

STANDING CONFERENCE OF TEACHER EDUCATION NORTH + SOUTH

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EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010 – IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

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Lisbon: A City of Mystery

Lisbon is a city I know quite well. Indeed, I have visited it on no fewer than three occasions in recent years. Despite the great earthquake which reduced whole sections to rubble in the eighteenth century, it is a city of considerable atmosphere and charm. It is redolent still of an air of mystery – a legacy perhaps of its neutrality during the Second World War, when it was a centre of espionage for both the allies and the Axis, given its closeness to Franco's Spain. Lisbon of course was a gateway to the New World for the Portuguese explorers in the 15th and 16th centuries, during the era of what political correctness now requires us to term the 'Voyages of Encounter', as opposed to the 'Voyages of Discovery'. Indeed, I can claim to have stood beside the modern 'Monument

to the Discoveries' at Belem, on the city's outskirts, in the teeth of an April gale and watched as the sunglasses of one of my party were whipped off his face and disappeared in the general direction of Brazil. On my return last July in rather different temperatures of 40°C +, I could find no trace of them! As I wandered around the 18th century grid-iron streets leading to Black Horse Square, or rode the tram up through the atmospheric Alfama District to the stunning viewpoint of St George's Castle, I have to confess that never once was I struck by the thought that I was in the city which in the year 2000 had given birth to the Lisbon objectives! Like the city itself, they have retained an air of mystery, I suspect not just for me but for many citizens of the EU.

The Lisbon Objectives: Visible or Invisible?

I can illustrate my point by another anecdote or confession. Last week, I spent an interesting day, with some others in this room, in the Ramada Hotel, just outside Belfast, at an event organised by the Dept. of Education (NI) – part of a process of developing a detailed strategic plan for the NI Education Service to coincide with the recently announced 2005-08 spending round. It was presided over by the Permanent and Deputy Secretaries of the Dept. Seán will be shocked to learn that the Lisbon Objectives, or even the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme, were never once mentioned. Indeed, while the words 'global society' featured in the draft planning documentation, it was

left to several of us in one of the working groups to raise the EU flag and suggest that, just possibly, given the position of the population of NI as EU citizens, some European reference might be a good idea. Certainly, at no point did the working groups sit down with the 2010 Work Programme and check off what was being proposed against it.

The EU and the Black Limousine Culture

Now all of these confessions may tell us something about the visibility of the EU at its periphery and indeed something about the relative insularity of NI society. How many people in the room can tell me who the current Head of the EU Office in Belfast is? I'm tempted to say that the Commission will offer a free weekend in Lisbon to the lucky winner. (**Eddie McVeigh**). They may also indicate that the EU and its Commission have got a PR or image problem. You know what I mean. The issue was well summed-up some days ago by the Dutch MEP who was one of the leaders of the successful revolt against the appointment of the controversial Italian EU Commissioner, Rocco Buttilione, when he talked about decisions in European affairs being the monopoly of the politicians in black limousines, who met together in glamorous European destinations to settle affairs without reference to the Union's citizens. Indeed, one even got a glimpse of this in Seán's speech, as he referred to the Lisbon strategy, the Copenhagen process, the Barcelona summit, the Bologna process

etc. You will get an even stronger sense of it, as I have done, if you go back and read the actual Report from the Education Council to the European Council of March 2001 on the ‘Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems’ (i.e. the Lisbon Objectives), which provides a whole litany of other processes to add to the list – Luxembourg, Cardiff, Stockholm, Santa Maria de Feira, Nice, Riga – I could go on.

The Lisbon Objectives and the Robert Kilroy Silk Factor

The relative ignorance of these developments at grassroots level may also be something to do with cynicism, brought about by the reality that many of the declarations and programmes are actively resisted in particular member states - what I suppose you could describe as the Robert Kilroy Silk factor (although megalomania might be another explanation in his case). I have been following with some selfish interest the unfolding of the Bologna process, which as one of Seán’s slides indicated, includes a commitment to a three-year cycle undergraduate degree structure. Where does that leave four-year undergraduate degrees, such as the BEd currently offered by Stranmillis and St Mary’s in the North and recommended in the recent review of the BEd. as a desirable, although as yet unattained, objective in the South? But just when I begin to get excited about this issue, I pick up my **THES** and read that France has just given the classic sign involving ‘deux doigts’ to Bologna, in the best Gaullist

'Non' tradition. This is a word with which we are very familiar in Northern Ireland of course in a variety of versions and colours. 'Dyslexics of Newtownards Say On'!

Some Good News from the North

Now, Seán I don't know whether you arrived in Armagh today in a black limousine (I rather suspect not), but however you travelled, your presence is welcome, both personally and as a representative of the Commission. You have provided us with a timely reminder of the European context in which we all operate and you have also provided welcome reinforcement to what some of us who have been flying the European flag have been trying to say and do.

Lest you have been depressed by my earlier remarks, I am the bearer of some good news from a Northern perspective. Even though the words 'Lisbon' and 'Copenhagen' may not have been on many people's lips here of late, actually significant strides have been, and are being, taken to realise what you have outlined. Let me address some of your action points and provide some examples, although I suspect that Eddie McArdle on behalf of the GTC (NI) in particular, in his address tomorrow, will want to provide more detail on some of them. Many of us may only have had the haziest of notions up to now of the implications of the Lisbon objectives, but by some process of osmosis, or perhaps because the objectives and the Education and Training 2010 Work

Programme represent sound common sense, we have been implementing in the NI context much of what has been proposed, even if more remains to be done, as indeed the Commission's mid-term review is likely to confirm from an EU-wide perspective.

Key Northern Ireland Actions in Relation to the Joint Interim Report (JIR)

1. There is an opportunity through the current development of a Strategic Plan for the NI Education Service 2005-08 to incorporate the 'five reference levels of average European performance' which you outlined, even if some of us may need to remind DE of their existence (but maybe, to be fair, they do already intend to place their own target-setting process for the new Strategic Plan for the NI Education Service within this valuable frame of reference). The linguistic competence indicator, when it is finalised, may however prove something of a challenge for NI society, although the CEA has currently been tasked with developing a primary school languages strategy.
2. The revised NI Curriculum, which will be phased in from 2006-07 onwards, will be geared towards developing pupils to participate in a knowledge society, with an emphasis for example at Key Stage 3 on 'Life and Work', with its skills-orientated, process-orientated approach at all

four Key Stages and with its particular focus on Personal Education, Citizenship and Thinking Skills.

3. The reform of the Further Education sector, currently being taken forward by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), is addressing the challenges of vocational and adult education and lifelong learning.
4. All of the above has been underpinned by a massive investment in ICT resources in schools, FE and even, albeit belatedly, initial teacher education, through initiatives such as C2K. The NI Educational Technology strategy, 'emPowering Schools', is currently being revamped.
5. Discussions continue around the Curran Report on the pay and conditions of teachers in NI and the related issue of a PSDR/appraisal system, linked to career development.

Key Northern Ireland Actions in Relation to the Work of Group A – Improving the Education of Teachers and Training

1. Both DEL and DE are currently driving a process of teacher education reform, intended to respond to what has been labelled as 'a climate of change'.

2. Teacher education recruitment and retention in NI remain generally buoyant, despite employment difficulties which are likely to be exacerbated by a demographic downturn (although I was interested in the European Union statistic in the 2001 report from the Education Council to the European Council that, as at 2001, half of EU teachers were aged 40 or more and 20% would be retired by 2011 and that in some countries, the proportion due to retire by 2011 is as high as 75-80%. This is precisely the kind of information we need to inform the local reform debate, as I have recently urged). A research study undertaken at Stranmillis, on behalf of DE, has in fact highlighted some current pockets of post-primary recruitment difficulty. I was equally intrigued by Seán's statistic that Europe will require the recruitment and training of over a million teachers by 2015.
3. Teacher education at the initial, induction and early professional development stages in NI is already integrated and competence-based and these competences are currently being revised by GTC (NI) at the request of DE, as part of the wider teacher education reform process. Given that the Equality Commission has recently highlighted the need to pay greater attention to preparing teachers to deal with equality issues in an increasingly multi-cultural (and sadly racist) society in NI, I would be surprised if the revised competences do not have something to say about

this. Whether in the short-term this will prevent Portuguese, Chinese or Filipino workers being petrol-bombed in their homes is another question.

4. The GTC is also currently reviewing the CPD process for teachers and no doubt it will be seeking to do so in the context of career-long learning and the identification of competences, bearing in mind that the current PQH (NI) programme for prospective head-teachers and the linked programme for serving heads, provided by the Regional Training Unit (RTU), are based around a set of standards. It would therefore be strange if the gap between EPD and PQH (for those that seek such a career path) were not to be treated in similar fashion. It is also, I believe, the case that the review is addressing the issue of accreditation of CPD work and no doubt the Group A concept of a 'shared' approach to CPD for teachers will resonate with GTC representatives.
5. As I have already noted, citizenship education is firmly on the NI curriculum reform agenda and important pilot work has been done in this area by CEA, in partnership with HEI colleagues.
6. The HEIs are currently working with CEA to ensure that the new curriculum competencies are linked with subject learning and ITE programmes are currently being revised to reflect this emphasis (e.g. the BEd. pathways at Stranmillis).

7. The NI GTC has recently adapted a Code of Professional Values for teachers in NI, following extensive consultation and no doubt the new TE competencies will reflect this Code.
8. The teacher education system in NI is already based on a partnership model involving schools, but we would all acknowledge that more needs to be done to convert the rhetoric into reality in this area. However, even as things stand, we do already see schools as more than simply 'venues for teaching practice'. Certainly, consultation by HEIs with schools as key stakeholders has been happening through the Partnership Days, funded by DE and organised by the institutions. However, experimentation is ongoing, for example, at my own College in relation to different partnership models and we have even put some funding into supporting innovative projects proposed by staff in this area. We are also currently working with St Mary's College in Creggan in Derry, with a teacher currently seconded to the College at the school's expense, in order to develop pupils at St Mary's as leaders of learning. The new M-Teach degree at Stranmillis provides another example of an innovative partnership model, which is very much designed to 'support the teacher to be a key actor in his/her own professional development'.
9. Your support and that of Group A for research-based, university-based, tertiary level teacher education will win you many friends in this room.

I'm sure Sheelagh will be alluding to the Hibernia College initiative in the South as a glaring example of a departure from the principle in the interest of 'stroke' politics. Certainly, we need to be given further support, as in England, to develop a research-based approach to teacher education.

10. Teacher education mobility has been a striking feature of the NI ITE system, at least at undergraduate level and valuable support has been given to this originally by DENI and latterly by DEL. To give an example, Stranmillis University College currently has active partnerships with no fewer than 27 European institutions in 13 states and has achieved in recent years a business target of 20 per cent outward mobility for its BEd. students. Inward mobility has been equally encouraging. Outward mobility of course has to be seen not just in the context of Comenius and Erasmus and of Europe, but also in a wider global context and our undergraduate students are also now undertaking short-term placements in the USA, South Africa, Zambia, Uganda and China. In the case of Erasmus exchanges, the ECTS system has been implemented. I know that St Mary's UC has enjoyed similar success in developing its undergraduate international programme. However, the PGCE programmes at all of the HEIs pose greater problems, because of their short duration (36 weeks), in relation to introducing a European dimension. However, there may be interesting developments in this area

that I am not aware of. As for COMENIUS etc., certainly we at Stranmillis have been active players in a number of COMENIUS initiatives in recent years and are currently leading two major projects – one a joint EU/ US funded programme and the other funded under Comenius 2.1, involving 10 partner institutions. The CARE project is in fact strongly focused on developing a global curriculum for teacher education in the context of under-achieving pupils. Staff mobility in a European and world context has also been a feature of our work. School involvement in COMENIUS projects has also been considerable in NI in recent years.

11. Language learning especially at KS1 and 2, is currently under review in the North and the unfortunate DE decision to phase out MFL provision at both university colleges in the mid-1990s may well be reversed shortly, although this would have significant resource implications. The forthcoming situation at Key Stages 3 and 4 is seen by some teachers as less positive. However, the proposed introduction of specialist schools at post-primary level may prove helpful.
12. The UK-wide, Government-supported Rewarding and Developing Staff initiative in the HE sector has enabled all of the NI HEIs to enhance professional support and financial incentives for those engaged in ITE.

13. The position with regard to the Bologna Process is less than clear currently at the UK level and will require continued monitoring.

The Value of the European Perspective

Thus, as you can see, Seán your contribution to the ongoing teacher education debate in the North has been timely. Many of the issues which you identified are already under discussion here and you have injected, on behalf of the Commission, a valuable European perspective which, I know, we will want to add into our deliberations, for example in relation to the GTC review of teacher education competences and CPD.

The Impact of Lisbon

In conclusion, I would like to return to Lisbon and to the ‘Monument to the Discoveries’ at Belem. The monument was erected in 1960 beside the River Tagus on the 500th anniversary of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator. Its angular design in concrete represents the prow of a ship, with Prince Henry pointing the way to the future to a crowd of illustrious personages, one of whom is the famous 16th century Portuguese poet, Luis de Camões (Camoens) who celebrated the epic voyage of Vasco da Gama in his work **The Lusiads** (1572). One could see the optimistic nature of the Monument as an appropriate metaphor for the Lisbon Objectives. But I am also reminded of

the poet Camões description of the city of Lisbon – ‘The princess of the world
... before whom even the ocean bows’. Let us hope that the Lisbon
Objectives evoke even half as dramatic a response. I am confident that in
Northern Ireland they will.