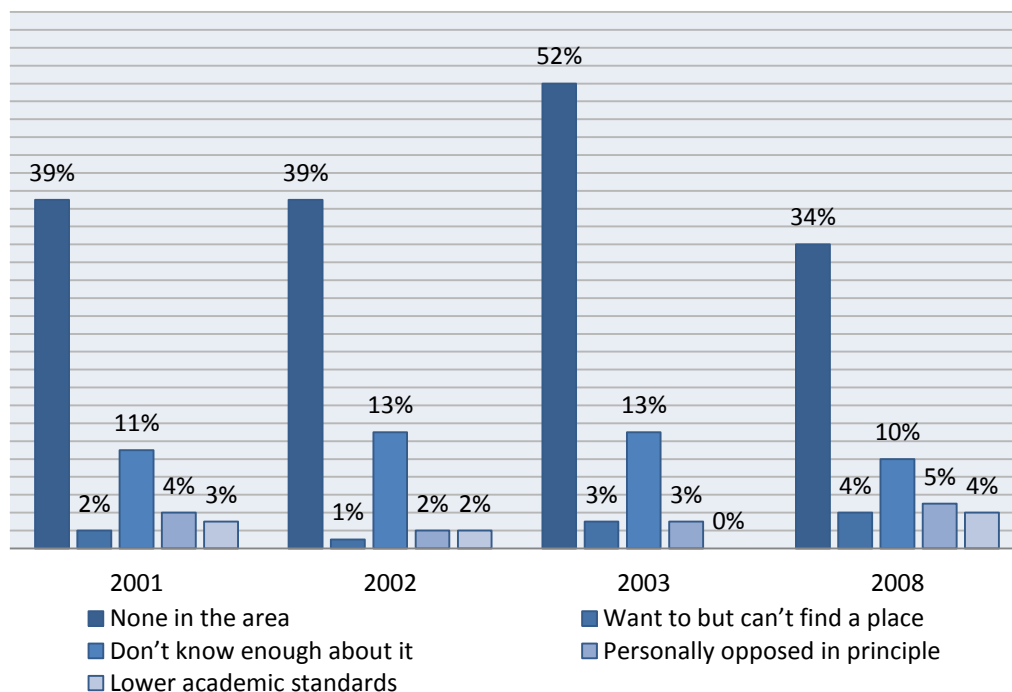
**Figure 10: Reasons given by parents in 1999 for not sending their child to an integrated school.**



**Source:** *Northern Ireland Life and Times 1999.*

Subsequent research conducted by Millward Brown Ulster (2003) (Figure 11) suggested that almost three quarters of respondents (72%) would choose an integrated school if there was one close to where they live, assuming no negative differential in academic or other standards. However, 39% of respondents in 2001 and 2002 respectively stated that they did not send their child to an integrated school because there are none in the area. Notably, this figure incremented and peaked at 52% in 2003, with follow up research suggesting a decrease to 34% in 2008.

**Figure 11: Reasons for not sending a child to an integrated school 2001-2003 and 2008.**



**Source:** *Millward Brown Ulster 2003, 2008.*

Research by Millward Brown Ulster (2008) also revealed that 5% of their sample were personally opposed to integrated education in principle and a further 5% preferred a single denomination school. When compared with NILT survey findings from 1999 where 13% of respondents expressed concern that their child should learn about their own cultural and religious lineage, it would seem that over the decade attitudes opposed or unsympathetic to integrated schools have slightly decreased. In addition, research by Millward Brown Ulster (2008) highlighted that 3% of respondents stated their church is opposed to integrated education.

## **Support for sharing and collaborating between schools**

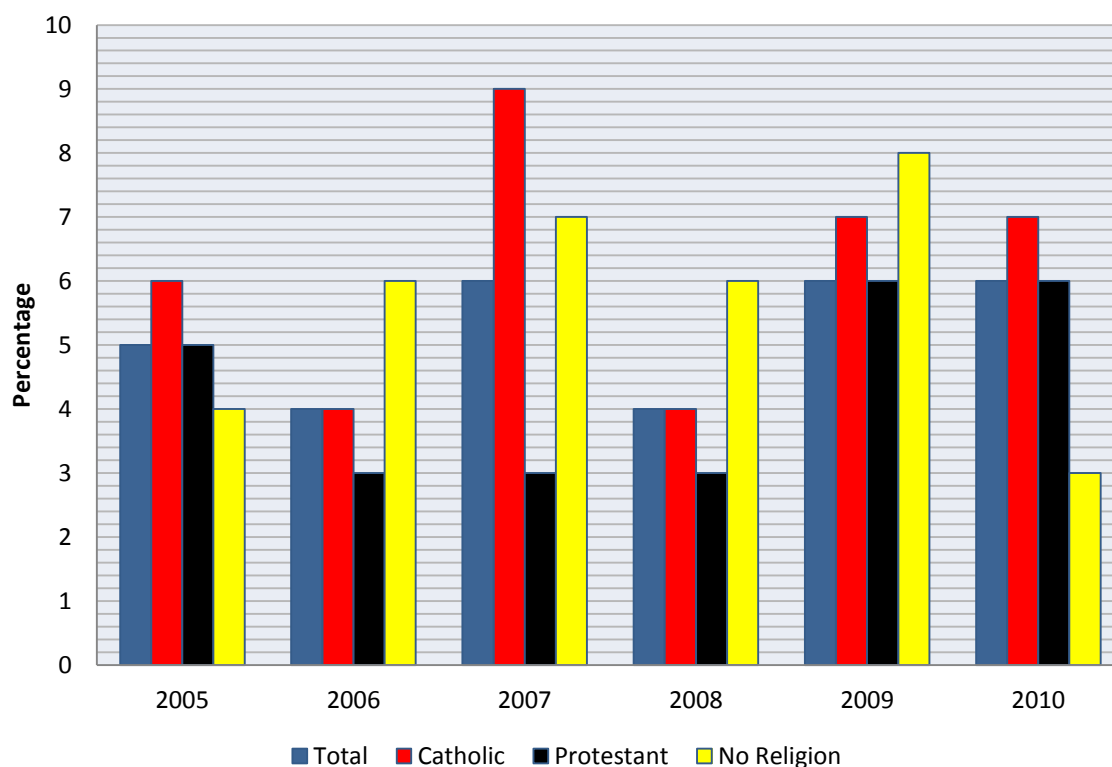
In their public opinion survey on integrated education in Northern Ireland, Millward Brown Ulster (2008) found that the vast majority of respondents supported schools sharing facilities with the nearest school even if from a different sector. In sum, 79% supported this option, and 7% opposed it. This finding accords with those of Fishkin *et al.*, (2007) who found that a large majority of parents in their sample supported the idea that schools should share facilities (67.8% T1 and 78.7% T2). Similarly, more recent figures from Ipsos MORI (2011) support this trend revealing that, overall, a prodigious majority of people (91%) support schools sharing facilities, partnering or collaborating. Significantly, this attitudinal research highlighted that there is little opposition to sharing, with just 4% in total opposing a little or opposing strongly. It was also observed that support for sharing is slightly higher amongst Catholics (93%) than Protestants (89%).

In exploring this concept further, Ipsos MORI (2011) scrutinised support amongst respondents for various types of sharing facilities. It was found that 88% favoured integrated schools, with 5% opposed to the full integration of schools, a finding echoed in research by Millward Brown Ulster (2003) which noted that 82% of the sample personally supported integrated education.

Moreover, although the least preferred option, 81% of respondents supported schools with a mixed enrolment, with support greater amongst those with experience of integrated education (85%), in comparison with those who had no direct experience (78%). Fishkin *et al.*, (2007) also observed that the majority of participants (59.3% T1 and 56.9% T2) agreed that schools that are not mixed should be required to partner with a school with children of a different religion.

Whilst public support for school sharing remains high, data from the NILT survey (Figure 12) indicates that only 6% of people sampled felt that the Government has '*definitely achieved*' encouraging schools of different religions to mix by sharing facilities.

**Figure 12: The proportion of people who believed that the Government has ‘Definitely achieved’ encouraging schools of different religions to mix by sharing facilities.**



**Source:** *Northern Ireland Life and Times 2005-2010.*

## Summary

Findings suggest that parents are in favour of structural change, with the majority unsupportive of retaining the status quo in the education system. Attitudinal data indicates that support and preference for integrated schools remains high with only slightly different levels of support between the two communities. It would seem that the main reason for preferences for integrated education not being met is insufficient numbers of shared spaces to accommodate demand. This is arguably reflected in the relatively small proportion of young people that attend integrated schools when compared with the overall pupil population, lending weight to the argument that public opinion is very supportive of creating additional integrated school places.



## **7. Research into the (educational, societal and economic) benefits of integrated education**

The first part of this section looks at research into the educational benefits of integrated education for pupils, with a particular emphasis on personal and group identities as well as educational achievement. The second part looks at the societal benefits of integrated education, including the impact of the experience on pupils; the role played by the sector in facilitating contact between individuals from the two main communities in Northern Ireland; and its impact on individuals' attitudes and beliefs. The final part considers economic analyses of integrated education.

### **Educational benefits**

The literature characterises integrated schools as providing, '*... constitutional and structural safeguards to encourage joint ownership by the two main traditions in Northern Ireland*' (Kilpatrick and Leitch, 2004, p.564); places where Catholic and Protestant students come together in settings that promote mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation (Pickett, 2008); and opportunities for student exploration of personal and group identities in a non-threatening environment (McGlynn, 2004; 2001). Initial discouragement of sending children to integrated schools has been replaced by a more accommodating attitude and parental preference (Macaulay, 2009). Various research (Gallagher and Lundy, 2006; Russell, 2006; Wardlow, 2006; McGlynn, 2004) has pointed to a significant unmet need for places in integrated schools, since children who are turned away from integrated schools each year are unlikely to find a place in another integrated school. Similarly, McAleavy, Donegan and O'Hagan (2009) have referred to the popularity of integrated schools and over-subscription in the sector, citing that from 1999 to 2002 there was a 22% increase in enrolments. Similarly, there is evidence of positive pupil attitudes to their integrated school experience. For example, Montgomery *et al.*, (2003) found that the vast majority felt quite positive about their school. Similar findings were also reported by Hunter (2008).

Assessment of the educational impact of integration is not without challenges; resistance from schools, parents, teachers and administrators, as well as lack of agreement on the identification of success indicators and interpretation of findings collectively highlight the problematic nature of analysis (Stringer *et al.*, 2009). In the first instance, uncertainty around the concept of integrated education can present challenges for its implementation. For example, early research (Milliken and Gallagher, 1998) found a lack of common vision of

what integration represented, and it was subsequently argued that the concept was not sufficiently understood by those charged with its implementation and delivery (Gallagher *et al.*, 2003). In another study (Donnelly and Hughes, 2006), teachers considered that if their school declared itself integrated (in line with statutory guidelines), then it would, by its nature, evolve an ethos of tolerance and mutual understanding.<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere, research evidence (McGlynn, 2008; Donnelly, 2008; Shepherd Johnson, 2001)<sup>28</sup> has identified diverse approaches amongst school leadership, varied practice amongst teachers (Montgomery *et al.*, 2003) and considerable disparity in interpretations amongst parents, teachers, and principals (Abbott, 2010). Inevitably, perhaps, three general models by which integrated schools approached the concept of integration have been identified (Montgomery *et al.*, 2003): passive, whereby the school does nothing to promote integration as it will happen anyway; reactive, whereby the school responds if a contentious situation arises and, finally; pro-active, by adopting (after consultation with staff) appropriate policies and practices to foster an integrated ethos.<sup>29</sup> It is suggested that lack of consensus meant that integrated schools have tended to adopt a combination of these three models (Gallagher *et al.*, 2003; Loughrey *et al.*, 2003). This has led to a call for greater debate amongst the integrated schools on the meaning and objectives of integration in order to establish ‘...a coherent and recognizable integrated brand with independently measurable indicators of success’ (McGlynn, 2007, p 86). This includes decisions about practical issues such as securing diversity of staff, policies regarding the display of symbols and the development of a more inclusive curriculum (Gallagher, *et al.*, 2003; Smith, 2001). No research has been carried out since Abbott (2010) to determine if the claimed lack of consensus amongst integrated schools has been addressed. McGlynn (2008, p.23) has advocated that the transformation process should be inclusive so that it becomes ‘...a joint activity, not just the domain of the school leadership’. Although parents have been a significant force in the development of integrated schools, Macaulay (2009) found that none of the churches had played a formal role. Although there has been opposition from the main Churches, notably from the Catholic clergy, there is evidence that relationships have improved over the years (*ibid*). Within this context, other research has explored the role of parental empowerment in the transformation of schools, although the evidence has also acknowledged inherent challenges including opposition from churches and limited understanding among parents of what the transformation process involves.

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<sup>27</sup> In the case of Northern Ireland, one Controlled Integrated and a Grant Maintained Integrated school in Northern Ireland were involved in the research. A total of 30 semi-structured (taped) interviews were conducted as well as staff room observations.

<sup>28</sup> Donnelly's study involved two primary schools – one GMI and one transforming school. Shepherd Johnson visited nine integrated schools, three primary and six post-primary integrated schools and of which two were 'transforming'. The research also involves interviews and focus groups with teachers and staff.

<sup>29</sup> All integrated schools at the time (N=44) were contacted and 40 schools (24 primary and 16 post-primary schools) agreed to participate in the research.

Although the Christian ethos of a school is often dependent on the commitment of principal and staff, it is also inclusive of people of different faiths and no religious faith, with an open policy on the display of religious symbols in integrated schools (Macaulay, 2009). Research (Stringer *et al.*, 2009; 2000) has found that school ethos had little, if any, impact on the attitudes of pupils. However, a further study (Stringer *et al.*, 2010) identified that whilst parents' political attitudes and religious group membership remained factors in shaping children's attitudes, increased opportunities for pupils to meet within integrated and mixed schools engendered more positive group positions and less extreme political attitudes.<sup>30</sup> This conclusion is reflected in other research where sustained and positive contact between pupils and opportunities to explore personal and group identities through formal and informal means fostered tolerance and critical thinking (McGlynn, 2004, 2001; Carter, 2004). In a further study, McGlynn (2008) found well established practices within integrated schools and curricular initiatives, staffing, parental involvement, pupil voice, school links and school management helped to foster a positive approach to cultural diversity.<sup>31</sup> Some evidence (Shepherd Johnson, 2001, 2007; Loughrey *et al.*, 2003) has found that community relations practices were better developed and more sophisticated in newly planned than in transformed controlled integrated schools, whilst in other research (Kilpatrick and Leitch, 2004, p 582) pupils have valued '*....sustained and long-term contact as key to the success of cross-community initiatives*' although they were dismissive of occasional, one-off events. This reflected the McGonigle *et al.*, (2003) analysis of six transforming (former controlled) schools which showed limited expertise in promoting the Irish culture and traditions. Elsewhere, Gallagher *et al.*, (2003) found distinctions emerging between GMI and CI schools in respect of how they promote positive inter-group contacts, while Niens and Cairns (2008) and McKeown (2012) highlighted that physical proximity alone was not enough to improve intergroup relations and McGlynn (2011, 2008) stressed that integrated schools should manage cultural difference in such a way as to promote long-term social integration.<sup>32</sup>

Research suggests that the extent to which preference for integrated education outweighs preference for selective academic (grammar) education is not known (McGlynn, 2007). However, there is some evidence to indicate that pupil achievement in integrated schools is

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<sup>30</sup> The study was cross-sectional in design and involved a sample of 1,732 children together with 880 of their parents. The children came from three age cohorts aged 11–12, 12–13, and 14–15 years attending two integrated schools, a Catholic mixed school, two Protestant segregated, and three Catholic segregated schools. The older groups had been attending the schools for 2 and 4 years, respectively, while the 11-year-olds were in the third or fourth week of their first year.

<sup>31</sup> This study included a survey of post-primary pupils in 11 integrated schools. The sample consisted of six principals, three from primary schools (one GMI more than 10 years old, one GMI less than five years old and one transformed CI) and three principals from equivalent post-primary schools. 57 integrated schools at the time. 2 Questionnaires were completed by 400 Year 8 and Year 10 pupils from 11 integrated post-primary schools.

<sup>32</sup> Semi-structured interviews with 52 principals of integrated schools of whom 33 were principals of planned and 19 were principals of transformed schools. For McGlynn (2011b) 2 schools were chosen (2 grant maintained primary schools). In each school semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, three classroom teachers, one classroom assistant and two focus groups of upper primary students. The researchers also conducted observations of classroom practice.

at least comparable to the secondary school sector although it is not possible to draw conclusive findings from the data. For example, NICIE (2007) found the achievement of integrated colleges at GCSE level to be substantially above the Northern Ireland non-grammar average, highlighting that of the 18 integrated colleges which offered GCSEs, nine appeared in the top 40 post-primary schools. Other research (Gallagher *et al.*, 2003) found similar trends. For example in the 1992/1993 academic year, GCSE attainment in the two GMI schools was much higher than secondary schools generally. In the 1998/99 academic year, 38% of pupils from GMI schools and 26% of pupils from CI schools achieved five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, in comparison to 33% of pupils from secondary schools and 95% of pupils from grammar schools. Similarly, when taking into consideration social disadvantage using Free School Meals (FSM) as a key variable for Year 12 pupils, research (Gallagher *et al.*, 2003) found that the highest level of performance at each FSM band level was in maintained schools, followed by integrated schools and controlled schools respectively. With reference to A-levels, passes were somewhat lower in GMI schools compared to secondary schools, particularly maintained secondary schools. More recently, a Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) survey (2008) of Year 12 pupils across Northern Ireland found that the mean scores of GCSE qualifications in integrated schools were above those of controlled secondary schools but below those of Catholic secondary schools. The same survey revealed that the A-level performance of Year 14 pupils in integrated schools lay between secondary schools and grammar schools.<sup>33</sup>

With regards to classroom practice, research (Hughes and Donnelly, 2007; McGlynn, 2007; Moffatt, 2007; Montgomery *et al.*, 2003) has identified the pedagogy of integrated education as an important area, with an emphasis on preparing teachers to become skilled in addressing diverse and sensitive issues. A range of educational tools have been designed to facilitate integration, for example, the Anti-Bias Curriculum (ABC) (NICIE, 2008) and Living with Diversity (NICIE, 2007), and it is argued that '*...integrated schools go further in their emphasis that awareness of bias is crucial to ensuring inclusivity. The anti-bias approach means challenging society's negative values, practices and prejudices*' (Abbott, 2010, p.847). Nonetheless, the training of teachers in separate institutions, with limited relevant pre-service or in-service training has remained a significant obstacle (Russell, 2006) and the few professional development opportunities within school (Hughes, 2011; Hughes and

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<sup>33</sup> This part of the project is based on a survey of 782 Year 12 pupils in eight schools and its purpose was to assess their preferences for options post-16 and post-18. Of the total sample of pupils, 42% attended grammar schools and 58% attended secondary schools. , In terms of school sector, this represents 58% attending Controlled/Voluntary schools, 32% attending Catholic schools and 10% attending Integrated schools. With regards to the survey of year 14 pupils, out of 911 pupils, 66 (7.2%) attended an integrated school.

Donnelly, 2007; McGlynn, 2007)<sup>34</sup> has contributed to varied classroom practice (Montgomery *et al.*, 2003) and tendencies towards an avoidance culture (Niens and Cairns, 2008) that has permeated across all school sectors (Abbott, 2010; Russell, 2006; Donnelly and Hughes, 2006; O'Connor 2002). The endurance of an avoidance culture has been a recurrent finding in other research (Donnelly, 2008, p.187; Shepherd Johnson, 2001) which found that cultural differences were minimalized rather than fully explored and, where there were limited opportunities for pupils to explore their and other's identity, '*...such practices are likely to impede rather than facilitate the progress of good inter-community relations*'. This has been a challenge for the integrated schools (Donnelly, 2004a, 2004b; Smith, 2001) where some teachers were reluctant to reflect on how personal experiences and views could impact on cross-community relationships within the school. The research suggested that this led to teachers identifying the ethos of the school according to their own understanding of what an integrated school should be, leading to inconsistencies in approaches.<sup>35</sup> In an attempt to redress this, training, on a voluntary basis, is regularly provided by NICIE for teachers and other staff as well as governors. This training includes, among other things professional development courses such as Anti-Bias in Education as well as training for teachers new to the integrated sector.

## **Societal benefits**

In Northern Ireland, a significant part of the policy discourse since the peace agreement concerns how social policies might address divisions within society and movement toward 'a shared future' (OFMDFM 2010; 2005). The extent to which such social cohesion has been achieved is subject to some debate. Research (for example, Bell, Harvey and Jarman, 2010; Hamilton *et al.*, 2008) has highlighted the enduring segregated nature of Northern Ireland, with an increase in the number of 'peace walls' between 1998 and 2012 (from 22 to 28) and predominantly segregated social housing (90%) (Nolan, 2012). Arguably, the terminology of a 'shared society' is characterised by ambiguity, referring equally to agreement on living apart as well as 'living together but differently' (Graham and Nash 2006) and it is acknowledged that vestiges of the conflict continue to filter through to the day-to-day life of Northern Ireland (NILT 2008, 2007; YLTS 2008, 2007). Other research (for example, Leonard and McKnight, 2010; Roche, 2008; Hansson, 2005) found that segregation has impacted on the lives of children and young people and that in some cases children as

<sup>34</sup> The school in Hughes (2011) research involved semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 'friendship groups' of Year 8 pupils, each comprising three friends (30 pupils in total).

<sup>35</sup> Donnelly (2004a and 2004b) involved one case study of a secondary school (integrated) and involved observing (as a non-participant) teacher interaction within the staffroom, 18 semi-structured interviews and three periods of staffroom observation.

young as three years exhibit biased attitudes and awareness of sectarian statements (Connolly *et al.*, 2002).

Education provision in Northern Ireland is characterised by pupil interactions mostly with peers, teachers and others from their own community, with limited opportunity to have their beliefs and attitudes challenged (Wylie, 2004). Various research studies refer to the potentially detrimental effect of separate schooling on social attitudes (Hughes, 2011; Hayes and McAllister 2009; Brocklehurst, 2006; Murray, 1985). Elsewhere, Niens and Cairns (2005) reported that segregation contributed to the formation of negative intergroup attitudes and perpetuation of inter-group hostility, arguing that the segregated education system prevented the development of inter-communal friendship. Previous research (Gallagher, 1995) stated that a segregated system not only maintained divisiveness, but also fostered mutual ignorance and suspicion. Separate representative school bodies have publicly challenged the view that their schools feed prejudices and promote sectarian tension. For example, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) (2007) considered it played a significant role in improving community relations through the promotion of reconciliation, healing and better understanding between divided communities. Protestant clergy have expressed support for integrated schools (Macaulay 2009, p.9) '*...conditional on integrated schools not impacting negatively on controlled schools on which they are transferors*' and the Presbyterian Church has publicly encouraged its ministers to play a full part within local integrated schools.

The contribution made by integrated education to '*...enabling and promoting continued engagement with children from different backgrounds*' (Community Relations Council and Equality Commission, 2010, p. 23) has highlighted the role of integrated schools in providing opportunities for interaction between individuals from the two main communities in Northern Ireland. This is reflected in a range of research formulated around the contact hypothesis, particularly the role of intergroup contact in fostering good relations. The contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) is based on the premise that bringing conflicted groups together under the right circumstances (for example, in the form of cross-group friendships) can reduce negative assumptions and stereotypes and strengthen positive perceptions. For example, research (Stringer *et al.*, 2009, p.252) has indicated that pupils from mixed and integrated schools reported '*...significantly higher levels of contact with other group members both within and outside school than their segregated counterparts*'.<sup>36</sup> Other research has similarly

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<sup>36</sup> The study was cross-sectional and involved a total sample of 1732 children in three age cohorts aged 11–12, 12–13 and 14–15 years attending two integrated schools, a Catholic mixed school, two Protestant segregated and three Catholic segregated schools.

established that opportunities for contact in integrated or mixed school settings were associated with higher numbers of inter-group friendships and willingness to mix with others (Al Ramiah *et al.*, 2011; Hargie *et al.*, 2008; Montgomery *et al.*, 2003; Niens *et al.*, 2003). Successive research has confirmed an increase in the number of inter-community friendships amongst those attending or having attended integrated schools (McGlynn, 2008; Niens *et al.*, 2003; McClenahan, 1995; Irwin, 1991) and significant long-term positive impact on cross-community friendships (McGlynn, 2003, 2001).<sup>37</sup>

Research evidence (Stringer *et al.*, 2009, 2000) has also found that the intergroup contact of integrated or mixed schools can influence social attitudes, with pupils adopting a more positive position on key social issues such as politics, religion, identity, mixed marriages and integrated education and a less positive position on segregated education.<sup>38</sup> Other studies (for example, McGlynn, 2003; Montgomery *et al.*, 2003) lend further support to these findings where respective cohorts of past pupils felt that integrated education had a significant positive impact on their lives. The findings of these two studies provide complementary perspectives – in the former, some past pupils considered that opportunities to discuss religion and politics at school had nurtured respect for diversity and comfort in a plural environment whilst in the latter, 50% of respondents reported having a partner from a different religious and cultural background compared to about 10% of the adult population. Similarly, Hayes *et al.*, (2007, 2006) found that pupils attending integrated schools expressed a less sectarian stance on national identity and constitutional preferences. The authors concluded that pupils from a ‘non-segregated’ school were more likely to adopt a neutral political position and reject traditional identities and allegiances, positing that *‘...integrated schools can and do have an impact on the outlooks of the pupils who attend them’ engendering positive attitudes that extended into later life* (Hayes *et al.*, 2006, p.4). These findings were reinforced in a subsequent study (Hayes and McAllister, 2009, p.444) which established that pupils who had attended a formally integrated school were *‘...more likely to have friends and neighbours from across the religious divide than those who attended a segregated school’* and that attendance at a formally integrated school was *‘...the most important predictor of cross-community contact’* (*ibid*).

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<sup>37</sup> McGlynn (2003) involved a study of 159 former pupils from the two longest established integrated post-primary schools. 50 former pupils also participated in semi-structured focus group interviews. McGlynn (2008) collected data in eight case study schools, of which four were primary (one maintained, one planned integrated and two transformed integrated) and four were post-primary (one controlled, one maintained, one planned integrated and one transformed integrated). McGlynn (2008b) used a sample which consisted of six integrated school principals from three primary (one grant maintained [GMI] more than ten years old, one GMI less than five years old and one controlled integrated [CI]) and three equivalent post-primary and intensive semi-structured interviews were held with the principals involved in the project ‘Integrating Schools’ led by NICIE and funded by the IFI.

<sup>38</sup> Stringer *et al* (2000) involved 1732 pupils from three age cohorts, years 8, 9 and 11 attending two integrated schools, a Catholic mixed school, two Protestant segregated and three Catholic segregated schools.

Attendance at an integrated school is considered important in shaping identity without a loss of community or social identity (Niens *et al.*, 2003; Montgomery *et al.*, 2003). Addressing the impact of integrated education on personal and social identities, Wardlow (2006) references McGlynn's (2001, p.5) study which highlights the opportunities for pupils to '*... explore self-perceptions in a tolerant environment*' that '*... provides a wider and more complex choice of personal and group components than the traditionally restrictive and mutually exclusive categories*'. McGlynn's (2001) study, for example, alluded to participants' '*superordinate integrated identity*', characterised by respect for diversity, broadmindedness, understanding and tolerance. This study, on the impact of integrated education on two cohorts of past pupils, found a respect for diversity, confidence in plural settings and enhanced ability to empathize with alternative perspectives. Subsequent studies have similarly shown that pupils from integrated schools considered themselves to be more tolerant (Montgomery *et al.*, 2003), to show greater sensitivity to religious categories somewhat earlier in their development than children attending other schools (Niens *et al.*, 2012) and to exhibit a relatively high propensity towards forgiveness (Niens *et al.*, 2003). Other research (Hayes, *et al.*, 2007) found that individuals from the two main communities in Northern Ireland who had attended a formally or informally integrated school tended to be more willing to abandon traditionally established allegiances; this appeared to be more pronounced among those who had experienced a formally integrated education than an informally integrated one.<sup>39</sup> These findings also suggested that individuals were also more likely to abandon traditionally established allegiances in favour of either an intermediate or opposing position. Similarly, Hayes and McAllister (2009, p.447) found that pupils who had attended a formally integrated school had a more favourable outlook for the future than those from a mixed or segregated school and that as '*...a group, they are significantly more likely to cross the religious divide, particularly in terms of their friendship networks, and this greater inter-community contact leads them to hold a more positive view about future relations*'. Elsewhere, O'Connor *et al.*, (2009) found that pupils from integrated schools reported most optimism about future relationships between Protestants and Catholics.<sup>40</sup>

Collectively, the evidence suggests that pupils within integrated education '*...have more consistent and meaningful patterns of contact with peers of the other religion both within and outside school and are arguably more likely in their adult life to adopt more accommodating*

<sup>39</sup> The reference in the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey is 'mixed or integrated' and when indicated 'integrated' the respondents were asked whether or not it was a 'formally integrated school'.

<sup>40</sup> In preparation for the introduction of Local and Global Citizenship on the curriculum, the Department of Education (DE) supported a pilot initiative between 2002 and 2007, offering schools the opportunity to avail of significant in-service training for teachers on an opt-in basis. As part of the pilot, 251 pupils from 33 post-primary schools, including 10 integrated schools were surveyed over a three year period.



*approaches to issues that have divided the two religious groups within Northern Ireland'* (Stringer *et al.*, 2000, p.11).

## **Economic benefits**

To date, there have been two main studies that have referred to the cost of a separate school system and the economic benefits of integrated education. These were completed by Deloitte (2007) and Oxford Economics (2010).

A government commissioned report on the cost of the Troubles (Deloitte, 2007) looked at the cost of division in areas such as education, housing, policing and security and estimated this to be in the region of an extra £1.5 billion spend every year. The report acknowledged that social division has led to an inefficient approach to demand planning. Although the report recognised that *'limited research has been conducted as to the financial impact of denominational split in NI's schools'* (p.63), and referred to the problems involved in isolating the impact of division from other factors, such as academic selection and a changing population, it also stated that societal division had created inefficiencies within the education system. Describing the *multi sector system in Northern Ireland*, it drew attention to *'...a spatially organised school system where all pupils in a certain locality do not attend the same primary or secondary school'* making *'...matching supply and demand more difficult compared to other regions in the UK'* (p.60).

Quantifiable costs and a comparative analysis of education expenditure is complicated, but the 'Cost of the Troubles' report contended that there was evidence that a divided society had perpetuated the existence of a multi-sector system which was both costly to administer and train for, as well as ineffective at managing the supply of pupil places. The report referred to identified, but not quantified costs (potential savings gained through greater collaboration between schools and consolidation within the schools estate), estimating savings between £15.9 million and £79.6 million. It looked specifically at four areas of education expenditure; schools provision, education administration, community relations and teacher training. With regards to schools provision, it referred to limited research on the financial implication of a segregated education system, taking into consideration issues of rurality, population distribution, academic selection and a changing population. With regards to education administration, the report referred to the range of organisations involved and again, drawing on the figures from the Bain Report concluded that the introduction of the ESA could make possible savings in the region of £6.4 million, but with the caveat that while the exact configuration of the management structures and realised savings may change, it

was likely that a new management model for education would result in significant cost savings. Other identified quantified costs that could be attributed to education in a divided society were management of the multi-sector schools system, including the potential savings garnered through the ESA (£6.4 million) and Community Relations (£4.25 million). It further contended that a reduction in the number of teacher training facilities could result in savings of between one and five per cent of current administration costs, equating to £108.6k per annum while savings of five per cent would equate to £543k per annum.

Although the Bain Report (DE, 2006) stated that there should be a surplus of no more than 10 per cent of school places and that the costs associated with five per cent of the schools estate could be saved, the 'Cost of the Troubles' report acknowledged the difficulty in estimating any surplus as well as calculating recommended enrolment levels and suggested a *scale of savings* based on a series of reductions in overall DE expenditure:

- 1% would equate to £15.9m
- 2% would equate to £31.9m
- 3% would equate to £47.8m
- 4% would equate to £63.7m
- 5% would equate to £79.6m

While it is not possible to estimate the exact direct costs of education that are associated with the divide, the assessment above indicates the potential for significant savings.

Oxford Economics (2010) looked at the impact of shared education and calculated that 'shared education' could, by sharing resources and assets, amalgamating schools and creating new merged schools, help the sector to better absorb 25% of real spending cuts with less of a detrimental effect on pupils and parents, as well as address criticisms of financial inefficiencies inherent in the current system. Oxford Economics also refer to shared education as a way of preparing for the comprehensive spending review by establishing a proactive local solution which would deliver long-term savings through lower maintenance costs, deal with excess capacity in the form of unviable schools and also better meet changing demographic patterns. Some references are also made to the possibility through shared education to better address a *cohesive, shared and integrated* approach to education.

The key thesis from the Oxford Economics report is that schools will face a reduction in their budgets and as a result of severe reduction in the schools capital budget over the next five years any shared solutions may have to work with the existing schools estate as opposed to building new schools. Oxford Economics also refers to a more shared approach to education in the form of inter-school collaboration which would also test the appetite for shared as well as integrated education. For Oxford Economics, a shared education approach that includes merging schools is the approach that would provide an opportunity to address financial restraint and austerity.

## **Summary**

There is a body of research evidence to suggest that integrated schooling has a significant and positive influence on the lives of those who experience it, most notably in terms of cross-community friendships but also in reducing prejudicial attitudes. What also comes across strongly from the research is that integrated schools provide an environment where pupils from a variety of community backgrounds can interact regularly formally and informally. While some research has referred to the possibilities within integrated schools to discuss challenging issues and to explore cultural differences in a safe and secure environment, other findings have highlighted a more diverse approach and with limited opportunities to do so. There have been attempts to estimate the cost of segregated education in Northern Ireland and references in this context has been made to shared education rather than integrated education, but as highlighted throughout this report, it is frequently the case that the terminology used does not make clear what is being referred to.

## 8. Examples from other contexts

This section of the report aims to place integrated education in Northern Ireland within a wider international context. Through a small selection of short case studies it is possible to draw on comparisons, differences and challenges that have been faced by other societies. Research has looked at experiences in the United Kingdom involving joint church schools and shared campuses, and in the Republic of Ireland where multi-denominational schools have been established. Research such as Hayes *et al.*, (2009) has looked at the concept of integration and compared the experiences of the Northern Ireland education system with those of the United States. Research has also been carried out comparing the experiences in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as in Israel.

### United Kingdom

Research has been carried out from a number of different starting points and policy drivers. Hughes (2011) refers to the discussion in England on separate schooling and intergroup relations referring to the riots in places such as Bradford in 2001 and how critics of faith schools refer to increased polarisation between communities. Reports such as Cantle (2002) also referred to the polarisation in communities such as Bradford, Oldham and Burnley and to separate education, communal and voluntary organisations, employment, places of worship and cultural activities. Cantle (2002, p.33) referred to the need for schools to *'...offer, at least 25%, of places to reflect the other cultures or ethnicities within the local area'*. The report also stressed the role the schools could play in challenging such 'parallel lives' through increased contacts between schools and other activities.

Another often referred to example in Britain is the creation of joint church schools, Anglican and Catholic. O'Sullivan and Russell (2008) found in their case studies that the schools had managed to create an overarching Christian ethos which respected the difference between the Christian traditions while also acknowledging similarities. They also state that joint schools need to establish a joint or agreed upon Christian ethos.

In light of the debate in relation to shared education in Northern Ireland, references have often been made to the shared campus in North Lanarkshire (Scotland) in which Catholic

schools and non-denominational schools are based on a shared site.<sup>41</sup> O'Sullivan and Russell (2008) found that the autonomy of the individual schools, including ethos and principles had been maintained, and the implementation of the Catholic Education Commission Charter had not been affected. Similarly, the evaluation also highlighted the sustained contact between children and limited, if any, forms of bullying or issues surrounding identity. They also refer to the need for any shared project to take into consideration the ethos of the schools involved, and that all the necessary stake holders including parents, the local community and local clergy and church hierarchy are supportive of the project. They also state that there cannot be any ambiguity surrounding the concept of sharing for the project and what it involves.

## **Republic of Ireland**

In the Republic of Ireland, the majority (96%) of the country's primary schools are owned or managed (or both) by churches, predominantly the Catholic Church, something '*...unique among developed countries*' (Coolahan *et al.*, 2012, p.1). It was not until the late 1970s - mid 1980s and the establishment of Educate Together that multi-denominational schools at primary level were established (Hyland 1996). The first multi-denominational school was founded in 1978. These schools have their own Ethical Education Curriculum (EEC) which replaces the daily half hour of Religious Education which all other national primary schools must teach. They emphasise respect rather than toleration and apply a rights-based approach to education. While there are similarities to the integrated sector, such as a strong emphasis on parental and co-educational involvement, these schools are not integrated – rather, they are based on equality of treatment in the principle and practice of different belief systems.

In 2012 there were 58 multi-denominational schools under the co-ordination of Educate Together. In addition, the Irish-medium sector also offers denominational, inter-denominational and multi-denominational education, depending on the wishes of the parents. These schools, however, only account for some 4% of the total number of national schools (Coolahan, *et al.* 2012).

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<sup>41</sup> The Bain Report (2006) referred to the shared campus model and that (p 169) 'primary school design in North Lanarkshire is based on financial and best-value considerations; the integration argument played no part in the Council's decision to support shared campus schools.'

With regards to secondary education, Killeavy (1999) refers to secondary education in the Republic of Ireland being entirely run by religious bodies but now having a wider representation from the community on their boards.

Of particular significance, the advisory group for the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector (Coolahan *et al.* 2012) has made recommendations in response to 'major political, social, economic, cultural, demographic and educational change' in the Irish state. The report states that '*There is now a mis-match between the inherited pattern of denominational school patronage and the rights of citizens in the much more culturally and religiously diverse contemporary Irish society*' (p1). Recommendations include arrangements for changes to the patronage of schools and in some cases divesting of ownership to the State.

## **United States**

Much research relating to the United States has concentrated on desegregated education and its impact on individuals. In the United States, school desegregation has been viewed as a possible route for improving intergroup relations, as indicated in the famous social science brief filed in the *Brown v The Board of Education* case that laid the basis for school desegregation. Thus, a substantial amount of research has focused on this outcome. Various pieces of research have highlighted the effects of segregated education on both students and adults. Survey based research, referred to by Hayes *et al.*, (2009) found that attending a desegregated school did have an impact on racial attitudes and shaped experiences for the better and as a result also had a positive impact on intergroup relations. Hayes *et al.*, (2009) also refer to research from The Civil Rights Project 2002; Eaton 2001; and Wells and Crain 1994, which found that students who had attended desegregated schools were also more likely to attend and succeed in college and to work in interracial settings. Similarly, Frankenberg (2007) refers to integrated schooling as benefitting from relatively higher levels of parental involvement and community support. Studies also suggest that students of all racial and ethnic groups who had attended racially diverse schools have a stronger commitment to civic engagement than their peers who attended segregated schools. Hayes *et al.*, (2009) also refer to research such as Holme, Wells and Tijerina Revilla (2005) who found that pupils who attended desegregated schools were more comfortable in racially mixed settings and also that they expressed less fear of racially mixed environments.

However, Gallagher (2007) makes an important point that despite the best efforts of the state, integration in the US has been hard to achieve and perhaps harder to maintain. It is perhaps important in this context also to take Zirkel's and Cantor's (2004, p.11) points on board which state that, rather than simply seeing integrated schools as meeting places and providing possibilities for contact, the school has to *'...encourage and arrange interaction in a variety of planful ways - from organizing campus dialogs to creating projects for students to work on together. We find that when thoughtful plans for creating more interethnic contact are implemented, prejudice and discrimination on campus is lessened and achievement for all students improves'*. The US Commission on Civil Rights (2006) found that there were limited, if any links, between racial and ethnic diversity in schools and academic achievement and whereas some studies had highlighted modest impact others had found negative impact. They also established that it was problematic to measure the outcomes on non-educational benefits and again, highlighted the studies which listed positive social benefits like increased social interaction and interracial friendships. However, other studies report mixed results. The Commission also established that some recent surveys have indicated generally positive reactions to school desegregation, such as cross-racial friendships and greater understanding of racial and cultural differences, but that *'...some of these surveys do not definitively identify a causal relationship between the two, since they lacked a comparison group of students from racially isolated schools'* (p 17).

## **Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Research has also looked at integrated education in the context of the former Yugoslavia, and in particular Bosnia-Herzegovina, a country established after the 1992-1995 civil war in which 200,000 people lost their lives and 1.5 million people were displaced, (Hromadzic, in McGlynn *et al.*, 2009). Bosnia-Herzegovina comprises two autonomous ethno-national entities, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska, with a third, locally governed region, the Brčko district. Bosnia-Herzegovina is almost four times the size of Northern Ireland and has a population of almost 4 million (Magill *et al.*, 2009). Jones (2011) refers to the administration of the education system in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with 13 educational policy making authorities; the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the government of the Republic of Srpska, the cantons within the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Brčko district. There is no common curriculum, although Jones (2011, p.85) identified *'... a core of subjects whose teaching has been agreed upon by each entity'*; and a set of national subjects which are then taught according to the area in which the

school is based and also reflecting the ethnic make up the student body.<sup>42</sup> There are also a number of examples of ‘two schools under one roof’, where pupils from different ethnic backgrounds attend separate schools within the same premises. These schools have largely arisen in areas where significant numbers of displaced minorities have returned to their former homes after the war.

Of particular interest is the Brčko district, as its education system is the only part of the highly segregated education system with integrated schools (Organisation for Security and Co-operation Europe [OSCE], 2007). Prior to the 1992-1995 war, Brčko was an ethnically mixed (45% Bosniak, 25% Croat and 21% Serb) and relatively prosperous part of the former Yugoslavia. By the time of the peace talks in 1995, the town of Brčko had lost 99% of its non-Serb population. OSCE refers to the academic year of 2001 and 2002, when children of different ethnicities attended school together and where, as a preparation, schools had removed ethnic insignia and symbols, and even been given new names (OSCE, 2007).

Within the classrooms in schools, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds receive instruction in their own languages and also maintain their individual ethnic and cultural identity. Pupils in various pieces of research have referred to their experiences of attending school as positive and referred to having friends from other ethnic groups (OSCE 2007). Similarly, the OSCE carried out a survey in 2004 in which respondents in Brčko were overwhelmingly critical of schools and universities where one language was used exclusively and where history was taught separately (Jones 2011).

Jones (2012) referred to a general perception that the integration in education had been a success, as interviews referred to friendships and other forms of positive behaviour between the various groups. International organisations, such as the OSCE also referred to the experience in Brčko being one which could be implemented elsewhere whilst acknowledging counter arguments such as the uniqueness of the place, the municipality’s small size, strong international supervision and large outside investment. However, Jones also argues that *‘...it is too simplistic to assume that the functional success of the system equals a more substantial level of success. The terms under which success is assessed are narrowly conceptualized as an ethno-national mix of staff and students in the same classroom’* (p.46). In addition, she found that teachers felt they had not received adequate training to work in

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<sup>42</sup> Elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia, The Nansen Dialogue Center in Skopje, Macedonia, introduced a model for integrated and bilingual primary education in 2007 as a way of alleviating tensions between the two main ethnic groups – Albanians and Macedonians. While allowing for students and teachers to learn and teach within their ethnic groups and with their native languages for the state mandated curriculum it adds daily or weekly co-curricular classes in which students and teachers integrate, both languages are used equally, and students and teachers collaborate on activities and projects. (See <http://www.nansen-dialogue.net/ndcskopje/>. Accessed 12/12/2012.



an integrated classroom or teach more challenging subjects and where *'...secretly lending textbooks to students or making jokes about language equality would be deemed as deviant and anti-integrationist by district or international officials'* (p.20).

## Israel

The focus for integration in Israel has been on bilingual education and where Palestinian and Jewish pupils attend school together. It was not until the mid-1980s that the first step was taken to establish a bilingual and desegregated school in Israel with the establishment of the Center for Bilingual Education (CBE) in 1997 which aims to establish and maintain Palestinian-Jewish cooperation in education, primarily through such schools, of which there are five with some 1000 pupils (Bekerman *et al.*, 2011; Bekerman, Zewbylas and McGlynn 2009). Rajuan and Bekerman (2011) refer to this small sector within the Israeli education system as successful because of the schools' relative independence, affluence and, recently, State support. These Jewish–Palestinian schools have based their work on a shared vision of a multicultural society whose citizens coexist in peace.

Research, such as Bekerman *et al.*, (2011, 2003) and Donnelly and Hughes (2006) has found that for the pupils involved, attending the integrated schools has made an impact by developing more moderate opinions in relation to conflictual issues, but also Bekerman *et al.*, (2011, p.399) found that pupils *'...recognised themselves as nationally and culturally divergent'* and *'they differed from students in monolingual schools in that they expressed less of a sense of social distance between the groups'*. Participants in the study also referred to better intergroup relations as they had grown up, something also encouraged by their teachers. They found that the contact between the two groups had helped to alleviate hostility and helped to establish friendships. However, they state that the friendships tended not to extend to pupils of monolingual schools. Bekerman and Shhadi (2003) also found that children's understanding of one another's cultures runs deeper than that found in the monolingual settings, but that they also found that these positive effects were not *'...necessarily transferable to representatives of the groups outside the immediate educational environment'*.

Research in Israel as well as elsewhere (Bekerman, Zembylas, and McGlynn, 2009) has also looked at the role of the teacher and the situation in the classroom. Donnelly and Hughes (2006, p.512) found that in the Israeli schools there was a clear emphasis on *'...communicating, clarifying and refining school goals'* and *'considerable emphasis was placed on creating and reflecting on the processes that may further improve relations*

*between Jews and Arabs*'. They also found that the schools were characterised by direct patterns of dialogue and operated with explicitly shared and stated objectives.

## **Summary**

From the short analysis of the case studies outlined above it is clear that Northern Ireland is not unique in looking to education as a means of developing social cohesion. Each context is different but even a brief review highlights some key issues relevant to education policy in Northern Ireland. In other parts of the United Kingdom, for example, there are schools jointly managed by the churches, which is not an option that has been explored actively by the churches in Northern Ireland. In the Republic of Ireland the majority of schools are owned or managed by the Catholic Church, but multi-denominational schools have been established and the recent Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector (2012) has made recommendations for changes to the patronage of schools and divesting of ownership to the State to reflect movement towards '*a more culturally and religiously diverse contemporary Irish society*'. The experience of desegregation in the United States raises questions about the impact and sustainability of statutory approaches to desegregation when compared to policies to support voluntary integration. The education system in Bosnia-Herzegovina is even more fragmented along ethnic lines than Northern Ireland and the examples of 'two schools under one roof' suggest caution about pragmatic approaches to sharing school premises if there is no deeper commitment to structural and social change within society.

## Conclusions

Drawing on the evidence and analysis of this review, a number of conclusions can be drawn.

**1. Political and policy discourse in Northern Ireland over the reporting period has shifted from 'integrated education' towards the concept of 'shared education'.**

The language used by political parties in their manifestos has shifted from reference to 'integrated' education (either positively or negatively) to that of 'shared' education. The evidence suggests that discourse on shared education represents a movement by political parties towards education policies that plan for separate development rather than structural change and a unified system of common schools. This is now also reflected in key education policy documents. However, political manifestos in Northern Ireland do not reflect many of the preferences expressed over time by parents and the wider population as represented in survey data.

**2. Key policy documents now make no explicit reference to integrated education, despite a statutory responsibility to support and facilitate.**

The shift in policy discourse since 2006 is clearly evident in key policy documents. The Strategy for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (OFMDFM, 2010) acknowledges that integrated schools provide '*... equal recognition to, and promotes equal expression of, the two main traditions and other cultures*' (p.16), but makes no references to integrated education. The new Education Bill (2012) makes no direct reference to integrated education despite government having a statutory responsibility to encourage and facilitate. No formal representation for integrated education is proposed in the establishment of the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA). There is no reference to integrated education in the Programme for Government (2011-15) and the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Group for Advancing Shared Education has no reference to integrated education in its remit.

**3. The policy discourse requires clearer definition of terminology, particularly the distinctions between policies to support integrated, mixed and shared education.**

The shift in emphasis towards a language of shared education has introduced ambiguity in terms of what this aims to achieve in practice. In particular it avoids clarifying whether the ultimate goal of education policy is structural change resulting in common schools or the maintenance of separate schools with some collaboration between them. For policy implementation to be effective a much clearer distinction between 'integrated', 'mixed',

and 'shared' schooling needs to be drawn. This would help determine whether limited resources will be concentrated mainly on supporting integrated education (common schools attended daily by children from diverse tradition); mixed schools (separate schools with a significant minority from other traditions); or shared education (separate schools with some shared resources, pupil contact and collaboration between them). It may not be possible to pursue these simultaneously, since prioritisation of one will have an impact on the others given that there are finite resources available.

**4. Public support for integrated education remains extremely high, but education policies are based on maintaining separate schools.**

Social attitudes and public opinion data in Northern Ireland reveals that public support for formally integrated schools remains very high in terms of its contribution to peace and reconciliation, promoting a shared future, and promoting mutual respect and understanding. Temporal comparisons of survey findings between 1999 and 2011 indicate that the majority of people believe that the Executive should encourage more integration, mixed schooling as well as greater sharing, partnering and collaboration between schools. In this respect, future surveys should attempt to further clarify understandings around these distinctions and specifically highlight the relative preferences for prioritising education strategies to create 'integrated' common schools, or more 'mixing' within or 'sharing' between existing separate schools.

**5. Integrated education can contribute to social cohesion.**

Research has found that pupils educated in integrated schools tended to have more positive attitudes through continuous engagement within children from other community backgrounds and, exhibited less sectarian attitudes which extended into adulthood. Although the evidence has identified the conceptual challenges of meaningful integration within schools, it has also highlighted the enduring opportunities for pupils to explore diverse and alternative views and opinions in the safety of this environment.

**6. The economic benefits of integration, mixing and sharing needs clarified.**

Estimates of the economic benefits of changes to the education system have proven difficult. Recent research has highlighted the possible financial savings accrued through the building of shared campuses. The possible financial savings which an integrated education system could provide have not yet been fully researched. Whilst there is agreement that shared education would have economic benefits, arguably greater savings could be made through the rationalisation of schools rather than sharing

existing resources. It is also clear that issues relating to finance and sustainability need to be considered within a constrained economic climate.

**7. The challenge of creating greater social cohesion through education is not unique to Northern Ireland.**

From the short analysis of the case studies outlined above it is clear that Northern Ireland is not unique in looking to education as a means of developing social cohesion. Each context is different but even a brief review highlights some key issues relevant to education policy in Northern Ireland. In Britain, for example, there are schools jointly managed by the churches, which is not an option that has been explored actively by the churches in Northern Ireland. In the Republic of Ireland the majority of schools are owned or managed by the Catholic Church, but multi-denominational schools have been established and the recent Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector (2012) has made recommendations for changes to the patronage of schools and divesting of ownership to the State to reflect movement towards '*a more culturally and religiously diverse contemporary Irish society*'. The experience of desegregation in the United States raises questions about the impact and sustainability of statutory approaches to desegregation when compared to policies to support voluntary integration. The education system in Bosnia-Herzegovina is even more fragmented along ethnic lines than Northern Ireland and the examples of 'two schools under one roof' suggest caution about pragmatic approaches to share school premises if there is no deeper commitment to structural and social change within society.

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