# Extending Inter School links

An evaluation of contact between
Protestant and Catholic pupils in Northern Ireland

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# PREFACE

Research for the Extending School Links project was carried out between 1988 and 1990. It builds on the Inter-School Links Project (Centre for the Study of Conflict, 1988), which sought to encourage innovative approaches towards cross-religious contacts between schools. This later project consolidated and further disseminated the approaches developed in the first project, and set out to develop systems of evaluation for inter-community work of this kind.

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John Darby,
Director, Centre for the Study of Conflict.
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# Foreword and Acknowledgements

## INTRODUCTION

The *Inter School Links Project* (1986-90) evolved from earlier research studies: *Schools Apart?* (1977), which had indicated that the education system in Northern Ireland could be genuinely regarded as segregated in that there was little evidence of crossover between maintained and controlled schools. *Schools Together?* (1984), which had interviewed teachers working in the two systems and suggested that, whilst almost all expressed a conviction that large scale integration in education was unlikely in the foreseeable future, there was considerable regret about the likely consequences of the segregated nature of the system. The report concluded that the time was right for a project which might test whether such goodwill could be converted into sustained co-operation between controlled and maintained schools so that pupils would have the chance to meet and work together.

In 1986 the Department of Education for Northern Ireland agreed to fund such a project and this became known as 'Inter School Links'. An account of the first two years is given in an earlier report (Dunn and Smith, 1988), and briefly summarised below:

## THE INTER SCHOOL LINKS PROJECT (1986-88)

**The purpose of the project was to investigate ways of improving the level of contact and co-operation between controlled and maintained schools in a community in Northern Ireland.**

A central theme of the project, like many initiatives in community relations, was linked to the contact hypothesis. Arising from earlier American work in psychology (Aliport, 1954) this posits that, where inter-group rivalry exists, conflict between the two groups may be reduced if certain conditions are met. In an educational context these conditions have been summarised in the following terms (McWhirter, 1983):

1 Contact per se will not necessarily improve inter-group attitudes and, if the conditions are not right, may even worsen them.

2 Contacts should be of a relatively enduring and intimate nature rather than transitory and casual.

3 Social and institutional support for the contact is important.

4 Contact should involve co-operative activity working toward a common goal.

5 The groups participating in the contact should be afforded 'equal status'.

Earlier research (Dunn, Darby and Mullan, 1984) had also posited a slightly different set of conditions on which work could be based:

1 Children need to be brought together systematically and on a long-term basis. Short-term activities without development are of limited value.

2 Children must be brought together for a valuable and well-planned purpose, and not just to learn to like each other.

3 Risk-taking should be avoided since, when things went wrong, it is difficult to recover.

4 Travel outside the region is important since, in Northern Ireland, venues and context have so much hidden meaning and local symbolism.

The Inter School Links project had a **development** aspect and a **research** aspect. Development involved working with teachers in schools, facilitated by the appointment of a Field Officer by the Western Education and Library Board. A Research Officer was also appointed by the Univerity of Ulster, Coleraine to monitor, report and evaluate the development of the project.

### Project Rationale

The project was characterised by three significant features, all of which contributed in an important way to its development. Firstly, it was **interventionist** in that it arose from an initiative originating outside the schools and this meant that a good deal of sensitivity was required. Secondly, it attempted to be **consultative** so that teachers were encouraged to develop a sense of ownership about the directions it eventually took. Thirdly, it anticipated that some form of **structured** approach would be necessary if linkages between schools were likely to endure. In a sense this meant 'institutionalising' contact between the schools.

The project worked with 3 primary and 5 post-primary schools in Strabane, a border town in the west of the province. Its first phase was exploratory and avoided presenting the schools with a prescriptive approach. This allowed trust and confidence to develop, although no clear strategy seemed to be emerging and, some inconsistencies arose over the way contact was taking place. Later, the project attempted to deal with this looseness of structure, and suggestions were made which led to the adoption of a framework within which inter school contact took place.. This framework responded to inconsistences and criticisms already encountered.

## A Planned Structure

The following principles emerged as the basis for a planned, structured approach to links as part of an Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) programme between schools in the same local community:

1 A link is created **between each year group** in the community of schools. This increases the chance of every child having the opportunity of contact, and allows schools to develop accumulating experience;

2 Each link should involve a **form of contact** between pupils which schools find practical and acceptable;

3 Each year-group should be linked through a **planned programme** rather than a 'one-off' event;

4 The programme should only entail the **frequency of contact** which schools and parents find acceptable;

5 Each linked programme should focus on some topic of work perceived to be **central to the curriculum** work of the school rather than based on a peripheral activity;

6 Schools should gradually phase in the full programme of links, a year-group at a time, according to **an agreed time scale**;

7 The long term aim should be that, once established, the full set of links between the community of schools will represent a major element of the implementation of **a policy on Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU)**.

Although this set of conditions is more prescriptive, the schools accepted the need to identify a framework within which the teachers themselves would control the pace and type of work undertaken. As a result the primary schools opted for linked programmes between the four upper primary year-groups, phased in over a four-year period. The post-primary schools agreed to develop joint study units in history for Forms 1, 2 and 3, phased over a three-year period.

## EXTENDING INTER SCHOOL LINKS (1988-90)

In 1988 the project applied for and received funding for a further two-year period. This was partly to allow the full set of linkages to come to fruition, and partly to allow the work to be evaluated. This report describes progress during the extended period (1988-90). During this time the project extended in three main directions:

### Consolidation

The project continued to be involved with the two clusters of primary and post-primary schools in Strabane to build up the full set of links between year-groups. In each cluster a teacher acted as co-ordinator, organising meetings and providing a point of reference for the Western Education and Library Board and the Department of Education, Cross Community Contact Scheme. Chapter 1 describes their progress and identifies some of the helpful features and residual concerns.

### Dissemination

Having identified some underlying principles for inter school work in Strabane, we were anxious to see if these could be adopted by schools in other communities. With this in mind two further sets of schools within the Western Education and Library Board area were approached - primary schools in Limavady and post-primary schools in Enniskillen. Chapter 2 describes work undertaken by these schools and contrasts their experiences with the Strabane schools. Mention is also made of other activities which helped disseminate the project's work to a wider audience.

### Evaluation

A major concern for the extended project was how we could begin to tackle a number of issues related to the evaluation of inter school contact. A start was made by focusing on five areas of evaluative concern:

#### 1 Types of Contact Activity

A broad base of practice had been built up and we felt the project would soon be in a position to comment on the relative strengths and weaknesses of various forms of contact activity.

#### 2 Impact on Pupils

We felt it was important to look more closely at the experiences pupils were deriving from the contact programmes.

#### 3 Teachers' Perceptions

The climate of change within education was encouraging all teachers to accept EMU as part of their profes-

sional responsibility, rather than a voluntary activity. We wanted to see how teachers' practical involvement with the project affected their views of EMU, what problems they encountered and the difficulties they see as EMU moves more formally on to the curriculum.

## 4 Parental Opinion

The project sought permission from schools to survey directly parents about their opinions. The intention was to gauge the level of parental support, assess the frequency and type of contact which is acceptable, and gain some insight into what parents feel EMU is about.

## 5 Long Term Prospects

An evaluation of the project's 'success' in terms of the extent to which established links endure partly depends on what happens in future years. However, we felt the accumulated experience with the schools would allow us to make some comment about future policy, resources and support structures.

These five concerns are discussed in Chapters 3-7. The final chapter draws together suggestions and recommendations which emerge from the project's work.

N.B. Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) is one of six cross-curricular themes which become part of the statutory curriculum for all schools in Northern Ireland by virtue of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989. Guidance materials for teachers have been issued by the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council and state that, *"through EMU pupils should:*

- *learn to respect and value themselves and others;*
- *appreciate the interdependence of people within the local community, the European community and the wider world*
- *know about and understand what is shared as well as what is different about their cultural traditions;*
- *appreciate the benefits of resolving conflict by non-violent means".*

Whilst contact between schools is not compulsory, teachers are encouraged to provide pupils with the opportunity of joint activities in that, *"Pupils should have experience of EMU activities with respect to at least one of the following:*

- *exploration, within the classroom, of contemporary controversial issues complemented by relevant visitors and visits;*
- *the exchange of materials, especially those reflecting cultural difference, using all forms of communication systems, with the possibility of visits to common ground and to each other's schools;*
- *joint work, extending ultimately to international contact and including the exploration of controversial social and political issues, both local and general."*

# OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

**Inter School Links
(1986-88)**

The project worked with three primary and five post-primary schools in Strabane to develop a planned, structured approach to inter school co-operation.

**Extending Inter School Links
(1988-90)**

The project developed in three directions:

## CONSOLIDATION

The project continued to work with Strabane schools enabling a full set of links to develop.

These included:

1 Linked programmes between three primary schools for P4, 5, 6 and 7

2 Linked programmes in history for Forms 1, 2 and 3 in five post-primary schools

## DISSEMINATION

General dissemination of the project's work took place through seminars, papers and presentations. The project also worked with schools in two further communities:

1 Development of a linked programme for P7 pupils in three Limavady primary schools

2 Development of a linked programme in English for Form 3 pupils in seven Enniskillen schools

## EVALUATION

The project focused on five main aspects of evaluation:

1 The relative strengths and weaknesses of various forms of contact

2 The impact of contact on pupils

3 Teachers' perceptions

4 Parental opinion

5 The long term prospects for inter school contact

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| Research Officer: | Alan Smith |
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| | Jack Walls (1988/90) |
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# CONSOLIDATION

## INTRODUCTION

The first two years of the project's development (1986-88) led to good working relations with eight schools in Strabane (three primary and five post-primary). From the early stages of consultation and negotiation we reached a point were the principle of a planned, structured approach to inter school contact was accepted, and work was initiated to put the elements of such an approach in place. The need for a structure emerged from our initial attempts to create inter school contact. This experience had highlighted a number of reservations about contact.

## RESERVATIONS ABOUT CONTACT

Reservations about some early work involving inter school contact can be summarised under six headings:

### 1 Ephemeral

A common criticism of activities involving contact between pupils is that it often involves a 'one off' event, perhaps a visit to the theatre, with minimal preparation and very little follow up. As part of a more comprehensive programme such an event may have value, but in isolation there is little confidence that this can achieve very much to enhance pupils' understanding of each other. There is some evidence to suggest that contact of this sort, where planning is minimal and the possible consequences are not thought through, can create counter-productive effects (Robinson, 1981; Dunlop, 1987).

### 2 Links Within the Community

Some teachers were sceptical about links which concentrated solely on bringing pupils together at neutral venues well outside their own community, outside the country or linking only with schools in another part of the country. Their argument was that a variety of linkages are obviously important, but perhaps an opportunity was being missed to bring together young people who were growing up in the same locality but did not meet through school. There was also some disillusionment that holiday schemes (e.g. to the USA) had 're-entry problems', pehaps giving young people glimpses of a life style they could only hope to achieve through emigration.

However, there are also some problems with the notion that 'community' and 'locality' map neatly on top of each another. For example, the extent to which a place like Strabane could be called 'one community' when the town is mainly Catholic and most Protestants live rurally. In a similar way an emphasis on community is not helpful to schools which, for demographic reasons, find there is no obvious partner school in the neighbourhood.

A few teachers felt that schools were being less than honest if they encouraged inter school contact, but failed to give this cooperation a profile within the locality. In the words of one teacher *"teachers and schools have abdicated their traditional role as moral leaders in the community - they look over their shoulders too much...are worried more about falling rolls and what some people might say. They should give more of a lead....say what they stand for"*. Such a view is more moralistic than most teachers expressed. Nevertheless, even the pragmatists, who felt it was better to proceed without fanfare, saw some virtue in establishing links between neighbouring schools so that the schools' activities gradually established a local credibility.

### 3 Peripheral to the Curriculum

Much of early contact work took place out of school hours. This had a tendency to generate activities which were perceived as peripheral to the curriculum, such as sports and quizzes. This may have been compounded by a desire to make contact enjoyable, so that pupils came away with positive feelings. Whilst the socialising effect of such contact was recognised and valued, some teachers began to question the 'educational' aims and value of contact where the emphasis was on *"having an enjoyable time together"*.

### 4 Low Status

Partly related to the notion of inter school contact being peripheral to the curriculum was an associated notion that the work was low status. The reasons for this included its dislocation from the main aims of the curriculum, and an unstated level of institutional support. Often a single individual would be enthusiastic about the work and people would tend to see this as an idiosyncratic quirk rather than a professional educational commitment. Such people often felt isolated,

relatively unsupported by the institution and insecure or undermined by the 'stick' they took from colleagues for the amount of time they were out of school.

## 5 Number of Pupils Involved

There was some concern that relatively few pupils from the school would have the chance to be involved, either because of logistical problems or because participation is voluntary. Also, the 'one off' approach which relied on the commitment of individual teachers was more likely to throw up a hit and miss pattern. One child could go through the whole school and never have the opportunity of contact, whilst another may have been in classes which had many such opportunities. There was no coherent plan and no guarantee that a child entering the school would receive an accumulating experience of contact as they moved up through the school.

## 6 Type of Pupil Involved

Another concern mentioned by teachers was that, to achieve more manageable group sizes, schools may select pupils who present a good image of the school to participate in contact schemes. It was felt that such an approach is likely to omit pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds or pupils with behavioural problems, and these are the children who might benefit most from the socialising nature of cross-community contact.

As well as these six issues, debate has also concerned the type of contact most appropriate to Education for Mutual Understanding, and this is discussed in Chapter 3 where the diversity of practice is surveyed, along with comments on pedagogy.

## LESSONS LEARNED

From the initial attempts at contact, and in response to the reservations mentioned above, the project consulted with school Principals and teachers and reached agreement on three main points about the future development of the project:

1 There would be a conscious attempt to **centralise work within the curriculum**. This meant that much of the contact would take place during the school day and involve pupils meeting on a whole-class basis. It was accepted that, since contact is voluntary, there might be some constraints on this.

2 It was important to **identify a coordinator**, that is someone who carried a sense of the overall plan and could cope with administrative arrangements.

3 **A planned, structured approach** would be needed to generate a programme of links related to the curriculum. From this, there would be some attempt to generate a whole-school approach leading to statements of policy.

## DEVELOPMENTS WITH STRABANE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Our previous report, *Inter School Links* (1989), indicates how the primary schools' earliest attempts had been a fairly fragmented series of events. The limitations of this had been recognised and led to the development of a structured programme in 1987/88. The original version was ambitious in that it linked a P4 class from each school on a regular basis, one day each week for a 19 week period. The programme involved the development of a theme on a cross-curricular basis. Within the programme pupils would work in mixed classes and travel to each other's schools according to an agreed timetable. The original version of the programme was considered unsustainable for two main sets of reasons:

### 1 Too Exhaustive

We had underestimated the extra workload which the programme entailed. This was not so much to do with the planning involved, as with its implementation. Contact was so frequent that teachers felt there was little time to reflect and make preparations between the weekly contacts. We had underestimated how much teachers rely on knowing each individual pupil for effective classroom management, class control, lesson organisation and, most importantly, for effective learning to take place. This may have settled out over time, but the energy involved in establishing new, settled patterns of working midway through the school year was considered too exhaustive.

### 2 Too Sensitive

Apart from the demanding nature of the programme an additional underlying concern was the extent to which frequent, regularised, class-based teaching of pupils in each others' schools was an acceptable way for the schools to proceed as part of an Education for Mutual Understanding programme. The extent to which such an approach could be perceived as a step on the road to institutional integration was raised as an issue.

Both sets of concerns suggested that a less rigid approach was needed and led to a revised programme for P4 pupils. The revised programme operated over a term. It led from a study of "Wind In The Willows" and was developed on a cross-curricular basis. It involved a preparatory period where each class was introduced to the theme in their own class, in their own school, over a number of weeks before moving to a variety of work which involved different types of contact. Types of contact included large group, educational visits involving all three schools; field work to the Ulster American Folk Park and a local site for environmental studies; the development of local trails which pupils completed in small, mixed groups; small group work on 'cooperative

relationships' completed using one school hall as the venue; and study of a common music programme. An element of mixed, class-based teaching was retained whereby pupils travelled to each others' schools on a set day for a three-week period. The programme was completed by a full-day, social outing involving all three classes at the end of the school year. An estimate suggests that a pupil involved in the programme would have had opportunity for contact with his or her peers in the other schools for 30 hours with 70% of the time involving structured, learning activity and the rest allowing time for less structured socialising. The schools were in close physical proximity to each other so a small amount of time was taken up by travel between the schools. Good quality work created by pupils was drawn together by all three schools and this was displayed in the schools, the local Teachers' Centre and made available for parents' evenings.

This programme was underway when our previous report, *Inter School Links*, was published. The need to see it through, and a desire to see similar linked programmes build up between each of the older year-groups in the schools, was one of the reasons for extending the 'Inter School Links' project for a further two years.

### Aims of the Extended Project

The following five aims were identified for the project's extended involvement with the three Strabane primary schools:

1 to support teachers already involved in the P4 programme in running an ammended programme during 1988/89;

2 to support the co-ordinator in achieving the longer-term goal of establishing an inter school link in each of the other upper primary year-groups;

3 to explore the possibility of establishing a residential link with the P7 classes;

4 to monitor the level and type of links which take place between the three schools which do not arise directly from the planned programme;

5 to work with Principals and explore the possibility of creating a common policy on inter school work for the three primary schools.

The project has now had a further two years working with the schools. The P4 link is running for the third successive year. It continues to operate on the principles outlined already with a variety of opportunities for pupil contact. The teachers involved have developed a good rapport and planning for the programme is accepted as a normal part of the school year.

The past two years have been concerned with establishing linked programmes between P5, P6 and P7 classes in the three schools. Initial progress was tentative, partly because other teachers were wary of the workload involved. A large part of this concern had been generated by the project itself, since other teachers in the schools may have sensed that the initial workload was demanding. However, once it was clear that teachers fully controlled the development of programmes some of this anxiety was alleviated. Publication of *Education for Mutual Understanding: A Guide* (1988) and early indications that EMU would form an important element of government's proposals for reform of the Northern Ireland curriculum may also have influenced teachers' perceptions of the importance of the project.

### Current Practice in Strabane Primary Schools

Despite some initial hesitations, four linked programmes are now operating between the project schools. This means that the project's first three aims had been achieved by the 1989/90 school year. Three P4 classes were linked through a programme focused on the theme "Time". Three P5 classes were linked through the theme "Water". Three P6 classes were linked through study of the book, "Charlotte's Web". All programmes involved class-based work which was enhanced by opportunities for pupils to meet on at least five occasions per programme. Three P7 classes were linked through residential work which incorporated workshop activities supported by the Quaker Peace Education Project, designed to raise pupils' self confidence and self esteem by developing skills in talking, listening and cooperating in small mixed groups. In addition the schools have secured computer equipment with desk-top publishing facilities and one Principal has organised initial staff training on this system for all three schools. The aim is to use these facilities to further cement and augment linkages between the schools.

### Other Links Between Strabane Primary Schools

The schools' participation in the project was focused on linking specific classes. However, comments from some Principals and teachers indicated that additional benefits were being generated. As the need to confer over linked programmes increased, so did the frequency of contact between Principals and teachers. Teachers became familiar with the environment provided by the other schools, with the way different approaches could be used, and they also became aware of a broader pool of resources. Invitations to events and performances increased between the schools. Over time a pattern of joint planning seems to have emerged which extends beyond the project and involves all three schools. Teachers have established relationships which have allowed them to learn from each others' strengths or particular knowledge. Access to colleagues, teaching the same age group, is of extra importance to teachers

working in single-class entry schools. Initiatives have arisen from relationships established through the project, not directly connected to the EMU programmes themselves. Examples include, joint teacher planning of a scheme in mathematics and consultation over approaches to handwriting. There has been development toward joint in-service training for the Northern Ireland Curriculum whereby each school site will provide an aspect of the training for staff of all three schools. The extent to which relations between staff within schools have developed has been remarked upon by Principals. Comments from the Inspectorate suggest that communication within one school had improved, and this was confirmed by the Principal's comment that the development of a more structured approach to staff meetings was in part attributable to the structured approach of the EMU project. Some of these staff development issues are raised in more detail in the evaluative section on teacher perceptions later in the report. There is also evidence from teachers' comments that involvement with the project has encouraged some schools to think again about the school's relationship to parents.

## Movement Toward Policy in the Primary Schools

The extended aims for the project also showed a concern to support the development of school policies on inter school contact. In all three schools the Principals have kept Boards of Governors informed about inter school contact. Support for the programmes from school governors and parents was particularly important during a period when a Free Presbyterian clergyman campaigned for parents to withdraw their children from 'EMU' and 'Choose Life' programmes in the Western Education and Library Board area. The basis for this was contained in a pamphlet by Foster (1988) which claimed that both programmes are based on a *"false analysis of the nature of the Ulster problem"* in that they encourage Protestant children *"to be brainwashed into accepting a share of the blame for the terrible events in Ulster"*, when the problem is not inter-personal relations, but inter-group and *"the blame lies fairly and squarely with the Roman Catholic community"*. Foster suggests that the programmes are a *"clandestine manipulation of children without the knowledge or consent of parents"*. Evidence from a survey of parents in the Strabane primary schools does not substantiate this claim and is discussed later in the report (Chapter 6).

The experience of the project supports the view that schools should be explicit with parents about their involvement in inter school contact. One important way which this can be achieved, in the formal sense, is through written policy statements endorsed by Boards of Governors who have ultimate responsibility for curriculum matters in the school. The three Strabane primary schools are currently at a stage where it seems a matter of course for much of the practice in Education for Mutual Understanding to be formally translated into written policy statements. A central part of such policy

will obviously be the commitment to inter school contact in the upper primary years through the structured approach encouraged by this project. However, movement to broader policy statements will also need to take into account how the concept of EMU is handled at the lower end of the school, how it is reflected in curriculum activity and materials, and whether contact between younger age groups (P1-3) is seen as desirable or necessary.

Debate about the extent to which school policies strike a balance between approaches which emphasise cultural and/or religious **similarity**, and policies which reflect **difference** will clearly have to take place. In our experience discussion of this issue seems the one explored in the least depth by schools involved in inter school contact. Yet in policy terms it is central, setting the fundamental orientation which the schools expect teachers to pursue. The absence of such debate is unsuprising since, in Northern Ireland, the issue of similarity and difference between the two communities has been characterised more by polite and tactful circumnavigation rather than open debate. With little precedent to guide them teachers, governors and others concerned with school policy are unsure how discussion can get underway, and how such a debate can be conducted and sustained as part of the policy-making process. Part of the difficulty is that teachers and policy-makers are themselves members of the respective communities in Northern Ireland, so they too are challenged to find new ways of relating to the 'other community' as they develop policies affecting how children are educated.

Although there is still some way to go toward the formulation of comprehensive, formal school policies in EMU, it would be wrong to underestimate the huge strides which the project schools have made in the past few years in building a system of contact which is coherent, structured and ongoing. When asked about written policy one Principal commented that the work in EMU had developed from the practical experience of operating programmes and making ammendments along the way. The move to policy statements was therefore seen as neither problematic, nor traumatic, but a natural progression. This was contrasted with other curriculum areas which have also recently moved to a more central place in the school curriculum where, in attempting to respond, schools have *"made a rush for formal policy statements about what should be done"*. This seems to have contributed to a certain amount of fatigue amongst teachers who feel bombarded by policy statements.

Comments in the later section on teacher perceptions (Chapter 5) support the view that changes in behaviour are more likely to change attitudes, rather than the other way round. Our experience suggests a functional distinction between the way the educational system as a whole and individual schools experience policy statements. In broad terms it appears that statements of

policy are most potent with respect to the way the overall system operates, that is, policy statements from government and regional educational authorities have a powerful effect on what teachers feel they should be doing. However, within the school itself teachers are more likely to be convinced by the authority of what it is possible to achieve rather than a school policy statement which is largely aspirational. This suggests that the future success of EMU will depend less on a down-the-line, managerial approach, and more on the amount of energy devoted to in-service approaches which work intimately with particular schools or groups of schools in developing 'tailor-made' approaches to EMU. This may initially appear slower and more expensive than the sort of 'cascade model' usually adopted, but this must be weighed against a longer-term commitment that EMU takes root as a regular and natural part of the school curriculum.

Finally, despite the lack of formal policy statements a parental survey indicates that all three primary schools have been remarkably successful in communicating to parents both the nature and purpose of the inter school link programmes as part of their commitment to EMU. This is reported in a later section (Chapter 6) and suggests that written policy statements by the school may be less potent than other forms of communication from the school to parents.


## DEVELOPMENTS WITH POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN STRABANE

Work with the five post-primary schools in Strabane developed in a similar way to the primary schools in that initial activities had been a series of loosely related events rather than a well-defined, curriculum-based programme. Review of the situation in 1987-88 had led to the history department from each school coming together to plan programmes which would lend themselves to the development of EMU and involve contact between pupils from all five schools. History was seen as an area of the curriculum which lends itself to the development of EMU. It allows pupils to confront evidence about historical events which are often the cause of division in Northern Ireland. The project was able to establish a relationship with history teachers through an already established interest group on local history. The approach agreed was that units of study would be jointly developed by teachers and gradually introduced to all pupils in Forms 1, 2 and 3 over a three-year period. Each unit would be taught over a term and, as part of the programme, one class from each school would be involved in a series of activities involving contact with the other schools. Titles for the units of study were:

1 *Peoples of Ireland* - a development study which was introduced to Form 1 pupils in the school year 1988-89 and operated for the second time in 1989-90

2 *The Ulster Plantation in Strabane Barony* - introduced to Form 2 pupils in the school year 1989/90

3 *The Williamite Wars and the Seige of Derry* -introduced to Form 3 pupils in the school year 1990/91

### Peoples of Ireland

Regular meetings of the group of history teachers during 1987/88 led to the production a booklet called 'Peoples of Ireland'. The booklet *"aims to introduce pupils to the multi-cultural origins of society on the island of Ireland by an examination of the varied settlements throughout the centuries"*. It looks at different groups who have settled in Ireland from earliest times, pre-history, Celts, Vikings, Normans, various plantations, through to more recent immigrations and emigrations. It asks who these groups were, when and why they came and encourages discussion about the contributions they made and how earlier settlers may have been affected by newcomers. Key historical concepts such as assimilation, plantation, push-pull factors in immigration and emigration, and the notion of nationality are involved. The booklet was launched at a reception in the local Teachers' Centre, attended and supported formally by school Principals and education authorities, and well reported in the local press. In producing the booklet and operating the programme the group received financial support from the Department of Education, Cross Community Contact Scheme and the Western Education and Library Board.

The programme operated for the first time in 1988/89. An introductory exercise involved pupils carrying out a survey and research on the origins of local surnames as a way of opening up the idea that various groups have settled the island throughout history. It also gave some opportunity to show that not all Catholics are descended from Celtic ancestors and not all Protestants from British families. The programme was taught over a single term, although teachers found they needed more time to cover the material they had created.

Although all first year pupils studied the unit, an important aspect was the opportunity for one class from each school to participate in contact activities. Altogether 135 pupils were involved and a higher representation of Catholics reflected the greater number of maintained schools. There was also a substantial gender imbalance with twice as many girls involved as boys. The teacher group are currently looking at the implications these imbalances have for the programme.

Contact involved both the sharing of work and actually working together. As a beginning, results of the initial exercise on surnames were exchanged between schools and teachers helped pupils examine the spread of surnames within the community. This was followed by a joint visit to the Ulster American Folk Park where

pupils worked in mixed groups. A video was made of this visit and this, along with other visual material, was shown to the whole group to stimulate discussion at a further meeting in the youth wing of the controlled school. The next stage of the contact programme involved a residential trip to Dublin to visit the Viking Exhibition, the National Museum, and on the way, Newgrange and Monasterboice Abbey. This took place in December 1988 and proved very popular with pupils. Because of the large numbers involved only half the contact group attended this residential. The other half later visited Carrickfergus Castle and preparation for this involved a visit to the technology centre in Omagh were pupils worked together on problem-solving exercises related to Norman castles. Later in the year the whole group came together again on a visit to Enniskillen Museum and Devenish Island where once again they worked in small, mixed groups. Some evaluation exercises were completed in relation to this first attempt at the Peoples of Ireland programme and these are reported in a later section (Chapter 4).

When the programme was complete the teachers met to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and suggest ammendments for its introduction to a new wave of first-year pupils the following year. Amongst their concerns was the amount of material they had tried to get through and this was tackled by revising the booklet to produce sets of worksheets for pupils. There was a desire to bring about more balanced ratios in terms of gender and cultural background. Fairly detailed discussion took place concerning the quality of contact with the suggestion that large-group contact has limitations. It was suggested that thought be put into how more intimate, small-group activities could be generated. Nevertheless, the success of the residential work suggested that it be included again along with some work geared toward joint displays. Teachers were also concerned that increasing use of the programme by the schools, and the commitment to create a second-year unit, would mean that time would need to be set aside to introduce other teachers to the work. Teachers have also looked at how an evaluative dimension could be built into the programme to enable them to judge how pupils attitudes are being affected.

As well as introducing the first-year unit the teacher group also began to develop a unit for second year pupils focused on the local impact of the Ulster plantation. This was introduced in the 1989/90 school year and involved pupils who had studied 'Peoples of Ireland' the previous year. The unit is a progression from the earlier one in that it is an in-depth look at a more controversial issue as well as showing how different people can react in different ways to events from the past. Again, the programme was taught to the whole year-group with some pupils from each school involved in contact. Contacts included discussion sessions and a residential visit based at the Corrymeela Centre involving field work to plantation sites. As this programme

draws to an end attention will turn to the development of a third unit of study which will be introduced to third-year pupils in the 1990/91 school year.

## Current Practice in Strabane Post-primary Schools

The post-primary schools have virtually achieved their aim of introducing units of study in history to the first three year-groups. The subject and the material they have developed encourages pupils to interpret historical evidence about Ireland's past. The relevance of this to EMU is that pupils may develop a deeper understanding of the way different interpretations of history may be used to define contmporary descriptions of relationships between the two communities in Northern Ireland. The programmes are enhanced by opportunities for pupils to meet, thereby sharing to some extent their encounter with historical evidence.

It remains to be seen whether the joint curriculum planning continues to build further up the school in history, or whether other subject areas in the schools will also begin to develop common programmes. There is the obvious danger that, having taken such a strong lead, the history departments are left to carry the onus of EMU development between the schools. This would run contrary to current education reforms which anticipate whole school development of EMU as a cross-curricular theme. We had hoped that the extended life of the project might enable the development of work further up the school, perhaps through another curriculum area, but the timescale prohibited this. It is clear that the development of programmes in post-primary schools will be a more protracted process. This is partly because it takes longer to draw together material which is both appropriately challenging for older pupils and related to the subject of study. Another consideration is the post-primary school environment which is structurally complex with many logistical constraints on opportunities for contact. Nevertheless, through patience and perserverence the history teachers have evolved a process of consultation which has firmly established contact and co-operation between the five schools. Their experience provides an ideal basis for the continued development of EMU in the future.

## SUMMARY

### WHAT WERE THE HELPFUL INGREDIENTS?

Given the progress which has been made we feel it is important to underline some of the elements which seem to have contributed to a firm base for the future development of EMU within the Strabane schools. The following have been equally important and therefore have no order of priority:

### 1 Initial Support

It should be remembered that the Strabane schools became involved on a project basis. This meant that initially, at least, an above average level of support was concentrated on the schools. The focus of attention from external agencies may have played a part in encouraging schools to exert extra effort in seeing plans through to fruition (the Hawthorne Effect). However, we still feel that the principles which emerged could be readily adopted and operated by groups of schools with support from Board field officers and the advisory service.

### 2 Principals' Support

A willingness on the part of school Principals to explore possible contact activities with other schools was a necessary prerequisite to the development work. Principals obviously have a major role in creating a climate in the school where staff are actively encouraged to see that EMU is both legitimate and valued.

### 3 Consultative Framework

Throughout the project we have been conscious that the involvement of third parties is interventionist. In many circumstances this can be catalytic and is welcomed as a first step in initiating contact. In others it will be experienced as oppressive or manipulative. Our experience suggests that, even where contact is initiated by a third party, it is vital to establish as soon as possible that it is the teachers who control the nature and pace of development. The intention should be to initiate a process of consultation between the schools and suggest possible frameworks in which contacts might take place. Going beyond this can lead to the schools undertaking initiatives which flounder because they are seen to be other peoples' solutions.

### 4 Coordinator

We had originally assumed that it would be necessary to identify a coordinator for contact in every school. As events turned out a single coordinator operating between each set of schools worked extremely well. This was partly because staffing in the schools allowed for a certain flexibility in the coordinator's teaching load. It is difficult to see how the work of someone coordinating planning meetings between teachers, liaison between schools outside meetings, and the organisation and administration of materials, transport, venues, could take place as successfully when all teachers are tied to classes. The role of the coordinator took on even greater significance once the schools moved to implement the full set of structured links between different year-groups in the schools. It then became crucial that at least one person had a view of the overall plan and the various contact programmes which would implement it.

### 5 Planning Days

The announcement in Department of Education, Circular 1988/2 of extra teacher cover for schools involved in inter school contact was timely. The Circular indicated that schools would be allowed **at least** 10 extra days to bring in substitute staff. The most obvious use of this is to bring in extra staff when events involving pupil contact are taking place, either to lower the teacher/ pupil ratio on educational visits or to cover classes when a particular teacher is out of school with pupils. It soon became clear, however, that the opportunity for teachers from the different schools to meet and plan for a sustained period was a vital element. These extra cover days therefore allowed for full-day meetings between teachers where a substantial part of planning the year's activities could be accomplished in two full-day sessions. More recently the primary schools have expressed some concern that, with four year-groups involved in links, each school will have used up 8 of its 10 extra cover days for planning before extra cover for activities involving pupil contact is taken into account. To date the schools have been able to respond by internal reorganisation where the Principal or other member of staff covers classes, but once again this only operates successfully where the staffing allocation allows flexibility or where the Principal does not have a class full-time.

### 6 Cross Community Contact Scheme

Department of Education Circular 1987/47 announced the Cross Community Contact Scheme which *"..offers financial assistance to schools, youth and community groups for the development of programmes which bring together young people from the two communities in the Province in ongoing, constructive and collaborative studies and activities which lead to greater mutual trust, understanding and respect."* (Northern Ireland Information Service, 14 September 1989). This gave all schools the opportunity of applying for extra financial assistance to cover materials, transport, entrance charges and other costs associated with educational visits and residential courses. Whilst there was some initial concern about the way in which support from the Scheme would complement support from the Education and Library Board, there is little doubt that it made a major contribu-

tion to the development of links between schools in Strabane. Most specifically it enabled schools to submit a joint application for extra resources to cover contact activities. As a result they received block sums of money which were administered through a joint bank account opened by the schools. The teachers were therefore in a more powerful position directly to requisition materials and pay bills associated with the contact activities. This system of block allocation allowed the Scheme to operate with the minimum of bureaucracy and teachers found it helpful and relatively simple to operate. Suggestions and recommendations at the end of the report devote more attention to the Cross Community Contact Schemewhere some minor points are made on administration, and some questions are posed concerning its future in relation to EMU.

## 7 Communication with Parents

Parental support for the sort of approach the schools were developing was perhaps the biggest unknown quantity. Whilst the schools recognised the importance of communicating with parents there was natural concern, particularly in the early days, that parents should not become alarmed that some radical form of social engineering was being set in place. The primary concern for teachers was therefore to focus on the educational value of joint activities planned for pupils. Each time pupils came together parents were informed about the nature of the activity and that their child would come into contact with pupils from the other schools. It has been noticeable over the past three years how the schools have gradually nurtured confidence in the programme. The parental survey in the primary schools indicates that parents have grown more familiar with the language of EMU, have some understanding of its aims and are fully aware that the schools are operating a comprehensive programme of contacts.

## WHAT ARE THE RESIDUAL CONCERNS?

A number of issues remain and it is expected that these will be explored as the schools develop their programmes further:

## 1 Policy Development

Given the progress made we would see it as regrettable if the schools were not offered further support in moving toward formal policy statements. Some Principals have indicated a willingness to develop this aspect and there is little doubt that the accumulated experience of these schools has much to offer in terms of understanding how the process of policy development in EMU takes place. An intrinsic value is that a focus on the development of policy would involve governors and staff in more detailed discussion about fundamental aims. This may enable those involved to confront some of the ambiguity currently associated with the language of EMU and what it seeks to achieve.

The Department of Education have acknowledged that school governors are centrally concerned with the process of policy development. In 1989 the Minister responsible for Education, Dr Brian Mawhinney wrote inviting each school's Board of Governors to nominate a governor to promote EMU. This was followed up by a seminar and reception for the nominated governors, hosted by the Minister, to explain Government thinking on the introduction of EMU to the common curriculum in Northern Ireland. Part of Dr Mawhinney's address at the reception pointed to the development of policy, *"I trust that governors will continue to take an active interest in the promotion of EMU in their schools, that they will seek to establish a written statement of policy with regard to EMU and to publicise this among parents."* (Northern Ireland Information Service, 25 June 1990). School governors also have a statutory responsibility *"to describe what steps have been taken by the Board of Governors to develop or strengthen the school's links with the community and, in particular, to promote the attainment of the objectives of the educational theme called Education for Mutual Understanding;"* under Article 125(2)(h) of the Education Reforem (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

## 2 Similarity or Difference?

The recent emergence of EMU has taken place in a socio-political climate where it is accepted that there are two distinct ethno-religious communities in Northern Ireland. The notion that education has a role to play in fostering better understanding and respect between these two communities has gained a certain respectability. This has led to a pragmatic view that, as part of EMU, greater contact between children whom the education system has traditionally segregated may lead to more tolerant relations between future generations of the two ethno-religious groups. This popular, though somewhat simplistic, philosophical basis for EMU conceals a plethora of thorny issues which become more apparent when practitioners attempt to implement contact activities.

Our experience is that many people find it incredibly difficult to articulate how the process of Education for Mutual Understanding operates. It often comes across as a metaphorical phrase representing an aspiration that people develop more harmonious ways of living together. This reluctance to impose a tight definition on EMU is seen by some to be its strength, allowing the theme to embrace, within the curriculum, a range of issues pertinent to human relationships. A broad interpretation of EMU allows teachers to address a wide range of issues, from inter-personal conflict, to social deprivation, race relations, gender, poverty, human rights, international relations amongst others. Others feel that the primary thrust should be inter community relations in Northern Ireland, and perhaps suspect that too wide a definition of EMU does nothing to encourage practitioners to deal with issues closest to home.

Whichever view is taken there is the suggestion that, despite EMU having a central place in the school curriculum, it is still largely uncharted territory, relatively untheorised and conceptually vulnerable. There is certainly a need for more educational debate around key theoretical questions which have direct practical implications for those attempting to implement EMU policies in the classroom. For example, a number of people (Gallagher, 1988; Foster, 1988; O'Callaghan, 1990) have queried how programmes designed to bring about inter-personal contact can expect to affect inter-group attitudes since the relationship between these is neither apparent nor simple. Exploration of this important issue remains largely confined to social psychologists and needs to be opened out in an educational context.

We suggest that the relationship between similarity and difference is equally complex and needs deeper exploration by those developing policies on EMU, so that their programmes have a clearer direction. The official line from government seems to lean heavily on the view that programmes should emphasise similarity between children yet encourage them to appreciate the richness of cultural diversity. An example is a statement from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland with responsibility for Education, Dr Brian Mawhinney, *"Those children, from controlled and maintained schools, who have worked together will have learned even more clearly that the differences between our schools is not as significant as some would have them think. Learning that there are many things in our culture that we share is a positive step towards greater mutual understanding and respect."* (Northern Ireland Information Service, 21 March 1988). A distinction between 'diversity' and 'difference' is implied but not explicit. Our experience suggests that teachers too feel more comfortable emphasising similarity and playing down difference. In the climate of Northern Ireland, where so often difference does indeed mean division, it is easy to see how it is less contentious to concentrate on similarity. However, over-emphasis of this denies that the concepts of 'similarity' and 'difference' are intimately bound as two sides of the same coin which cannot be handled separately.

Our hope is that those involved with EMU will continue to wrestle with the issue of similarity and difference, despite the elusive and somewhat theoretical tenor of the language. Whatever kind of EMU programme is provided it will, even by default, communicate some message to children about the relationship between the two main religious and cultural traditions in Northern Ireland. That message may emphasise similarity between the cultures, thereby encouraging the notion of a common culture. It may emphasise differences, thereby encouraging the notion of separate development. Or it may consciously attempt to communicate a more complex picture which denies neither, and encourages some form of cultural pluralism.

## 3 Time

The most precious commodity for teachers continues to be time. Not only time to consider the sort of philosophical issues mentioned above, but time to meet with colleagues in other schools, time to develop programmes and time to implement the work with pupils. There is concern that if staffing allocations to schools are such that all teachers are tied to a full day of class teaching then much of the planning and discussion required for EMU will fall further down the list of priorities. The unique aspect of EMU is that the contact encouraged between schools inevitably means that schools are encouraged to generate whole new sets of institutional relationships and it is difficult to see how this can be done without flexibility in teaching timetables.

A related concern is that joint work on a class-to-class basis means that teachers are often working with exceptionally large groups of pupils. Given the kind of small group activity which EMU programmes often include this provides a further working difficulty for teachers. Access to extra teacher cover can alleviate this to some extent, although this invariably means involving a teacher who has not had the benefit of participating in the planning process. In exceptional cases other solutions have been found (for example, the work in Limavady schools reported in Chapter 2), but there is little doubt that current teacher/pupil ratios in schools impede the type of small group work approriate to EMU.

## 4 Logistics and Cost of Full Blown Contacts

The Strabane primary schools have speculated how readily schools can sustain comprehensive sets of links between all year groups as part of their approach to EMU. Their experience suggests that for links to be meaningful they need to take place on a fairly regular basis. Yet as more links are built up the tasks of administration and arranging contact become more complex whilst the flexibility for teacher cover decreases. If they are to represent anything other than fragmented experiences for pupils, programmes between single classes in all four upper primary years would appear to approach saturation point . Yet, if the programmes are educationally sound and achieving benefits in EMU terms, clearly they should be available for all classes. This will cause problems for larger schools which have more than one class in each year group, since the logistics would then be even more complex. It also causes dilemmas where symmetry of classes between controlled and maintained schools in an area does not exist.

Even if symmetry between controlled and maintained schools were not a problem there is some concern amongst teachers that full sets of linkages operating

between schools throughout the province would be financially unsustainable because of the extra teacher cover involved and the costs incurred by the educational visits and transport commonly associated with contact activities. Some teachers are concerned about the overall financial cost to the education system, and a few use financial arguments to support the view that teachers are being asked, unrealistically, to compensate for institutional segregation when they would prefer to see their role as one exclusively about teaching and learning. Issues concerned with funding are discussed in more detail later in Chapter 7.

## 5 Demography

A number of teachers involved in the project have questioned the logic of choosing an area which has a majority/minority demography which is 59% Catholic (Eversley and Herr, 1986). This issue was referred to in the previous report (Dunn and Smith, 1989). Lack of symmetry between Protestant and Catholic populations in the area is relevant and, at times, the controlled schools have felt under more pressure to participate in the links. Sometimes this was misinterpreted by those in the Catholic schools as the controlled schools being lukewarm to contact, but it has been noticeable how, during the course of the project, a greater appreciation of each other's circumstances and concerns has grown. The very lack of numerical symmetry within the population may actually have helped sensitise people to anxieties which the demography invokes. Our feeling remains that similar majority/minority issues would have arisen in any area for it is very rare in Northern Ireland to find a community which has a symmetrical demography. Even in such a situation we would be forced to question whether this should in fact be considered 'ideal' in community relations terms, since the very notion of symmetry implies some form of distinct and separate development with mirror institutions reinforcing the existence of two communities in the one locality.

The notion of 'community' itself is problematic and it became clear that we could not think of Strabane as a single community in simple geographical terms. Children in the area clearly recognised they live in 'Strabane', but it was clear even to the youngest children that they do not live in a single community. Perhaps an opportunity was missed to make this sort of issue the focus for a curriculum-based programme between the schools. The initial thinking behind fostering links between schools in the same town was belief that the experience of contact may help children perceive themselves to be part of the same community. We have no evidence of any advances in this area, and this underlines the limitations to what schools, being only one of many social institutions, can hope to achieve as agents of social change.

The structured approach which has been developed will obviously have its limitations for other groups of schools. We have already mentioned a saturation point which schools will inevitably reach and the problems of matching classes where there is lack of symmetry between schools. The notion of linking with a partner school in the same area is obviously limited for those schools which are isolated by geography or by the fact that they are located in highly segregated areas. Other solutions will need to be found in these cases, perhaps an emphasis on residential work where children live and work together over a number of days. However, the project has demonstrated that, even in a highly imbalanced majority/minority situation, it has been possible for schools to institutionalise a system of contacts which provides the framework for children to explore together issues about the nature of the community in which they live.

## EMU AND DIFFERENCES IN PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

There are a number of distinctive differences between primary and post-primary schools which are likely to affect the way contact as part of EMU is implemented in the respective institutions. The three mentioned below are related to each other.

Firstly, teaching in primary schools is more clearly orientated to cross-curricular approaches. Primary teachers are well used to developing a theme which draws together diverse knowledge and skills. This lends itself well to the nature of EMU which concerns itself with process and relationships. The situation in post-primary schools is more likely to regard knowledge of a particular subject discipline as the central objective and the relationship between subject disciplines secondary. There has been a movement away from this notion, but most teachers in post-primary schools still feel themselves considerably constrained to gear work towards examinations. It remains to be seen whether reforms in assessment which are criterion-referenced, based on levels of achievement, rather than norm-referenced, will encourage more multi-disciplinary approaches in teaching. In Strabane, the work in history has drawn attention to questions about the overlap between history and activity, more accurately described as community relations.

Secondly, because teachers in post-primary schools generally perceive themselves to be subject specialists, they are less likely to embark on more holistic themes appropriate to EMU. Concentrating on the contribution of an individual subject discipline may be no bad thing, but it can give rise to the situation where pupils receive a fragmented and disjointed experience of EMU through history, EMU through English, EMU through music and so on. For pupils the implications of EMU through these different disciplines may never be drawn together. Therefore, the involvement in EMU of a wide range of teachers from various disciplinary backgrounds is to be encouraged, but it does suggest that post-primary

schools face a more complex task in putting together programmes which provide a coherent experience for pupils. There is a danger that, whilst individual teachers may be making individual contributions to EMU through their own subjects, the school has no overall plan which identifies what EMU is trying to achieve. For EMU to function in a genuinely cross-curricular way we would see it as vital that post-primary schools delegate particular individuals the responsibility of identifying what programmes operate throughout the school and how these relate together to give a whole-school EMU scheme. Post-primary schools, being generally larger and more structurally complex, face a challenging task which will require focused leadership, discussion and cooperation between departments, and whole-school in-service development.

Thirdly, a clear difference between primary and post-primary schools concerns their internal organisation and this too will have a bearing, particularly on how contact with other schools is operated as part of the EMU experience. In primary schools children usually have a single teacher who works with them for the whole day on all aspects of the curriculum. Classes have a stability which gives teachers the flexibility to decide when and where learning activities take place. If the primary school teacher decides to carry out joint work with a class from another school it is relatively straightforward to organise and carry out with least disruption to the rest of the school. Post-primary schools, on the other hand, are much more bound by a highly-structured timetable where class periods are short. The organisation of contact with other schools is therefore more disruptive to these schools. Invariably other teachers are affected by missing periods with pupils who are out of school, or are asked to cover classes for the teachers who accompany them. This disruption of routines can be the cause of discontent in some schools.

We have no illusions about the complex and highly idiosyncratic nature of most post-primary school timetables. Even so we would still encourage schools which are serious about facilitating pupil contact with a neighbouring school, to look again at the way their timetables are organised. The possibility of completely synchronising the timetables of neighbouring schools is remote, but there may be opportunities for those responsible for timetabling to come up with imaginative solutions which allow schools to synchronise block sections of the timetable for one or two afternoons in particular subjects. Such synchronisation has already proved possible for work experience schemes and day courses operated through local Technical Colleges. This would greatly facilitate opportunities for contact through educational fieldwork or work in each others' school.

# DISSEMINATION

## INTERVENTION

Our previous report suggested that the relationship between intervention and innovation is such that all action, however passive, can be perceived to be a form of intervention. We suggested that, broadly speaking, intervention may take three forms. Firstly, intervention through **exhortation** encourages people to take action on a particular issue. It may involve statements of support from government officials and education advisors, and the dissemination of information about sources of support. A second form of intervention is **catalytic** and might include access to extra funding and well-organised communication, administrative and in-service networks to ensure that available energy is exploited in a positive way. A third form of intervention is more **formative** in that institutions are actively supported to follow particular procedures and practices. Each is important. Exhortative interventions draw attention to the initiative, catalytic intervention encourages a degree of experimentation and throws up a broad base of practice, and formative intervention suggests that decisions have been taken about the way policy might best be implemented.

Following publication of its first report the project became more overtly drawn into a process of dissemination with a wider audience which embraced all three forms of intervention.

## FOLLOW UP TO THE PREVIOUS REPORT

Local and national press reaction to the report was quite positive and this led to a number of enquiries to the schools and project personnel. A display of project work became available and was used extensively to disseminate the ideas of the project. This included invitations to speak at seminars and in-service courses for teachers organised by the Inspectorate, Queen's University and the University of Ulster. Presentations were given to a conference of the British Council of Churches, staff of teacher training institutions, teacher centre organisers in the Western Education and Library Board and undergraduate students. An invitation to Chief Officers of all five area Boards was not picked up, but the Western Education and Library Board arranged for a presentation of the project's work to be given to its members prior to a monthly meeting of the full Board. This was an ideal opportunity to discuss the work with Board nominees to the governing bodies of Western

Education and Library Board schools. Teachers involved in the project attended receptions where they met colleagues also involved in contact work, and received requests for information from other schools. Particular interest was shown in obtaining copies of the 'Peoples of Ireland' booklet. Radio interviews also helped stimulate interest, the schools were asked to participate in a television documentry, and an educationalist from Cyprus visited some of the schools to learn from their experiences. All this encouraged teachers to value their achievements and the underlying tone of much of it was to exhort a wider audience to action. This activity coincided with information emerging from the Department of Education about curricular reforms which proposed to give greater emphasis to community relations through education, and this undoubtedly increased interest in the project. Given the introduction of EMU as a cross-curricular theme the liaison committee encouraged the project Director to write to the Chief Officer of the Western Education and Library Board with suggestions for future developments. A letter was sent suggesting the appointment of a permanent Board officer with responsibility for continuity of policy development in EMU, provision of an in-service programme for teachers, and co-ordination of field support for schools. It also suggested that, given the level of interest in EMU, the appointment of at least two field officers would be realistic along with administrative support.

Conference papers and articles published in academic journals (see bibliography) ensured dissemination to the research community, and academic links were made with interested parties in the United States, Sri Lanka and Israel, opening up future possibilities for comparative study. The work was also referred to in a recent report from the Council of Europe on violence and conflict resolution in schools (Walker, 1989).

Some of the more catalytic outcomes, such as increased co-operation between teachers, movement toward joint in-service days and discussion of EMU at parent evenings, have already been mentioned. A number of teachers also put themselves forward for roles involving EMU within the support service, and at least one Principal used the experience of the project as a focus for part-time study. A number of students also became associated with the project resulting in dissertations on the project's activities.

The most interventionist and formative aspect of the dissemination process involved identifying and approaching schools in two other communities. The intention was to encourage them to proceed with links according to the general principles established by Strabane schools. The schools approached were identified in consultation with the Western Education and Library Board advisory service. The choices were based less on the individual characteristics of these schools, more on the fact that Limavady and Enniskillen represent communities at opposite ends of Western Education and Library Board territory. Schools in Limavady are farthest away from Board headquarters which sometimes makes them feel more isolated from the support service. In Enniskillen a bomb on Remembrance Day in 1987 had a deep effect on the whole community including the schools. One consequence was renewed commitment from the schools to work together for the benefit of pupils. In both situations Western Education and Library Board felt it would be appropriate to give schools what extra support was available.

## LIMAVADY PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Limavady is a town in the north of the province, midway between Coleraine and Londonderry. The district has a population of 27,100 of which 50% are Catholic according to analysis of the 1981 Census (Eversley and Herr, 1986). The same report puts the under-fifteen population at 5,700 of which 55% are Catholic. The Field and Research Officers initially approached the Principals of three primary schools in the town in the 1988/89 school year. The schools were all co-educational, one maintained and two controlled with approximate enrollments of 735, 550, and 400 respectively.

### Initial Meeting with Limavady Principals

The Principals had responded to an initial letter by suggesting that we meet them collectively in one of the schools. It soon became clear that a good deal of consultation and co-operation between Principals was already part of the pattern of relationships between the schools. At this initial meeting we outlined the previous work of the project in Strabane, the principles which had emerged and our desire to see if a similar approach could be adopted in Limavady. The Principals outlined joint activities which had already taken place, the most recent being a joint entry to the 'Studying Our Past' history competition. They were at pains to point out that, whilst the benefits from this had been considerable, the schools were reluctant to undertake the work again because of the extra workload it had imposed. We explained some of the principles we were starting from, particularly that any work undertaken should take place as part of the school day and with support for the teachers. On the understanding that this would be the case we then explored how a start could best be made. Given

the time of year, it was suggested that an initial link might involve P7 pupils once they had completed the selection procedure for entry to post-primary schools. It was then agreed that the next step would be a further meeting with Principals and P7 teachers from each school to explore possibilities.

### Development with Limavady Teachers

The initial meeting with Principals clarified a number of issues. There was agreement to proceed with planning a programme involving contact between one P7 class from each school which would operate during the summer term. It was agreed that the children would meet together at a common venue in the town and this could be block timetabled for Friday afternoons over a number of weeks. Access to extra funding and teacher cover through the Cross Community Contact Scheme was outlined and it was agreed to proceed with a series of meetings with teachers after school to identify a focus for the programme.

These meetings threw up a number of suggestions for the programme. One was for an activity-based programme at the local leisure centre where pupils could have experience of a range of sporting activities. Another was a curriculum-based programme with an underlying cultural theme where pupils had workshops in art, craft, music and drama. A third suggested approaching an external agency which already offered support in organising cross-community workshops.

Discussion of EMU and its underlying aims led teachers to be cautious about a programme which simply brought children together in large groups for the sake of it. It became an aim to have pupils working together in small groups, encouraging them to interact and share experiences. A decision was taken to invite organisers of the Quaker Peace Education Project to speak to the group and explain approaches they were using. Decisions were finally made to work with this agency and develop workshops which would operate at the local Technical College each Friday afternoon for a six-week period. A proposal was put together on this basis and submitted to the Cross Community Contact Scheme, one teacher agreeing to act as co-ordinator for this purpose. Financial support was requested for workshop materials, photocopying and planning expenses and the cost of a full-day outing for all pupils at the end of the workshop programme. A request for transport to bring pupils to and from the Technical College each Friday was submitted to the Western Education and Library Board.

### Parental Involvement in Limavady

Attention turned to the logistical problems in organising contact. A particular concern was how approximately 90 pupils could be organised to work in small groups of eight or nine. The Technical College has two large halls so it would be no problem for each of these to house

five small groups. A bigger problem was deciding how each small group could work with an adult. Even with four teachers and additional support from the Peace Education Project some extra hands would be needed. One solution would have been to bring in extra teacher cover on workshop days. However, this had the disadvantage that the supply teachers would not have been involved in the preparation and planning prior to workshops. We suggested that an alternative solution might involve the participation of parents on a voluntary basis. We felt that this would not only resolve the logistical problem, but also underline parental support for the programme. The schools were initially a little reticent about this suggestion since they were aware of pitfalls to parental involvement if it is not thought out and planned properly. Perhaps the schools were initially wary that we were suggesting that the programme become 'open-house' for parents to come and go as they please. However, this was talked through and it was agreed that each school would try to identify one or two supportive parents who might be willing and able to join in planning sessions on a voluntary basis, and eventually participate in the programme as small-group workshop leaders. In the event each school identified at least two parent volunteers, either by approaching particular parents or, in one case, explaining the programme at a parents' meeting and asking for volunteers. This turned out to be an important innovative part of the programme as these parents then took part in planning sessions and running the workshops for pupils.

The importance of parental involvement was underlined in a statement from Parliamentatary Under-Secretary of State, Dr Brian Mawhinney, *"Given the tremendous interest and support from parents, I have decided that some of the funds (from the Cross Community Contact Scheme) may be used to assist activities involving parents of children involved in contact schemes at their schools and youth groups."* (Nothern Ireland Information Service, 14 September 1989). The opportunity is therefore created for parents to meet as part of the contact process, although we are unaware of the extent to which this opportunity has been taken up by the organisers of contact programmes.

### The P7 Programme for Limavady Pupils

By this stage the initial group of four teachers had expanded to a group of about 18 adults which included parent volunteers, project staff and personnel from the Peace Education Project. It was decided that two full-day planning sessions would be necessary to define the programme and work out organisational arrangements. The approach used by the Peace Education Workshop was largely drawn from a manual produced by the Friends Workshop at Kingston Polytechnic and involved activites with particular aims. During the full-day planning sessions workshop leaders rehearsed the activities themselves, decided on the materials required,

discussed who would take on particular responsibilities and made decisions about the timing of sessions. The outcome was a Teachers' Booklet for the programme. This approach helped the planning group develop good rapport and a sense of group cohesion.

It was decided that the title for the programme would be 'Myself and Others'. The introduction to the booklet described the programme aims and suggested that, *"The ability to co-operate and communicate confidently within a group which contains a variety of social and cultural backgrounds is seen as particularly appropriate to P7 children who will shortly be moving to a new social environment in a post-primary school"*. It mentioned that, *"The programme is one aspect of the schools' commitment to Education for Mutual Understanding which will soon be a feature of the curriculum in all schools in Northern Ireland"*. The booklet described how the programme would operate and acknowledged the schools and individuals concerned with the programme. A leaflet for parents was derived from the booklet and this was distributed to the parents of each child who would be involved in the programme. A few controlled school parents did not wish their children to take part and arrangements were made for these children to work with another class in their own school.

Within the broad aims of the programme, 'Myself and Others', each workshop had a particular purpose:

Workshop 1 introduced children to the programme. Its aim was, *"to establish a co-operative atmosphere in taking turns to speak, agreeing ground rules"*;

Workshop 2 was called 'Listening to Each Other' and had activities designed *"to practise skills in listening"*;

Workshop 3 was called 'Co-operating' with activities designed *"to practise working together on joint projects"*;

Workshop 4 was called 'Conflicts' and, through role plays of conflict situations (e.g. the bully in the playground), pupils were able to act out conflict situations, explore how they might develop and then discuss the sorts of things which help inflame or resolve conflict;

Workshop 5 was called 'Affirmation' with activities designed *"To appreciate each others qualities; to build up confidence and self-esteem"*;

Workshop 6 was called 'Looking Forward' and, being the last in the programme, encouraged pupils *"To think about and discuss what we expect from moving to a new school"*.

Pupils worked in the same small group throughout the six-week programme and this meant that they had the opportunity of getting to know at least some pupils from other schools. These groups had been arranged at the

first workshop so that each small group had pupils from all three schools. The pupils' final meeting involved a single-day outing for everyone involved in the programme.

## Some Issues from Limavady

The group met on at least two occasions to discuss how things were going. The programme operated very well in practice largely because so much planning and organisation had gone into it. Timings were very tight with each workshop lasting just over an hour and travel to and from the venue taking up fifteen minutes either side. This led to some discussion about the time needed for this type of work. Some workshop leaders felt the time did not allow for proper discussion to develop naturally from the activities, whilst some of the teachers expressed the view that they would be reluctant to have workshops take up a longer period of time because of pressure to cover other curriculum matters.

This developed into a discussion about the educational value of the programme and the style of approach it demanded. The programme was activity based and, in the main, children experienced this as 'good fun' even though each activity had more serious aims. This caused some of the organisers to question the extent to which children were being challenged and encouraged to think hard about their ideas. Perhaps it raised more fundamental questions about the way children learn, whether the environment need necessarily be 'serious' for learning to take place, or that learning material needs to be suitably knowledge-based and 'weighty'.

Nevertheless, children not only enjoyed the programme, but many of the small groups generated a sense of intimacy within which children were able to share their views and opinions. To generate this the workshop leaders were encouraged to adopt a less formal style, explore ways of fostering discussion rather than adopt question and answer techniques. Frequently the nature of the activity required whole-hearted participation from the adults on the same basis as any other member of the group. On occasions the adults may have found it a little more difficult than the children to ignore their inhibitions.

The most interesting and innovative aspect of the programme was the way the organising group brought together a collection of people with diverse backgrounds. Besides the field and research officers, there were the teachers, the parent volunteers and volunteers from the Quaker project. The interaction of these threw up some interesting issues. Teachers took a professional interest, particularly in the educational aims of the programme, tended to have a concern for the organisation and structure of activities, and were adept at pacing the work within the alloted time. Parents took an enthusiastic approach and grew in confidence as they uncovered their talent to work with a group of children

which perhaps they had initially felt unqualified to do. As a group they tended to be closer to the teachers in outlook. The volunteers from the Quaker Peace Education Project were highly motivated to work with the children. Their dress and manner was generally less conservative than the rest of the group and this helped them identify closely with the pupils, perhaps encouraging children to see them more as a friend or older brother or sister, than an adult in a teaching role. This gave rise to discussion about different styles of working with children, and it became clear that those involved interpreted the programme's aims in different ways. A particular issue was the level of formalism required to be effective. Volunteers encouraged children to use first name terms, though teachers were less comfortable with this approach, having to reconcile it with the more formal terms of address used back in school. The emergence of these issues considerably enhanced the experience of the organising group and, rather than generating tension, encouraged issues to be discussed openly.

## Current Situation in Limavady

The programme demonstrated how, with planning and support, contact could work on a class-to-class basis within the school day over a period of weeks. It is not clear, however, whether the programme will operate a second time in the same form, because teachers had begun to discuss the feasibility of moving to links which involved pupils working in each others' schools on projects with a more explicit curriculum focus. In part this would avoid some of the difficulties of working to a tight timetable at a neutral venue and reduces the dependency on an external agency. However, it may also mean the loss of the innovative dimension of parental involvement. The resources and timescale of this project have meant that we have been unable to sustain an intimate involvement with the schools, so a question mark must arise over the extent to which the principles of further links between different year groups which emerged from Strabane, will be pursued by these schools. Another limitation has been the absence of a field officer for mutual understanding during the 1989/ 90 school year whilst the Western Education and Library Board reorganise staffing arrangements in response to demands from the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Hopefully, once these matters have been resolved schools will experience a continuity of support for EMU on a permanent basis.

## POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ENNISKILLEN

Enniskillen is the main town of Fermanagh in the southwest of Northern Ireland. The district has a population of 51,900 of which 57% are Catholic according to an analysis of the 1981 Census (Herr and Eversley, 1986). The same report puts the under-fifteen population at 14,000 of which 61% are Catholic.

## Initial Contact with Enniskillen Schools

The project's first contact with post-primary schools in Enniskillen was facilitated by the Western Education and Library Board at a meeting of Principals in December 1988 to discuss bursaries under the Spirit of Enniskillen Awards, a scheme set up after the Remembrance Day bombing. The scheme helps Protestant and Catholic young people travel abroad together. At this meeting the research officer outlined the approach developed by Strabane post-primary schools in history and asked whether schools in Enniskillen might consider a similar approach. Although considerable interest was shown in the history material the project suggested that there may be other curriculum areas amenable to the same sort of approach. A discussion followed which indicated that much worthwhile contact already existed between the schools, including a very successful drama group involving about thirty pupils from different schools working together after school. There followed general agreement from the Principals that the project could approach members of the English departments to explore the possibility of a linked programme during school hours as part of their normal curriculum work. Following this the field officer made a series of individual visits to the seven schools in Enniskillen (3 secondary and 4 grammar) and sought a meeting involving the heads of each English department.

## Development with Enniskillen Teachers

The first meeting with teachers discussed possibilities for a linked programme and which year group might be involved. Agreement was reached that the programme would focus on the study of common materials, involve third-year pupils and involve activities which would give pupils an opportunity to meet. It was decided to proceed with a series of meetings to identify curriculum materials for the programme before considering how a system of contacts could be established for the 200 pupils who would be involved. In principle it was accepted that the programme would be designed for use by all third-year pupils with a class from each school also being involved in contact. Teachers met on a further five occasions during the 1988/89 school year and two of these were full-day planning meetings. These established that the programme would look at the theme 'Growing Up', drawing on the work of local writers, but hopefully introducing some comparative material from texts set in other situations of social conflict. An initial plan was to base the programme on all pupils studying the text *'Shadows On Our Skin'* by Jennifer Johnston, supplemented by appropriate short stories and a common anthology of poetry related to the theme 'Growing Up'. A proposal was put together for the Cross Community Contact Scheme requesting assistance in purchasing class sets of the text, one teacher co-ordinated this and opened a joint bank account to administer the funds. Some initial planning

took place on this basis. However, it soon became clear that at least one of the schools would not be happy using this text with pupils, partly because events in the novel take place within a strongly nationalist household, and partly because there were objections to some of the language in the book. The cover of the latest edition has images symbolic of the conflict in Northern Ireland and some were wary that this might concern parents. The group acknowledged these concerns and, although a change of plan would mean a certain amount of frustration and loss of planning time, it would have been unwise to proceed without the full support of everyone involved.

## An English Programme for Third-Year Pupils

The group continued to meet and plan during the 1989/90 school year. The title of the programme remained 'Growing Up', but the focus for the work shifted from study of a novel to study through a common anthology of short stories, *'The Genius and Other Irish Short Stories'*. This contained contributions from local writers and would be used in conjunction with poetry identified by the teacher group. The stories in this anthology give ample scope to develop issues related to the theme 'Growing Up' such as, relationships with parents and teachers, self image, dreams, vocation, friendship; and some stories allow development of issues relevant to EMU in the Northern Ireland context such as, political courage, religious hypocrisy and the power of words over physical violence.

The group have produced a booklet for pupils as part of the programme and pupils met at a local theatre before the programme was introduced. A number of possibilities were discussed for pupil contact and three distinct aspects emerged. Firstly, a series of workshops provided by a writer in residence for a week at the local Teachers' Centre, jointly sponsored by the Arts Council and the Western Education and Library Board, with schools linking pupils through drama workshops. Secondly, pupils working together to produce a booklet of their own work arising from the theme, using desktop publishing facilities. Thirdly, a residential trip involving visits to literary and cultural venues is being considered.

## Some Issues From Enniskillen

As in Strabane the development of links between post-primary schools has proceeded more slowly than developments in the primary schools. This is largely due to the time involved in identifying appropriate curriculum materials, producing the pupils' booklet and identifying contact activities which are workable within the constraints of post-primary school timetables. The larger number of schools involved also means that a good deal more consultation and organisation needs to take place. Nevertheless, the pace of development means that deeper issues are addressed and the pro-

gramme which emerges is more likely to take a place within the normal curriculum work of a particular subject area.

The issues which arose over the choice of materials also indicate that a good deal of sensitivity is required, not only about community relations in Northern Ireland, but also over broader issues such as the type of language pupils are exposed to through school texts. English teachers obviously hold strong views in both directions about whether any use of language can be considered 'bad'. The dynamics of an adult group, where each is contributing work, also calls for tact and sensitivity so that critical discussion can take place about the quality of material being collectively produced.

Planning for the programme began before requirements for the Northern Ireland Curriculum in English were available. As the deliberations of government's English working party emerged, planning may have become too caught up in looking at how the programme related to levels of achievement and assessment criteria, rather than the original aims of the programme. However, it did reassure the group that their approach would fit with proposed curriculum changes. This process also revealed anxieties that the demands on English from cross-curricular themes might swamp the subject itself and, if teachers are not careful, they could find themselves operating somewhat contrived and contorted programmes in English. This is emerging as a general issue and will require further examination in the future.

Consideration was also given to the EMU guide (NICED, 1988) and the report of the Working Party on EMU as a cross-curriculum theme (DENI, 1989). There was clear encouragement in these that schools should develop programmes in EMU which lead to contact between pupils. The EMU working party report made it clear, however, that such contact could not be made compulsory and schools should respect the wishes of parents who do not wish their children to be involved in contact activities. However, this was contextualised by the notion that children also have an 'entitlement' to contact. This creates something of an anomaly for teachers implementing EMU. The most logical way to operate contact so that it is perceived by pupils as a routine and natural part of the curriculum would involve class-to-class work within school hours. If some pupils do not participate this detracts from its normative influence and brings about the added problem of making alternative arrangements for such pupils. A further issue is whether contact will be perceived as a normal part of curriculum activities if only some classes, for practical reasons, are offered the opportunity of contact. The voluntary nature of contact contrasts with the compulsory nature of EMU as part of the curriculum and the implication of this for funding is raised later in the report as part of a discussion about the Cross Community Contact Scheme (Chapter 7).

## Current Situation in Enniskillen

The seven schools in Enniskillen have established a basis for pupil contact through English and considerable time has been spent in identifying a particular programme. The absence of a field officer during the 1989/90 school year has not prevented development from taking place as the group received considerable support from the organiser of the local Teachers' Centre. It is not clear whether the contact programme will grow to include more joint work on a class-to-class basis. Given the number of schools involved a pattern may emerge whereby schools operate a 'pooled' system of contact, common activities are identified and schools negotiate amongst themselves the extent to which each becomes involved by working in pairs or threesomes. As with Limavady, a question mark remains whether the programme established will stand alone or be followed by similar programmes between other year-groups.

## SUMMARY

Dissemination took place at a number of levels. A wider audience was exhorted to action through conferences, presentations and circulation of information. The project was catalytic in involving a wider group of schools and individuals in the development of inter school contact programmes. The project worked with primary schools in Limavady and post-primary schools in Enniskillen and was formative in encouraging them to begin building curriculum-based links which were structured, and planned to give pupils experiences of contact. The extent to which these schools have taken on board the general principle of establishing such links between a variety of year-groups remains in doubt. Although future developments will in part be dependent on the commitment of the schools themselves, it will also be related to the form of in-service and permanent support which the area Board sets in place. This infrastructure will obviously influence the extent to which schools will be encouraged to proceed along the lines suggested by this project. Our work with schools in Limavady and Enniskillen confirms the view put forward in our previous report that it is not possible to distil a ready-made formula which all schools can apply, although broad guidelines can be established.

**Development of contact programmes in EMU involves sensitive issues, often idiosyncratic to the particular community, which means that the development and evolution of such programmes demands a process which is slow and careful, requires considerable levels of support, and involves consultation, negotiation and time for reflection. The experiences in Strabane, Limavady and Enniskillen all support the view that the process cannot be short-circuited.**

# EVALUATION - TYPES OF CONTACT

## SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The nature of schools as institutions is perhaps an over-riding reason why, in the past, pupils from controlled and maintained schools in Northern Ireland rarely met or worked together. Longer serving members of the teaching profession will recall a time when there was more cross-over in enrolment patterns, particularly in rural areas where village schools existed. Even when the system moved to a more segregated pattern inter school contact was the exception rather than the rule, until comparatively recently. Schools themselves have evolved into fundamentally autonomous institutions, concerned primarily with issues directly affecting the school, its status, its reputation and the achievements of its pupils. The threat of declining rolls, the pressures of curriculum change, and a sensitivity to community opinion do not create the ideal climate for change.

The continuation of community conflict has caused us to look again at the role of education, as one aspect of institutional life in Northern Ireland. A focus on the relationship between education and community relations has come about partly through a growing concern for the likely effect of educational segregation on our children. This has been fuelled by policies from the current government which encourage schools to accept a more prominent role in fostering better community relations. It is evidence of teachers' concern for the children whom teach that, despite pressures which encourage them to look institutionally inwards, so many have responded to the challenge of working within the structural segregation of the system to generate an 'integrated' experience for pupils.

Early exhortation in this direction came with the publication of DENI Circular 1982/21 and more recent measures have included extra resources, curriculum reform and legislative changes which ensure that all schools now have a statutory responsibility in this area. From the outset the Western Education and Library Board responded positively. By November, 1982 the Board had adopted a policy statement which it reproduced in the advisory service's Publication No 4 (WELB, 1984) and circulated to all schools in its area. An adviser was given responsibility for mutual understanding and this led to the appointment of a field officer in 1986. A proliferation of activity between schools followed and has led to the situation where approximately 75% of schools in the Board area can

now claim to have participated in some sort of activity which brought children from maintained and controlled schools together (Bullick, 1990).

## A BROAD BASE OF PRACTICE

The rest of this chapter looks at the broad base of practice which has been generated between schools in the Western Education and Library Board area. The diversity is such, that attempts to categorise the forms of contact which have taken place is not simple. We have therefore chosen to address this by responding to four simple questions which often come up when proposals for contact are discussed. These ask, 'How might pupils meet?', 'How long should contact last?', 'Where will it happen?', and 'What kind of things will children be doing?' Where appropriate we refer to examples we have encountered between schools within the Western Education and Library Board area, and have drawn on the experience of teachers to suggest the relative strengths and weaknesses of various approaches. A section is also included outlining some of the practical steps which an Area Board can take to increase the possibility that inter school contact takes place. Much of this is based on the experience of field officers working as part of the Board's support structure. Finally, attention is drawn to the implications which inter school work can have for the style of teaching used by teachers when working with pupils on EMU. This emerged as a universal issue, equally important for teachers in primary and post-primary schools.

## HOW CAN PUPILS MEET?

An over-riding issue concerns whether it is more profitable, in EMU terms, for pupils to encounter each other in large groups or small. Large groups of children attending the same event can certainly go some way toward encouraging the perception amongst pupils that the schools, as institutions see contact as legitimate. The sheer scale of large groups coming together can generate an impressive sense of unity, allows individuals the comfort of the relative anonymity which a large-group encounter provides, yet keeps open the possibility of inter-personal exchanges taking place. However, the scale of large-group encounters inevitably means that the experience of contact is unpredictable and some teachers (e.g. Dunlop, 1987) have indicated that this can have counter-productive effects, especially if incidents occur which reinforce negative stereotypes or prejudices

toward the 'other group'. Large-group encounters, for example travelling together to see a theatre production, may at first glance seem relatively simple to organise, but teachers soon find themselves looking at how they can plan things so that the herd mentality is eroded and pupils are encouraged to mix. This may involve thinking carefully about the way pupils are seated on buses, how tasks can be introduced which induce children to work with new people, and may include 'ice breaking' type activities before the excursion takes place.

Many teachers are convinced that the quality of contact improves if a situation can be created which allows pupils to interact in the more intimate atmosphere of small groups. Even so there are question marks about the way inter-personal contact can hope to influence inter-group attitudes. There are a number of ways to achieve small group sizes. One is to twin classes so that two teachers work simultaneously with a mixed group of pupils. Advantages are that the teacher/pupil ratio remains the same, although total group size is larger, and the possibility of class work on a common project is created. Joint classwork on a routine basis strongly encourages pupils to perceive the work as a normal part of their school experience. Disadvantages are that teachers need time to plan lessons together and there may be difficulty in finding accommodation where two classes can work comfortably. Where space permits each teacher could work with a mixed class in a separate room or the project could involve field work (for example, a pond study or environmental trail). A weakness is that twinned work can become very class-based where the whole group of children are expected to progress at the same pace. More child-centred approaches can be encouraged where the introduction of material and classroom organisation recognise that children work at different speeds.

Another way of creating a climate for small group work is the use of residentials, where children spent a few days away from home, usually at a venue designed to accommodate school groups. The experience of living and working together is a valuable one. It gives children the opportunity of relating to each other as human beings rather than as representatives of a group. Uniforms, cultural symbols and normal routines are temporarily removed allowing sharing and trust to be emphasised. Voluntary support is often available and this can create the possibility of smaller groups of perhaps 6-10 pupils. An important aspect of residential work is that it represents 'time out' for teachers and pupils in that new rules, relationships and ways of working can be explored. This can be an exhilarating experience, though it should not be overlooked that, once the residential ends, all concerned return to their former environments where the trappings of cultural symbolism and rules of behaviour continue to exist. This can leave pupils feeling disillusioned about the experience, so it is important that 'de-briefing' and follow-up work takes

place. A good deal of pre-planning is required for residentials, they are costlier than school-based work, and participation is voluntary with parents often asked to contribute toward costs.

Generally speaking then contact can be brought about through **joint outings, twinned classwork, or residential work**. Each has strengths and weaknesses and most teachers would consider using programmes which involve a variety of these forms of contact. Teachers will often initiate contact through large-group outings and follow this up with more sustained contact through classwork on a joint basis or a residential trip.

## HOW LONG SHOULD CONTACT LAST?

The contact hypothesis suggests that an ingredient of successful joint work is that it should be sustained. There are two concepts bound up in the single notion of a 'sustained' programme. One is the concept of **'duration'**, meaning the length of time which children are together on any particular occasion. The other is **'frequency'**, meaning the number of occasions when contact takes place. Is the experience of six hours of concentrated contact different from the experience of one hour's contact on six separate occasions? Both result in the same 'contact time', but we have found no research evidence which suggests which part of the continuum, 'short, frequent - long, infrequent', is likely to have most impact on childrens' attitudes toward each other.

Common sense suggests that 'contact time' is not the only variable at work. Impact may be more dependent on exactly what takes place when pupils are together than on either the duration or frequency of the contact. Nevertheless, conventional opinion reveals considerable scepticism about the likely impact on pupil attitudes of isolated, one-off contact. This suggests that that teachers have intuition about this issue and that some minimal level of contact may be important. We can therefore learn something from what teachers have to say about the value of contact, its duration and its frequency.

Few teachers are confident that one-off special events such as concerts, visits to museums provide anything more than a minimal experience of contact when set against the total educational experience of pupils at school. This is not to say that the activities are not valuable in themselves, but rather that their frequency is important. Even if the frequency is increased there is concern whether pupils will experience any coherent relationship between different events. This suggests that planned contact needs to be explicitly linked in the minds of pupils by a coherent theme, representing a coherent programme of activities rather than a succession of isolated events. For example, a series of three such 'isolated' events in a single term might give a total contact time of 15 hours for the term.

In the school context it is unlikely that the duration of joint classwork would be less than the normal class period. However, given the novelty of the situation most teachers would feel that little worthwhile could be done in sessions lasting less than an hour, and even this does not allow for the extra time needed for transportation and settling pupils into a new environment. This seems to take us nearer to the idea that the minimal contact encounter should take up either an afternoon or morning session. Obviously some teachers will be concerned how this will impinge on other curriculum work they have planned. The next question is, how often it is practical to operate these kind of contact sessions before they begin to be regarded as disruptive to normal school routine. Our experience suggests that six to eight sessions over a single term approaches a point beyond which teachers would find unacceptable. This contrasts sharply with the expectations of parents discussed later in the report (see Chapter 6, Figure 6.3). A series of six such sessions might give a total contact time of 9 hours in a single term.

For teachers, one of the attractions of residential work is that it gives pupils a concentrated experience of contact over a short space of time. Besides other benefits, children on a residential will live and work together for upwards of 30 hours.

**Discussing the interaction of children in terms of 'contact time' has a certain dispassionate quality about it, but it throws into stark relief the limitations on what teachers can hope to achieve in the limited time which various options present. An 'idealised' programme might link pupils through an outing in the first term, six class-based sessions in the second, and a residential experience in the third. In total this would represent about 44 hours out of a total year's educational experience (i.e. approximately 3.5% of the teaching time available in a school year).**

It also opens out an issue about how children learn and how attitudes are formed, clearly of central concern to those who feel contact has a role to play. Amongst educationalists there is no consensus view on how children learn, except that the process is complex. The developmental theories of Piaget emphasise continuity and progression, whilst more recent work (Skemp, 1979) highlights the importance of novelty and the discontinuity of experiences. Teachers will have their own views about the way childrens' attitudes are formed and these will be reflected in the programmes they create. Much of the practice in schools is predicated on a theory of learning which implies that repetition and reinforcement are important features. This developmental view suggests that children assimilate knowledge in a fairly uniform way, passing through progressive stages so that new experiences build on what has gone before. It tends to support the view that each experience of contact will reinforce earlier ones and that programmes involving regular and frequent contact have most impact

on the way childrens' attitudes are formed. This is hard to reconcile with discussions we have had with teachers themselves about the effects of past educational experiences on the attitudes they hold. Their accounts suggest that the process of attitude formation is much less uniform, less progressional, relying rather more on the impact of key formative experiences, a traumatic event, a relationship with one individual. This may account for the confidence placed in residential work, and its popularity with children. The novelty of a residential may itself be sufficiently formative for people to remember the experience and the attitudes associated with it.

## WHERE SHOULD PUPILS MEET?

Experience so far would suggest that meeting places for contact should relate to one or more of the characteristics represented by three main options. These are, a neutral venue, in the local environment, and in each others' schools. These options are not exclusive of each other.

1 **A neutral venue** could be the local leisure centre, a library, museum or other educational centre. Neutral venues have been particularly popular when schools are beginning to establish links and with schools which find it difficult to identify a partner school in the neighbourhood. They have the advantage that they are not identified with one community or the other and this avoids issues of territory and symbolism. Disadvantages are that they usually involve additional costs, need to be booked and often the group is dependent on the programme of another agency. Being outside the normal classroom environment means that the teacher and pupils do not have the same recourse to materials and equipment so it is more difficult to develop routine work on a curriculum project through a programme based solely around neutral venues.

2 **Work in the local environment,** for example a study of local buildings, can allow a regular pattern of contacts to be established and travelling time is reduced. It has the advantage that teachers have more control over the type of work carried out and pupils may even develop a sense of common ownership about the locations used.

3 **Work in each others' schools** provides the opportunity for routine and accumulating project work. The venue provides ready access to resources and classroom facilities. It also introduces the notion of 'hosting' with pupils being encouraged to develop appropriate social skills. This option provides a symbolic message to parents and the local community about the commitment of both institutions to co-operation, and part of its hidden curriculum is that pupils are allowed to see for themselves that the other school is not a mysterious place. Dunlop's (1987) account of class exchanges as part of the Schools Cultural Studies Project shows that it

was clearly ahead of its time. This describes how work in each others' school can be the catalyst for discussion between older pupils on religious belief and cultural symbols. He cautions that, when considering inter school visits, problems can arise from weak planning, an inequality of numbers from each school and if the process is seen to be too one way. Indeed, the 'Why do they never come to us?' syndrome did emerge as an issue in our work in Strabane.

## WHAT KIND Of ACTIVITY IS BEST?

The development of practice in EMU has thrown up a range of activities which teachers have used in organising contact between pupils. The following headings give an idea of the diversity which has become characteristic of work in this field:

### 1 Sporting Links

These have always been popular although they have tended to be competitive in nature which may be good for school morale, but runs contrary to the more co-operative attitudes which EMU seeks to develop. More recently teachers have looked at how co-operative games can be used since they are more dependent on the interaction of pupils and less on a winner and loser. Examples of teams organised on an inter school basis are rare, even though team sports within the local community may draw their membership on a cross community basis. Opportunities exist for youth groups and local sports clubs to liaise with schools along these lines. The existence of different sporting traditions within the two cultures still seems a relatively untapped source for EMU programmes and there is room for imaginative work along these lines. Projects which research playground and street games can provide an opportunity to explore similarity and difference within the cultural traditions.

### 2 Quizzes

Inter school quizzes have a long tradition, generally organised as after school activities. The RUC community relations branch has been active in this approach, although their involvement is not always welcomed in all areas. Again, the competitive nature of a quiz may not sit too comfortably with the underlying aims of EMU, although mixed teams are always used.

### 3 Special Events

The characteristic feature of special events is that they take place on one occasion. Examples include visits to educational centres, a joint carol service, conferences, debates, joint sports day, a joint display. These usually involve a good deal of organisation and, linked together, a series of special events can represent a programme on a particular theme such as music or the arts.

### 4 Activity Holidays

A number of successful ventures have linked schools through activity holidays such as outdoor pursuits or the skiing programme operated by the Western Education and Library Board. They have the advantage of being action orientated with many of the activities necessitating teamwork, and pupils have the opportunity of living and working together for a period of time.

### 5 Electronic Mail and Computer Projects

The growth of Information Technology has meant greater access to computer equipment and schools are now required to integrate it into all aspects of curriculum work. The potential for sharing and exchanging information has increased and the use of links between schools using electronic mail is developing. Electronic mail has proved particularly useful where face-to-face contact is difficult, and it can be used to augment and sustain contacts already established. There are examples, such as 'live adventuring' developed in Derbyshire, where a dialogue can be established between pupils. Software packages exist to enhance work in particular curriculum areas and this can lead to joint project work, e.g. packages which allow pupils to create two-dimensional plans of historical sites which can be made up into three-dimensional models. The availability of word processing and desk-top publishing packages means that teachers can jointly produce professional teaching booklets and worksheets, and the pieces of work from different schools can be jointly reproduced. There are examples of inter school newsletters and joint magazines. This obviously helps raise the profile of EMU work within the community and improves communication between the school and home.

### 6 Work in the Local Environment

Field work in the local environment often involves nature study, but can be much wider. Examples exist of projects on pollution, conservation and environmental protection. Traffic surveys, map work, artwork, studies of local buildings and architecture have all provided a useful focus. Extended work in local history has included interviewing older people in the community, exploring the inscriptions on graveyard tombstones and projects on sites of historical interest.

### 7 Educational Trails

It is possible to create an educational trail on virtually any theme. Examples include forest trails, shoreline trails, trails back through time, trails exploring each others' schools, and trails with a cross-cultural theme, such as the trail around the city walls produced by Londonderry Teachers' Centre. Most pupils enjoy the treasure hunt aspect of trails with booklets containing blank sections to complete, and it is relatively easy to group pupils so that they need to help each other.

## 8 Curriculum Projects

The main concern for teachers is to ensure that their involvement in contact activities does not adversely affect time available to cover the many other aspects of a crowded curriculum. The introduction of EMU as a cross-curricular theme is designed to encourage teachers to include EMU-related activities as part of the way they teach the main areas of study. In theory at least, this should mean that contact can become an integral aspect of any curriculum-based project. There are many examples of this kind of curriculum-based work. In the primary school thematic approaches are normal and naturally tie in work about identity, relationships and cultural development. In the post-primary school work tends to be more subject specific and joint curriculum projects have been actively encouraged by schemes such as the Schools Joint History Competition. Curriculum projects do require extra energy from teachers in coordinating activities, but their advantage lies in the relevance they have to what the school would normally be teaching. There have been a number of curriculum projects which have specifically aligned their aims with the general aims of EMU, such as the Schools Cultural Studies Project, the Religion in Ireland project, the CRIS project, materials developed by the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace/Irish Council of Churches and the European Studies project. Their strength lies in the fact that materials have been produced which deal explicitly with EMU-type issues, but a weakness may be that schools feel a lesser degree of ownership of the programmes, not having developed the material themselves.

## 9 Workshop Programmes

Workshop programmes are one way of developing contact so that pupils work in small groups. There are examples of workshops which bring in specialists for work on themes such as drama, art, music, computers. Residential programmes will often use this way of working and there are many voluntary agencies, such as Corrymeela and the Quaker Peace Education project, which assist schools in running workshops on themes concerning cultural traditions and conflict resolution.

## IS CONTACT ENOUGH?

The main issue common to all these forms of contact is, do they help children to develop greater understanding of each other and their respective cultural traditions? Is working together on a computer project, for example, sufficient to achieve this? Most teachers would claim that it is no more than a beginning, an opportunity to build confidence and trust. Being largely concerned about relationships and process there is a tendency for programmes in EMU to concentrate on achieving a common task with EMU aims as part of the latent agenda. It is our experience that few teachers are comfortable with programmes with an explicit commu-

nity relations focus, although the situation could change as confidence grows. This has led to charges that the whole ideological basis for EMU is suspect, being based on a liberal, humanist tradition which is vague and 'woolly' in its language. If this is the case then it is more a statement about the extent to which it has been possible to turn aspirations into practice, than a reason to abandon the cause. The issue of the value of contact is one in need of further research. Now that EMU is part of the formal curriculum, future developments may include the emergence of initiatives which attempt to establish a process of evaluation.

## HOW AN AREA BOARD CAN HELP

The Area Board is a primary source for basic support. However, as well as providing in-service and field support an area Board can take other effective measures which increase the likelihood of contact between schools developing. The project's working relationship with the Western Education and Library Board has provided us with first-hand experience of the way a Board's strategy can encourage contact. The following are some examples.

## 1 Conferences for Pupils

The Board planned and hosted a series of conferences in each council area for senior pupils from post-primary schools. Actual themes for the conferences varied, but the question of community relations was a frequent subject of debate. Prior to each conference selected pupils were given training in leading group discussion and over 1,300 pupils participated in the series. The strength of each conference lay in good organisation with four distinct elements of assembly, introduction, discussion and plenary session. The use of pupils as discussion leaders meant that any consensus on particular issues was not teacher-led. The conferences allowed schools to express a sense of unity on a grand scale and tested the climate of opinion toward mutual understanding in various localities. Its fundamental weakness was that the series did not form an integral part of an on-going programme of inter school contact and, though a wealth of goodwill was generated, much of this was dissipated by lack of follow-up.

## 2 Invitations to a Linked Programme

The Board operated a scheme in conjunction with the Ulster American Folk Park which invited primary schools to participate with partner schools in a history project. Over 600 pupils were involved and met on average six times during the project. An open day for parents was held at the end of the programme. At the end of the year 18 of the 20 schools expressed a desire to continue working with their partner school during the next school year. The scheme's strengths were in offering an enjoyable, pre-packaged programme at a specialist venue which is a living, working museum.

This is particularly attractive to smaller schools which welcome extra support. Some weaknesses were identified, such as the long travel time involved for more distant schools. In some cases aspirations to maintain contact were more difficult to realise once the programme finished.

### 3 Linked Scheme in Swimming

The Board operates a swimming scheme which allows for ten weeks instruction for P7 classes. Where schools were willing to share transport and pool facilities the programme was extended for a further 3-6 weeks of recreational swimming and sometimes culminated in a swimming gala. About fourteen schools took advantage of this. Its strength is that contact is created through an uncontroversial activity, parents recognise value in the instruction received, and sometimes it can lead to other contacts being established. A weakness is that schools may take advantage of the scheme purely to gain extra swimming time with little or no interest in developing EMU further.

### 4 Book Week

During National Book Week the Board's Youth Services offer an intensive programme of specialised events to promote reading, enjoyment of books and use of the library. Where possible schools are encouraged to participate with a neighbour school. Activities included visits from authors, book fairs and visits to libraries. There is clear educational value in the approach and such meetings can be the launching pad for further contacts.

### 5 Links Through the Small School Support Scheme

Extra curriculum support for small schools through a peripatetic team of specialist teachers is particularly important to the Western Board because of the large numbers of small, rural schools in its area. The situation where a teacher may travel in and out of the same village twice in the same day to give similar support to two different schools has been looked at to see where opportunities for joint provision might operate.

### 6 Joint Access to Transport, Resources and Funding

By looking at the way it makes certain facilities and resources available it has been possible for the Board to suggest shared provision in certain areas, for example support from the music service or access to computing facilities. Encouragement to submit joint applications for transport and other funding has involved relatively little amendment to administrative procedures whilst the implications at school level are considerable.

All these illustrate how, by reviewing how its services are delivered and identifying particular goals, a Board can considerably enhance the possibilities of contact between schools in its area. There are obviously difficult issues to face. An Education and Library Board has a responsibility to make its services accessible to all controlled, voluntary maintained and, with certain limitations, voluntary schools in its area. There are natural concerns that this access should not be in a form which coerces schools into contact. The Western Board's arrangements reflect the view that inter school contact is encouraged rather than compulsory.

## CONTACT AND TEACHING STYLE

The commitment of teachers has a large part to play in determining the strength or weakness of any of the approaches mentioned. Teachers, as well as pupils, are being asked to find new forms of working together and this inevitably draws them away from their traditional experience of working alone with a class in the confines of the classroom. Movement out of the classroom, to work alongside another teacher with unfamiliar children, calls for considerable adaptability on the teacher's part. For some this is uncomfortable and many would prefer to remain insulated from the experience. Even planning a programme with a colleague can be potentially threatening, involving, as it does, putting ideas into the open and inviting critical comment. EMU's concern with process and relationship means that less formal styles of teaching are required which cast the teacher more in the role of participant than authority figure. Recent developments in active tutorial skills have tried to support movements in this direction. Teachers are likely to hold strong opinions about how they teach and the way they teach, and there will be occasions when this simply leads to disagreement or tension. Coupled with this is a caution about what can be expected as education accepts a more active role in community relations. The tendency in the past has been to ignore or pretend divisive issues in the community do not exist, and teachers are wary of how these can be handled if they arise in the classroom. Some consideration might be given to the lessons learned from earlier projects, such as the Schools Cultural Studies project and the Humanities Curriculum project, about the way controversial issues can be handled with mixed groups. We hold the view that work of this type cannot avoid raising issues for teachers which involves them in re-examining their own emotions and feelings about the 'other community' in Northern Ireland.

## SUMMARY

The past twenty years has seen a broad base of educational practice emerge in Northern Ireland. This has led to the situation where it is now not uncommon for schools to bring Catholic and Protestant children together as part of school activities. Such activities can be encounters in large or small groups.

**Currently, inter school contacts fall into three broad generic forms, group outings, work in each others' schools, and residential work.** These are sometimes augmented and sustained by links through electronic mail. Each approach has virtues and weaknesses.

A sustained experience may be provided by frequent, short contacts, or by less frequent, but concentrated contact. **It is not clear how the effect of contact may be related to its frequency and duration. Our experiences through the project have led us to estimate that, in practice, it might be possible for schools to operate programmes involving 44 hours of contact if a combination of approaches are used. This represents approximately 3.5% of the teaching time available in a school year.**

Choice of venue for inter school contact is an important consideration. A programme of inter school contact will have different characteristics depending on whether it uses a neutral venue, work in the local environment, or is based in the schools themselves.

Activities which provide the focus for contact are diverse and wide-ranging and various examples have been given. Each has strengths and weaknesses and the kind of activity chosen may reflect the extent to which a community relations dimension is explicit.

**As well as providing in-service and field support, an Area Board can take effective measures to increase the likelihood that inter school contact takes place. Such measures include initiating schemes which encourage schools to cooperate, and providing services to schools on a linked basis.**

Inter school contact raises issues about teaching style. These could be addressed by **pre and in-service work to build confidence in three main areas - team teaching, the development of skills to promote active learning, and experience of how controversial issues can be handled within the classroom.** All of these involve teachers re-examining their own feelings and emotions towards the 'other community' in Northern Ireland.

# EVALUATION: IMPACT ON PUPILS

## THE COMMON HISTORY PROGRAMME IN STRABANE

Our own practical involvement with schools through the project gave us an opportunity to consider how we might learn something about the effect of the programmes on pupils. Trew (1989) reviews the limited research on the impact of contact schemes for Catholic and Protestant children in Northern Ireland. Individual studies have variously used questionnaires, interviews, sociometric tests and participant observation, and it is clear that no single study will give comprehensive answers to questions about impact. We chose to focus on the 'Peoples of Ireland' programme which operated between first form pupils in five Strabane post-primary schools (3 secondary, 2 grammar). Details of the programme are given earlier in the report (Chapter 1). The programme was taught to all first form pupils (11-12 years old) in each school, but only one class from each school participated in a series of contact activities. This allowed us to identify a 'contact' and 'non-contact' class in each school. The programme was designed to be taught during normal history periods over a term, although it actually operated longer than this. This meant that we were able to gather data from pupils before the programme was introduced and again after the programme had finished, a period of approximately six months. Details about the pupils who provided data are given in Appendix B.

Percentages are used throughout when discussing results. For simplicity, pupils attending maintained schools are called 'Catholic' and pupils attending controlled schools are described as 'Protestant'. Whilst the former is almost certainly true in the Strabane context, we can be less certain about the latter. Although both controlled schools estimate that anything up to 10% of their total enrolment may be children from a Catholic background, we had no way of knowing how many of the pupils who supplied us with information fall into this category. We realise there are sensitivities about such labelling and apologise in advance for any offence it might cause. Our choice of labels is to draw attention to the perceived affiliations usually associated with controlled and maintained schools in Northern Ireland.

We wished to see what contrasts existed between pupils in controlled and maintained schools, whether their reponses to various questions had changed by the time the programme ended, and if any such changes appeared to be different for contact and non-contact groups.

Before the programme began, each class was asked to write a short essay on the subject 'My Country' with the instructions *"Do not worry too much about spelling or grammar. In this case we are only interested in your ideas. Do not spend a long time thinking about what you are going to write - put down the first ideas that come into your head"*. This exercise took about 15 minutes.

When the essay was complete pupils were given a series of open-ended questions which took about fifteen minutes to complete. Pupils only saw these questions when their essay was complete.

Pupils were asked to complete the same tasks six months later once the programme was complete. Additionally pupils who had participated in contact were asked to complete an evaluation sheet. This asked them to say which of the groups who have settled in Ireland did they think had most influence; which parts of the course they did and did not enjoy and why; and how they felt about the part of the programme which involved meeting pupils from other schools.

Information collected in this way was analysed and, in the following sections, we describe the findings which emerged. For simplicity, the main findings have been grouped under four headings - IDENTITY; AWARENESS OF THE 'OTHER COMMUNITY'; UNDERSTANDING AND UNCERTAINTY; and PUPILS' OWN COMMENTS ON THE PROGRAMME.

## IDENTITY

In the Northern Ireland context, national allegiance has been regarded as an important dimension of identity. Trew (1983) reviews a number of approaches which have been used to assess national allegiance among Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. These include Rose (1971) who presented adults with a choice of five identity labels, and Moxon-Browne (1983) who used an identical question. Both found that the majority of Catholics identified themselves as Irish (76% in Rose's 1968 study and 69% in Moxon-Browne's 1978 study), whilst most Protestants identified themselves as either British (30% Rose and 67% Moxon-Browne), or Ulster (32% Rose and 20% Moxon-Browne).

Robinson's (1970) questionnaire to 1,000 school-children in Derry indicated that 57% of Catholics looked to Dublin as their capital city, whilst 76% of Protestants named Belfast.

Weinreich's (1981) use of bipolar constructs suggested that the general rule, 'to be Catholic means to be Irish, but not at all Protestant and not at all British', and that a symmetrical statement about Protestants generally holds true.

Trew (1981) used an open-ended question which asked sixth-formers and university students, 'What Are You?'. The results were a little surprising, indicating that only a small percent (4%) of either Catholics or Protestants spontaneously referred to themselves using a national identity and none used descriptions such as Ulster or Northern Irish. Her review of these approaches led Trew to conclude *"the pattern of national identification is far more complex than many social scientists have realized. The findings also show that the different methods of investigation of national allegiance can lead to quite discrepant conclusions"*.

Hosin and Cairns (1984) used the technique of a 'My Country' essay to see whether national loyalty varied in 9, 12 and 15 year-olds in Jordan, Iraq, Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland. Content analysis was used to code the essays by reference to violence, loyalty, identity, politics, law and order, and religion. The results suggested that the impact of violence was not dependent on its cultural setting.

More recent work (Wetherell and Potter, 1988) has drawn attention to some of the difficulties with content analysis of discourse. They suggest that the method is often used with scant regard to the complexity of language, ignoring that people use language in a way which is dependent on context and full of internal contradictions. This undermines any analysis of discourse which implies that individuals are psychologically coherent and consistent.

The data gathered gave us two ways of looking at national allegiance as one dimension of pupils' identity. Firstly, evidence from the way pupils identified their country in the essay. Secondly, how pupils identified the capital city of their country in response to a specific question.

## 1 The 'My Country' Essays

Extracts from some of the essays are given in Appendix C and they illustrate the range and complexity of pupils' writing about their country. Although the statistical analysis of pupils' essays which follows is important, especially as a way of discerning the underlying pattern and structure of pupil opinion, we are left feeling that it does not do justice to the overall impact of the material we read. This created a more subjective view that there

is a deeply-embedded awareness among young people about the complex relationships which exist in Northern Ireland. The language in these essays created a strong impression that these twelve year-old children have already grasped that living in Northern Ireland requires that certain issues need delicate handling. The views held by children were expressed with honesty and accuracy, and often suggested strength of conviction. This suggests that our prejudices and insecurities have been transmitted to children in a variety of ways which are elusive and difficult to comprehend, but it has been done with a skill and sophistication that a formal system of education would find difficult to match. This overall impression lends support to the view that education has a role to play in counter-balancing some of the less-conscious aspects of cultural socialisation. Given the sheer amount of material available we decided to see if the content could be looked at in fairly simple terms to see what patterns might emerge. Each essay was read and note taken of how pupils identified 'My Country'. The following table shows the identity labels which pupils chose for their country.

**Percentages of Children and the Identity Labels they used for their Country:**

|  | Protestant | | | | Catholic | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Contact Before After | | Non-Contact Before After | | Contact Before After | | Non-Contact Before After | |
| (n= ) | (45) | (29) | (42) | (35) | (84) | (76) | (80) | (63) |
| Ireland | 49 | 14 | 7 | 6 | 51 | 50 | 49 | 48 |
| N Ireland | 24 | 35 | 43 | 31 | 14 | 5 | 14 | 24 |
| Britain | 9 | 14 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Other | 9 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 18 | 13 | 8 |
| No Label | 9 | 23 | 34 | 49 | 22 | 27 | 22 | 20 |
| Totals | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

The 'other' category included pupils who had identified their country as Strabane or some local name, perhaps confusing county with country. It also included two pupils who simply identified their country as part of Europe. **Overall a quarter of the pupils found ways of writing the essay without giving an identity label, mainly by a decriptive technique which mentioned people, places and events, but not naming the country itself. Noticeable was how there was an increase in the use of this strategy by both Protestant contact and non-contact groups after the programme was taught.** This perhaps suggests an increasing 'uncertainty' about how their country could be labelled. It could be that the experience of the programme encouraged some Protestant pupils to see the identification of their country by a single label as more complicated than they had previously thought. If such an effect was brought about by the programme then it appears attributable to the way the programme was taught rather than the experience of contact activities, since the effect was the same for both contact and non-contact pupils.

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The analysis seems to be in line with earlier work reviewed by Trew (1983), in suggesting that the majority of Catholics identify with Ireland as a whole. Protestant pupils were more likely to identify their country as Northern Ireland. A notable exception was the Protestant contact group where 49% identified their country as Ireland before the programme began. After the programme significantly fewer pupils in this group (14%) used the labelled their country 'Ireland'. Instead, some must have opted to use no identity label (as mentioned above), whilst others must have decided their country could be better labelled 'Northern Ireland'. No corresponding change took place within the Protestant non-contact group. **All this suggests that, whilst Catholic pupils' identity labels for their country remained fairly static before and after the history programme, the experience of contact for Protestant pupils dissuaded them from identifying their country as 'Ireland' and encouraged them to either:**
(a) **avoid using a label, perhaps because they now perceived choice of label as a complex issue, or**
(b) **identify their country as 'Northern Ireland' rather than 'Ireland', perhaps because they had now clarified the political identity of their country in their own mind.**

Further analysis of the essays went on to see whether pupils gave evidence to suggest that their country is a contested issue and, if so, what essential reasons were given for this (see Appendix D). An assessment was also made of whether pupils gave any overall evaluation of their country in generally positive, negative or balanced terms (see Appendix E). Finally, a list of positive features (Appendix F) and negative features (Appendix G) of the country were generated and how frequently they were mentioned. This generated data which allowed us to look for differences between the responses of Protestant and Catholic pupils, differences between contact and non-contact groups, and differences over time.

## 2 The Capital of 'My Country'

Once they had completed their essays pupils were asked to answer a series of open ended questions. One asked pupils 'What is the capital city of your country?' The following responses were given:

### Percentages of Pupils Naming their Capital City

|         | Protestant (n=151) | Catholic (n=303) | Before (n=251) | After (n=203) |
|---------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Dublin  | 15                 | 61               | 43             | 49            |
| Belfast | 80                 | 18               | 38             | 39            |
| London  | 1                  | 2                | 1              | 3             |
| Other   | 2                  | 14               | 13             | 5             |
| None    | 2                  | 5                | 4              | 4             |
| Totals  | 100                | 100              | 100            | 100           |

This supports earlier work which suggests that Protestant children identify Belfast as their capital, and Catholic children identify Dublin.

Linked to the evidence from the 'My Country' essays it suggests that both Protestant and Catholic pupils had less uncertainty about identifying their capital city, than they had in labelling their country. **It indicates that there are a number of Protestant pupils who are comfortable in calling their country Ireland, but see its capital as Belfast. There are also a number of Catholic pupils who identify their country as Northern Ireland, but see Dublin as the capital city of their country. This suggests that 12 year-olds are quite capable of living with ambiguity and contradictions which some adults might consider to be logically inconsistent.**

**Neither the 'My Country' essays, nor the Capital City question, provided any evidence to suggest that pupils' identities, in terms of national allegiance, were eroded by the history programme or the experience of inter school contact. Indeed, there is a suggestion that after the experience of contact some Protestant pupils had either, become aware that labelling is a complex issue, or had clarified how they wish to label their country.** We would hope that both these could be interpreted as positive experiences for the pupils concerned. If this is the case then we feel it is helpful to the process of mutual understanding, since understanding the position of others is also about clarifying where you, yourself stand.

## AWARENESS OF THE 'OTHER' COMMUNITY

Given that part of the programme brought Protestant and Catholic children together we wished to see if there was some indirect way of detecting whether pupils became more aware of the 'other' community, and whether this was different for contact and non-contact groups. Two questions were related to this and these are now described.

### 1 The Surnames Question

An initial part of the history programme involved an introductory research exercise for pupils. All pupils carried out a survey of surnames in their area. Each school drew up a list of the most common names. These were then circulated to the other schools so that a more comprehensive picture was built up. Given that most people in Northern Ireland are adept at associating a person's name with their religion or cultural background, we were interested to see what preconceived ideas children had about surnames and whether these preconceptions were at all affected by the research exercise.

Pupils were asked to state the three most common surnames in Strabane. The question generated over a

hundred different surnames. Each time a surname was mentioned it was given a point. Four lists of names were generated - the top five names mentioned most frequently by Protestant and Catholic pupils are listed for before and after the research was carried out.

**Pupils' Perceptions of Most Common Surnames**

| Protestant | | Catholic | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Before* | *After* | *Before* | *After* |
| | | | |
| Smith | Smith | Doherty | Doherty |
| Doherty | Doherty | Kelly | McLoughlin |
| Hamilton | Robinson | McLoughlin | Kelly |
| Kee | Hamilton | McGarrigle | Gallagher |
| Robinson | Kee | O'Neill | McGarrigle |

Apart from the name Doherty which is very common in the area, it was noticeable that one had to look a good way down the different lists before names commonly associated with the other tradition were reached. Pupils perceptions of the most common surnames in Strabane remained remarkably fixed over time. Even though they completed a common research exercise with shared data most pupils remain convinced that the most common names in Strabane are names associated with their own religious or cultural identity - clearly both cannot be right.

**2 The Schools Question**

Pupils were asked to make a list of all the schools in Strabane. The data was then organised to see how many pupils from controlled schools named maintained schools, and vice versa. The contact and non-contact groups were compared to see if their awareness of the schools changed over the time the programme operated.

It was found that the Protestant pupils' awareness of the Catholic post-primary schools increased over time, whilst the Catholic pupils' awareness of Protestant post-primary schools declined. This suggests the process was a differential one - Protestant contact groups became more aware that the maintained schools exist, whilst the Catholic contact groups' awareness of the controlled schools declined (Figures 4.2 and 4.3):

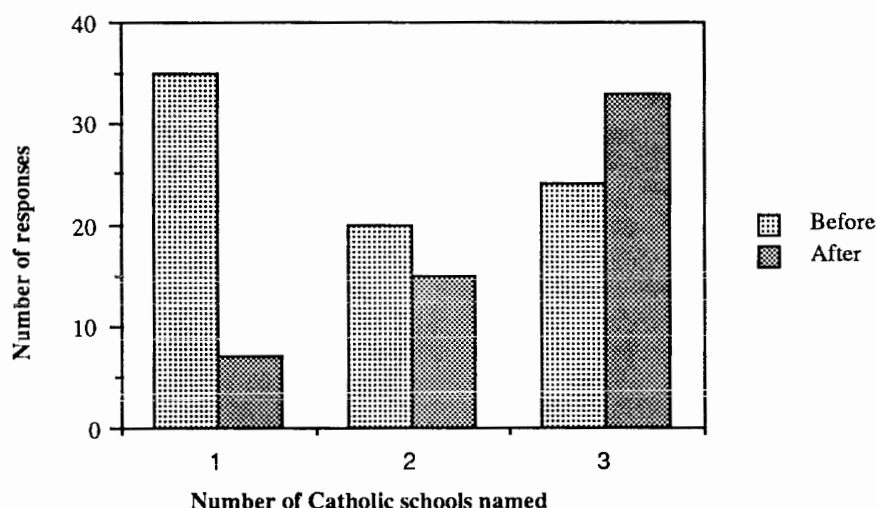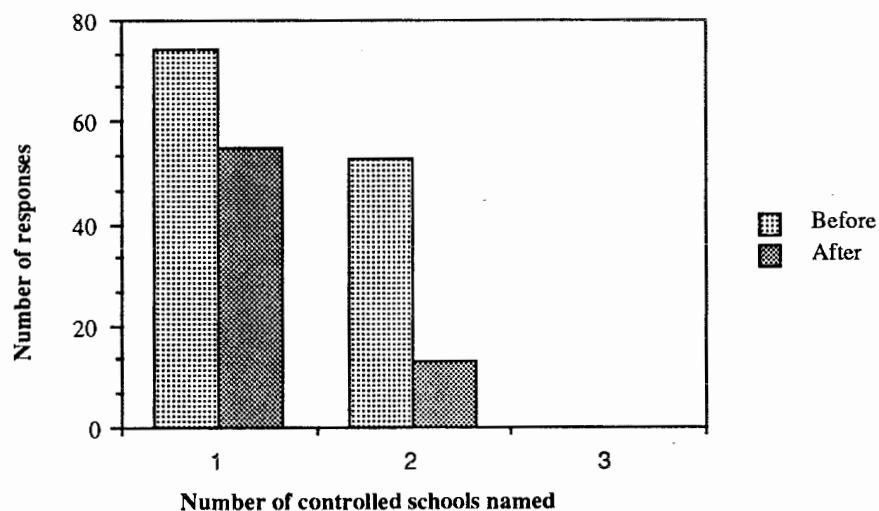**Figure 4.1: Change in controlled pupils' knowledge of Catholic post-primary schools**



**Figure 4.2: Change in Catholic pupils' knowledge of controlled post-primary schools**



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Responses to these questions suggest two things. **First, that even when a programme contains a feature which encourages pupils to draw from an 'objective' pool of knowledge, they are still influenced by the perceptions commonly held within their own cultural group. Second, when a contact programme is organised the ratio of pupils from each tradition appears to be an important consideration.** Once certain limits are exceeded it seems that the minority group become more acutely aware of the majority group than vice versa. A majority/minority ratio of 70/30 appeared to produce this effect in Strabane.

## UNDERSTANDING AND 'UNCERTAINTY'

The rest of the questions which pupils answered bore some relation to history or the programme they studied. Some of these were concerned with pupils' ideas about the importance of History, reasons for emigration from Ireland, pupils' sense of 'time', and their definitions of the term 'Plantation'. These provided evidence that pupils had picked up some of the historical concepts which teachers had hoped the history programme would convey. The results to these questions are given in Appendix H. However, two questions gave interesting results because they suggested that the historical material which pupils had studied may have encouraged them to adopt a more questioning attitude about Ireland and the settler groups which are part of its history. These two questions are now discussed.

### 1 The Native People of Ireland

The history programme looked at different groups which had settled in Ireland from earliest times, through Celts, Vikings, Normans, organised Plantations, Scots, Hugenots, Quakers, Palatines and more recent immigrants. We were therefore posing a dilemma for pupils by asking them to say who are the native people of Ireland. Does the question mean who were the very first group of settlers? Does it mean which group from all those who have settled have had most influence on the country? Does it mean which ancestral group has left its descendants most ownership rights to the country? The programme had clearly raised the issue that the notion of a 'native' person is by no means a simple one, perhaps people of many origins can come to think of themselves as native of the same country. We wished to see whether pupils chose to identify a particular settler group, or number of groups, as 'native', and whether over time there was evidence that pupils became more suspicious of the term 'native'.

Responses to this question initially look confusing. A few pupils named more than one of the groups they had studied as part of the history programme, but most opted to select one of the settler groups. The top five answers were ranked in order. When we contrasted the responses of Protestants with Catholics, before and after the results proved interesting.

### Who are the native people of Ireland?
#### Percentage of pupils' giving the top five answers

| Protestant | | Catholic | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Before* (n=87) | *After* (n=64) | *Before* (n=164) | *After* (n=139) |
| Normans 18 | Dont know 22 | Celts 53 | Celts 38 |
| Dont know 17 | Irish 20 | Dont know 10 | Vikings 17 |
| Stone Age 16 | Celts 18 | Irish 7 | Irish 14 |
| Celts 12 | Scots 16 | Vikings 7 | Stone Age 9 |
| Vikings 8 | Vikings 8 | Stone Age 6 | Normans 7 |

The effect over time seems to have dissuaded Protestant pupils that the Normans are the native people of Ireland, with most no longer knowing who to put. Perhaps this suggests that the programme has had some effect in raising doubt in pupils' minds about what is meant by 'native'. After the programme some of the Protestant pupils' have used the more generic term 'Irish' for the native people of Ireland, where they previously did not.

Most Catholic pupils continue to identify the Celts as the native people of Ireland, although a smaller percentage think this after the programme. Use of the more generic term 'Irish' has increased and more Catholic pupils have identified the Normans native.

**Taken together it could be argued that the results show some form of reciprocal process at work where both cultural groups provide evidence that some of its members were either:**
**(a) willing to acknowledge the possibility that settler groups, other than the one usually associated with their own tradition, may have a claim to be native or,**
**(b) sought to identify a more common, generic term for those presently living in the country.**
**Both these movements could be interpreted as 'signals across the divide' that attempts at understanding 'the other' position are being made.**

### 2 Which Settlers had the Most Influence?

At the end of the programme 105 pupils from the contact groups completed evaluation sheets. Amongst other things, pupils were asked to state which of the groups studied have had most influence on Ireland.

The most influencial settlers from the Protestant pupils' point of view were the Celts. The main reasons given were the introduction of agriculture, e.g *"because they brought more idea of farming and how to make houses"*, and the similarity in language, *"because they had a language similar to ours"*. The Vikings and Normans were also seen as influential by the Protestant pupils. The Vikings mainly for their warlike qualities, e.g. *"Because they are violent and they hate other religions"*; *"Because there is still fighting, killing and stealing going on today"*. The Normans *"because of*

*the way they could organise themslefs and they were christians"*; *"Because they showed us how to farm and be peaceful with each other"*. Fewer pupils mentioned the Plantation period, usually by referring to the English who *"gave us the English language"*; *"brought over towns"*; *"brought Protestantisiam in and a lot of the people in N. Ireland today are Protestants"*; *"started the plantions which brought in the split between N. Ireland and Eire"*.

From the Catholic pupils' point of view the most influential settlers were the Vikings who were *"very strong and fighting people and had a big influence over the people of Ireland"*; *"because there is so much the vikings taught us, like standing up for ourselves and of course hygene"*. Catholic pupils saw the Normans almost as influential *"Because we would still be speaking Irish although I would have liked to speak Irish"*; *"because it was them that brought over the English Nationality"*; *"because they made the Penal laws and the Irish took on some of there ways"*; *"because if the Normans hadn't come to Ireland the English wouidn't be ruling Co Tyrone today"*.

More Catholic than Protestant pupils mentioned more than one group or suggested that all the settlers have had an influence because *"They all taught the Irish different skills and trades. Each group of people taught the Irish different skills"*; or *"because they all came to start fights with others"*.

The responses are summarised in the following table:

**Percentage of pupils identifying particular settlers as influential**

|  | Protestant | Catholic |
|---|---|---|
| Stone Age | 3 | 10 |
| Celts | 34 | 9 |
| Vikings | 21 | 23 |
| Normans | 21 | 21 |
| Plantations | 14 | 6 |
| All Had | 7 | 17 |
| Other or none | 0 | 14 |
| Totals | 100 | 100 |

Both questions about settler groups show differences before and after the programme. These differences suggest three things. **Firstly**, there is evidence that some pupils became less certain about their previous answers to questions about the settler groups, with a number of them changing their responses as a consequence of the programme. **Secondly**, there is evidence that some pupils became more suspicious of terms, such as 'native', either finding it more difficult to respond to the question about native people (by responding 'don't know'), or by looking for a more complex answer than

simply choosing a single settler group as native or most influential (by responding 'all of them'; using a more generic term like 'Irish' rather than one settler group name; or by naming more that one settler group as equally influential). This suggests that uncertainty and changes in response are evidence of pupils becoming more critical and aware of the complex issues involved in the study of Ireland's settler groups. **Thirdly**, many pupil comments about the influence of various settler groups provide evidence that they have drawn on information from the course (e.g. about the characteristics of different settlers) and applied this knowledge to make some sense of the way Northern Ireland is today.

**All three of these suggest that study of the joint history programme generated a certain amount of uncertainty in pupils' minds which may have been crucial in encouraging them to develop an 'understanding' of the complexity of inter-group relations in Northern Ireland. Pupils provided evidence that they are able to tolerate ambiguity, so we are not suggesting that the generation of uncertainty is about creating confusion. Rather it seems to be a step in the learning process, on the road toward critical thinking.**

## PUPILS' OWN COMMENTS

When pupils were asked to complete evaluation sheets at the end of the programme they were asked what they enjoyed most about the course; what they disliked most about the course; and what they felt about working with pupils from the other schools. The responses to these are now described:

### 1 Which Part of the Course did Pupils Enjoy Most?

There was overwhelming agreement between Protestant and Catholic pupils that the most enjoyable part of the course had been the trips and site visits because *"it was very good fun and was educational"*; *"Because we were learning new things about our country and because I made lots of new friends on trips and it was good crack meeting them all"*; *"Meeting new people, finding out about our past and learning to mix with other religions"*; *"Because lots of people think there is a difference between Catholic and Protestant and going on those trips and meeting people from the other religion I have proven to myself that there isn't"*.

The residential visit to Dublin was picked out for particular mention by 30% of Protestant and 20% of Catholic pupils, e.g *"Because we were able to see a real viking village and we were able to see Newgrange"*; *"Because it was good sleeping away from home"*.

Nearly a quarter of the Catholic pupils also picked out a particular section of the course, usually because they enjoyed the way it was taught. There was no evidence to support the view that pupils who enjoyed the study of

a particular settler group then saw that group as the most influential on Ireland. Pupil responses are summarised in the following table:

### Percentage of pupils who enjoyed different parts of the history course

|                    | Protestant | Catholic |
|--------------------|------------|----------|
| Trips              | 94         | 72       |
| Project work       | 2          | 2        |
| Particular section | 1          | 23       |
| All of it          | 2          | 1        |
| No reply           | 1          | 2        |
| Totals             | 100        | 100      |

## 2 Which Parts of the Course Did Pupils Not Enjoy?

A third of Protestant and Catholic pupils identified classwork as the least enjoyable aspect of the course *"because it was boring and I did not like it"*; *"because we write too much I get a sore hand"*; *"Because the teacher wouldn't stop mouthing on about them Normans"*. Some pupils drew attention to the difficulty they had with questions in the course book, *"They were hard to understand with all these fancy words and very hard to answer too"*; *"I hate them questions and you don't learn anything from them"*.

A number of pupils mentioned part of the course which studied a particular group of settlers, noticeably the Plantations because *"I couldn't understand them very well"*; *"because you can't remember half the people"*. One class stood out as enjoying the Normans least but this was *"because a different teacher was teaching us"*. Responses to this question are summarised below:

### Percentage of pupils who did not enjoy parts of the history course

|                     | Protestant | Catholic |
|---------------------|------------|----------|
| Classwork           | 34         | 32       |
| Particular section  | 15         | 26       |
| Answering questions | 1          | 4        |
| Homework            | 3          | 7        |
| Writing             | 3          | 4        |
| Liked all of it     | 6          | 9        |
| No reply            | 38         | 18       |
| Totals              | 100        | 100      |

## 3 What Did Pupils Think About Meeting the Other Schools?

The frequent comments about the value of contact fell into three broad categories. **Firstly, the opportunity it gave to make friends,** *"I think its brillrant meeting other schools because you make more friends. Yes it is important to mix"*; *"Pupils from other schools are great, because you can make friends with them, and see them again, and sometimes they might meet you somewhere, and they would know who you are"*. **Secondly, were comments which recognised a community relations value in contact,** *"Meeting other children of the same age and different religion gave me a sense of friendlyness. I found out things that I hadn't thought of before"*; *"I think it is important not to have any religion or colour barriers between us at this early stage in our life. I thoroughly enjoyed it and have made new protestant friends through it"*; *"I do think it was important because it taught us to get on with prods"*; *"I like meeting catholicks and I think mixing the two religions is very good and when we are older we could discuss are differences"*; *"yes because later in life you might be working with protests and you have to learn to except them"*; *"I think it is important because we need to meet people of different religions to bridge the gap of violence. In other words to stop the troubles"*. **Thirdly, were comments which simply saw value in people mixing,** *"because we were able to mix with them and ask all sorts of questions"*; *"because we got to learn all about them, we mixed with them and even asked them questions and talked to them"*; *"I think this is important to associate with other schools, because out off school we fight and call each other names"*.

Some pupils made a specific link between the contact and the history course they studied, *"I think it is a good idea....we find out what they thought about the coarse"*; *"If we are going to know about our ancestors we should at least know the people around us. I enjoyed it a great deal"*; *"I think it was important because it helped us to see that we are all people but have different ways, just as the Vikings had different ways of living than the Irish"*.

A higher percentage of Protestant (16%) than Catholic (4%) pupils felt that the contact with other schools had made them feel awkward, embarrassed or was not important, *"because other people didn't like you"*; *"Well I thought it was alright and I made some friends but some people were ignorant"*; *"I thought it was hard to make friends with them because they came from the other area"*; *"It has been enjoyable and a bit embarresing at the same time but I have got alot more friends now"*; *"I liked meeting people because we shared jokes and sweets. But I don't think it was important"*. It is not clear whether this is related to feeling 'outnumbered' by the larger numbers of Catholic pupils involved in the programme, but suggests that some consideration should be given to the equality of representation from

the different traditions as part of future contacts.
Responses to this question are summarised below:

**Percentages of pupils comments on value of contact**

|  | Protestant | Catholic |
|---|---|---|
| Making friends | 34 | 24 |
| Community relations important | 24 | 27 |
| Meeting other people | 19 | 21 |
| Felt embarrassed or awkward | 11 | 3 |
| Not important | 5 | 1 |
| No reply | 7 | 24 |
| Totals | 100 | 100 |

## EVALUATING SELF-ESTEEM IN LIMAVADY

The participation of approximately a hundred P7 children in a six-week series of workshops in Limavady provided us with the opportunity of investigating whether the programme had any impact on pupils self-esteem. This was done using an instrument developed by Harter (1985) and involved a questionnaire, 'Self-Perception Profile for Children'. This asks children to identify with certain traits or characteristics on a four point scale. Questions are grouped to define self-esteem in six dimensions, Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptence, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioural Conduct, and Global Self-worth.

The questionnaire was given to the contact class in each school. Questionnaires were also given to two other classes who were not part of the programme to establish control groups. Questionnaires were completed before and after the programme. We were therefore interested in differences in self-esteem between Protestant and Catholic pupils, between contact and non-contact pupils, and whether this changed over time (2 months) for any of these groups.

The results revealed significant differences between the sexes in Athletic Competence (.009) and Behavioural Conduct (.010). However, these were unrelated to the variables we were looking at, and no significant differences were found between groups by religion, contact or over time.

This does not suggest that the programme had no impact in terms of EMU aims. There are many limitations in using this sort of instrument in relation to EMU programmes. **Firstly,** although many practitioners assume a link between high self-esteem and positive inter-group attitudes, the research evidence is less clear on the relationship between these. **Secondly,** when we look at the whole programme 'Myself and Others' it is clear that only a relatively few of the activities were specifically designed to improve self esteem. Other specific aims included improving communication skills, encouraging co-operation and, listening to others. Perhaps a less specific instrument, such as the 'Acceptance of Others' questionnaire developed by Fey (1955), might have given a different picture. So, other conflict or prejudice-reducing effects of the programme would not have been picked up by the instrument used. **Thirdly,** it may be unrealistic to expect any significant change in self-esteem over the, relatively short, two-month period which the programme operated. Certainly the general comments made by Limavady pupils about the value of meeting others was broadly in line with those already described for Strabane pupils, so **we would sound a cautionary note about the results of quantitative instruments which are not contextualised by qualitative information.**

## SUMMARY

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT FROM THIS?

The term, Education for Mutual Understanding, has at least three notions bound up in one. **First**, it is to do with **education**, not just in the sense of acquiring knowledge, but also in the sense of **learning** how such knowledge can influence the way we see and relate to each other. **Second**, EMU contains the notion of **mutuality**, that is that there should be some **reciprocal process** at work, that the processes which are operating between pupils are not unidirectional. **Third**, EMU is to do with **understanding**. It seeks to create a climate which encourages Protestant and Catholic pupils to use the knowledge they have acquired to help form their own, informed opinions about inter-group relations in Northern Ireland. But it is also about **seeing someone else's point of view even if you cannot agree with it**.

Our attempts to evaluate the impact which the study of a common history programme had on pupils focused on three aspects of their experience. First, it looked at the influence which the programme may have had on pupils' sense of national or cultural identity. Second, it looked at the extent to which pupils became more aware of the other community in their area, how important they saw the contact between them. Third, it explored the sort of knowledge pupils picked up from the programme and how they did or did not use this to support views expressed about their country, its past and the way it is today.

These three aspects of our evaluation do not map neatly on to the dimensions we have identified in Education for Mutual Understanding. However, our findings do allow us to say something about the effect of contact as part of an EMU programme. We have therefore summarised our conclusions under three separate heads, Education?, Mutual?, and Understanding?

### 1 Education?

**Firstly, the evaluation does suggest that EMU's primary thrust for teachers is education in its critical sense.** That is, education in the sense that pupils provided evidence that their knowledge of history had increased through the programme; they became knowledgeable about different settler groups in Ireland; were able to talk about their characteristics; had some sense of when and why they came; became familiar with historical terms such as Plantation. Pupils also provided evidence of relating this knowledge to an understanding of why Ireland is the way it is today. This was particularly evident in statements from pupils when asked to comment on the influence of different settler groups.

**Secondly, the evaluation provided evidence that the programme did not have any significant influence on the different labels which Protestant and Catholic pupils traditionally use to identify their country, and from this we infer that the programme did nothing to erode Catholic and Protestant childrens' respective senses of national or cultural identity. Indeed, there was some evidence to support the view that the experience of contact may have encouraged the minority group (in this case Protestant pupils) to clarify their national allegiance.** This was particularly evident in the analysis of the 'My Country' essays and the question on the capital city. This is an important finding because the programme did not set out to achieve any of these things, that is to dilute any sense of national or cultural identity already held by pupils. This should be reassuring to those who may be suspicious that the primary thrust of EMU is political proselytisation rather than educational practice. Our findings suggest that, even were this the case, its impact would be limited by the influence of more potent social processes external to the school.

### 2 Mutual?

There is evidence from pupils' comments that they were aware of studying a common programme, saw contact as important, and appreciated that one of the reasons behind it was a community relations dimension. However, the section on surnames suggested that, **even when exercises designed to generate a common data base are included, pupils are still likely to base their perceptions on their preconceived beliefs.** This points up the limitations of programmes which are educationally-based. Nevertheless, **there was evidence of some form of reciprocal process taking place on an inter-group basis**, whereby individuals within cultural groups 'sent out signals' that they were willing to entertain notions not normally associated with their own cultural tradition (this came across most powerfully in the analysis concerning the native people of Ireland).

**The findings are not so clear on how important symmetry is to achieving mutuality.** There were some indications that an imbalance between the number of Protestant and Catholic children participating may lead to a less positive experience for the minority group (see for example, some comments made by Protestant pupils about the value of contact). There was also some evidence to suggest that a lack of symmetry may lead to the situation where the minority group becomes more aware of the majority group than vice versa (see for example, the differential awareness of other schools between Protestant and Catholic pupils over time). On the other hand, the experience of clarifying their national allegiance could be interpreted as a positive outcome for Protestant contact pupils. **This suggests that the dynamics and prerequisites of what constitutes 'mutuality' is a question worth pursuing.**

### 3 Understanding?

EMU seeks not only to promote knowledge and a sense of mutuality, but also that the interplay of these will generate greater understanding of the other cultural group. The evidence is not so clear about the extent to which the programme helped Protestant pupils became more sensitive to the way Catholic pupils view the world, and vice versa. Some of the comments by pupils about the value of contact suggest it raised questions they had not considered before, but do not clarify what these questions might be. Class discussion which took place toward the end of the programme about the way people respond to immigrant groups may have proved revealing, but the researchers were not privy to these. Other comments by pupils suggested that the experience of contact affirmed for them that they are all fundamentally the same, yet the findings on national allegiance indicate that substantial differences do exist between Catholic and Protestant children in this area. **It is therefore important that EMU programmes recognise that the the understanding they seek need not be a consensus or agreed view held by all pupils.** Any understanding pupils acquire will reflect that they have much to share in common, but they retain the right to maintain separate and distinctive views on certain issues.

**Our study suggests that it is reasonable to expect that contact programmes will do little to erode the aspect of pupils' identity which is to do with national allegiance, but may encourage pupils to become more aware of the 'other community', provided the majority/minority demography is acknowledged sensitively. Most importantly, it is crucial to have realistic expectations of what sort of 'understanding' may emerge from the contact experience. Such understanding is unlikely to be manifested by pupils having sudden insight into what it is like to be a member of the 'other community', so that they no longer perceive relationships between the two communities in Northern Ireland to be problematic. It is much more likely that the experience of contact, particularly if it has explored issues relevant to our history, can best hope to encourage a more critical attitude in pupils. This may manifest itself by pupils questionning 'accepted versions' within their own community, but weighing the evidence and arriving at their own view, accepting that a reaffirmation of their own cultural group's version is as legitimate an outcome as a rejection. We have suggested that one aspect of this may be that pupils provide evidence of 'uncertainty' where previously issues had seemed simple and clear cut. The emergence of 'uncertainty' need not be about the creation of confusion. It can be seen as an indication that pupils are becoming more aware of the complex nature of social relationships and a move away from simple 'them' and 'us' versions of Northern Ireland society.**

### APPROACHES TO EVALUATION

Any single study, including this one, cannot hope to provide a comprehensive picture of the impact which particular contact programmes have on children. For practical reasons decisions have to be made about how the evaluation will proceed, what sort of methods will be used and these decisions are made in the light of the resources available. We feel the information gathered has provided useful insight into the way pupils experienced this programme. Where possible we have allowed the pupils' own words to speak for themselves. Nevertheless our approach has also pointed up some of the limitations of evaluative approaches which are overly reliant on a single method (the Limavady questionnaire is a good example of this). In such cases it is impossible to capture what some researchers have called the 'texture of reality'. When this is missing important dimensions are inevitably missed. We feel that there is plenty of room for the precision associated with quantitative approaches to be complemented by the feel for a situation which qualitative approaches can provide. The difficulty often lies in marrying the two in one study.

### A ROLE FOR TEACHERS?

Given that there will be no formal assessment of EMU as part of the school curriculum we feel it is doubly important that we continue to explore avenues which give us some insight into the impact of contact programmes on children. There is certainly room for more ethnographic and biographical study. Often the difficulty with these is access or the time involved in looking at pupils' experience in a longitudinal way. However, teachers themselves are ideally positioned to overcome both these difficulties. With a growing responsibility for work in this area we would hope that they too would have a concern to find ways of monitoring the effects of educational practice in EMU. It may be possible that teachers can find ways of building monitoring techniques into the programmes which they design.

# TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter is derived from field notes, conversations, interviews and group meetings with teachers during the lifetime of the project. Semi-structured interviews were also carried out with teachers in Strabane midway through and toward the end of the project, and on occasions tape recordings were made of group meetings which took place to review contact programmes operating between the schools. Interviews also involved teachers who were not involved in the project thereby increasing the likelihood that the views of those not necessarily sympathetic to inter school contact could be included. The views of teachers are also placed in a wider context, where appropriate, by reference to a survey carried out by the Field Officer (Bullick, 1990). This survey involved a substantial questionnaire sent to all 254 schools in the Western Board area to which 65% of schools responded. The questionnaire was mainly completed by Principals and concerned the support they had received, and other issues pertaining to EMU and inter school contact.

We were interested to see whether teachers' perceptions of inter school contact had changed during the course of the project, what benefits they had derived from their involvement, what concerns or difficulties they identified and, more recently, how they viewed impending changes which give EMU a more prominent place within the curriculum.

## CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

When the project first began, it took note of earlier work which suggested that the development of inter school contact was likely to be dependent on the involvement of teachers who are particularly committed to cross community work. There is undoubtedly much to be said for the quality of work which can be generated by those who enthusiatically volunteer to become involved in inter school work. Motivation is not a problem and such people are more likely to devote time and energy to making their initiatives work. When we first approached schools in 1986 we requested schools to identify teachers who might be receptive to work involving cross community contact. This brought together a group of teachers from primary and post-primary schools who were both enthusiastic and committed. Whilst a number of worthwhile contacts emerged from this it soon became clear that there were

certain problems with the approach. The contact activities which took place in the initial phase still tended to be relatively isolated events and peripheral to the curriculum. Teachers had little else in common to structure contact around beyond their own commitment to the improvement of cross community relations. Bearing in mind that one of the project's aims was to see whether links of an enduring nature could be generated, a decision was made to develop a more structured approach. This meant that consequent invitations to teachers were based on which year-group they taught in the primary school or subject area they were teaching in the post-primary schools. Therefore the teachers who became involved subsequent to this change in direction could not simply be described as enthusiastic volunteers. Some shifts in attitudes to the programme were reported by teachers. One said the initial impression was *"a feeling that we were being put upon"*, and another, *"I had early reservations, now I believe it might play a bigger part than I thought at first"*. A number of teachers felt that early expectations had been over ambitious and that too much was being imposed on staff, but these concerns seem to have subsided as teachers began to exert more control over pace and direction.

*"The programme is now manageable - too much was expected at the outset"*

*"Prior to the project I had not any real idea what the other schools were like. I assumed they were similar. Having got into this I have seen a wide variety of styles, for example, in management"*

*"Staff felt the workload was too much initially, now it is fine"*

**Interviews of teachers involved with the programme from the outset suggest that attitudes to the work have moved in two ways at the same time. Firstly, teachers have become less sceptical of the value or importance of the work** e.g., *"I now feel that teachers have a relationship of growing importance to carry over to the children"*. It seems that creating a situation where teachers are trying out contact and learning from actually doing it is much more conducive to attitudinal change than intellectual arguments or moral exhortation. A case of change in behaviour being the forerunner of attitudinal change, rather than the other way round. **Secondly, teachers have become more sensitive to the**

difficulties and limitations of the work e.g., *"we still have much to try and adjust as we learn, but progress has been made already"*. Shifts in attitude are evidenced by statements, such as *"I have very vague feelings that it seemed like a good idea"*, to *"Contact with other schools is valuable in its own right. I doubt its long-term effects on the community, but if it helps one child to break out of the ghetto mentality then it has been worth it"*. Involvement seems to have allowed teachers simultaneously to develop a positive attitude toward EMU whilst becoming more openly critical of what it can achieve. **This suggests that developing a positive attitude and expressing sharper criticism are not the incompatable changes in attitude one might think.** On the contrary, fairly uncritical involvement in any area of work tends to suggest that a certain amount of self-delusion or tokenism is taking place. EMU's prominence is still relatively recent. **Because its language is reconciliatory there may be a natural reticence to express criticism for fear of being regarded as extreme. Yet paradoxically, some of EMU's most ardent practitioners are those who feel most comfortable about pointing out its limitations.** As EMU develops, and more practitioners become involved, we would expect this trend to continue.

In the wider context Bullick's survey of all schools in the Western Board area suggests that teachers' awareness of EMU has considerably increased with 85% of respondents indicating they have been aware of EMU for the past two years and 45% percent claiming to be aware of the work which EMU involves for the past four years. This was in part attributed to the Board giving inter school contact a higher profile and providing a presence on the ground through the appointment of a Field Officer. However, awareness of EMU has also been heightened through publications sent to schools with 63% of respondents having read the EMU Guide (NICED, 1988), 56% the cross-curricular Working Group Report on EMU (DENI, 1989), and 72% the Cross-Curricular Themes Consultation Report (NICC, 1990). Interestingly 18% of respondents indicated that they had initially become aware of EMU through the media, indicating the special interest which EMU has for the wider community.

**Bullick's survey suggests that a fairly receptive climate currently exists for the further development of EMU with 68% of respondents convinced of the value of EMU, 16% having no strong feelings either way, and 13% remaining to be convinced.** An interesting aspect was that a number of the project schools featured in the group which remained to be convinced of the impact which EMU can have on community relations. A possible explanation is that intense involvement through the project has magnified the complexities which these schools now see. Perhaps, too, the schools have had to think harder about what can be achieved to improve community relations through education, in stark relief to the apparent intractable

conflict which exists. Some activists suggest a 'burn out' factor may come into play in this type of work where expectations are initially high yet results are difficult to discern.

## THE VALUE OF CONTACT ?

Interviews revealed that most of the Strabane teachers felt that the benefits of contact between pupils *"were not easily quantifiable - for the first time children are mixing with non Catholics - a high proportion come from one hundred percent segregated estates"*. Some suggested that it is more realistic to think that *"seeds are being sown for better relationships which may bear fruit in the future"*, or *"Meetings are valuable. If they are enjoyable and interesting, later in the teens, if they are in a confrontation, they might think back to meeting and appreciate the good and positive thinking towards another religion, class and culture"*.

**The most commonly mentioned benefits from contact concerned new relationships with staff from the other schools.**

*"I would now call into the Convent. If there was something I needed I would not hestitate because co-operation has now improved. When I first went to one of the maintained schools I would have been aware of the religious pictures etc. Now this is not so obvious - I've got to know the school and it's now a school as opposed to a Catholic school. The same might also happen with the children, hopefully"*

*"Staff have developed closer relationships with the staff of each others' schools. Three-school planning now takes place between Principals with meetings together and a well-established pattern"*

*"Teachers have developed good relations between them, learning not to jump in with both feet"*

*"Inspectors to the school have noted changes, a more open approach with improved communication within the school"*

*"It breaks the rut. It's refreshing and enjoyable working in a team and the input of new ideas adds richness"*

*"It adds to the tone of the school, the tenor, contributing to mutual understanding and relations between staff"*

The interviews with teachers showed that a number perceive EMU to be largely about 'friendships'. The majority of teachers referred to this when asked to suggest what indications they could give that the contact programmes were having a beneficial effect on children.

*"Maybe my expectations are too high. From what I can see on trips, I have not seen happening what I was*

*looking to see happening, that is, friendships developing even on a very small scale."*

*"No friendships appear to have been struck up over the three years"*

*"On an outing a child from an extreme end said to me, 'I made a friend from the County primary school today'"*

*"It is not enough to form friendships"*

A preoccupation with friendship as an indicator of 'success' seems to be prominent in teachers' minds, particularly in the primary schools. **It implies that the development of tolerance and respect for others' views is dependent upon, or evidenced by friendships being formed, yet need this be the case? Whilst friendship may be helpful, we are unconvinced it is essential in developing understanding and insight into the way another person thinks or feels.**

## CONCERNS AND DIFFICULTIES

Teachers raised a number of issues during the interviews and these are summarised below:

### 1 Demography

A common comment highlighted some of the feelings which arise when contacts are being established within a community where one tradition is in the majority.

*"Here the Protestant side is overwhelmed. The ghetto is back to front - untypical. We can't gain enough from it in Strabane. I could see them saying the Catholics have it all their own way"*

*"The target area was wrong, another controlled school is needed"*

Practical problems obviously arise when symmetry in numbers does not exist and this limits the extent to which work through the schools is reinforced by experience in the community.

*"There is not much potential for continuity because Protestants are in the rural districts of the area"*

Existing pressure on the minority may lead to caution and the feeling that there is a reluctance to engage with the majority.

*"The number of Protestant pupils coming to the Catholic school diminished over time"*

Yet despite what many teachers see as an unfavourable demographic climate the schools have still been able to generate substantial contact programmes and a few teachers suggested that **the very existence of a major-**

**ity/minority pattern can have a positive effect in sensitising the majority community to minority concerns.**

*"At first we thought there was resistance from the controlled side, but now we see how they have a different situation to work with. The controlled school is more subject to parental influence and power, there are pressures from different churches and the political views of other staff may have been at play"*

*"We didn't want EMU to appear as a cultural invasion into their background"*

### 2 Parents

Opinions varied on the extent to which parents had been kept up to date with developments, although the results of a parental survey reported later suggest that the schools have been uniformly successful in communicating with parents about contact programmes. There was some suggestion that the controlled school relied on more formal communications to parents and maintained schools relied on a less formal grapevine.

*"Parents were always informed. We have taken it on as part of the school process with an 'opt out' option for parents"*

*"Parental contact has been weak. They have not been given a clear picture of what it is apart from the booklet. This is partly because we are not sure of what parents may think. One or two might think it is a sellout. However, the play went excellently and has opened up the school to more of their people and only good can come of that"*

*"Not one parent has approached me with negative attitudes"*

Teachers in both types of school clearly carried the notion that the body of parents in controlled schools was characteristically different from the body of parents in maintained schools. Most of this is supposition, but the general tenor was that the parents in maintained schools are a fairly homogeneous group and the Catholic tradition they shared with the school meant that a certain amount of support could be taken for granted. **Parents in controlled schools were seen as a more heterogenous group which means that consensus is less likely to exist, leaving school policies vulnerable to dissention from vocal minorities.**

*"In most State schools parents resist indoctrination, that is challenges to their own point of view, in other words education must perpetuate the myth"*

It was suggested that other factors come into play when parents are considering whether they wish their child to visit the other schools.

*"Their parents have reservations about letting the children into our area. There is a class factor. One group is going up in the world, one group sees itself going down"*

There was general agreement between teachers that lines of communication between the school and the home could be improved.

*"We need more consultation with parents. If they are not involved then education is limited in achieving anything"*

Some teachers suggested that communication with the home should be extended to include greater parental involvement in EMU-related activities.

*"I think if there was something to involve parents ... it would be difficult. When parents see how well the children behave, if they met parents from the other schools, it might be that a more sympathetic attitude is adopted towards people from different parts, but this is very delicate. Perhaps parents could be used in super-vision. A sympathetic parent, for example, could come along on trips, begin like that. Parents with expertise might be used and involved in a fishing trip, crafts or a project of some kind"*

## 3 Workload and Staffing

There is natural concern amongst teachers that involve-ment in contact as part of EMU will impose an extra workload for planning, in organisation and in the time involved in contact itself. Interviews suggested that, whilst contact is seen as valuable, it is not fully inte-grated in teachers' minds with what they regard their 'normal' work to be. It is still perceived as different and distinct.

*"There is extra work on teachers, and assessment for the National Curriculum makes this work feel like an extra burden"*

Concern was expressed too about the disruptive aspect which contact activities introduce to the traditional school day.

*"I have heard complaints about the number of people leaving school on the days of EMU activity resulting in loss of teaching time"*

**The contact aspect of EMU makes it quite different from the way most teaching takes place and there-fore susceptible to the notion that it is not 'real' teaching, but a sojourn into some other type of activity. If teachers perceive it this way then there is little prospect of EMU being fully integrated into the curriculum.**

Another issue was a reservation whether the educational authorities were being realistic about the amount of teacher cover which would be required if all schools seriously took on board the notion of building linked programmes between different year groups.

*"There is a need to increase the amount of substitute cover available if the programme is to be fully imple-mented and meaningful. At the minute substitutes are allowed for ten days, but twenty would be more ade-quate to allow for proper planning with the whole schools involved"*

## 4 Resources or Bribes?

The availability of extra resources and funding for contact programmes came in for some criticism, more usually from teachers who had not been involved in the programmes.

*"The perks of extra finances and resources act as an incentive, but there is some resentment at some facili-ties"*

*"The non-Catholics were dragged into it by bribes and tokens - never whole hearted. Money was given and this was very wrong because if you don't do something from principle .... we are trying, but sceptical"*

*"Teachers are envious of the funding available. Others are keen on it generally and enjoy it. I feel a little left out. I would like to get involved"*

Allocation of resources is always a contentious issue, peoples' priorities are bound to vary and it would seem that authorities will be open to criticism whichever way they turn on this issue. If extra resources are not made available then complaints will be made that teachers are asked to implement change without adequate resources. If extra resources are made available then authorities are open to charges that resources are being used to ma-nipulate and induce participation. In the long term it may be important to consider how the situation can be created where funding for EMU is seen less as an extra injection into schools, possibly interpreted as a reward for conformist behaviour. The alternative would be a system of funding which builds EMU-related costs into the budget for every school. This, of course, carries a danger that such funds slide into other areas of the school budget if the priority attached to EMU is low. Options for funding are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

## 5 Suggestions for Development

A number of teachers put forward suggestions for developing the work. Improved consultation with parents was mentioned frequently and others thought it was important for support from Boards of Governors to be nurtured.

*"..training days for Board of Governors and introduce EMU with seminars. Invite parents to talk and listen to them, air it all in this area particularly with the Protestant side"*

There was the suggestion that to have impact the work needs to be 'institutionalised' to some extent.

*"I would like to see every class involved with more work in each others' schools so that the programme is integrated into the normal yearly work and is seen as routine"*

Some teachers feel uneasy about reorganising children to encourage mixing of groups, although much of the internal organisation of schools groups children in all sorts of artificial ways, for example, by gender, ability, and age.

*"When visiting the groups are split and mixing is organised. If you did not do that I wonder how they would sort themselves out. They're too young to re-group themselves. The only objection I have is that a lot of the situations are very contrived"*

Some suggestions were quite specific and outlined work that might be carried out in the future.

*"I would love to produce a book on legends of Ireland for the class and do it with the children. The existing books are not simple enough and do not use their language. We could make it a book they want to read and produce it in co-operation with the other staff. The children would have an input by suggesting the language for it"*

A few teachers would like to see EMU work become more closely-linked to contemporary events in the community.

*"I would like to see us address the conflict in some less neutral way, perhaps study the roots of the conflict with older children especially to see the other side's view. Everyone is already too well-versed in their own side of the story and need to know the other side to sympathize"*

## 6 Current Educational Practice

A point raised by a number of teachers was whether schools are well-placed to develop EMU given the way children have traditionally been taught.

*"Northern Ireland problems consist of a fear of discussion. The new style of religious education is more critical, there is time to talk"*

*"We are trying in this school to promote questioning in Maths, Science and English. Change is beginning. The*

*political corollary may be social change. Schools may overcome peer pressure, but thinking critically about our own situation is different. We have a resistance to challenge our own background"*

**EMU is perceived to be centrally involved with encouraging children to think in a critical and autonomous way yet many teachers felt the approach to teaching in many schools is not geared to this.**

*"Critical, independent thinking, we hammer that out of them at school. We don't teach them to be critical and assertive because of the syllabus and time restrictions. Employers want them to respect authority"*

*"Religious teaching promotes questioning and critical awareness, so does literature and the study of cultural heritage. Traditional teaching methods have not been adequate to promote this. For the last two years we have had space to develop that type of approach, but I am not sure if the National Curriculum will allow that time"*

## 7 The Conflict

There was a general perception amongst teachers that younger children are not fully aware of the conflict around them and it would be inappropriate to focus their attention on this too early. Some teachers identified the transition from primary 7 to post-primary school as the stage when they notice a developing awareness in pupils about the conflict.

*"At that age, primary four, with eight year-olds, there is little idea about religious differences"*

*"With the younger children we concentrate on how little differences exist between the schools. We cut down the differences and emphasise similarities. They get used to the idea of meeting and if it is carried on into the secondary schools they should find it easier to discuss things with each other"*

The majority of teachers did not see themselves as explicitly dealing with issues related to the conflict, perhaps leaning on the notion which has been described as creating an 'oasis of peace' (for example, McCartney, 1986).

*"We avoid the conflict. Normality is the word. The children never ask why there was a bomb, for example"*

*"We don't feel we are addressing the conflict at all. All we are doing is establishing relationships between children, although this is and isn't linked to the conflict. EMU does not set out to address the problem directly. It is only addressing a small part of the conflict, but I can't see any other way to do it"*

*"We have steered away from conflict. It is based on the*

curriculum, justified on educational terms and educationally worthwhile"

However, some teachers saw opportunities to tie in work with more direct relevance to the conflict.

"I was on safe ground with the Armada. References were peripheral, but with implications. With the Tercentenary Celebrations in Derry I would have liked to have looked at Walker and Lundy and do a character study, looked at King James' forces and the treatment of those who surrendered"

"We all belong to the same country. We are all Irish and have a good country at heart. I think that with older children it should be spoken about plainly and openly, with parental involvement"

## 8 The Motivation Behind EMU?

With EMU becoming a compulsory part of the school curriculum we were interested in how teachers felt about this change, and what they thought the reasons behind it were. The majority were highly sceptical of government's motivation in introducing this curricular reform.

"A last ditch effort to cure our ills, to solve our problems. They mixed before but the powers that be feel if a start is made with the children it will continue. There are social and political reasons, but they are principally political"

"Now government is expecting too much from education. It has to happen at a higher level. Most social education comes from the families. If Protestants are told at home that Catholics are untouchable then education will not overcome this. EMU is putting too high a responsibility to imagine that we effect children to that degree. Peer pressure is the biggest influence"

"We feel another threat from Mr Mawhinney. He keeps talking in terms of regarding us. We feel we are being forced along this road"

"The social problems existing here seem unsurmountable because of economic and political factors which will not be overcome by contact. Both sides are experiencing unfairness and education will not solve this"

Some Catholic teachers felt that the government has an underlying agenda to bring about integrated schools, and teachers of both religions were anxious that their tradition's right to retain its distinctive characteristics and institutions should not be eroded.

"It suggests that Catholics are entrenched in their Catholic schools. That is not true. We have made the running for EMU here. Contact might help. They think

it all happened because the schools were separated, but economics is a bigger factor"

"We are the people on the move, moving into integrated schools. The hidden agenda is to encourage integrated education a la Mawhinney"

"It will be a long, slow process, but it annoys me when I hear them blaming Catholic schools on television. Protestant people want their own schools. Let them have them"

"I don't see it as a religious thing. I would not want to put a Protestant viewpoint to Catholic children. I would be annoyed at Catholic theology"

Others took a more pragmatic view.

"With the education reforms EMU will be compulsory so, even considering reservations, in essence it doesn't matter. Since we have been involved for four years a structure exists for EMU so that side of the cross curriculum theme is not the problem"

This sensitivity to the political motivation behind support for EMU comes through very strongly from teachers. Further evidence of this was provided by Bullick's survey of teachers in the Western Board area which indicated that:

"although the majority of respondents saw the motivation behind EMU as more political than educational and a number stated they resented such 'blatant intervention and imposition', they generally accept its inclusion as a cross-curricular theme in the common curriculum. A total of almost 58% either approved or strongly approved of EMU's imminent introduction into regular classroom practice".

**The survey also suggested that a correlation exists between teachers who held a neutral or negative attitude towards EMU and those who have infrequent contact with people from the other tradition in their personal lives.** This is in line with our earlier view that teachers have no special immunity from the emotions generated by the Northern Ireland conflict, and part of the challenge of EMU is that they too re-examine their partisan perceptions of the 'other community'.

## SUMMARY

It is impossible to say anything conclusive about the way all teachers feel about EMU and related contact activities. **The interviews revealed teachers' comments to be ambivalent on most of the pertinent issues giving the impression that a number of attitudes are pulling teachers in different directions.** As a group of professional people with a responsibility for the education of young people there is a natural sympathy with many of the aspirations expressed through EMU. As practitioners they are wary of the time and organisational problems involved. As members of the community they are conscious of the sensitivities of some parents, and reticent to deal with potentially contentious issues by embracing them in the classroom. As members themselves of the cultural traditions in Northern Ireland they are wary of the political intent behind certain aspects of curriculum reform. **Despite these divergent pulls the climate of teacher opinion towards work involving cross community contact seems remarkably receptive.** The extent to which such goodwill is translated into effective practice will depend to a large extent on the tangible and moral support which teachers receive within the education service.

# CHAPTER SIX

# PARENTAL OPINION

## INTRODUCTION

Gallagher (1989) indicates that beyond opinion surveys on integrated education and two studies by the Northern Ireland Council for Educational Research, *"relatively little appears to be available on parents' opinions or attitudes to educational provision"*. We know of no surveys which have looked at parents' attitudes to inter school contact as part of EMU programmes. The project's involvement with three Strabane primary schools gave us an opportunity to initiate work in this area. Given that Principals and teachers often express uncertainty about the way parents might feel about contact between controlled and maintained schools we were anxious to test opinion on a number of issues. These were identified in consultation with Principals from the three schools, and a short questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire was delivered via pupils to the parents of one P6 and one P7 class in each of the three schools. In this way questionnaires were given to the parents of almost a quarter of the pupils enrolled in the three schools, although we had no way of knowing whether one parent answered the questionnaire or whether the mother and father conferred on their answers. Out of a total of 185 questionnaires, 145 were returned giving an overall return rate of 78.4%. The return rate from the maintained schools (84%) was higher than parents from the controlled school (62%), but we feel both these are acceptable for comparative purposes.

The questionnaire identified six main issues. Firstly, we wished to see what general level of support there was from parents for the schools arranging contact between pupils. Secondly, we wished to see how frequently parents thought such contact should take place. Thirdly, we wanted to know what level of support there was for three broad types of contact (single day outings, work in each others' schools, and residential work). Fourthly, we wished to check out whether all schools had been equally successful in informing parents about their child's involvement in the project. Fifthly, we wished to give parents a chance to say what they think EMU is about. Sixthly, we wanted to hear what parents might wish to say about the introduction of EMU to the school curriculum as part of Education Reform.

We feel the questionnaire (Appendix I) had a number of strengths. Its design was simple, but a number of issues were clearly addressed. The return rate was good. This was in part achieved by asking Principals to distribute the questionnaires (in sealed envelopes) and tell pupils it was important for their parents to return them by the following day, or the day after at the very latest. The simple design of the questionnaire also meant that it was straightforward and took little time to complete. Perhaps the most important feature was that the questionnaire was given to parents from schools which had been actively involved in inter school contact for the past four years. Therefore, parents were not being asked hypothetical questions, but ones which asked them what they felt the schools in Strabane should be doing. We expect that parents are less likely to express an opinion simply to appear liberal when the questions are directly concerned with what is happening to their own child at school. However, there are also a number of limitations to what can be inferred from information gathered in this way and these are discussed at the end of the chapter. We will now look at each of the issues in turn. Where questions asked parents to indicate a strength of feeling a five-point scale was used giving a range, 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'don't know', 'disagree', 'strongly disagree'. Where appropriate the responses are given in the form of charts. These charts have been standardised for comparative purposes and give the percentage responses within any particular group. In places the labels Protestant and Catholic are used to distinguish between the parents of controlled and maintained schools. This is done to draw attention to the religious or cultural affiliation normally associated with such schools.

## 1 General Support for Contact

Parents were asked if Protestant and Catholic children in Strabane should have the chance to meet and work together as part of school activities. The responses are summarised by figure 6.1.

**Overall a majority (90% of all parents) agreed that Protestant and Catholic children should meet as part of school activities (40% strongly agreeing and 50% agreeing). The response showed slightly stronger support from Catholic parents, but the level of support from both sets of parents was remarkably high.** Comparing the two groups, 87% of the Protestant parents support contact (32% strongly agreeing and 55% agreeing); and 96% of the Catholic parents support contact (44% strongly agreeing and 50% agreeing).

**Figure 6.1: Parental support for inter school contact by religion**
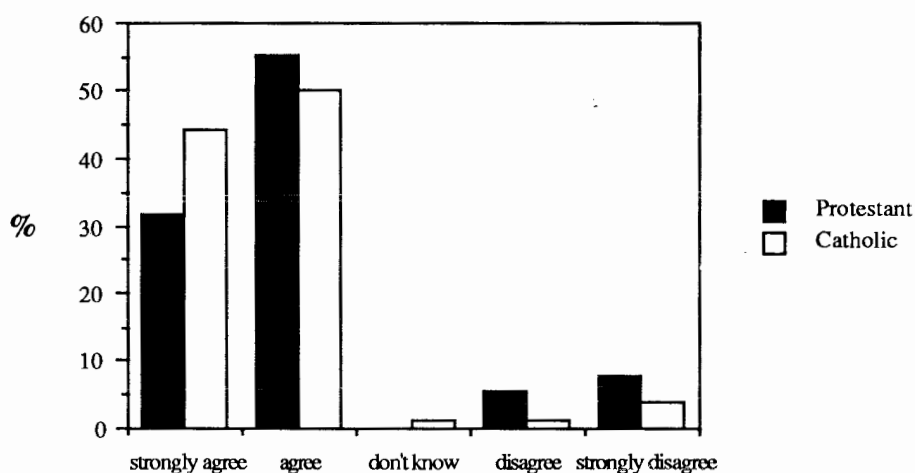


Overall a minority (7% of all parents) disagreed that Protestant and Catholic children should meet as part of school activities (2% disagreeing and 5% strongly disagreeing). There were differences between Protestant and Catholic parents. Comparing the two groups, 13% of the Protestant parents do not support contact (5% disagreeing and 8% strongly disagreeing); and 5% of the Catholic parents do not support contact (1% disagreeing and 4% strongly disagreeing).

Taken as a whole the pattern of results seem to suggest that Protestant parents are slightly more lukewarm to the idea of contact than Catholic parents, and where they object parents are more likely to strongly disagree than simply disagree. However, it should be noted that the level of support was high from both groups and it is only when we look at the relatively small percentages of parents who do not support contact that the different climate of parental opinion which the schools have to work with can be seen. Both types of school have a minority of parents who do not support contact, but the controlled school has a larger minority of parents who feel this way. This may be partly explained by the fact that the controlled school is less likely to have a homogeneous community

since it contains a wider variety of pupils who come from different religious denominations or cultural backgrounds. Even though the minority of parents who do not support contact is relatively small it does suggest that the decision to make contact a voluntary, rather than compulsory aspect of EMU, was a wise one (see report of EMU Working Party, DENI 1989). Had this not been the case controlled schools in particular would have had some concern about losing the pupils of parents who have strong objections to cross-community contact as part of school activity.

It is worth drawing attention to another point which suggests that the minority of parents who object to pupil contact should not only be thought of in terms of differences between Catholic and Protestant parents. Figure 6.2 shows how the strength of feeling against contact varied between the three schools. Indeed, if anything there is more similarity in the pattern of opposition to contact between the controlled school and the maintained girls' school. This suggests that the strength of opposition in any school may be more dependent on the particular circumstances of the school, rather than simply on whether it is 'controlled' or 'maintained'.

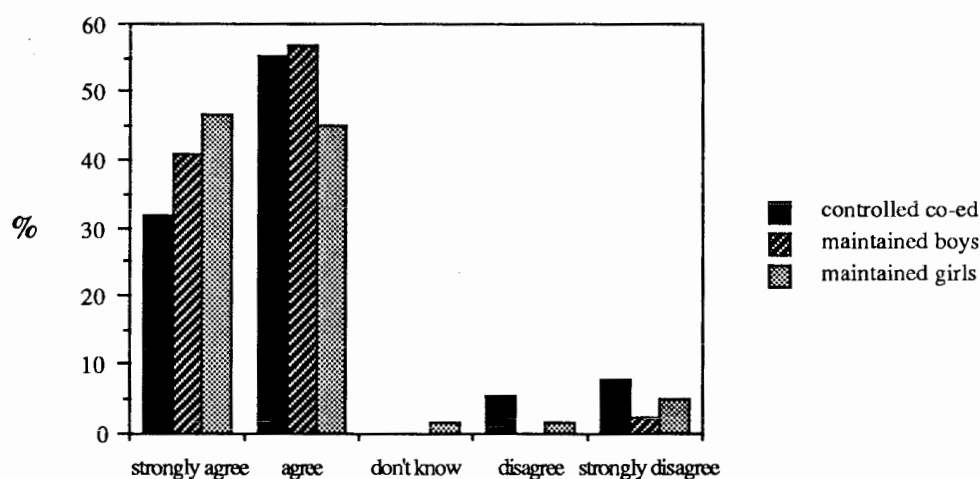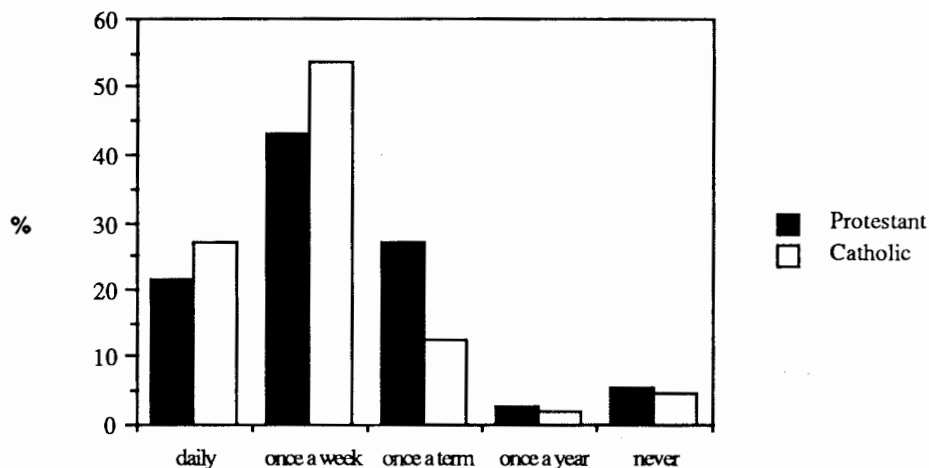**Figure 6.2: Parental support for inter school contact by school type**

**Figure 6.3: Parents' desired frequency of pupil contact by religion**



## 2 Frequency of Contact

When the primary schools initially developed their contact programme for P4 pupils, weekly contact took place for a short period. Discussions with teachers had suggested that they considered this too frequent, not just because it was onerous, but it was also thought that contact which involved work in each others' schools might be perceived by parents as moving toward a form of institutional integration. We therefore wished to check out the frequency of contact which parents might find acceptable. Parents were asked how often they thought Strabane primary schools should arrange for Catholic and Protestant pupils to work together. A five-point scale was given covering the range 'daily', 'once a week', 'once a term', 'once a year', 'never'. The results are summarised in figure 6.3.

**Overall a majority (75% of all parents) agreed that Protestant and Catholic children should meet at least once a week (25% daily and 50% once a week).** The response showed stronger support for frequent contact from Catholic parents, but the pattern of support from both sets of parents was remarkably similar. Comparing the two groups, 65% of the Protestant parents support at least weekly (22% daily and 43% once a week); and 81% of the Catholic parents support at least weekly (27% daily and 54% once a week).

**Overall a minority (7% of all parents) thought Protestant and Catholic children should meet only once a year or never (2% once a year and 5% never).** Feeling for this frequency of contact was similar in Protestant and Catholic parents. Comparing the two groups, 8% of the Protestant parents wished infrequent or no contact (3% once a year and 5% never); and 7% of the Catholic parents wished infrequent or no contact (2% once a year and 5% never).

An interesting picture emerges when the results of this question are compared to the first question about support. **The 87% of Protestant parents who support contact seems to convert into 65% who would wish to see contact taking place on at least a weekly basis. The 96% of Catholic parents who support contact seems to convert into 81% who would wish to see contact taking place on at least a weekly basis.**

**Figure 6.4: Parents' desired frequency of pupil contact by school**



51
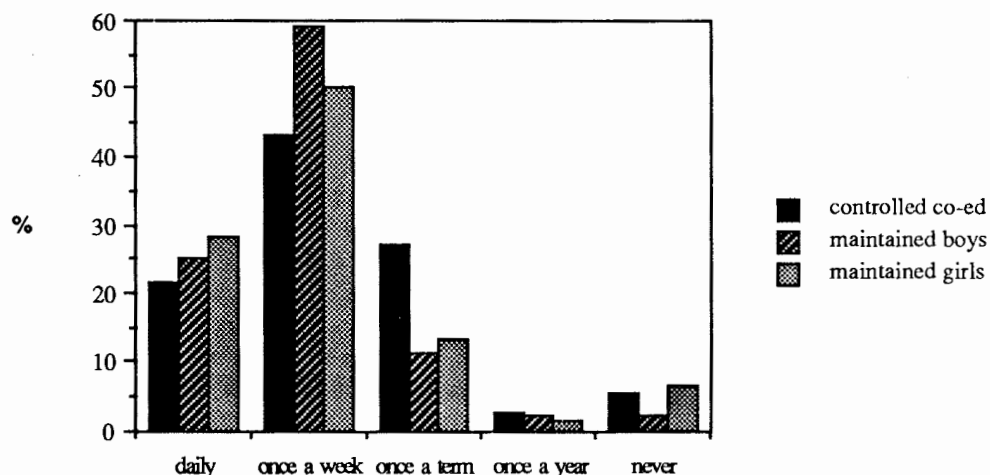
The picture at the other end of the spectrum seems a little more difficult to explain. **The 13% of Protestant parents who do not support contact seems to convert into 8% who wish for infrequent contact (once a year or never).** Presummably some of the Protestant parents who did not express support for contact, nevertheless see contact once a term as acceptable. **The 5% of Catholic parents who did not express support for contact seem to convert into 7% who wish for infrequent contact (once a year or never).** Presumably, a few of these Catholic parents feel that agreeing with contact once a year is being supportive of contact. Therefore, the relationship between statements of support and the frequency of contact which such support suggests is not just as straightforward as we might think.

As before, there were differences between the individual schools (see figure 6.4).

### 3 Forms of Contact

Parents were asked three separate questions to see what level of support existed for three different types of contact. The first question asked parents how they felt about pupils from Strabane primary schools going on **joint field trips** to a local venue. The second question asked parents how they felt about their child **visiting other primary schools** in Strabane as part of their classwork. The third question asked parents how they would feel about their child going on **a residential (overnight) trip** within Northern Ireland with the other schools. Parents responses are summarised in the following table:

**Parent responses (%) to different forms of contact**

|  |  | strongly agree | agree | don't know | dis-agree | strongly disagree | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Joint field trip in the | P | 26 | 63 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 100 |
| local area | C | 42 | 51 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 100 |
| Visits to each each others' | P | 21 | 66 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 100 |
| schools | C | 48 | 46 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 100 |
| Residential trip within | P | 21 | 58 | 13 | 0 | 8 | 100 |
| N.Ireland | C | 36 | 42 | 14 | 5 | 3 | 100 |

The majority of parents gave their support for all three forms of contact. **Joint field trips are supported by 89% of Protestant and 93% of Catholic parents.**

**Visits to each others' schools to complete projects as part of classwork is supported by 87% of Protestant and 94% of Catholic parents.** This is an important marker for the schools because it indicates the strength of support for this form of contact and, taken alongside the fact that 65% of Protestant and 81% of Catholic parents desire at least weekly contact, it suggests that the schools could operate a programme involving weekly visits to each others' schools with some confidence.

**A residential trip within Northern Ireland is supported by 79% of Protestant and 78% of Catholic parents.** This is another important marker for the schools since a joint residential visit had been planned as part of the P7 programme for the first time in 1990.

The minority who disagree with these forms of contact remained consistently low, the strongest feelings of opposition being expressed by those Protestant parents opposed to a residential trip (8%). The responses do not make it clear whether any expressed opposition is simply due to the fact that controlled and maintained schools are jointly involved. It is possible that some parents may disagree with these forms of contact for other reasons, for example, the feeling that their child is too young to spend a night away from home.

Although these questions allowed us to gauge the level of general support for certain **forms of contact**, the information does not allow us to draw any conclusions about the way parents might feel about particular **types of activity**. For example, parents might feel comfortable with the idea of inter school visits for class projects involving joint computer work, but we cannot say if the same level of support would exist for a similar form of contact but which involves, for example, project work on conflict resolution. Responses to our questions do not allow us to draw any conclusions about what parents envisage children doing when they meet. We cannot say what percentage of parents would support the idea that either the activity or the material used when children meet should have an explicit community relations dimension.

### 4 Awareness of Involvement

Of the 145 parents who completed questionnaires, 75 had a child in P6 and 70 a child in P7. The schools had been working with the project for four years, initially beginning with P4 classes and building further up the school with each successive year. This meant that the P6 group were the pupils who had been involved from the outset. When the parental survey was carried out these pupils had already been involved in programmes for three successive years. On the other hand P7 pupils were just about to be involved in a linked contact programme as part of the project for the first time. We wished to see if parents were aware that their child had or had not been involved in the programme. The results are summarised in the following table:

**Parents' awareness of their child's involvement in contact**

|  | Yes | Don't Know | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| P6 Protestant (n=23) | 19 | 2 | 2 |
| Catholic (n=52) | 46 | 0 | 6 |
| P7 Protestant (n=15) | 7 | 4 | 4 |
| Catholic (n=55) | 21 | 11 | 23 |

The results show that only eight parents of P6 children (2 Protestant and 6 Catholic) indicated that their children had not been involved in contact. The P6 children had been involved for at least three years and **this suggests that all the schools have been successful in communicating with parents about their child's involvement in contact programmes.** Neither does it indicate that eight children were involved without their parent's consent since a number of parents had specifically requested that their child not be involved in contact and the schools respected these parents' wishes. Such children would therefore not have been involved in contact even though most of their P6 peers were.

The responses from P7 parents cannot be so easily understood. P7 pupils were only about to participate in a linked programme as part of the project. Nevertheless, a number of parents in all three schools stated that their child had been in contact with pupils from the other schools. This might be partly explained by the fact that sometime in their school career their child may have been involved in inter school contact through a different scheme, for example, Book Week or the Ulster American Folk Park programme operated by the Western Education and Library Board. Some parents may have anticipated the forthcoming P7 programme, being unclear whether it had yet started.

We were also able to look at the earlier questions to see whether a separate pattern of responses emerged between the parents of P7 pupils and the parents of P6 pupils who had been involved longest. No significant differences emerged between P6 and P7 parents on any of the other questions.

**5 What is EMU about?**

We included an open-ended question to get some idea of what parents perceive the aims of Education for Mutual Understanding to be. Over half (58%) of the 145 parents responded to this question (45% of the Protestant parents and 63% of the Catholic parents). Of those who responded the majority variously described EMU to be about children working together, teaching Catholic and Protestant children about each others'

customs and beliefs, teaching children tolerance and respect of other peoples' beliefs. The following is a sample of the comments made by parents. It is worth pointing out that the parents of children at these schools represent a good cross-section of the socio-economic pattern in Strabane, a town characterised by high unemployment and strongly-held political views.

*"I think EMU is about schools joining together and working together and I think it is a very good idea"* (P)

*"Children getting together periodically on outside school activities"* (P)

*"EMU is both sides of the community working together and each side knowing what it is to be a Catholic/ Protestant, i.e. learning this as children"* (P)

*"For children to learn to live with each other despite their religions"* (P)

*"Teaching awareness of the different cultures and traditions that exist in N Ireland to assist understanding of and appreciation of our difference"* (P)

*"Learning to understand each other - perspectives, traditions, religious affilliations, race, colour, handi-capped (physically, mentally), sex etc"* (P)

*"Learning to live with one another and accepting each other for what we are"* (C)

*"I think EMU is a way of getting Catholic and Protes-tant children to work together and to understand each other better"* (C)

*"It helps them to have respect for the opinions of others both social and religious-wise. For some children it is the only chance they might get to communicate with children of a different faith"* (C)

*"To respect each others point of view"* (C)

*"I never heard about it until now but I think it would be ideal"* (C)

*"An opportunity for all children in Northern Ireland to learn about their own culture and that of other tradi-tions"* (C)

*"I think EMU is about making a child aware off what is going on in society. Getting together with people and learning about different traditions"* (C)

*"I think EMU should be about teaching children to have respect for people who have different backgrounds, beliefs, culture and values from themselves"* (C)

*"I think EMU is about learning together as Christians, and not asking if you are Orange or Green"* (C)

*"That children should be taught just because they go to different schools and Churches that they are different from each other"* (C)

*"I actually know a little about it, that each Protestant and Catholic child will know and learn about each other and the best way of doing it is by applying it into there school life and the outings which are being implemented at the minute"* (C)

*"EMU is to help in my mind to bring Catholic and Protestant together to help them to live in peace in the future which I think is a splendid idea"* (C)

*"I think EMU is about becoming aware of the traditions in Ireland (usually the 2 traditions - I am not sure if this includes possible class divisions as well). I would expect in the later school years that EMU will have looked at wider difference in the community (local and national - European and worldwide)."* (C)

*"I think EMU is about children finding out they are all the same, that they like and dislike the same things. Its the parents who put ideas in their heads"* (C)

*"Coparation with other primary schools"* (C)

*"EMU is the harnessing of the energy, wasted through the segregation of communities in NI, and directing it, through children, to improve the future for this country"* (C)

*"I thank that it will help the children alot"* (C)

A few parents expressed uncertainty or concern about some aspects of EMU.

*"I feel that too much is emphasized of Religion in NI. The R.C. Church seems to feel put under threat at the mere mention of Protestant. Religion and education are separate"* (P)

*"I am not sure that the motives underlying EMU are totally beneficial to the individual child - rather to benefit the school purse"* (P)

*"Something to do with Religion. Don't really understand it"* (P)

*"Is it about taking more interest in what goes on in school, and having more say in what goes on!"* (P)

*"I dont know what it is about But if it is about Catholic and Protestant I do not want to know"* (C)

*"The only thing that I strongly disagree with is the fact that the RUC are involved in some areas and therefore the childrens lives may be at risk. I also disagree with the political motives involved in setting up EMU"* (C)

*"EMU can only work if the parents agree with it I dont think it would work if parents or pupils were forced into it against their will"* (C)

*"I have no objections to try bring the communities together but I do not want my children to be involved in travelling to these projects with people other than their teachers"* (C)

The responses revealed that parents are clearly aware of the community relations dimension of EMU. It also showed parents to be aware of at least three broad facets of EMU aims - the simple mixing of children from different traditions; learning about each others' customs and culture; and teaching respect and tolerance for others. More often than not, responses referred to all three implying that parents see them as inter-related. The following table broadly summarises the responses.

**What is EMU About?**
**Percentage responses of parents.**

|  | Protestant Parents | Catholic Parents |
|---|---|---|
| Protestant and Catholic children mixing to learn respect for other beliefs | 37 | 56 |
| Unsure what EMU is about | 5 | 6 |
| Anxious about certain aspects | 3 | 2 |
| Question was left blank | 55 | 36 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

## 6 Other Comments

A final question invited parents to write any other comments they wished to make about the introduction of EMU to the school curriculum. Twenty percent of parents wrote an additional comment. These fell into three broad categories - those who thought that EMU was generally a good thing; those who were unsure if giving EMU a formal place within the curriculum was necessarily the best way to proceed; and those who felt that such a move was unlikely to do much good.

**EMU as part of the school curriculum**
**Percentage responses from parents**

|  | Protestant Parents | Catholic Parents |
|---|---|---|
| Generally thought to be a positive move | 16 | 15 |
| Unsure if it should be on the curriculum | 3 | 6 |
| Felt it was unlikely to do any good | 0 | 5 |
| Question was left blank | 81 | 74 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Parents who were supportive of EMU having a place within the formal curriculum made comments such as:

*"It has my full support"* (P)

*"Any measure that helps to promote community relations is worthy of support. Children have no prejudice until it is inculcated in them. Therefore an education program which can promote positive ideals is to be praised"* (P)

*"All schools should mix"* (P)

*"Only one comment! It should have been done years ago!"* (P)

*"I would be pleased. Children whos parents have a mixed marriage would be happier"* (C)

*"As parents, we are strongly in favour of EMU being part of the school curriculum"* (C)

*"I think they should do leisure activities first then get down to their own historys. Maybe then they'll understand the other side"* (C)

*"Our school have been involved in EMU for the past three years, only we didn't call it by that name. We just referred to it as school trips. I must say however, it has been working very well"* (C)

*"I agree with the EMU system"* (C)

*"I agree with the changes for children to learn about EMU"* (C)

*"I think this EMU should have been brought about earlier. It is sad to think how much opportunities the children have missed because of this"* (C)

*"I think it is something that should have happened long ago"* (C)

*"I just think it is right"* (C)

Some parents were unsure about EMU being given a more prominent place in the school curriculum by education reforms and expressed certain reservations:

*"I feel it is under-developed and priorities have been lost in an attempt to glorify what is basically a reasonable idea"* (P)

*"EMU should concern itself with teachers as well as pupils otherwise it becomes just another "WAFFLY" part of the curriculum - it needs to be highly structured with solid aims and objectives"* (P)

*"I think EMU is about giving children on both sides of the community a chance to meet and work together.*

*Although I agree with EMU I also strongly disagree with integration of schools as a whole"* (P)

*"My child already attends a school which has Protestant and Catholic children working together every day and year. It would be better if religion was not brought into schools"* (P)

*"I would hope that the programme would be initially much wider than purely Religious differences or being too 'backward-looking' i.e. tending to highlight differences"* (C)

*"I would not like to think it would do away with Catholic schools. I would like to see more Protestant use Catholic schools"* (C)

*"It should be clearly stated by the Secretary of State that this is not a substitute for political movement which should be actively pursued by both British and Irish governments"* (C)

*"..the education system has always shown a positive attitude in this field. The government's Draft Order is therefore their own attempt to show on paper that they have tried to solve NI's problems. They are making Education out to be the cause and now the solution to 'the troubles' here. I therefore think to make this a compulsory cross-curricular theme is in some ways a damaging and forced effort to compel Catholics and Protestants to come together. In some respects it is an insult to the teaching profession and the good work that our teachers have always carried out with diligence and in a professional manner"* (C)

*"I feel the government may be placing too much importance on integration. Children should receive a good education - that should be government and schools priority. Children didn't create the situation in N Ireland, it was created by injustice and bad Government. Children shouldn't be used as pawns to try to solve problems or make it look as if the problem doesn't exist"* (C)

*"I dissagree with political links and/or the RUC"* (C)

*"I don't see why it had to change. There is nothing wrong with the way things are"* (C)

*"I don't agree with it. Why should we want to understand Unionist (Protestant) views? They don't want to understand ours"* (C)

## SUMMARY

There are, of course, limitations to the sort of conclusions which can be drawn from opinion surveys of this nature which present no more than a snapshot at one particular time. It is well known that opinion surveys often reveal that most people wish to appear more

liberal than their behaviour suggests. However, this survey asked questions to real people with real children attending schools which have been actively involved in the project. In one sense these parents have a vested interest since they could reasonably expect that their responses would encourage or dissuade the schools from taking actions directly affecting their child. We hope this has made the survey less prone to an overly optimistic or distorted picture of what parents think. Even so there is still likely to be some mismatch between peoples' attitudes and their behaviour.

The results, of course, apply to the particular case of three primary schools in Strabane and it would be unwise to generalise these to other contexts. Indeed the survey itself indicated that **differences in parental opinion will vary from school to school, perhaps depending more on the school's immediate environment and the local circumstances pertaining, than on whether a school is controlled or maintained.**

There are limits too in using single questions to address an issue, particularly when a number of respondents leave a question blank, as was the case with the final two questions. However, our priority was to keep the questionnaire simple, short and easy to complete. A more substantial questionnaire would, of course, include a number of questions on each issue so that responses could be cross-checked for consistency. Another concern is that it is impossible to put any interpretation on the views of those who chose not to return the questionnaire, although in this case these were relatively few.

By its nature this questionnaire asked broad, relatively direct questions not particularly designed to raise controversy. In part this was due to the fact that questions were negotiated with Principals who have a legitimate concern that questionnaires administered through the schools do not alarm parents. We had thought of a number of questions which might attempt to calibrate where the limits of parental support lay, for example, *'Would Catholic parents be happy for a Protestant teacher to take their child's class?'*, or *'Would Protestant parents be happy for children to learn something of the Irish language?'* It seems reasonable to expect that the more precise and specific a question then the more likely it is to say how far general support for contact activity will permit schools to go. In the end we felt that the questionnaire was perhaps an inappropriate way to try and get a feel for this sort of issue. It was reasonable for schools in the live situation to be concerned that these sorts of questions could suggest to parents that certain activities might be taking place or about to take place when this was not in fact the case.

The questionnaire should be viewed as a rather crude, but initial attempt to gain some broad insight into the climate of parental opinion with which the schools have to work. Given a different timescale we would have wished to follow this up with more in-depth interviews with parents, collectively and individually, since this is obviously a more appropriate way of gathering information on sensitive issues. Indeed, without this qualitative information, we would wish to be cautious about survey data. A good example of this is the question about frequency of pupil contact. Given the number of parents who indicated that they thought schools should organise contact on a daily basis, the response demands deeper exploration. How do these parents see such frequent contact working in practice? Do they see a daily movement of pupils between the schools? Are they not concerned about the effects on other curriculum work? Are they expressing a wish that the schools could become integrated? Are they simply using the question to express a strength of support for contact work in general? None of these questions can be answered by a simple survey.

**Neverthelesss, the survey results paint an optimistic picture for the future of contacts between the primary schools in Strabane. If indeed a quarter of parents expect daily contact (22% of Protestant parents, 27% of Catholic), and approximately a further half expect contacts to be once a week (43% of Protestant parents, 54% of Catholic), then teachers will have some cause to be concerned about how they can fulfill these parental expectations.** They should be to some extent reassured that the idea of doing classwork in each others' schools seems less controversial than teachers may have thought. Equally, schools will need to be aware that a minority of parents are not supportive of their children being involved in contact programmes. Schools need to decide what provision will be made for the children of these parents.

There has been a certain reticence on the part of schools to directly ask parents what they feel about cross-community contact. Intuitively teachers might recognise that within any parental body there will be differences of opinion and to ask questions directly often draws attention to minority opinions which might impede the development of work in line with the majority view. This may be an inducement to work away in a fairly anonymous fashion, hoping that everyone will fall into line. However, we feel it is courting disaster if schools are not seen to be seeking out parental opinion on EMU-related matters. We suggest that the sort of simple survey used in Strabane is one means, within most schools' resources, which would allow them to confirm the general climate of parental opinion, and also begin a more open dialogue with parents about what the school is trying to achieve. The result of a simple survey could be followed up by consultations with parents, perhaps forming the basis for a parents' meeting to discuss the general principles associated with EMU. **If contact as part of EMU is not to become a divisive issue then it is important that schools attempt to find ways where parents themselves can meet to express support or discuss concerns freely.**

# LONG TERM PROSPECTS

## INTRODUCTION

The extent to which any curriculum change may become entrenched within the education system is obviously a matter of speculation. The extent to which contact between schools becomes 'institutionalised' will only be revealed as future practice unfolds. However, speculation can be strengthened by two things. Firstly, we can set current developments against past experiences of curriculum change. This allows us to look at the general relationship of curriculum to social change, the sort of approaches which have been adopted, and how curriculum ideas have been diffused. From this we may derive a sense of scale about the undertaking and help identify general features which are likely to accelerate or impede progress. Secondly, we can look to current practice since what people are doing now is a good indicator of what they may do in the future. This allows us to look more specifically at the different agencies involved in curriculum change and review how current practice might be adapted to support future changes.

This chapter begins by looking at the general context of curriculum change before looking at specific issues facing schools, local education authorities and central government.

## EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The education system could be regarded as a subsystem of our social system. Hoyle (1972) points to two major dimensions of society. First, much of society's practice is formalised through political, economic, religious, educational and other institutions. Second, society is normative in that its institutions are pervaded by values which define limits within which the interactions of individuals take place. It is unclear how the stability or coherence of a society is related to the degree to which its different institutions are integrated, or the degree to which it is necessary for a consensus of values to exist. However, it is clear that educational institutions have a relationship to the broader values which permeate society and McGee (1967) suggests that this allows us to distinguish between

*"..education as an agent of social change (where social changes are brought about through education); as a condition of change (where changes in education are necessary to broader social changes); and as an effect*

*of change (where educational institutions adjust to changes in other social institutions)."*

This does not deny that there are limitations to the impact which any single institution can have on social value systems. Such limitations are endemic to the nature of educational institutions, just as other social institutions will have their inbuilt limitations. Therefore relative impact in comparison to other forms of social institution (such as the political, economic, or religious) cannot be taken as an excuse for inaction. Rather this analysis emphasises that the relationship between social institutions and social value systems is essentially dynamic, fluid and reciprocal. Within this framework particular institutions have choices about the direction they will take. In general terms this means that institutions can take up positions ranging somewhere between initiating change or adapting to change.

## CULTURE AND THE CURRICULUM

A similar view underlies Skilbeck's (1976) analysis of the relationship between curriculum and culture in Northern Ireland. Skilbeck regarded culture in Northern Ireland to be *"militant"* and *"highly ideological"*, *"constrained by the need to establish and to fix identities, and to preserve certain positions"*; *"dominated by images and symbols and myth-making processes"*; *"thin and translucent ..., it lacks complexity ..., it lacks openness"*; *"it is highly reproductive"* and, in Northern Ireland *"teachers are ... relatively naive bearers of culture"*. Though his description may be contentious it serves to underline the notion that schools, as social institutions, play an important role in mediating cultural values to the future adults of our society. Skilbeck suggested that schools may respond to this weighty responsibility in a number of ways.

*"First, schools may swim with the tide by identifying basic trends and going with rather than resisting them. Second, schools may identify particular elements of the past, and seek to preserve them. Third, schools may carry on their work largely ignorant of or indifferent to what is happening in other key sectors of the culture. Fourth, schools may look forward, trying to anticipate situations in the future, assessing them for their educational significance, and influencing them through the various limited means at their disposal."*

Skilbeck advocated the fourth approach which he

termed **reconstructionist.** He suggested that such an approach requires schools to identify a set of educational criteria which have been worked through by staff, by reviewing what they have done in the past, and reflecting on how this has affected cultural development. Schools may then be better placed to anticipate the sort of cultural environment which today's children will encounter in the future.

Current education reform in Northern Ireland could be perceived as moving schools toward a more reconstructionist role. However, reforms involving the introduction of cross-curricular themes such as EMU and Cultural Heritage, allied to resources to encourage inter school contact, can only provide a climate in which change may take place. Education reforms attend to the structural changes within the education system which might induce change in educational practice. Of themselves they will not guarantee that educational processes will alter significantly. Schools will still be relatively free to adopt strategies which are adaptive, reactionary, initiatory or reconstructionist. If fundamental issues about the educational process within schools and its relationship to cultural development are not addressed, then the change sought by current reforms is more likely to be assimilated by existing practice leading to *'innovation without change'* (MacDonald and Rudduck, 1971). We suggest a turning point has been reached regarding the development of community relations work through the curriculum. The momentum for change which developed from pioneering work in the late Sixties and Seventies, has continued into the Eighties, and seen changes within the structure of education which recognise that cultural development through the curriculum is an important issue. The transition which has yet to take place is widespread acceptance of the steps which schools need to take so that their practice is more than cosmetic. **The future impact of EMU and Cultural Heritage will therefore depend less on education reform in the structural sense and more on the way individual schools and teachers look critically at how their practice interacts with the process of cultural development in Northern Ireland.**

To begin this task schools will need to consider three broad areas:

## 1 Values

All areas of the school curriculum impart something to children about the values which their elders hold dear. In daily life children are exposed to an array of diverse and often contradictory values, from the home, from the media, from individuals. Institutionalised education opens up the possibility that a school may explicitly identify the values which it mediates to children. This does not suggest that a school should be about identifying values which it can imprint on children, but it does suggest that schools can be about finding ways of allowing children to interact with and develop a critical view of different, identifiable value systems.

Values mediated through the school are reflected explicitly through the formal curriculum and through the relationships and informal processes which operate within the school. It seems sensible therefore that any school which is reviewing its relationship to cultural development in Northern Ireland will take, as its starting point, a critical look at the values it conveys through its formal and informal processes. Of necessity this will be a continuous process, involving debate and discussion between teachers who work in the institution, governors who are responsible for its policies, and parents who have a vested interest in its activities. Skilbeck described this as *"a permanent, intellectual task"*. The task is onerous and complex and, because it is ongoing, there is a danger that it is unstructured and allowed to drift. However, values are at the heart of EMU, so it is difficult to see how an approach can be meaningfully developed without a process of value clarification.

## 2 Curriculum

In the broadest sense the curriculum represents all the processes, materials and relationships which a child encounters through his or her school experience. Much of this will be open to chance, but the school also attempts to provide a controlled environment, where learning experiences are structured and planned with particular aims in mind. If a school has gone through a process of clarifying the values it mediates to children then the task of formulating the planned part of the curriculum should be less problematic. The task will involve deciding on the central ideas or issues to be raised by learning activities, and how these can be developed using appropriate material and resources. Coherence is more likely to be achieved when this is taken on as a whole-school task, rather than the individual teacher being left in relative isolation. It implies that schools will require focused leadership and organisational management. It suggests that we need to consider how the materials we use as part of the curriculum allow issues about different values to be raised and, in the context of Northern Ireland, this inevitably involves drawing on material derived, in part, from the two main cultural traditions. Skilbeck saw it as important *"to move towards a new common-core of humanistic and social studies to which all schools, irrespective of their loyalties, could subscribe"*. Yet it will only be possible to entertain such ideas once we are clear whether such an approach is promoting the notion of a common Northern Ireland culture, whether we accept the existence of two distinct cultural traditions in Northern Ireland, or whether a common-core curriculum can simultaneously reflect what is shared and what is distinct. **In legislative terms the common curriculum has arrived, but work has barely begun in identifying what a common curricular experience in EMU for all children might look like.**

## 3 Relationships

The introduction of cross-curricular themes to the Northern Ireland Curriculum presents a fundamental challenge to the traditional view that education is primarily concerned with the transmission of knowledge derived from disciplinary bases. The common thread running through all the cross-curricular themes is the emphasis they place on relationships. They are concerned with the way information from different disciplinary bases can be applied to understanding issues relevant to modern society. Schools may experience considerable difficulty in re-orientating themselves to themes which are more concerned with process and application than with the way knowledge is structured. Part of this re-orientation will not only involve looking again at the relationships between traditional disciplines, but include a re-appraisal of the way themes are taught. EMU's central concern with notions such as understanding, respect and tolerance makes it particularly dependent on the values which are revealed through relationships within and between schools. These, and a consideration of teaching styles conducive to the development of EMU aims, would appear to be sensible starting points for discussing relationships. Values associated with EMU will be largely mediated through the teacher-pupil relationship, and another dimension is how teachers, as well as pupils, are drawn by EMU to confront their own attitudes about the 'other community'.

### The Pace of Change

We have no illusions about the complexity which schools face in integrating EMU and inter school contact into the curriculum. To put things in perspective we could point to work which suggests that the rate of change within educational systems is very slow. Early studies by Mort (1964) found a fifty-year lag between a felt need and innovation to meet that need, followed by a fifteen-year period before three percent of schools had adopted the innovation.

The seeds for EMU have been around in Northern Ireland for at least twenty years. The Nineties see it take a formal place within the school curriculum, yet full integration into educational practice is far from secure. There is little doubt that the past five years have seen a remarkable proliferation in activity, particularly in terms of inter school contact, but we suggest that **the full import of cultural development as part of the curriculum may only be judged by the extent to which schools internalise the aims of EMU as part of their own value systems.**

Nevertheless, given the time scale of educational change there is little cause for pessimism. Structural changes within the education system now provide a climate which encourages schools to excavate the relationship between educational practice and cultural development in Northern Ireland. This longer-term process will involve schools looking again at the values which they mediate to children, planning the curriculum processes and materials required, and considering the implications of the values associated with EMU for relationships within and between schools. **Long term prospects will depend more on how conscientiously individual schools go about these tasks than on further change to the system as a whole.** It is therefore worth considering some of the general difficulties schools face in implementing change alongside any particular assessment of the project's long term influence on Strabane schools.

## STRABANE SCHOOLS AND THE INTER SCHOOL LINKS PROJECT

From the outset we were clear that this particular project was not simply about curriculum development in the sense that the primary concern was about the development of teaching materials. Rather we saw the role of this project to be about exploring how a structured system of contact relationships could be established between schools in the same community. In working with teachers we were inevitably drawn into their need to design material and draw together resources. However, our main concern was to establish a climate, one which was structured, and more importantly, one which achieved a sense of permanence. Comments from some of the Principals in Strabane suggest that we have cause to be optimistic about the durability of the institutional relationships which have emerged.

*"The project worked well. The permancy is there because of relations developed between staff. We are trying to take away the artificiality of it all. It is not just recreational, but also educational and curriculum-based"*

*"It has become internalised. We could go it alone now, autonomously as the project people have slipped out of the running"*

*"Since we have been involved for four years a structure exists for EMU"*

*"Other members of staff have been drawn in so the process is extending out, by the end of the year all will be directly involved"*

Changes in curriculum are inevitably about changes for teachers and the way schools function as institutions. Stenhouse (1975) provides a useful review of the general difficulties faced when attempting to implement curriculum change in schools. We have considered the long-term prospects for Strabane schools against this framework, bearing in mind that inter school contact is only one dimension of EMU and that the schools would not see their responsibilities discharged completely by adopting a system of contact alone.

## 1 External Constraints

The project seems to have addressed some of the external constraints often experienced by schools when implementing curriculum change.

A major external constraint on schools implementing change is ACCESS TO RESOURCES. The introduction of a common curriculum has recently highlighted the anxieties which schools express if they feel they are being asked to implement change with limited material and teaching resources.

Project schools did not complain about a lack of resources, either in terms of teacher cover or access to teaching materials and the ability to develop these themselves. Rather than provide resources from the project itself schools were linked into into existing support structures, such as voluntary agencies and the Western Education and Library Board. Teacher cover and funds were provided by the DENI, Cross Community Contact Scheme. Teachers became aware of sources of support and developed administrative experience in securing funding. This means that the schools will not feel that access to resources has suddenly stopped once the project formally ends. There is a residual concern amongst some of the primary schools that a reduction in staff will weaken their ability to sustain links in the future. There is also an absence of field and in-service support, but this is a temporary situation whilst the Area Board gears its staffing to the demands of the new Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Another external constraint on schools is the influence of SOCIAL AND PARENTAL OPINION. The import of recent legislative reforms, which give parents more input to schools, implies that schools have traditionally been fairly independent of parental opinion. However, pressure for examination results and demands for school uniform are examples of parental influence on schools. In Northern Ireland the existence of a segregated system may heighten schools' sensitivity to parental opinion on community relations issues.

The climate of parental opinion toward inter school contact between Strabane primary schools has been tested by the project, albeit only recently. The project initially encouraged schools to begin building lines of communication with parents regarding inter school contact. Our survey of parental opinion (see Chapter 6) indicates that the primary schools have successfully communicated their involvement. We are less clear of the extent to which post-primary schools have tested parental opinion. However, we know that they are conscious of the importance of this issue and engage in informal processes which tap into the climate of parental opinion on a routine basis.

## 2 Internal Resistances

A school is one of the few social institutions where most of its members are conscripted. Inevitably this means that schools become centrally concerned with issues of CONTROL. Strong arguments have been made (Shipman, 1968; Young, 1972) that a preoccupation with control pervades the way schools function, even where this is not acknowledged explicitly. An important aspect of this is that knowledge, the way it is structured and the way it is taught, becomes used latently to maintain order and exert restraint on the school population. This means that schools have an internal resistance to any curriculum change which involves change in practice and thereby threatens the organisational processes of control within the school.

When a particular curriculum change involves changes to established METHODS AND STYLES OF TEACHING this is a direct threat to control patterns which already exist. This is particularly so if the change (such as that implied by EMU) involves redefining relationships in more equal and reciprocal terms since the teacher-pupil relationship is thrown into question.

When a particular curriculum change challenges the way knowledge has been traditionally perceived as disciplinary-based, for example the cross-curricular basis of EMU and its concern for process, then TEACHER IDENTITY is likely to be threatened. This may be less of a threat within primary schools where teachers are less likely to identify with a single subject. When curriculum change challenges teachers to review what they are teaching in terms other than disciplinary knowledge, the teacher is being asked to adopt a novice's stance. There is likely to be a natural resistance to this since it threatens a teacher's identification with a particular subject, and this in turn is often associated with his or her status within the school.

Internal resistance to curriculum change within the school can also be attributed to an institution's need for MORAL JUSTIFICATION of its activities. Historically society has demanded certain moral standards from teachers, partly because their working relationship with children places them in a pivotal position to mediate social and cultural values. This expectation from the broader society encourages schools to develop an institutional sense of moral integrity. Stenhouse (1975) claims,

*"The result of this moralism is that it is difficult for the school to question its moral claims and if it does so, it often grasps for a new moral certainty. Innovation of quality needs to be experimental, provisional and tentative. The need for certainty causes many schools to assert in moral terms the rightness of the innovation they are about to embark on. This leads to cults and band-wagonning, neither favourable to the spirit of*

*critical experiment which would seem the appropriate temper for innovation."*

Schools in Northern Ireland will wish to feel they have accurately read the moral climate amongst parents and within the broader community before asserting unconditional support for cross community contact. Where they detect an ambivalent climate schools may hang back before grasping a new moral orthodoxy. Reconstructionists, however, might claim that schools can in fact lead the broader moral climate. Whichever is the case, there is obviously a certain amount of risk if an institution has not tested the climate before embracing change.

The project's initial contacts with schools were cautious and tentative. Project staff were concerned to convince schools that they wished to discuss how the project might develop and to negotiate any directions it might take. In retrospect this sort of approach was less likely to be perceived as a threat to established systems of control within the schools. There were occasions when teachers expressed concern about the pace at which we wished to move, or that decisions were being pushed. These could be regarded as signals that underlying issues of control were being challenged, and suggests that project decisions to withdraw on such occasions were appropriate.

It is more difficult to say whether teachers have adopted different styles of teaching appropriate to EMU as part of the project. Certainly the nature of inter school contact demands new working relationships with teachers from another school, and teachers have commented that this was one of the project's most positive outcomes. However, the project never explicitly provided in-service support which focused on teaching styles. Our approach was more tentative and exploratory, so there may be some justification for suggesting that future support in this area would be welcomed.

Issues about moral justification were more concerned with how inter school contact was justifiable in educational terms rather than the adoption of 'a cause'.

### 3 Organisational Issues

Schools function on a daily basis, involve large numbers of people and have therefore evolved complex systems of internal organisation. The introduction of any curriculum change threatens to bring disruption and potential chaos to an intricate, but dynamic system. Successful change is therefore more likely to take root if it is GRADUALIST in its approach. The dynamic flow of the institution largely depends on operating a TIME-TABLE to control the complex interactions which take place in a single day. Such a timetable is necessarily concerned with regulating internal organisation. This highlights a major resistance which inter school contact must face since it introduces the need for incorporating new sets of external relationships within a timetable

which is geared toward internal organisation. Negotiations over timetabling can also expose the nature of INTERNAL POLITICS. Stenhouse (1975) suggests,

*"..it is important to bear in mind that most innovations have strong implications for the internal politics of the school. The school has a hierarchy of status and power. Curriculum and organisational change disturbs that allocation of status. Integration threatens the power base of subject departments. The introduction of new subjects increases the competition for resources and may create new opportunities for promoted posts. Pastoral emphasis also creates new power structures."*

The project had a number of features which made it responsive to organisational difficulties.

It took a four-year period to develop an institutional base for the system of contacts. During this time the approach was gradualist with extra elements being built in during successive years. This allowed time for confidence and trust between teachers to develop. By introducing links to the lower end of schools, and building them up through the school over a number of years, the introduction of change fell into step with the annual rhythm of development. Any effects on timetable and organisation were therefore minimalised and allowed to filter up the school.

This gradual accumulation of contact up through the school was an important indication that the structure had moved beyond a simple dependency on good relationships between individual teachers. **It suggested that the structure was establishing an institutional base which would be less susceptible to disruption by changes in staff. A set of new inter school relationships were gradually becoming accepted as part of the institutional organisation and orthodoxy.**

The project's emphasis on inter school relationships may have helped deflect some of its implications for the internal politics of schools. We are aware that issues did arise in some schools, for example, where concerns were expressed about the number of teachers away on inter school contact, or the favourable allocation of resources for EMU. When we approached schools initially, work on cross community contact was perceived as potentially problematic rather than high status, so this may have protected it from becoming a battleground for staff politics within the schools.

### 4 The Innovative School and Styles of Decision Making

The constraints mentioned so far will apply, in greater or lesser degree, to all schools irrespective of the curriculum change involved. How successfully those seeking curricular change overcome the various constraints is likely to depend on the way issues are handled when they arise as part of the implementation process.

The NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS and STYLE OF MANAGEMENT within a school will therefore be of crucial importance in determining whether a particular school is receptive to curricular change. Since the Principal carries a particular responsibility for the internal management of the school, the ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL and the STYLE OF DECISION-MAKING he or she encourages, are seen as key factors in determining whether a school is receptive to curriculum change. Loubser, Spiers and Moody, (1971) have suggested four basic styles of decision-making encouraged by school Principals. These are described as *'tell decisons'* (where a person feels a decision is too trivial or too important to give to someone else); *'sell decisions'* (where a person sees only one course of action and realises that it is important to convince others); *'consult decisons'* (where someone seeks out the views of others before taking the decision); *'share decisons'* (where a person encourages others to join in the decision and accept responsibility for its consequences).

Our involvement with schools included a mixture of all the *tell*, *sell*, *consult* and *share* elements of decision-making style. From the teachers' point of view the project may have seemed to consist more of telling and selling. From the project's perspective, we set out with good intentions of democratic and shared styles of decision-making, though we must concede that the language of consultation which emerged reveals an ultimate unwillingness to relinquish overall control. Researchers and curriculum developers also become bound up in issues concerning status, the maintainence of order, and control.

We feel it is a positive indicator of future permanence that the Principals in the project schools did not appear to operate closed or oppressive regimes. There was a willingness on the part of Principals to support teachers' participation in the project, and encouragement for them to use their own judgement about the pace of development.

### An Overall Assessment

We suggest that a frequent problem with curriculum change is that those who are involved often look for solutions which focus on the unique aspects of the particular innovation, when it might be more fruitful to work at more fundamental issues of *knowledge, control, staff relations, organisational management* and *styles of decision making*. It is chastening to think that the durability of any change in practice which the Inter School Links project helped schools adopt might be more dependent on the organisational health of the schools than on any successful formula used by the project.

We assume that the project schools were just as susceptible to the sort of difficulties which any school faces in implementing curriculum change. Our overall assess-

ment suggests that, whether by design or intuition, the project contained features which allowed it to cope with many of the difficulties normally encountered by schools introducing curriculum change. This suggests that the system of inter school contacts adopted by Strabane schools at least, has every prospect of enduring for some time after the project has formally ended.

Lastly, it is debatable whether schools would have moved spontaneously toward establishing a structure unsupported. One dimension of this was the need, particularly in the early stages, for some sort of catalyst. In this case it was the project, acting as an honest broker and keeping things moving. Despite a strong start in establishing structured links it cannot be said that the same institutional base was established in the two other communities (Limavady and Enniskillen) and this is largely attributed to the schools not receiving the same level of sustained support. This suggests that, although the school is the main change agent, adequate in-service support and schemes for funding are important to complement the role of the school. The two main agencies in this area are the Education and Library Boards and the Cross Community Contact Scheme, and some comments are now made about how they might support the development of increased inter school contact.

### EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARDS

Through this project we have received support from the Western Education and Library Board which is responsible for providing services and curriculum support to 254 controlled, maintained and voluntary, primary, secondary and grammar schools within its area. The overall area has a majority Catholic population and the future cultural demography is reflected in a pupil population of 10,481 children attending controlled primary schools and 24,773 attending maintained primary schools (DENI, Statistical Bulletin, No 3/1986).

Earlier sections of the report have indicated how this particular Board have taken a positive attitude toward cultural development and the promotion of inter school contact. The Board has a long history of supporting curriculum projects such as the *Northern Ireland Schools Curriculum Project (1973-78)*; the *Schools Cultural Studies Project (1974- 82)*, the *Religion in Ireland Project, (1979-82)*, and the *Inter School Links Project (1986-90)*. This has been accompanied by a willingness to make policy statements (1982), appoint field support (1986-89) and take administrative decisions which encourage co-operation between schools (see Chapter 3).

Education reform in Northern Ireland places a greater responsibility on Education and Library Boards for providing curriculum support to schools. Responsibilty for in-service education and training has also moved

from the Inspectorate to the Area Boards. Most of the five Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland now seem to have identified an education officer who will carry responsibility for EMU, although this is usually along with responsibility for other aspects of the Board's services. At least three Boards have taken steps to second a teacher who will provide field support for schools. However, these moves simply bring support, in terms of staff, to a level which the Western Board had already achieved by 1986 when neither schools nor Boards had any statutory responsibility to support the development of EMU. Teachers could be forgiven for being sceptical about the priority which Boards attach to EMU when they see that the equivalent staffing within one Board for another cross-curricular theme (Information Technology) is over fifteen times greater. We suggest it is unrealistic to expect that a single Board officer and one seconded teacher can give adequate support in EMU to over 250 geographically disparate primary and secondary schools in a Board area.

We have suggested the appointment of **at least one** Board officer with special responsibilty for EMU to provide permanence and continuity to future developments. Such a person might have responsibility in three areas:

**1 The development of policy on EMU** by the Board, including monitoring how the delivery of services and support can encourage inter school contact, and advice for schools on how whole-school policies on EMU may be developed.

**2 The provision of a programme of in-service education and training.** We suggest a comprehensive in-service programme in EMU would enable teachers to become familiar with:

- resource material and its relevance to different subject areas
- support from voluntary and statutory agencies
- the philosophical basis for EMU work
- methodologies and models of good practice
- teaching styles appropriate to this type of work
- guidance on handling potentially controversial issues
- a practical framework about how to proceed with their own pupils.

It seems sensible that in-service support should be organised so that teachers from neighbouring controlled and maintained schools have the opportunity to meet and establish working relationships. However, there is also a need for the development of EMU on a whole-school basis and a compromise may be a programme of in-service support which works with the staff of neighbouring schools on a paired basis, perhaps synchronising exceptional school closing days.

It is worth considering the extent to which some of this work might be co-ordinated through the recently formed Regional Training Unit which provides the opportunity for inter board cooperation.

**3 Field support** for development of EMU within, and contact between schools. This project has demonstrated the need for catalytic agents within the system which can promote and support the development of contact between schools. The nature of the work is labour-intensive, necessitating a sustained presence in helping teachers overcome practical difficulties. Two field officers within a Board area would allow responsibilities to be split on a geographical or primary/secondary basis. Even then the number of inter school groups which a single person could service is limited. An imaginative solution to this might involve identifying teachers within schools who have past experience and expertise in EMU, and developing a scheme which would release these teachers one or two days a week to disseminate their experience to other schools.

If increase in inter school contact comes about through EMU, it will involve extra administrative tasks such as organising transport and processing requests for support. The use of field officers to deal with such administrative tasks is poor use of their time, so extra administrative support should be considered.

Our hope is that the schools involved with the Inter School Links project will experience no discontinuity of support as the project formally ends. We feel these suggestions represent the very minimum requirements which will permit Boards to discharge their basic statutory responsibility to support EMU. None of our suggestions take account of the desirability for work involving parents and school governors and, of course, better quality development will only be fostered when the basic requirements have been exceeded.

## THE CROSS COMMUNITY CONTACT SCHEME

Government support for cross community work shifted when the Community Relations Commission, created in 1969, was disbanded in 1974. Some of its responsibilities moved to the the Deparment of Education and current responsibilities are partly discharged through the DENI, Community Branch.

In September, 1987 the Minister of Education for Northern Ireland introduced the Cross Community Contact Scheme with an original annual budget of £200,000 per year. The Scheme provides funds for schools and youth groups involved in cross community contact and is administered centrally by DENI, Community Branch.

All schools were notified of the Scheme via DENI Circular 1987/47 and later, Circular 1988/2 informed schools that they would be eligible for additional substitute teacher cover,

*".. not exceeding 10 days per school ... in any school year for approved Cross Community Contact Schemes and other planned Education for Mutual Understanding programmes."*

In 1989 government announced (Northern Ireland Information Service, 14 September 1989) that the Scheme was,

*".. proving so successful that Community Relations Minister, Dr Brian Mawhinney MP, has decided to expand it to provide an opportunity for parents to become involved in community bridge-building, if they wish."*

These developments were consolidated by DENI Circular 1989/19 which gave more detailed guidance on the kind of support available through the Scheme, and suggested that the criteria for funding would become more concerned to support the development of sustained programmes rather than 'one-off' encounters.

By 1989 the Minister announced (Northern Ireland Information Service, 26 June 1989),

*".. I am currently funding cross-community contact Schemes to the tune of £450,000 a year, twice the original financial allocation, and that to date my Department has received over 400 applications for grant-aid from 350 schools and 240 youth and community groups. This year's budget is £650,000 to allow for more growth."*

The Minister also guaranteed that the Scheme would run at least until 1991/92.

There are certain attractions about the Scheme. It is universally accessible to all schools in Northern Ireland and this may have made it particularly attractive to schools in Education Board areas where a system of support was not available. The Scheme attempts to operate with the minimum of bureaucracy. Schools bid for a cross community contact budget at the start of the school year by submitting an outline of their proposed activities. If successful, schools receive a block budget which they may lodge in a joint bank account. This means that teachers have direct access to funds and more control over obtaining their own resources. Once linked to the Scheme schools may make use of extra teacher substitute cover by the Principal making a simple entry in the monthly substitute teacher returns.

All of the schools involved with this project made use of the Cross Community Contact Scheme and we heard few complaints about the way it functioned. However, we feel it is worth mentioning four issues.

## 1 Administration of the Scheme

An October closing date for receipt of applications means that schools must meet and plan their full set of cross community contacts during the first month of a new school year, a hectic time in most schools. Even where this is achieved it means that Community Branch receive the bulk of applications at around the same time. Assessing and processing these obviously takes time and may involve requesting advice from the Inspectorate. This means that some schools may not receive approval to incur expenses until they are into the second school term, so opportunities for contact within the first term may be lost. We appreciate that this system does allow administrators to gauge the likely demand on funds at an early stage in the school year and must concede that the administrative problem is currently more potential than actual. Our experience is that there is more flexibility in the administration than our description suggests. However, if demand continues to increase at the rate suggested by the Minister it may be necessary to move toward an administrative system which processes applications as a trickle throughout the school year rather than a deluge at the start.

## 2 Contributions to Educational Visits

A very practical question arises for schools when they organise educational visits. Transport and entrance charges make these expensive activities. Most schools have codes of practice whereby pupils are asked to make cash contributions to certain sorts of outing. This means that such activities are necessarily voluntary since parents cannot be compelled to subsidise statutory education provision. In the main parents accept whatever code of practice operates. However, there are potential problems about this in relation to inter school contact as part of EMU.

Although inter school contact is encouraged, it is not a compulsory part of the curriculum. However, if a teacher wishes to include contact as a natural part of the EMU experience he or she may wish it to operate on a whole-class basis. This also causes least disruption to the rest of the school. Such teachers will wish to nurture parental support for a class-based approach and may not wish to encourage parents to opt out by requesting a financial contribution. There may also be situations where children who would have otherwise taken part are excluded from the opportunity of contact because the parents have limited financial means. Tension can also arise if one school does not normally ask for parental contributions toward outings and another does.

The obvious solution would be a policy decision which allows all costs associated with inter school contact as part of EMU to be covered from government funds.

However, even this could cause difficulties within the school since some teachers may regard it as inconsistent that parental subsidies are asked of some educational visits and not others. Again, this is not yet seen as a major issue by many schools, but it draws attention to some of the detailed issues into which teachers become drawn.

## 3 The Future Cost of Inter School Contact

Funding of the Cross Community Contact Scheme was £650,000 for the 1989/90 financial year, and the Minister has guaranteed that the Scheme will continue to at least 1991/2. With EMU moving on to the school curriculum it is worth considering the likely cost of inter school contact which might result, and consider how this could be administered to schools. The comments we make can be better understood when set against information about the total numbers of schools, pupils and annual education expenditure. Such information for the 1984/85 financial year is given in Appendix J.

We have drawn on our experience of working with the three Strabane primary schools to suggest what implications there might be for education expenditure if all schools in Northern Ireland adopted a similar level of inter school contact. These three schools jointly received approximately £3,000 per year from the Cross Community Contact Scheme. This **additional funding** enabled the schools to plan four linked programmes from P4-7 and covered the costs involved in purchasing materials, subsidising entrance charges, reprographics and some of the transport costs. It is important to remember that additional teacher cover was administered through the normal channels and did not come from this additional funding. Most of the transport costs within the Board area were carried by the Western Education and Library so most of this too was not covered by additional funding from the Scheme.

This level of funding seemed neither too generous nor too meagre in terms of what the schools were able to achieve. This suggests that a school of a approximately 250 pupils might reasonably expect to incur additional costs of approximately £1,000 per annum (**excluding teacher cover and most transport costs**) in developing contact programmes with four classes.

If we assume that half the costs were absorbed by each school as part of the general cost of establishing contact (£500 per school), then the remainder can be notionally attributed to expenses per pupil (£2 per capita). In a very crude way, this allows us to estimate the overall costs to the education system if all schools had been operating similar contact programmes:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1,381 schools at £500 | = | £690,500 |
| 350,000 pupils at £2 | = | £700,000 |
| | Total = | £1,390,500 |

Therefore, the estimated additional costs to the education system in 1984/85 would have been £1.39 million, if all schools had been giving pupils the level of contact operated by Strabane schools. This figure is equivalent to 0.25% of the total annual current expenditure on education in 1984/85.

Additional costs to annual recurrent expenditure of 0.25% contrasts with the 3.5% of annual teaching time which we suggested in Chapter 3 it may prove possible to devote to inter school contact in practice.

However, it is difficult to anticipate costs to the overall system without having a clearer sense of what might be regarded as the 'desired minimum level of contact opportunity' for all pupils which the system may be capable of supporting financially. For example, another estimate could be arrived at if it was regarded as desirable that all pupils in Northern Ireland should have the opportunity of a single, overnight residential experience per year. Even at a modest subsidy of £10 per pupil this amounts to £3.5 million per year, and still excludes extra costs of teacher cover and transport. Therefore, there is clearly a need for some discussion about what would count as the minimal contact experience for all pupils which the education system could sustain financially.

**Although there is uncertainty about the level of inter school contact which will be generated by EMU becoming part of the formal curriculum, it nevertheless seems reasonable to suggest that a conservative estimate of the cost to the system (excluding substitute teacher cover and transport) would be between £1 and £5 million per year (i.e. roughly 0.2-1% of total recurrent annual expenditure on education in Northern Ireland).** This estimate contrasts with the £0.65 million which the Minister provided through the Cross Community Contact Scheme in 1989/90. Although it is also worth contrasting with the £1 million **per day** currently spent on maintaining the security forces in Northern Ireland.

Whatever decisions are eventually made about the level of funding, the issue still arises of how schools will have access to funds since the continuation of the Cross Community Contact Scheme beyond 1991/92 has not been assured.

## 4 How Can Funds Be Administered?

We have already mentioned that the existence of the Cross Community Contact Scheme may have been particularly welcomed by schools in Board areas where funds or support for inter school contact did not exist. This may be a good reason for continued existence of the Scheme beyond 1991/92, but the movement of EMU to a statutory position within the curriculum may also change the way support for inter school contact is viewed by the Boards. The introduction of delegated

budgets through Local Management of Schools (LMS) will also effect the climate in which decisions about funding are taken.

From a strategic point of view four options seem available to decision-makers about the way future funds to support inter school contact are made available. These are, funding through:

A CENTRAL AGENCY such as the Cross Community Contact Scheme. This means all schools would continue to have access to additional funding for contact, irrespective of which Board area they are in. The total from this source would need to be increased to allow for the anticipated increase in inter school contact brought about by EMU being part of the curriculum. It is improbable that there will be uniform development of inter school contact by all schools so this form of funding means that the finite pool of funding will be utilised more by schools which vigorously pursue contact policies. Schools which do not apply to the Scheme lose their access to potential funds by default. In this way uneven development of practice may be further fuelled. Other disadvantages of this arrangement would be that schools are encouraged to perceive the funding as additional or extra, implying that inter school contact is not an integral element of the curriculum. Also, the central administration of funds is not backed up by a central support structure and constructive use of such funds will largely be dependent on field support being available through Education and Library Boards.

Support for inter school contact has not been supported to the same extent by different AREA BOARDS. Whilst one Board may have administered its own cross community contact scheme and provided field support, another may not have given inter school contact the same profile or priority. The existence of a central source of funds may even have dissuaded an Area Board from duplicating a similar scheme. The existence of central and local funds means that a good deal of co-ordination is necessary between the local Board and the central agency. If this is not effective it can lead to confusion amongst schools. Responsibility for in-service support of the new curriculum means that some funding for EMU will need to be routed through Boards. Whether this should extend to block allocations which enable Boards to distribute funds to schools and develop their own support schemes for inter school contact, is an issue to be addressed.

The possibility of financial support for inter school contact becoming an INTEGRAL ELEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL BUDGETS is raised by the introduction of Local Management of Schools. An advantage would be that schools are encouraged to identify contact as a routine part of curriculum practice reflected by the costs it will incur in the school budget. This would necessitate a formula which arrives at an equitable amount for every school, taking into account

its size and level of contact activity. Possible draw-backs are that not all schools may wish to use funds for this purpose, so potential funds for contact are either lost to the overall system or 'slip' into some other budget head. Funding through this route throws greater responsibility on the individual school, and central authority inevitably loses some of the influence it can exert in promoting specific forms of practice.

If this option were chosen it would be necessary to generate some sort of formula. As all schools are not the same size, such a formula would need to include a weighting between grant per school and grant per pupil. Obviously a system weighted toward per capita allocations would be more favoured by large schools, and a system weighted toward allocations per school would favour small schools.

A COMBINATION OF FUNDING ROUTES would involve a mixture of the possibilities described above and would necessitate the development of greater co-ordination and co-operation within the system as a whole. An advantage is that the way the system is moving could be monitored and reviewed as it develops, and strategic decisions could be made at different points in time to shift the emphasis of funding through any particular channel. Strategic decisions could be guided by a long-term aim, such as the desire that all schools eventually incorporate inter school contact as an accepted and unexceptional part of their practice, or that Areas Boards develop support schemes which exceed their minimum statutory responsibilities toward EMU by promoting inter school contact.

**The choice of funding route(s) will therefore be of crucial importance in influencing the sorts of development in cross community contact which may take place at all levels in the Northern Ireland education system. Given that practice is far from institutional-ised, the wisest choice may be a mixture of funding routes, since this gives policy-makers most flexibility for future choices. However, the initial balance between a central agency, Area Boards, and individual school budgets will need to be carefully considered.**

## SUMMARY

We have suggested that recent legislative changes and curriculum reforms have encouraged schools in Northern Ireland to adopt a more reconstructionist role which relates cultural development to educational practice. A number of structural changes within the education system have created a climate where different forms of educational process may begin to develop as part of EMU. **Opportunities for inter school contact represent a climate for EMU to develop, but changes to the structure of education do not in themselves guarantee that the values associated with EMU will take root in schools.**

**The long term impact of EMU will be dependent on the reconstructionist role which schools are prepared to develop.** Increased contact between maintained and controlled schools may be one indicator that schools are adopting such a role. However, other external restraints and resistances may dictate how able schools are to adopt a reconstructionist role. The innovative school will initiate debate and development by clarifying its own **values** in relation to EMU, discussing the **curriculum** and cultural development, and defining how these affect **relationships** within and between schools.

Development within schools will be enhanced by **support from Area Boards** particularly through in-service and field support, and support in developing school policy. This suggests that Area Boards need to review staffing levels so that they reflect increased responsibility to support the development of EMU as part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Our experience in Strabane suggests that the **level of funding** which would be required if all schools devoted 3.5% of teaching time to inter school contact, would be in the order of £1.39 million. This contrasts with £0.65 million made available through the Cross Community Contact Scheme in 1989/90. However, the future level of funding may need to be set in relation to what policy-makers consider to be the basic opportunity for contact which the education system can provide for all pupils in Northern Ireland. This means that future funding may need to be more of the order £1 to 5 million (roughly 0.2-1% of the annual recurrent expenditure on education in Northern Ireland). The estimates assume that all schools in Northern Ireland attempt to give their pupils opportunities for cross community contact, but the additional cost of teacher cover and transport are not included.

**There exist a number of strategies for the future funding of inter school contact.** Each gives different emphasis to routing money through a **central agengy, Area Boards,** as part of **individual school budgets** or a **combination** of these.

**In the long term, a mixture of funding routes would give decision makers greater flexibility in influencing the direction of future development.** Emphasis on different funding channels at different times can create different climates. An emphasis on central control of funding encourages overall development, an emphasis on Board control induces development of support structures, and an emphasis on funding through individual school budgets induces schools to perceive inter school contact as an unexceptional part of their practice. All three are important so the balance of funding by different routes will need to be carefully judged and monitored.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Inter School Links project extended over the four-year period 1986-90. The primary purpose of the project was to investigate how controlled and maintained schools could develop co-operative relationships so that children from the two main cultural traditions in Northern Ireland could meet and work together as part of their formal education.

An account of the initial two years of the project is given in a previous report (Dunn and Smith, 1989). Project work during that period was described as school-based and interventionist, involving negotiation and consultation with schools in a particular community. This led to schools in Strabane adopting a structured framework for inter school co-operation. A number of suggestions and recommendations were then made which we felt would strengthen the development of inter school contact and encourage schools to see the work as an accepted and integral feature of the school curriculum. Publication of the first report, *Inter School Links*, coincided with government proposals for major legislative and curricular reforms in the Northern Ireland education system. These reforms give greater prominence to cultural development within and between schools through the introduction of two curricular themes (Education for Mutual Understanding and Cultural Heritage) for all schools in Northern Ireland. The situation has therefore been dramatically changed to one where all schools now have a statutory responsibility to develop work in this area.

This report, *Extending Inter School Links*, has dealt with work carried out during the last two years of the project. During this time the project was extended in three ways.

A process of CONSOLIDATION took place whereby inter school links were strengthened and more deeply entrenched within the original community of schools.

A process of DISSEMINATION took place whereby the experiences of the project became available to a wider audience. Work was initiated with schools in two other communities to investigate how readily they could adopt a structured framework for inter school contact.

A process of EVALUATION began by looking at the strengths and weaknesses of various forms of contact, the impact on pupils of a particular programme, the perceptions of teachers, the attitudes of parents, and the prospects of links enduring.

Over time the project has gradually moved from an early emphasis on development with schools toward a consideration of research and evaluative issues. The concluding part of this report therefore identifies the main research findings from which a number of recommendations are made.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

In Northern Ireland there are many expectations of what can be achieved by encouraging contact between Protestant and Catholic children. These range from the extravagant to the cynical, from expectations that contact will bring an end to violence to suspicion that it is a distraction from the 'real' issues of social division. This project has allowed us to explore what schools find feasible in practice, and we hope our findings give some guide to what it might be reasonable to expect from inter school contact. The main research findings are summarised under eight headings:

## 1 Forms of Contact

Whilst a broad base of practice in cross community contact between schools has emerged most seem to be variations on three generic forms:

(a) Single day contact, usually outside the school on an educational visit or fieldwork;

(b) Contact in each others' school, sometimes involving work in mixed classes;

(c) Residential work usually involving children living and working together away from home over a number of days.

Whichever form of contact is used there are logistical problems to be overcome and consideration given to the relative value derived from contact within large groups or small groups. Teachers generally view small groups to be the more desirable since interpersonal contact between pupils is more likely, but current teacher/pupil ratios make this the more difficult to achieve in practice.

## 2 How Much Contact?

It is not clear whether it is the 'duration' of contact or the 'frequency' of contact which contributes most to a 'meaningful' experience for children in EMU terms.

A varied programme might consist of an educational outing in the first school term, six class-based sessions in the second, and a residential in the third. Given the pressure to cover other aspects of the curriculum, teachers may find this achievable. Even so such a programme would still only represent 44 hours of contact, i.e. 3.5% of teaching time available in the school year. This puts a realistic perspective on what it may be possible to achieve through contact alone.

## 3 Venues for Contact

There appear to be three broad options open to teachers organising contact:

(a) Neutral venues, often outside the local environment such as museums and residential centres;

(b) Common venues, usually a location in the local community such as a leisure centre which may encourage pupils to regard the venue as common territory or a shared space;

(c) Each others' territory, which often means visiting each others' schools and can encourage notions of hosting.

Teachers expressed a concern about the amount of time which can be taken up by travelling to and from venues. If contact is to become accepted as routine and regular the use of local venues is more economical of time. The use of each others' schools is more economical of cost, although some schools experience accommodation problems or lack suitable space for joint classes.

## 4 Types of Activity

The types of contact activity currently operating under the banner of EMU are too diverse to categorise. However, there are a number of dichotomies which may apply to the emphasis of any particular activity:

(a) social - educational

Recreational activities may have a greater social dimension that those which are focused on completing a particular educational task;

(b) intergroup - interpersonal

Contact can be organised so that the experience is essentially one group encountering another, or this may be broken down to increase the chances that pupils from different traditions encounter each other as individuals;

(c) curricular - extra curricular

Curricular activities are more likely to take place within the school day and involve 'normal school work', whilst extra-curricular activities may be regarded as excep-

tional or peripheral, often organised after school on a voluntary basis;

(d) intellectual - emotional

Some activities depend more on pupils assimilating and organising information, perhaps depending on material derived from a particular discipline. Other activities will depend more on the more affective aspects of relationships encouraging children to express feelings and share experiences;

(e) explicit - implicit

Activities may focus on issues which have a bearing on relationships between the two main traditions in Northern Ireland, its historical development or work related to conflict. Alternatively, pupils might meet simply for the experience of working co-operatively through an activity such as drama with no direct reference to issues affecting community relations.

Such dichotomies are not fixed or mutually exclusive, and they do not suggest that any more value should be placed on an activity simply because it sits closer to one end than the other. Rather, it may be useful for teachers to consider how the type of activity they use lends itself to their specific objectives for contact and whether it is likely to generate the sort of outcomes they have in mind.

Our experience suggests that Education and Library Boards have a role to play in initiating schemes which provide schools with opportunities for contact, and these can be supplemented by decisions which offer certain support services on an inter school basis.

## 5 Impact on Pupils

An investigation of the impact on pupils of cross community contact used a number of evaluative techniques with 12 year-old children studying a common history programme in Strabane. We were able to look at differences between Catholic and Protestant children, differences before and after the programme, and differences between children who had contact and children who did not. There were three dimensions to evaluating the programme:

(a) Identity

National allegiance was considered as one aspect of pupil identity. This was looked at through a question about the capital city of the country and the analysis of 454 essays entitled 'My Country' written by pupils.

Over sixty percent of all essays contained some reference to the current conflict, violence or the existence of two cultural traditions in Northern Ireland.

Snapshots before the programme suggested that pupils' overall evaluation of their country was more positive than negative, whilst after the programme their overall evaluations were more negative than positive.

The most frequently mentioned negative feature of the country was violence, mentioned by fifty percent of both Protestant and Catholic pupils.

The results confirmed earlier research showing there are significant differences between the national allegiance of Protestant and Catholic children, although the extent of such differences seems related to the technique used to detect it.

The most frequent labels which children used to identify their country were 'Ireland' or 'Northern Ireland'. Labels suggested by earlier studies such as Ulster or Britain were used by only a small number of pupils.

The most important finding was that the history programme had no significant effect on the identity labels which children chose for their country or the city they identified as its capital. The evidence is that the programme had little effect on existing national allegiances. If anything the experience of contact seems to have helped some pupils clarify their national allegiance. The programme had not been designed to erode pupils' national allegiance or sense of cultural identity, our finding should provide reassurance on this issue.

(b) Awareness of the 'Other Community'

The programme included a specific exercise which was designed to encourage pupils to make use of a common data base in identifying the most common surnames in their town. Our findings indicate that this had no significant effect. Even after a common data base was generated, pupils still perceived the most common surnames to come from their own cultural tradition.

Results also suggest that the programme may have helped the Protestant pupils who experienced contact become more aware of Catholic schools in the town. This was attributed to a numerical imbalance where the Protestant pupils formed a minority within the contact group. We suggest that numerical balance is an important aspect of achieving a sense of equality between the two traditions.

(c) Understanding and Uncertainty

We found that the history programme made some impact in communicating to pupils historical concepts or knowledge, such as the historical usage of the term plantation, a sense of time, reasons for emigration and knowledge of different groups which settled in Ireland during its past. There was some evidence to suggest that pupils were able to apply this knowledge to make

personal judgements about the influence which different settler groups have had on present society in Northern Ireland.

Results suggest that a possible effect of the programme was to create a degree of 'uncertainty' in some pupils' minds on some issues. For example, pupils became more suspicious of the implications of the term 'native' and their responses before and after the programme suggested that a degree of uncertainty had been generated about who might be regarded as the indigenous people of Ireland. This need not mean that pupils were confused, but could indicate that a degree of uncertainty is part of a process which develops critical thinking.

Pupils' own comments about the programme indicated that they enjoyed the joint educational outings best.

Seventy five percent of both Protestant and Catholic pupils saw value in meeting pupils from the other schools, and twenty five percent recognised a community relations dimension to the contact.

A smaller percentage of pupils (11% of Protestant and 3% of Catholic) expressed views which suggested that they felt embarrassed or awkward about meeting pupils from the other schools, although most of these still felt the experience had been worthwhile.

## 6 Teachers

Our interviews with teachers revealed concerns about resources, funding, staffing and the time involved in generating inter school contact.

Ambivalent feelings were expressed about the movement of cross community work to a more prominent position within the school curriculum. Our findings were consistent with a study carried out by the field officer (Bullick, 1990). This indicated that, even though many teachers are suspicious of the political motivation behind recent reforms, most still recognise the educational value of work developed under the auspices of EMU.

Our findings suggest that teachers feel more comfortable with a low profile approach which does not make explicit reference to community relations issues.

Discussions with teachers indicated that they would welcome inservice support which:

(a) provides experience of working with a mixed group of pupils alongside another teacher;

(b) provides experience of styles of teaching particularly appropriate to EMU;

(c) gives experience of how controversial issues may be handled in the classroom and with mixed groups;

## 7 Parents

Research findings on parental opinion were limited to a survey of parents from three Strabane primary schools. We are therefore cautious about extrapolating the findings to the general population of parents.

There was some evidence to suggest that the climate of parental opinion is more dependent on the immediate school environment than on whether a school is controlled or maintained.

Responses from Strabane parents indicated that:

(a) The climate of parental opinion within the two cultural traditions is characterised more by its similarity than its difference;

(b) There was considerable support for inter school contact from parents in both communities (87% of Protestant and 96% of Catholic parents strongly agreed or agreed with contact);

(c) A minority of parents (13% of Protestant and 5% of Catholic) were unsupportive or disagreed with contact;

(d) A majority (75% of all parents) felt that schools should arrange for contact at least once a week (25% daily and 50% once a week);

(e) A minority (7% of all parents) felt that children should only meet once a year or never (2% once a year and 5% never);

(f) A majority of parents agreed with the three generic forms of contact. Joint field trips were supported by 89% of Protestant and 93% of Catholic parents. Visits to each others' schools were supported by 87% of Protestant and 94% of Catholic parents. Residential trips involving an overnight stay in Northern Ireland were supported by 79% of Protestant and 78% of Catholic parents;

(g) Virtually all of the parents surveyed were aware if their child had taken part in cross community contact as part of the schools' participation in the project;

(h) Responses from parents showed considerable awareness of what EMU is about and most comments suggested that they regard contact between pupils to be worthwhile;

(i) Although most parents expressed general support for inter school contact some, in common with teachers, also expressed concern regarding political motivation behind the introduction of EMU to the school curriculum.

## 8 Long Term Prospects

Our speculations about the long term prospects of inter school contact becoming accepted as an integral feature of the school curriculum are qualified by statements which draw attention to the logistical difficulties and internal resistances which schools have to overcome. Studies suggest that a realistic timescale for curriculum change to take root in schools is likely to be measured in decades rather than years.

Nevertheless, we are reasonably confident that the framework for contact developed by Strabane schools has become institutionally based and should prove to be fairly resilient.

Our experience of transporting the framework to other communities was limited by time and the inability to maintain a sustained presence on the ground through lack of resources. This confirms our view that the pace of development cannot be short-circuited and demands an approach which is tentative and sensitive. We found it unrealistic to expect schools to internalise new sets of institutional relationship in anything less than a three-year period and only then with sustained support and resources.

We have suggested that future development of contact as part of EMU will not develop uniformly across all schools despite the introduction of a common curriculum. This is partly because schools need to respond to the particular circumstances of their local climate. Some schools simply exhibit more of the characteristics of an innovative institution than others. Another factor may be the priority which different Education and Library Boards give to this aspect of the curriculum and this will be reflected in the level of support they offer schools.

Our discussions with teachers suggest that they have considerable doubts about whether schools could operate a universal system of inter school links so that every pupil in every school has the opportunity of a meaningful and sustained experience of contact. The general feeling is that this would be logistically unattainable and prohibitive in terms of cost. However, this was not presented as an argument that the development of contact should be abandoned.

Our experience of working with Strabane schools allowed us to estimate the amount of time that schools may find they can devote to inter school contact in practice. We estimated this to be 44 hours (about 3.5% of the teaching time available in a school year.

We suggested that statutory, curricular reforms do not, in themselves, guarantee that inter school contact will increase, and this is more likely to depend upon three things:

(a) the capacity of individual schools to overcome external constraints and internal resistances and take on a reconstructionist role in incorporating innovation;

(b) the development of appropriate support structures and inservice training by Education and Library Boards;

(c) the provision of funds to meet the additional costs of inter school contact, channelled through a central agency, through Area Boards, as an integral part of individual school budgets, or a combination of these.

We drew on our experience with Strabane schools to estimate the overall cost to the education system if 3.5% of all schools' activity is concerned with inter school contact. This estimate suggested costs would be of the order £1 to 5 million (roughly 0.2-1% of the annual recurrent expenditure on education in Northern Ireland), which suggests that the £0.65 million currently provided through the Cross Community Contact Scheme would be insufficient.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Research findings from the project have led us to make recommendations under four general headings:

### 1 The Future Climate for Inter School Contact

Our experience suggests that attitudes amongst teachers and parents are ambivalent towards the way current government policy has cast a spotlight on the role of education in developing better community relations. On the positive side there is considerable sympathy for the notion that schools should be active in this area, and substantial support for them taking steps to implement practical schemes. On the negative side people are wary and culturally suspicious of a political agenda which suggests that education is being used to develop an integrationist social policy. Opportunities for local development of inter school contact will therefore be affected by the pervading political climate and we recommend that government is sensitive to this.

### 2 Support and Inservice Training

Now that schools have a statutory responsibility to develop EMU and Cultural Heritage through the curriculum it is likely that co-operative contact between schools will increase. Legislation also places the responsibility for curriculum support with Education and Library Boards. We recommend that:

(a) Education and Library Boards are encouraged to co-ordinate their plans for EMU so that there is consistency in the level and type of support received by schools in different parts of the province. They will also need some working agreement on how support will be provided for schools which create links across Board boundaries;

(b) Education and Library Boards review their staffing arrangements to convince themselves that these reflect the priority they attach to inter school contact, and are sufficient to discharge their statutory responsibility in supporting EMU as part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum;

(c) Education and Library Boards are encouraged to put forward their views on how the funding of inter school contact may be administered, bearing in mind that a resolution between central, regional and local funding needs to be found.

### 3 Funding

We recommend that the Department of Education review the increased level of funding which will be necessary to reflect the 3.5% of time which schools might devote to inter school contact.

We recommend that the Department of Education pursue a policy which achieves a combination of funding routes to support inter school contact.

We recommend that the balance between central, regional and local funding is arrived at after consultations with Education and Library Boards and school Boards of Governors about their needs and priorities in relation to inter school contact.

### 4 Evaluation

There will be natural concern to assess the impact of EMU. There are two asects to this. First is a need to evaluate the impact of the policy on the education system as a whole. We recommend that such an evaluation is based less on the notion of policy compliance at different levels, but more on an appraisal of the variety of aims, priority and practice which the policy generates throughout the system. Second, now that EMU is part of the formal curriculum there is increased concern to evaluate the impact of EMU activities on pupils. We recommend that teachers are given support which encourages them to build elements into contact programmes which allow them to monitor and assess their impact on children over a long period of time.

We also suggest that schools might consider the use of simple surveys to confirm parental opinion on inter school contact and assist them with planning. We recommend that further research investigates parental opinion in more detail.

### 5 Comparative Studies

The function of education in divided communities is a universal issue and considerable experience has now been accumulated locally. We hope that researchers are encouraged to develop working relationships with those in other countries who are looking at similar issues.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

**Schools Involved with the Inter School Links Project**

| STRABANE PRIMARY SCHOOLS | | |
|---|---|---|
| *SCHOOL* | *TYPE* | *PUPILS* |
| Barrack Street Boys' | maintained | 302 |
| Girls' Convent | maintained | 265 |
| Strabane Primary | controlled | 236 |

| STRABANE POST-PRIMARY | | |
|---|---|---|
| *SCHOOL* | *TYPE* | *PUPILS* |
| Convent Grammar | voluntary | 406 |
| Our Lady of Mercy | maintained | 593 |
| St Colman's High | maintained | 954 |
| Strabane Grammar | controlled | 340 |
| Strabane High | controlled | 600 |

| LIMAVADY PRIMARY SCHOOLS | | |
|---|---|---|
| *SCHOOL* | *TYPE* | *PUPILS* |
| Drumachose | controlled | 398 |
| Limavady Central | controlled | 550 |
| Termoncanice | maintained | 734 |

| ENNISKILLEN POST-PRIMARY | | |
|---|---|---|
| *SCHOOL* | *TYPE* | *PUPILS* |
| Enniskillen Collegiate | controlled | 420 |
| Enniskillen High | controlled | 670 |
| St Franchea's Girls | maintained | 420 |
| St Joseph's Boys | maintained | 350 |
| Convent Grammar | voluntary | 675 |
| Portora Royal School | voluntary | 430 |
| St Michael's Grammar | voluntary | 625 |

(Source: Register of Schools, Western Education and Library Board, 1986)

## APPENDIX B

**Numbers of Pupils Providing Data for Evaluation of the History Programme in Strabane Schools**

| | | Before | After |
|---|---|---|---|
| Co-ed controlled grammar | contact | 23 | 12 |
| | non-contact | 21 | 18 |
| Co-ed controlled secondary | contact | 22 | 17 |
| | non-contact | 21 | 17 |
| Girls maintained grammar | contact | 34 | 31 |
| | non-contact | 34 | 27 |
| Girls maintained secondary | contact | 27 | 25 |
| | non-contact | 24 | 20 |
| Boys maintained secondary | contact | 23 | 20 |
| | non-contact | 22 | 16 |
| Totals | | 251 | 203 |

The difference between before and after totals is due to absenteeism.

Within the 251 pupils providing data, the following ratios applied:

| | |
|---|---|
| Grammar/Secondary | 57/194 |
| Boys/Girls | 88/163 |
| Controlled/Maintained | 87/164 |
| Contact/Non-contact | 129/122 |

## Pupils' Essays on 'My Country'

An initial reading of the 454 essays from Strabane pupils soon showed the complexity of written responses. The content of essays was wide ranging:

Many pupils referred to the climate and the environment:

*"My Country has a lot of life. It is not all quiet and boring. it is full of Greenery and lots of hedges and things like that. I think you might have guessed I live in Ireland"*

*"We have a good countryside and a lot of trees and flowers so we can go out for walks and we can have a big garden and a nice one as well. We have a lot of animals as well. We eat some of the animals as well"*

*"Ireland is a hard country to get used to. It is a nice place to visit but in the winter it is cold and wet (nearly like the summer). There is a lot of fighting going on at the moment and maybe someday it might stop. There is some good things about Ireland it hasn't earthquakes or volcanoes so there is no need to worry about the ground falling in on you while you're sleeping"*

Or showed a concern for the environment:

*"If I were someon importat the first thing I would do is to stop the fighting And I would try to clean up the society and try to get something done with the ozone layer"*

*"The trees which are being cut down which is destroying the enviroment and the air and is leaving a whole in thee earth"*

*"There is allot of violance that the IRA create and the Army are not doing as much ass they should. Why have we allot of stupid traffic wardens they dont move the traffic on they hold it up. The amount of polution that farmers make would choke you to death and they dont give a dam"*

*"In Northern Ireland there is alot of bombing and terriost attacks. But most of the countrysides are beautiful, with rabbtits and other wildlife. But the rabbits are getting very scarce because people are shooting them and gas's and things like that"*

Some were quite romanticised:

*"The country is a lovely place....The fire on in the cold and windy nights. The teapot on the cooker to drink something to keep you warm, the animals out in the shed feeling someone cares. The dogs out in the kennel getting warm for bed. The children fast asleep with the*

*star shineing upond them God is whating over them they will be safe"*

Some pragmatic:

*"In my country there is a wide variety of building materials for houses to live in"*

Some were brief and to the point:

*"I live in Ireland. I think it is a dump"*

Some were unintentionally amusing:

*"Ireland is a little island that fell off England"*

*"I like my country because it is colourful. People think it is small but when you are in it looks to be very big"*

*"My country may be small but I can't change that. I used to live in whales but compar whales with Ireland and you will find a lot of different things, because no other country can beat what Irelands got. If you understand what I mean"*

A few were rather enigmatic:

*"There's only one phone box in my country"*

*"There are two Republican armies. The IRA and the Unionists"*

*"Our country is having a phase which many people call the trouble. I don't really understand it but I think it is because paramilitary groups like the IRA, INLA etc don't want the British Army to help keep the peace"*

**Over sixty percent of all the essays contained some reference to the current conflict, violence or the existence of two cultural traditions.** Some of these tried to describe or make sense of the situation:

*"My country is called Ireland it is part of the UK. Some people think it is overrun by terrorist and if you go out you'll be blowen up. But Ireland is quiet and peaceful in places"*

*"The country Ireland is the country I live in. The country Ireland has two parts Northern Ireland and southern Ireland and is also split into three different parts Ulster, Lenstier, and Munster. Northern Ireland is the more riotus end I am afraid"*

*"The country I live in is called Ireland the country is divided into two parts Ireland and Northern Ireland. I live in Northern Ireland there is a lot of violence where I live because the soldiers are hear and the people do not want them to be hear so they throw stones and bottles at them and sometimes they shoot back plastic bullets. There is a kind of army called the IRA and they*

kill soldiers and police and sometimes the police shoot them and kill them. The IRA blow up factories and cars. Sometimes they kill innocent people and there are different other organisations that kill too"

"Where I live there is alot of Prodisons and when the Catholics moved in the prodisons moved out"

"My country is quite small and there is groups of catholics and Proudestants going round the streets killing one another. There is a lot of people but most of them are quite friendly if even they are catholics or proudestants"

A number of essays suggested that some children see the conflict as a routine part of life:

"Ireland might have its' disadvantages like bombs, and people getting killed but that happens everywhere in the world"

"In Derry there is a lot of bombs and that kind of stuff"

"Ireland in the North is always at wars with IRA and other Republicans. Even though there are allot of bombing the place isn't that bad. Strabane is a quiet sort of place except sometimes there are shops which are bombed"

Some saw little prospect for change:

"Britain took northern Ireland over a long time ago and is not much hope of them giving it back to Ireland"

"My country is Northern Ireland. It is a small country, and it is part of Britain. There is a lot of trouble going on in Northern Ireland between Prostants and Catholicks. It is very stubet I think but there is not a thing I can do about it"

A few thought life was too dull:

"My country is called Strabane it is a very big place. It is a very boring town the boys are ugly"

"I live in Strabane where there is no bombs compared to Belfast. It is very boring here"

But many expressed a wish for the end of violence:

"If I had three wishes to make Ireland a better place I would wish for peace Health Wealth"

"I think the relionjohn volice should stop because it is very silly and kills too many people and gives our country a bad name with other countrys"

"If I were to rule a contry I would not have any fighting.....The only thing that is wrong with my country at the minute is the vilence. I hate vilonce"

Some were partisan in their views:

"It is the foudtain of War the bristish People's Greed is so Great that innconet People have had to die for no reason Ireland is so Great for its legends that the countryside is so beautiful that the British don't know what They are doing they don't care about The Irish Traditions or its Army that Get us into trouble because of Greed. It's army is trying to fight of Blood Thirsty Mongrols who try to steal our land"

"The war is like a disease killing people but the SAS will soon stop that"

"My country could be better in many ways. It would be better if the English would get out and stay out"

"My country Northern Ireland is run by Margaret thatcher she has been in power for quite a while and I believe she will win the next election with flying colours. There is allot of violence in my country and if we had a shoot to kill policy the IRA would soon cease to exist and northern Ireland would be a better place all round. There is allot of fighting between catholics and proti-tants and this shouldn't happen I am a protistant myself and I think Catholics start allot of the fightingm I'm not saying they are a burden on society but they do start allot of it"

Some offered solutions:

"I reckon that Ireland should be split in two. The border should be in the middle not away up at the top. If the brits left and there was a new border, prodestins could live in the North or South and the Christans live in the other part of the country"

"I wish that the "Anglo Irish Agreement" was scrapped and that Ireland was left like it is now"

"I think Margaret Thatcher schould let N.Ireland go"

"I'd rather live somewhere nice and quiet.....many Irish people are very smart but leave their country for a Job or something"

"I don't like the troubles in Ireland and I don't like the IRA. I don't like the brits been in Ireland and I'd like it better if it was just cops"

A few mentioned a way forward through education:

"I think more state schools should be used because it helps different relinjohns get on better. I went to a primary state school. My best friend was a different relionjohn but we didn't care"

"Mixed schools are a very good idea. If our children can learn to live in peace with other religons, they will be able to live with them when they grow up and they

*will not fight"*

A few conveyed a sense of despair:

*"I also wish that everyone would respect each other and there was no Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and that we were all the same but now, I think Ireland is a cruel country"*

*"Our population is getting smaller an smaller Each day with all the shooting and killings. The Government isn't very organised."*

*"My country is filled with violence between prodetants and catholics. The place where I live is looking like a rainbow with red, white and blue. Also there is Gobnascale which is Green, White and Orange. And then there the groups like the IRA and the UVF. The IRA fight the police, but the UVF sometimes fight. Our country is falling to bits with these terrorist groups"*

*"My country (Ireland) to me is just a battle field. I hate living in fear of an IRA mistake."*

### Did Pupils Recognise their Country as a Contested Issue?

The table below shows that overall there was a similar increase in the percentage of Protestant and Catholic pupils who became aware that their country is a contested issue by the end of the teaching programme. This effect seems to be consistent for all pupils studying the programme.

**Percentages of Pupils Aware that their Country is a Contested Issue**

|  | Before (n=251) | After (n=203) |
|---|---|---|
| Protestant | 60 | 72 |
| Catholic | 52 | 62 |
| Contact | 50 | 53 |
| Non-Contact | 60 | 77 |

When we looked at other issues (e.g. the enviroment, health, litter etc) the pattern was not as consistent. Instead, mention of these issues were clustered together on a class basis. This suggested that at particular times a sort of consensus existed within particular classes that certain issues were more important than others. Our explanation for this was, as well as studying the common history programme, project classes would have been receiving lessons in a range of subjects which had not been jointly planned by the schools. So a class in one school may have received an environmental studies class emphasising health education, whilst another in another school may have been looking at pollution. The result would be a differential awareness of these issues on the part of pupils in the different schools. In contrast, the history programme, which was jointly planned, produced a more uniform effect.

Reasons Given for the Country Being a Contested Issue

Both before and after the programme only 26% of the 454 essays written by pupils identified reasons why they felt their country was a contested issue. The four main reasons mentioned were Religious (13%), Political (10%), Historical (2%), and Social (1%). There was little difference between Protestants and Catholics, or before and after the programme.

## APPENDIX E

### Pupils' Overall Evaluation of their Country

The essays were examined to see whether pupils gave an overall evaluation of their country which described it in generally positive or negative terms, or portrayed a more balanced picture by giving equal weight to good and bad points.

### Percentage of Pupils Giving an Overall Evaluation of their Country

|  |  | Positive | Negative | Balanced | None | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Protestant | Before | 35 | 33 | 17 | 15 | 100 |
|  | After | 22 | 56 | 16 | 6 | 100 |
| Catholic | Before | 68 | 14 | 14 | 4 | 100 |
|  | After | 45 | 35 | 14 | 6 | 100 |
| Contact | Before | 60 | 15 | 15 | 10 | 100 |
|  | After | 37 | 37 | 14 | 12 | 100 |
| Non-Contact | Before | 54 | 25 | 14 | 7 | 100 |
|  | After | 38 | 46 | 14 | 2 | 100 |

The numbers of pupils giving a balanced picture of their country, mentioning both positive and negative features, is constant between groups and over time. However, the most interesting feature of the data is the change from positive to negative feelings about their country by all the various subgroups. Why this should be so is difficult to disentangle, but it may be that the experience of the history unit made a contribution in that it introduced a realistic, or non-idealised version of the settler groups in Ireland's past.

More Catholic pupils (68%) started out with an overall positive evaluation of their country, fewer (45%) continued to have this view. By the time the programme ended the number giving a negative evaluation had increased from 14% to 35%.

Fewer Protestant pupils (35%) began with an overall positive evaluation of their country, and fewer (22%) continued to hold this. By the time the programme had ended the number giving a negative evaluation of their country had increased from 33% to 56%.

These trends were consistent for contact and non-contact pupils. This means that, if there is a causal connection between the trends and the history programme, it is more likely that the effects are attributable to the way the programme was taught rather than the experience of contact alone.

However, we can only infer such a causal connection between these trends and the history programme which pupils were taught. The programme specifically aimed *"to redress the common myths of Legitimacy and Racial Superiority as the root causes of present day divisions and emphasise the diversity in the evolution of modern society in Ireland."* It sought to do this by introducing pupils to the various groups of people who have settled the island over time. This encourages pupils to recognise that the identification of people in the modern society who are 'indigeneous' or 'native' is less straightforward than they might think. The programme seeks to promote the notion that it is questionable whether any single group within current society has a more rightful claim to ownership of the modern country. It could be argued that the programme encourages uncertainty by raising difficult questions about the relationships between 'identity', 'nationality' and 'territory'. If the history course was influential, this can be thought of as a positive and optimistic effect. However, it must be made clear that the data from the essays emerges from two 'snapshots' at two different points in time. Differences might equally be attributed to other events current at the time such as the political climate. Yet other pictures may have emerged if 'snapshots' had been taken at other intervals in time.

## Positive Features which Pupils Identified about their Country

Pupils identified four main sorts of positive feature associated with a favourable evaluation of their country. In order of popularity these were: features to do with a pleasant environment or climate; good opportunities for social and leisure activities; appreciation of the country's history and tradition, for example, its music and folklore; and the industry, creativity and productivity of the people. Many pupils mentioned more than one feature.

### Percentage of Pupils who Identified the Following Positive Features

|  | Protestant (n=151) | Catholic (n=303) | Contact (n=234) | Non-Contact (n=220) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment, climate | 49 | 66 | 55 | 57 |
| Social and leisure | 19 | 37 | 28 | 24 |
| History and tradition | 9 | 31 | 28 | 22 |
| Productivity | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

The order of priority of these positive features was the same for Protestant and Catholic pupils, and the results were virtually the same for contact and non-contact groups. Comments which identified the history and tradition of the country as a positive feature were more frequently made by Catholic (31%) than Protestant (9%) pupils.

The positive features maintained the same order of priority in the league table before and after the programme.

## Negative Features which Pupils Identified about their Country

Pupils identified seven main sorts of negative feature associated with an unfavourable evaluation of their country. The following table shows these, with those listed most frequently coming at the top.

### Percentage of Pupils who Identified the Following Negative Features

|  | Protestant (n=151) | Catholic (n=303) | Contact (n=234) | Non-Contact (n=220) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Violence | 58 | 56 | 49 | 66 |
| Environment, weather | 33 | 21 | 20 | 31 |
| Social and amenities | 7 | 8 | 9 | 7 |
| Bad Habits | 9 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| Crime | 7 | 4 | 4 | 7 |
| The Economy | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| People from the other community | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |

The most frequently mentioned negative feature of the country was violence connected with the current conflict. This was consistently mentioned by Protestant, Catholic, contact and non-contact pupils, and all these groups mentioned violence more frequently at the end of the programme.

References to adverse weather and poor environment contributed to negative overall evaluations of the country. The inclusion of this category to support both negative and positive evaluations shows the differences of opinion over these matters, perhaps reflecting our continual preoccupation with the weather in a changeable climate. However, comparison between tables show how the environment and climate is much more likely to be used to make positive statements about the country.

The other negative features maintained the same order of priority in the league table before and after the programme with consistent patterns between Protestant, Catholic, contact and non-contact groups.

## Pupils' Responses to Questions about History

### 1 The Importance of History

Pupils were simply asked 'Why is history important?'. By far the most popular response was *to find out about our ancestors and the past* (mentioned by 78% of pupils). Next by a long way was *to find out about one's own country* (8%) and a variety of other answers explaining that it is needed for exams, that knowledge is important for its own sake, that history is not important, or that history is important *"in case you become a History Teacher"*. There was no appreciable difference, either in the way any of the groups answered this question, or as a result of before and after data.

### 2 Reasons for Emigration

A later part of the history programme dealt with emigration and immigration, looking at people's motivation to emigrate and the factors which may have influenced people's decisions in Ireland's history. Pupils were asked to say why they think people emigrated from Ireland to America in the past.

The three most popular answers were, *because of the famine* (mentioned by 37%), *to find work* (28%), and *to make a new life* (14%). These were the top three answers for all subgroups irrespective of time. The most noticeable feature was the elimination of the category of answers saying 'don't know' (10% before, 0% after), no doubt attributable to good teaching.

### 3 Sense of Time

A primary aim of the history programme was to convey to pupils a sense of time. That is, a study which looks at historical development over a long period, not dealing with particular periods in history in great depth. It encourages pupils to develop a sense of chronology and understand the relationship between events separated by time. Pupils were asked to say when they thought most emigration from Ireland to America took place.

A sense of historical time is one of the most difficult concepts for children in history. Before the programme began 16% had narrowed it down to around the time of the potato famine in 1845, 10% identified the nineteenth century, and 20% were unable to give any answer. When the programme was complete 18% had identified the period, 20% identified the century and 10% were unable to answer.

### 4 Definitions of 'Plantation'

The history programme also looked briefly at periods of the planned settlement, or plantation of groups in Ireland. A question asked pupils to write what they understood the word 'plantation' to mean. We wished to see if the programme helped children pick up the historical definition of this term.

Before the programme the three top answers overall were, *to plant something in the ground* (29%), *growing crops* (18%), and *a group of trees* (17%). When the programme was complete the three top answers were, *people who come to live in a country* (31%), *putting something in the ground* (20%), and *to build or settle* (13%).

The most striking difference was between contact and non-contact groups over time, where the contact pupils had clearly picked up the historical definition more strongly. Before the programme 11% of the contact group had used the historical definition and when it was complete this had risen to 45%. The corresponding change in the non-contact groups showed an increase in usage of the historical definition from 8% to 18%. This is interesting since an important part of the programme had been site visits to Plantation sites which only involved pupils in the contact groups.

Questionnaire to Parents in Strabane Primary Schools

**PLEASE PUT A CIRCLE AROUND YOUR ANSWER**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Do you think Protestant and Catholic children in Strabane should have the chance to meet and work together as part of school activities ? | strongly agree | agree | don't know | disagree | strongly disagree |
| 2 How often do you think Strabane primary schools should arrange for Catholic and Protestant children to work together ? | daily | once a week | once a term | once a year | never |
| 3 How would you feel about pupils from Strabane primary schools going on joint field trips (for example, a vist to Gortin Glen) ? | strongly agree | agree | don't know | disagree | strongly disagree |
| 4 How would you feel about your child visiting other primary schools in Strabane as part of their class work (for example, to complete a computer project) ? | strongly agree | agree | don't know | disagree | strongly disagree |
| 5 How would you feel about your child going on a residential (overnight) trip within N. Ireland with pupils from the other primary schools in Strabane ? | strongly agree | agree | don't know | disagree | strongly disagree |
| 6 Has your child been involved in working with children from other primary schools in Strabane ? | yes | | don't know | | no |

7 Recent changes in education mean that all pupils in Northern Ireland will learn about **'Education for Mutual Understanding"** (EMU). In the space below, please write what you think EMU is about:

8 If you have any comments you wish to make about the introduction of Education for Mutual Understanding to the school curriculum, please write them below:

## APPENDIX J

**Schools, Pupils and Education Expenditure in
Northern Ireland (1984/85 Financial Year)**

|  | SCHOOLS | PUPILS | CURRENT EXPENDITURE (£Million) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nursery | 84 | 4,642 | 3 |
| Preparatory * | (29) | 4,050 | } 123 |
| Primary | 1013 | 180,978 | |
| Secondary | 182 | 101,887 | } 180 |
| Grammar | 78 | 54,298 | |
| Special | 24 | 2,609 | 9 |
| Other Costs ** | - | - | 268 |
| TOTALS | 1381 | 348,464 | 549 |

* Preparatory included as part of grammar schools
** Other costs include Universities, Further and Adult
education, School meals, Teacher training, Libraries and
· Museums, Youth and Sport services, Administration
and Miscellaneous services

(Source: DENI, Basic Education Statistics, June 1986)

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