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**INTO RESPONSE
TO THE REPORT BY
THE POST-PRIMARY
REVIEW BODY**

June 2002

Executive Summary

1. Guiding Principles

The INTO supports the *Guiding Principles* of the Review of Post-Primary Education. They outline a system where pupils are valued equally, encouraged to develop their talent to the full and equipping them with the skills and values for the 21st Century.

2. Transfer Test

INTO has been at the forefront of the campaign to abolish the 11+ Transfer Test and academic selection in any form for over 50 years. INTO welcomes the recognition in the *Gallagher and Smith Report* of the long-term detrimental effects of this test, and fully supports the proposal in the *Burns Review* to abolish the 11+ transfer tests and end academic selection .

3. Academic selection.

INTO is of the view that no form of academic selection should be used in the transfer of pupils from primary to post-primary school.

4. Age of transfer

INTO is of the view that the age of transfer should remain at 11.

5. Admissions Criteria

Parental Preference

INTO support this as the initial criterion to be used for selecting schools of their choice. Only in a situation of over subscription will the other criteria be actioned.

Brother or sister already attending a school or eldest child

INTO supports this criterion

Compelling individual circumstances

INTO supports this criterion. Where there are genuine compelling individual circumstances these should be considered. INTO has concerns that the use of this criterion is a potential legal minefield

Proximity to the child's home

INTO opposes the use of this criterion and suggests replacing it with a lottery, which is fair and equitable to all children and not based on where their parents can afford to live.

6. Pupil profile

INTO supports the concept of a pupil profile on a professional basis but has grave concerns over the content, and use for which the pupil profile is intended. There is scant information on the pupil profile within the Burns Review Document making it difficult to comment on in any detail. INTO is of the view that the pupil profile should be manageable for teachers, appropriate and meaningful to pupils and should not be given to the post-primary schools or used as a means of selecting pupils.

7. Collegiate System

INTO supports local collaboration of schools. The Collegiate system as proposed in Burns is bureaucratically burdensome and costly to maintain. Many aspects of the out-workings of the Collegiate are vague and make it difficult for teachers to fully understand what it would actually mean for them.

8. Collegiate Structures.

INTO is concerned that the proposed new structures within the collegiate would only add another layer of administration to an already over-administered education system. Schools are currently under-funded and under-resourced and could not sustain further resources being directed away from the classrooms. These proposals should be examined in the context of the Review of Public Administration.

9. Further and Higher Education, Employers and the Economy.

INTO is of the view that education links with the Further and Higher Education sectors, Employers and the Economy must be an integral part of the post-primary school system.

10. Practical problems.

INTO has identified some practical areas of concern:
problems of transporting pupils and teachers between school in the Collegiate;
time lost in travelling from teaching and learning; and
practical and financial issues of ICT, distance learning and assessment.

11. Alternative proposal.

Comprehensive Education / All-ability schools is the policy of the INTO, with all pupils being given equal access and opportunity to the best education available.

Introduction

INTO is the largest Teachers' Union in Ireland representing over 30,000 teachers. In Northern Ireland INTO represents members in Nursery, Primary, Secondary, Grammar and Special Schools across all employment sectors. INTO has been to the forefront of the campaign for the abolition of academic selection at 11 for over 50 years. INTO participated in the establishment of the Northern Ireland Association for Comprehensive Education (1969 - 1996) and the production of research and policy documents on selection and post-primary education since 1947.

The INTO Response to the (Gallagher and Smith Report) Review Body on Post-Primary Education in Northern Ireland, February 2001, articulates very clearly the policies and views of the Organisation for the reform of the Post-Primary Education system in Northern Ireland; to ensure:

- ...the end of the system of selection for post-primary education at the earliest possible opportunity and the introduction of a system of comprehensive grant-aided schools throughout Northern Ireland.
- ...progress... must be generic, guarantee the excellence of existing educational provision; be fully funded by the Northern Ireland Executive and guarantee the terms and conditions of service of Northern Ireland teachers.

- ...that all post-primary schools be of equal status and parity.

The Burns Report

INTO welcomes the Review Body Report as it reflects many of the policies and views of the organisation. INTO regrets the Review Body's conclusion that a comprehensive system of education is not suitable to the needs of the Northern Ireland education system. INTO does not accept that it would encourage "negative interdependence" nor that it falls short of a number of the Guiding Principles of the Burns Report. Having examined these Principles INTO is of the view that a comprehensive system of education would be the best mechanism to deliver on all the objectives contained within them.

INTO supports the Guiding Principles as they form the foundations on which the post-primary education system must be built. The statement recognising and supporting the key role teachers play is welcome. INTO agrees that each young person should be valued equally, enabled to develop their talents to the full, encouraged to develop a love of learning and equipped with the values and skills for the 21st Century, and this should be central to a new system of post-primary education.

Main Proposals of the Report

The Report proposes three major changes to our current system:

- The development of a pupil profile to provide information to parents, pupils and teachers;

- The abolition of the 11+ transfer tests and the end of academic selection as pupils move from primary to post-primary school, and its replacement by a procedure which gives priority to parental choice;
- The creation of local collaborative networks of schools in a system of Collegiates.

Pupil Profiles

INTO supports the concept of a pupil profile. As professionals, teachers record and collate information on pupils relevant to all aspects of their development. Concerns remain however over the use and possible misuse of the proposed profiles.

The Burns Report lacks detail and clarity on the format and purpose of the pupil profile. It recommends that the detail on the format, content and structure of the profile be determined by CCEA. Phase 2 of the CCEA Review of the Curriculum and Assessment was recently published. It proposes a standardised annual report format for parents and specifies the content required, stating that "the report would provide a complete 'pupil profile' ". It is only natural therefore to assume that this is what CCEA is proposing for the pupil profile as detailed by the Review Body. INTO will be responding to the detail of the pupil profile as defined within the CCEA Review in the response to that.

INTO has concerns in relation to the workload for teachers, both primary and post-primary, in establishing and maintaining the profiles. INTO welcomes the statement in the Review Body Report that "The pupil profile

should not be made available to post-primary schools in advance of the completion of the transfer arrangements." The proposed profiles should not be used as a means of selection or transfer from primary to post-primary school. This would undermine the educational and diagnostic rationale for the profile supported by teachers.

The main INTO concerns are that:

- Any form of record or report on pupils must be simple to produce, maintain and understand. It should be concise, only containing relevant information on the pupil for use by the teacher, school, parent and pupil themselves.
- Pupil profiles should not be used to inform comparisons between schools or teachers, as this renders the pupil him / herself to a statistic, instead of a person, and does not add value to any pupil's learning or progress.
- The pupil profile should not increase workload for teachers.

INTO has concerns over the use of ICT in the assessment of pupils and the compilation of the pupil profile as defined in Burns and the CCEA Review of Curriculum and Assessment. The current resources in Northern Ireland schools are not capable of delivering this system now or even in the future unless major financial resources are provided for software, hardware, training and development.

Abolition of the 11+ Transfer Tests and the End of Academic Selection

As stated earlier INTO has been at the forefront of the campaign to abolish the 11+ and academic selection at any age for entry to post-primary school for the last 55 years. As teachers, parents and previous pupils of the system, INTO members whole-heartedly endorse the proposal of the Review Body to abolish the 11+ and end academic selection as a means of transfer to post-primary education. The evidence to support this view and the proposal of the Review Body is well documented in national and international research over the years, in INTO publications and in the Gallagher and Smith Report of October 2000:

- the distortion and narrowing of the primary curriculum;
- iniquities of selection and the far-reaching effects of classifying three-quarters of 11 year olds as failures;
- the socially divisive system of post-primary education;
- restricting development of the pupils;
- demotivation and demoralisation of pupils; and
- lack of consideration of different styles of learning, aptitudes and abilities.

INTO remains of the view that the current transfer test must be abolished and that standardised tests, or Key Stage Assessments must not be used as alternative forms of academic selection. It is important that post-primary schools do not 'select' pupils according to their ability or aptitudes, whether academic or other.

Admissions Criteria

The admissions criteria as proposed by the Review Body specify in order of priority:

1. Parental (and pupil) preference
2. Siblings and eldest child
3. Children of staff
4. Compelling individual circumstances
5. Proximity to pupil's home

(Criteria 2-4 only to be actioned in a situation of over subscription)

INTO supports the first four criteria as proposed by Burns. INTO is of the view that that parents and pupils should be able to select the post-primary school of their choice but recognise the potential problems pertaining from the system of post-primary schools which currently exists in Northern Ireland. Over subscription is likely in some schools in Northern Ireland that are viewed as better than others, based on previous years' experience of academic selection. This will take some time to change. During this time it will be necessary for some schools to action other criteria. There is a concern that the fifth criterion is not the most appropriate criterion to ensure social inclusiveness and fairness to all.

INTO is concerned about the use of this criterion *compelling individual circumstances* as it is a potential legal minefield.

INTO is of the view, in the interests of fairness and equality of opportunity for all concerned that a lottery is a better criterion to use than *Proximity to Pupil's Home*. The use of this criterion would ensure that each pupil would have an equal chance of getting the school of their choice, and that no pupil would be advantaged or disadvantaged for social, financial or academic reasons.

To assist parents in their choice of schools and to eradicate the prejudice of the selective system INTO proposes that all post-primary schools change the name of their school from *Grammar, Secondary or High School* to *College*. This will go some way to removing the inequalities of the two-tier system and begin the process of parity of esteem for all post-primary schools.

Collegiates

INTO remains convinced that a comprehensive system of education is the best system of post-primary education in Northern Ireland. INTO is of the view, based on research into the Scottish system and the Republic of Ireland, that comprehensive education better addresses the issues of social inclusion, provides the range of subjects (academic and vocational), delivers on equality of opportunity, and is commensurate with the Guiding Principles of the Review Body Report.

INTO calls on the Education Minister to reconsider the benefits of a comprehensive education system for Northern Ireland. The Collegiate system as detailed within the Burns Report proposes a system of post-

primary education that has many of the benefits of comprehensive education but with a much more complex and bureaucratic structure. Comprehensive education provides access to a broad-based common curriculum for all pupils, co-operation rather than competition between schools and is socially inclusive.

INTO supports the Burns proposal that co-operation rather than competition is the way forward for post-primary education. The combined negative effects of Open Enrolment and the 11+ transfer test are well documented in the Gallagher and Smith Report (October 2000) and the Review Body Report (Page 133-136). Co-operation between schools has the potential to provide a much broader curriculum and an enriching experience for pupils and teachers. Open Enrolment has had a detrimental and devastating impact on post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. The Collegiate structure, whilst containing many benefits appears aspirational and inimical to the current system of LMS (Local Management of Schools).

The Collegiate system as outlined by the Review Body is complex and appears to be administratively and financially burdensome. INTO has been campaigning for a reduction in teachers' workload and bureaucracy. The Employing Authorities and the Department, in recognition of the problems in the current system, established a working group with the Teacher Unions to identify the issues and propose changes. The Burns Report is proposing an additional layer of bureaucracy and increased workload for Principals and, by association, all teachers. The proposed Collegiate structure includes the establishment of a Board of Principals,

Collegiate Liaison Council, Collegiate Support Centre and Collegiate Standing Conference. All of these are additional structures and will require additional work, administration, and major additional resources.

INTO is of the view that the education system in Northern Ireland is already under-resourced. The proposed changes in the Burns Report require major additional funding and the allocation of resources as detailed in the Report are insufficient to implement them.

Schools are currently funded through the LMS (Local Management of Schools) formula. This formula, and the revised version due to be implemented soon, does not provide schools with the necessary funding to provide an adequate education for pupils in their care.

The Burns Report states in its Guiding Principles that:

"The education system should provide for the development of all aspects of the individual, including the intellectual, spiritual, moral, cultural, physical, emotional and creative." and;

"Each young person should be equipped with the values and skills needed for working and living in the 21st Century."

These principles along with the others stated in the Report can only be recognised when the education system in Northern Ireland is properly funded and adjusted to place teaching and learning as the first priority. Class sizes need to be reduced for this to occur, which in turn requires funding, and the protection and expansion of teacher numbers in the education system.

There are a number of practical issues with the proposed collegiate system, which give INTO cause for concern:

- Timetabling issues for pupils and teachers if moving between schools;
- Teaching and learning time lost due to movement between schools;
- Additional role, duties, workload and time demands for post-primary principals to operate the collegiate system;
- Additional workload and time demands on post-primary teachers to operate the collegiate system;
- Additional levels of administration in post-primary education with introduction of Collegiate Board of Principals, Liaison Centre, Support Centre and Collegiate Standing Conferences;
- Different methods of teaching via ICT, implications for training and professional development of teachers.

These issues are of all of crucial importance to INTO and will determine the success or failure of any new system of post-primary education. Any proposed change in teachers' terms and conditions of service must be agreed through the Teachers' Negotiating Committee. All issues must be detailed and discussed concurrently with the educational and other aspects of the debate.

In the INTO Response to the Gallagher and Smith Report a two-stage approach to the review process was recommended:

- "i) Early abolition of the *Selective Transfer Process*;
- ii) High level dialogue involving the Education Minister, the Northern Ireland Executive and all education partners to plan for change." (INTO Response February 2001).

The INTO model of a two-stage review presents a realistic and positive approach to the contrasting and apparently intractable positions adopted by some bodies.

The *Guiding Principles of the Review Body Report* propose a positive system of education, which is open and fair to all, and are fundamental to any education system with the interests of children at its centre. The current system of selection at 11, and any form of academic selection at 11 runs contrary to these *Guiding Principles* and must be abolished at the earliest possible opportunity.

The second stage of the review, as proposed by the INTO, is to involve all the education partners in discussions on how to achieve the best post-primary education system for all concerned in Northern Ireland. The Report of the Review Body would form the basis for this dialogue, along with the collated responses from this consultation exercise. In this way Northern Ireland could move towards an agreed system of post-primary education, which addresses all the needs of pupils for the 21st Century, protects the interests of the teachers and is underpinned by the Review Body *Guiding Principles*.

Conclusion

In summary INTO proposes:

- i. Abolition of academic selection at 11;
- ii. Pupil profiles to be used for educational / diagnostic purposes only;
- iii. Pupil profiles to be relevant, concise and teacher friendly;
- iv. A system of post-primary education to be socially inclusive and provide a wide range of subjects to suit pupils' needs for the 21st Century;
- v. The establishment of a post-primary education system which is manageable, cost effective and makes efficient use of the resources available;
- vi. That teachers' professionalism and rights are upheld within any changes to the system;
- vii. A two-stage strategic approach to the review process.

It is also important that this consultation and review takes into account other consultations and reviews, in particular:

- i. Review of LMS;
- ii. Curriculum and Assessment Review;
- iii. Independent Enquiry into Teachers' Terms and Conditions of Service; and
- iv. Review of Public Administration.

All of these reviews and consultations are interdependent, and will impact on each other. Therefore none can be viewed in isolation but should form a holistic approach to Education in Northern Ireland in the 21st Century.

Further information on INTO policy on academic selection and post-primary education in Northern Ireland:

- INTO Response to the Review Body on Post-Primary Education in Northern Ireland (February 2001)
- Report of the INTO Fora on Selection (1999-2000)
- 'Unequal but Fair', INTO/UTU Publication (2000)
- The INTO/UTU Case for Non-Selective Education in Northern Ireland (1985)

The above documents are available from:

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