



Community division and student separation in Initial Teacher Education

Milliken, M. (2020). *Community division and student separation in Initial Teacher Education: Transforming Education 07*. (pp. 1-8). <https://view.publitas.com/integrated-education-fund/transforming-education-in-northern-ireland-briefing-papers-collection/page/60-61>

[Link to publication record in Ulster University Research Portal](#)

Publication Status:

Published (in print/issue): 01/12/2020

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via Ulster University's Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The Research Portal is Ulster University's institutional repository that provides access to Ulster's research outputs. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact pure-support@ulster.ac.uk.

Report 07

Author:

Dr Matthew Milliken
School of Education
UNESCO Centre
Ulster University
Cromore Rd
Coleraine
BT52 1SA
www.ulster.ac.uk



transforming education

Community Division and Student Separation in Initial Teacher Education

1. Purpose

The potential for the professional movement of teachers across the community divide in the NI school system has been identified as being affected by the convergence of four inter-related factors: the exception of teachers from Fair Employment legislation; the place afforded to religion within schools; the requirement for all teachers employed in Maintained primary schools to be in possession of an RE certificate that has been approved by the Catholic bishops; and the organisation of Initial Teacher Education (ITE).¹ Ulster University's Transforming Education project has already published papers exploring the first three of these; this paper explores the ways in which community division is reflected in, and impacts upon, the provision of ITE.

2. Context

2.1 The History of Teacher Education in NI

Following the introduction of a system of National Schools in Ireland in the 1830s, teaching gradually became a professional occupation. Responsibility for the training of teachers fell to denominational colleges which were located mainly in and around Dublin. At the time of the partition of Ireland there was only one teaching college north of the border, St Mary's on the Falls Road in Belfast. St Mary's prepared women for teaching in Catholic schools. Those Protestants, and Catholic males, who wanted to qualify as teachers were obliged to attend colleges in the south, or further afield; in England or Scotland.

A state-funded teaching college for "men and women of all religions" was hurriedly set up after partition – it opened in Fisherwick Place, Belfast in 1922 but was later relocated to a purpose-built campus at Stranmillis. The first NI Education Act in 1923 proposed a system of education in the newly created Northern Ireland that was free of the involvement of churches; in keeping with this vision no clergy were appointed to sit on the NI government's Committee for the Training of Teachers. The Protestant churches were incensed by both the secularism inherent in the Act and the management arrangements for the new teaching college – they began a campaign of intense lobbying which resulted in legislation that secured church representation in the management of schools but not on the board of Stranmillis.

The 1923 Education Act had granted financial support for St Mary's but did not back the establishment of a training college for Catholic men in NI. It was considered that they could (and should) attend the new non-denominational college. The Catholic Bishops were wary of what they perceived to be creeping secularism and refused to allow Catholic men to train alongside Protestants. Instead they insisted that northern Catholic men should continue to attend southern institutions where they would be prepared to teach in faith schools. The education minister (Lord Londonderry) rejected this proposal, citing North-South differences in curriculum. In response the Bishops forbade Catholic schools from employing teachers who had trained at Stranmillis.

In an effort to compromise, Lord Londonderry proposed that Catholic men could have their own accommodation block within Stranmillis. The Bishops agreed to make a substantial contribution towards the cost of such a building but requested additional measures as a quid pro quo: a separated sports ground and a physical wall between the Catholic hostel and the accommodation used by non-Catholics. This was a step too far for the Unionist government and negotiations broke down.²

¹Smith, A., & Hansson, U. (2015). *A Review of Policy Areas Affecting Integration of the Education System in Northern Ireland*. Integrated Education Fund. <http://www.ief.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Integrated-Education-Scoping-Paper.pdf>.

²Biaggi, C. (2020) Reforming education in post-partition Northern Ireland: state control and churches' interference, *History of Education*, 49:3, 379-397, DOI: 10.1080/0046760X.2020.1738563.

Thus, the training of teachers along sectarian lines became a feature of the NI education system. It was even upheld as a virtue by the United Education Committee of the Protestant Churches, who warned in 1925 against “[throwing] the door open... for a bolshevist, or an atheist, or a Roman Catholic to become a teacher in a Protestant school”.³

The Catholic authorities responded to increasing demands for a northern college for training prospective male teachers by establishing St Joseph’s on the Stewartstown Road in Belfast in 1945. In 1985 St Mary’s and St Joseph’s merged into one institution on the St Mary’s site. The 1973 Education Act included stipulations that required all teachers employed in NI schools to have attained a recognised teaching qualification – Queens University Belfast, the Open University and the (then) New University of Ulster responded by introducing a range of postgraduate and undergraduate courses.

In 1968 Stranmillis became a ‘college’ of Queens entitling it to issue university degrees and in 1999 both Stranmillis and St Mary’s were afforded University College status within Queens University – they remain, however, financially and organisationally separate and independent of their parent university.

2.2 Providers of Initial Teacher Education in NI

At present, four institutions in NI offer ITE. Demand for ITE places in these institutions is consistently high and the application process is very competitive. Many would-be teachers from NI choose to apply to ITE institutions elsewhere – often with the ultimate intention of returning to NI after qualification. Around one-in-five of teachers currently working in NI schools have gained their professional qualifications in GB.⁴

Institution	ITE Courses Offered	Duration
Stranmillis University College	Bachelor of Education (BEd) (Hons) for primary school teaching	Four years
	BEd (Hons) for post-primary teaching in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Studies, • Religious Studies, • Technology and Design, • Mathematics/Science 	Four years
	Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) for Early Years	One year
St. Mary’s University College	BEd (Hons) for primary school teaching	Four years
	BEd (Hons) for post-primary teaching in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Studies, • Religious Studies, • Technology and Design, • Mathematics/Science 	Four years
	PGCE for teaching in Irish Medium Education primary schools	One year
Queen’s University Belfast	PGCE for post-primary teaching in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English, • Mathematics, • Computing/IT, • Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics), • Modern Languages, • Religious Education, • Social Sciences (Politics, Sociology) • Irish Medium Education (<i>in association with St Mary’s University College</i>) 	One year
Ulster University	PGCE for primary teaching	One year
	PGCE for post-primary teaching in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art and Design, • English with Drama and Media Studies, • Geography, • History, • Home Economics, • Music, • Physical Education, • Technology and Design • Irish Medium Education (<i>in association with St Mary’s University College</i>) 	One year

2.3 Reviews of Teacher Education in NI

In the early 1980s, the academic Henry Chilver conducted research into the state of ITE in NI at the behest of the Conservative Government. The Chilver Report proposed a unified collegiate Centre for Teacher Training, but the proposal was severely attacked by the churches on both sides and was eventually shelved. Subsequent reports commissioned by the Department of Education identified that the configuration of ITE colleges in NI had resulted in an over-supply of teachers and that the system was financially unsustainable.⁵

In 2011 the Department of Employment and Learning commenced a further review of teacher education. In its initial phase the review identified that educating a teacher in NI was considerably more expensive than elsewhere in UK. The review specifically singled out the education of primary school teachers in separate colleges as being particularly costly and proposed that this was due, at least partially, to the payments of premia⁶ to St Mary’s and Stranmillis. Nevertheless, the review concluded that, in the absence of an agreed strategy on ITE and clear, agreed outcomes from policy makers, it was difficult to accurately determine whether the current arrangements represented value for money.

The second phase (an investigation by an international panel of experts led by Professor Pasi Sahlberg) reported back to the Assembly in 2014 and highlighted issues of “fragmentation and duplication”.⁷ The team noted that there was potential for greater cooperation and collaboration between ITE providers and proposed four alternative models:

1. **A collaborative partnership between ITE institutions**
2. **A two-centre model within a Belfast Institute of Education**
3. **A federation of ITE providers**
4. **A single NI Institute of Education**

The report was met with vocal (and effective) opposition – particularly from supporters of St Mary’s who argued that the closure of St Mary’s would impact negatively on employment levels in an area that was recognised as suffering from particularly high levels of social deprivation.⁸ Further progress on the matter has subsequently stalled.

A joint research paper by Martin O’Hagan of St Mary’s and Patricia Eaton of Stranmillis published in 2020 framed the separation of the University Colleges and the inertia in relation to responding to the changes proposed by Sahlberg as being a ‘Wicked Problem’⁹ – i.e. one that exists within deep-seated, macro-social, political and cultural issues such as those that underpin the governance of NI. They drew attention to the fact that the department which commissioned the Sahlberg review – the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) – was, at the time, run by an elected member of the Alliance party (unabashed and longstanding advocates of an Integrated model of education) while the Department for Education was led by a Sinn Fein representative (who favoured a system of separated education predicated on parental choice). Thus, O’Hagan and Eaton concluded, the situation was made even more intractable by the micro-political issues that are inherent within the consociational model of government and the structure of educational administration in NI.¹⁰

By recognising that a problem is ‘wicked’ does not mean that it is not worth solving or that efforts to address it should be abandoned; rather that it needs instead to be viewed and tackled from a new angle.¹¹ In order to have any chance at coming up with a viable solution it is necessary to gain a deeper insight into the problem, to view it from many different perspectives and to reframe it entirely. “When you come to a fork in the road, pick it up!”¹²

3. Issues

3.1 The Economics of ITE

The number of new teachers required each year to meet the requirements of natural turnover in the profession is calculated by the Department of Education (DE) – DE then informs the four institutions how many applicants they are permitted to accept. This capping process is made more complicated by the fact that the Department for the Economy (DfE) plays no part in this decision even though it is responsible for funding Higher Education.

Teaching in NI remains a high-status profession and demand for places greatly exceeds the capped admission figure.¹³ It was calculated in 2012 that primary teaching places were up to 15 times over-subscribed and that the number of students applying for post-primary courses was seven times more than the number of places available.¹⁴ Each year around 600 teachers qualify as teachers at the four institutions in NI. DfE has however published research which indicates that, at current levels, there will be an oversupply of around 140 teachers p.a. over the next decade.¹⁵ In contrast in England the number of students undertaking ITE is only 85% of the total required by the government’s teacher supply model.¹⁶

⁵e.g. Osler, D. (2005) *Policy Review Of Teacher Education In Northern Ireland* https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/659/1/osler_report.pdf.

⁶Premia’ are additional payments to sustain small, specialist, historic institutions.

⁷See <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/initial-teacher-education>.

⁸See <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/belfasts-st-marys-and-stranmillis-teacher-training-colleges-in-fight-for-survival-30927620.html>.

⁹Rittel, H. & Webber, M. (1973) Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning *Policy Sciences*, 4:2155-169 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4531523>.

¹⁰Hagan, M. & Eaton, P. (2020) Teacher education in Northern Ireland: reasons to be cheerful or a ‘Wicked Problem’? *Teacher Development*, 24:2, 258-273, DOI: 10.1080/13664530.2020.1751260.

¹¹Wong, E. (2020) *What is a Wicked Problem and How do Can Solve it?* Interactive Design Foundation <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/wicked-problems-5-steps-to-help-you-tackle-wicked-problems-by-combining-systems-thinking-with-agile-methodology>.

¹²Attributed to the NY Yankees baseball coach ‘Yogi’ Berra.

¹³See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-53840930>.

¹⁴Moran, A. (2012) Crises as catalysts for change: re-energising teacher education in Northern Ireland, *Educational Research*, 54:2, 137-147, DOI: 10.1080/00131881.2012.680039.

¹⁵Department for the Economy & Ulster University (2019) NI Skills Barometer <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/Skills-Barometer-2019-Summary-Report.pdf>.

¹⁶<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/nov/28/government-falls-short-on-secondary-teacher-recruitment-targets>.

³Reported in Bardon, J. (1992) *A History of Ulster* Blackstaff Press, Belfast.

⁴Milliken, M., Bates, J. & Smith, A. (2020) Education policies and teacher deployment in Northern Ireland: ethnic separation, cultural encapsulation and community cross-over, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/00071005.2019.1666083.

In response, the Department for Education in England created a system of bursaries to encourage the uptake of post graduate teaching qualifications. In the 2020-21 school year a financial incentive of £26,000 was offered to those with a degree in chemistry, computing, languages, maths, physics, biology or classics. Since the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a 30% increase in applications to teaching courses. In response, the bursary for 2021-22 has been reduced to £24,000 for those wishing to teach chemistry, computing, maths or physics, whilst languages and classics cuts have been even more stringent to £10,000 and biology student teachers can expect only £7,000.¹⁷

In spite of such enticements, most indigenous NI students choose to remain at home to undertake ITE. There are some financial benefits for NI students considering a four-year BEd at Stranmillis or St Mary's; they are only required to pay around £4,000 p.a. as opposed to the £9,000 p.a. course fees that are levied on students from GB.

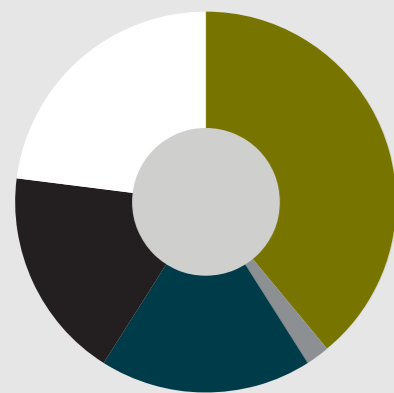
It seems that one branch of the NI Government (DE) is subsidising students wishing to take up ITE here whilst another branch (DfE – which is ultimately responsible for the funding of the four institutions) is forecasting significant levels of unemployment among the teachers that are being produced. In the meantime, schools across the water are crying out for teachers. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the system is – at least partially – either producing teachers for export to fill vacancies elsewhere (particularly in schools in England) or creating a generation of professionals that will struggle to find employment as a teacher locally and may ultimately be forced to leave the profession.

3.2 Sectoral Separation and Shared Education in ITE

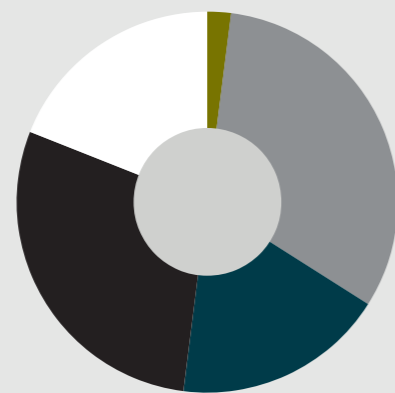
All four ITE institutions are open to applications from students from all sections of the community. There are however indications that the composition of the student bodies at the two University Colleges still strongly reflects the religious divide. It was reported in 2014 that 18% of the student teachers enrolled at Stranmillis were Catholic, and there were no Protestant students at St Mary's.¹⁸ It is widely acknowledged that St Mary's does, in effect, prepare teachers for working in the Catholic Maintained sector (CCMS) whilst Stranmillis prepares students for the employment in Controlled sector schools.¹⁹ In effect, each college has tended to draw its students from one side of a segregated school sector, place them in the same sector for teaching practice and that, after graduation, the students return to the same sector for employment.²⁰

A survey of over 1,000 teachers undertaken by the UNESCO Centre in 2017-18 identified that 39% of those teaching in Maintained primary, Maintained post-primary and Catholic Voluntary Grammar schools had attended St Mary's (or St Joseph's) and only 2% had gained a teaching qualification through Stranmillis. In contrast, 32% of teachers in Controlled primary, post-primary and non-denominational (Protestant ethos) Voluntary Grammar schools had undertaken ITE in Stranmillis with only 2% having attended St Mary's. Integrated schools on the other hand had a workforce that was comprised of 26% Stranmillis graduates and 10% alumni of St Mary's.²¹

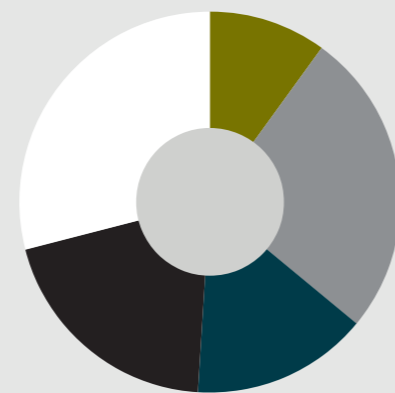
ITE Attended by those Teaching in Maintained PS, Maintained PPS or Catholic Voluntary Grammar



ITE Attended by those Teaching in Controlled PS, Controlled PPS or Non-denominational Voluntary Grammar



ITE Attended by those Teaching in Grant Maintained Integrated and Controlled Integrated PS and PPS



● St. Mary's ● Stranmillis ● Ulster University ● QUB ● Other

It is an occupational requirement for those applying for teaching posts in Maintained primary schools to be in possession of an RE teaching qualification that meets standards set by the Catholic bishops (AKA 'the Certificate'). An approved course has always been provided within the parameters of the BEd at St Mary's. The multi-faith RE course undertaken by all primary PGCE students (and offered as an 'elective' for post-primary PGCE) at Ulster has also been recognised as passing muster, but the core RE module offered to undergraduates at Stranmillis does not (NB: the authorities at Stranmillis have never sought this recognition).

In 2013 DE undertook an assessment into the impact of the Certificate on teachers' employment opportunities.²² Following the publication of this document significant efforts have been made to ensure that Stranmillis students who wish to complete the Certificate can do so in as straightforward a manner as possible. Since September 2019, the St Mary's course has been made available in-house to Stranmillis undergraduates where it is taught by Stranmillis staff. It remains however an additional, optional undertaking. For many of those school-leavers considering primary school teaching, the choice of the ITE institution at which they will undertake their BEd still generally places them on a path into a career in either the Maintained or the Controlled sector.

There is also evidence that those would-be teachers who leave NI to undertake ITE tend to choose institutions that are consistent with their faith/community identity – students who came through the Maintained sector in NI choose to attend Catholic Colleges (that offer the Certificate) while their counterparts from the Controlled sector undertake their ITE at secular or non-denominational institutions.²³

In 1969, just at the start of the 30 year conflict that became known as the Troubles, students from Stranmillis and St Mary's engaged in the first inter-college, cross-community initiative.²⁴ Today, a joint programme of Shared Education is agreed annually between the two colleges and a joint funding application is submitted to DfE. Community Relations in Schools (CRIS) had worked in close partnership with both colleges to deliver the Diversity and Mutual Understanding (DMU) training programme; including single college and inter-college Community Relations training workshops. CRIS has also supported a student facilitator training programme (which included a shared residential). DMU was superseded by the Professional Learning in a Changing Society (PLICS) programme which in 2019-20 included a series of seven non-contact and shared activities, events and conferences for students in from both University Colleges.²⁵

The colleges worked together to obtain a €1 million grant through the International Fund for Ireland for the joint delivery of in-service, community relations courses for serving teachers in Northern Ireland. The CREDIT programmes were designed to help teachers develop awareness and skills in dealing with division, diversity, inclusion and community cohesion. CREDIT ran from 2011-2014.

3.3 Community Separation and Student Life

A purposive sample of thirty teachers who had crossed the community divide in education were interviewed as part of a larger research study.²⁶ The sample included teachers employed in all school sectors and equal numbers from the two dominant traditions. Interviewees were asked about their experiences of ITE. It was evident that both Stranmillis and St Mary's were seen as having strong and separate identities; a sense of community, culture and ethos pervaded each institution.

There is a kudos thing about St Mary's. It's built up to be this really eminent place and you need three A levels to get into it. I think that is probably part of it. There would be families in my community and places like that they want the most elite place for their children and they would see St Mary's as being that. (Former St Mary's student)

You know Stranmillis anyway? It's very churchy-based there's a big contingent of Church-based people. You know it's Protestants who had gone to church and youth club and religious groups and scripture union – so you are still repeating the same people – your group. And they had come to be 20 years old and had never met anybody from a different faith or background. (Former Stranmillis student)

However, it was felt that, just as the path of the prospective teacher through a largely segregated school system may have limited their opportunities (and potentially their capacity) to engage with those of a different community background, so too could their experiences of ITE. It was believed that this cycle of separation was apparent among those students who had studied at St Mary's and Stranmillis.

A lot of teachers I know from my own faith went to a CCMS primary, went to a CCMS post-primary, went to university (usually in Belfast) and they became a teacher – particularly if they became a primary school teacher – went to St Mary's. Well, I don't know a lot of Protestant primary school teachers, but they probably would have gone to Stranmillis... if you go to St Mary's you are being trained to teach in a Maintained primary school whereas in Stranmillis you are being prepared to teach in a Controlled primary. (Former St Mary's student)

Through the Education for Mutual Understanding scheme in the 1980s and 90s, the Community Relations Equality Diversity programme at the start of the 21st Century and now Shared Education, generations of teachers have been required to engage their pupils in cross-community contact initiatives. Interviewees were however of the opinion that, in spite of DMU and other programmes initiated by Stranmillis and St Mary's, there is an enduring division between the University Colleges.

Stranmillis and St Mary's; the fact that they are apart - and doggedly so - doesn't give the students any opportunity to mix. (Former QUB student)

¹⁷<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-wields-axe-on-teacher-training-bursaries-as-covid-causes-supply-rises/>.

¹⁸Irish News 25th November 2014 "No Protestant Trainee Teachers at St Mary's College" by Simon Doyle <http://www.irishnews.com/news/2014/11/25/news/no-protestant-trainee-teachers-at-st-mary-s-university-college-108939/>.

¹⁹O'Hagan & Eaton (2020) Ibid.

²⁰Nelson, J. (2008) Exploring diversity through ethos in initial teacher education, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24: 7, 1729-1738, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.02.014>.

²¹Milliken, M. (2018) *Teaching across the divide* Ulster University PhD Thesis <https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/teaching-across-the-divide>.

²²DE (2013) *review of employment opportunities for teaching staff* <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/review-employment-opportunities-teaching-staff-key-findings>.

²³Milliken et al (2020) Ibid.

²⁴<https://www.stran.ac.uk/about-us/history-and-heritage/>.

²⁵<https://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk/general/calendarcollegeevents.asp>.

²⁶Milliken, M. (2018) *Teaching across the divide* Ulster University PhD Thesis <https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/teaching-across-the-divide>.

There was a suggestion that the impact of community separation might not be so apparent among those who undertook a PGCE course at university as it was among those who undertook a BEd at Stranmillis or St Mary's.

We are training teachers separately and feeding them back into the system. The difference you will find with a little bit more cross-over at post-primary level – if you are coming out of Queens or Ulster with a PGCE. (Former Stranmillis student)

Whilst this teacher assumed that there was a 'little bit more cross-over' – she was plainly not over-optimistic about the extent of this. There were strong indications that those who have chosen to study in QUB may still lead social lives that are affected by their community identity. This social separation of students may also have territorial components:

The Gaelic playing students go to 'the'²⁷ Hatfield', 'the Fly' – anywhere with a 'the' in front of it. They run about with Gaelic jerseys on. They show their identity and only mix with their own side. The Protestant side stay out of the Union... the boys may play rugby, but they socialise away from the area they go to 'Ollies' and that sort of thing – no 'the'! There's never a great mix – there is that separation. (Former Stranmillis student)

It seems that the university student-body may also maintain an identity-specific physical and geographical separation as illustrated by this teacher (who had undertaken a PGCE at Ulster) reflecting on his undergraduate years in Belfast.

I found University quite polarised too – who you associated with, what you did. Particularly where you lived. For example, the Holylands area where I lived for three years – Catholic students to be honest. It was very rare that you found a Protestant student living or even hanging around that area.

Consequently, a social and spatial division with its roots in community identity may be being Maintained between students during the week – even among those who attend 'mixed' institutions. At the weekend, many of those students whose families live outside the city, elect to return to their home community.

Then, at the weekend... the country folk go back home and come back on Sunday night. So, there's never a great mix. (Former QUB student)

Some of those interviewees who had undertaken their ITE in Queens and Ulster did, however, note benefits with regard to opportunities for developing cross-community contact that arose from having taken the PGCE route into teaching.

Well if I had gone to Stranmillis I would never have had the Catholic friends that I have because when I went to Coleraine I met people whose names I couldn't pronounce when I saw them written. (Former Ulster student)

The data gathered in the interviews showed that few teachers actively sought, were offered or availed of opportunities to venture from the community consistent path during periods of teaching practice. This was as much a feature of those from a Catholic background as it was for those with a Protestant identity:

Any lasting friendships are with people who went to my own school. So, then I went from there to St Mary's in Belfast and I did all my teaching practice in Catholic schools. (Former St Mary's student)

I did my teaching practice – secondary school was [Controlled post-primary] and then [non-denominational voluntary] for the Grammar. (Former QUB student)

In contrast, it was indicated that some students may have been encouraged to use their teaching practice as an opportunity to reach outside the familiar – to experience the practice and culture of a school beyond their own community.

Teaching practice, the first one was [CCMS post-primary]. I suppose it would have been along kind of what my school experience was like. Amazing school. The girls in there adore History as you can imagine, given where they live. And then I went to [non-denominational Voluntary Grammar] for my second placement, a very different environment than [the CCMS post-primary]. (Former Ulster student)

One teacher expressed opinions on the cumulative effect of both the community separation of ITE and the general principle of the teaching colleges taking students immediately after they finish school at age 18. He had undertaken a PGCE in England having already obtained a degree from QUB.

I would suggest people should go to university and then do a PGCE. They should mix - rather than going straight through state Protestant schools to Stranmillis, you know, or St Mary's and where they can be 21 before they have come to a school with people of different religions or faiths on the whole.

4. Concluding Comments

There has been considerable consensus across all of the official reviews that have been conducted into ITE in NI that, as it is currently constituted, it is expensive and in need of structural reform.

Given the increased expectation upon teachers that they will be involved in shared education projects, the separation of the University Colleges (and the probability that the students in each institution will have taken separated educational paths through segregated schools) makes some sort of cross-community contact programme between St Mary's and Stranmillis a logical necessity. Research into effective community relations programmes in schools has shown that one-off and piecemeal interventions are of limited benefit when compared with strategic, sustained and intense interventions.²⁸ Although steps have been made to create opportunities for contact, there remains considerable capacity for further extension of these programmes – given that St Mary's staff already endorse an optional (Catholic) RE Certificate course delivered at Stranmillis, these classes could possibly be a suitable place to start.

It is easy to characterise the division between St Marys and Stranmillis as contributing to the enduring separation of primary education but, whilst community separation may be most evident in the two University Colleges, from the evidence above it is apparent that this is not just limited to these providers of ITE. Even at the ostensibly more mixed institutions (Queens and Ulster) there may be significant social separation between students from the two communities. It is probable that a high proportion of PGCE students will also have passed through the separated systems of schooling and that, during their undergraduate years, they may have had minimal meaningful contact with students from 'the other side'. There would potentially be considerable benefit from social, professional and educational initiatives aimed at ensuring that all student teachers gain practical experience of working on both sides of the divided school systems. These could operate in tandem alongside programmes that support cross-community interaction between students – within and between institutions.

In keeping with much of the education system in NI, the current system of ITE is characterised by duplication - this undoubtedly contributes to its expense. The two University Colleges, for instance, receive additional premia payments. In addition, the NI Executive subsidises local students to study in local institutions but at the same time awards more places for ITE than are required to 'restock' the teaching profession. This over-production of teachers is endemic within the system and sustained from the public purse. Division of responsibilities and communication between DfE and DE seems, at least partially, to be at the root of this particular issue.

The problems of community division are complex, and they are woven across many dimensions of life in NI. The separation of education is not only indicative of this tangled mess but significantly also makes a considerable contribution to its reproduction. In order to untangle a knotted thread, a loose end needs to be found. A radical review and redesign of ITE may provide the starting point from which the Wicked Problem of educational division and duplication can start to be unravelled.

²⁷Emphasis in original.

²⁸O'Connor, U., Hartop, B. & McCully, A. (2002) A Review of The Schools Community Relations Programme Department of Education.