



**Equality Awareness in  
Teacher Education and  
Training in Northern Ireland**

**Final Report  
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## **Executive Summary**

### **Rationale**

In the tender for this project, the Equality Commission outlined evidence which shows that many teachers within Northern Ireland have an under-appreciation of equality issues as they relate to pupils' learning and their own practice within classrooms. Such research evidence also suggests that teachers have had little exposure to these issues in either their initial teacher training or their continuing professional development. This differential exposure to equality issues thus ensures an imbalance and, in most cases, a continued lack of understanding of the impact of equality issues on teachers' own practice and professional development and thereby on the educational achievement of their pupils.

The present study attempts to investigate these themes further and to gauge the extent of awareness and prioritisation of equality issues in teacher education and training in Northern Ireland. The research team was asked to establish the level of awareness of equality issues in relation to the content and delivery of teacher education and training policy, beyond Northern Ireland. This includes and prioritises equality issues in teacher education and training. This desk study collated and analysed currently published materials from other jurisdictions outside Northern Ireland (Strand 1). This material is presented in Section 1 of the report as context and background to the study.

The Graduate School of Education (GSoE) team considered the best way to operationalise the aims of the study was to focus on three specific groups. These were those groups involved with both the provision of initial and continuing teacher education and training and those involved in receiving such education and training. Thus, the overall intentions of this research study were to explore the awareness of equality issues:

- (i) amongst the policy makers and stakeholders in teacher education and training across all levels (Strand 2);
- (ii) amongst providers of teacher education and training at each of its main stages (Strand 2);
- (iii) and amongst the 'users', i.e. the teachers. This group includes those who are experienced teachers, those recently qualified, and those still in training (Strand 3)

### **Structure of the report**

This executive summary presents the main findings and recommendations of the study. The detailed research work is presented in the main sections of the report which are in four parts: Part 1 presents the desk study which positions the study within the wider national and international debates around equality issues and teacher education; Part 2 presents the aims of the study, the research questions and the research design and methods; Part 3 presents the detailed analysis of the data from each of the main participant groups and Part 4 recaps on the main findings and recommendations.

## **SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

### **Section A: Equality Issues at Policy and System Level**

1. Many respondents sought a coherent and cohesive equality framework within education, underpinned by commonly held values and beliefs, and promoted through continuing professional and personal development, rather than prescribed by legislation.
2. Respondents from the Department of Education (DE) believed that in general, current arrangements do address the major equality issues. However, all other respondents articulated concerns across the major aspects of equality, and believed that current constraints, including resource constraints, limit their capacity to attend to these issues.
3. Evidence from the representatives of other stakeholder groups (Transferors' Representative Council, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Governing Bodies Association) suggests that they believe that their capacity to influence schools' awareness of equality issues and to facilitate good practice is very limited.
4. Overall, evidence from the seminars with policy makers and stakeholders suggests that at the policy level, there is no generally-known or accepted programme within the system either to identify the full range of equality needs, or to address those already identified. Limited resources also reduce capacity to attend to issues such as creating access for pupils with physical disabilities.
5. Because the statutory competency model which underpins the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum does not give explicit prominence to equality issues and, accordingly, these are not given priority within initial teacher education.
6. In focus group discussions with teachers, there seemed to be a clear distinction in terms of awareness of the full range of equality issues between teachers trained outside Northern Ireland and those trained locally. Teachers trained outside Northern Ireland had more explicit exposure to equality issues in their courses of study.
7. It appears that the Department's current dominant agenda of improving standards in schooling obliges schools to prioritise teaching, learning and assessment practices in relation to improving pupil examination performance. This is currently a key indicator of school improvement, and is also a benchmark for teacher performance-related pay. Other concerns for schools, such as equality may be marginalised within this standards agenda.

### **Section B: Equality Issues in Teacher Education and Employment**

1. Respondents from all groups interviewed expressed concern about on-going gender-equality issues in the recruitment and promotion of teachers, especially in primary schools. These issues included unequal access to employment, unequal opportunities for promotion, and perceptions of the 'feminization' of teaching.

Student teachers, in particular, believed that although there are more female teachers, especially of younger children, male teachers still have better opportunities for promotion.

2. Student teachers' and teachers' awareness of equality issues was uneven. This variability may well be a consequence of the very limited emphasis on equality issues within the teacher competence model which dictates the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum. However awareness was more evident among those respondents with direct experience of equality considerations, either from personal experience, or from exposure on an ad hoc basis through certain optional courses.
3. Teachers' take-up of opportunities for training in equality issues varies greatly. Only a minority of teachers at present express an active interest in taking forward such issues. Thus, the main focus of Continuing Professional Development provision in universities and university colleges is on those aspects of the equality agenda prioritised by teachers, in particular Special Educational Needs. This has resulted in the marginalisation of other aspects and in a somewhat disparate and uncoordinated approach to equality issues in general. Given that the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are reluctant to consider introducing courses on equality issues without clear evidence of demand from teachers, it is unlikely that such provision will be expanded in a more systematic way without external encouragement and resourcing.
4. Higher education providers also identified problems of access to Continual Professional Development (CPD) courses and/or training for some teachers, especially in relation to gender, but also location, finance and disadvantage.
5. A significant barrier, identified by teachers, to their wider professional development in these areas was the relative lack of opportunity to teach or work outside their own community background. Aligned with this, was a concern about the unequal access for employment across the Controlled and Maintained school sectors for all teachers.
6. Student teachers felt that applicants to teacher education and students engaged in teacher education should not be discriminated against on the basis of disability or sexuality. However, some believed that this might happen.

### **Section C: Issues of Equality in the Teacher Education Curriculum and in School Classrooms**

1. The Department of Education representatives interviewed expressed the view that the promotion of equal opportunities is the responsibility of all teachers in pursuit of the statutory requirement for all children to have equal access to the curriculum. Through various initiatives and ongoing processes, such as school inspection, the Department believes itself to be well-informed about the nature and extent of disadvantage and inequality.

**Initial Teacher Education Issues**

2. All the providers of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) indicated that equality issues were a consideration within their courses. However, the extent to which the constituent aspects of equality (community background, race, gender, disability) are addressed varies between the providers.
3. Student teachers indicated that, in their experience, the Education for Mutual Understanding programme, designed to heighten mutual awareness of student teachers from Catholic and non-Catholic backgrounds, is not being implemented in an effective way.
4. Issues of gender, race, social class, etc., tend to be covered in ITE in an ad hoc manner, either through subject methods courses or through one-off lectures. It is therefore possible for students to go through their initial teacher education course without having to focus in a formal way on many of the aspects of equality. In addition, the practicalities of the present university-school volunteer partnership model for student placements were considered by the ITE providers to be barriers to equality issues being dealt with effectively during teaching practice.
5. Tutors also may be more comfortable with higher profile equality issues, such as those related to gender and SEN, but seemed to be unsure of the wider area of equality legislation in general and how this applies to schools and student teachers' experiences within schools.
6. Those trained as teachers in Northern Ireland agreed that, in general, issues of equality or equal opportunity were not explicitly addressed in their courses. The exception to this was special educational needs (SEN). Teachers trained in Great Britain expressed the view that issues of gender, race, and social disadvantage had been more formally addressed in their initial teacher education and they appeared to be more confident in addressing such issues in their classrooms.
7. Student teachers felt that the equality issue given greatest emphasis in their courses was differentiation in terms of pupil ability. Although issues such as social disadvantage, the differences between grammar and non-grammar schools, and gender were also addressed in training, they felt they were not taught how to deal with them directly. What knowledge they had about these equality issues came from experiences gained during school placements. These included the following:
  - There are more female teachers, particularly of younger children, yet male teachers have better promotion opportunities;
  - Applicants to teacher education and students should not be discriminated against on the basis of disability or sexuality;
  - Students were highly conscious of attempting to ensure that children of different academic abilities were given equal opportunities in their lessons;
  - Gender was less of an issue for students – however, many of them saw different treatment of girls and boys by teachers as 'unfair';
  - Students were able to describe problems they had observed or encountered with pupils who were from Traveller backgrounds, were disabled or socially disadvantaged. They felt that their university or university college courses did not equip them well to deal with such pupils; and,

- Students commented that, in Northern Ireland, 'race' was considered to be a lesser issue than religion. However, in school placements they had noted the inappropriate attitudes of some pupils in relation to 'race' and ethnic minorities.

### **Continuing Professional Development Issues**

8. The major responsibility for the support of beginning teachers during induction and Early Professional Development lies with their employing schools. Education and Library Board (ELB) Curriculum And Support Services (CASS) have a supplementary, supportive role. Thus, the extent to which schools take seriously these responsibilities is the dominant influence on the beginning teacher. In addition, CASS officers believed that the ethos and value systems of individual schools will largely determine the extent to which beginning teachers are encouraged to engage with any issues of diversity.
9. Within their current programmes of support for beginning teachers, ELBs do not at present explicitly identify equality as a concern. It appears that considerable attention is given within these programmes to issues of differentiated learning. However, this emphasis is located within a framework of the development of effective teaching skills, rather than within an equality agenda.
10. There is at present a range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses dealing with SEN issues. These are popular with teachers and other educationalists, probably because recent reforms contained in the Education (NI) Order 1996 and the accompanying Code of Practice on Special Educational Needs has put pupils with learning difficulties very firmly on the agenda of mainstream schools.
11. Consideration of a more equality-focussed approach to aspects of the ELB support programmes for beginning teachers is in its infancy. ELB officers felt, however, that there may be some scope, within present arrangements, to accord greater priority to equality awareness for beginning teachers, and felt that this would be a productive strategy.

### **Practice in Schools**

12. Teachers were aware of certain equality issues, (e.g. gender, ethnicity) but attention to them in the classroom and in their day-to-day practice varied, depending on how comfortable or knowledgeable they felt in dealing with them. They indicated that individual teachers are often left to deal with equality issues and to take individual responsibility for tackling these issues in their classrooms
13. Teachers acknowledged that issues around gender, especially boys' and girls' achievement had become a particular area of focus in the past few years. They suggested, however, that certain initiatives (e.g. around boys' underachievement) may not be as much about creating equality of opportunity as about fulfilling a more instrumental need within certain schools to improve attainment.

14. Some teachers were more commonly aware of equality issues arising from pupils' social background. However, they also acknowledged that there was a certain degree of labelling attached to children from certain backgrounds, and that children from disadvantaged areas were perhaps not expected to do as well as children from more affluent backgrounds.
15. When speaking of equality issues around disability, teachers normally defined these in relation to special educational needs (SEN), specifically learning or behavioural issues. It was rare for teachers to offer comments on, or to consider, physical disabilities and the integration of pupils with physical disabilities in their schools.
16. Teachers felt that often equality issues of community background (i.e. religion) or 'race' were often categories of equality either ignored (race, especially) or not dealt with adequately (religious differences/sectarianism). They themselves had difficulties in dealing with these issues in their classrooms. In addition, they considered some practices and behaviours in their schools, from colleagues and pupils, around issues of 'race' or religion to be unacceptable, but did not feel able to challenge these within the prevailing ethos of the school.
17. In general, it was felt that most Northern Ireland teachers have had limited experience of diversity, either in their own schooling or in their professional lives. This may limit their capacity to engage across the range of equality issues. In addition, it was felt that the commitment of schools to the equality agenda is variable so that even if teachers individually show commitment to equality issues, they may not be supported in their actions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Section A: Equality Issues at Policy and System Levels

1. The Equality Commission should, if possible, promote a reconsideration of the values which underpin the teacher education system in Northern Ireland in order to shift emphasis away from the teaching of subject knowledge towards an emphasis on an holistic approach to meeting the learning needs of the whole child.
2. If the school system as a whole is to move forward across the range of equality issues, it will be necessary for the Department of Education to prioritise these explicitly in the processes of school improvement.
3. The Equality Commission should seek a more pro-active role in working with government, key education stakeholders and teacher educators to create an explicit and well-known equality programme within the education system and to prioritise the integration of such a programme into teacher education. However this should not be seen as a further external imposition but as an integral aspect of teacher education and school practice.
4. The Equality Commission should consider how it might work with Government and Higher Education Institutions to encourage greater representation of men and minority groups into teacher education. Potential student teachers from less affluent backgrounds should be able to access the same bonus payments from Government to train in Northern Ireland as they receive if they train in Great Britain.
5. The teacher competency framework for initial teacher education (ITE) should be amended to give greater emphasis to the need for teachers to address and deal with the full range of equality issues which may inhibit pupil learning. Progress towards improving awareness of equality issues in teacher education and training, should not be promoted solely through legislation (although this is unquestionably a major avenue), but also through revisiting the underlying principles of education. This is a responsibility which must be shared by all those involved in framing and providing teacher education and by those who are responsible for the employment of teachers.
6. The Equality Commission should recommend to the Department of Education that at least one Professional Development Activity within the EPD programme should have a compulsory equality-related focus.
7. Prioritisation should be given to changing school practice. Stimulus for such change would result from, for example, devising indicators of tangible outcomes in these areas of equality concern, and by resourcing the implementation of new policies, through both recurrent and capital funding processes and through special initiatives. A more explicit focus might also be given to equality indicators within the inspection process, to include explicit monitoring of practice relating to gender, disability and race.



8. In addition, schools might be required to monitor, for example, examination attainment, suspensions and expulsions and attendance rates according to gender, free school meals entitlement, ethnicity, disability and special educational needs. It is likely that the computerised CLASS information system, currently used in Northern Ireland schools can accommodate such monitoring. Such information should be published in the annual reports of school governors to parents.
9. Simultaneously, there is scope for stakeholder groups, such as the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Governing Bodies' Association, the Transferors' Representative Council, to become more proactive (within the limitations of their roles) in prioritising discussion and development around equality concerns for those institutions in which they have some influence. If, for example, Transferor representatives on the Education & Library Boards, the governing body of Stranmillis University College, and Controlled school boards of governors, gave clear priority to the implications of such issues in the on-going decision-making processes of these bodies, equality concerns would become more visible at both system and school levels and in teacher education. In the same way, CCMS and GBA have capacity to highlight areas of concern and to influence behaviour, so could give greater prominence to equality issues within their schools.
10. Given the imminence of new legislation (the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill, currently out for public consultation), many of the issues identified by this research will come to the forefront of concerns in teacher education and schools. Action to support teacher educators and teachers will become urgent, once the final form of the legislation is known. The Commission should therefore prepare guidance for all interested parties in the education system as to the implications of the legislation and how issues may be confronted.
11. If implemented, the recommendations from this study will have some resource implications. Therefore consideration must be given by government to identifying additional monies, possibly hypothecated, to accommodate necessary improvements.

## **Section B: Equality Issues in Teacher Education and Employment**

12. Young people from all backgrounds need to be encouraged to enter teaching as a profession. The Equality Commission should explore with government and Higher Education institutions how access to graduate and post graduate courses for those who come from non-traditional educational backgrounds can be encouraged and enhanced.
13. Gender-inequities in the recruitment and promotion of teachers remain a deeply entrenched issue. The Equality Commission should revisit this issue as a priority and consider how it can progress its work with employers of teachers to redress these employment inequalities as they apply to women and other groups identified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998). The Commission might also consider whether teachers should continue to be exempted from Fair Employment legislation and whether individual schools should be designated as public bodies for the purposes of Section 75.

14. A more in-depth approach to training and the promotion of a broader range of experience to enhance teachers' awareness of equality issues should be considered. This might be facilitated by the use of secondments and exchanges within the teaching profession across all types of school in Northern Ireland. This approach would be enhanced if supported by longer and more sustained training by Curriculum and Advisory Support Services (CASS) and others with some specialist knowledge in the area of equality. If this training were delivered with firm backing by the Education and Library Boards and the Department of Education it would also introduce a more multi-agency approach as proposed by the universities and university colleges.
15. Issues of unequal access for teachers to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses, according to factors including gender, location, educational background and financial constraints, need to be addressed.

### **Section C: Issues of Equality in the Teacher Education Curriculum and in School Classrooms**

16. There is a need to ensure that accurate information on equality legislation, as it relates to schools, be provided and be easily accessible to those involved in the provision of initial teacher education. This should have both a primary and post-primary focus. Higher Education institutions should be encouraged to work to ensure that tutors involved in the provision of ITE are trained in the applications of this legislation within schools. The Commission should seek a more pro-active role in working with teacher educators in the integration of equality issues into ITE programmes. However such integration should not be seen as a further external imposition but as a core aspect of the ITE curriculum. This would go some way to reduce the lack of awareness of equality issues as expressed by tutors.
17. In order to address the understandable reluctance of Higher Education institutions to introduce courses on topics for which they feel there will be limited demand, equality awareness should be included as a core outcome of all Continuing Professional Development modules taught. Additionally, HEIs may be encouraged to review the viability of offering specific modules on equality issues in education.
18. The Equality Commission should consider how it might support tutors and student teachers through the provision of suitable resources including training and web-based materials, CD ROMs, and other teaching resources. The Commission might also consider offering specialist expertise as appropriate to the institutions concerned: the existing EC education-related materials e.g. *Raising Awareness – Diversity and Racism* (2001) would provide a useful basis for this if more widely disseminated and supported.
19. The Curriculum and Advisory Support Services (CASS) of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) should also consider how they might influence, in a more systematic fashion, teacher tutors within schools who are responsible for beginning teachers, to consider equality issues as appropriate foci for Early Professional Development work. It would also be beneficial to encourage wider learning within

schools from these EPD activities, perhaps through their incorporation into wider school development planning and practice.

20. Consideration should be given within CASS beginning teacher programmes to creating a more explicit equality framework so that issues of access to learning for all pupils are not simply viewed as a skills-based activity.
21. Although attention is given within schools to some issues of equality, especially special needs and gender differences in attainment, it is recommended that, through teacher education programmes, teachers should be encouraged to locate these within the broader debate of equality. This will require the development of appropriate values and attitudes, as well as practical strategies for dealing with these issues in the classroom.
22. Training for serving principals and other school senior managers should include an explicit examination of the equality and human rights philosophy and legislation, as well as an in-depth consideration of the underlying value system of education, as already occurs within provision for aspiring principals (Professional Qualification for Headteachers [Northern Ireland]).

## **Part 1**

### **Context and Background**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this section is to provide some comparative information on policy on equality in education in a range of other jurisdictions. This will provide a wider context for a consideration of the role of equality in teacher education and training in Northern Ireland. In carrying out this comparative survey it was agreed that the focus should be on a number of English-speaking countries including Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and the Republic of Ireland.

Broadly speaking, the discussion is organised into three main themes. The first theme provides a background to equality legislation in Northern Ireland and identifies some of the factors that have influenced its development. From this point we move to the comparative discussion beginning with an examination of the role of education systems as significant employers within national economies and the protection that exists against discrimination in the employment of teachers. In addition, we consider any specific arrangements that exist as caveats to uniform anti-discrimination measures (as in, for example, the teacher exception in Northern Ireland) and whether there are any special measures taken to encourage the participation of minorities or other specified groups as teachers.

The final theme relates to the role of education systems as significant providers of a service to society. The clearest way in which this occurs lies in the educational qualifications people gain through schooling. The key interest here lies in any policy framework which seeks to address the pattern of distribution of qualifications within a population and between groups of that population. In addition, the issue of the curriculum is also important in this theme as it provides the potential for public recognition of diverse cultures, traditions or identities. A further aspects of this theme lies in the structural organisation of schooling. Thus, although mass education has traditionally acted as a mechanism of social integration and hence been provided through a state system of public schools, in some societies minority groups are permitted to organise their own schools with varying levels of public subsidy accorded to these institutions. In addition, public school systems may involve various forms of differentiation, such as single-sex schools, special schools for pupils with disabilities, differentiation on the basis of academic ability, which can sometimes act as an indirect basis for differentiation on other, arbitrary, social grounds. Finally, de facto ethnic or other social integration can occur due to other arbitrary conditions, such as high levels of residential segregation.

It should be noted that the focus of this section is on policy frameworks rather than a detailed consideration of practice. The extent to which there is consistency between policy and practice in any particular jurisdiction is a matter for more detailed study than was available for this project, but the consideration of policy frameworks in different places allows for an examination of some of the aspirational goals set by different societies.

## **Equality legislation in Northern Ireland**

The legal basis for measures on equality in Northern Ireland can be seen to have derived from three main sources. First, a significant body of legislation emerged as a consequence of political violence and attempts to promote community relations and/or ameliorate claims of religious/political discrimination. Second, some equality legislation had its origins in British legislation, particularly dealing with gender and 'race'. Third, some equality measures originated in the European Commission, especially in relation to gender.

From 1921/2 there were a number of legislative protections for equality in Northern Ireland, largely derived from the Government of Ireland Act which prohibited the endowment of any religion by the State. The main equality legislation occurred in response to the Civil Rights Campaign of the 1960s: the first major wave of reform legislation in the late 1960s and early 1970s sought to address many claims of discrimination in a variety of social areas including employment, housing allocation and voting rights. This included the establishment of Staff Commissions with an equality remit in public services (especially health and social services, and education). The last major legislation of this first wave was the 1976 Fair Employment Act which created the Fair Employment Agency, made direct discrimination illegal on the basis of religion of political opinion and provided a basis for dealing with allegations of discrimination against individuals. However, the rigours of the 1976 Fair Employment Act did not apply to a number of designated occupations, including teachers (but not other ancillary staff employed in educational establishments). Teachers were made exempt from the legislation in recognition of the fact that Northern Ireland had de facto parallel religious school systems. There was a de jure system of denominational schools owned and managed by the Catholic Church. The local authority schools were, in theory, open to all, but in practice the vast majority of pupils and teachers were from the Protestant community. If teaching posts had not been made exempt from the anti-discrimination provisions then two disputes would likely have arisen. First, the Catholic authorities would probably have argued that this would have been in breach of their legal right to operate denominational schools, the ethos of which, they argued, required the employment of Catholic teachers. Indeed, the Catholic authorities might have argued that, notwithstanding the anti-discrimination legislation, the acknowledged right for denominational Catholic schools to exist would only be consistent if they retained the right to hire Catholic teachers. The second potential dispute might then arise as there would be little or no grounds on which the local authority schools could justify the use of a religious criterion for teaching posts in controlled schools. In other words, it was possible that the absence of an exemption for teachers might have impacted mainly, or exclusively, on local authority schools and Protestant applicants for teaching posts. These complexities were recognised during the debates on the Fair Employment Act in the House of Commons and provision was included in the Act for the Fair Employment Agency to keep the matter under review.

For a variety of reasons the pressure for reform mitigated throughout the rest of the 1970s and early 1980s. It was not until the latter part of the 1980s that new legislation emerged, largely as a consequence of the renewed commitment to a community relations policy which sought to promote (a) more opportunities for Protestant/Catholic contact, (b) more tolerance of cultural pluralism, and (c) equality of opportunity. In legislative terms the effects of this can be seen in the 1989 Fair Employment Act which made indirect discrimination on the basis of religion or political opinion illegal, created the Fair Employment Commission and Fair Employment Tribunal, provided a legal basis for affirmative action and obligated employers to monitor the religious compositions of their

workforces and make annual returns on these data to the FEC. As before teaching posts were exempt from these requirements.

There is evidence that employers generally applied increasingly formal procedures to the employment process as a result of the tightened legislation. It is possible that the employment of teachers was not subject to the same protections as this did not come within the terms of the legislation.

An area of distinctive policy in Northern Ireland concerned the Targeting Social Need (TSN) initiative. This was promoted by a desire to promote equality as between the two main religious communities, allied with a desire not to favour one category over another simply on the basis of religion. The chosen solution was to encourage government departments to skew spending towards areas or institutions with higher levels of measurable social need. Given the different social profiles of the two main religious communities, this would have the effect of skewing resources towards Catholic communities or institutions, but would not preclude programmes aimed at Protestant communities or institutions, or, indeed, communities or institutions not defined by religious background. This initiative was later to be developed as New TSN (see below).

The legislative context in Northern Ireland has advanced still further as a consequence of the Peace Process. Before considering this, however, we will consider the two other areas of influence.

When Race Relations legislation was passed in Britain to outlaw discrimination on the basis of 'race', the definition of 'race' did not include religion, at least partly in order to avoid potential read-across issues to Northern Ireland. This gap in the legislation was to become glaringly obvious following the Rushdie affair when Islamic interests were not protected against discrimination. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the myth was maintained that there was little or no 'race' discrimination in Northern Ireland and hence there was no need for an extension of the British legislation. Eventually this was accepted as a myth and 'race' legislation was passed to outlaw discrimination on the basis of 'race'. Significantly this applied not just to employment, but to the provision of goods and services (including education). Also, in recognition of the demographic conditions in Northern Ireland, Irish Travellers were identified as a distinct ethnic minority. A separate Commission for Racial Equality was established in NI.

Opportunity laws designed to promote gender equality were passed in Britain and in Northern Ireland in 1976. A separate Equal Opportunities Commission was established in NI and it maintained a somewhat distant relationship with the British EOCs in England and Wales. The legislation passed in Britain was virtually identical to that applied in Northern Ireland.

The third area of influence from Britain lies in provisions for disability legislation and, in effect, Northern Ireland followed British practice, but a few years behind at each stage. Thus, for example, disability legislation in Northern Ireland does not yet apply fully to access to schools, and the Special Educational Needs Disability Act (SENDA) has still to be introduced. It is important to note here that in addition to the equality legislation there is education legislation that applies to special educational needs and which encompasses disability. This education legislation is designed to ensure that there is appropriate educational provision and access to the Northern Ireland curriculum for those with special educational needs. As with the equality legislation it is highly influenced by that in Britain

and underpins the move towards the integration of pupils with special educational needs into mainstream schools. Despite mounting evidence of serious difficulties with integration in Britain, the Department of Education in Northern Ireland initially refused to accept there might be a problem here and eventually NI went down the same road of a Code of Practice, the development of a rhetoric of social inclusion and a more structured identification and assessment system.

At a more general level it is worth noting the consequences of the separate legislative tracks that exist for disability and special educational needs. Due to the use of separate legislation in both areas the language and concepts which inform discussion and understanding of these areas can differ in subtle, but important ways. The consultation document on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill (DE/DEL, n.d.) also highlights this point. In particular, the notion of equality plays a more explicit role in disability legislation, but features much less as an explicit concept in legislation on special educational needs. Thus, it is possible that the technical, procedural and individualistic emphasis of special education may cause educators to see it as distinct from the main equality discourse.

Another area of influence lies in the context of the European Union. The main equality area promoted by the European Commission has been on the issue of gender. A variety of directives have established guidelines and rules which have shaped British legislation and, hence, Northern Ireland legislation (for background information and details of current initiatives see [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/equ\\_opp/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/index_en.htm)).

A desire to encourage the pro-active promotion of gender equality, as compared with simply outlawing inappropriate behaviour, promoted the establishment of equality proofing. This was taken up in Britain with the aim of promoting equality proofing for gender and 'race', although in practice there is little evidence that any action of significance occurred. The same approach of equality proofing was addressed in Northern Ireland, but now to include religion and political opinion as well. However, the level of external scrutiny was much more significant in NI so that the failings of the approach became evident more quickly. Debate over this went into hiatus during the 1997 general election. After the election the New Labour government introduced radical new proposals in a White Paper on Equality which combined proposals on equality with a New TSN strategy. Currently the responsibility for this programme lies in the New TSN Unit in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (for details see: [www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/equality/newtsn.htm](http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/equality/newtsn.htm)).

As a consequence of the Peace Process many of the proposals in the White Paper on Equality have been implemented. Perhaps the main features of this are the establishment of a unified Equality Commission (combining the Fair Employment Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the NI Disability Council), the creation of obligations on public authorities to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity and the extension of anti-discrimination measures to include the provision of goods and services.

The Section 75 requirements oblige public bodies to produce an equality scheme on how they will promote equality on a range of dimensions, including persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, between men and women generally, between persons with a disability and persons without, and between persons with dependants and persons without. The implementation of this plan must be monitored on an annual basis and reconsidered in detail every three years.

Section 75 plans must be approved by the Equality Commission and public bodies are obliged to consult widely during the preparation and monitoring stages. Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act Education and Library Boards and government departments were subject to statutory duties to have regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. In a future designation, Higher Education Institutions, Further Education Institutions and a number of other education-related organisations including, for example, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) were covered.

The main equality legislation to impact on schools and the employment of teachers concerns gender: when the 1989 Education Reform Order made Boards of Governors responsible for recruiting teachers the Department of Education produced a video to ensure they were aware of their legal obligations under equal opportunity legislation. However, despite long standing evidence that the employment level of teachers is mediated by gender, there appear to have been relatively few complaints brought by teachers to the EOC over the years. There was a report published into this issue by the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) [reference] some years ago and a DENI-sponsored study (Rees et al., 2000) which sought to examine why relatively few women occupied principals' posts.

The main curriculum area in which equality concerns ought to have had a place lies in the educational themes of Education for Mutual Understanding and Cultural Heritage as these themes were created to provide a community relations dimension to the curriculum. The available evidence (Smith and Robinson, 1992; 1996; Leitch and Kilpatrick, 1999), however, suggests that few teachers took up the opportunity provided by these themes to examine Equality issues. The newly emerging framework on education for democratic citizenship will include themes related to justice/equality and human rights/responsibilities.

### **Education as an Employer**

All of the jurisdictions considered in this paper have legislative frameworks against arbitrary discrimination in employment, much of which applies to the employment of teachers. Table 1 below shows the general pattern of protection provided under the law across these jurisdictions. This shows that most jurisdictions have specific legislative protection against discrimination on the basis of sex, 'race' or disability status. In addition, many jurisdictions also have general rights or anti-discrimination measures that cover a range of social dimensions and services in addition to employment. The United States is the only jurisdiction in our survey which provides specific legislation protection on the basis of age. It should be noted also that a common feature of all these jurisdictions is that the legislation provides for special agencies or bodies with oversight, promotion or enforcement responsibilities. Perhaps most important, the ubiquity of these measures is a reminder of the trend towards pro-active measures for the promotion of equality in recent decades. Apart from the general protection accorded to teachers under these frameworks, perhaps the issue which is most explicitly addressed lies in legislation which seeks to provide equal pay for equivalent work.



Table 1: Legal instruments against discrimination in employment by social dimension and jurisdiction

	General	Sex	'race'	Disability	Religion/political opinion	Age
Australia	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Canada	✓			✓		
England		✓	✓	✓		
Republic of Ireland	✓	✓				
Scotland		✓	✓	✓		
United States	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Wales		✓	✓	✓		
Northern Ireland		✓	✓	✓	✓	

An issue of particular interest lies in the operation of any special measures to encourage a more diverse workforce among teachers by identifying under-represented groups and seeking ways to reduce this under-representation. Thus, for example, in different contexts there is under-representation of men teaching in primary schools, and of ethnic minorities or disabled people generally among teachers. In addition, research on gender patterns in teaching in Northern Ireland suggest that the 'glass ceiling' remains intact as relatively few women are found in senior positions in schools (Rees et al., 2000).

The issue of under-representation of ethnic minorities among teachers has received specific attention in recent years in England. The Teacher Training Agency's (England) equality statement states that it "is working to make teaching more representative of the wider community, getting more men into primary teaching, more disabled people and more candidates from minority ethnic groups." (for details see the TTA website at: [www.canteach.gov.uk](http://www.canteach.gov.uk)) Furthermore in the quinquennial review of the Teacher Training Agency (1999) efforts by the TTA to encourage people in teaching from those groups currently under represented in the profession included: the use of teachers from ethnic minority groups in advertising; focus groups on teacher recruitment from ethnic minorities; research projects in different aspects of the recruitment and retention of members of ethnic minorities; and sponsorship of the National Mentoring Consortium, a project to encourage 50 ethnic minority graduates a year into initial teacher training and to support them in their first year of teaching ([www.canteach.gov.uk/about/archive/corp-op-plan2001/aim1.htm](http://www.canteach.gov.uk/about/archive/corp-op-plan2001/aim1.htm)). In addition, the TTA has sought advice on future action from organisations representing people with disabilities. Inter alia there has been a drive to recruit more men into primary teaching.

Considerable research suggests that school districts across the United States confront a shortage of minority educators, while the number of minority students in the public schools steadily increases (Wise & Shaver, 1992), a pattern which appears to have been exacerbated by the enhanced use of testing programs at the point of entry to teacher training. In different parts of Canada there have been pro-active attempts to encourage

more minority candidates to seek entry to teacher training courses. In the latter case the stated goal of the initiative is that the cultural composition of the teaching population reflects that of the general population. In Australia it is possible to see a related priority in teacher recruitment, although here the focus of policy is directed specifically at increasing the participation of indigenous minorities in educational decisions and to increase the number of teachers from indigenous backgrounds (MCEETYA 1995).

Less clear is the operation of any consistent policy for monitoring the patterns of participation by various social groups across the jurisdictions. Policy on monitoring can be important as it provides data to inform analysis of patterns of participation and the identification of potential ameliorative strategies.

There are some circumstances where educational institutions are permitted exemptions from the anti-discrimination laws. In many cases these exemptions relate to schools which are run by and for faith communities and which seek the right to appoint teachers with specific attributes that are related to the ethos of the school rather than to any specific educational criterion. More generally, exemptions on aspects of 'normal' regulations may apply to schools which operate as independent and private institutions, or which have been accorded a significant degree of autonomy from local authority regulation, such as Charter Schools in the United States. However, under most circumstances these exemptions do not apply to anti-discrimination measures in relation to the employment of teachers and relate more to freedom from administrative regulations and oversight of school district authorities.

The Australian National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) works collaboratively with all educational authorities and while Catholic schools receive public funds they have a degree of autonomy. The Commission recognises that school authorities have a duty to ensure that proper standards of education and financial management are maintained in accordance to, in many cases, by the government and statutory authorities. However where differences arise the objectives established by the Catholic community will over-ride those of the government. Teachers intending to teach in Catholic schools must fulfil the Accreditation Policies of the Catholic Education Commissions and diocesan requirements. This varies across Australia, with not all territories specifically requiring courses of the Catholic faith. Where this requirement does exist, however, it creates a situation where the Catholic schools are permitted to discriminate on the basis of religion in their recruitment of teachers.

In Canada, the Toronto Catholic District School Board serves students from diverse cultural, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds through a broad range of programs and services. Working in partnership with parents, local parishes and the wider school community, TCDSB schools offer a learning environment which reflects Catholic tradition and values. Toronto's Catholic schools follow the provincial curriculum as set out by the Ministry of Education, but add a specific commitment to the spiritual and emotional development of pupils. In order to maintain this ethos the Catholic schools are permitted to require applicants for teaching posts to provide a recommendation from a priest with pastoral responsibility who can affirm the applicant's commitment to the Catholic faith.

A similar exemption is permitted in the Equal Status Act (2000) in the Republic of Ireland which permits denominational schools to admit pupils and teachers from within the faith community in order to maintain the religious character of the institution. This exemption has not been without controversy as it has led to calls for religiously integrated schools

and to a vigorous campaign by Humanist groups to reverse this legal exemption. In some ways this dispute is similar to debates over the teacher exemption in Fair Employment legislation in Northern Ireland in which the recruitment of teachers does not come within the anti-discrimination provisions of the law.

### **Education as a service**

The third main strand for this section concerns the somewhat broader role of education as a service to society and the public. This covers a range of dimensions, including attainment and qualifications, access to educational pathways and issues related to the curriculum. We will examine each of these in turn.

### **Attainment**

The acquisition of educational qualifications is an important outcome of education, not least because it impacts on an individual's ability to compete in the labour market for employment. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the disadvantage often suffered by social groups, including ethnic minorities and women, within labour markets is sometimes attributed to lower than average educational qualifications. This has led to policies designed to boost the educational performance of targeted students, thereby reducing the 'attainment gap' between disadvantaged groups and mainstream students and, it is hoped, creating a level playing field in the competition for jobs.

In many jurisdictions the focus of attention has been on the position of ethnic minority communities. Thus, for example, the issue of an attainment gap between ethnic minorities and mainstream students received significant focus on Britain in the 1970s and early 1980s, with the establishment of the Rampton, and later the Swann, commission. However, this commission had been initiated by the outgoing Labour government in 1979 and the successive Conservative governments which operated between 1979 and 1997 showed little enthusiasm for a pro-active drive specifically to reduce this attainment gap. The issue returned to the policy agenda in the latter part of the 1990s with the publication of several official reports outlining data on the comparative educational experience of minority students. Towards the end of the 1980s a similar issue arose in Northern Ireland regarding the differential educational outcomes for leavers from Catholic and Protestant schools, although the policy outcomes were more immediate and concrete in that they resulted in the opening of two new Catholic grammar schools, the allocation of 100 per cent capital grant to Catholic schools and a commitment to monitor the impact of policy and practice on the religious school systems (Gallagher et al, 1994).

In England the Teacher Training Agency provides material aimed at ensuring that initial teacher training equips all new teachers with the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to enable all pupils to realise their full potential. The guidance identifies some of the ways in which successful teachers and schools should work to raise pupil achievement, improve the quality of their education and prepare all pupils to live in a socially just, democratic, pluralistic society. Other parts of the guidance show how, in preparing trainees to meet the Qualified Teacher Standard, Initial Teacher Education providers should address issues around the differential attainment of some minority ethnic groups. Indeed, the fact that this issue is mentioned in the requirements at all is worth noting. In addition, the guidance identifies the main issues which training might address and provides extracts, examples and other reference sources to support each issue.

A report from the School Inspectors (OfSTED, 1999) focused on strategies schools have implemented to raise the attainment of minority ethnic groups, the policies developed by schools for tackling stereotyping, ensuring high expectations and promoting good 'race' relations and local authority assistance to achieve successful outcomes. The main findings of the report indicated that attainment of minority ethnic groups as a whole is improving although some groups continue to underachieve. Those schools that have been most successful in raising attainment have senior management teams which make clear that under-performance of any group is unacceptable and challenge individual teachers and departments to come up with ways to improve the situation. Furthermore, most of the local education authorities were conscious of their responsibility for promoting good 'race' relations. However, the report also found that few monitored the implementation of these policies; the local authorities that do monitor appear more likely to provide good support for training teachers and other schools staff.

The issue of the Black-White gap in attainment, that is, the lower average attainment achieved by African-American students in comparison to White students, has become a significant focus of discussion in the United States as part of a more general aspiration to close the achievement gap among students by 'race', income, language and gender. Thus, for example, the Council of the Great City Schools established A National Task Force on Closing Achievement Gap in 1998. In an initial review by the Task Force they found a very mixed picture of how school systems address the achievement gap. Some districts are placing their focus on raising achievement levels for all students and hoping the gaps will close along the way and others are doing the reverse (Task Force on Bilingual Education, 1998). In other contexts the problem appears to be more indirect in that it is linked to learners who have English as a second language: in this context the aim is that the provision of English language support may not only address this deficit, but also encourage the pupils to achieve high academic standards.

In Australia the Department of Education report 'Learning for all - Opportunities for Indigenous Australians' showed that, despite gains in the last 30 years, significant inequality still remains. This report showed that, as a group, indigenous students recorded markedly lower achievement levels in all academic subjects compared with their non-indigenous counterparts. Thus, for example, the results of the 1999 National Year 3 Reading data indicate an improvement in the literacy levels of students even though a third of Indigenous students were still below the National Standard in reading. The Literacy and Numeracy strategy which was launched in March 2000 aims to ensure that every child leaving primary school should be numerate and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level.

In the Republic of Ireland attention on attainment patterns has tended to focus on the position of Irish Travellers. At the launch of the new guidelines on education for Travellers the Minister, Dr. Michael Woods T.D., stated, "these guidelines are a key initiative in tackling educational disadvantage within the Traveller community. By helping schools in integrating Traveller children the guidelines will make a major contribution to implementing Government policy on inclusion" (For a list of all initiatives aimed at tackling educational disadvantage for Travellers see: [www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/social\\_inclusion\\_summary.doc](http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/social_inclusion_summary.doc)). The initiative builds on a programme of support for Traveller education which includes a National Education Officer, additional resource teachers, visiting teachers and additional money for schools enrolling Travellers. The Minister claimed that this support has seen an increase in the enrolment of Traveller

children to 5000 in primary schools and 1500 in second-level schools, although there is not yet any firm evidence on the impact of the initiative.

In British Columbia a series of education initiatives aim to improve enhanced educational opportunity for Aboriginal students. These include workshops for teachers, curriculum, communication with Aboriginal parents and communities, and employment equity (BC Teachers' Federation Aboriginal Education, 2000). The Learning Opportunities Grant (2000) launched by the Ontario government, provides funding to help students who may be at greater risk of not achieving their educational goals. The risk factors include, low family income, low parental education, recent immigration and aboriginal status. The programmes available for the students include reading programmes, adapted curriculum tutors, counsellors, mentoring, classroom assistants and reduced class sizes.

This brief review indicates that across most jurisdictions there has been a recognition of the unequal distribution of education outcomes among different social groups and measures introduced to tackle unequal outcomes for minority communities. The extent and range of approaches used vary considerably across the jurisdictions, as does the extent to which there is any evidence to demonstrate the efficacy of these measures.

A related measure concerns the relationship between attainment and social disadvantage, an issue which has also been subject to significant education policy, at least since the 1960s. Social disadvantage and ethnic minority status often go hand in hand due to the consequences of discrimination, residential segregation and other factors. In consequence, the lower average attainment achieved by students from social disadvantaged backgrounds often acts as an indirect influence on attainment differences for minorities. Thus, while it is possible to differentiate policies which specifically target action on identified groups as compared with those target a condition (for example, social disadvantage), the latter often acts as an over-inclusive, but not exclusive, impact on ethnic minority groups. From the 1960s to the late 1970s the predominant approach was one based on state-led intervention to ameliorate the consequences of social disadvantage, in line with Keynesian economic policy. When this interventionism approach was discredited in the 1970s, many western jurisdictions moved to a variant of neo-liberal policies where the approach was more usually based on a 'trickle-down' theory of improvement. This approach too was largely discredited and a variety of approaches are used to tackle the consequences of social disadvantage. To the extent that any coherence can be identified in 'third way' practice in this area, it would appear to be based on Rawlsian ideas which permit a degree of inequality to operate with limits set by a demands of social justice. This remains a highly contested area in social policy and, in many respects, current practice in Northern Ireland may be more interventionist and pro-active in comparison with most other jurisdictions. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that while measured performance levels for all pupils have steadily risen over time, the gap in performance between pupils who are socially advantaged as compared with those who are socially disadvantaged persists.

## **Access Issues**

A second dimension of the role of education as a service to society lies in access to educational opportunity. This has been addressed in a number of ways in different societies. Currently the key focus across most jurisdictions probably lies in access to post-compulsory education. In particular, towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many of the

jurisdictions moved towards de facto mass higher education and began to address issues related to the access of minorities and people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. But in earlier years other access issues arose, perhaps most particularly related to the consequences of segregated education.

In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation in schools and struck down the long-standing ruling of 'separate but equal' provision on the grounds that separate provision was inherently unequal in its consequences. That racially separate schools are inherently unequal (*Brown v. Board of Education, 1954*). Throughout the 1960s the Supreme Court permitted various measures to promote integration, including bussing, that is, the assignment of pupils to schools and the use of transport as a matter of policy in order to achieve racial mixing in individual schools. The period of liberal rulings changed in the early 1970s when a more conservative court began to constrain the conditions in which bussing and other measures might be applied. Over more recent years there has been a pattern of court decisions which release school districts from court supervision and thereby effectively end bussing policies. In consequence, many urban school districts are moving back to a pattern of racial segregation as students return to neighbourhood schools.

Another contentious issue in US education policy lies in the use of affirmative action measures to encourage minority entry to higher education. Although there have been various initiatives over the years aimed at promoting the participation of women in higher education (see below), the main focus of controversy has centred on the use of 'race' in admissions decisions in order to enhance the proportion of ethnic minority students gaining entry to higher education. Throughout most of the period of debate African-Americans were the main target group for affirmative action measures, although currently the group most likely to benefit from these measures is Latino, or Spanish-speaking, community. For many years the conditions in which 'race' could be used in admissions procedures was set by the Bakke case which permitted the use of affirmative action goals as long as they were not used as strict quotas. In practice the relatively small number of selective universities in the USA used 'race' as one among a number of factors in their consideration of applications and, in line with the Bakke conditions, required all applicants to satisfy minimum qualifications thresholds. This practice was called into question by court decisions in the late 1990s in California and Texas, and a California referendum on affirmative action. The combined effect of these decisions was to outlaw the use of 'race' as a factor in admissions decisions for universities and a significant drop in number of minority students entering these institutions. However, there remains a lack of clarity on what is permitted in this area. The court decisions had no general application as the Supreme Court did not consider their effect in overturning the Bakke conditions. However, the current Supreme Court has accepted a case from Minnesota which addresses essentially the same issue. In the intervening period many universities in California and Texas have examined other admissions criteria that might have an indirect, but legal, consequence of restoring minority entry.

From at least the 1970s there has been a general trend in the United States towards increasing the participation of women in post-compulsory education and addressing practice which encouraged young women to undertake curricula which emphasised 'traditional' domestic roles. Although the administration under President Clinton was probably more pro-actively committed to this issue, in comparison with the current Bush administration, the goals of promoting gender equity in education remain significant within educational policy. Thus, for example, the 2002-2003 Annual Plan and 2001 Program

Performance Reports ([www.ed.gov/pubs/annualreport2001.index.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/annualreport2001.index.html)) includes performance indicators on two gender equity goals: first, to ensure that girls and women have educational opportunities comparable to those available to boys and men, and second, to increase the number of educators receiving gender equity training, including training that deals with multiple forms of discrimination.

Measures to enhance access for ethnic minorities and women in order to encourage institutional diversity can be found in other jurisdictions. The programme for diversity in British Columbia schools (2001) aims to assist the school system in meeting its obligations under the Constitution Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the BC Human Rights Code, the Multiculturalism Act, the Official Languages Act, the Employment Equity Act and the School Act. In the same jurisdiction the Second Language Policy Framework package is intended to provide leadership and a basis for consistency in the delivery of Education as a Second Language (ESL) services in BC schools. The package has been developed to address key policy issues around the delivery of ESL programs and services in the compulsory schools system. In addition, the British Columbia Gender Equity Advisory Committee (1994) provides support for teachers in gender-equitable education involving the inclusion of the experiences, perceptions, and perspectives of girls and women, as well as boys and men, in all aspects of education.

Once again, policy and practice varies across the jurisdictions depending on their own particular context, but there is a general pattern such that policy has aimed to identify and remove arbitrary barriers to the participation of different social groups in education. Normally this is based on two judgements: first, that the existence of arbitrary barriers to participation is unjust, and second, that wider access enhances the diversity of social institutions and that this, in itself, is a desirable outcome.

It should be noted, however, that a key part of the debates on these measures relates not just to the removal of contemporary barriers to participation, but issues related to the legacy of past barriers. This raises the question of active ameliorative measures to address past disadvantage and, in some places, arguments over the extent to which special measures, including reverse discrimination, should be adopted. This is perhaps clearest in the debates over affirmative action in the USA but, as noted above, this particular debate remains far from settled.

An important arbitrary barrier to access is also provided by a disabling environment that limits the physical access that some people have to buildings and hence denies them access to educational and other opportunities. Sometimes these environmental restrictions relate to basic structural assumptions about the assumed appropriate location for people: up to the 1980s most children with severe learning difficulties were under the remit of the health department rather than education, with the consequence that they were kept in social care rather than school, thereby placing significant limitations on opportunity. The Salamanca Agreement (1994) on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education states that *'those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools, which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs.'*

In England, Wales and Scotland, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001) and the Code of Practice for Schools places new duties on education authorities not to discriminate against disabled pupils in the provision of education in schools and in respect of admissions and

exclusions. The Special Education Needs Standards Fund Grant (England and Wales) provides funding for local authorities to improve the education of children with SEN through the professional development of coordinators, teachers and learning support assistants. It is also worth noting that materials associated with the Index for Inclusion (<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/index-inclusion-summary.htm>) have been circulated to all schools in Northern Ireland and Wales, although it is not clear to what extent they have informed practice.

Whilst not a requirement of Federal law in the US, inclusive education is central to the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997), while the New Freedom Initiative (Removing Barriers for Americans with Disabilities) (Feb 2001) aims to help Americans with disabilities by increasing access to assistive technologies, expanding educational opportunities, increasing the ability of Americans with disabilities to integrate into the workforce and promoting increased access into daily community life.

An example from Canada is provided by regulations under the Ontario Education Act which require school boards to provide exceptional pupils with special education programmes and special education services that are appropriate for their needs, while in British Columbia there is a requirement that programmes of initial teacher education include attention to students with special needs. In Australia draft disability standards on education have been prepared by a taskforce established by the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA, 2000). The Students with Disabilities Code of Practice for Australian Tertiary Institutions (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission 1998) deals only with tertiary education, but there is a perception in Australia that it provides a framework which could be useful to education providers more generally in planning how to meet their responsibilities under disabilities legislation. In the Republic of Ireland the most overt statement in this area lies in the ICT Blueprint document (2001) which provides support for special needs pupils and teachers in ICT provision. However, there has been controversy in the Republic over proposed legislation on special educational needs leading to one parent standing as a candidate in the recent Dail election on this single issue., The controversy arose following a court decision that there was no legal requirement on the state to provide education for anyone above the compulsory age regardless of any special needs an individual might have. The proposed legislation was an attempt to define requirements in this area.

## **Curriculum**

One of the earliest consequences of the recognition of the importance of equity in education was a consideration of stereotypical representations in textbooks and curriculum material more generally. A significant amount of work went into the development of new materials, particularly ones which did not present gender and racial roles in ways which would encourage prejudice. Related to this was work which sought to examine the curricula that were available to students and the patterns of choice that were taken when options were presented to students. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the significant body of work on gender and the curriculum. Thus, for example, a significant factor in the decision to introduce a statutory curriculum in England, Wales and Northern Ireland arose from a concern that some students were being denied access to a broad and balanced curriculum and that it was necessary to define a minimum entitlement on equity grounds (Ofsted, 1998).



The issue of a statutory curriculum raises questions about the way decisions are made about the inclusion or exclusion of material. In many jurisdictions there have been debates over what should or should not be included in the history curriculum. In large part this arises from the traditional role of public schooling as a mechanism for social integration and the equally traditional role of history curricula in forging a common national narrative.

Advocates of a more diverse curriculum have argued for the inclusion of wider elements both to challenge unitary, and often overly simplistic, national narratives and to provide recognition of the role played by minorities (importantly, including women) in national stories.

This issue is perhaps highlighted to an even greater extent in programmes for citizenship education. In many jurisdictions these programmes offer little more than uncritical lessons in political literacy so that children learn about the structures and procedures within their own society without necessarily being offered alternatives. In the United States, for example, the constitutional proscription on the endowment of religion has created a situation where symbols or manifestations of faith communities are rigorously excluded from public schools, but through civics lessons they are replaced by images and symbols of the state (Lomas, 1998). The political realities of Northern Ireland make it difficult to apply a citizenship education programme in such a unitary manner, so that the development work underway in this area has tended to focus on skills rather than content, and is based on the three elements of (a) democratic structures and systems, (b) justice and equality issues, and (c) issues related to rights and responsibilities. It should be said, however, that this programme is still under development and its final form remains unclear.

Given that the current paper focuses on the role of equality awareness within teacher training, the present interest lies more directly with the curriculum provided for teachers, both through initial training and as part of professional development. In this respect it is possible to identify a wide range of initiatives and programmes across most of the jurisdictions surveyed, although the variety of approach is as much a feature of this practice as anything else. Thus, for example, there have been a series of initiatives in the United States which aim to support teachers help students attain prescribed school district and state standards in contexts where English may not be the students' first language, or where classrooms are linguistically diverse. These include specific programmes in states as diverse New York, California and Massachusetts. Corson (1998) provides a wider range of examples of programmes designed to support teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms, including programmes aimed at supporting students who have English as their second language.

There have been local authority programmes to support teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms in the UK generally, while in Wales, Scotland and England there has been official recognition of the right of parents to opt for teaching through indigenous languages.

There are very many examples of programmes designed to support teachers work toward gender equity. In the United States, for example, the National Science Foundation has funded a series of initiatives aimed at university and college educators, the purpose of which is to ensure that the training they provide to prospective and existing teachers addresses issues related to gender equity. Other programmes are more directly addressed at teachers in order to support their work in classrooms. Similar types of programmes, of varying scale and duration, can be found in practically all of the jurisdictions surveyed.

Legislation on the rights of disabled people, and on special needs more generally, have provided a context for support programmes for teachers. When special needs measures include specific codes of practice or equivalent guidelines there is often training for teachers to ensure they know how they are expected to conform to these requirements. The pattern in England has tended to be one which provides training directly to teachers, while in the United States a somewhat wider range of support is provided including, as above, programmes directed at trainers of teachers rather than teachers directly. A similar approach can be seen in Australia where some state education departments provide support teams to provide materials and training to teachers and schools.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this section was to provide a general overview of equality measures in education across a range of English-speaking jurisdictions, beginning with a consideration of the influences which have helped to shape equality legislation and practice in Northern Ireland. Following this consideration of Northern Ireland, the section examined issues related to education as an employer and issues related to education as a service.

As a major employer education systems are subject to legislation on terms and conditions of employment, including legislation against discrimination. We found that all of the jurisdictions surveyed operated anti-discrimination legislation, some of which provided general protection while others were more specifically tailored to protect the interests of specific social groups. In some places varying degrees of exemption from standard legislation is permitted, particularly where denominational authorities are accorded the right to run their own schools while being in receipt of public funds.

Education provides an important social service to society as a whole. In our discussion we focused on three main aspects of this: first, the social distribution of educational qualifications within a society; second, measures to prevent arbitrary restrictions on access to educational opportunities, or measures designed to encourage access and diversity; and third, issues related to the curriculum. As with the role of education as an employer, there has been a general trend across all the jurisdictions surveyed towards pro-active measures in all these areas, although the nature and extent of measures adopted varies quite widely. As a general comment, many of the issues dealt with in this section focus on the broader social role of schools. By tradition, public schools, that is schools owned and managed by the state, have acted as an important focus for social integration and hence have tended to emphasise an assimilationist approach through which students are encouraged to think of themselves as members of a common community. The practical consequence of this approach is to downplay diversity in public spaces, including schools. The major problem with this approach was that it assumed a fictive homogeneity of identity that served to deny public recognition to minorities or, as in the case of women, provided identities that were fixed and subordinate. Over the past three decades or so there has been a general move away from these assimilationist assumptions. As reflected in the discussion above, there has been a general trend towards recognising the existence and condition of minorities and the establishment of legislation across a range of areas to prevent arbitrary discrimination against minorities. In education this is manifest mainly through the recognition of minorities and women in the curriculum, pro-active measures towards legitimising diversity and a recognition that special measures are sometimes need to ensure that all groups are provided with equality of opportunity.

## **PART 2**

### **Design and Methods**

#### **Aims of the Study**

The aims of the study were to:

1. Examine and assess the extent to which equality issues (including gender, disability, 'race' and community background) are addressed in the content and delivery of teacher education and training;
2. Examine and assess the extent to which the content of teacher education and training addresses how gender, race, disability and community background may inform teachers' perceptions of pupil learning styles and teachers' expectations of pupils with respect to their educational achievement and attainment, subject preference and career ambitions;
3. Identify 'good practice' with respect to equality issues in the content and delivery of teacher education and training in jurisdictions outside Northern Ireland;
4. Explore awareness of equal opportunities issues and their application in classroom practice and school processes among trainee teachers and recently qualified and longer-serving teachers;
5. Obtain suggestions from all respondents on how equality issues could be best addressed and included in teacher education and training.

#### **Research Questions**

Given the approach and interpretation of the aims of the study, as outlined above, the research sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do equality issues inform the development of teacher education policy in Northern Ireland?
2. To what extent do initial and/or in-service teacher education and training programmes inform and promote teachers' awareness of equality issues?
3. Does any awareness of differences based on gender, race, community background and disability inform teachers' own classroom and school practice with respect to pupils' educational achievement?
4. Is there evidence of good practice in equality issues in teacher education and training in jurisdictions beyond Northern Ireland? If so, what form do these take?

5. How might equality issues best be addressed and included in programmes of teacher education and training in Northern Ireland?

## **Research Design and Methods**

The design of the research centred around a series of seminars and focus groups with the key participants outlined above as well as the desk study. The research was carried out between May 2001 and March 2002.

### **Strand 1: Desk Study**

Following consultation with the Equality Commission, seven jurisdictions were selected for investigation. These were: Australia, Canada, England, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, USA and Wales. A number of methods were employed to obtain material for the desk study: the team made use of specific websites relating to government, non-departmental public bodies and other relevant civil society organisations in the target jurisdictions. In addition, the team adopted a wider search for published and web-based material relevant to the exercise. Table 2 below outlines the links between the aims of the study and the methods used within it to gather information and data to answer the research questions posed.

### **Strand 2: Seminars**

Seminars were used to gather together key policy makers in teacher education and training and those who provide education and training for teachers, either through higher education, the Regional Training Unit and the Education and Library Boards.

In this Strand the research team explored the contexts within which equality issues are shaped for teacher education and training in Northern Ireland and the extent to which these issues are prioritised in policy and practice. The main aspect of Strand 2 took the form of a mapping exercise of the current status of equality issues within teacher education and training, and some consideration of issues emerging from this. It focused on the collection of data from:

- Representatives of the major policy makers and stakeholders in the Northern Ireland education system, whose responsibilities help to shape the frameworks within which teacher education and schooling take place. These included Units within the Department of Education (DE), i.e. Teachers' Branch, Equality Branch and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the Transferors' Representative Council (TRC), and the Governing Bodies Association (GBA). The Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) was unfortunately unable to take part in the seminars.
- Representatives of all the providers of teacher education and training in initial teacher education and continuing professional development (CPD). These included the five higher education institutions (HEIs) and all providers in the CPD sector (the Curriculum and Advisory Services (CASS) of the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the Northern Ireland Regional Training Unit (RTU)). In obtaining data from these providers, attention was paid to the extent to which

current provision informs and shapes teachers' understandings of pupil learning styles and teacher expectations of pupils' educational achievement.

Seven seminars were held in this Strand. Each seminar focused on different groups within teacher education and training:

- One seminar for Branches within the Department of Education (Teacher Education Branch/ETI/EB).
- One seminar for other policy makers and stakeholders (CCMS, TRC, and GBA).
- Two seminars for HEIs (1 for initial teacher education and training [ITE] and 1 for continuing professional development [CPD]);
- Three seminars for ELBs and RTU (1 dealing with induction, 1 focusing on early professional development, [EPD] and 1 on CPD, including head teacher training)

### **Conducting the seminars**

In preparation for the seminars the research team provided a briefing paper (see Section 1: Context and Background) as background information for participants. The briefing paper focused mainly on the legislative context of equality in Northern Ireland. The paper outlined general equality legislation, as well as that specifically relating to education, and the sources of legislation elsewhere that have influenced practice in Northern Ireland.

For the seminars themselves the research team also constructed a list of questions (see Appendix 1) to act as a stimulus to conversation and to focus the discussion on themes fundamental to the research. For example, for the seminar with providers of initial teacher education and training in higher education, the team was interested in mapping the field of current practice in relation to awareness of equality issues and how these are dealt with in ITE courses; what constraints do these providers feel that they face in prioritising these issues; where do they think changes need to be made or resources focused to enable a higher profile of equality issues in initial teacher education?

All the seminars were recorded, either using a tape recorder or by detailed field notes. At least 2 team members were present at each of the seminars.

### **Strand 3: Focus Groups**

Strand 3 focused on the awareness of equality issues in teacher education and training amongst the 'users' of such education and training, i.e. the teachers themselves. Data were collected from a sample of teachers from each of the main teaching phases. These are student teachers, those recently qualified (engaged in induction and early professional development programmes) and those with longer teaching service. The team sought their views regarding the extent to which equality issues have been adequately included in their professional education and training and how these are addressed in schools.

A series of ten (10) focus groups was held with teachers:

- Two for recently qualified teachers (1 primary group and 1 post-primary);
- Four for longer-serving teachers (2 primary groups and 2 post-primary); and,
- Four for trainees in the 4 institutions which provide initial teacher training (1 group in each of Queen’s University, the University of Ulster, St Mary’s University College and Stranmillis University College).

**Conducting the focus groups**

For the focus groups the research team also put together a list of areas for consideration (see Appendix 2) to act as a stimulus to conversation and to focus the discussion on particular themes which were fundamental to the research.

All the focus groups were recorded, either using a tape recorder or by detailed field notes. At least 2 team members plus the research assistant were present at each of the focus groups.

**Table 2: Summary of aims and methodology**

AIMS	METHODS		
Strand 1: Northern Ireland and Other Jurisdictions	Seminars	Focus groups	Desk Study
Identify good practice in other jurisdictions			✓
Strand 2: Policymakers, Stakeholders and Providers	Seminars	Focus groups	Desk Study
Extent to which equality issues are addressed in content and delivery of teacher education and training in Northern Ireland	✓		✓
Strand 3: Teachers	Seminars	Focus groups	Desk Study
Examine and assess the extent to which the content of teacher education and training addresses how equality issues may inform teachers’ understanding of pupils’ learning styles and their expectations of pupils’ achievement	✓	✓	
Measure awareness among trainee teachers, recently qualified teachers, and serving teachers of equal opportunities issues and their application in classroom practice and school processes		✓	
Obtain suggestions from trainee and serving teachers of how equality issues could be best addressed and included in teacher education and training		✓	

## **PART 3**

In this part of the report there are six (6) sections which detail the findings from the main groups of respondents. These are: policy makers and stakeholders (Section 1); providers - initial teacher education (Section 2); providers – induction/early professional development (Section 3); providers – continuing [professional development (Section 4); teachers – recently qualified and longer-serving (Section 5) and student teachers (Section 6).

### **Section 1: Policy Makers and Stakeholders**

#### **Introduction**

This section considers data provided by those organizations and groups which have policy responsibility for school services, either for the system as a whole (Department of Education), or for groups of schools.

Two interview sessions were held to obtain the views of these groups. These were with:

- representatives from Department of Education (Teachers' Branch, Equality Division & Education & Training Inspectorate (ETI))
- representatives from other main stakeholders (Transferors' Representative Council (TRC), Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and Governing Bodies' Association (GBA)).

[N I Council for Integrated Education was invited to attend but did not do so.]

#### **General aspects identified by respondents**

Since there is a statutory requirement for all children to have equal access to the curriculum, respondents stated that this is the Department of Education's priority, and many of its recent policy initiatives have provided substantial resources to support this. The Department's view is that the equality agenda may be viewed as the contemporary way of describing a long-standing need to deal with categories of individual difference among pupils and differential educational outcomes. As stated above, this is already a priority for the Department and as such, the promotion of equality is considered to be the responsibility of all teachers.

In addition, the ETI school inspection process monitors equality issues such as the integration of special needs and ethnic minority children (including Travellers) in mainstream schools and the implementation of the EMU cross-curricular requirements. The Department representatives believed therefore that, through such monitoring, the Department is well-informed as to the extent and nature of ongoing disadvantage and inequality for such groups, and is working continuously to remedy this.

CCMS is a statutory body established under the Education Reform Order of 1989. It acts as the umbrella organisation for the Catholic Maintained sector and as such, has a concern with the ethos and values which should underpin its schools, although its direct impact on curriculum and pedagogy is limited. The CCMS representative considered that these values have clear equality implications which should underpin and shape the moral responsibility of all who work with children. The general care of children is viewed as a responsibility which transcends the needs of the individual child and which includes the wider community.

CCMS issues policy documents on a range of issues, including some which relate to equality concerns (e.g. the promotion of respect for diversity, gender issues). The Northern Catholic Bishops have also recently issued a mission statement (2001) which addresses how such responsibilities may be addressed. Maintained schools should be aware of and base practice on such policies.

TRC is comprised of the main Protestant churches which transferred their schools to the state since 1921. It is not a statutory body, but has access to government. It has no direct input into matters of teacher training & development or school practice except insofar as it has nomination rights to Education & Library Boards, to school governing bodies and to the governing body of Stranmillis University College.

The GBA acts as an umbrella organization for schools in the voluntary grammar sector, both Catholic and non-Catholic. Its representative at the seminar believed that the Association has more control of governing bodies than governors in other school sectors. He also believed that the governors of voluntary grammar schools have greater feelings of ownership for their schools than other governors of schools. However, GBA has no role in shaping the ethos of individual voluntary grammar schools and, until the introduction of the Early Professional Development aspect of teacher education, GBA had little knowledge of practice in schools.

The GBA representative believed that a child, on entering school, becomes part of a wider school community, which includes his/her own family group.

### **Key Equality Issues, Identified By Respondents, Which Arise From The Legislative & Employment Contexts**

Most of the issues identified under this heading were raised by respondents in the main stakeholders' seminar.

A concern raised by one representative related to what he described as the unequal treatment within the school system of children who are not academically inclined. He felt that current emphases on academic outcomes were leading to the neglect of the needs of such children.

Two respondents identified the inequalities created for Protestant teachers by the current exemption system, which allows Catholic primary schools to require applicants for teaching posts to hold a Catholic Teachers' Certificate. It was felt that current arrangements thereby create a tension between parents' right to have their children



educated within the Catholic ethos by Catholic teachers, and the rights of all teachers to have equal access to employment opportunities, including those in Catholic schools.

Gender issues were identified by several respondents. These included:

- The 'capture' by women of the education system, resulting in a shortage of male applicants for teaching posts;
- The diminishing number of men teachers in primary schools, particularly in Key Stage 1;
- A continuing promotion system which seems to favour the relatively smaller group of men teachers at the expense of the larger group of women teachers; and,
- Differential pupil attainment, according to sex.

Respondents were uncertain as to how to address these.

There was uncertainty as to the role of school governing bodies in forming and steering the equality agenda. One instance cited related to the tension for school governors and teachers between absolute legislative rights to equality and the contrasting values of local individuals or communities, e.g. around issues of homosexuality.

*'There is in a sense a potential tension, as different perspectives are brought to the concept to what rights and equality are, and how absolute they may be.'*

Several respondents were concerned that any legal requirement on schools to produce Equality Impact statements would be very burdensome .

### **Other Current Equality Issues Identified By The Respondents**

All of these issues were raised by respondents in the main stakeholders' seminar.

The growing numbers of special needs children with conditions such as Down's Syndrome, Asperger's Syndrome, autism, and ADHD creates problems for the management of teaching and learning due to the great variety in the capacities of these children to learn. In addition, the high costs of providing separate special education facilities may lead ELB officers to create pressure on parents to seek integration into mainstream schools for their children, even where this may not be appropriate for the child, or for other children in the school.

*If the cost of special education is very expensive, ... there will be constant pressure on the part of government to move people out of special schools into mainstream, even with a classroom assistant.*

Within the current context of severely limited capital funding, schools are unable to provide proper access for children with physical disabilities.

Two respondents expressed concern that, within school practice, issues of inequality have often been left to RE departments to deal with; these were seen as being separate from the main concerns of teachers and schools. This issue might worsen with the revision of the curriculum; it already seemed possible that equality issues might be similarly compartmentalized into the new Citizenship curriculum.

### **Perceived Constraints On Change**

All of these issues were raised by respondents in the main stakeholders' seminar. Respondents identified a number of constraints which operate at different levels of the school system.

#### **1. At government level:**

- Respondents believed that there is a lack of commitment by the Department to provide adequate funding to promote equality. For example, there is a lack of access to many schools for physically disabled children. This situation is unlikely to change without much greater spending;
- The Department has not yet provided detailed information about the impact of current TSN spending in remedying some forms of inequality. Such information would be useful in determining the effectiveness of current initiatives, and could assist in prioritising future developments;
- It was also stated that, due to pressure to improve results in the statutory curriculum, there is no space in classroom activities for 'touchy-feely' issues outside the main subject focus of the curriculum, such as 'who is a human being'?

#### **2. At regional level:**

- ELBs lack resources for in-service teacher development in awareness of equality issues, and the promotion of strategies to address these;
- The difficulty for individual schools in the voluntary grammar sector, of adhering to equality requirements without the support of an employing body.

#### **3. At school level:**

- Schools are perceived to be swamped with curriculum change – equality issues are not given priority and there is a lack of commitment to promote equality within the curriculum.

*'Boards of governors are very varied in their alertness, or lack of it, to the issues.'*

*'Issues like this (equality issues) are pushed back. (Schools) are too busy trying to wrestle, and we are about to introduce another series of massive changes.'*

- Also, the promotion of equality within schools raises difficult issues, which have no simple solutions:

*'There's a whole series of simple questions with extremely complicated answers. .... What it comes back to us as governors of the school (is) what should you be doing, but that implies you know what is right, and that's the difficulty we're in. There's clear evidence in the past that there was discrimination against women, minority groups, language discrimination, I don't have any doubt about that. The problem is now, have they gone away? I'm not sure they have.'*

*'None of us is particularly good at (dealing with tensions around moral issues). If you look for example at Travellers, I thought our organization was wonderful, (but) we actually dealt with them in a paternalistic way, which the intention was kind, but the end result wasn't good.'*

- Respondents expressed concerns that many young teachers are likely to be conservative in their outlook on equality matters, to stereotype children and be unaware of current equality requirements. Also, it was felt that in some schools, there is a lack of sensitivity to the different contexts from which children come.
- A number of issues were identified for schools in attending to children's special educational needs:
  - In seeking to be more inclusive and to integrate those children with special educational needs, schools may have to confront a tension between the needs of those individuals and the needs of the wider group. By attending to some special needs, provision for the wider groups may be negatively affected.
  - Special arrangements for those with special educational needs in mainstream schools may actually reinforce perceptions of their difference.
  - There may be a tension for schools with excellent special needs provision, in that they may not wish to publicly promote this aspect of their activity for fear of damaging their image and thus deterring other families from enrolling their children. Or, their provision may be swamped with many additional children.

*'Say for example, dyslexia; there are a number of grammar schools that have quite good programmes. They don't advertise them. The reason they don't tell is that 1 or 2 children a year is not a problem.'*

### Possible means of promoting equality awareness and good practice

A range of possible strategies for improvement were identified by all respondents.

1. Consideration of equality issues should be included more explicitly within the main phases of teacher education [ITE, induction, EPD and CPD]. Suggestions included:

- Refining the criteria for the selection of student teachers to include not just academic qualifications, but also positive personal qualities likely to lead to equality awareness:

*'I do think the sort of thing we are talking about here will depend upon interaction and an intuitive commitment by whomsoever is teaching children, so that they won't just know the facts, they will imbibe the philosophy and the moral underpinnings.'*

- By considering why physically disabled people do not often apply to become teachers and then taking steps to remedy this situation.
  - In initial teacher education and training: inclusion of equality concerns in taught courses, and a requirement to focus on an aspect of equality during teaching practice for later discussion;
  - In induction and Early Professional Development education and training: a requirement to use one Professional Development Activity to address an equality issue;
  - In Continuing Professional Development education and training: through the provision of in-service, to encourage teachers to raise and address equality issues arising from individual and school practice.
2. Regional bodies, such as CCMS, should consider whether they might issue further guidance to schools on disability and other equality issues.
  3. The new citizenship curriculum should give emphasis to equality issues, providing that these do not become marginalized into this area;
  4. Consideration of the range of equality issues should be included within the in-service teacher training which will be offered to support the new citizenship and personal & social education themes.
  5. Equality issues should become mainstreamed in schools, diffused throughout all aspects of school life, including the discipline system, the pastoral care system, the allocation of resources, partnership with parents etc.

*'It shouldn't be delivered solely by Citizenship. It should throw into other issues, and if the school is committed to equality in terms of the way it teaches teachers, the way in which its discipline policy operates ... the way in which bullying is seen as the antithesis of (equality), if that's how it's operating, then these other (equality) issues which will emerge, there will be a basis there to deal with them.'*

*'It's got to be something that is part and parcel of what happens in the school.'*

6. Additional resourcing should be provided by government to all levels of the system in order to progress the continuing capacity to address equality-driven issues.

*'I think intuitively all of us would want to say we favour the notion of integration (into mainstream schooling of children with special needs), but that has major implications in terms of the actual training of people, it also has major implications in terms of resources, and that's not just at the school level.'*

## **Issues Relating To The Role Of The Department Of Education And The Other Major Stakeholders In Promoting Policies To Address Inequality.**

### **The Department of Education**

As indicated above, the Department representatives interviewed indicated that the Department considers that the promotion of equal opportunities is the responsibility of all teachers in pursuit of the statutory requirement for all children to have equal access to the curriculum. Through various initiatives and ongoing processes, such as school inspection, the Department believes itself to be well-informed about the nature and extent of disadvantage and inequality.

In addition, under the current legislation, the Department, like other public bodies is now required to undertake equality impact assessment of its policies and practices, and to produce an Equality Scheme, following public consultation.

### ***The equality scheme of the Department of Education***

The Department issued an Equality Scheme in February, 2001 in fulfilment of its duties arising from Section 75 of and Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act, 1998. In the Annexes to the scheme, the Department identifies its functional responsibilities and policies (Annex A), the policies to be subjected to Equality Impact Assessment (Annex C) and the policies which may contribute to the promotion of good relations between groups (Annex D).

In Annex B (Outcome of Initial Screening of Policies), the Department undertakes an audit of what it judges to be the current state of equality impact. The findings are as follows:

TABLE 1: Summary of Annex B, Department of Education Equality Scheme

	Is there evidence of higher or lower participation rates across groups?	Is there evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, priorities about this policy?	Is there potential to enhance equality of opportunity for any of the 9 groups through the policy?	Have earlier consultations with relevant authorities indicated that particular policies create problems specific to them?
Initial Teacher Training	<b>Yes</b>	-	-	-
CPD of Teachers	-	-	-	-
Raising literacy/ numeracy standards	-	-	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Support for low & underachieving schools	-	-	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Promotion of inclusion for pupil groups in danger of educational underachievement	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	-
Maintenance of the statutory curriculum	-	-	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Maximising learning opportunities for children with special educational needs	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Promotion of inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream classes	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>

Source: DE (2001b) Equality Scheme For The Department Of Education. Bangor, DE

Within these, certain responsibilities and policies provide a framework within which teacher education and development issues are key aspects if equality issues are to be addressed. These include ITE, support for low and underachieving schools, support for raising standards in literacy and numeracy, the promotion of inclusion for pupils in danger of educational underachievement, the maintenance of the statutory curriculum, the maximising of learning opportunities for children with learning difficulties and special educational needs, and the inclusion of such pupils in mainstream schools and classes.

It seems from this information, that while the Department has identified a considerable range of equality implications around some of its key policy areas relating to schools and pupils, it is not clear from interview data how these feed through into its analysis of equality issues to be addressed in teacher education and training, even though it seems unlikely that school policy initiatives can be successful without the commitment of teachers to the aims of such policies and their capacity to implement them. From the interview data, it appears that teachers and teacher-educators are assumed by the Department to be able to understand the nature and impact of inequalities, support personally the need to erode these, and have pre-existing capacity to do so.

The explanation for this 'gap' is unclear. It may be that there has been a lack of consideration within the Department about ends and means relationships of policy implementation, or that Teachers' Branch and the Equality Division have not communicated effectively, or simply that the Department believes that existing procedures for policy and practice monitoring through the ETI show that practice in teacher education & schools, and levels of pupil outcome are acceptable. This last seems unlikely given that the Department's own analysis of educational outcomes for pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) since the introduction of the Targeting of Social Need (TSN) initiatives (DE, 2001a), indicates that improvements in the levels of attainment for these pupils do not appear to have eroded the existing differentials between these and other pupils; in general, educational outcomes have improved for all pupils (para.3.2).

In addition, in the same document Figure 11 suggests that between 1994/5 and 1998/9 there was a very slight percentage increase in the differential (para. 4.1) between all school leavers and those entitled to FSM, whose first destination after school was an institution of higher education.

The Department's New TSN action plan (DE2000c) also considers how improvements may be made to educational outcomes of Special Educational Needs and socially-disadvantaged pupils, but in general, there appears to be a dearth of evidence from the Department about the educational outcomes of other pupil groups affected by equality concerns.

It may be that the Department's current dominant agenda of improving standards in schooling is forcing schools to prioritise their attention on teaching, learning and assessment practices in relation to improving pupil examination performance since this is currently a key indicator of school improvement, and is also a benchmark for teacher performance-related pay. Other indicators relating to concerns such as equality may be marginalised within this standards agenda.

In addition, the Department's focus on issues of social disadvantage and SEN complement evidence from other groups of respondents within this research that for schools and teachers, these are the dominant and 'visible' themes within the current operation of the equality agenda. These are the issues which teachers refer to when asked about equality. However, in general these themes are not explicitly located within a broader agenda which seeks to foster equality for all individuals and groups.

### **Other stakeholders**

Evidence from the representatives of other stakeholder groups suggests that they believe that their capacity to influence schools' awareness of equality issues and to facilitate good practice is very limited. CCMS, in association with the Northern Catholic Bishops, appears to play a more proactive guidance role in these issues than the other groups represented, and has already produced several policy documents which address aspects of equality (e.g. Catholic Bishops, 2001). However, its capacity to ensure school compliance with policy guidelines is also restricted. In addition, as with all other stakeholders, it must operate within the parameters and priorities laid down by the Department of Education.

The GBA, in its present form believes that it has capacity to influence the work of the governing bodies of voluntary grammar schools. However, since, by its representative's own admission, it has no control over the ethos of its schools and has only recently become aware to a limited extent of any aspect of teacher development, it seems unlikely that it can play any important direct role in fostering the consideration of a wide range of equality concerns, or in promoting good practice, unless the Association as a whole decides to prioritise these and take them forward. Its own dominant agenda at present may be assumed to lie elsewhere just at present, in the protection of the existence of the voluntary grammar school sector during the current Review of post-primary education. However, this campaign, in itself, provides some evidence to suggest that the Association has considerable capacity to act to influence, when this is prioritised.

The group of Protestant churches represented in the Transferors' Representative Council, although not a statutory body like CCMS, has nomination rights to governing bodies in teacher education, Controlled schools and to the Education and Library Boards. However, as with the GBA, it does not appear to use these rights in any systematic way to foster any particular policies or practices in these institutions. While not in a majority in any of these boards, it might be that greater coordination across the TRC membership of these bodies might lead to a greater capacity to assert aspects of the equality agenda within teacher education and Controlled schools.

### **Conclusions**

- Although respondents from the Department apparently believed that in general, current arrangements do address the major equality concerns, all other respondents articulated concerns across the major aspects of equality, and believed that current constraints limit their capacity to attend to these.



- Overall, evidence from these two seminars in Strand Two suggests that at this policy level, there is no generally-known or accepted programme within the system either to identify the full range of equality needs, or to address those already identified.
- If the school system as a whole is to move forward across the range of equality issues, we believe that it will be necessary for the Department of Education to prioritise these explicitly in the processes of school improvement.
- Such prioritization might be developed through the curricula for teacher & school education and through school practice, through devising indicators of tangible outcomes in these areas, and by resourcing the implementation of these policies, through both recurrent and capital funding processes, and also, perhaps, through some special initiatives. A more explicit focus might also be given to such indicators within the inspection process to include issues such as gender, disability and 'race'.
- Simultaneously, there may be scope for stakeholder groups, such as CCMS, GBA, TRC, to become more proactive (within the limitations of their roles) in prioritising discussion and development around equality concerns for those institutions in which they have some influence. If, for example, Transferor representatives on the ELBs, Stranmillis University College Board of Governors, and school governing bodies, gave clear priority to the implications of such issues in the on-going decision-making processes of these bodies, equality concerns would become more visible at both system and school levels and in teacher education. In the same way, CCMS and GBA have capacity to highlight areas of concern and to influence behaviour, so could give greater prominence to equality issues within their schools.

## Section 2: Providers - Initial Teacher Education

This section considers the data provided by the HEIs who have responsibility for the provision of initial teacher education in Northern Ireland. One interview session was held to obtain the views of these providers. The participants were:

- One representative from Queen's University Belfast;
- Two representatives from Stranmillis University College;
- Two representatives from University of Ulster

(the representative from St Mary's University College was unable to attend)

### General Aspects of Equality Awareness Identified by the Respondents

All the providers of ITE indicated that equality issues were a consideration within their courses. However, the extent to which the constituent aspects of equality (community background, 'race', gender, disability, etc) are covered varied between the providers. Variation occurred in terms of what providers are required to generally cover within ITE courses in relation to the competency framework and also the requirements of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Special Education Needs (SEN, with emphasis on learning rather than physical disability) emerge as two areas which are given particular attention specifically within ITE courses. Both these areas are the focus of special courses and/or joint programmes between colleges and departments. However, even these courses are not always compulsory and EMU programmes especially seem to suffer from a sense of 'tokenism' in terms of how they are perceived by the students and how effective they are:

*People have tended to think that EMU is only about inter-college contact with the students which has been singularly not very successful because they still sit in their own groups. Staff training for EMU needs is a start*

*The problem with the inter-college programme apart from how people perceive it is there is also little time to do it. All the research on contact suggests that superficial and limited contact can actually be counterproductive and I feel that to some degree that is what we are doing, creating opportunities for people to learn how to avoid issues rather than to learn how to deal with them*

Issues of gender, 'race', social class, etc., tend to be covered in an ad hoc manner either through subject methods courses or through one-of lectures. For example, concerns around boys' underachievement are dealt with in English classes and girls performance and participation in science is dealt with in the various science subjects. Often issues of 'race', gender and social class are part of EMU courses and are integrated into such

courses along with community background, political opinion and religion. In fact, RE courses emerged as particular spaces for dealing with equality issues (gender, 'race', and sexuality):

*Within religious studies you can open the way to deal with these issues and other subjects can be attuned to them. There are opportunities through subjects, through curriculum studies, professional studies and EMU.*

No judgement seemed to be made by the providers of ITE as to whether RE classes was the best forum in which to deal with such issues.

Students can also opt to consider the above aspects of equality through coursework. It is possible, however, for students to go through their initial teacher education course without having to focus specifically on many aspects of equality and how it relates to their practice as teachers:

*[focusing on equality issues] tends to be by options – some people would opt to look at some of these issues but I think you could go through the course without having to focus on many of those issues in a formal way.*

Moreover, the practicalities of the volunteer partnership model between HEIs and schools for student placements were considered barriers to equality issues being dealt with in school while students were on teaching practice.

*Its actually more focused on the teaching rather than a lot of the other issues that are seen by other people as more peripheral unless they happen to be placed in an integrated school where may be there us a sharper focus on some of the issues.*

The issue of tutors themselves within institutions being comfortable with equality considerations has also been raised. There is a sense that tutors may be more comfortable with higher profile issues, such as gender and SEN, but would be very unsure of the wider area of equality legislation in general and how this applies to schools and students' experiences within schools. Some of the issues emerging with respect to tutors' experience of equality issues are:

- lack of training in this area and lack of confidence in transferring this knowledge back to students;
- lack of awareness of particular legislation and how this is imparted to students;
- working with non-diverse student groups and how this may erode any perceived need to confront issues of inequality; and
- the extent to which ITE programmes are providing adequate preparation for the onset of equality programmes/issues in the classroom.

A strong theme, that also came through in discussions with teacher and student teachers was gender issues in employment in teaching: the small proportion of women principals and vice-principals (especially in the primary phase); attitudes of male and female students to principalships; gendered; stereotypical notions of society amongst some trainee teachers and how this is reflected in their own ambitions as future teachers and role models for male and female teachers within the teaching profession.

### **Perceived constraints on change**

Within courses of initial teacher education there seems to be a willingness to engage with equality issues. Respondents suggested that they are implicitly, if not always explicitly, considered within such programmes. A main constraint is time and how issues of equality are given priority in an already packed curriculum for ITE students. There was a sense of responsibility amongst tutors that they should be modelling through their own teaching the skills and knowledge students require in relation dealing with these issues in classrooms.

*We as teachers in higher education, have to model the type of things we expect the students to do. If we are not then it is unreasonable to expect students to pick up the skills we also need to have a participative approach to teaching.*

However, given other constraints, such as particular emphases from the inspectorate (e.g. numeracy, literacy, ICT, etc.) it is not always feasible for issues of equality to be given priority.

*...this issue is not a high level priority for all the obvious reasons. Last year we were being hit by literacy, numeracy, ICT and classroom management – they are of more importance and take a higher profile.*

The precedence accorded to certain aspects of inequality in Northern Ireland society generally were also cited as barriers to dealing with wider equality issues. For example, a focus on political issues and the constraints of single-sex schools and schools separated by religion seemed to dominate equality considerations, so that tackling issues of gender, 'race', disability and sexuality would take a lower priority.

*Constraints already exist, in the form of single sex schools or schools separated by religion – you cannot change the fundamental building blocks, you have to be realistic.*

However, there was a sense that, due to Northern Ireland's particular circumstances, it was fundamental that students are supported in being able to cope with community or political issues that they will encounter in schools. Developing confidence in dealing with these issues can then be built on to develop confidence within trainee teachers to deal with wider, more diverse equality issues:

*We focus too much on political issues instead of maybe taking on things like the gender issue, disability, special educational needs – when we develop confidence in working together then we could tackle the more contentious things.*

### **Possible means of promoting equality awareness and good practice in ITE**

The following are ideas which emerged as ways for moving forward on equality issues in initial teacher education:

- Accurate information on equality legislation should be provided, and be easily accessible, for teachers and tutors. This information should have both a primary and post-primary focus;
- There should be adequate training for teacher-tutors to over-come the lack of knowledge and skills amongst tutors in the field of equality. The providers of ITE acknowledged that this was a major concern and would need to be tackled if equality issues were to be covered more comprehensively in the ITE curriculum;
- Resources should be developed to support student teachers in schools and classrooms. These could be used in working with partnership schools in enabling student teachers to focus on equality issues in their placements. The development of training materials, CD ROMs, etc, would help in this regard. The Equality Commission might wish to resource such materials;
- The focus on equality issues should be increased and integrated into ITE programmes. This should be seen as integral to a new model of the ITE curriculum rather than as a further external imposition by way of accountability on HEIs and especially those who educate and train teachers.

## Section 3: Providers – Induction/Early Professional Development

### Introduction

This section considers data provided by representatives of the Education and Library Boards' Curriculum and Advisory Service, (CASS) who provide support to beginning teachers through their programmes for induction and early professional development.

One interview session was held to obtain the views of these providers. All five of the Education and Library Boards were represented by officers with a remit to work with beginning teachers.

### General/contextual aspects identified by board officers

The main responsibility to support beginning teachers through the induction and EPD phases of their development lies with the employing schools. The role of ELBs is to support schools (normally through teacher-tutors), and beginning teachers during these phases.

ELB CASS services, working across the five Board areas, provide induction support through a structured programme outside school to first-year beginning teachers. In the second and third years of their teaching service, CASS provides support on an individual basis to teachers who are writing the Professional Development Activities required for progress through the Early Professional Development phase of teacher education. Support is also provided for teacher-tutors and Heads of Department in employing schools, both on an individual and group basis.

CASS officers believed that the purpose of this support programme is to help beginning teachers to become confident, competent, thoughtful and critical practitioners. All training is based on the ELBs' commitment to encourage beginning teachers to work to meet the needs of all pupils so the key element of such reflective practice is the promotion of equal access to learning for all pupils.

*'I would have thought that it's intrinsic (in the curriculum-based induction training days) that there's a commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils. You are talking about a range of methodology that will help you to do that. You are not necessarily saying it like that, of course.'*

In the very early stages of teaching, this focuses on the need for differentiation in the classroom, according to pupils' individual learning needs. Based on such strategies which acknowledge individual difference, the programme anticipates an eventual broader understanding of equality concerns. However, neither the induction programme nor the support for EPD provided by CASS yet provide explicit focus on broader issues of equality.

*A lot of young teachers in induction pick areas like diversity in the classroom and how all youngsters get the learning experience. How they deal with all youngsters, that's 3.1 in the third Chapter of competencies (for newly-qualified teachers). ..... But you don't look at it from the point of view of equality.*

CASS officers also work to develop appropriate guidance materials for school teacher-tutors and Heads of Department who are providing in-school support for EPD.

In the broader context of equality concerns, one ELB representative referred to his Board's commitment to a policy of cultural tolerance, and to other education-related groups (e.g. the Inter-Cultural Education Group, the Inter-Faith Forum) who provide materials mainly for the new Citizenship curriculum. Some of these groups have web sites, which CASS officers thought might be useful for beginning teachers. However, such groups are not incorporated directly within either the induction or EPD programmes.

### **Key equality issues, identified by respondents, which arise from the legislative & employment contexts**

This programme of external support, funded by the Department of Education, is based on the assumption of full-time, permanent employment for beginning teachers. However, at present such contracts are not the norm; most beginning teachers obtain temporary or part-time posts (In 1999, the ratio of permanent to non-permanent posts was one to three. [Sutherland, 2002]). In these circumstances, while CASS is anxious to provide support, this is not always possible on a regular basis. Thus, some beginning teachers are unable to avail of the external programme at all, and others only on an intermittent basis.

A further difficulty for such beginning teachers may be a lack of full support from their employing schools, especially if their periods of employment are brief. For those who work on a series of very short substitutions, schools may be unaware of their beginning teacher status, or may not have time to develop proper support programmes for them before their contract is over.

CASS officers identified further inequalities for beginning teachers, according to their school of employment. These related to the varying school situations in which these teachers found themselves: some schools are better resourced than others, some schools provide easier teaching contexts than others. Thus the level of challenge confronting beginning teachers is often unequal, yet the criteria by which their work is judged are uniform across different types of school.

The lack of men teachers in primary schools was also cited as a concern by the representatives, both for teachers and for pupils who lack adult male role models.

### **Other current equality issues identified by the respondents**

CASS officers emphasized the paramount importance of the values and practices of the employing school for beginning teachers engaged in induction and EPD activities, both in general and in relation to equality awareness. This importance operated in varying ways:

- In the priority accorded to induction/EPD by the school principal and senior management team;
- In the level of interest and support made available for beginning teachers' development;
- In the ethos of the school, particularly in relationship to attitudes towards difference; and,
- In the sorts of issues for PDA work which are approved by teacher-tutors & Heads of Department for EPD-phase teachers.

*It depends on the school and the climate of the school discussion and the mode of questioning there is in the school. I(n some schools) I could see some individuals would get quite fired up by this kind of more political issue.'*

'You can recognise the school they've come from by the things they've said.'

In some schools, due to emphases on other priorities, there is no real ethos which accepts difference and works to erode inequalities. For beginning teachers in such schools, CASS support is likely to be of less benefit.

In general, the groups of beginning teachers supported by CASS have had a monocultural social and educational experience; there is seldom even any social class diversity within groups. For example, only beginning teachers who have studied in Great Britain have had any direct school experience of equality issues arising from differing ethnicity or from multi-faith communities. In such circumstances it is more difficult to generate informed discussion about what it means to be a teacher in a context of diversity.

From their experience of beginning teachers' concerns, CASS officers considered that their dominant issue is pupils' need for equality of access to literacy and how this may be facilitated. As such, this is the equality priority both for the beginning teachers and for those who support them.

### **Perceived constraints on change**

The main emphases within the induction support programme must attend to issues of behaviour management, of teaching literacy, numeracy, ICT, and must address the need to recognise and facilitate different styles of pupil learning. These are the areas accorded priority by ETI and schools, and are of most practical importance to beginning teachers and to their employing schools:

*Our difficulties with induction, .... They have so much to learn that they are subjected to, and the range of subjects and the range of curriculum areas, and primary issues as*



*well. (Knowing about these) is what gives them their confidence.'*

*We do a lot of behaviour management.*

*Those would have to be our starting point; literacy, numeracy, methodology, resources, a lot of stuff. How you're doing it. Obviously (we) are trying to encourage them to think as widely as possible about learning styles, range of methodologies. But that's really the purpose of our (induction) courses.'*

The amount of time available for induction and EPD is limited. This constrains the range of issues which can be addressed. EPD priorities for beginning teachers are generally identified from their own perceived needs or those of their schools, rather than at the suggestion of CASS officers.

*Particularly in post-primary, they get very hyped on curriculum content*

*There are reasons why ... a significant thing should be something teachers look at when they're teaching but they don't. .... (Particularly) in post-primary, again, it goes back to the realization that all they need to consider is the subject knowledge. They've got the subject knowledge, and are going to give it to (the pupils). .... especially in grammar schools, "I have the knowledge, that's my job".'*

The first year of teaching is very challenging and pressured. CASS support officers have great difficulty in encouraging beginning teachers to move the focus of their attention from their own performance to broader issues of how and why their pupils are learning.

*It's getting them (beginning teachers) to move beyond their image as a teacher, and how they are projecting themselves, and (instead) ... actually bringing the focus into the realm of (what is happening) in the classroom.'*

Both the induction and EPD support programmes encourage beginning teachers to consider varying learning styles and to provide differentiated learning opportunities for pupils, but not as an explicit equality strategy. Instead, differentiation is seen more as being a means of promoting effective teaching and learning. But, whichever framework it is located within, it is hard work for beginning teachers, and does not always happen.

*Differentiation would be very popular but .... they wouldn't be thinking about equality, they would be thinking about it from a teaching perspective. .... To them it would be a teaching issue.'*

Issues of inequalities for pupil groups within schools are matters for the attention of school governors, principal, and SMT. CASS officers considered that the ELBs were not yet in a position to address such issues on a school-by-school basis.

*It's a management issue. It's also a question for all teachers, not just the beginning teachers. '*

The value systems and ethos of individual schools may not encourage awareness of equality issues among beginning teachers. They are pressured to conform to school norms, and many are not aware or concerned about the dangers of stereotyping pupils, or the implications of social class background, ethnicity, etc. for learning. In addition, many see their own work priority as teaching their subject effectively.

Due to pressures of accountability, internally and externally, many have a very instrumental attitude to their teaching and a limited view of their role.

*(There are) young teachers in their first year, who are clearly comfortable in saying, "Oh, those children are very attention-seeking, those three children are very lazy", and you get the sense that this is the way these things are dealt with. '*

*The ethos of the school is a big thing ..... you conform to the ethos and the attitudes and values which surround the ... pre-determined ethos. '*

*I'm not so worried about the school where the ethos is, but I'm worried about the school where it isn't, because .... they will pick up on that, and they will become like the teachers around them because (equality) hasn't been questioned in those schools. '*

### **Possible means of promoting equality awareness and good practice in Induction and EPD**

- CASS representatives believed that if the required core competences outlined in the Teacher Education Handbook were amended to incorporate a heavier emphasis on awareness of wider forms of diversity, this would give greater priority within pre-service, induction and EPD education and training.
- While the basis of current support programmes is already to encourage beginning teachers to consider how they can best facilitate appropriate access to learning for all their pupils, this does not happen within any kind of explicit equality framework. CASS

representatives felt that the equality aspects of existing activities could be made more explicit, and that in addition, beginning teachers could be asked more challenging questions which would provoke them to think more deeply about such issues.

- EPD-phase teachers might be encouraged to engage in equality-related enquiry through their PDA work, even if this is not a priority for their school.
- Although the management of EPD lies within employing schools, CASS might be more pro-active in alerting teacher-tutors/Heads of Department to the value of PDA-based enquiry into an aspect of equality in the classroom. In addition, 'selling', to principals, the wider value of such activities as management tools to promote school development planning would probably generate more interest within schools.

## **Conclusion**

The major responsibility for the support of beginning teachers during induction and EPD lies with their employing schools. CASS services have a supplementary role. Thus, the extent to which schools take seriously these responsibilities is the dominant influence on the beginning teacher.

In addition, the ethos and value systems of individual schools will largely determine the extent to which beginning teachers are encouraged to engage with any issues of diversity.

Within their current programmes, ELBs do not at present explicitly identify equality as a concern. However, it appears that considerable attention is given within these programmes to issues of differentiated learning, although this emphasis is located within a framework of effective teaching.

Consideration of a more equality-focussed approach to aspects of the ELB support programmes for beginning teachers is in its infancy. It does appear, however, that there may be some scope, within present arrangements to accord greater priority to equality awareness for beginning teachers.

## Section 4: Providers – Continuing Professional Development

### Introduction

This section of the report focuses on the continuing professional development (CPD) perspective of Strand 2 of the research and draws on data from two seminars:

- one with representatives from the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and
- one with representatives from the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the Regional Training Unit (RTU).

Despite the fact that each of these seminars explored the same areas the participants of each chose to highlight and examine different aspects and the two sessions are therefore written up separately.

### Higher Education Institutions

#### Contextual Background

The four representatives from the HEIs were variously responsible for a range of courses and, for the most part, had significant involvement in CPD courses within each institution. Equality issues would have been raised at institutional level through staff development and training. Generally, it was felt that there was a sharpened awareness of such issues as a result of more recent and increasing emphasis on quality assurance and accountability within this sector along with the developments in the equality legislation.

*What we do in terms of policy and practice procedures are conditional upon the university's policies with regard to equality awareness and the levels of practice that are required..... We have also been through QAA and that has also raised our awareness in terms of equality and meeting the needs of individual students ..... We are also practice driven .... the evidence is seen in our access to buildings and the awareness of staff to access issues and various equality issues.*

Throughout the session reference was made to the role of the institution and the development of appropriate policy based on legislative requirements; great faith was put in the ability of various departments in the various institutions to put into place practices which reflected the overall policy:

*I have confidence in the university developing and promoting high quality practice as it derives from the requirements of the legislation*

though there was little discussion as to how this might be achieved.

## Equality Issues

Several equality issues were raised in the discussion and these are considered under three headings; firstly those which pertained to access to the courses, secondly those which were about equality in the delivery of the courses and finally those which related to the content of the courses.

### **Access to Courses**

Of those which were raised regarding equal access to the various CPD courses offered by the HEIs gender, religion and disability and/or learning difficulties were all seen as important factors. In relation to disability and/or learning difficulties the HEIs reported that they all ask students to indicate on their application forms any form of disability which might require special provision to be made for them. However, a difficulty associated with this procedure is that some students may not declare their needs and these only emerge as the course develops.

*On the application form there is a section to self-declare a disability or learning difficulty and that is followed through .....we actually found that we had more students with needs than were declared on the application form .... We felt that there was an issue around non declaration and very often these things emerge from individual relationships with tutors.....*

Implicit in some of the discussion regarding disability/learning difficulties was the idea that students were reluctant to declare certain invisible disabilities (e.g. mental health problems), or learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia), because they thought that this might prevent them from gaining a place on the course for which they had applied. Only when they had been accepted on the course and built a relationship with a tutor was it felt that they have the confidence to discuss these difficulties.

All of the HEIs also reported greater numbers of females enrolled for their CPD courses than males, though this clearly reflects the fact that more females opt to enter the teaching profession. The contrast was drawn between the types of courses that males and females enrol for with there being more males selecting management courses, though UU recently had introduced new entrance criterion for these courses which reversed this trend.

*The management course was more male than female about four to five years ago but then that course had been only open to those presently in positions of management, junior management in schools, and then that course was opened up to everyone ....and more females came through and the age profile lowered ...*

There was a general sense that Queen's and UU attracted fairly equal numbers of students from both the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland. Both St Mary's and Stranmillis pointed out that, contrary to popular belief, their institutions have students from both sectors though this is more apparent at CPD level than ITE:

*In a sense St Mary's is an historically unique institution being Catholic education centred – that does not mean that we do not have students who are not of the Catholic persuasion and we have students doing ITE and Masters programmes who are of a different religion*

and

*The M-level programme will deal with a greater deal of religious diversity than the ITE and the joint programme seems to be saying I will choose the module that meets my professional needs and interest not because it happens to be offered by Stranmillis or St Mary's.*

Thus, it was argued that the greater mix of students at M-level was because people were choosing modules that were of interest to them rather than because of the institution in which they were delivered. In all the HEIs important benefits were felt to be derived from this religious mix in the courses in that there was an opportunity for students to talk to people from the other community, sometimes for the first time.

The CPD courses in the HEIs are not only open to teachers but attract youth workers, nurse tutors, educational psychologists and other students from a range of associated professions. UUC have also been active in trying to accommodate those from less traditional academic backgrounds (especially social disadvantage) by taking non-graduates who were accepted on the course through the submission of portfolios and interviews alongside their professional experience. The point was made that these students had performed as well as those who had been accepted through the normal pathway and concern expressed that the possibility of non-graduate entry to CPD in education may not be possible in the future. The other institutions present did not mention any attempts at provision for those from non-traditional academic backgrounds and there was no indication that this was under consideration. While there was no further discussion around this point it does raise the question of the limited access to higher education for those from less traditional academic backgrounds, particularly the socially disadvantaged.

### ***Delivery of Courses***

Other equality issues were associated with the delivery of the courses and what emerged here was that several strategies had been introduced in the HEIs to try to ensure that all students were treated equally. These strategies included anonymous marking, 'support for learning' workshops and the completion of student surveys and evaluations of modules all of which were seen as designed to:

*Meet the needs of individual students and (were) conditioned by equality issues and the need to ensure that everybody has an equal opportunity in doing the best they can.*

Attention also was drawn to the fact that, as a result of an increasing number of overseas students studying within the HEIs, tutors generally were becoming more aware of racial issues associated with equality and the need to address these in their modules.

### **Content of Courses**

In terms of equality issues being addressed in the content of courses there was a generally held belief that modules should be designed to address the professional needs of teachers and where equality issues such as gender, 'race', social disadvantage naturally arise in the context of the module then they would be addressed. It was argued that:

*We provide courses that we think serving teachers will be interested in. If these (equality) issues happen to arise they arise in the context of the academic demands in the programmes, but I certainly do think that we say, let's address this....*

and

*You can't just put on a module on equality issues – it would not attract the numbers. We need to provide courses that we think serving teachers will be interested in. If these issues happen to arise they arise in the context of the academic demands of the programmes we address them.*

It would therefore seem that the reason the entire area of special educational needs is so well catered for in CPFD courses is that it is current and topical and therefore highly marketable and is within this context both policy and legislation are covered in depth.

Other specific modules have been introduced in the various HEIs, for example EMU courses in Queen's and one on Human Rights Education in UUC, though it was pointed out that, as with special education, attendance at these modules is determined by students interest in the area and it is therefore likely that course participants will already have an awareness of the issues involved. Furthermore, the continuation of such modules is again very dependent on demand.

The participant from UUC drew attention to the fact that their CPD courses are largely action research based which should theoretically lead to challenging the underpinning values of education and equality. However, this was not always the case since whether or not these values were raised within the module would frequently be determined by the focus of the course being taught or, as it was put by the respondents:

*Modules are designed to address the professional needs of those who take the courses and where issues of gender, 'race', social disadvantage naturally arise in the modules we undertake to address them*

and

*It (equality) is not introduced artificially, it arises because it follows on from the content and to do it otherwise would be quite wrong*

## Constraints

Throughout the discussion some constraints which hindered the participants' ability to ensure that equality in terms of access, delivery and content of courses were identified and these are now outlined.

Two of the main perceived constraints pertaining to equality of access to CPD were funding and the rural-urban divide. In terms of funding the vast majority of CPD students are self-funding and the point was made that longer serving teachers (and other professionals) will be financially more secure and therefore more able to afford CPD than those who are more recently qualified and therefore on lower salaries. This it was felt discriminated against younger teachers:

*you have a young teacher who's being told you fund yourself yet CPD is becoming a prerequisite for promotion that person is in a difficult situation.*

Additionally, the fact that the courses were only available in certain locations meant that sometimes students have long distances to travel and thus where the course was delivered could also place some people at a disadvantage:

*whilst there is some outreach from the HEIs ..... there is an element of good fortune of being within a certain geographical area of an HEI as compared to not being ..... the availability of transport, the cost, time available, family commitments and the like.*

Attention was repeatedly drawn to the fact that, when talking about specific modules on equality issues only those students who were interested in the area would choose such options:

*We've recently introduced a module on human rights education. Again it would be those students who would opt to go in that direction who would spend more time on it – those who com on those courses are likely to have an awareness in those areas.*

There appeared to be some resistance to the idea of introducing modules on specific equality issues mainly because it was felt that these would not attract enough students to be financially viable. This is understandable given the financial requirement placed on various Schools and/or Departments within HEIs though there was no indication that this belief had been supported by hard evidence from potential students.

## Possible ways of promoting equality awareness in CPD courses in HE

While the group as a whole discussed and explored what they perceived as the issues around access, content and delivery of equality issues in continuing professional development courses there was less discussion focussed on the way forward. This appeared to be partly because there was a belief that many of the issues were already being dealt with by University policy:



*All of that (equality issues) is framed in terms of CPD ....and the university's policies and strategies and I have confidence in the University developing and promoting high quality practice.*

However, it was suggested that with a multi-agency approach things could be moved forward:

*We are not the only agency that our customer should have access to and I think that it's beholden on the Government and the Equality Commission. It's the multi-agency approach that will eventually deliver the legislation to the highest levels of practice and if we could just play our part.*

and

*At EPD stage there is a multitude of people who are actually involved at that point between boards, schools and teacher tutors and also lay people in the sense of boards of governors*  
...

Additionally, the imbalance in males and females taking CPD courses was seen as primarily due to the low number of males coming into the profession and this it was argued needed to be dealt with at ITE level and even further back. It was also argued that another means of addressing the equality agenda in education would be to encourage greater numbers from the minority groups (e.g. ethnic minorities) or those groups that rarely enter the teaching profession:

*It would be good to see those from minority backgrounds encouraged into the teaching profession here. As minority communities increase there is going to be a deficit there unless we're proactive.*

However, this suggestion that the HEIs need to be more proactive was a loan voice and the difficulties of taking such an approach without a multi-agency dimension were seen too great by other members of the group.

### **Conclusion: HEIs**

A range of equality issues were associated with access, delivery and content of courses at CPD level. Factors which limited access to courses were also seen as constraints and included gender, location of courses, funding and academic background, while delivery and content were seen to be limited primarily by student interest in specific areas. It was suggested that the way forward was through the development and implementation of university policies introduced to address the equity legislation combined with a multi-agency approach to teacher education in general. It was argued that the introduction of modules on equality issues which were of little interest to the student body was not financially viable, as well as being unnecessary since such issues would be addressed as they arose in the delivery and content of the course.

## Education and Library Boards

### Contextual Background

All of the eight board officers who participated in the research were members of their board's CASS team and had positions as advisers and/or had a clearly defined role associated with equality issues. Overall the group ranged from people who had direct involvement in the development of programmes designed to raise awareness of equality issues through to those who were responsible for advising within their own particular subject area. All, with one exception, were involved in supporting schools at CPD level and in this way would have at the least, indirect impact on board policy.

The representative from RTU had overall responsibility for the development and delivery of courses for serving teachers offered by RTU. These range from those for EPD to CPD through to the professional qualification for headship (PQH).

Generally speaking, while the board officers indicated that, because of legislation such as Section 75, there was a growing awareness of equality issues amongst themselves there was a sense that this needed to be made a much more explicit agenda both within the boards and the schools.

*I would be critical that we're probably not doing as much as we should be doing for teachers, but I think it would be wrong to say that nothing has been happening. I think what we've been doing is probably implicit rather than explicit ... we need within CASS to make equality and issues around equality a much more explicit agenda for all of us.*

There was a suggestion that because there are so many competing dimensions and very specific areas of the curriculum that have been given attention recently that more generic issues such as equality tend to only attract attention from those teachers who are already committed to the topic.

*I think the system to date may not have seen these things (equality issues) given the priorities we've been having like curriculum and so on. These kind of issues which are generic issues that go across everybody's work are sometimes seen as not that important. There's been no obligation upon teachers to engage in discussion so we've only maybe been taking people who are interested in those kinds of issues.*

The RTU representative also acknowledged the importance of equality issues and pointed out that they had offered courses on this in the past. Additionally, part of the remit of the PQH is to ensure that equality and human rights legislation is addressed within the content of the course.

Within the ELBs there was an acknowledgement that there needed to be training for all board personnel and not just teachers in relation to the human rights legislation. Furthermore, there was significant discussion around the need for equality issues to be driven by common shared values and that people needed to:

*...stop seeing responsibility for equality as something that a few marginalized people who are dealing with special needs, or EMU and so on deal with – it's everyone's responsibility .*

## Equality Issues

Equality issues which were identified included some which related to legislation and employment as well as those associated with the content and delivery of courses. In terms of legislation and employment there was general agreement that while Section 75 had raised awareness there was still much to be done especially in ensuring that schools were familiar with the implications of the human rights and equality legislation for their practice. It also was felt that there needed to be a greater sense of balance between the nine areas identified in this legislation.

*I think we have to remember that equality legislation and Section 75 are part of the Peace Agreement and we need to tease out what the nine areas are and we need to be very explicit. There is also the issue over balance about each of them and the clear relationship with human rights.*

While the equality legislation is included in the PQH it was also pointed out that

*there is practical advice being offered to schools particularly headteachers in terms of the impact of the equality agenda on them in terms of their everyday work*

though it was stressed that this was not just from the standards template but from the ethical and philosophical underpinning.

The question of access to courses, and particularly the PQH was raised and concern was expressed regarding the under representation of female teachers and the fact that small schools did not appear to be taking up places available to them. Additionally, it was pointed out that it was principals' responsibility to ensure that all their staff were aware of the CPD courses that were available to them through the ELBs or RTU yet whether this was done in a fair and non-discriminatory manner was open to question.

When the focus moved to the content and delivery of courses it was generally felt that the four areas which had had legislation associated with them (i.e. gender, 'race', religion and special educational needs/disability) had a reasonably high profile, especially the latter two where the growth in specialist courses in these two areas was referred to. Additionally, it was argued that certain topics such as these lend themselves more readily to equality issues, though there was still work to be done in terms of training, especially in moving towards equality being seen as a core activity.

Furthermore, some of these issues tended to be marginalised since previous practice had been to address each area in isolation. Even here the efforts were somewhat disparate and not very well coordinated and thus, it was generally argued that equality issues should not be separated out into discrete areas but rather treated as various dimensions of human rights issues.

Reference was also made to the fact that certain equality issues are only raised by teachers when they occur in their own area or school. Thus, for example in the case of ethnic minorities:

*Schools would tend to ask me to come in to support them on diversity when they have to face it because they have children from ethnic minorities....and they want to know how to address this in the curriculum....but many schools will not address these things unless they actually experience – they think they are nothing to do with them.*

Though not referred to specifically it would seem that a similar argument would hold in other equality areas such as gender, religion and social disadvantage. Thus, for example if a teacher teaches in an all boys school they would not ask for an input on girls' learning unless they were to be amalgamated with an all female school.

The exclusivity of the educational system where most of the teachers will have come through a somewhat narrow educational experience with little knowledge of a broader perspective, was also highlighted. This was seen as limiting teachers' understanding and perception of the equality agenda.

*a lot of those teachers have been in the same school for 20 years and in the same way teachers can grow up in a town, go to Stran or St Mary's and teach in the same town again for the rest of their lives – it's madness.*

Additionally, a wide range of diversity between and within schools in terms of values and commitment to equality issues was reported and described as having a major impact on the delivery of training. Where there is an ethos of celebrating diversity then clearly this will encourage all staff to develop in this way while if schools have other priorities then the equality agenda was unlikely to feature to the same extent.

*I really do think there's a big job to be done at whole school level – there is such a range of values and beliefs out there and here it is the principal who is key. You'll not get any schools that doesn't have these things in its aims and objectives but what actually happens on the ground and what this means for the daily practice depends on the living our the values and we need to do something here.*

## **Constraints**

Throughout the discussion the underpinning thinking was that a culture of equality within schools cannot not be imposed on people through legislation. Rather it requires that the purpose of education is revisited and linked more closely with the emergent equality framework.

*Bringing about equality is about changing hearts and minds and that is about people's values and attitudes; we should be involved in that.....It is not a paper exercise that can be brought in through legislation.*

Thus, one of the main constraints was seen to be the fact that equality issues sometimes were being addressed because of the legislation rather than because of a genuine belief in the principles involved. In such instances change is always difficult and it was suggested that principals play a key role here. A further constraining fact identified was the previously mentioned point that while all schools have equality issues in their policies these were not always put into practice. Schools, it was suggested, '*are not always about living these policies or delivering the values contained in them.*'

While courses and training on equality issues such as diversity have been offered in the past they have tended to be extremely broad and not in enough depth to really address these issues. They have not really been directed at what the group perceived as key aspects, namely, '*exploring values, attitudes and the hidden agenda*'. Additionally, these courses only attract those teachers who have a specific interest in the area and unless they have the support of their schools they will have difficulty in bringing their learning into the school environment. Thus, the training as it stands at the moment will have extremely limited impact on the broader picture.

*I have been working in this area for a number of years and we have built up the context of diversity in terms of raising awareness but it would be on a general level, nothing really in the kind of depth that would be needed.*

The point was made that courses offered by CASS are designed to encourage teachers to consider different learning styles and teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of pupils with effective teaching and learning in mind. In this sense the courses could be seen to be promoting equality in terms of participation in learning environment. However, the focus of these courses is on skills development and not developing values and therefore any impact here is rather by good fortune rather than design.

It was argued that there are competing values throughout schools and the education system which lead to further difficulties in the promotion of the equality agenda. For example while the underpinning philosophy of the legislation in this area is the achievement of equity there are also competing values such as competitiveness as promoted in the Department's strategic plan. This can result in discrepancies and put schools in difficult positions where they are faced with trying to maintain a balance between varying demands particularly in terms of resources and training.

### **Possible ways of promoting equality awareness issues in CPD courses provided by ELBs**

The belief that we need to revisit the purpose of education, learning and teaching and link it more closely to the emergent equality framework underpinned much of the discussion. Associated with this was a common perception that the way forward was very firmly based in a re-examination of the ethical and philosophical underpinnings of education. This point, which was vigorously supported by the entire group and returned to on several occasions, was also supported by the agreement that the role of CPD should be about:

*redefining what we think professionally – we need to explore values and attitudes, to address the hidden agenda.....*

and

*could undertake this (training) in terms of skills and competencies and in terms of standards but you keep asking yourself the question where is the ethical underpinning. I think there was a drift in the 90s towards a technocratic skills focus, a mechanistic approach to education and I'd like to think that we are combating that and hope we have a more balanced perspective.*

Opportunities for teachers to expand their experiences through, for example, secondments were also seen as important though it was generally felt that ITE and indeed EPD might be too early for this to occur. All of the board officers stated how valuable their own placements with their boards had been in enabling them to develop both professionally and personally.

There also was a strong belief that individuals need to be encouraged to explore their own personal and professional perspective on equality issues through on-going training opportunities. This approach would be most successful if complemented by a depth and breadth of experience perhaps through secondments or placements as suggested above. Such an approach would allow those in the education profession the opportunity to look at the implications of their own values and beliefs for their practice.

While training was seen as one of the main ways forward again the point was made that this should be about:

*Engaging people in thinking about these (equality) issues and reflecting that's the way forward not to go down the road by bringing in legislation*

The question as to how to assess the impact of the training and implementation of the equality agenda was raised and several suggestions made including:

- development of indicators by the inspectorate
- use of the self-evaluating schools materials
- development of an equality index for society
- use of organisational health checks.

## **Overview**

The ELBs and RTU are two of the main providers of continuing professional development courses and thus have a major part to play in the content and delivery of equality issues in schools. Previous practice has meant that there has been a greater focus on certain aspects of the equality agenda which has resulted in the marginalisation of these aspects and a somewhat disparate and uncoordinated approach. The vision that underpinned much of the discussion was one of a coherent and cohesive equality framework within

education underpinned by commonly held values and beliefs, and promoted through continuing professional and personal development rather than legislation.

*Bringing about equality is about changing hearts and minds and that is about people's values and attitudes and we are involved in that. In our training we are asking people to change their attitude to presenting the curriculum to the pupil and the framework of the law is implicit in that but we need to be explicit about what we are teaching to create a culture of equality within the school.*

### Key points from ELBs and HEIs

- A common theme which ran through both discussions was the difficulty in encouraging teachers to enrol for courses which focussed on equality training (over and above that on special educational needs). This raises the question as to how to ensure that CPD training includes this aspect of the teacher's role, especially since there is an understandable reluctance on the part of HEIs to introduce courses on topics for which they feel there will be no demand and which would not therefore be financially viable. One way of overcoming this difficulty might be to include equality awareness as a core outcome of all CPD modules. Additionally, consideration could be given to offering a module on Equality Issues in Education which could prove reasonably popular, especially with the introduction of the new curriculum and citizenship.
- The narrow experience of teachers in Northern Ireland was also highlighted in the discussions, particularly by the ELB officers, who argued strongly for a more in-depth approach to training and promoted a broader range of experience to enhance teachers' awareness of equality issues. Ensuring that serving teachers gain some breadth of experience could be encouraged by the use of secondments and exchanges within the teaching profession in Northern Ireland. This approach would be enhanced if supported by longer and more sustained training by CASS and others with some specialist knowledge in the area of equality. If this training were delivered with firm backing by the ELBs and the DE it would also introduce a more multi-agency approach as proposed by the HEIs.
- Access to CPD appeared to vary according to a range of factors including gender, location, educational background and financial constraints. Principals were seen to have a key part to play here since it is their responsibility to ensure that information regarding CPD is distributed amongst all their staff and not just the favoured few. Additionally, young people from all backgrounds need to be encouraged to enter teaching as a profession and the suggestion of facilitating access to post graduate courses for those who come from non-traditional educational backgrounds should be explored.
- Principals were also seen to play a major part in ensuring that equality principles underpin school philosophy. It is therefore vital that training for senior managers and potential or current principals should include not only an examination of the equality and human rights philosophy and legislation but also an in-depth consideration of the underlying value system of education.

- There was a firm belief in one group that the way forward is not solely through legislation (though this unquestionably plays a part by requiring issues to be raised and addressed through policy), but through revisiting the underlying principles of education and it would appear that those providing CPD training are in the ideal position to achieve this.



## Section 5: Teachers – Recently Qualified and Longer Serving

### Introduction

Strand 3 focused on the awareness of equality issues in teacher education and training amongst the 'users' of such education and training, i.e. the teachers themselves. Data was collected from a sample of teachers from all the main teaching groups. These are student teachers, those recently qualified (engaged in induction and early professional development programmes) and those with longer service. Teachers in all these categories were asked their views regarding the extent to which equality issues had or have been adequately included in their professional education and training and how they are addressed in schools. Opportunities were also being provided for teachers to discuss their understandings and awareness of equality issues in practice, i.e. within their own pedagogy and classrooms.

In Strand 3, a series of ten (10) focus groups were held with teachers:

- 2 for recently qualified teachers (1 primary group and 1 post-primary);
- 4 for longer-serving teachers (2 primary and 2 post-primary); and
- 4 for trainee teachers in the 4 institutions that provide initial teacher training (1 group in each of Queen's University, the University of Ulster, St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College).

The following section considers those issues that came out of the six (6) focus groups conducted with qualified teachers, both recently qualified and longer serving teachers. The issues have been sub-divided in to two sections: equality awareness issues for teachers within the profession of teaching and equality awareness issues as articulated or operationalised within teachers' own schools and classrooms.

### Equality Awareness and the Profession of Teaching

Equality issues relating to employment emerged as a key theme amongst the teachers. The issue of gender and employment was identified as a main concern and reflected those factors articulated by other participants in the research. Issues of concern that were raised by all teachers covered equality of opportunity in the profession for men and women, especially in relation to promotions and "who gets them" (male, long serving teacher). Primary school teachers tended to agree that it was more likely that males would end up as principals or vice principals more often than women. One teacher in particular suggested that there was pressure on men in primary schools to apply for these positions, and to keep applying if not successful on the first go:

*I think it would be generally perceived in the profession, particularly in the primary school that if you are a man... you will eventually get to be principal or vice principal and all you have to do is apply, and keep applying, you may also get senior classes which are very often deemed to be the better classes at P6 and P7*

Teachers did not think that there were the same opportunities for women to move upwards within the profession, although it was acknowledged that this was changing. It was not that teachers felt that formal barriers were put in place to prevent women being promoted, but that perhaps women teachers were not encouraged to go for promotions, or that fewer women did not see themselves particularly able to do these roles and had fewer role models to identify with.

In contrast to this concern, teachers commented on the profession becoming more female as well as fewer of men coming into the profession and pursuing a teaching career. This latter concern was felt to be more of an issue particularly within the primary sector, but was also a concern in the post-primary sector. Both male and female teachers considered that perhaps young men did not see a place for themselves within schools and teaching, suggesting that young men might see teaching as "a girls-only thing or a sissy thing". They considered that this may well pose problems in terms of recruitment in the long term. One suggestion offered for the lack of males in primary schools was the perceived difficulties of men working with young children. Teachers were conscious that wider social misconceptions of the problems of men working with young children may well be putting men off coming in to the profession.

*What about the problems of men and children, particularly in a primary situation, ... mothers not liking their children being left with men. I think it's this whole thing about the illness in society*

*One thing I noticed was I felt disadvantaged as a man teacher in my relationships with pupils because of the threat posed by allegations of sexual misconduct...it didn't seem to be the same for the women teachers...I think it may be a tiny reason why more men aren't going in to teaching*

A series of other issues were raised in relation to gender and the profession that have implications for this research and the future deliberations of the Equality Commission but which were not gone into in detail:

- women taking career breaks to have families and it taking longer for them to advance in the profession once they had returned to teaching;
- the lack of paternity leave;
- discrimination of females working in an all male staff, especially in boys' post-primary school, and the same for males working in an all female staff body in primary schools;
- equity issues in terms of pay and hours (teachers rights);
- lack of male role models for boys in schools (particularly in primary schools).

Teachers were asked how much attention was given to issues of equality awareness in their initial teacher education. From the data there seems to be a clear distinction in terms of awareness of these issues between teachers who had trained outside Northern Ireland and those who had trained inside Northern Ireland. For those who had trained in England or Scotland, for example, issues of equality and equal opportunity were addressed in explicit ways and were integrated into the taught curriculum and the coursework and assessments that student teachers had to complete. Issues of gender, 'race', and social disadvantage seemed to have been more formally addressed:

*I trained in England, so ...there were a lot of issues to do with racial equality [and] gender equality... I trained in Leeds Bradford so those were big issues for us and dealing with multi-cultural issues*

This group of teachers also thought that having considered equality factors in training, they were better placed for dealing with them in the classroom; they weren't coming to them cold:

*I did my PGCE in Scotland and gender issues were addressed in my PGCE...this helped me from the point of view, coming in as a new teacher I didn't have to deal with that new, I had it in theory and so all I had to do was put it into practice when I went into the class*

For those who had trained in Northern Ireland, issues of equality or equal opportunity were addressed less formally on teacher training courses. Most teachers suggested that issues of equality, such as gender 'race', social disadvantage and community background had come up in their training, but not focused upon as specific curriculum content or courses. The exception to this was special educational needs which was often conflated with differentiation in teaching, i.e. considering differential learning needs within special educational needs. It was felt that perhaps special educational needs was a more tangible aspect of equality of opportunity and could be dealt with within courses on ITE programmes. Teachers mentioned that perhaps SEN is easier to deal with in training as you are "able to get down to specifics" in terms of attending to the various learning disabilities whereas "with social background and religious differences it is a fairly arbitrary issue unless you are in the classroom" (female recently qualified post-primary teacher). It is interesting to note that teachers consistently talked of special educational needs when disability was raised as an equality issue. More experienced teachers felt that newly qualified teachers were coming out of training more aware of equality issues than they themselves had been at this stage of their teaching career. However, they suggested that perhaps newly qualified teachers came out focusing on one or two issues only and that they still lacked a broad understanding of how these issues play out in the classroom environment.

Many teachers suggested that equality issues only really came to mean something for them once they were in the classroom. They were not sure how beneficial any attention to these issues in theory alone within ITE programmes might be. Many of them considered that they had only become more aware of equality issues when they were in their own classes. They suggested that when doing a PCGE or BEd, you are always in someone else's class and are restricted in what you can do or introduce to the class:

*While those things [equality issues] are probably going on you are less aware of them whereas when you are coming into your own class and you are dealing with them on your own...it would become more of an issue than it would be during teacher education*

Teachers felt that there was not enough emphasis on religious diversity in teacher education programmes to help teachers deal with the realities of Northern Ireland's particular context as it arose inside their own classrooms. Teachers talked of having been on EMU courses and programmes within their training institutions, but that the worth of these courses was often limited. There was difference of opinion in relation to how much religious diversity was considered within the curriculum in schools. Primary teachers felt that there was not enough attention to this issue within their curriculum, but post-primary teachers thought it was covered more comprehensively within the secondary curriculum. Primary teachers felt that it was just not addressed:

*I mean tolerance is maybe something in the classroom but it is not addressed within the curriculum at all and that is something that surprised me when I got back from England*

Teachers commented that they had probably come to understand more about equality issues through their continual professional development and work with the education and library boards. They highlighted that more specific courses were available that dealt with particular equality issues, such as boys underachievement, but again, these were of limited value. Teachers also commented that equality issues came up in more general courses on particular pedagogical techniques rather than being the main focus of particular programmes. However, there was the consideration of time and workload and how much teachers could actually attend to these issues in their day-to-day practice. Teachers considered that perhaps in CPD courses they were good at addressing the theory of equality issues, but that in practice, teachers do not get as far as they should in doing something about them in their classroom:

*We don't get as far as we should in saying this is what you might like to do about it...maybe it is at level one which is a realisation of the problem and that's OK for some things...where perhaps the realisation of the problem is the biggest single step you can take but you so need practical classroom level strategies then to implement to make a difference*

Teachers also considered that as a profession they rarely get to teach or work outside their own community. Aligned with this concern was the opportunity for employment across all sectors of schools for all teachers. Teachers considered that there was an inflexible divide between the controlled and maintained sectors and that this was unfortunate and prohibited teachers from both sectors getting together. There was a sense that different schools from different sectors had their own ethos and ways of operating and that this prohibited teachers being able to move across the divide to have the full range of experiences. Teachers were genuinely concerned about the inequality of opportunity for them to be employed in any school within Northern Ireland. The fact that catholic teachers can apply to work in primary controlled schools but that protestant teachers cannot apply to work within primary schools in the maintained sector was considered a major infringement on equality of opportunity for all teachers - "*it makes it divisive before you even start*".

## Equality Awareness in the Practice of Teaching

Teachers were specifically asked about their awareness of equality issues in the classroom and the impact of these on children's learning and experience at school. Teachers were also asked whether they addressed the issues specifically in their own pedagogy and practice. As with the section in equality issues in the profession, a number of issues were raised that indicated that teachers were aware of certain equality issues but that attention to them in the classroom and their day-to-day practice varied, depending on how comfortable or knowledgeable they felt about dealing with them. What emerged from talking with teachers was that in general it was about the individual dealing with equality issues and taking individual responsibility for tackling these issues in the classroom. Some initiatives, such as literacy programmes to tackle underachievement, for example, were dealt with at the school level, but wider equality issues, particularly 'race' and social disadvantage, were dealt with by individual teachers who felt it part of their responsibility to counteract any discrimination they witnessed or to talk with their pupils about such issues.

### Gender

Teachers acknowledged that issues around gender, especially boys' and girls' achievement was a particular area of focus in the past few years. They also mentioned that gender has been the focus of CPD courses they have attended and initiatives at the school and board level. Teachers commented that they had been made more aware, through these courses and initiatives, of not treating boys and girls differently in class and to thinking more about the consideration of boys' and girls' learning styles in their own practice. Teachers talked of types of 'positive discrimination' in some of their schools with regard to programmes to counteract boys' underachievement. They suggested that this may not be equality of opportunity but that such programmes were fulfilling a need within certain schools to raise boys' achievement. Teachers did not offer comment on how such programmes may have been affecting girls and their achievements.

Primary school teachers talked of trying to counteract gender-stereotyped resources in their classrooms. They were conscious that certain resources that they were using in school were not showing men and women, boys and girls, in the same light and were stereotyped in their betrayal of male and female roles. These particular teachers felt that it was inappropriate for young children to be exposed to such stereotyping of roles:

*From a playgroup and nursery background it immediately flags up for me resources, to make sure we've got equality of resources when you look at your books, what content, what images are in your books, jigsaws, baby dolls that sort of thing because certainly a lot of the playgroups I have worked in they would have just had a baby girl doll all dressed in pink...*

The area of resources also brought to light issues around 'race' and ethnic minorities and the lack of attention to these issues and groups in the many resources that schools have. Teachers suggested that descriptions of the lives of children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds were missing from their story books, play materials and general resources.

An area of concern, in relation to gender, that was raised by some teachers was that of some boys' attitudes to women generally and to female teachers in particular and how these attitudes manifest themselves in boys' work. They suggested that these attitudes are foul and aggressive and are generally of a derogatory nature towards women:

*This boy wrote an essay, he subtitled it The Rape. It was about this girl who was walking down the street and she was raped and I said to him "Why was she raped?" He said "because of the clothes she was wearing" and this was a third year boy and our year 10 boys in general seem to have a very low opinion of women*

Teachers tended to attribute this type of attitude to lower-achieving, disaffected boys, who come from one parent (female) families. These perceptions of teachers are not unproblematic in themselves and may suggest a labelling by teachers of certain students or indeed, a sense of self-determination by teachers of students which perpetuates the status quo and leaves no room for considerations of schools and teachers making a difference by talking sexually offensive behaviour. Teachers suggested such boys seem to have very little respect for women in general and this is often shown through their attitudes to, and interaction with, female members of staff. Teachers commented that they would tackle this sort of behaviour head-on, along with parents in some instances, but that even some parents did not see it as an important issue or one that they should discipline their child for. Furthermore some teachers suggested that parents react differently to male and female teachers and those parents too often voice discriminatory remarks towards women teachers:

*If I give off to a kid... the mother would come up and say thank you but you see if a female did it ...the first female teacher to say anything to their wee Johnny the mother's up their going to the...board – how dare you...who does she think she is, she is only a woman*

Teachers tended to point out that situations like those described above often come out within the classroom setting and they felt that this was a particular gender-equality issue that they came up against in their day-to-day dealings with students in their classrooms. They did not all seem equally confident about how to deal with such attitudes when faced with them, nor did they seem to express knowledge of having the skills to deal with such derogatory remarks and/or behaviour.

Within the area of gender and achievement, teachers also talked of a number of other factors connected with learning: lower and higher ability pupils; bottom and top set pupils; inequality of subject choices for pupils and general issues around achievement and difference. Teachers were conscious that they treated certain groups differently and perhaps gave more time to certain groups than to others. For example, teachers suggested that gender was an issue that was discussed often in the classroom from the perspective of behaviour, that boys perhaps got more attention in the classroom because they demanded it more. Teachers often thought that they had given too much time to boys because of behavioural aspects and that girls got less of their attention; they commented that they felt uncomfortable about this but there was a sort of acceptance that this would be the case.

Teachers acknowledged that they had certainly given unequal amounts of time to different children. Higher ability and lower ability children were groups that were cited as having received more time from teachers; there was a feeling that the ones who didn't get any equality of time were the children in the middle, the ones that didn't cause any problems. Teachers suggested that there were equality issues here in relation to teacher time and quality of interaction with all children.

### **Social Background/Disadvantage**

Teachers saw treating all students as equal irrespective of their social background as a main issue in terms of equality; providing equality of opportunity regardless of whether or not students are from a socially disadvantaged area. All teachers tended to talk more about social background or social disadvantage rather than social class. However, they did perceive that students' social background would have a major impact on their learning and achievement in school. Most teachers agreed that background really plays a big role for children and their achievement, and that most teachers would be aware of this. One teacher commented that their principal had made getting to know the social background of the pupils in the school a main priority for new teachers:

*Our principal actually said to our beginning teacher to go and drive around the area and see what sort of housing.. and get a feel for them...we just assumed that the children we were teaching were coming from the same backgrounds as we did, had books in their houses and it is back to basic knowledge about what is happening to these children*

Teachers commented that perhaps there was a certain degree of labelling attached to children from certain backgrounds and that children from disadvantaged areas were perhaps not expected to do as well as children from more affluent backgrounds. Teachers suggested that lack of parental education was a big factor here; that education is not a priority for socially disadvantaged children nor their parents. Teachers talked of having to fight not only for children from these backgrounds to see the worth of education as the way forward, but teachers felt they had to 'fight' parental apathy as well.

Teachers also raised concerns about the inequalities around access to schooling, particularly what they saw as the differential quality of schooling accessed by children in grammar schools and children in secondary schools. The current consultation by the post-primary review body (the Burns Report) was brought into focus here in relation to opportunities to access different types and quality of schooling. Teachers were also concerned about inequalities of allocation of resources between grammar and secondary schools. The main perception amongst this group of teachers was that grammar schools seemed better equipped and resourced than secondary schools:

*I have subbed in 10 different schools...there's definitely an inequality there...the grammar schools seem to have everything and it is just not fair and the secondary schools just have nothing, some of the schools are appalling...there is nothing wrong with grammar schools but there is an inequality of resources*

Whether these inequalities of resources is factually true or not, for these teachers there is a widespread perception that this is the case and that children across schools in Northern Ireland are not receiving equal resources to fund and support their learning.

### **Disability and Special Educational Needs**

These two equality issues were treated as similar by the teachers interviewed. This tended to be mainly because in educational situations (and indeed in educational legislation), physical disability, for example, is considered a special educational need and students with a physical disability are stated under the special needs Code of Practice.

Teachers spoke of awareness of equality issues around disability and special educational needs (SEN). However, generally teachers spoke of SEN issues with respect to learning or behavioural issues. It was rare for teachers to offer comments on, or consideration of, physical disabilities and the integration of pupils with physical disabilities in their schools. Of those SEN issues that were raised, the labelling of children as having a special educational need was considered an equality issue. Teachers commented that stating of children for emotional as well as learning needs stigmatises the child, and teachers are prone, then, to respond to the child in particular ways. Teachers also suggested that they found it difficult to give all children identical opportunities when it came to factors such as a child's level of literacy or numeracy: "people don't have the same opportunities open to them due to their special needs" (female recently qualified primary teacher). Teachers were very aware that they tended to spend more time with children in their classes with special educational needs than with other children; they were aware that this was unequal in terms of time and attention, but they didn't see how they could get around this.

Teachers also mentioned the differentiation of learning opportunities and classroom tasks as a challenge for them. Teachers said that they often didn't feel well equipped in terms of a range of pedagogical techniques to deal with a wide range of ability in their classrooms. Many of them commented that differentiation came up in their training and that they were aware of it, but that it was definitely a skill that improved with practice and experience as a teacher. Comments were also made that suggested bottom sets in schools were often full of children who had different special educational needs that ranged from emotional to behavioural to learning needs. Teachers often felt frustrated at what they could do for these children in such a situation:

*At the very bottom class you would get kids put in there not just for learning difficulties, you've got kids who have behavioural problems, they are stated for that and they could be quite bright and you have all that problem of 15 kids at the bottom end and one guy doesn't know what day it is and one wee fella who is as bright as you get but can't sit on his backside for 30 seconds...at the end of the day, I put my hands up and say I don't know what to do at times*



Teachers offered views on the inclusion of children with special educational needs into mainstream schools. Most of them talked about the difficulties of inclusion of children with special educational needs. They suggested that it doesn't work for all children and so any policy that promotes inclusion per se will have problems. Several teachers argued that it was difficult to generalise about inclusion as in some cases it might be fine at primary level but not at post-primary and vice versa; they also talked of cases where inclusion had failed in their school setting. Teachers also talked of their own anxieties about mainstreaming and integrating children with SEN into mainstream schools. Teachers felt quite strongly that they weren't adequately trained for this nor did they all have the relevant experience. They would very much hope that as inclusion is pushed more strongly in schools that proper training and support would follow:

*I am trying to integrate pupils at the minute into mainstream schools...it is proving very difficult because teachers in the mainstream schools are naturally anxious about the specific difficulties that [these] children have...some of them are coming with support but support is very limited*

### **Community background/'race'**

Teachers felt that often equality issues of community background (i.e. religion) or 'race' were often categories of equality that were either ignored ('race' especially) or not dealt with well (religious differences/sectarianism). They also mention how they themselves often had difficulties in dealing with these factors when they arise in their classrooms or that the institutions in which they worked had certain practices which might be considered problematic in terms of 'race' or religious beliefs.

Religion was mentioned quite specifically as a problematic area and the fact that most schools in Northern Ireland are predominantly Christian in values, ethos and outlook, even integrated schools teach a Christian religion. Teachers felt that there was often not room or space within teaching time, RE classes or other arenas to consider other religions and to make children aware of other religions.

*I noticed a big difference in the RE input when I came back here because in England...it is more inclusive of all religions whereas in NI schools...mainly Christian based religions are the religions that have give scope for within RE classes, we don't look at Hinduism, Buddhism, any of those kinds of religions, they are not talked about*

Exposure to different religions was an issue aligned to exposure to different ethnic minorities. Teachers talked of feeling a sense of responsibility when ethnic minority children were present in schools to develop understanding of different backgrounds. Teachers talked of dealing with issues such as other faiths from an individual stand point, either because they had trained elsewhere and had been exposed to different religions, or because they were aware of the diversity of children in their classrooms and felt it was necessary to teach white, Northern Irish students about different religions, faiths and ethnicities. Teachers talked of taking responsibility for this themselves as many felt it was an important part of their job even if their intuitions were ignoring such issues:

*The thing with NI for me is that they seem to ignore other faiths in controlled schools, they just seem to completely ignore these because the main two religions are so passionate...everything that goes with that as opposed to the actual religious aspect. I feel that they seem to ignore other faiths*

*You have to educate children about difference...[that] is not being done properly and that is why these are so many problems. You have to go out of your way to do that yourself and that comes back to your own common knowledge and your own sensitivity and your own interest in it*

In terms of the Catholic/Protestant divide and sectarian issues, teachers talked of genuinely successful EMU partnerships across schools and other schools from other community backgrounds. They talked of successful trips abroad for students from different community backgrounds and for positive links between schools promoting extra-curricular activities. However, teachers did comment that very little of the conflict situation in Northern Ireland was ever talked about explicitly either between teachers, between teachers and students or between students. This seems to be one of the most striking factors to emerge from discussions with teachers, that even though there are numerous EMU programmes and very positive cross-community work between schools, nobody ever really seems to talk about these issues in constructive ways that would enable students to work out some of the problems together.

*I don't know, our boys look at the girls from ----- school and ...well they certainly don't see them as Catholics and they are quite happy. It is an issue, it is very difficult to get our kids to discuss it with them. The girls would sit down and the boys would sit down and at the end of the day they are all quite happy to say if we go our way and you go your way*

Many teachers were of the opinion that racial inequalities was one area that was really ignored within schools in Northern Ireland. They suggested that the smaller number of ethnic minority communities within NI to be one of the reasons why this was so. They were generally concerned at the lack of attention to 'race' and ethnic minority issues on the curriculum, but also very concerned at the extent of racism in schools. Some teachers felt quite strongly that all children should be educated about other 'races' and ethnic minorities generally and not only if the school happened to have children enrolled from these sub-groups.

Teachers were concerned that all children should know about equality issues and be educated about anti-racist and unacceptable behaviour and use of language:

*But it doesn't necessarily mean that just because you don't have a child from a different ethnic background that the children shouldn't be educated ... other children [need] the opportunity to understand equality here. I mean how often do you hear children...talk about going to the 'chinkies'...or quite often they call each other 'nigger' as some sort of insult and they don't know what it means*

## Conclusions

- Equality issues and employment emerged as a key theme amongst the teachers. The issue of gender and employment was identified as a main concern and reflected those factors articulated by other participants in the research.
- There seems to be a clear distinction in terms of awareness of the full range of equality issues between teachers trained outside Northern Ireland and those trained locally. Issues of gender, 'race', and social disadvantage seemed to be more formally addressed in initial teacher education in Great Britain. Those who trained as teachers inside Northern Ireland agreed that issues of equality or equal opportunity were not explicitly addressed in their courses. The exception to this is special educational needs (SEN).
- Teachers felt that a significant barrier to their wider professional development in equality areas was the lack of opportunity to teach or work outside their own community. Aligned with this, was a concern about the unequal opportunity for employment across all sectors of schools for all teachers.
- Teachers were aware of certain equality issues but that attention to them in the classroom and their day-to-day practice varied depending on how comfortable or knowledgeable they felt about dealing with them. Individual teachers are left to deal with equality issues and to take individual responsibility for tackling these issues in their classrooms
- Teachers acknowledged that issues around gender, especially boys' and girls' achievement had a particular area of focus in the past few years. They suggested that certain initiatives (e.g. around boys' underachievement) may not be about creating equality of opportunity but that such programmes are fulfilling a more instrumental need within certain schools to improve attainment.
- Teachers were more commonly aware of equality issues arising from pupils' social background. However, they also acknowledged that there was a certain degree of labelling attached to children from certain backgrounds and that children from disadvantaged areas were perhaps not expected to do as well as children from more affluent backgrounds.
- When speaking of equality issues around disability, teachers normally defined these in relation to special educational needs (SEN), specifically learning or behavioural issues. It was rare for teachers to offer comments on, or consideration of, physical disabilities and the integration of pupils with physical disabilities in their schools.
- Teachers felt that often issues of community background (i.e. religion) or 'race' were often either ignored ('race' especially) or not dealt with adequately (religious differences/sectarianism). They themselves had difficulties in dealing with these factors in their classrooms. In addition, they considered some practices and behaviours in their schools, from colleagues and pupils, around issues of 'race' or religion to be unacceptable but did not feel able to challenge these.

## Section 6: Student Teachers

### Introduction

This section will consider data provided by students of initial teacher education. Four focus group sessions were conducted with student teachers from:

- Postgraduate courses in teacher education: Queen's University Belfast (post primary) and University of Ulster (post-primary and primary)
- Undergraduate courses in teacher education: St Mary's University College (and Stranmillis University College (both offering mainly primary with some post-primary in certain subjects)

Focus group interviews were carried out with students from each of the four main providers. Approximately ten students took part in each session. The BEd students were all third or fourth years. Students were initially asked to identify equality issues and to consider how such issues were addressed in their training. They were also asked to comment on their own experience of equality issues in the classroom. The following section presents student teachers' awareness of equality issues in the education system that affect them as professionals and then their awareness of equality issues in the classroom.

### Awareness of equality issues in the system which affect student teachers as professionals

#### Gender

Students were aware of the relatively small number of women teachers in senior positions in schools. A female primary BEd student commented:

*There's less teachers who are male and they get jobs quicker than females do. They get the head teacher's job quicker. There are more females so why are all the heads male? That's an issue which is disheartening because you can see that there are males in your class who maybe aren't as academic as you. You know that they are going to get a job quicker than you because a staff which consists of 99% female want a male because they are not going to become pregnant for a start.*

A male counterpart responded:

*But is it not more fair to have the guy in the job and not 100% women?*

On the matter of promotion, the male students felt that male teachers were more ambitious than females which was the reason for more males in higher positions.

*When it comes to promotion within the schools I think it may be more likely that men will push themselves forward for something. Women may be happier in the classroom whereas men would prefer to climb up the ladder. (male student)*

The response from a female student to this comment was:

*I do agree with that but in the beginning they [males] do get the jobs first.*

More male than female students responded that they expected to become school principals. There was agreement between all primary students that very few male students would end up teaching at Key Stage one (five to eight year olds). In one College, male students were actively discouraged from Key Stage one teaching.

Among the PGCE students, it was observed that the number of females, even in the science subjects, greatly exceeded the number of males. A male student said that he considered himself as 'being in a minority group'.

### **Community background**

One of the issues discussed widely among the students from the University College students was Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU). Student teachers at Stranmillis and St. Mary's University Colleges have been taking part jointly in programmes of EMU activities designed to raise personal awareness of cultural diversity and to develop their professional skills in these areas. The Northern Ireland Curriculum currently requires all schools to deliver the two statutory Educational Themes of Education for Mutual understanding and Cultural Heritage, and in new curriculum proposals these themes are being considerably sharpened and re-focused into a new programme of study in Personal Development and Local and Global Citizenship. EMU activities have been running in the University Colleges for over ten years.

Many students considered the EMU programme a waste of time and money. They commented that they felt that for EMU they were often forced to sit and talk about their differences which they felt was divisive, uncomfortable and could make them feel intimidated.

*It's like you Catholics sit there and the Protestants there and talk about your differences.*

*They just put you in a situation where you just feel intimidated. You automatically feel uncomfortable.*

They also commented that contact between the students from the two colleges under the EMU programme was for two mornings per year – an impossibly short time to develop friendships or meaningful working partnerships. Overall the impression was that EMU was 'obviously not working'. They were worried that their own negative experiences of EMU at

College may be brought with them to schools. They felt that the theory of EMU was so positive and worthwhile, that there had to be better ways of making it work in practice.

*I have a particular thing about the EMU and I've been involved with the Executive trying to organise how the EMU is being done in the College because it's obviously not working the way it is now. But I think the problem with school is that students are coming out with a negative opinion of EMU and that's relaying back to school and I think they are not really going to want to put it across in school they would rather get on with the work they have to do and not want to be bothered with it. So it's about trying to make it a more worthwhile thing in college because coming into 4<sup>th</sup> year practically everybody has a negative view of EMU. We're trying to change the system myself and a couple of others I personally want it to be a more positive experience because it is so worthwhile in theory so it should be possible in practice. But at the minute it's not working. We are only ever going to take away our personal experiences and not really look into it more deeply as to the background and reasons for it it's very valuable for primary school children to take part in it because they are at the age where they are a little less set in their ways and much more impressionable.*

Students from both of the University Colleges commented on the lack of attention given to integrated schooling in their courses, even during EMU sessions. There was a feeling among one University College that their own community background that had a strong cultural and sporting ethos, led to a stronger feeling of community in their College than that experienced by students in the other College.

Amongst the PGCE students there was a definite feeling that Catholic students were advantaged in terms of getting jobs. It was argued that Catholic students were more likely to get a job in non-Catholic schools than Protestant students in Catholic schools so the job opportunities for Catholic students were wider.

*They have an advantage from what I can see they can really apply to both with no problem but Protestants are at a disadvantage.*

The problem of Catholic students obtaining posts in integrated schools and then being discriminated against by the Catholic Council for Maintained Schools (CCMS) in subsequent applications to Catholic schools was also highlighted.

*You can apply to both but once say you are a catholic and you go to integrated colleges and you try to get back into a Catholic school again you'll still be discriminated because you teach in an integrated education. CCMS will discriminate against you not directly...*

## **Disability**

When asked about disability students in another institution commented that access would be very difficult due to the College being built on a big hill. Students felt that there was no reason to discriminate against teachers with disabilities although one raised the question of the cost of classroom assistance which may be need to facilitate teachers with certain disabilities.

*I do wonder about the equality of actually getting the job, you go through the training and want to be a teacher but at the end of the day if there were 2 teachers side by side and maybe the disabled person had some good attributes that the other person didn't have I wonder would there be any issue of equality on the employment of the disabled person who would need a classroom assistant more money and the parents to answer to.*

## **Sexuality**

This issue was discussed in both University College focus groups and students in both institutions agreed that a person's sexuality should not affect their employment chances in schools. However they also agreed that both of their institutions were not places in which homosexual students would feel comfortable to 'come out'.

*We talked about that in religion today. It was brought up that 10% of population are homosexual and in regards to the college there should be about 80 people who are homosexual. It doesn't say a lot for our college when they don't feel comfortable about coming out.*

## **Primary versus secondary Bachelor of Education (BEd)**

Students in both University Colleges discussed this issue widely. There was a strong feeling that because the majority of students were primary designated, those destined to teach in secondary school felt that everything was geared towards primary and that they were consequently disadvantaged. The primary students agreed that they were better catered for than their secondary counterparts.

## **Awareness of equality issues in the classroom**

Generally students felt that the equality issues that had been given greatest emphasis in their University and University College courses were differentiation in terms of ability, that is, the need to address the needs of children of all academic abilities in their lessons, special educational needs, social disadvantage and the differences between grammar and non-grammar schools, and, to a lesser extent, gender. They felt that such issues were addressed but that they were not taught about how to deal with them. Students felt that they learned most about equality issues by their experience during school placements.

### Academic ability

This was by far the issue that was uppermost in the minds of both primary and post-primary students regarding equality of opportunity. They were encouraged in their courses and whilst on placement to ensure that their teaching accommodated the range of abilities within their classes.

*I think if you are thinking of equality when you go into your class the first thing comes to mind is what's the abilities in the class and how they would be met...*

They felt sometimes that they were spending too much time with lower achievers in their efforts to match their teaching to the individual levels of each child (differentiation). Another use of the term differentiation, the process of dealing with pupils from diverse backgrounds, was suggested by the facilitators in one focus group, but it was rejected by the students whose focus was clearly on dealing with ability differences. Students from one institution felt they were better prepared for teaching the lower attaining classes as a result of their sociology classes.

### Gender

Students discussed their experiences of gender issues in the classroom both in relation to their own teaching and in their observations of classroom teachers' behaviour. In relation to their own teaching, both female and male students in post-primary schools commented that they felt that boys were easier to teach than girls. It was felt that girls did not participate as fully and that they held grudges. The general feeling was that students felt that they 'knew where they were' more with the boys. In relation to differences in learning styles, there was a comment that boys were always trying to relate what they learned to everyday life [science lessons] whereas girls would just accept the new material in its own context. Another commented that girls spent more time and seemed to have more pride in their work. There was general agreement in this group that although there were differences between boys and girls, they were not sufficiently large to engage in different teaching styles for girls and boys, rather try to focus different teaching styles to different ability levels.

In primary schools students commented most on behavioural differences between boys and girls. One said she expected to get angry with boys first. Others observed teachers treating girls more favourably because of better behaviour. Many students commented that treating boys and girls differently (for example, giving them different 'jobs' in the classroom) seemed unfair and that they would endeavour to treat them in the same way.

*I remember observing an art class the teacher there had very distinct roles for the girls and boys. It was only the girls who were allowed to do the nice jobs like mixing paint and the fellas had to clear away-it was very distinct. I just thought just treat them all the same.*

However one student broadened the discussion to consider the problem of unequal attention being given to all pupils in a class as not purely a consequence of gender.



*I've been to a school where when it came to art only the good artists were allowed to use paint. When you go into classrooms and look at the teachers you have to be careful not to let their views colour yours. There are personality clashes in every classroom and there will be some children that teachers won't get on with. You can get your view coloured.*

### **Community background**

The most prominent issue in regard to community background that arose from the focus group discussions was that of children from traveller families. Some of these children attend Catholic schools. Students commented on some of the problems faced by the children and their schools, for instance, the low attendance of many traveller children, not wearing school uniform, disruptive behaviour in schools and the comment that many of the female traveller children leave after year ten to get married.

Both primary and secondary students highlighted the problem that traveller children would often leave the school after a very short time. The primary students were more involved with the traveller children in school.

*...They were catered for, they went out of the class 2 days a week but I found that the travellers were not discriminated against but most of them came from bad backgrounds....one of the kids his father was in jail for 98 convictions the kids would be coming into class the next morning telling me they were out chasing the peelers down the road and how their brothers had burnt a car out outside a petrol station. It was very sad one boy his mother was 29 and he was the oldest of 6 and you could tell he was badly neglected and there was another child and he came in late and he would say it was daddy's day to take us out and we only got back this morning. I wasn't prepared in the college to deal with that, I learnt how to deal with that out there.*

They commented that they were not prepared by College to deal with these children, but learned while they were on placement. One student commented that teachers were also expected to be social workers.

*Sometimes I think we are expected to be social workers and teachers. The fact that we are having this discussion are teachers meant to try and solve all the problems of equality in schools. Is that what our job is, when you think of the word teacher there is so much we are meant to be doing and for us at the end of the degree are we meant to be social workers, to promote liberal thinking, to promote equality. That's all the things a great teacher can be but I don't think we can make it perfect in the degree here.*

The issue of religion was not discussed in much detail. Students from the Universities were more likely than those from the University Colleges to carry out their placements in schools which were of a different religion to their own. This was not seen as a problem except for students placed in North Belfast because the placement had coincided with the

trouble at Holy Cross and threats were made to Catholic teachers in non-Catholic schools. This worried students who were vulnerable at the time.

## **Disability**

Disability was seen as an aspect of special educational needs (SEN), an area that was given much emphasis in the training of students in all four institutions. Students did not, however, highlight SEN specifically as an equity issue. Even though they covered a lot about SEN in their courses students complained of being under-prepared to deal with children or other students who have special needs.

Many students gave examples of practice they had observed in schools in relation to disabled pupils and teachers. Most of these experiences were highly positive.

*The school I was in the SEN unit was very good and the kids were catered for as fully as possible I think there was one class was timetabled (?) there was 2 kids with wheelchairs and they had helpers but the rest of the school in general the kids were allowed to integrate as fully as possible any they often benefited from it I thought it was great.*

*There was one wee boy who was actually in the top class and he had spina bifida but he did have an assistant in with him for science to help him but I don't think the other members of the class were actually aware of it, it wasn't an issue. He was the top of the class.*

*When I started in mine I was provided with a folder with all the information on pupils with special needs there was a very good support system within the school, they were excellent. There would have been pupils in wheelchairs and provision was made for them, I would have been made very aware of the pupils needs.*

The exception was a student who had a negative experience with the teacher of a class with a large proportion of students with learning and behavioural problems. The student commented on the very low expectations of the teacher regarding this class.

*I had special needs in the integrated school and I was given no folder the teachers would say well this class well they're mad, they're hyper and you won't be able to deal with that she more or less said go in and expect little written work, they had such low expectations of them. At the same time there was instances where you would come in and you just couldn't settle them and it very difficult but at the same time that's not saying they weren't capable of doing the work.*

### **Social disadvantage**

When prompted to discuss social disadvantage students saw this mainly in terms of the secondary/grammar divide at post-primary level as a result of selection at age eleven. They felt strongly that children from more affluent backgrounds were destined for grammar schools even if their ability was low. Their parents just paid for tutors who 'trained' the children to pass the test. Such a facility was not an option for children from poorer backgrounds.

*I think there's a lot of assumptions made like smart people are the ones with money and people with no money will be secretaries. I came across it in school myself I think it's still an issue.*

There were some comments from students criticising the attitudes of some grammar school teachers:

*Some of the grammar teachers, I would hear the teacher say that's a lovely child her father's a lawyer you know what I mean and that kind of attitude I don't want anything to do with I would never want to hold that kind of attitude. They think just because of who their parents are they are going to be a good child.*

*I actually think that the teachers in secondary schools are better teachers than those in the grammar schools because they actually teach more. They are not necessarily smarter if they teach in a grammar school. In the grammar school I was in I said to them about jobs and such and I said I couldn't really comment on the grammar school sector because I haven't done the practice here yet but from the secondary sector I think I would like to teach in the secondary sector and I asked him and he said no I wouldn't want to teach in the secondary sector I'm much more on the academic side. I was floored....*

### **'Race'**

There were only a few incidents discussed by students where 'race' was identified as an issue.

*Thinking back to my own teaching practice on prejudice we discussed that topic, it was in my observation, one of the teachers asked what's prejudice and they were saying them darkies miss and it was awful the mentality they had about 'race'. They didn't know the correct terminology on how to name ethnic minorities.*

Other experiences were less depressing. In one primary school a student commented that this was her first experience of teaching children of Chinese and Indian backgrounds. She said that 'race' is not much of an issue in Northern Ireland – "...it's all about religion".

## **Conclusion**

In summary, students' awareness of equality issues that might affect them as professionals were expressed as:

- There are more female teachers, particularly of younger children, yet male teachers have better promotion opportunities.
- The EMU programme, designed to heighten mutual awareness of students from Catholic and non-Catholic backgrounds, is not working.
- Students should not be discriminated against on the basis of disability or sexuality.
- In the University Colleges courses were geared very much towards primary students and the secondary students felt disadvantaged.

In relation to classroom experience:

- Students were highly conscious of attempting to ensure that children of different academic abilities were given equal opportunities in their lessons.
- Gender was less of an issue – however, many students saw different treatment of girls and boys by teachers as 'unfair'.
- Students were able to describe problems they observed or encountered with pupils who were from traveller backgrounds, disabled or socially disadvantaged. They felt that their University or University College courses did not equip them well to deal with such pupils.
- Students commented that 'race' was not as much of an issue in Northern Ireland as religion, but they did notice a heightened lack of awareness or negative attitudes among pupils about people from different racial origins.

## Part 4

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

#### Section A: Equality Issues at Policy and System Level

1. Many respondents sought a coherent and cohesive equality framework within education, underpinned by commonly held values and beliefs, and promoted through continuing professional and personal development, rather than prescribed by legislation.
2. Respondents from the Department of Education (DE) believed that in general, current arrangements do address the major equality issues. However, all other respondents articulated concerns across the major aspects of equality, and believed that current constraints, including resource constraints, limit their capacity to attend to these issues.
3. Evidence from the representatives of other stakeholder groups (Transferors' Representative Council, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Governing Bodies Association) suggests that they believe that their capacity to influence schools' awareness of equality issues and to facilitate good practice is very limited.
4. Overall, evidence from the seminars with policy makers and stakeholders suggests that at the policy level, there is no generally-known or accepted programme within the system either to identify the full range of equality needs, or to address those already identified. Limited resources also reduce capacity to attend to issues such as creating access for pupils with physical disabilities.
5. Because the statutory competency model which underpins the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum does not give explicit prominence to equality issues and, accordingly, these are not given priority within initial teacher education.
6. In focus group discussions with teachers, there seemed to be a clear distinction in terms of awareness of the full range of equality issues between teachers trained outside Northern Ireland and those trained locally. Teachers trained outside Northern Ireland had more explicit exposure to equality issues in their courses of study.
7. It appears that the Department's current dominant agenda of improving standards in schooling obliges schools to prioritise teaching, learning and assessment practices in relation to improving pupil examination performance. This is currently a key indicator of school improvement, and is also a benchmark for teacher performance-related pay. Other concerns for schools, such as equality may be marginalised within this standards agenda.

## **Section B: Equality Issues in Teacher Education and Employment**

1. Respondents from all groups interviewed expressed concern about on-going gender-equality issues in the recruitment and promotion of teachers, especially in primary schools. These issues included unequal access to employment, unequal opportunities for promotion, and perceptions of the 'feminization' of teaching. Student teachers, in particular, believed that although there are more female teachers, especially of younger children, male teachers still have better opportunities for promotion.
2. Student teachers' and teachers' awareness of equality issues was uneven. This variability may well be a consequence of the very limited emphasis on equality issues within the teacher competence model which dictates the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum. However awareness was more evident among those respondents with direct experience of equality considerations, either from personal experience, or from exposure on an ad hoc basis through certain optional courses.
3. Teachers' take-up of opportunities for training in equality issues varies greatly. Only a minority of teachers at present express an active interest in taking forward such issues. Thus, the main focus of Continuing Professional Development provision in universities and university colleges is on those aspects of the equality agenda prioritised by teachers, in particular Special Educational Needs. This has resulted in the marginalisation of other aspects and in a somewhat disparate and uncoordinated approach to equality issues in general. Given that the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are reluctant to consider introducing courses on equality issues without clear evidence of demand from teachers, it is unlikely that such provision will be expanded in a more systematic way without external encouragement and resourcing.
4. Higher education providers also identified problems of access to Continual Professional Development (CPD) courses and/or training for some teachers, especially in relation to gender, but also location, finance and disadvantage.
5. A significant barrier, identified by teachers, to their wider professional development in these areas was the relative lack of opportunity to teach or work outside their own community background. Aligned with this, was a concern about the unequal access for employment across the Controlled and Maintained school sectors for all teachers.
6. Student teachers felt that applicants to teacher education and students engaged in teacher education should not be discriminated against on the basis of disability or sexuality. However, some believed that this might happen.

## **Section C: Issues of Equality in the Teacher Education Curriculum and in School Classrooms**

1. The Department of Education representatives interviewed expressed the view that the promotion of equal opportunities is the responsibility of all teachers in pursuit of the statutory requirement for all children to have equal access to the curriculum.

Through various initiatives and ongoing processes, such as school inspection, the Department believes itself to be well-informed about the nature and extent of disadvantage and inequality.

### **Initial Teacher Education Issues**

2. All the providers of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) indicated that equality issues were a consideration within their courses. However, the extent to which the constituent aspects of equality (community background, race, gender, disability) are addressed varies between the providers.
3. Student teachers indicated that, in their experience, the Education for Mutual Understanding programme, designed to heighten mutual awareness of student teachers from Catholic and non-Catholic backgrounds, is not being implemented in an effective way.
4. Issues of gender, race, social class, etc., tend to be covered in ITE in an ad hoc manner, either through subject methods courses or through one-off lectures. It is therefore possible for students to go through their initial teacher education course without having to focus in a formal way on many of the aspects of equality. In addition, the practicalities of the present university-school volunteer partnership model for student placements were considered by the ITE providers to be barriers to equality issues being dealt with effectively during teaching practice.
5. Tutors also may be more comfortable with higher profile equality issues, such as those related to gender and SEN, but seemed to be unsure of the wider area of equality legislation in general and how this applies to schools and student teachers' experiences within schools.
6. Those trained as teachers in Northern Ireland agreed that, in general, issues of equality or equal opportunity were not explicitly addressed in their courses. The exception to this was special educational needs (SEN). Teachers trained in Great Britain expressed the view that issues of gender, race, and social disadvantage had been more formally addressed in their initial teacher education and they appeared to be more confident in addressing such issues in their classrooms.
7. Student teachers felt that the equality issue given greatest emphasis in their courses was differentiation in terms of pupil ability. Although issues such as social disadvantage, the differences between grammar and non-grammar schools, and gender were also addressed in training, they felt they were not taught how to deal with them directly. What knowledge they had about these equality issues came from experiences gained during school placements. These included the following:
  - There are more female teachers, particularly of younger children, yet male teachers have better promotion opportunities;
  - Applicants to teacher education and students should not be discriminated against on the basis of disability or sexuality;
  - Students were highly conscious of attempting to ensure that children of different academic abilities were given equal opportunities in their lessons;
  - Gender was less of an issue for students – however, many of them saw different treatment of girls and boys by teachers as 'unfair';

- Students were able to describe problems they had observed or encountered with pupils who were from Traveller backgrounds, were disabled or socially disadvantaged. They felt that their university or university college courses did not equip them well to deal with such pupils; and,
- Students commented that, in Northern Ireland, 'race' was considered to be a lesser issue than religion. However, in school placements they had noted the inappropriate attitudes of some pupils in relation to 'race' and ethnic minorities.

### **Continuing Professional Development Issues**

1. The major responsibility for the support of beginning teachers during induction and Early Professional Development lies with their employing schools. Education and Library Board (ELB) Curriculum And Support Services (CASS) have a supplementary, supportive role. Thus, the extent to which schools take seriously these responsibilities is the dominant influence on the beginning teacher. In addition, CASS officers believed that the ethos and value systems of individual schools will largely determine the extent to which beginning teachers are encouraged to engage with any issues of diversity.
2. Within their current programmes of support for beginning teachers, ELBs do not at present explicitly identify equality as a concern. It appears that considerable attention is given within these programmes to issues of differentiated learning. However, this emphasis is located within a framework of the development of effective teaching skills, rather than within an equality agenda.
3. There is at present a range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses dealing with SEN issues. These are popular with teachers and other educationalists, probably because recent reforms contained in the Education (NI) Order 1996 and the accompanying Code of Practice on Special Educational Needs has put pupils with learning difficulties very firmly on the agenda of mainstream schools.
4. Consideration of a more equality-focussed approach to aspects of the ELB support programmes for beginning teachers is in its infancy. ELB officers felt, however, that there may be some scope, within present arrangements, to accord greater priority to equality awareness for beginning teachers, and felt that this would be a productive strategy.

### **Practice in Schools**

5. Teachers were aware of certain equality issues, (e.g. gender, ethnicity) but attention to them in the classroom and in their day-to-day practice varied, depending on how comfortable or knowledgeable they felt in dealing with them. They indicated that individual teachers are often left to deal with equality issues and to take individual responsibility for tackling these issues in their classrooms
6. Teachers acknowledged that issues around gender, especially boys' and girls' achievement had become a particular area of focus in the past few years. They suggested, however, that certain initiatives (e.g. around boys' underachievement) may not be as much about creating equality of opportunity as about fulfilling a more instrumental need within certain schools to improve attainment.



7. Some teachers were more commonly aware of equality issues arising from pupils' social background. However, they also acknowledged that there was a certain degree of labelling attached to children from certain backgrounds, and that children from disadvantaged areas were perhaps not expected to do as well as children from more affluent backgrounds.
8. When speaking of equality issues around disability, teachers normally defined these in relation to special educational needs (SEN), specifically learning or behavioural issues. It was rare for teachers to offer comments on, or to consider, physical disabilities and the integration of pupils with physical disabilities in their schools.
9. Teachers felt that often equality issues of community background (i.e. religion) or 'race' were often categories of equality either ignored (race, especially) or not dealt with adequately (religious differences/sectarianism). They themselves had difficulties in dealing with these issues in their classrooms. In addition, they considered some practices and behaviours in their schools, from colleagues and pupils, around issues of 'race' or religion to be unacceptable, but did not feel able to challenge these within the prevailing ethos of the school.
10. In general, it was felt that most Northern Ireland teachers have had limited experience of diversity, either in their own schooling or in their professional lives. This may limit their capacity to engage across the range of equality issues. In addition, it was felt that the commitment of schools to the equality agenda is variable so that even if teachers individually show commitment to equality issues, they may not be supported in their actions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Section A: Equality Issues at Policy and System Levels

1. The Equality Commission should, if possible, promote a reconsideration of the values which underpin the teacher education system in Northern Ireland in order to shift emphasis away from the teaching of subject knowledge towards an emphasis on an holistic approach to meeting the learning needs of the whole child.
2. If the school system as a whole is to move forward across the range of equality issues, it will be necessary for the Department of Education to prioritise these explicitly in the processes of school improvement.
3. The Equality Commission should seek a more pro-active role in working with government, key education stakeholders and teacher educators to create an explicit and well-known equality programme within the education system and to prioritise the integration of such a programme into teacher education. However this should not be seen as a further external imposition but as an integral aspect of teacher education and school practice.
4. The Equality Commission should consider how it might work with Government and Higher Education Institutions to encourage greater representation of men and minority groups into teacher education. Potential student teachers from less affluent backgrounds should be able to access the same bonus payments from Government to train in Northern Ireland as they receive if they train in Great Britain.
5. The teacher competency framework for initial teacher education (ITE) should be amended to give greater emphasis to the need for teachers to address and deal with the full range of equality issues which may inhibit pupil learning. Progress towards improving awareness of equality issues in teacher education and training, should not be promoted solely through legislation (although this is unquestionably a major avenue), but also through revisiting the underlying principles of education. This is a responsibility which must be shared by all those involved in framing and providing teacher education and by those who are responsible for the employment of teachers.
6. The Equality Commission should recommend to the Department of Education that at least one Professional Development Activity within the EPD programme should have a compulsory equality-related focus.
7. Prioritisation should be given to changing school practice. Stimulus for such change would result from, for example, devising indicators of tangible outcomes in these areas of equality concern, and by resourcing the implementation of new policies, through both recurrent and capital funding processes and through special initiatives. A more explicit focus might also be given to equality indicators within the inspection process, to include explicit monitoring of practice relating to gender, disability and race.
8. In addition, schools might be required to monitor, for example, examination attainment, suspensions and expulsions and attendance rates according to gender,

free school meals entitlement, ethnicity, disability and special educational needs. It is likely that the computerised CLASS information system, currently used in Northern Ireland schools can accommodate such monitoring. Such information should be published in the annual reports of school governors to parents.

9. Simultaneously, there is scope for stakeholder groups, such as the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Governing Bodies' Association, the Transferors' Representative Council, to become more proactive (within the limitations of their roles) in prioritising discussion and development around equality concerns for those institutions in which they have some influence. If, for example, Transferor representatives on the Education & Library Boards, the governing body of Stranmillis University College, and Controlled school boards of governors, gave clear priority to the implications of such issues in the on-going decision-making processes of these bodies, equality concerns would become more visible at both system and school levels and in teacher education. In the same way, CCMS and GBA have capacity to highlight areas of concern and to influence behaviour, so could give greater prominence to equality issues within their schools.
10. Given the imminence of new legislation (the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill, currently out for public consultation), many of the issues identified by this research will come to the forefront of concerns in teacher education and schools. Action to support teacher educators and teachers will become urgent, once the final form of the legislation is known. The Commission should therefore prepare guidance for all interested parties in the education system as to the implications of the legislation and how issues may be confronted.
11. If implemented, the recommendations from this study will have some resource implications. Therefore consideration must be given by government to identifying additional monies, possibly hypothecated, to accommodate necessary improvements.

## **Section B: Equality Issues in Teacher Education and Employment**

12. Young people from all backgrounds need to be encouraged to enter teaching as a profession. The Equality Commission should explore with government and Higher Education institutions how access to graduate and post graduate courses for those who come from non-traditional educational backgrounds can be encouraged and enhanced.
13. Gender-inequities in the recruitment and promotion of teachers remain a deeply entrenched issue. The Equality Commission should revisit this issue as a priority and consider how it can progress its work with employers of teachers to redress these employment inequalities as they apply to women and other groups identified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998). The Commission might also consider whether teachers should continue to be exempted from Fair Employment legislation and whether individual schools should be designated as public bodies for the purposes of Section 75.

14. A more in-depth approach to training and the promotion of a broader range of experience to enhance teachers' awareness of equality issues should be considered. This might be facilitated by the use of secondments and exchanges within the teaching profession across all types of school in Northern Ireland. This approach would be enhanced if supported by longer and more sustained training by Curriculum and Advisory Support Services (CASS) and others with some specialist knowledge in the area of equality. If this training were delivered with firm backing by the Education and Library Boards and the Department of Education it would also introduce a more multi-agency approach as proposed by the universities and university colleges.
15. Issues of unequal access for teachers to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses, according to factors including gender, location, educational background and financial constraints, need to be addressed.

### **Section C: Issues of Equality in the Teacher Education Curriculum and in School Classrooms**

16. There is a need to ensure that accurate information on equality legislation, as it relates to schools, be provided and be easily accessible to those involved in the provision of initial teacher education. This should have both a primary and post-primary focus. Higher Education institutions should be encouraged to work to ensure that tutors involved in the provision of ITE are trained in the applications of this legislation within schools. The Commission should seek a more pro-active role in working with teacher educators in the integration of equality issues into ITE programmes. However such integration should not be seen as a further external imposition but as a core aspect of the ITE curriculum. This would go some way to reduce the lack of awareness of equality issues as expressed by tutors.
17. In order to address the understandable reluctance of Higher Education institutions to introduce courses on topics for which they feel there will be limited demand, equality awareness should be included as a core outcome of all Continuing Professional Development modules taught. Additionally, HEIs may be encouraged to review the viability of offering specific modules on equality issues in education.
18. The Equality Commission should consider how it might support tutors and student teachers through the provision of suitable resources including training and web-based materials, CD ROMs, and other teaching resources. The Commission might also consider offering specialist expertise as appropriate to the institutions concerned: the existing EC education-related materials e.g. *Raising Awareness – Diversity and Racism* (2001) would provide a useful basis for this if more widely disseminated and supported.
19. The Curriculum and Advisory Support Services (CASS) of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) should also consider how they might influence, in a more systematic fashion, teacher tutors within schools who are responsible for beginning teachers, to consider equality issues as appropriate foci for Early Professional Development work. It would also be beneficial to encourage wider learning within schools from these EPD activities, perhaps through their incorporation into wider school development planning and practice.

20. Consideration should be given within CASS beginning teacher programmes to creating a more explicit equality framework so that issues of access to learning for all pupils are not simply viewed as a skills-based activity.
21. Although attention is given within schools to some issues of equality, especially special needs and gender differences in attainment, it is recommended that, through teacher education programmes, teachers should be encouraged to locate these within the broader debate of equality. This will require the development of appropriate values and attitudes, as well as practical strategies for dealing with these issues in the classroom.
22. Training for serving principals and other school senior managers should include an explicit examination of the equality and human rights philosophy and legislation, as well as an in-depth consideration of the underlying value system of education, as already occurs within provision for aspiring principals (Professional Qualification for Headteachers [Northern Ireland]).

**Graduate School of Education, Queen's University, Belfast  
Equality Awareness in Teacher Education and Training Project**

**Seminar 1: Providers of Initial Teacher Education**

**Stage 1: Mapping the field**

- What is currently taking place in ITE programmes in relation to equality awareness?
- What is the provision generally for students with regard to equality awareness in ITE programmes?
- How are issues around gender, 'race', community background and disability specifically addressed?
- What is the extent of tutors' awareness of these issues and how do they integrate these issues into their practice?
- What are those responsible for ITE programmes trying to achieve in relation to raising awareness equality issues amongst their students?

**Stage 2: Constraints**

- What are the constraints/barriers to addressing these issues within ITE programmes?
- Are there opportunities taken to prioritise the issues in ITE programmes?
- If so, what are the characteristics of the contexts in which these opportunities arise that enable equality issues to be addressed effectively?

**Stage 3: What can we do?**

- What are the realistic expectations of incorporating/prioritising equality issues in an ITE programme?
- What needs to be done by ITE providers to deliver more formal opportunities for students to engage with issues around equality and for them to recognise the significance of these issues in their own practice?

### **Instrument for Focus Groups**

- Introduction – Introductions  
Key issues – course/in-service useful
- Explanation - Equality – what does this bring to mind?  
Equality for whom?
- Explore specific labels of equality mentioned
- Were issues of equality mentioned in training?  
Provision  
Practice in classrooms – what do you do?
- Context in school of equality – explicit policy development/school as a working place
- Generate focus on group differences/inequalities – i.e. getting away from individual differences
- Issues not raised – to be covered? Section 75/EC list of equality areas
- Origins of awareness – reasons why they do this
- Constraints/ways forward

Appendix 3

Information for the desk study was obtained from the following websites.

- Equality Commission (NI)
- Department of Education (NI)
- Department of Education and Skills
- Teacher Training Agency
- UK Government Website
- Disability Rights Commission (UK)
- Commission for Racial Equality (UK)
- Department of Education and Science (Republic of Ireland)
- Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)
- US Department of Education, Equity Education (Washington)
- California Department of Education,
- Education Queensland,
- Australia Capital Territories Education and Community Services
- Ministry of Education (Canada)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (EU).

In addition a literature search using QUB library BIDS, OCLC (First Search) obtained material from academic journals including, Journal of Education Policy, European Journal of Teacher Education, Education Policy Analysis Archives, Multicultural teaching, British Journal of Special Education, Teacher Educator, Teaching and Teacher Education, Peabody Journal of Education.



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<http://www.decs.act.gov.au/>

Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/>

British Columbia Ministry of Education <http://www.gov.bc.ca/bced/>

British Education Index <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/bei/bei.htm>

California Department of Education <http://www.cde.ca.gov/>

Canadian Education Research Information System <http://ceris.schoolnet.ca/e/>

Canadian Human Rights Commission <http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/>

Canberra Connect Education and Learning  
<http://www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au/ie4/educationandlearning/educationandlearning.html>

Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education <http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/csiehome.htm>

Commission for Racial Equality <http://www.cre.gov.uk/>

Commonwealth Department of Education and Training <http://www.dest.gov.au/default.htm>

Council of the Great City Schools <http://www.cgcs.org/>

Department of Education and Science Ireland <http://www.irlgov.ie/educ/>

Department of Education and Skills <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/>

Department of Education and Skills Special Education Needs  
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/senap>

Disability Rights Commission <http://www.drc-gb.org/drc/default.asp>

Education Queensland <http://www.education.qld.gov.au/>

Government of Canada [http://canada.gc.ca/main\\_e.html](http://canada.gc.ca/main_e.html)

Hopwood Links <http://www.csteep.bc.edu/ctestweb/hopwood/hopwood.html>

INTO Irish National Teachers Organisation <http://www.into.ie/>

National Assembly for Wales <http://www.wales.gov.uk/>

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission <http://www.nihrc.org/>

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Equity Education Homepage  
<http://www.k12.wa.us/equity/>

Ontario College of Teachers <http://www.oct.on.ca/x>

Ontario Ministry of Education <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/>

Scottish Executive Online <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/>

South Australia Department of Education, Training and Employment  
[http://www.dete.sa.gov.au/dete\\_home.asp](http://www.dete.sa.gov.au/dete_home.asp)

Teacher Training Agency <http://www.canteach.gov.uk/>

The Civil Rights Project Harvard University <http://www.law.harvard.edu/groups/civilrights/>

The Council of Chief State School Officers <http://www.ccsso.org/>

UNICEF Convention of the Rights of the Child <http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm>

US Department of Education <http://www.ed.gov/>

US Department of Education Gender Equity Expert Panel  
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/genderequity/>

US Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services  
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/index.html>

US National Board for Professional Teaching Standards <http://www.nbpts.org/>

US Teachers College Record <http://www.tcrecord.org/>