

A REPORT ON THE NORTH-SOUTH SCHOOL, YOUTH AND TEACHER
EXCHANGES CONFERENCE 18 October 2001, Armagh

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Introductory remarks

Professor John Coolahan

(National University of Ireland, Maynooth)

Conference chairman

I think that on this beautiful October morning we are privileged to come to the historic centre of Armagh in order to have a day together to dialogue, reflect, exchange ideas and perhaps think forward on important issues affecting school, youth and teacher exchanges between the two jurisdictions within the island of Ireland.

There is no doubt our concentration here today is on a stock-taking of the recent and current situation vis-à-vis educational exchanges North and South. But we will also be thinking towards the future: What is the best way forward? Can we make improvements? Is there a need for new kinds of development or planning?

- **DRAWING ON TRADITION**
- **RATIONALE – VALUE**
- **THE WAY FORWARD?**

I am interested in educational history, particularly the history of Irish education, and it may also be worth bearing in mind a little of that tradition. So I clustered a number of comments under these three headings, drawing on tradition, looking at the rationale and the value of these exchanges, and aiming to end the day with a few reflections on the way forward.

DRAWING FROM TRADITION

- Regard for education a distinguishing feature of Ireland's tradition
- Ireland the "Light of the North" during Europe's Dark Age
- Scholars flock to the monastic cities
- Irish carry learning and piety to Europe
- John Scotus Erugena – Court of Charlemagne

As one stands back a little from the present and the future, I think one of the striking phenomena of Irish history is the traditionally high regard for education which has been a feature of Ireland old and new, North and South. I think this has been a phenomenon that we have tended to underestimate. In comparative terms it has a lot of very interesting features which are different from almost any other country.

One of the features of that old tradition was the amount of mobility. There was a tradition of exchanges and movement at times which were much less propitious and more difficult for such exchanges and travel. For example, while Europe was experiencing its Dark Age, Ireland was, in Newman's words, "the Light of the North" in terms of learning and culture. At that period we had scholars flocking both within Ireland and from outside to the great monastic learning centres, Glendalough or Bangor or Derry or Clonmacnoise, and these centres of learning established a remarkable international reputation, so much so that they have become part of the heritage of Western civilisation.

During the same period intrepid travellers were moving out from Ireland and carrying learning, piety and culture to mainland Europe: Colmcille, Columbanus, Gall, Killian, Fursa and so on, courageous pathfinders with a passionate belief in the value of learning and piety and culture who set up great foundations across Europe which are also part of the European heritage. Ireland formed part of the wandering scholar tradition of the Middle Ages, with people like John Scotus Erugena bringing important philosophical foundations to the court of Charlemagne.

17th to early 19th CENTURIES

- Irish students head abroad to Irish Colleges
- Centrality of the hedge school tradition throughout the island of Ireland
- Census of 1824:

12,000 schools (of which 9,300 were hedge schools); 560,000 pupils

Then there are later cycles. In the 17th and 18th centuries, periods when the political circumstances were very turbulent, with a great deal of dispossession, one of the striking

features was again this concern for learning, and people adjusting to their difficult circumstances in order to give expression to that belief in the value of learning. So you had Irish students heading across to Irish colleges which were among the great centres of learning: Louvain, Salamanca, Rome, Santiago de Compostella, Douai.

Here at home, in a more intimate way and in even more difficult circumstances, the people established the hedge school system. Not alone did they not have official encouragement for such schools, their establishment was frequently against the official line: it was a counter-culture in a way. What was truly remarkable, and what we have tended to underestimate, was the centrality of the hedge school tradition in Ireland: its extent, scale and achievements.

Look, for example, at the Census of 1824, long before the State got seriously involved in supporting education: it shows there were over 12,000 schools in Ireland and of those 9,300 were hedge schools catering for very large numbers of pupils. There was no compulsory attendance or anything like it. These were schools of the people by the people for the people, a 'bottom up' type schooling movement.

- Mobility and Interchange of hedge schoolmasters
- National School system 1831
- 1870 - 7000 schools and one million pupils

Within that schooling movement there was also considerable mobility between the hedge schoolmasters up and down the island. One striking example (it always tickled my fancy because I love his work) was William Carleton of Clogher Valley in Co Tyrone moving down to the hedge schools of Munster as part of his apprenticeship – because apprenticeship was part of that tradition, as wandering scholars travelled to learn their trade and gain, if you like, their informal licence to teach.

The hedge school system was replaced by the national school system in 1831 and again that proved a quite extraordinary success. It saw the rapid growth of a state-supported school system in Ireland that was way ahead of what was happening in England or Scotland at the time. By 1870 there were 7,000 of these schools catering for a million pupils, again long before compulsory attendance. There was also a great deal of teacher mobility within this system. One example I like was P W Joyce from Glenosheen, County Limerick working with the help of Patrick Keenan, later Sir Patrick Keenan, from Ratoath, Co Meath, as an organiser of schools in County Antrim in the 1850s. The structuring of the national school system was a remarkable achievement, as was the way in which the people bought into it, despite the rows about denomination that took place at another level.

I think Joyce is a particularly interesting case because as well as being a very distinguished educationalist he was a great, almost polymathic figure in the broader cultural movement of the 19th century: in his work on placenames, on Irish antiquities, on the Irish language, on Irish music. One of his great successes, North and South, was his *A Child's History of Ireland*. I brought along a quotation from his introduction to that book because I think it catches the spirit of certain things we would be keen on ourselves as we move towards a more open pluralistic kind of approach to the affairs of the island at large.

"Above all I have tried to write soberly and moderately, avoiding exaggeration and bitterness, pointing out extenuating circumstances when it is just and right to do so, giving credit where credit is due, and showing fair play all round. A writer may accomplish all this while sympathising heartily, as I do, with Ireland and her people. Perhaps this book, written as it is in such a broad and just spirit, may help to foster mutual feelings of respect and toleration among Irish people of different parties, and may teach them to love and admire what is good and noble in their history, no matter where found."

P.W.JOYCE, from the introduction to *A Child's History of Ireland*,

sanctioned for use in schools, 1898

Joyce's *A Child's History of Ireland* was a huge success throughout the island and part of this was due to the sense he had of the "broad and just spirit", and mutual feelings of respect and toleration among Irish people from different parts. Seeing this need for a more embracing kind of perspective on the past is not a late 20th century view, it is a late 19th century view.

PARTITION SETTLEMENT

- The Great Divide
- New directions from a common root
- Growing apart
- Lack of contact
- Educational partition – consequences

However, following the partition settlement – what I frequently refer to as the Great Divide – the island's education systems, coming from a common root, just sprang apart. The image I always have in my mind is of a child's catapult, with its single root and two prongs. This educational partition became very successfully established. People might not have intended that to be the case but that was the outcome.

I thought to myself as I was jotting down those comments that I trained as a teacher twice in the 1960s in the South and as far as education in Northern Ireland was concerned it could have been Timbuctu. There was no reference to it, no mention of it – it was just out of one's consciousness. Even though we are a tiny island with that other rich tradition from which to draw on, we suddenly broke it apart. I think there are consequences of that and all of us on the island have been the poorer for them.

LATE 20TH – early 21ST CENTURY

- Changing era of history
- EU developments
- New educational and training linkages

- Exchange schemes – Erasmus, Socrates, Lingua, Comenius, Arion etc

Nevertheless history moves on and we are now part of another changing era, the late 20th and early 21st century, an era of history of great change on an international level, maybe more change than we even yet know about on the basis of recent happenings. And as part of that change, a Europe that was very divided following two great world wars has decided to come together; old enemies coming together and establishing what we now know as the European Union. What an extraordinary achievement that was: it would have been almost unpredictable 50 years ago.

With the formation of the European institutions came the realisation of the centrality of education and training in helping to foster, promote and cultivate a sense of European unity, the sense that we were sharing a common European heritage. As part of that, exchange schemes were seen as important, bringing teachers and students together, linking schools and other educational institutions, engaging in joint projects and research. With programmes like Erasmus, Socrates and Comenius, that agenda is now very well established and operational.

CONTEMPORARY IRELAND

- North-South renewal of contacts
- Richness in diversity
- Co-operation North/Co-operation Ireland
- European Studies Project
- Horizon
- Citizenship Development Project
- Civic Link 'This island we live on' and 'Dissolving Boundaries'
- Support from international agencies

It is within that broader sweep that we can see the situations here in our own island, where again there is a renewal of contacts between North and South. There is a realisation now that there is a great richness and diversity which has evolved and we can each learn a great deal from the other; that we share a great deal of common interests and common problems. There is also the realisation that international agencies have come in behind these

developments, from the EU and the United States in particular, because they are seen as part of a broader international movement, and we should bear that context in mind.

RATIONALE – VALUE

Educationally can:

- Broaden the context
- Enrich the content
- Develop the process
- Extend the outcomes

To turn to my second theme, we need to ask ourselves, what is the genuine rationale and value of this cross-border educational business? Is it wishful thinking or pious liberal middle-class aspirations, or is there a robust reality that is grounded in real educational values? That is part of what we will be talking about today. But it seems to me that there are, and can be, a robust grounding in educational values – apart from certain other desirable aspects – from North-South school, youth and teacher exchanges in Ireland. And it seems to me that such co-operation can broaden the context, enrich the content, and develop and innovate the process of education. And it can also extend the outcomes of education for our young and not so young people North and South.

BROADEN THE CONTEXT

- Widens frame of reference
- Variety of cultural experiences and assumptions
- Synergy of similarities and differences
- Varying curricular policies
- Exchanging pedagogical approaches
- Variety of youth experiences/work
- Promotes social interaction

What kind of ways could this be exemplified and more clearly delineated? In broadening the context it seems to me that it has the potential of widening the frame of reference of young people in dealing with many issues, enriching the variety of cultural experience and cultural assumptions, and deepening the synergy that can emerge when sharing similarities and differences.

The exchanging of pedagogical approaches can be very rich and in my view there is substantial evidence that it has been already. The direct social interaction of face-to-face contact, of living with families and meeting and exchanging and sharing and working together, that whole process of social education and interaction also broadens the context.

ENRICH THE CONTENT

- Mutual planning of content
- Adaptation and exploration of material
- Particular achievements in history, geography, languages, citizenship, the arts
- Scope for 'extra-curricular' engagements
- Curricular policies under review
- Co-operation of curricular councils

In what ways might cross-border exchanges enrich the content? Part of this will come about through the very fact of cross-border groups working together on content, themes, issues and projects. Such joint work will also lead to adaptation, exploration and fresh thinking. I think if you examine the projects that have taken place, a lot of progress has already been made in subjects like citizenship, the arts, history and geography. Then there are the extra-curricular engagements: drama, music and sport. It is also worth bearing in mind that in both systems, North and South, curricular policies are currently under review, and maybe this is a good opportunity for closer liaison given that there is already good co-operation between the curricular councils in the two jurisdictions.

DEVELOP THE PROCESS

- Fostering active learning methodologies
- Purposeful utilisation of ICT
- Sharpening communication skills
- Fostering confidence and sense of identity
- Providing frameworks for interpersonal relationships
- Challenging stereotypes – reaching out

Developing the process – and process is hugely important here – I think active learning methodologies are very much a feature of these kind of exchanges. Almost all of them exemplify active learning methodologies in a variety of ways – that is very desirable in that it is what modern pedagogy is seeking to promote.

The purposeful utilisation and integration of ICT in education is national policy North and South. This forms a significant feature of many cross-border projects, and there is considerable evidence from them of sharpening communication skills amongst the youngsters involved.

Another consequence is a fostering of a sense of confidence and a sense of identity; shyness is broken down and you establish more of your own identity by learning about the identity of

another. This often goes with a challenging of stereotypes, a reaching out from behind the stereotypes and the realisation that there is a lot more to another person than the received stereotype.

EXTEND THE OUTCOMES (1)

- 'Incidental' and 'programmed' outcomes
- Mutual understanding
- Cultural understanding
- Cultivation of tolerance and pluralistic perspectives
- Communication/interpersonal skills
- Skills in the utilisation of technologies
- Cultivation of cultural awareness
- Developing teamwork skills

Another point that I am going to lightly touch on is extending the outcomes. Here I think there is already a lot of evidence, although a lot of this work is reasonably new, that you can have important incidental outcomes to cross-border school and youth exchanges. There are, of course, the programmed outcomes, but we need to watch the incidental outcomes for they are not always perhaps congenial or lend themselves to very precise scientific analysis.

The importance of cultivating mutual understanding and understanding of other people's culture is very real and can be done through these types of projects. Similarly the cultivation of tolerance and pluralistic perspectives is what we aim for and frequently what is achieved.

Developing interpersonal, communication and teamwork skills through projects which are a bit different from the normal work of the school is also a very important part of modern good pedagogical practice.

EXTEND THE OUTCOMES (2)

- Collaborative projects – websites
- Clarifying identities
- European/US dimensions

- Outcomes for teachers, student teachers, trainees

- Potential for teacher education – initial, induction, in-career, research

These collaborative projects already have produced a great deal, particularly in their work on websites. I know one project which already has 30 programmes on its website, including curricular type data and material from the kids involved. This is there for everybody, not just in Ireland but outside Ireland too, and the outside dimension is also important in this kind of work. That kind of productive work represents fantastic creativity, and should be at the core of what education and learning are about.

It also seems to me, as someone closely involved in the field, that there is great potential for teacher education in this kind of cross-border work. We had a conference last May in Belfast

between the 27 institutions dealing with teacher education North and South, and the sense of interest and motivation at it was just stunning. The potential is there and I think these kind of North-South educational events can tap into that and give it a sense of affirmation and moving forward.

The only thing I would say about that way forward at this point in the conference is that we have got to lift our sights in terms of thinking forward – we have got to think systematically, we have got to think out of a sense of where we are at in history, rather than just thinking about elastoplast type initiatives.

Opening address

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield

Chairman, Northern Ireland Higher Education Council

I recall being told a great many years ago that when people competing for entry into the Civil Service were asked to state a preference about where they would like to serve if appointed, a disproportionately large number said 'Education'. And the reason for this was that every person has an experience of, and consequently views on, education. After all, we had all been to school, some of us had children there, and not a few were involved in school systems as members of parents' associations, boards of governors or in other ways. Parental influences, of course, remain enormously important, but who among us would not say that experience at school shaped and moulded us?

I myself attended two typical public elementary schools in the thirties and forties, before going on to the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, of which I have been a governor for a good many years.

One of the founding fathers of 'Inst' was a distinguished Belfast figure of the day, Dr William Drennan. It fell to him to make the principal address at the opening of the Institution on 1st February 1814. In that address he defined the ideal of "liberal and ingenious men, uniting their labours, without regard to nation, sect or party, in one grand pursuit, alike interesting to all, by which mental prejudice may be worn off, a humane and truly philosophic spirit may be cherished in the heart as well as the head, in practice as well as theory; the happy result of which must be that the youth entrusted to their care will be stimulated by imitation and example of their teachers, as well as by their own generous emulation in the pursuit of knowledge and in the practice of virtue."

Later in his remarks, William Drennan added: "The Directors, in their choice of masters and in their admission of scholars, are perfectly unbiased by religious distinctions. They have sought for teachers, either in this or the other kingdom" (an interesting usage so many years after the Act of Union), "wherever best recommended by their merits and experience in their professional departments and by their morals and manners in their personal characters. Of nothing are the Boards more desirous than that pupils of all religious denominations should communicate by frequent and friendly intercourse in the common business of education, by which means a new turn might be given to the national character and habits, and all the children of Ireland should know and love each other."

Surely the purpose of this event today is to move things forward towards that great objective. But we have, alas, much to do, as some recent events most clearly demonstrate.

I had a conversation recently with the remarkable principal of Hazelwood Integrated College, right in the heartland of the most troubled area of contemporary Belfast. The parents of her children have expressed a preference for that pattern of education, and yet those very pupils – working alongside each other throughout the school day – have to return to the entrenched sectarian ghettos in which they live, and cannot break wholly free of the atmosphere of fear and mutual distrust which persists there. It would be utterly unfair to load upon the system of education a disproportionate share of the blame for ignorance and animosity.

We cannot expect to move mountains, but we can build bridges. Yet in that role we have to be aware that children at school in the different parts of our island are separated from each other not by a single barrier but by a maze – very difficult to penetrate – of gender, academic, religious and political divisions. I am myself a supporter of the integrated education movement in Northern Ireland – not because I suppose it to be the universal

answer, but because I believe in freedom of choice and the right of parents to exercise options in the interests of their children and in the use of their conscience. We who are well disposed to integrated education need to have the utmost respect for others' convictions. Indeed, if there is one thing we need to inculcate, and to observe ourselves, it is respect for honest difference.

Perversely, in not a few cases schools in Northern Ireland have had much firmer relationships with schools across the border than they have enjoyed with their own neighbours. Belfast 'Inst' and Blackrock College – alike in a passion for rugby football as well as academic excellence – have had longstanding contacts at every level. But the need for exchanges and contacts within Northern Ireland is distinct from the need for exchanges across the border.

Such exchanges should, I believe, have a dual purpose: to know each other, and to learn from each other. Since the United Kingdom moved in the direction of devolution, I have always thought there would be growing opportunities to benefit from the variety of differentiated systems. Tony Blair's Labour Government came to power reciting the mantra "education, education, education", but I believe Britain as a whole can learn a great deal from Ireland in terms of preparing young people for the world of tomorrow.

All of us in Northern Ireland await with bated breath the outcome of the review of post-primary education, led by my old friend Gerry Burns. I am myself persuaded that for many years we have under-funded and under-rated the technical and vocational aspects of education. There seems to be a passionate pursuit of the university degree as the be-all and end-all of a well-functioning system. As chairman of the Northern Ireland Higher Education Council for the past eight years, I see no higher priority than to ensure that no one capable of benefiting from higher education is excluded from access to the system.

Happily our two universities in Northern Ireland draw widely from both sides of the community here. Yet I fear that too many carry forward into the university environment the stamp of previous segregation, seeking their university friends and intimates largely from their own community. Ideally an important part of the university experience should be exposure to "the other", yet unhappily changes in patterns of student support, and differences in the approach to funding in the two jurisdictions, inhibit and impede movement across the border for higher education. On the other hand, the leaders of higher education in the two jurisdictions are drawing ever closer through the Conference of Irish Rectors, and we in NIHEC have drawn great benefit from our links with the Higher Education Authority in the South.

As some of you may know, I spent an earlier period of my life in the senior ranks of the bureaucracy. I was struck by how many times, when meeting for the first time some political figure whose views seemed absolutely abhorrent, I found in him some human point of contact. We need to teach our children literacy and numeracy, music and drama, scientific and cultural studies. But we also need to elevate on our agenda, and advance by practical steps, that ideal expressed by William Drennan nearly two centuries ago, that "all the children of Ireland should know and love each other."

For I am ever more convinced that no set of political or constitutional arrangements can solve our deep-rooted problems unless planted on a firm foundation of better knowledge and mutual respect. Our children stand before us like a blank page of virginal white: are we to write anew upon that page all our old grievances, animosities and prejudices? Or are we to nurture a new generation, secure in their own traditions but understanding and respectful of others? In this area lies our greatest responsibility to posterity.

Before coming here today, I have had a privileged advance view of the paper which Andy Pollak will shortly deliver to us. For a long time Andy has been to the fore among those who seek to confront problems and heal wounds. I remember his work for the Opsahl

Commission, whose report remains a truly remarkable contribution to the development of ideas about the future of Northern Ireland. You will find in his paper that the topics we discuss today advance a much wider international agenda. We must not be so inward-looking as to fail to appreciate the difficult and dangerous conditions in the wider world. We in the developed West have lived in an oasis of comfort amid a desert of misery. There has been sometimes a smug arrogance in our dealings with other systems and other cultures.

Closer to home, there was universal rejoicing when the Berlin Wall came tumbling down, but since then the former 'Ossis' have often found the new greater Germany a cold house to live in. Often our reaction to the flight of desperate people from desperate situations is to behave like those who have expensive houses situated on a river bank who pile up sandbags to hold back the rising waters. Of course, Osama bin Laden and all he stands for is to be despised, but how much do even the well-educated among us know about Islam? We are speaking today about exchanges within an island, but one of the evils we must seek to avoid is insularity. One of the projects in which we could most usefully co-operate is to make our children more outward-looking. We need to learn that even the most disadvantaged among us lead incomparably better lives than whole populations in the world's poorest countries.

So let us remember then that we live not only in Ireland but in the European Union; not only in the European Union but under the wider umbrella of the United Nations Organisation and its various organs, particularly UNESCO.

I will leave you, if I may, with a final point. From 1991 to 1999 I was privileged to serve as one of the 12 governors of the BBC, that great public service broadcasting institution. At the core of our Corporation were three missions: to inform, to entertain, and to educate. My work at the BBC exposed me more and more to the potential of developing web technology.

We are developing an ever more technologically friendly and adept generation of young people. Let us not forget then that in the modern world exchanges do not always require physical movement by plane, bus, train or car. If North-South links are pretty good – except when terrorists choose to interrupt them – East-West links are often less easy or reliable. Interestingly, Wales is in that respect very similar: North Wales can more easily relate to Merseyside, and South Wales to Bristol and points east, than North Wales can relate to South Wales. Technology can help us to leap over these physical barriers. I would hope to see not only growing co-operation by BBC and RTE in serving our young populations, but more and more children and schools in regular contact over the Internet.

So I wish you well in your task. You have an inspiring chairman in Professor Coolahan, and I am confident that in your workshops you will find new means to bring William Drennan's noble dreams to fulfilment.

Conference paper

North-South School, Youth and Teacher Exchanges: the Current Situation

Andy Pollak, director, Centre for Cross Border Studies

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a distillation of some of the findings of a much longer report the Centre researched and wrote for the two Departments of Education in Dublin and Bangor (under the auspices of the North/South Ministerial Council) in the summer and autumn of last year. Since then it has been in a kind of limbo because political developments – or rather non-developments – in the peace process have meant that the two Ministers for Education have not been able formally to receive it. Because the valuable material collected and analysed in that report was in danger of becoming out of date, the wise people in the two Departments suggested that the Centre should hold a consultative conference with the people involved in North-South educational exchanges – officials, managers, principals, teachers, youth leaders, students and young people – to discuss some of its findings [but please bear in mind that some of these findings may be a little out of date, since they are nearly 12 months old].

The first and most significant of those findings is that over the past decade or so there has been a remarkable flowering of North-South relationships in the educational sector. It does not take a genius to see that education has a key role to play here. Acting, as it does, on the more open minds of young people, it can greatly increase the mutual contact, knowledge, understanding and respect which have been so absent from relationships on this island for so long.

Over the past 10-15 years there has been an extraordinary expansion in the numbers of children and young people crossing the Irish border on school and youth exchanges. One Co-operation Ireland official estimates that well over 100,000 young people (most of them of second level age) have gone through its programmes alone in that time.

For those in Northern Ireland who remain suspicious of any kind of closer relationship with their neighbours in the rest of the island, the impartial international voice of the United Nations education agency can be cited. UNESCO stresses the importance of the third of four fundamental 'pillars of knowledge' in the modern world: "learning to live together, so as to participate and co-operate with other people in all human activities."

UNESCO says: "When people work together on rewarding projects which take them out of their usual routine, differences and even conflict between individuals tend to fade into the background and sometimes disappear. People derive a new identity from such projects, so that it is possible to go beyond individual routines and highlight what people have in common rather than the differences between them." A better and more widely acceptable rationale for cross-border educational co-operation in Ireland would be difficult to find.

AN EXTRAORDINARY GROWTH

As I have said, our researches uncovered an extraordinary growth in such co-operation over the past decade. Between 1985 and 1989 just over 100 Northern schools had completed two-way exchanges as part of Co-operation North's trail-blazing School and Youth Links scheme. At the time, this was the only significant programme for such exchanges, apart from the pilot

phase of the European Studies Project (which I will mention in a minute). In 2000, according to the Centre's calculations, nearly 540 schools – 261 in the North and 276 in the South – were involved in a wide range of cross-border programmes, involving either face-to-face contact or ICT.

The programme which accounts for the largest number of these links is the European Studies Project, a curriculum-based initiative which started in 1986 with 18 schools in Ireland, Northern Ireland and England, and which now boasts 193 Irish schools plus schools from a dozen other European countries, although the involvement of English and Welsh schools has declined in recent years (there are still 29 involved, despite the withdrawal of funding from the project by the Department for Education and Skills).

The Centre's calculations also showed some other unexpected things (*see table on page 23*). Both among secondary schools and voluntary grammar schools in Northern Ireland there is a high level of cross-border interaction: a remarkable 52 per cent of the former and 59 per cent of the latter reported such links. In the Republic, with its larger number of schools (many of which are distant from the North), the figures were nearly 23 per cent for secondary, vocational and community schools and over 35 per cent for fee-paying schools.

When Northern schools are identified according to their religious labels, another interesting fact emerges: the number of mainly Protestant schools involved in contacts with schools in the South is remarkably high. Our 'snapshot' figures should be treated with some caution, but if accurate they show that nearly 47 per cent of mainly Protestant grammar schools have cross-border links, as do 44 per cent of mainly Protestant non-grammar secondary schools.

However the statistics also indicate that there is a considerable job of work to be done if schools from the less well-off parts of society are to take part in this growing rapprochement. Taking the island as a whole, half the grammar and/or fee-paying second level schools in both jurisdictions are involved in cross-border contact, compared to just over a quarter of other second-level schools. There is also a considerable amount to be done to bring more primary and special needs schools into contact with their counterparts across the border.

YOUTH WORK EXCHANGES

Many youth leaders believe the two jurisdictions' common problems of low achievement, early school leaving and young people with poor skills and qualifications – all leading to widespread social problems and youth alienation – might be better tackled in the less structured youth work sector. Measuring this sector and its cross-border dimension is much more difficult because of the lack of structures and major centrally-run programmes. The Youth Council for Northern Ireland attempted to quantify cross-border links in the past but concluded that the task was impossible.

However, as in the schools sector, the very wide range of North-South youth projects indicates a huge interest and willingness to expand this area of activity. All the youth leaders the Centre's researchers spoke to emphasised the need for the political will at governmental level to resource such work. They pointed out that nothing that is happening between the two Irish jurisdictions – or planned to happen – bears comparison with the vast resourcing of Franco-German youth exchanges in the aftermath of the Second World War, where the hugely ambitious and ultimately realised intention was to effect a fundamental cultural change in the way in which the future citizens of those two countries viewed each other.

One Southern programme manager suggested to us that a grant from the two governments building up to around £500,000 per year for youth and school exchanges, phased in over two-three years, would show the beginning of a real political will to effect change. However maybe this estimate shows a certain ignorance of what is already going on at Department of Education and Science level in Dublin. The spending figures here will surprise most people.

Last year the Department tells me they spent IR£300,000 on the Civic Link programme; £180,000 on the European Studies Project; £60,000 on East-West schools links; another £60,000 on the largely East-West Causeway youth exchange programme, and around £200,000 on various other North-South and East-West initiatives – a total of IR£800,000. These projects received corresponding funding from the Department of Education or Education and Library Boards in the North, and in the case of Civic Link and the East-West Schools programme from the Departments of Education in Washington and London respectively.

Many of these youth leaders – mostly in the North, but in the South too – were of the opinion that the youth work area, in particular, would benefit from a stronger North-South-East-West framework, in order to bring in as many Northern young people from a unionist background as possible. In this context, the Centre was impressed by the work of the **Let's Talk** project. Let's Talk has brought together several thousand young people from Northern Ireland, Ireland and the English midlands – as well as young Africans and Australians – in a series of conferences to discuss peace and reconciliation in these islands and issues of human rights and justice further afield. The prominent involvement of young people from strongly unionist places like Ballymena has been one of its most striking characteristics. The enthusiastic participation of young people from Indian, Caribbean and other backgrounds has also added greatly to the mutual learning, particularly for young people from the Republic of Ireland who are coming to terms with people of different races and cultures for the first time.

On the structural level, another positive move has been the opening of discussions on a proposal to establish a new 'North/South Youth Entity' by the National Youth Council of Ireland and Youthnet, the main umbrella bodies for voluntary youth organisations in the Republic and the North respectively.

EUROPEAN STUDIES AND OTHER CURRICULAR PROJECTS

I'm now going to return to school exchanges, an area which I know much more about than youth exchanges (and which because of time constraints and the difficulties of assembling youth sector data, we devoted more attention to in our study), and more particularly to the **European Studies Project**. This is because the Centre has come to believe – in the course of doing this research – that curriculum-based programmes like the ESP probably offer the most sustainable approach to cross-border school links. We believe that through such programmes, which are the core of a school's activities, principals, teachers, students, managers, governors and the wider community might eventually be persuaded that a cross-border dimension could become a useful element in all Irish children's education.

Anything that is seen as non-curricular, non-mainstream 'add on' – requiring extra 'out of hours' work for teachers and students – will be resisted by schools, which are having to cope with an increasingly overloaded and exam-oriented timetable (that is what the teachers tell us). Curriculum-based modules, leading to assessment and examination, should be one way forward for North-South school co-operation programmes, alongside the face-to-face exchanges which remain the essential tool for lowering barriers and increasing mutual understanding between children and young people from the different traditions and in the different jurisdictions.

This is why a major curriculum-based initiative like the European Studies Project continues to be so important. Recent reviews and evaluations have highlighted a number of key lessons learned in the past decade and a half since the ESP began: after an expensive early period it has proved good value for money; its North-South dimension in Ireland has been one of its most successful elements (although the relative demise of the East-West dimension involving English and Welsh schools has been unfortunate); teachers are positive about the project and its curriculum materials; more schools in disadvantaged areas should be brought in; there is some duplication with other programmes; some schools have been in the project for too long

and there is a need for an 'exit strategy' so as to improve the turnover of schools involved. (I understand that the two Departments are working on these last three issues at the moment).

We also talked to senior Education and Library Board officials in the North who stressed that the ESP was the first North-South Programme to concentrate on curricular projects rather than pupil exchanges, and as such, its multiplier effects have gone on spreading ever since. They also pointed out that in the present, still tense political climate, an international programme like European Studies is the only framework in which many Protestant secondary schools will link with schools in the South.

We also looked at a number of smaller cross-border projects with a potentially significant curricular dimension. Among these were the **Citizenship Development Project**, which aimed to develop a citizenship education module for 15-16 year olds and involved 20 schools in the north-west under the managership of the Western Education and Library Board and St Angela's College, Sligo; **Civic Link**, probably the single best-funded cross-border educational initiative (with generous funding both from the US and Irish governments), which involves second level students, working with their teachers, identifying and exploring local community problems, devising an action plan to deal with them, and discussing their findings with partner schools and youth groups across the border; two small pilot projects – one secondary (**Our Town, Your Town**), one primary (**Pride in our Place**), which involved schools studying the history and geography of their locality (or a feature of it) and then presenting their findings to their cross-border partner school; and the cross-border, cross-community primary schools project of the **Churches Peace Education Programme and the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace**, which brings together 22 rural primary schools in the north-west to work on heritage-related themes such as farming and entertainments.

There is not enough time to go into all these projects. However three points should be made. Firstly, there is some duplication – some newer projects have admitted that they targeted schools already involved in North-South links in their initial stages. Among the reasons cited were that pressure from funders to deliver quickly meant it would have been difficult otherwise to get the projects off the ground, and schools already experienced in cross-border exchanges are always easier to bring into a brand new project. Secondly, there are sustainability problems: both the Citizenship Development Project and Our Town, Your Town have been discontinued since we examined them last year. Thirdly, the very positive evaluation of the last of these projects – which involved primary schools from insecure and isolated border Protestant communities – inclined the Centre to the view that more effort and resources need to be put into cross-border links between primary schools.

Another programme in the north-west, **Cross Connect**, shows both the benefits and limitations of ICT as a cross-border tool. This project networked 12 small, otherwise disadvantaged rural secondary schools in Cavan, Leitrim, Derry and Tyrone and Fermanagh, equipping them with multimedia PCs and ISDN lines. Technology acts as a neutral facilitator, allowing schools to create links in a "safe, structured and supervised environment" says the principal of one mainly Protestant Northern secondary school involved. There is an emphasis on involving the whole school and teaching staff, and those involved were enthusiastic about the benefits their schools had gained. However two notes of caution need to be added: 1) this was not a cheap programme, costing over £300,000 for a four year project, funded, like so many of these innovative cross-border projects, by the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme; and 2) the limits of ICT were shown by the view of some teachers that much more face-to-face contact was needed to combat prejudice and misunderstanding.

Probably the most successful – and certainly the largest – North-South ICT-based programme is **Dissolving Boundaries**, which is managed and co-ordinated by the University of Ulster and the National University of Ireland Maynooth. This has involved 52 schools, primary and secondary, and around 1,500 students in video-conferencing, computer conferencing and e-mailing on topics like local history and the environment, sport and literature. Again costs are not low: £560,000 in year one, and £200,000 in the current year. However an independent

evaluation found that the video-conferencing helped students to improve their language and presentational skills and their confidence. It also found that real progress had been made in promoting North-South mutual understanding, with most of the children involved never having had contact with children from the other jurisdiction before.

POLITICAL AND STRUCTURAL ISSUES

Another issue which arose in the research was the value of exclusively North-South links in comparison with links that involved wider networks of British and European schools. As one senior ELB officer from a Catholic background put it: "In the present political climate, the mainly Protestant controlled schools would be very unhappy to be seen overtly linking with schools in the South." This is yet another argument for the continuation and development of the European Studies Project, some of whose strongest supporters are teachers in Northern mainly Protestant schools.

The problems in North-South working are not just political: they are also structural. Officials of the North Eastern Education and Library Board, which has extensive exchanges with schools in Alsace in France and Brandenburg in Germany, pointed out that the mismatch of structures between the devolved education and library boards in the North and the very centralised education administration in the South does not make forging North-South links easy. One of the strengths they have found in working with Alsace and Brandenburg is the ease of making regional, local and personal contacts within an administrative structure not dissimilar to their own.

Even in the case of programmes directly launched and funded by the Department of Education and Science in Dublin, these structural mismatches can lead to delivery and sustainability problems. The quite small **Our Town/Your Town** scheme was launched and funded in 1999 by a group of senior inspectors, yet most of the administrative work in the first year was carried out by the highly committed inspector whose idea it had been. This year he moved onto other things and the project folded as a result. When launching a primary version, **Pride in Our Place**, shortly afterwards, the DES inspector concerned overcame this support problem by persuading a Dublin college of education to take on its administration. And yet the same Southern Education and Library Board adviser, because of the wide range of back-up services available to her, was able to take up both projects with little notice and to run them efficiently in the North. (The Department of Education and Science stresses, however, that in the past couple of years it has built up a dedicated seven-person unit to run North-South co-operation in education.)

Schools in the west and south of Ireland, which are geographically distant from the border, have their own particular problems with North-South co-operation, although programmes like the South Eastern Education and Library Board-County Cork VEC partnership (which I will talk about in a minute) show that they can be tackled and at least partly overcome. However in most of these more distant places, only substantial extra funding – if only to start to overcome the perennial problem of lack of substitute cover – will increase the take-up level on cross-border co-operation schemes.

Funding is a constant problem for the plethora of small schemes which are currently the norm in cross-border educational exchanges. Without the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme over the past five years many of them would either not have happened or would have folded after a short time. Before that Co-operation North (now Co-operation Ireland) kept them going with small grants. Co-operation Ireland continues to be centrally involved in the cross-border education sector through its Youth Education and Community programme and management of the Civic Link project. Tribute must be paid to both these organisations for the key roles they have played in the growth of North-South school and youth exchanges.

Some individual schools prefer to make their own links with a partner school across the border and sustain the link by keeping their ambitions modest. A good example of this is the annual exchange between Carrick-on-Suir CBS in Co Tipperary and Ballymena Academy in Co Antrim, which is now over 20 years old. However much of the energy for sustaining this link has come from the huge individual commitment of the Carrick teacher who started it and still runs it from the Tipperary end.

The example of the **Horizon** project is salutary. Started by a group of senior students at Alexandra College in Dublin nine years ago, this now brings together around 40 schools for an annual weekend of outdoor pursuits and cross-border team projects. Its 1999 evaluation said that Horizon was a "very successful organisation" which spent its funding "wisely" and was one of the most student-centred projects in the cross-border field. However funding has always been a big problem for this very committed group of teachers and students. Before 1997 they depended entirely on the generosity of member schools. Between 1997 and 1999 they received EU Peace and Reconciliation funding (although this was only for Northern Ireland and the six Southern border counties). Since then the project has again been dependent on small once off grants, with the co-ordinator forced at one point to draw £6,000 from her pension lump sum to pay an outstanding bill. It is little surprise, then, that one of the evaluator's criticisms was that among Horizon's schools there is a disproportionate number with students from more privileged backgrounds – one might observe that their privileged parents and schools' contributions are one reason why the project has survived and prospered. However the 1999 evaluation warned that the project found itself "a victim of its own success in that member schools have reached numbers where there is neither the infrastructure nor resources to support them adequately." I have heard within the past fortnight that the two Departments of Education have now agreed to co-fund the employment of a co-ordinator for two years.

POTENTIAL FOR THE FUTURE

I would like to start to bring my talk to a close with a note about two projects which we believe hold out promise for co-operation both in the schools and youth work sectors. Last year EU Peace and Reconciliation money was made available for the chief executives of the North's education and library boards and the Southern border counties vocational educational committees to come together for two conferences. Senior administrators who attended those events reported great goodwill and enthusiasm for co-operation, despite the two sides mismatched structures (the ELBs have multi-million pound budgets to provide a wide range of services while the VECs are much smaller organisations concentrating on the vocational sector). One of the areas where there was particular enthusiasm for cross-border work was that of marginalized young people, where the Western Education and Library Board is particularly active in working with groups in Donegal. This will be even more the case once the VECs receive new statutory responsibilities for providing services in this area under soon-to-be-passed youth legislation in the South.

The other project is one the Centre's researchers felt had considerable potential across a number of areas. The **South Eastern Education and Library Board** and **County Cork VEC** have been involved in exchanges since the early 1990s. They were among the first to put together an extended study module to help young people involved in exchanges, and others, to plan and learn from their cross-border visits. In the past two years they have concentrated on three themes: marginalized young people, citizenship and school development planning. The Centre was impressed by this project's innovative approach in a number of areas:

1. There was a commitment to it from senior officials not as a 'hands across the border' exercise but as something that assists them in their core educational work.

2. The two bodies have engaged in serious mutual learning, with the SEELB consulting Co Cork VEC on school planning, Transition Year and community and parental involvement, and Cork looking for advice on Public Private Partnerships and from the board's ICT, curriculum development and Special Needs support officers.
3. A key part of the project's ethos is an attempt to take the main responsibility for developing co-operation from the young people themselves and to integrate it into a "whole organisation involvement" by the board and the VEC.
4. The SEELB in particular believes that there is a need for the school curriculum and the out-of-school youth curriculum to be brought closer together, in line with the international emphasis on young people learning 'key skills' like numeracy, literacy, communication, ICT, working with others and problem solving. The North appears to be more advanced than the South in this area, with the SEELB employing 'youth tutors' who work particularly with disadvantaged young people in school, out-of-school and cross-community contexts.

The Centre believes that this project offers an unusual example of good practice in that it crosses so many of the boundaries faced by young people on the island of Ireland, and does so by means of a partnership which faces daunting problems of distance, structural mismatch and shortage of resources. It is cross-community; cross-border in the widest sense ("I'm not interested in taking a Northern GAA club across the border – I could do that any day of the week", commented one youth leader); and it crosses the traditional divide between school and youth work.

LINKS BETWEEN TEACHERS

I'm not going to say much about cross-border links between teachers because of shortage of time. I just want to point to two potentially valuable proposals which came out of our research, and commend one embryonic initiative. One proposal came from a senior Northern official. He suggested that, given the shortage of primary teachers in the Republic, and the significant number of unemployed primary teachers in the North, a pilot scheme should be started which would allow newly graduated teachers without a job to take up teaching posts in the South for up to three years. They would be paid as qualified teachers, while induction and early professional development could be arranged with support from the North's excellent ELB programmes in these areas.

The second is a proposal from a Southern teacher heavily involved in cross-border work that some incentive for such cross-border and/or international work should be introduced, perhaps in the form of a scaled post.

The embryonic initiative is a proposal for a **Standing Conference on Teacher Education in Ireland** (which Professor Coolahan was one of the initiators). This emerged last year from a cross-border conference which brought together for the first time representatives from the 27 agencies and institutions directly involved in teacher education in Ireland to discuss matters of common interest. By all accounts it was an inspirational occasion, and although the initiative has slowed down somewhat since then in the face of some financial and organisational problems, discussions on it are continuing.

THREE FINAL ISSUES

I want to finish by quickly mentioning three issues that have arisen from our research which will be familiar to an audience like this one. Firstly, we heard from numerous people that lack of access to information about partner schools and youth groups, support and guidance, sources of funding and dissemination of good practice is a widespread and constant problem in cross-border exchanges. Secondly, the extra workload and lack of recognition of teachers involved in exchanges was also frequently mentioned. Thirdly, citizenship education was an area mentioned both by teachers and youth leaders as an area that should be pursued on a

cross-border basis, although it was also sometimes added that this should be done in a relatively low-key way in order to refute any charge that citizenship is part of any North-South political agenda.

SCHOOLS WITH CROSS-BORDER LINKS (2000)

	Northern Ireland	Republic of Ireland	All-Ireland
<u>PRIMARY SCHOOLS</u>	996	3,480	
<i>with cross-border links</i>	101 (10.1%)	95 (2.7%)	
<u>SECONDARY SCHOOLS</u>			
SECONDARY (FEE PAYING/GRAMMAR)	91	57	
<i>with cross-border links</i>	54 (59.3%)	20 (35.1%)	
SECONDARY (OTHER)	194	693	
<i>with cross-border links</i>	102 (52.6%)	157 (22.7%)	
PROTESTANT FEE PAYING/GRAMMAR	60		
<i>with cross-border links</i>	28 (46.7%)		
PROTESTANT OTHER SECONDARY	81		
<i>with cross-border links</i>	36 (44.4%)		
CATHOLIC FEE PAYING/GRAMMAR	31		
<i>with cross-border links</i>	26 (83.9%)		
CATHOLIC OTHER SECONDARY	85		
<i>with cross-border links</i>	51 (60%)		
<u>ALL SECONDARY SCHOOLS</u>			
FEE PAYING/GRAMMAR			148

<i>with cross-border links</i>			74 (50%)
OTHER SECONDARY			887
<i>with cross-border links</i>			259 (29.2%)

from:

Cross-Border School, Youth and Teacher Exchanges on the island of Ireland: a draft report for the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Education (Northern Ireland). Centre for Cross Border Studies, Armagh. November 2000.

Report on Workshop 1

The Role of Exchange Projects within the School Curriculum

Chair: Professor Tony Gallagher (Queen's University Belfast)

Rapporteur: Breeda Connaughton (Dept of Education and Science, Dublin)

The following five questions were provided to the group for guidance:

1. **Is the Centre right to stress that curriculum based programmes offer the best way forward for sustainable North/South educational co-operation?**
2. **How can curriculum based programmes like the European Studies Project be integrated more fully into schools' core curriculum?**
3. **What would be the problems of assessment and examination involved in integrating such cross-jurisdictional programmes into national curricula?**
4. **How can the European Studies Project be best sustained and developed, so that it has a good turnover of schools and involves more disadvantaged schools?**
5. **Given the crowded curriculum at senior cycle, should such programmes be aimed increasingly at junior cycle or even at primary school?**

The workshop group broadly agreed with the opening proposition and accepted the importance of curriculum-based projects in ensuring Sustainability in North/South educational co-operation. The curriculum approach enriches subsequent exchange experiences.

The two broad themes which emerged from the discussion on the four following questions were as follows:

1. The reasons for and benefits of pursuing co-operation

Under this heading the main purposes identified were

- To increase awareness
- To change perceptions
- To combat a tendency towards insularity
- To enhance and add value to school and curriculum
- To achieve efficiencies through co-operation for mutual benefit

It was pointed out that a practical approach can be cost efficient e.g. it is easier and cheaper for Northern schools to visit international organisations and embassies in Dublin rather than in London. It was acknowledged that working with partners enhances what teachers do. However, as currently operated, it does increase the workload.

It was also noted that co-operation initiatives could contribute significantly to staff development.

2. How can implementation of co-operation best be achieved?

2.1 Structure and policy

There was general consensus on the need for structure, organisation and management in co-operation initiatives. This was essential to ensuring success and was understood as encompassing a system-wide approach, from educational policy level to individual school level. Policy needed to be examined in terms of prioritising the area of North/South co-operation and in developing approaches to mainstreaming. An overall structure should be

developed to bring together the variety of initiatives currently operating. This was particularly important in the context of the many schools that were not involved in any of the projects. It was also considered that there was an urgent need to address the low involvement of less advantaged schools.

2.2 Whole School Involvement

A Whole School Involvement approach is fundamental. Boards of management, principals and even parents and the community should be involved and supportive in order to ensure success. Currently, individual enthusiastic teachers support non-mainstream cross-border initiatives and it is often the case that the same teacher is involved in several different initiatives. The result is inbuilt non-sustainability. Principals and management should be involved in action planning, setting objectives, and allocating resources, including financial and time resources, thus enabling teachers to become more fully involved. Activities should be a whole school issue and should be advertised and celebrated, for example by posting notice of activities on the school display board.

2.3 Primary Perspectives

Again there should be a focus on the whole school. The importance of involving the principal, management and if possible the community was stressed. Co-operation is possible from primary 1 through to the final years and can be embraced through diverse aspects of the curriculum e.g. music, games, drama, ICT, environmental studies. It is easier in many ways to have a whole school approach at primary level. One participant, speaking from experience, considered that a long term bilateral partnership between schools was most effective at primary level.

2.4 Multilateral approach

The value of a multilateral approach is a significant advantage in attracting some schools. In many instances, incorporating an East-West, European and international dimension increases the feasibility of co-operation initiatives and brings parents, teachers and management on board. The European Studies Project had allowed many Controlled (i.e. mainly Protestant) schools in the North to participate within such a wider framework.

2.5 Mainstreaming

There was much discussion of how this might be achieved, particularly given the perceived mismatches in the systems North and South. If it is to be achieved, it will require political support, particularly as regards assigning priority to cross-border modules, given the increasing demands on schools. It might also require changes to the statutory curricula North and South. This sort of activity has to be sold through the curriculum. It should be borne in mind that any hint of a political agenda would be counterproductive, particularly within the citizenship area.

2.6 Funding

Funding, including funding of teacher travel, is essential.

2.7 Time as a resource

The linked issues of time as a resource and teacher workload were recurring themes. This was seen as presenting particularly acute problems in the North, where an additional burden has been imposed by the AS level requirements on a system which was already regarded as having a curriculum and examination overload. It was observed that it takes a considerable

amount of time to become involved in new projects; such projects can be off-putting in that they bring an additional workload, and the variety of projects and access to them is confusing.

Possible solutions suggested were in the areas of sharing existing experience and focussing on what the systems have in common. Co-operation activities should be mapped to identify where they might meet key requirements of the curriculum in the two jurisdictions. Planning is fundamental to addressing the time issue, and a modular approach would be important in allowing teachers choice. Field work in the other jurisdiction is a useful way of making space for curriculum co-operation projects.

2.8 Different structures North and South

The differences in structures North and South sometimes give rise to difficulties. The centralised education system in the South and the education and library boards structure in the North do not provide an even match. This was reflected in difficulties in sourcing and accessing support in some instances in the South.

2.9 Transition Year

The Transition Year available to second level schools in the South was regarded on the one hand as a benefit in that it provides an opportunity to explore topics outside the main curriculum. On the other hand, it constitutes an obstacle to co-operation initiatives in that there is no corresponding facility in the system in the North. Northern teachers are envious of the opportunities for enrichment provided by Transition Year. However, the fact that Transition Year is where alternative, often interesting, projects are consigned can result in a perception of reduced importance and can exacerbate a tendency to move North-South co-operation away from the curriculum. It was suggested by some participants that for these reasons the focus should be less on Transition Year, and more on 2nd year of post-primary school in the South and 3rd year in the North. This would provide an easier and more apt match. This is a route which is currently being explored by the Dissolving Boundaries project.

It was noted that even within the structure of Transition Year, there is a reliance on the enthusiasm of individual teachers who also experience problems with timing and resourcing.

2.10 Evaluation, measurement and accreditation

It was considered that there is too much emphasis in evaluation exercises on examining the cross-border activity itself rather than the impact of it on the young people involved.

It was agreed that ways have to be found to recognise and legitimise North-South curricular programmes like the European Studies Project, while recognising that in the North, in particular, teachers consider that the system is over-examined. There was some discussion on whether examinations should change to accommodate this kind of work. It was considered that in the future there would be increasing emphasis on accreditation for non-academic work. The benefits to students of projects which focus on research, enquiry and teamwork thus need to be emphasised. The advantages of valuable developmental experience in co-operation initiatives and the benefits in terms of acquisition of skills and competencies should be stressed.

In the South parents and students are inclined not to value what is not measurable in the Leaving Certificate

It was agreed that some formal acknowledgement and recognition of teacher input was necessary. Some form of certification should be explored.

2.11 Other Issues

Substitution was identified as a particular difficulty in the South in the context of attendance at exchange events, teacher-planning meetings etc

Child protection issues (e.g. the vetting of parents who are hosting residentials) were giving rise to an increasing number of concerns. As a result the tendency is towards hostel accommodation, which requires more funding.

The Curriculum Advisory Service of the education and library boards in the North is regarded as being very valuable as a support to teachers. This service is staffed by field officers (seconded teachers) who act as advisors to teachers and generally support them through help with planning, back-up administration and provision of pre-prepared materials. It is regarded as unfortunate that it is not matched by a similar service in the South.

It was noted that the Scoping Study report made no reference to Education for Mutual Understanding.

Report on Workshop 1a

The Role of Exchange Projects within the School Curriculum

Chair: Dr Jim Gleeson (University of Limerick)

Rapporteur: Tony Mahon (Laois Education Centre)

The guidance questions were the same as in Workshop 1.

1. The group agreed that curriculum-based programmes are an excellent way to ensure that sustainable North-South educational co-operation is ensured alongside youth work and other informal educational experiences.

(The group felt the following three points should be taken on board in future planning)

2. There was considerable discussion of inter-jurisdictional differences: cross-curricular themes as a statutory requirement in the North but not in the South; Transition Year and Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) as positive developments in the South which were not provided on a mainstream basis in the North; different assessment arrangements, with more provision for continuous assessment in the North.
3. The differences between the primary and post-primary systems were highlighted as important features in both jurisdictions, with a belief that there was more room at primary level for cross-border co-operation because the subject emphasis is not as great.
4. Teachers are under greater pressure in schools in disadvantaged areas compared to schools in better off areas. A Co-operation Ireland participant said that take-up from schools in disadvantaged areas for their programmes in the South was high. On the other hand schools in disadvantaged areas in the North were less likely to get involved in cross-border programmes such as the European Studies Project, with teachers afraid of how such involvement would be seen in the local community.

It was also noted that interest in CSPE was much higher in disadvantaged schools in the South, whereas there is a "wall of resistance" to it in many better off schools.

(Other points)

5. Discussion on curriculum-based programmes in the context of the points system in the South and examination pressures in both jurisdictions led to a philosophical discussion about the very purpose of education. This led on to a discussion about who owns the curriculum. This was seen as related to teacher empowerment and the issue of greater community involvement in curriculum design, development and evaluation at local level, a demand which flies in the face of the present tendency to centralise.
6. Current problems for curriculum-based exchanges include curriculum overload and the dominant 'acquisitive culture' around education, particularly in middle and upper class areas. The hope was expressed that the revised Northern curriculum would be less constraining than the 'strait-jacket' which is there at present.
7. Subject teaching provides the dominant 'scaffolding' at post-primary level in both jurisdictions, as against a more flexible 'areas of experience' approach. It is too narrow to talk about curriculum-based programmes where the curriculum is defined

largely in terms of subjects. There is a need to focus more on generic skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking and on the processes rather than the products of education.

8. The extent to which successful cross-border exchanges depend on the interest and enthusiasm of key individuals was highlighted. Such people need to be freed up from their day-to-day work to provide leadership and inspiration to others. School-based action research projects also have real potential to develop a stronger sense of parental and community involvement.
9. Some participants felt that the configuration of the school year was problematic for cross-border exchanges. For example the long summer break, with schools lying empty and students idle and bored, could provide opportunities for exchanges.
10. The importance of relevant strategic planning at jurisdictional, regional and school levels was stressed. Schools should also evaluate their contribution to the improvement of community relations in their areas.
11. The Certificate in Contemporary European Studies offers possibilities. One education and library board officer reported that it is provided at AS and GCSE levels in the North (and in Britain), involving coursework and a written examination, and is accredited in five countries in all. It was suggested that the curriculum bodies, North and South, could ensure that this becomes a part of the curricular and assessment procedures in both jurisdictions.

Report on Workshop 2 Teacher and Student Teacher Exchanges

Chairman: Professor John Coolahan

Rapporteur: Conor Ó Raghallaigh (North/South Ministerial Council, Armagh)

The following four questions were provided to the group for guidance:

1. Is teacher education the obvious place to extend North-South educational co-operation, given the role and status of teachers throughout the island?

Discussion on this question started with an acknowledgement that there is a general lack of awareness on both sides of the border about the education system operating in the other jurisdiction and the extent of North-South co-operation currently taking place.

There was consensus that the attitudes and roles of teachers are critical to the future success of North-South co-operation in the education field. Increasing general awareness among teachers of the benefits of North-South exchanges should include the adoption of a structured approach to the issue during teachers' training period.

Specific Recommendations

Suggestions on how incorporation of a North-South dimension into the teacher training curriculum should be approached included the following:

- a. There is need for an overall Department level strategy in both jurisdictions on the place of North-South educational programmes within both primary and secondary curricula. This strategy will shape the scope and content of complementary courses within the teacher training colleges.
- b. A Standing Conference on Teacher Education should be established, with input from all the relevant partners in education.
- c. A North-South *Erasmus* type programme should be considered, whereby student teachers could receive some of their formal education and training in the other jurisdiction.
- d. Some of the funding for exchange programmes should be specifically focussed on particular areas of teacher education.
- e. In addition to giving student teachers formal training on North-South issues, similar training should be made available to existing teachers and school managers as part of in-career development programmes.

2. What are teachers' views on the argument that curriculum-based programmes are the best way forward for sustainable North-South co-operation?

North-South exchanges and programmes are commonly viewed as an aside to the 'real' work of addressing core subjects and preparing students for exams. The lack of curricular recognition for North-South programmes implies a lack of guaranteed resources and lack of support, such as substitution, for teachers involved in such activities. 'Extra' activities are particularly vulnerable in terms of resource allocation. A more central curricular status for North-South programmes would also serve to inform the teaching profession of the benefits of developing North-South exchanges and programmes.

It was recognised, however, that 'peace and reconciliation' values are inherently abstract and are not easily transferable to formal curricula. At secondary level, the

absence of a Transition Year in the structure of the Northern system was seen as a key obstacle to introducing items like civic education or North-South studies in a more informal way.

It was emphasised that North-South exchanges and programmes must have, and be seen to have, value for the school/institution, teachers and pupils involved. Exchanges and programmes should complement the core curriculum and the most appropriate exchanges should be sought for individual schools. Whether a North-South element becomes part of the core curriculum or not, it should become a central plank in school planning, with resources allocated accordingly.

3. What incentives should be put in place to encourage teachers to do cross-border co-operation and/or other international work?

In discussion on this question, the use of the word *incentive* was seen as somewhat problematic. It was considered that a well-designed North-South or international co-operation programme should have its own inherent value, which will be recognised by teachers. Teachers, however, do require support to enable them fully participate in such programmes, as follows:

- a. Overall policy direction and well-directed resource allocation should be forthcoming from both Departments of Education and the education and library boards in the North.
- b. Individual schools need to adopt an overall vision of what is to be achieved and must be flexible in their support for teachers involved. The issue of substitution for teachers who are absent because of their involvement in North-South co-operation was raised several times. Indeed, it was mentioned that many teachers could not be present at the present conference as they are not provided with substitutes for such events.
- c. There should be a system of accreditation or recognition for teachers involved in North-South programmes.
- d. The possibility of a North-South co-operation post of responsibility in each school should be explored.

4. Is the free movement of teachers between North and South a feasible proposition in the near future?

Unfortunately, the group had little time to discuss this issue. It was agreed, however, that the situation was improving and some progress had been made in bringing closer the free movement of teachers between both jurisdictions

Report on Workshop 3

Youth Work Exchanges

Chair: Bernice Sweeney (Youth Council for Northern Ireland)

Rapporteur: Duane Farrell (Youthnet, Belfast)

Introductory Comments

Participants in the group felt that the conference paper did not adequately reflect the large volume of work done in the youth sector in the area of North-South youth exchanges. Furthermore, there was no recognition of the work done within and between voluntary youth work organisations. Many youth work organisations operate on a 32 county basis and North-South links are an intrinsic part of this work. Others may have work they do on a North-South basis funded through schemes other than exchange programmes. Queries were also raised about the value of the questions asked and the language used in the questions.

The following five questions were provided to the group for guidance:

1. **Should the Youth Work sector have a particular role in overcoming divisions on this Island after 30 years of conflict that has involved so many young people?**

Youth work has a very clear role in overcoming divisions. Andy Pollak's paper highlighted the fact that there were a disproportionate number of grammar and fee-paying schools involved in North-South exchanges. The result of this is that many young people living in interface areas in the North – i.e. those who could benefit most from accessing these exchanges - are falling through the net. This is where the role of non-formal education complements that of formal education. There is also a need for the role of youth work to be more widely recognised and valued. Youth work by its nature plays an important role in the personal and social development of young people. This role is not always easy to measure in terms of tangible benefits, and in attempting to do we can lose the real value of such work.

Furthermore, in Border areas in particular, young people come together naturally through outlets provided within youth organisations.

2. **What is the contribution of youth work to overcoming the blocks preventing disadvantaged young people from playing a full role in Irish Society, North and South?**

The very essence of youth work is that young people come voluntarily. The number of young people accessing youth services clearly indicate that it is meeting at least some of the needs of the young people involved. However it is important that non-formal education does not become a dumping ground for the formal education sector. To this end, there is a real need for greater co-ordination between formal and non-formal education. This greater coherence should in itself present greater opportunities.

Considerable potential exists around co-ordinating the curriculum between formal and non-formal education as well as across geographical borders.

Participants felt that a balance needed to be struck between developing theoretical subjects like citizenship and action-based models such as community involvement, and this could come about as a result of greater coherence between the formal and non-formal sectors. However it was also stressed that exchanges are not necessarily

a panacea to problems of disadvantage. One participant said that sometimes fear about North-South exchanges can come from youth workers and not young people.

3. How can youth work co-operation become more focussed and sustainable, given the mismatch in youth service structures on either side of the border, and the wide range of organisations in each jurisdiction?

It was emphasised that when the Youth Work Bill goes through in the South, this mismatch will not be as great, for in the new legislation Vocational Education Committees (VECs) will have a role in co-ordinating youth work at local level. It was also noted that this mismatch exists across both the formal and non-formal sectors.

Part of the discussion centred on new developments in the area of North-South youth relations. Participants were informed that an interim executive had been established to oversee the development of an all-island 'entity' for North-South youth relations. The organisations involved are:

- Education and Library Boards (Inter Board Youth Panel)
- Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA)
- National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)
- Northern Ireland Youth Forum (NIYF)
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI)
- YouthNet.

The role of this entity will seek to go beyond the issue of exchanges. It is envisaged that this body will deepen relationships between the sectors and will try to address issues around policy, implementation and infrastructure. Other issues to which a North-South dimension would bring added value are training and accreditation, equality and youth participation.

It was also noted that Léargas, the British Council and the Central Bureau for Educational Exchanges, alongside the Youth Council for Northern Ireland, have agreed a 'joint protocol'. This agreement outlines how these agencies can work better together to enable them to provide quality services on a cross-border basis.

4. Would North/South relationships in the youth work sector be enhanced by developing East-West relationships?

Everyone agreed that East-West relations were important both in the context of Ireland and Great Britain, but also in the wider context of Europe. However participants emphasised that it was often difficult to access partners for these exchanges. Many voluntary sector agencies in Northern Ireland have headquarters in England, Scotland and Wales. The result of this is that East-West co-operation is happening, albeit at a more informal level. Participants felt that North-South relations must be the priority in terms of developing relationships, and that a by-product of these emerging relationship should be a clearer focus on the East-West dimension.

5. How are the youth work sectors relating to the current realities facing young people on the island, and how can they learn from each other?

People were puzzled at exactly what information the question was trying to ascertain. The general feeling was that young people should be asked this question, and that it was essentially hard to quantify. It was felt that the question was too philosophical.

Report on Workshop 4

The Role of ICT in Exchange Projects

Chair: Jane Smyth (University of Ulster at Coleraine/Dissolving Boundaries project)

Rapporteur: Dr Patricia Clarke (Centre for Cross Border Studies, Armagh)

The following five questions were provided for guidance:

1. **How effective and sustainable are ICT-based co-operation projects, given the cost implications?**
2. **Is the use of ICT as a 'neutral facilitator' a way of removing the 'threat' from North-South school exchanges and thus of encouraging mainly Protestant Northern schools to become involved?**
3. **Is the use of ICT a way of ensuring greater involvement in cross-border co-operation by the whole school and teaching staff?**
4. **What are the limits of ICT-based co-operation in combating prejudice and misunderstanding?**
5. **With its emphasis on using ICT to motivate students, and its cross-border management structure, does the Dissolving Boundaries project offer a model of cross-border good practice for the future?**

Most of the discussion focussed around the first two questions.

1. Sustainability of ICT-based projects

There was agreement that the first question was the wrong question. It would be better phrased 'What is the co-operation project and how can ICT help it?' Most of the ICT infrastructure is already in place in schools, and any North-South collaboration will use existing equipment. Effective new projects will not necessarily involve the full cost of installing equipment. The first wave of ICT projects in schools involved significant technical and training costs, but such levels of funding are no longer needed.

For example, for the Cross-Connect project the Western Education and Library Board chose schools which needed complete computer suites and recruited ICT teachers to work in a number of schools; there were also consultancy costs. However this was a pilot project and its costs should not be equated with the cost of ongoing ICT-based cross-border projects.

Over the past 8-9 years Cross-Connect has been developing videoconferencing facilities eventually leading to face-to-face meetings. "There is no cheaper way to do this than the cost of a local phone call."

It only costs £50 every three months for a school to link to another school across the border through videoconferencing. However in many schools involved in cross-border projects EU Peace and Reconciliation funding bought computers which will now need to be upgraded.

The infrastructure is already there. It is accepted that most schools (and also libraries, which are important for the youth services and for evening work) now have the necessary hardware. In future there will be a lot more youth service/community access to use schools' ICT facilities in the evenings. However there are other costs involved in training people to work with pupils (particularly young children with short attention spans) on computers. This, however, will be a diminishing cost.

It was also suggested that a radical look at the school day might be required in this ICT age: Should there be two shifts during the school day, so that ICT teaching skills can be used and re-used efficiently, rather than the traditional 9am-3pm school day?

There was also agreement that technical assistance should not be a massive cost. One border school pays a local person for a couple of hours technical assistance every month. Often children can solve basic problems for teachers. It was suggested that schools could reduce technical assistance costs by sharing such assistance with neighbouring schools.

It was recognised that the purpose of cross-border contact sometimes gets lost in the technical problems, and simple hardware should be used e.g. a built email system is very inexpensive to run.

ICT should be used as an invisible tool behind the co-operation work and not become the main focus. There is no need always to be talking about videoconferencing systems when simpler email systems may be more appropriate. There was also concern about the decisions being made at Department of Education level e.g. the Department in the North sent a large number of schools a data projector, although many teachers either did not need them or did not have the skills to use them.

2. ICT as a neutral facilitator

In response to question two, there was agreement that ICT-based co-operation projects make the stereotypes young people have of each other disappear. In some Protestant areas of the North there is a reluctance (to put it mildly) to get involved with schools and youth groups across the border. A lot of work can be done with kids by getting them to look at their own values before they actually meet face-to-face. This also allows the teachers to get an understanding of the main issues and thus better plan the face-to-face meetings.

You can leave kids alone to talk to each other across the border over the email system (e.g. at lunchtime) whereas you could not do this in a face-to-face meeting. This means the kids are not performing for the teachers. It is a new learning process where friendships are developed without physical safety issues.

It was recognised that there are still safety concerns over the unsupervised use of the Internet. Children need to develop the social skills of using the Internet and free access is one concern of parents. However it was said that the overwhelming majority of problems are experienced within schools (e.g. putting offensive material on the school web).

Data protection issues were raised, with parents asking: "Who is accessing information about our kids? Whenever they put their imprints on things it makes them vulnerable." Would it be possible to create a closed communication system with private, protected space (e.g. through multi-tiered passwords or a filtered, teacher-monitored school web)?

"Children never really build up trust if you don't trust them". ICT-based work gives the control to the learner – it is not passive and must be energised. Teachers need to be trained to take a step backwards and let the kids lead.

ICT-work opens up the school environment, exposing it to the outside world. It is important that imperfect working documents are allowed to go 'live'. Teachers have to learn to leave work in an unmoderated form; in the past there has been a tendency for them to play it safe and to try and correct everything. A good example of unmoderated work is the European Studies Project website where one can see work in different stages of development.

3. Other points

There is the potential to set up chat rooms (e.g Yahoo groups or through NINE, although the difficulties of getting access to NINE were mentioned). Conferencing platforms can be used to set up such chat rooms where there can be a continual thread of discussions which are visible to the group. Agreement can be reached on the use of chat rooms at certain times of the day (eg. ASYNCRONISE). They are effective and powerful and are very focussed, involving the kids in planning their own material in a very visual manner. It is a less threatening environment for them than sitting around and having a discussion as we are now. It is easy to establish protocols for use.

We have to recognise that there are limitations to videoconferencing and that such chat rooms may be less limiting.

Why do we have to develop school websites? One reason given was that this was a life-skill. One school allows parents to advertise their business on the school website hoping to show the usefulness of such tools to the wider community.

The group recognised that we are only at the very beginning of what ICT can do and there are small schools which do not have such skills and need to start at a lower level (IT is not just video-conferencing and email). In 5-10 years it is expected that all schools will be more or less at the same level, but until then we need to work at the level of the individual school and use what technology is available. For example why do we not use telephone conferencing more often? However it was also pointed out that "videoconferencing is the phone call of the future."

It was recognised that some people are still fearful of technology. We need to offer people a variety of technology to develop links. If we aim too high in the technology curve we create barriers. Teachers and youth workers have to be trained to use technological skills with the aim of bringing them up to approximately the same skill level. It was felt that too many assumptions were being made during the discussion about the level of people's expertise.

There were also difficulties experienced in finding time-slots to link with schools of a different denomination across the border. One example was given of a group of schools which had different days off to attend confirmation training. It was felt that it would be useful to set specific times for chat rooms and other ICT links to enable schools to timetable meetings.

Suggestion 1: Participants should investigate their local schools/libraries' ICT facilities with the aim of meeting again through videoconferencing to discuss the feedback paper out of today's conference. By doing this we will all be able to see at first-hand the possibilities and difficulties (the technology does not work all the time) in using videoconferencing to link and learn across the border.

Suggestion 2: It was also recognised that there are schools which might like to be involved in cross-border projects which do not have access to all the technology. Given the present multiplicity of agencies organising such projects, it was suggested that a centralised body is needed to assist schools in accessing technology for cross-border linkages.

Report on Workshop 5

Exchanges also involving countries outside Ireland

Chair: Jim Mullin (Léargas, Dublin)

Rapporteur: Caitrona Hughes (Southern Education and Library Board, Armagh)

The following five questions were provided for guidance:

- 1. How important is the East-West (British-Irish) dimension in educational and youth co-operation on the island of Ireland?**
- 2. What are the advantages of exchanges also involving British, European and American schools and youth groups alongside Irish schools and youth groups?**
- 3. What can be learned from the high level of co-operation between some Northern education and library boards and regional education bodies in France and Germany?**
- 4. To what extent are the structural mismatches between the education and youth systems North and South a block to the expansion and sustainability of cross-border exchanges?**
- 5. How might the European Studies Project and other co-operation projects be restructured to involve more British schools?**

1. It was agreed that it would be easier for many schools in the North, particularly mainly Protestant schools, to develop relationships with Southern schools as part of a project that involved a third country school, rather than in a bilateral 'up front' North-South project. In the case of such schools, this international dimension attracts much greater support from their catchment community.
2. There was a broad consensus in the group about the benefits of such an international dimension for all Irish schools. It is important for schools, North and South, to avoid an insular approach by working with other schools outside the island. There are common problems such as racism which need to be tackled in the context of the 'bigger world' outside Ireland. Cultural diversity must be an integral part of the modern curriculum. Such an international dimension should also be part of a whole school ethos.
3. It is important that co-operation projects should focus on issues relevant to and of interest to young people. An overseas 'cause' is one way of achieving this, e.g. working with a school in an impoverished country like Romania. School exchanges should not be "funding-led" but should be decided on by the students.
4. The question was asked whether it was more difficult to develop exchanges between "immediate neighbours" across the Irish border, e.g. an Armagh-Cork exchange would be more attractive to students than with a neighbouring school just across the border.
5. It was felt that multilateral international exchanges had particular benefits for the professional development of teachers and youth workers. On the other hand, cost factors favoured North-South exchanges.
6. The question was asked about the level of contact that was maintained between schools after international exchanges. Is there any research on this? The Socrates programme has done no such research to date.
7. What are the policies of the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) and the Department of Education and Science on the relative significance of bilateral North-South and multilateral Ireland-abroad exchanges? If there are such policies (and

there is clearly a need for such policies), they would clearly have funding implications.

8. Concern was expressed about the mismatch of educational structures highlighted by the conference paper (e.g. the large differences in functions between the education and library boards and the vocational education committees). However there was confidence that people could overcome such mismatches by building good multi-layered partnerships (involving all education stakeholders, including parents and local communities) across the border.
9. There was agreement that there is a need for the co-operation structures on the island to be integrated. It was suggested that Léargas, the youth councils and the Central Bureau could come together, with support from the two Departments, as a consortium to administer and resource all North-South-East-West school and youth exchanges. There was also a need for some mechanism to relay good experiences and good practice in cross-border exchanges up to policy makers, rather than simply receive directives from them!
10. Concern was also expressed that a Transition Year system would exclude those who had left compulsory schooling early. Such 'alternative' educational experiences should be introduced throughout a student's school career.
11. It was felt that some kind of certification was needed for cross-border work. As levels plus lack of funding prevents the involvement of British schools in the European Studies Project.

Report on Workshop 6: Exchanges involving Schools and Youth Groups

Chair: Jimmy Peel (South Eastern Education and Library Board, Dundonald)

Rapporteur: Andy Pollak (Centre for Cross Border Studies, Armagh)

The following five questions were provided for guidance:

1. **Does working with marginalized young people present particular opportunities for cross-border co-operation?**
2. **Does the international emphasis on learning 'key skills' make exchanges involving both schools and youth groups potentially a crucial area for cross-border co-operation?**
3. **How can education and library boards in the North and vocational education committees in the South learn from each other (and, in particular, can the South learn from the North's use of youth tutors)?**
4. **What is the importance of citizenship education in North-South exchanges?**
5. **What is the significance of the SEELB-Co Cork VEC's emphasis on developing a 'whole organisation involvement' in North-South co-operation?**

1. Marginalized young people

Involving marginalized young people from some Protestant areas of Northern Ireland (e.g. where there is sectarian conflict) in North-South contact which they might find threatening would be problematic. A considerable amount of careful single identity work is needed before such face-to-face contact. However it would be a good learning exercise to bring youth workers working with marginalized young people in both jurisdictions (many of them working in isolated situations) together to share their experiences and practice.

The principal of a Northern school in an area with a strong loyalist paramilitary presence said she had no problem linking with a school in Dublin. Protestant parents from areas of sectarian conflict in Belfast loved going to the South – the problem was in making links with parents across the sectarian divide in the North. However she believed that if there was a will the forging of cross-border links "from the ground up" was possible even in the most difficult circumstances.

2. Key skills

A number of participants felt the question about 'key skills' was the wrong question. Better questions would be: How can North-South co-operation assist us in our curriculum, particularly in the non-formal part of it? What added value can cross-border co-operation bring to our core work? What do we, in the school and youth work sectors, want out of the cross-border interaction of young people? It was agreed that it was important always to come back to what was educationally valuable rather than what was politically motivated.

Some ideas of what that 'added value' might be were discussed. They included: gaining knowledge of another culture; gaining inter-personal skills from forming

relationships with young people who are different; changing attitudes in the way that the attitudes of French and German young people changed towards each other after the Second World War.

3. **North-South youth 'entity'**

The new North-South youth work 'entity' was discussed. This was seen as having great potential added value, in that it would provide a systematic basis on which youth organisations in both jurisdictions could relate to each other. One participant said they should not apologise about it being seen as 'political' since the aim was to bring about change following the "terrible events of the past 30 years."

One participant preferred the concept of 'partnership' to that of 'exchanges' in North-South and international work. Partnership implied common work, doing things better together than they had been done separately in the past, and finding a common set of activities leading to mutual learning.

Mutual admiration was expressed by participants from the two jurisdictions for some aspects of the other. There was Southern envy of the youth work support, in-service training and other services provided by the education and library boards. There was Northern admiration for the "more rounded education" – exemplified by Transition Year – more often available in the South.

4. **Citizenship education**

The question was asked as to whether North-South exchanges contributed to young people's citizenship education. The main 'added value' was felt to be the broadening perspective that comes from looking beyond one's own community and seeing how young people in another jurisdiction cope with similar problems.

One participant spoke passionately about the importance of international citizenship education in teaching young people to "reach out" to their peers in other countries and cultures. He expressed disappointment that the Civic Social and Political Education programme in the South, on which so much important groundwork had been done, was now in danger of being "marginalized to the point of extinction." It was a "key life skill" for young people to learn how to be members of a democratic community and society, particularly at a time when there is widespread indifference to participation in democracy in many countries, including the UK and Ireland. He felt that in this situation a North-South citizenship programme, if sensitively handled and well-managed, could bring great added value to the lives of young Irish people

Final summing up by

PROFESSOR JOHN COOLAHAN

Thank you very much indeed to all the chairpersons and rapporteurs – their cogent summaries of the many issues which emerged has been a *tour de force*. They have been very disciplined in giving us so much reportage in such a short time and we look forward to the more extensive final conference report from the Centre for Cross Border Studies.

THE WAY FORWARD (1)?

- Strategic planning – how much a priority?
- Promotion of best practice – drawing from evaluations
- Affirmation of effort
- Resourcing/investment
- Time issues
- Preparation/structuring of projects

It seems to me that if there is going to be a meaningful way forward, we have got to believe that this kind of work is genuinely educationally sound, socially sound and important at this stage of the development of Irish society, North and South. It has been operating fairly impressively for at least the last five years, and significantly longer in terms of the pioneering work of Co-operation Ireland and some other agencies. Now, however, it needs to be considered as part of strategic planning, to be treated by government not just as *ad hoc* or occasional or stop-go or experimental. So we have got to decide if it is a strategic issue at top level, at policy level, and then examine what kind of a priority it should have at that top level – because in the long run what decisions are made in the near future will have a big bearing on whether the outcomes we have talked about are likely to happen.

I think also the promotion of best practice becomes very crucial and it becomes important to draw on evaluations, where they have occurred, to help us in promoting best practice. That is where a lot of the pilot work has been useful up to this stage.

Several workshop reports mentioned the importance of the affirmation of the efforts of teachers and others who have frequently given a lot of extra time to this co-operation work. In at least one of the workshops I was at, it was urged that this and time issues ought to be more seriously tackled in the context of whole school planning, which is now afoot in both jurisdictions. If this kind of work is seen as integral and central to the overall curricular, extra-curricular and education programmes of schools, some formal affirmation will both give it the necessary lift and give those involved the feeling that their efforts are being valued.

Predictably, the resourcing of cross-border school and youth exchanges has cropped up in all the workshops, and to date, as Andy Pollak has said in his conference paper, there has been a reasonable degree of resourcing. But if the outcomes and the indicators of success of such exchanges are going to become more productive and precise in the future, then we need to see the money spent in this area more as an investment than as a burden on resources. And if we see the present situation as a crucial stage in the evolution and development of

Irish history as part of European history, then we are talking here about a significant investment in the future.

THE WAY FORWARD (2)?

- Curricular linkages
- Sustainability – the long haul
- A dimension of a better future for the island
- Normalisation of relations based on: communication, understanding, co-operation, tolerance, love of neighbour

In all the discussions today the quality of preparation and the structuring of projects have been seen as crucial to good delivery and the promotion of best practice. The discussions have also stressed repeatedly the centrality of the curricular anchoring of cross-border projects and that the curricula in both jurisdictions are to a certain extent undergoing evolution. In one workshop it was said that recent developments may have made the curriculum more straight-jacketed, more compartmentalised, more subject-based and perhaps allowing less scope for adaptation than formerly. If that is so, it would need to be carefully watched, because the heart of the matter should not only be a whole series of curricular developments in subject areas, but also something that genuinely promotes educational values and skills.

Another issue that emerged from the discussions was sustainability – whether educational co-operation across the Irish border is going to be a long-term development. Needless to say politicians and civil servants have to work on the basis of short-term budgetary patterns and current political fashions. That is part of the reality in every country. But if we believe in what we are doing here, then it has to be a sustained commitment for the long haul, so that it is not a sporadic, periodic thing that only happens when people get 'seed' money. I think the concept of 'seed' money can be a dangerous one in this area. 'Seed' funding has its purposes, but what is afoot here is a fairly significant long haul in terms of educational, social and other considerations.

Education cannot do everything – but it has a role to play in creating one dimension of the broader effort to work towards a better future for the island and the relationships between its people, so that the century ahead may be less traumatic than the century we have just left behind. That better future will be based on things that are very close to our concerns as professional educators and youth workers: understanding, co-operation, tolerance and love of our neighbour.

In that sense Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's quote this morning from William Drennan was perfect for the occasion, that all the children of Ireland should know and love each other. I think that is the heart of the matter: for children and young people to know each other, respect each other and love each other. That is the essence of the recipe for a society that is civilised in the 21st century.

It also happens to coincide with the extraordinary relationship of the island of Ireland with Christianity and other foundation religions. Christianity has been the most strongly expressed, and the basic, original message of Christianity was 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself' and love God in that kind of context as well. If that seems clichéd, the reality is that it does not take away from its truth. If we realise that we are part of an evolving, changing era of

history on the island of Ireland, in Europe and in the world, then the educational dynamic has got to be different for the new century in the context of lifelong learning and the other features that we are moving towards.

We cannot see the full pattern for the future, we cannot predict it – but I believe the kind of work that has been going on here today is highly pertinent as we try to clarify our way forward and help ourselves to become more productive agents of change.