
CHAPTER SEVEN

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 permanency 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 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-wagoning, 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 decisions' (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 decisions' (where someone seeks out the views of others before taking the decision); 'share decisions' (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 maintenance 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. Responsibility 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 responsibility 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 Department 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 an 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 drawbacks 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 institutionalised, 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 agency, 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.
