

ASPECTS OF INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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1. INTRODUCTION

1. This paper is set out under the four interlinked strands of **Diversification, Demography, Costs** and **Use of Estate**. It analyses the issues raised by the evidence made available through field visits, documents from the providers of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Northern Ireland and the range of other sources consulted, including government departments and agencies. It then offers a series of options for the consideration of those responsible for managing and providing ITE.
2. The report is written at a fascinating and perhaps critical period in the history of Northern Ireland (NI). Clear signs exist of the strength of the desire, on all sides, to heal long-standing and still painful divisions, both within the United Kingdom and looking at the pan-Irish context. Few things are more important for NI's future development than the new generations of teachers who will carry the responsibility for equipping the young people of the region with the knowledge, skills and values to live as citizens in this rapidly-changing world. Changes to ITE in the region might be considered for a number of reasons – social, economic, and political, for example. Taken together, the evidence studied offers some powerful reasons why the options which propose significant change might carry substantial weight. Nevertheless, the evaluation of these options plainly needs also to take account of the impressive strengths within the current range of provision, strengths which plainly cannot afford to be threatened. The report has sought to reflect the diversity of views on the desirability of change, recognising that the development of policy will continue to require great sensitivity.
3. The report is based on the following sources of evidence:
 - The Wellington Park Conference (May 2004) and the report of its predecessor conference in 2003.
 - Research and reading of key background documents provided by government departments and ITE providers.
 - Relevant reports, statistical data and background information obtained through the Internet.
 - Inspection reports by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) on all ITE providers.
 - Attendance at the ITE stakeholders' Meeting in Belfast (June 2004).
 - Fieldwork visits in NI. All five ITE providers and both Government Departments – the Department for Education (DE) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) - were visited, as well as one primary and one post-primary school (in order to obtain a "users' perspective"); in addition, meetings were held with other members of the

Stakeholders' Group, including ETI, the Regional Training Unit (RTU) and the Education and Library Boards (ELBs).

- Initial submissions and responses to the interim study paper by all providers.

A list of evidence considered is provided as **Annex A** to this report, and the original questions in the Specification to Consultants form **Annex B**. The report follows the form of this specification, but the questions are not included in the body of the text, in order to keep it uncluttered.

2 CONSEQUENCES OF DIVERSIFICATION ON TEACHER EDUCATION

4. Both university colleges (UCs) set out their position in relation to diversification in their initial submissions, and some of the main points from these are included, in addition to comments from the other providers. Where a point made in the text specifically reflects one provider's comments, this is indicated by the provider's initials in brackets, as follows: St Mary's University College (St M), Stranmillis University College (S), The Queen's University, Belfast (QUB), the University of Ulster (UU) and the Open University (OU).
5. The two UCs both welcomed unreservedly the opportunity which diversification has given them. A strong sense was registered that the terms of reference for the study were expressed in terms of a number of possible disadvantages. The consultants assured providers that the topic was to be explored in a disinterested way. Both colleges set out their rationale for the manner in which they had used the opportunity given to them by Government to diversify, and stated their conviction that this had both supported, without in any sense undermining, their central mission and had been beneficial in preserving and even enhancing their ethos. They argued that the specialisations selected had been chosen in order to avoid competition with other HEIs, and to dovetail with their role as teacher educators – in one case (St M) by supporting a faith-based liberal arts tradition, and in the other (S) by facilitating a link between early childhood studies and education and by exploiting strengths in relation to health promotion and leisure studies.
 - i. Both UCs are clear that diversification has in no way harmed, but has positively enhanced, their **provision of ITE courses**, citing benefits to the experience of the students and the expertise of the lecturers.
 - ii. It is seen (S) that the **life of the University College has been enriched** as a result of the recruitment of a more varied cross-section of students, with the significant enhancement of religious diversity and promotion of religious integration in keeping with the College's philosophy. This has helped to end the social isolation of teacher education students, which has often been the subject of critical comment in earlier years, in the context of a monotechnic college.
 - iii. The **scope for any significant further diversification** would depend on the availability of earmarked additional core funding to meet additional staff costs. The university colleges believe that the effect of the introduction of diversified courses has been very positive and that the **impact on the two universities and on the OU of any further expansion** would be very slight. One (S)

commented that, given a projected increase in the demand in NI for study opportunities close to home, a further, fully-funded, increase in full-time places would be within the College's capacity both to recruit and to teach.

- iv. The **quality of partnership arrangements with schools** is not felt by the providers to have been adversely affected by diversification. The reports by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) on these arrangements indicate schools' views that more contact with specialist tutors while on school experience would be appreciated and beneficial: this might indicate possible pressures on some staff because of the range of commitments.
- v. There is no evidence to suggest that diversification has in itself affected **the ability of the university colleges to participate in Early Professional Development (EPD) activities**, but this capacity is thought (S) to be limited by political and funding issues, which are seen to have prevented the NI ITE providers generally from making any significant contribution to the EPD phase, so that their considerable expertise has been under-used in consequence (S). The existence of the Teacher Education Partnership Group is designed to address these issues and bring a coherent approach to the funding and provision of induction and EPD activities.
- vi. The universities recognise that **diversification is primarily a matter for the two colleges**. One (QUB) pointed out that all developments in the curriculum offered by them ultimately come under the aegis of the University as the degree awarding body. A concern was expressed that further diversification might divert attention from the colleges' central mission of preparing teachers. Another suggested that any increase in the Maximum Aggregate Student Numbers (MASN) should be appropriately distributed to recognise the current geographic imbalance between Belfast and other locations (UU); it was felt that any future review needed to take a close look at the effect of diversification on the MASN cap.
- vii. Diversification is said to have **reduced unit costs** at the UCs significantly: from £6,889 (gross costs per student) in 1998-99 to £5,100 in 2003-04: a 26% cash terms improvement (St M) and from £6,002 (1995-96) to £4,912 (2002-03) (S).
- viii. Diversification brought **modest increases to staffing** levels. Any increase in workload or stress associated with diversification had been very slight. One provider (S) commented that it felt that the Government's general HE policy more generally had exacerbated stress levels across the sector.

- ix. Covering the diversified courses has meant at one provider (St M) that the **hours of some staff** (those formerly solely on B Ed) now include time with the BA; time with B Ed students may or may not be reduced for this reason. The other college (S) reports that there has been much **creative synergy** between B Ed provision and the BA and BSc programmes, through the close disciplinary relationship between Early Childhood Studies and Education and links in such areas as research and international outreach. The BSc teaching team has the potential to contribute significantly to the preparation of ITE students.
 - x. There were no significant issues about effects of diversification on **the quality of assessment of B Ed and PGCE students** except that one college (St M) commented on improvement: the large number of assignments formerly given to B Ed students in certain areas had been reduced.
 - xi. Diversification is seen to have had a positive effect on the Colleges' **material resources**, with such improvements cited as ICT and e-learning facilities, a wider range of dining facilities and enhanced international and business links.
6. The above summary underlines the strength of positive feeling expressed by the two UCs, and this was fully confirmed through discussion, with strong and even passionate commitment to the concept of diversification being expressed by both. It is hard from this evidence to see signs that the new courses have had adverse effects within the colleges on their B Ed provision, whether for staff or students. Certainly, the breaking down of any tendency to isolation for a teaching monotechnic is perceived overwhelmingly in positive terms, and the fact that these developments had full governmental backing, and indeed was encouraged by the Government in the first place, was a point stressed emphatically.
7. From the universities' perspective, things are viewed rather differently. There is undoubtedly some sense that expansion by the colleges into new areas inevitably encroaches on the undergraduate provision within the universities, unless there is an overall increase in student numbers. It is acknowledged, however, that the numbers are small and the direct impact is therefore not great. The question is rather seen (QUB) as being about whether further diversification of the two UCs might divert attention from the key issues about the future shape of ITE provision. The need for such diversification would not exist, it is argued, if there were a more coherent approach to providing teacher education. Other commentators have pointed to the strongly-held view in some quarters that one positive effect of

diversification is to increase access for less well-qualified students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

8. The question of diversification is therefore one which cannot be separated from wider issues about the development of the two colleges, and it has been pointed out (S) that the 2002 Agreement between QUB and the two university colleges committed the University to facilitating diversification. It is clear from many of the discussions that those issues are seen as particularly important in developing a longer-term strategy for teacher education. Moreover, the suspicion that behind the formulation of these questions lies some 'hidden agenda' about merging or closing these colleges remains intact in some places, despite specific assurances that this is not the case either for the two Departments or for ETI. The study is taking it as axiomatic that the future existence of the colleges is not under threat from government action. However, the shape of their future provision, both in ITE and beyond, is plainly a matter to be considered in the light of all the evidence.
9. That diversification to date has been perceived by the colleges as highly valuable and beneficial is not in doubt; nor is the evidence of a very substantial effect on reducing the cost of provision per student. Both University Colleges stress strongly that the particular basis for diversification, while it might be seen as piecemeal in policy terms, had a very clear rationale for them. It is clear that any decisions on future expansion in this area are dependent on wider views about the overall costing of the HE sector and target numbers in particular fields.

3. THE CONSEQUENCES OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND OTHER FACTORS ON TEACHER EDUCATION

10. Between 1995/96 and 2001/2002 the number of pupils in **Catholic Maintained** schools from Years 1 to 7 declined by 12%. The comparable figure for **Controlled primary schools** was 7%. Between 2001 and 2023, official demographic figures forecast a decline of 12% across the communities in the age group from 4 to 10 years. The 2001 census included figures for Roman Catholic families, Protestant and 'none or not stated'; these figures indicated the need for all future analyses of requirements to look at the split between the sectors, rather than simply providing a single line, recognising that there would continue, from known figures, to be higher numbers designated as Roman Catholics than as Protestants.
11. Although a range of **ethnic communities** is located in Northern Ireland, the total number of recent migrants is small. Recent estimates of Portuguese communities in Dungannon (around 1,000) and Craigavon (in the region of 3,000) are not reflected in the most recent published census statistics. It is suggested that these communities are largely transient and are predominantly made up of young, single male workers, although often such groups are the precursors of a more settled, family-based community.
12. It is clear from these projections that the **population of compulsory school age will decline significantly**, from 304,000 in 2002 to 258,000 in 2017, although it is expected to increase slowly thereafter. The population as a whole is expected to increase slowly until 2030, after which there will be a slow decline.
13. In interviews for this Study many professionals drew attention to the fact that these **projections had been revised** from two years ago, and that some demographic projections in the Republic of Ireland had proved incorrect. They urged caution about relying on a single projection.
14. **Newly established communities** developing from migrant workers marrying and settling in Northern Ireland will take several years to produce appreciable numbers of school age children. In the medium to long term (up to 20 years), however, there could be local increases in the number of school age children as a result of such population movement.
15. Despite these expressed doubts, it is almost certain that **fewer teachers will be required** - initially in the primary sector, but subsequently in the post-primary sector as well. The actual reduction in the number of teachers needed will depend on other factors like the age/subject area profile of older teachers and government policy on retraining teachers to meet the needs of the proposed developments in the curriculum. Here, there

appears to be scope for a **more developed analysis of expected trends**, based on the age, phase and subject profile of the teaching force and looking closely at predictions on teachers' retirement ages.

16. The **Curran Report** refers to 5 areas of **subject shortage**. However, the Report states boldly: 'There is no general shortage of teachers in Northern Ireland'. This position is not likely to change in the short and medium term. Proposals within the Curran Report suggest that the low percentage of permanent posts offered to newly qualified teachers (37%) should be addressed. Newly qualified teachers without permanent posts do not receive mentoring or continuous employment. This is evidently being looked at through the ELBs, as part of the response to the recommendations from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) on the management of substitute cover. Although the low proportion of permanent posts for newly qualified teachers remains a concern, it is reported that almost all such teachers have a permanent contract within two years of completing their training. We believe this situation continues to need careful monitoring and data collection.
17. In recent research into **The Recruitment and Retention of Teachers in Post-Primary Schools in Northern Ireland**, carried out by the DE, the majority of post-primary principals were expecting shortages in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Technology and Design, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Home Economics. Even so, few of the schools have existing vacancies and those that do are almost exclusively non-grammar schools. Possible shortages of subject teachers are masked by the fact that non-specialist teachers are covering shortage subjects in the younger age-groups in some post-primary schools. Few principals in their contacts with parents wish to publicise their areas of specialist staff shortage.
18. Further detailed research into subject shortages and age/subject teacher profiles would need to be undertaken in order to give a reliable prediction of teacher need. We have studied with interest a report produced in 2002 by the University of Ulster (with contributions from the two UCs) on Recruitment in Technology and Design. This reflected on a 'chain of influencing factors' affecting the choice of teaching Technology and Design as a career, the breaking of any one of which could contribute to continued under-recruitment. It also noted the effects of the lack of incentives in shortage subjects comparable with those found in England as a perceived inequity and source of a drain of potential teachers from NI. The paper stressed the significance of high quality specialist teaching throughout post-primary education, if a cycle of shortages were not to be perpetuated.
19. The **Costello Report** is designed to bring about a major reorganisation of post-primary education. The implementation of

the report (by 2008) will have a range of consequences for the teaching force – for example, in its deployment and in the range of specialisms required.

20. One intended effect is that a wider ability range will be present in all post-primary schools. This could mean, for example, a greater need for teachers of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and reductions or expansions in particular specialist areas. Moving teachers from school to school is not easy. Many older teachers may allow the Costello Report to trigger their early retirement. However, new legislation across the European Union is expected to give an entitlement to teachers and others to continue working beyond current retirement ages. The consequences of these trends are difficult to predict, but again need to be studied carefully.
21. As numbers in primary schools decline there would be an opportunity to improve the **pupil: teacher ratio**. This, if initiated, could mitigate the impact of falling rolls on the reduction of the total number of teachers required. Over recent years, school decisions on teacher deployment have had the effect of maintaining pupil: teacher ratios and class sizes despite considerable budgetary pressure on schools. In part this can be attributed to a higher number of small schools than elsewhere in the UK. However, pupil: teacher ratios in post-primary schools are already more favourable in Northern Ireland than those in both England and Wales (but not Scotland). Those in primary schools are also lower in Northern Ireland than in England, and unless teacher supply is managed downwards they will continue to fall with the expected demographic changes. This fall will be uneven in its effects, but may well continue to polarise full and under-recruiting schools.
22. When rolls reduce suddenly or dramatically in a school, for whatever reasons, the normal decline in teacher numbers rarely accords precisely to **curriculum needs**: some teachers are surplus to requirements; some vacancies cannot be filled from existing redundant staff. There are retraining implications in these common situations.
23. Additional training or re-training is required with any major curriculum change. A refocus on **skilled-based learning** would suggest, ideally, a retraining programme over a 2-year to 3-year period which would, temporarily, require large numbers of additional teachers for successful implementation. Whether in practice this would happen depends on financial factors way beyond the world of education.
24. **New areas of study**, including citizenship and modern languages in primary schools, will increase the need for teachers. Some teachers will seek retraining, but in many schools new staff will be brought in. Once again, however, this

could be at the expense of staff retiring or being made redundant.

25. A rapid expansion of **primary modern languages** could make strong demands on ITE providers. In most schools, however, **citizenship** will be taught by existing teachers, often within their own tutor group. Experience suggests that this type of 'add-on' curriculum makes fewer demands on the total number of teachers needed, but may have an impact on ITE courses, and the need to broaden areas of study. Provision of training for citizenship has received much attention, both through the ITE providers and the Curriculum and Advisory Support Service (CASS), with an 'ITE Citizenship Progress Planning Group' in existence since 2003 with representatives from the Department of Employment, ITE providers and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). A further area where expansion is suggested as likely is that of **teaching through the Irish Medium**, where much interesting development is currently taking place in one of the providers (St M).
26. The current **Teacher Demand Model** (TDM) of the DE has been revised several times. Predicting the exact number of teachers required and, for post-primary education, apportioning precisely an estimate of the number of teachers required in each subject area are notoriously difficult to achieve. This does not mean that a serious attempt should not be made to grapple with this unwieldy information. In interviews, it was clear that current ITE providers do not feel constrained by the TDM. The DE has commented that the TDM is not designed to assess teacher demand by subject, and that it therefore makes use of research by the ITE providers and feedback from the schools. We see a place for informing the TDM regularly and systematically with such additional data.
27. With 5 providers it is difficult to manage a **match between the demand for teachers and their supply** without accurate up-to-date information. In fact, a perfect match is impossible. As is also clear in other parts of the UK, any substantial mismatch can lead to serious shortages in key subject areas or oversupply of recently trained teachers, with consequent unemployment. Trends in the different phases and subjects will need to be monitored closely as any significant changes caused by demography or teacher recruitment patterns become apparent.
28. Northern Ireland is part of the UK. Teacher qualifications are mutually acceptable. The Catholic Certificate is restricted in its award, not being designed for use outside the Catholic sector. It is likely that **movement between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland** for initial training will grow, as both enjoy political stability. With high entry requirements in Northern Ireland to university colleges and universities, some students –

often of high quality, but falling just beneath the fierce threshold required for a training place in Northern Ireland - have gone to England to gain their professional training. Many of them return home to teach. No brake is currently placed on this free flow of trainee and graduate teachers. European Union (EU) regulations make it possible for foreign nationals to teach in Northern Ireland - subject to certain qualifying factors (length of previous teaching experience being a major one).

29. As new communities of migrants are established it is likely that a small number of teachers from the 'home' country may travel to work in Northern Ireland. In addition, more teachers of English as an Additional Language (EAL) may be needed to serve these fledgling communities. SEN teachers may be needed in the early stages of this uncertain pattern of population change. These trends are already being felt in Dungannon and Craigavon, for instance.
30. The Northern Ireland Teachers' Health and Wellbeing Survey suggests that cover teachers should be readily available to allow permanent teachers to undertake additional training. This has implications for the pool of fully qualified substitute teachers needed to facilitate this. The report also noted the extent of health and stress problems within the teaching profession, which may have considerable implications for the future profile and supply of teachers. Another important strand is the age-profile of teachers: it is fully recognised that an ageing profession will need substantial replenishing, and this will be a critical factor in determining what scale of reduction will be required.
31. A further recommendation that teachers have access to ICT to reduce the burden of routine administration and the preparation of teaching materials has a considerable bearing on initial teacher education. The current development of an ICT strategy recognises that teachers leaving initial training have efficient keyboard and computing skills.
32. The report 'Further Education Means Business' sets out a comprehensive strategy for the development of the further education (FE) sector, focusing principally on lifelong learning and economic regeneration. The review also has a strong emphasis on addressing skills shortages through vocational education, with clear implications for school/college collaboration and a coherent approach to the 14-19 curriculum.
33. The implications for teacher education are not spelt out in any detail, and will perhaps need to be the subject of a further study. However, the evidence submitted to the review includes some points that are germane: the extract from the ETI Chief Inspector's Report 1999-2002 notes some significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching currently, and these are often related to teachers' inadequate understanding of industry. The thrust of the review will underline the need for teachers' skill

development in this area especially. Moreover, there remains a significant proportion of teachers in FE who lack teaching qualifications. As the whole of provision for 14-19 year-olds is brought more closely together, questions about the preparation of teachers in both schools and colleges will be brought into sharp relief. Studies in other parts of the UK have served to underline weaknesses among some FE teachers in dealing with the vocational needs of the younger students they will meet, and in England the quality of teacher training for FE generally has been the subject of a fiercely critical inspection report. In Northern Ireland, the evidence gathered for the Department's FE Review shows that the vast majority of FE Teachers are teacher-trained (they have to be within 3 years of taking up post); all are qualified to at least level 4 in the National Vocational Qualifications Framework and there is a requirement for them to have GCSE English and Mathematics (or Key Skills in application of number and communication).

34. To deal with these issues will not necessarily require more teachers, but it may well require different or differently trained teachers. There is a clear need to build into all projections of specialist teaching requirements an analysis of the implications of expanding the vocational curriculum.
35. E-learning is seen as a significant development in the classroom and beyond. Currently it is making a considerable impact in a small number of schools where enthusiastic (but often isolated) teachers are transforming the teaching and learning process. Some ITE providers are exciting students with the possibilities of e-learning in their future careers. One (S) comments on the fact that its revised B Ed and the new Master of Teaching will be delivered through 'blended learning', and many other initiatives, including Active E-learning and the development of a virtual campus have been noted, with the Classroom 2000 ICT strand for schools also generating new provision for student teachers, funded by the Government.
36. The development of e-learning in schools is determined as much by capital and continuing revenue investment by the schools as by the introduction of e-learning in teacher training courses.
37. Any notion that computers will replace teachers, with a consequent drop in the number of teachers needed, was discounted years ago. Effective teaching and learning demand high quality human input; e-learning is likely to enhance the quality of learning rather than replace the medium of instruction.

4. THE COST OF INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

38. The study has confirmed the difficulty of obtaining an agreed basis for looking at questions of costs and cost-effectiveness in Northern Ireland's Initial Teacher Education. In particular, the question of securing 'like with like' comparisons with other countries' costs was felt to be difficult because of different assumptions and methods. Particular concern was frequently expressed about the fact that the 'MASN cap' now operated only in Northern Ireland. Another criticism voiced more than once was that the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) study's figures, which are seen as the basis for the perception that costs are too high, are thought to be founded on incorrect assumptions. In addition, student teachers in Northern Ireland do not receive bursaries for initial training or 'golden hellos' on first appointment; these sums, offered through the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in England range from £6,000 to over £12,000. It was argued that the effect of this was to make the overall cost of initial teacher training to the government significantly higher in England than in Northern Ireland. Significant financial incentives in shortage areas are also found in Wales and Scotland.
39. The figures given by the two UCs for unit costs for a four-year BEd course cost per student per year are as follows: Stranmillis: £4,912 per student for 2002-03. (The College is funded on a different basis from the university sector and SCOP Colleges. Comparisons are therefore said to be difficult.) St Mary's: £5,100 per student for 2003-04.
40. One provider (UU) indicated that the cost to the Exchequer for the 2004/05 academic year of providing 195 full-time initial teacher education (ITE) places amounted to a total of £1,103,317. This includes a payment of £24000 in respect of 'partnership support'. Overall this equates to a unit cost per student of some £5658 comprising a block grant element of £4508 and a fee of £1150.
41. In analysing comparative costs for training throughout the UK, one provider (St M) suggested that the best source of data was from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The following table comes from the HESA statistics for 2001-02:

	Education Average per FTE student	All Departments Average per FTE student
Total UK	3388	3720
Total England	3377	3700
Bishop Grosseteste	2291	2170
Newman College	2084	2190
St Marys' College	2783	2440
Total Wales	3072	3299
Trinity College	2465	2470
Total Scotland	3634	4112
Total Northern Ireland	2890	3591
QUB	3732	4297
St Mary's	2751	3059
Stranmillis	2442	2442
UU	3386	3050

42. St Mary's also indicated that the average total cost of teacher training per year in Northern Ireland, according to the HESA data, was £5,416 across the four HEIs, and that this figure did not distinguish between B Ed and PGCE courses. This compared with a figure of £6,049 for England and Wales and £6,368 for Scotland. It was also stated (UU) that the HESA data for average unit costs across all subjects did not take account of the particular subject mix of each institution.
43. In order to check the feasibility of undertaking a direct comparison between NI costs and those in the rest of the UK, we consulted leading figures from the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in England and from the field of academic research into teacher education in the UK, as well as statistical sources available through the Internet, including Eurydice. All those consulted took the view that comparisons were more likely to be misleading than helpful to policy-makers, and underlined that the aim of achieving 'like with like' figures would almost certainly prove chimerical, because of crucial differences between the four regions in the assumptions made and in contextual features.
44. The most recent data (for the academic year 2004/05) from the TTA include figures for the unit of mainstream funding per full-time equivalent (FTE) place. These range from £3,719 for a primary HEI provider outside the London area to £5,698 for

someone on a flexible post-graduate route in Inner London. To these costs need to be added the £1,150 a year for tuition fees, and a number of pockets of additional funding available, for example, for specific groups to support recruitment in shortage subjects. (The table is given as Annex D.)

45. The available data certainly do not suggest that costs in Northern Ireland are significantly more expensive than in other parts of the UK, and it is clear that the position has changed considerably since the issue of costs was discussed in the NIAO report, both because of the effect of diversification on the two university colleges and the additional payments made to attract teacher trainees in other parts of the UK. [Costs from the Republic of Ireland are still being sought, but informal evidence so far received does not suggest that the Northern Ireland provision is more expensive than that in the Republic.]
46. The question of identifying the actual unit of resource for initial teacher education has been reviewed in an important study by J M Consulting Ltd for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This looked at costs in 16 HEIs in England chosen to represent a broad range of types of institution and types of provision (primary, secondary, undergraduate and postgraduate). The aim was to compare costs with funding, and to look at how any differential related to a similar comparison for a typical 'non-laboratory' HEFCE-funded subject. This was a response to the frequent claim that full costs for providing ITE are higher than the funds provided.
47. The report's conclusions are not simple ones, and underline most strongly both that costing models such as this are far from precise, because of the assumptions that have to be made, and that the range in actual costs are highly variable. The costs for ITT in the 15 institutions in the sample used vary from £7721 to £4520 – against core funding of £4707 and £4606 respectively. The weighted average cost is £5973. Hence providing a benchmark from England for comparing NI costs is by no means straightforward, but the study does underline the view that in England providers were having to cross-subsidise the costs of ITT courses from other sources.
48. Providers have underlined that it is important to have a clear understanding of the cost elements in providing ITE, noting for example that, because the ITE providers (other than the OU) do not make payments to schools, HEI staff in consequence have to visit students more frequently. The largest single cost is academic time and it is not possible to arrive at a "precisely accurate" apportionment of academic staff time between their various activities of teaching (to different student groups), scholarship, research and administration. An element of judgement will always remain because these activities overlap.

49. The nature of the funding provided means that to disaggregate PGCE from undergraduate degree costs is not a straightforward process. Again, the important conclusion from the England study is that much depends on the key assumptions in arriving at the true cost figure: in this case, these relate especially to the amount of time when trainees are within the HEI - a far lower figure, of course, for the PGCE.
50. A comment made by one provider was that three-year B Ed courses in certain English institutions may in reality turn out to be based on a 3+1 model in order to obtain qualified teacher status (QTS) and attract PGCE bursaries.
51. Data on the costs of School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) courses in England indicate that providers receive around £5,000 from the TTA per place, a generally higher figure than for HEI-based courses because of the differences in what funding has to cover.
52. The factors which contribute to the cost of training contain a number of variables, and clearly these could be affected by decisions at a policy level. For example, a shift towards a reduced or increased pattern of visiting has a significant bearing on costs. Such decisions, however, have important repercussions for the method and quality of training, which go well beyond the scope of this study.
53. Submissions from the five providers included a number of points which bear on the specific questions posed by DEL on costing, and these have been included in earlier drafts. In the light of a suggestion received, these have not been included in the final report, but they remain available to all parties for reference.

5. QUALITY AND USE MADE OF THE INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION ESTATE

54. As is general with higher education, the proportion of the year for which the estate is directly in use for teaching students is such as to leave it available for other use for substantial periods. The HEIs were invited to indicate the extent to which they used their accommodation and facilities for other purposes (for example, community use and income-generating activities). This study is inevitably dependent on information supplied by the providers, since it was not possible to obtain independent evidence. However, in following up this report, a more detailed analysis of such issues as room-loading would seem to be valuable, since clearly there is potential for making still fuller use of some of the facilities, including, for example, ICT resources. There are issues both for universities and the UCs in relation to the portion of the year when trainees are on school placements.
55. In the current B Ed courses, 22 weeks in each year out of 30 are spent in the HEI, 8 in the partner school, so that over a four-year B Ed degree 32 weeks are spent in school experience. In the current PGCE provision, Primary courses last for 36 teaching weeks: 18 of these are spent in the HEI and 18 in schools. On the Secondary course, the overall length is also 36 weeks, with 12 spent in the HEI and 24 in schools.
56. Reports by the ETI on each of the four local providers were read, but, because of their focus, they offered little evaluative comment on the estate, although a report on one provider (S) by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) commented very positively on the learning environment and library facilities, which accorded with the view of the consultants from their site visit. In response to the questions about the quality of the estate devoted to initial teacher education, each provider offered its own self-evaluation. Their comments have been included in earlier drafts, to which reference can be made for the detail.
57. The consultants were not in a position to undertake site visits in other parts of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland. If required, this would need a separate study entailing additional costs. However, from inspection knowledge of a large number of HEI providers, the estate in the local providers visited appears broadly comparable with that in England – varying considerably between the ex-training college type of institution (in which category, the sites and buildings of the two UCs stand up well in comparison, despite the problems in some buildings in one college (S)) and the university context, where sections of a campus are dedicated to education (or shared with other faculties). Some outstanding facilities for physical education (UU, Jordanstown) and Technology and Design (St M) were seen, where it seemed that the capacity plainly existed for fuller sharing with students from other providers. The visit to

Mountcollyer to see the shared facilities used for Technology and Design underlined that sharing of facilities took place not only using plant from Higher Education but also the wider community.

58. Providers reported few areas where they felt that they suffered from a lack of appropriate facilities. One (St M) commented on a current lack of playing pitches for Physical Education, but it was hoped that a recent opportunity in the locality might rectify this.
59. Both university colleges commented in some detail on the use to which the estate is put when not occupied by staff and students. One (St M) commented that the period when the estate is not being used during term-time is confined to the four weeks of spring when both B Ed and BA students are on school experience or work-based learning respectively. During this time the technical equipment in rooms is audited, checked and repaired where necessary. All the offices continue to be occupied by staff, who are continuing with their work. Evening classes in the M Ed and M Sc continue in this period, as they do throughout the academic year. The ITE estate is used by all manner of outside groups throughout the year, with the exception of ten days in July. The main areas used by outside groups are the Assembly Hall, the Conference Room, the lecture theatres, the multimedia suite, the conference room and the sports hall. In the course of an average year there are many lettings to schools, summer and Easter academic courses for children, conferences by public and community bodies, public lectures, dramatic presentations and many events during the West Belfast Festival. It is believed that there could be higher utilisation for such purposes and also for additional academic courses. The extra utilisation of estate for these activities would take place mostly in twilight hours, at weekends and in summer holiday periods.
60. The other university college (S) commented that it has developed a thriving Conference business over the last few decades, which has generated significant additional income and ensured efficient use of the estate throughout the year. Some of the bookings are residential and most include a catering requirement. Full details of the income generated by the conference business can be found in the Annual Accounts. Major clients in recent years have included the NI Regional Training Unit (RTU) and the Open University which uses the campus at weekends and on selected evenings as a major regional study centre. Adequate parking facilities are available and there are plans to enhance these further. The proposed incorporation of the University College will open up further income generation opportunities.
61. No particular suggestions were offered for a fuller sharing of the resources across the providers. This is an area which we

believe merits further investigation. It was not felt that an alteration to the school-based dimension of B Ed and PGCE courses (either an increase or decrease) would appreciably affect the use of the ITE estate in each HEI.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSED OPTIONS

Diversification

62. The issues on diversification at the two UCs seem less complex than those in other areas of the study. The Colleges have done what they were encouraged by government to do; it has brought clear benefits in reducing costs and developing the institutions into places which are no longer monotronics and have acquired a more diverse population. They are unhesitatingly in favour of diversification and what it has done to them. Plainly, there is scope for further diversification, if that is the policy. However, it is clear that any further expansion of the UCs' non-ITE portfolio will cause raised eyebrows in the other providers, although the UCs continue to see further diversification as an important option to consider if teacher trainee places reduce. The climate in which HE operates has undoubtedly changed since the original policy encouraged diversification. But any decision with regard to future diversification is inter-dependent with wider policy on ITE provision.

Demography and Teacher Supply

63. Numbers of pupils will fall significantly over the period we are considering, as indeed they are already falling. That is, as ever, both an opportunity and a challenge. On the one hand, it provides scope to review pupil: teacher ratios and class sizes, and to focus on working with individuals or groups with particular needs. On the other, maintenance of viable units, both at school level and for particular courses within schools, is inevitably threatened, not least because declining numbers never fall evenly across all schools or age-groups. For ITE, of course, such a contraction in numbers poses questions about the viability of particular courses offered.
64. To state the obvious, maintaining a stock of teachers at its present levels is possible only in the most buoyant of economic circumstances. These are unlikely to apply to public expenditure in the near future. Indeed, the current mood in Westminster and Whitehall is one beset by talk of cuts and more cuts. However strong a priority education remains for the major political parties, the public purse is always tightly constrained.
65. For these reasons, it seems to us inevitable that one central question which must continue to be addressed sharply – as indeed it is already being addressed – is the modelling of teacher numbers required for the future, taking particular note of the effect of the two-way traffic with the Republic and with the rest of the UK. Our investigations highlight that such modelling is affected by a number of factors, many of which may mitigate the

effects of falling rolls, but to an extent which still seems far from certain.

66. We conclude that numbers of teachers will need to fall, and that the throughput of new teachers from ITE cannot be immune. One point often put to us was that new teachers in Northern Ireland are both highly qualified and highly motivated, and the worryingly large drop-out from the profession in early years familiar from English statistics does not apply to anything like the same extent. But that very fact, encouraging as it is in many ways, may itself tell against the need to train teachers at the current rate.
67. We have reached no firm conclusions on the likely rate of reduction that may be required: the Department for Education is currently undertaking important research which will bear strongly on this. Moreover, it seems to us that increasingly the allocation of quotas for post-primary ITE will need to be driven by a subject-sensitive analysis. Teacher shortages in Northern Ireland are nothing like what they have been recently in other parts of the UK. In England, for example, the work of the Teacher Training Agency has been strongly influenced by the extremely poor supply of mathematics, science and technology teachers, and its policy has been geared to finding urgent remedies for that situation. Yet even from our limited number of visits to schools, we were aware that shortages already exist: one post-primary Principal, for example, reported an extremely poor field for a science post: the four applicants had all in fact trained in England. Of course, that they were all keen to return to NI was an equally significant factor.
68. Any fall in the number of teachers to be trained will inevitably keep alive questions about the best configuration of ITE in the region. At the end of this report, we propose a small number of options which the Departments and other stakeholders may wish to consider. We certainly do not have a preferred option, and even if we did that would be immaterial, since it is not our place to make or even propose government policy. A spectrum of possibilities, from something akin to the status quo to a single lead provider, has been proposed to us. We think the arguments need further testing.

Costs

69. Cost data remain extremely hard to interpret and even to establish in a consistent manner. Some of the questions posed by DEL are extremely difficult to answer with any precision or certainty of comparability. The English study cited underlines both the methodological problems and the wide range within a single country ostensibly funded on similar principles. It still seems clear to us that benchmarked financial data alone do not

give a particularly strong steer to policy. Moreover, questions of value for money and cost-effectiveness are concerned with quality as well as expenditure, and the ETI reports on the providers continue to emphasise many features of very good quality, with continued improvements evident in key areas such as partnership with schools.

The Use of the Estate

70. The time available for visiting has enabled us to form an overview of most of the premises and resources used for ITE. The distinctive nature of education degrees inevitably results in different patterns of use from most courses, because of the time spent by students in school rather than at the provider's home base. Clearly, much constructive thought has been given to ways of sharing premises and resources more widely, but there is undoubtedly more that can be done, with a mixture of imagination and good will.

General reflections

71. This study could not – and does not – take place in a vacuum. Indeed, even while we were in Belfast the Minister was making important announcements which will have a direct bearing on the shape and pattern of ITE in the future and the new status and governance arrangements now proposed for Stranmillis University College will clearly affect any future decisions. In addition, it is plain to us that the partnerships in Northern Ireland, incorporating Higher Education, the ELBs, bodies such as ETI, the RTU and many others represented at the two conferences are engaged in extremely important developmental work, which is a vital context for this study.
72. The distinctive tripartite structure of ITE, Induction and EPD is a valuable integrating concept for taking forward this work, and we believe that there is more to be done to ensure the full involvement of each partner at the different stages. Two questions occur to writers more familiar with the English system: is there still scope for further development, among the locally-based providers, of the schools' tutoring and mentoring function in ITE; and, similarly, are those from HE who have led in the initial phase always taking as full a part as they might in tracking new teachers' progress and providing training expertise beyond the ITE stage? These are questions beyond the scope of the present study. The ETI reports on the quality of partnership arrangements between schools and HEIs within ITE, and arrangements for such partnerships are stated clearly within the document 'Initial Teacher Education: Partnerships between schools and the Higher Education Institutions'.

73. What is certain is that to play a key part in the proposed developments, be they curricular, organisational or pedagogic, the ITE providers need to be **both** at the forefront of the thinking and action **and** capable of supporting change from the perspective of well-grounded practical research and models of excellent practice. At such a challenging time, many of the key questions facing ITE providers and the other stakeholders are concerned with ensuring high quality, flexibility, innovation and effective collaboration designed to make the most efficient and cost-effective use of the impressive range of valuable resources to be found in Northern Ireland.

Options

In taking forward the analysis of provision offered in this report, it is suggested that the strategic options might be classified into four categories of response. (These are not fully distinct, and variations on these themes may well be possible: it is, in effect, a spectrum from no change to significant change.)

It has been suggested to us that there is an insufficiently close linkage established between the data presented in the report and the specific options set out. The report does, indeed, argue that the selection of any one of the options will be dependent not only on **economic or demographic data**, but on **questions of quality** and on **political will**. Nevertheless, the data in themselves – and particularly those on numbers of pupils and the effect of these on the required supply of teachers – do indicate some important reasons for **considering change of some sort**, just as the clear strengths of current position **counsel against adopting change for the sake of change**. The fact that what is presented is a **spectrum of possibilities** underlines that no one option is self-evidently or compellingly the right one. The writers of this report heard powerful arguments from those advocating change, either on a small or larger scale, and also from those believing that no such change was required: indeed, that it might destroy important features of current provision. They themselves have **no personal commitment to any of the options** put forward, and have therefore presented the four neutrally, while reflecting as fully as possible the range of strong views expressed.

1. Do nothing

In almost all situations, it is important to present the possibility of what in option appraisals is often termed the ‘do nothing’ option, a term used entirely without pejorative connotations. Unless the pressures and the reasons for change are overwhelming, and especially if what is there at the moment has real strengths, then there is an onus on those preparing possible change options to give serious consideration to retaining the status quo. Certainly, some of those submitting evidence were deeply sceptical of the motives for or the necessity of such change, and some felt that it would risk undermining the distinctiveness of current provision: all five providers, with some strong evidence, stressed what they had to offer which was unique to them. The

strength of this response is a significant part of the backcloth to this study. It does not in any way necessarily undermine the case for **considering** change, but it does serve as a valuable reminder that any proposed change requires persuasiveness and a great effort to win 'hearts and minds' if it is to be embraced in a spirit which makes success likely.

Moreover, it is important to be clear about what kind of change is to be considered and what is 'off-limits'. Plainly, the most obvious way of generating structural change would be to reduce the total number of providers, and there has been powerful suspicion that this is a kind of 'hidden agenda' forming the backcloth to the study. Yet DEL and DE officials have underlined that there is no current intention to close or merge any of the providers, all of which have distinctive features and strengths to offer the community. Hence, at least in these simple structural terms, 'do nothing' is, it appears, an option. However, it is clear that the Departments do see powerful external changes which cannot be ignored, since the contexts in which new teachers are being and will be trained cannot remain the same – with implications for the numbers of teachers needed and the skills required that will depend on sensitive forecasting of future needs. If these implications are grasped imaginatively, they surely have the capacity to improve the quality, responsiveness and efficiency of what is offered, while contributing to desirable social and political outcomes.

2 Small-scale change, building on existing partnerships

Partnerships in Northern Ireland have a number of effective features, and the two Teacher Education conferences (Limavady 2003 and Wellington Park 2004) underlined the strength of these partnerships and the range of stakeholders involved, including the RTU, the ELBs, CASS and others, as well as the HEIs and schools. These bodies have established a number of common features in the management and delivery of ITE, as well as the framework of competences which embraces ITE, induction and EPD. Although the precise nature of the competence framework is currently under review, with the possibility of some simplification ahead, it already gives a very good basis for dialogue and cooperation over the provision of ITE. Hence the possibility surely exists for some further development of shared approaches and provision, building on existing links, without undermining the institutions concerned. The basis of any such extended collaboration, normally by two HEIs, would be the best use of existing resources and expertise in a way which avoids unnecessary duplication of provision and is based on sensitive analysis of the supply/demand modelling available.

We saw examples of constructive cooperation and exchange - for example, between the two University Colleges in a science, history and geography module of the primary B Ed. We saw examples where, with the necessary will and logistics in place, fine facilities could be shared more by other providers offering the same specialism: for instance, in relation to the Technology and Design provision by the University of Ulster and St Mary's University College. We saw examples of imaginative use of ICT and e-learning which could, as it seemed to us, be disseminated more widely to provide a kind of template of

good practice for all student teachers. We saw examples of expertise in educational research which, if shared more widely, could make a great contribution to the professional development of HEI staff in response to new developments.

This option could be explored by looking specifically at pairs of providers to explore scope for further cooperation or reduction of overlap. However, it is not presented here necessarily in that way: what is argued, simply, is that there is an approach which continues incrementally along the line of gradual change and development, in recognition of the strengths of existing structures. Particular extensions of existing cooperation could, we argue, be one way of building on existing strengths while, at the same time, showing a proper concern for economic prudence and value for money which recognises the financial constraints within the system and helps create a stronger sense of partnership – perhaps at the same time helping to counteract the sense of unhealthy competitiveness which occasionally still seems to surface.

3 A more developed planning and implementation structure for all ITE

In this option, all institutions would preserve institutional management autonomy, but with a considerably enhanced cross-institutional structure, including the Government Departments, HEIs and ELBs (and other partners as determined) to determine allocations and intakes and to facilitate joint provision by two or more providers. Like Option 2, this would permit an evolution from existing partnership arrangements, but would do so in a more coherent, systematic way, with longer planning timescales, financial controls and analysis of supply and demand projections. In this way, there would be a very clear rationale for all allocations of places, and a secure mechanism for ensuring value for money.

The coordinating body would proceed through discussion and negotiation, but there would need to be a capacity to make decisions, backed by Government, in any cases where consensus could not be achieved. We are not recommending any particular coordinating mechanism, and are acutely aware of the dangers of elaborate committee-based bureaucracies which have failed to add value and have been abandoned after much frustration. However, there are existing or emergent structures which should offer scope for effective cooperation. We recognise, for example, the vital role of the two Departments and the impetus being gained by the Northern Ireland University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), with a new Liaison Group about to start work – as well as the importance of regional coordination through such bodies as the ELBs and CASS, RTU and CCEA.

4 A fully integrated or federated structure, with overarching responsibility for all of the providers offering ITE

In discussions with a wide range of those engaged with the ITE partnerships, it was clear that some felt that there was now an opportunity to go further, and consider a model which, in effect, would bring all providers of ITE within a single structure. (A more limited version of this also existed, in which the two university colleges might be brought more strongly under the umbrella of Queen's University Belfast.) Those who favoured this approach, from several different 'stakeholder' perspectives, sometimes spoke of the idea as akin to a single institute or department for education with a number of constituent bodies. They believed that it would have considerable benefits in terms of the 'three Es' (efficiency, economy and effectiveness) as well as for the 'three Is' of the Northern Ireland philosophy of early teacher education, seeing it as an approach with the potential for significant cost reductions, if built on a fully worked out model for ITE. Others said that the way forward lay not in the idea of amalgamation but in recognising the reality acknowledged by the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement, namely that diversity exists, that the diverse groups must respect each others views and that the diverse groups must work together for the common good.

Those who were in favour of this integrated option suggested that it would create, in addition, an opportunity to develop for Northern Ireland a real 'centre of excellence' for teacher education and in particular for ITE, well founded on the strengths of the existing provision: it would bring together within its ambit the best research, scholarship and educational thinking from all of the providers, and would harness these strengths to a fully inclusive and comprehensive vision for education in Northern Ireland for the twenty-first century. This was an idea which was propounded eloquently and thoughtfully by a number of the partners, and from varied perspectives. There would, of course, be many issues of practice and principle which would require great care and skill to implement effectively: for example, questions of degree-awarding powers would undoubtedly arise and sensitivities would plainly exist over any arrangement which appeared to favour any particular provider. As with the previous model, but even more so, this option would draw into the discussion the full range of partners who contribute to teacher education at all levels.

Choosing from the options

It was made clear at the outset of the study that this report would not make specific recommendations: it was not the writers' place to do so. The interim paper again stressed that its purpose was to combine analysis of data with a reflection of the views and perspectives of those with whom we met and spoke. This remains the writers' central objective. The fieldwork and reading we have undertaken have offered us valuable glimpses of the nature of ITE in Northern Ireland; but we do not have the independent evidence on which to offer a fundamental appraisal of strengths or weaknesses: indeed, it would be presumptuous to attempt this.

However, we offer some thoughts – from what is essentially the outsider's standpoint - which we hope may be useful to those whose task it is to take forward the thinking.

- (i) The review was triggered by a number of imperatives, not least of them the necessity for government departments to show their responsiveness to the issues raised in the report by the NIAO: not to have looked at the scope for greater financial efficiency and economy would surely have been irresponsible. This need is independent of the relationship, at any given time, between Whitehall and Northern Ireland, though obviously it acquires somewhat different coloration and contexts under the two systems. But keeping costs to a minimum is a political requirement unlikely to disappear in the short or medium term, at least.
- (ii) The questions raised by the specification for the study underlined that there were also significant challenges ahead for teacher education in Northern Ireland as a result of demographic and wider social changes: declining school populations, an 'estate' with some problems in management, quality and use, and the uncertainties of the employment market, for example.
- (iii) Added to these factors – inherently difficult to quantify with precision – are the important changes within Northern Ireland education, many of which have radical implications for teacher education which fall outside the scope of the present study, but which undoubtedly bear on it: Classroom 2000; new curricula and courses; major impending change to 14-19/further education; a major push on Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The successful implementation of these developments will depend crucially on the flow of able young teachers and on their having the opportunity within the profession to spearhead them.
- (iv) None of this implies that one particular option for change is to be embraced. However, it would seem – again, with the outsider's eye – that the one reaction which would be difficult to justify would be a complacent rejection of the need for any response on the grounds that all financial and demographic data were intrinsically suspect and unreliable. Not that any signs of such a reaction were encountered, of course. Yet at times views were somewhat polarised, in a way which underlined the need for a sustained and

- open debate in order to establish and seek to accommodate stakeholders' diverse perspectives.
- (v) One important reason why doing nothing at all may not be a realistic option for the long term is that there already exists a widespread desire to capitalise on the strengthening sense of dialogue and partnership which already exists, by building stronger bridges and relationships across the providers. A recognition of the value of greater coherence and coordination is common ground among those with whom we have spoken, and hence improved communication and connectivity have a momentum of their own.
 - (vi) On one point the sceptical reaction may seem justified: financial data have proved as slippery and elusive as might have been predicted. All attempts to find a robust model for looking at the costs of providing ITE have run into formidable reefs: the principle of 'like with like' comparison is far easier than the reality. On this, the search continues, but without expectation of an outcome that gives a clear steer to policy.
 - (vii) For this reason, the reality of a continued period of falling school rolls is the sharper tug on political action. Northern Ireland continues to attract an exceptional calibre of highly-qualified student teachers, and some of these choose to teach in other parts of the UK or in the Republic, where they are undoubtedly most welcome. But the basis of intake management must surely continue to be the needs of Northern Ireland itself, unless the Departments have in mind a major change of policy in this regard, in such a way that planning would take explicit account of the wider context of the UK and the Republic. For example, good teachers trained in Northern Ireland can offer much to the inner cities in England which currently face acute shortages of teachers and are heavily dependent on recruiting worldwide in a way which can risk bleeding other countries of one of their most precious resources.
 - (viii) But these practical considerations, while of great importance, need to be placed in the context of wider policy considerations. At the heart of these are questions about the nature of society and the nature of teacher education, which again go far beyond this study. There is manifestly a great and widespread desire for sustained excellence, combined with a keen wish to build on existing strengths, to develop the powerful partnerships that exist and to promote a fully inclusive and integrated approach to teacher education. It is a central aim of government to promote reconciliation and a shared future, and ITE could make a positive contribution to achieving this aim, not least through the nature and breadth of the experience of schools in the community which student teachers receive.
 - (ix) Those charged with taking forward these matters will wish to ensure that policy considerations are as fully informed as possible by the best available data; but they will also recognise that decisions will rest on fundamental questions about the way in which Northern Ireland is to develop, given the prospect of real political and social stability, and about how education, including teacher education, can

best serve, in a coherent and integrated way, fundamental goals for individuals and for society.

Next steps?

It will be for those with responsibility for managing and delivering ITE in Northern Ireland to determine what action, if any, should be taken to follow up this and the parallel studies which are being carried out: what follows therefore is simply a series of reflections stimulated by our visits, reading and discussions on some areas which, from our perspective, may be worthy of further attention. These make no claim to originality, but the hope is that they may chime in with thinking which is already taking place in the region.

- a. The study has sought to make use of the most up-to-date data available on questions of costs, numbers and demography. Both Departments in Northern Ireland have been extremely helpful in providing information and pointing to sources of evidence. However, we believe that, to go alongside the analyses which inform the DE's teacher demand model (TDM), there would be great value in acquiring **more detailed and sensitive profiling of the teaching profession**, together with the demographic data, in order to provide a more comprehensive basis for determining potential shortfall or over-supply – perhaps including high, medium and low projections. We suggest that statistical modelling might be developed more fully to look closely at curricular needs especially in post-primary education, and that such additional information might be added to the existing TDM as an aid to planning the allocations to ITE, to respond both to the risk of a **general over-supply** and **increasing shortages in key specialist areas**. This information should support strategic decision-making about the distribution of courses and students across the providers.

- b. All the available information has indicated that, since the report by the NIAO, the unit costs for ITE providers have come more closely into line both internally to the region and in relation to UK comparators: the lack of a perceived need for special financial incentives and the relatively low wastage rate among beginning teachers are further factors which have affected the comparative costs. However, recent studies such as that from England which has been cited in the report have sought to analyse costs in a more developed way - taking account of the differences between ITE and other degree courses, for example. The Departments may wish to consider the possible value of seeking **more refined and up-to-date costing**, using a model such as that in the English study.

- c. In order to inform a strategic policy for ITE, more detailed **quantitative data** as in the two bullet points above may provide a more robust method of evaluating the available options. However, it has been clear to us that these need equally to be underpinned by the best possible **assessments of quality**. It was extremely helpful to be able to study reports from ETI on each provider. However, we suggest that – subject to availability of resources within the inspectorate’s programme and to the remit given to ETI – it would be valuable for ETI to provide full, up-to-date intelligence. This might cover the **overall strengths of the ITE provision, management and estate in each provider**, looking closely at such questions as **research capacity, specialist expertise, quality assurance** and **partnerships with schools**.
- d. In order to develop further the excellent training and development partnerships which plainly exist in the region, and to ensure a coherent progression through from higher education study to professional development, we suggest that there might be scope to explore **enhanced coordinating roles within the region’s excellent supporting structures**, including, especially, the Regional Training Unit and the work of ELBs and CASS.
- e. We heard much about the difficult logistics of **sharing estate and facilities more widely**, and of initiatives which, while initially promising, had not been sustained for one reason or another. While in no sense underestimating such considerations, we believe that the aim of securing such cooperation remains a valuable one, if resources are not to be underused. We suggest that this is a matter both of goodwill and practical support, and suggest that thought be given to the best ways of pursuing this goal through a **renewed determination to break down barriers and prejudices**.
- f. We were made keenly aware not only of the continued high calibre of student teachers but of the excellent practice in many features of their training and in the resources available for them. We suggest that the idea of **‘centres of excellence’** is worth further exploration, in order to share and disseminate expertise and facilities as widely as possible. From our limited direct evidence, it seemed likely that areas where such an approach might have benefits would include **ICT and e-learning**, where promising developments in making these an integral aspect of students’ experience and permitting a high level of tutorial and peer support, and specialist areas such as **technology and design** where numbers in individual providers are low.

Annex A

The evidence used in this report:

Site visits:

The Open University
Queen's University, Belfast
St Mary's University College
Stranmillis University College
University of Ulster (Coleraine, Jordanstown and Mountcollyer)
Strandtown Primary School
Down Academy, Downpatrick

Discussions held with:

The five providers
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Education
The Regional Training Unit
The Education and Library Boards
Sister Anne O'Shea
The Education and Training Inspectorate
The Teacher Training Agency
Professor Alan Smithers
Principals from NI schools
Stakeholder Group
And others, informally

Conference:

Wellington Park Hotel Conference (May 2004)

Documents:

Initial and subsequent submissions from all five providers
Documents supplied by providers, including strategic plans, newsletters, curriculum documentation, etc.
Conference papers (Limavady and Wellington Park)
emPowering Schools in Northern Ireland (DE)
ITE: Partnerships between Schools and the HEIs
"Further Education means Business" (DEL)
Curran Report (Teachers' Pay and Conditions)
Costello Report
Inspection reports: ETI and QAA
Consultation on Proposals to Introduce Variable Fees (DEL)
The Recruitment and Retention of Teachers in Post-Primary Schools in Northern Ireland
Recruitment in Technology and Design (UU)
Northern Ireland Teachers' Health and Wellbeing Survey
NIAO Study
Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data
Unit of Resource study by J M Consulting Ltd for the Department for Education and Skills

Annex B

The Specification for the Study

ANNEX 1

WORK PLAN

Study Area 1: Consequences of Diversification on Initial Teacher Education

The study should explore and report on the effect of diversification on the Teacher Education aspect of the University Colleges' (UCs') work, including the effects on -

- Value-added dimension of the BEd and PGCE courses;
- Capacity to cope with recommended further diversification;
- Partnership role with BEd and PGCE partner schools;
- Partnership role with Area Boards and schools in Early Professional Development;
- The attitude and implications of existing and further diversification in the UCs on NI's HE sector in general;
- Unit costs;
- Staffing levels and staff allocation;
- Staff work-load;
- Staff work/life balance;
- Staff stress levels;
- Staff contact hours with BEd and PGCE courses;
- Specialist tutor school-based supervision of BEd and PGCE students;
- Student-teacher assessment;
- Material resources.

Measurable outcomes:

The study should report on whether or not diversification in both University Colleges has diminished each college's capacity to cater for the BEd and PGCE courses, the price they have each had to pay to maintain their standards in terms of impact on human and material resources, and the possible impact on their teacher education courses of any further diversification, as recommended by the NI Audit Office (NIAO) in 1998?

Specifically, answers are required for each college to the following questions:

- How has the value added to teacher education courses been affected by diversification?
- Can the colleges cope with any further diversification within their existing resources?
- How has the quality of the colleges' partnership arrangements with partner schools hosting their BEd and PGCE students been affected by diversification?
- How has the quality of the colleges' partnership role with the Area Boards and schools in relation to Early Professional Development been affected by diversification?
- What has been the effect on the NI HE sector generally of the introduction of diversified courses at the UCs, and what could be the effect on HE of possible further diversification at the UCs?
- How has diversification reduced unit costs at the UCs?
- Have staffing levels increased and/or staff been re-allocated from the BEd and PGCE courses to cover diversified courses?
- How has BEd and PGCE staff workload been significantly affected by diversification?
- How has UC staff work/life balance been affected by diversification?
- Have specialist staff contact hours with the BEd and PGCE courses been affected to cover diversified courses?

- How has the capacity of specialist tutors to undertake systematic school-based supervision of BEd and PGCE student teachers been affected by diversification?
- How has the quality of assessment of BEd and PGCE students been affected by diversification?
- Has diversification had any discernible effect on the colleges' material resources?

Study Area 2 : Consequences of Demographic Trends and Other Factors on Teacher Education

The study should explore and report on the effect on teacher supply of demographic trends (and other related factors indicated below) in Northern Ireland from the present to 2023. Answers are required to the following questions:

1. Based on the most recent census figures, what are the accurate demographic trends in Northern Ireland's -
 - Protestant population?
 - Roman Catholic population?
 - Population from other Community Backgrounds?

What are the implications for teacher supply in each sector in Northern Ireland of these statistics, from the present to 2023?

2. What are the implications for teacher supply in Northern Ireland of the recommendations of the Curran Report?
3. What are the implications for teacher supply in Northern Ireland of any proposed reduction in pupil/teacher ratios?

4. What are the implications for teacher supply in Northern Ireland of proposed changes in Northern Ireland's curriculum towards a focus on skills-based learning?
5. What are the implications for teacher supply in Northern Ireland of proposed additional areas of study in the Northern Ireland curriculum e.g. citizenship, modern languages in the primary curriculum etc?
6. What are the implications for teacher supply in Northern Ireland of possible modifications to the Department of Education Demand Model e.g. the tightening or relaxation of the quota approach?
7. What are the implications for teacher supply in Northern Ireland of free trade in initial teacher education with the rest of the UK?
8. What are the implications for teacher supply in Northern Ireland of the recommendations of the NI Teachers' Health and Wellbeing Survey?
9. What are the implications for teacher supply in Northern Ireland of the recommendations of the current review of Further and Higher Education?
10. What are the implications for teacher supply in Northern Ireland of E-learning?

Study Area 3: The Cost of Initial Teacher Education in Northern Ireland

The study should explore and report on the cost of initial teacher education, both BEd and PGCE courses, in Northern Ireland's five Teacher Education Institutions, and compare this with the cost of similar courses elsewhere in the British Isles.

Answers are required to the following questions:

1. How much does a four-year BEd course cost per student per year at each of NI's University Colleges?
2. How much does a PGCE course cost per student each year at each of the NI HEIs offering PGCE courses?
3. How much more or less does it cost, per student per year, to undertake a Four Year BEd course in NI's UCs than in comparable Institutions in England, Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, comparing like with like?
4. How much more or less does it cost, per student each year, to undertake a PGCE course in NI's HEIs than in comparable Institutions in England, Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, comparing like with like?
5. How common are three-year BEd courses in England, Wales and Scotland, and what is the unit cost per year?
6. How much does it cost to undertake a school-based initial teacher-training (SCITT) course in England and Wales?
7. Whatever the cost of initial teacher education in Northern Ireland in comparison with others, how could the unit cost, per student per year, realistically be reduced from their present levels?

Study Area 4: Quality and Use Made of the Initial Teacher Education Estate

The study should explore and report on the quality and current use made of the Initial Teacher Education estate at the five HEIs offering initial teacher education courses.

Answers are required to the following questions:

1. What proportion of the current BEd provision is based in each university college and what proportion in partner schools?
2. What proportion of the current PGCE provision is based in each HEI offering PGCE courses, and what proportion in partner schools?
3. What is the quality of the estate devoted to initial teacher education in each University College and the other three providers?
4. How does the quality of the estate compare among the five ITE providers?
5. How does this quality compare with the accommodation provided for initial teacher education across a sample of similar institutions in England, Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland?
6. What facilities, both necessary and desirable, are lacking in each of the initial teacher education providers in Northern Ireland?
7. What use is made of the initial teacher education estate in each institution when it is not being used for its primary purpose?
8. Could there be higher utilisation of the ITE estate in each Institution when it is not being used for its primary function?
9. Is any rationalisation of the ITE estate possible amongst the five HEIs?

10. What effect would an alteration to the school-based dimension of BEd and PGCE courses (either an increase or decrease) make on usage of the ITE estate in each HEI?

Stakeholders who could be consulted are:

- DEL & DE & DFP
- HEIs
- ETI
- The NI Stakeholders Group
- GTC (NI)
- ELBs
- CCMS
- CCEA
- NICIE
- The Teachers' Unions
- NUS/USI
- GBA
- SHA
- ANIC
- Equality Commission NI
- UCET (NI & London)
- RTU
- LSDA (NI)
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaiochta
- TTA (London)
- OFSTED
- HMI Scottish Office
- HMI Welsh Office
- The Teachers' Unions
- Department of Education & Science Republic of Ireland

In the light of their findings, all studies are asked to propose revised models for the delivery of teacher education in Northern Ireland, for discussion purposes.

Annex C:

Supporting detail from Comparative Costs study

1. The following gives detail from the English study, which may be of interest in looking closely at NI costs.

Table 1. Main cost elements studied

	percentage of the total costs of an ITT student	percentage of the total costs of a HEFCE-funded student
Academic staff time	29%	45%
Other departmental costs		
• Equipment/consumables	5%	
• Travel costs – staff and students	3%	
• Administrative support	7%	
Payments to schools, mainly school placement costs	12%	
Subtotal: academic department costs	56%	
Central university costs, including estates, TRAC infrastructure and cost of capital employed adjustments, libraries and IT, and central administration	44%	55%
Total	100%	100%

2. The following table sets out the study's summary of the costing figures for ITE, compared with those for the other non-laboratory subject. It is important to note that the figure for initial teacher education (here Initial Teacher Training (ITT) includes TTA core funding as well as the standard tuition fee of £100. The paper notes that both the ITT and non-laboratory subject costs are about 20% higher than their funding when the latter includes allocations as well as core funding and that the costs of ITT are significantly higher than those of the non-laboratory subject. Average ITT costs across the case studies are 170% of the costs of non-laboratory subjects, and 200% of the core-plus-allocations funding of non-laboratory subjects.

Table 2. Average costs and funding for ITT and a non-laboratory subject

2002/3	ITT	non-laboratory subject
weighted average annual <u>cost</u> per student FTE	£5973	£3579
(a) weighted average annual <u>core funding</u> per student FTE	£4709	£2870
(a) differential of cost from core funding	27%	25%
(b) average <u>core funding-plus-allocations</u> per student FTE	£4921	£3014
(b) differential of cost from core funding-plus-allocations	21%	19%

3. The paper notes a number of reasons why the ITT costs are higher:
- generally, staff student ratios (the number of students per staff member) are lower in ITT. This means that there are more members of staff for a given number of students. This is due to the different teaching methods employed in ITT, with the longer teaching year, support provided to student placements, the sometimes small group specialist teaching, and the time required to support partnerships, contractual arrangements, and quality assurance;
 - payments to schools for placements, and the costs associated with mentor training, staff and student travel, where payments are often constrained by available funding;
 - support staff costs, in particular the placement office, where again we were frequently informed of the significant workload borne by staff;
 - laboratories and ICT workshops for the specialist subject programmes.
4. The third and fourth tables highlight the extent of variability among the institutions surveyed, and it is this which, for the purposes of the present study, seems most significant. Plainly the position is one where, for whatever reasons, providers differ widely from each other both in the actual costs and in the relation between these and the core funding, in ways which make comparability particularly difficult to establish. However, if the figures bear any relation, in the methodology employed, to those made available so far to the NI study, they do seem to indicate that there is no reason to feel that the costs in Northern Ireland are out of line with those for England. Moreover, the conclusion that in England ITT costs would need something in the order of a 20% increase in funding to bring average costs and funding in line is certainly an interesting one.

Table 3. Cost differentials, by case study institution

Institution	Differential of the ITT cost from its core funding expressed as a percentage of core funding	Differential of the non-laboratory subject cost, from its core funding expressed as a percentage of core funding
a	29%	-6%
b	40%	5%
c	31%	42%
d	17%	-1%
f	19%	0
g	42%	
h	7%	17%
i	25%	31%
j	31%	55%
k	-2%	22%
l	3%	-3%
m	31%	21%
n	58%	51%
o	64%	41%
p	45%	82%
weighted average	27%	25%

Table 4. Costs and core funding for each case study institution for ITT.

Institution	core funding £/student FTE	cost £/student FTE
a	5009	6475
b	5138	7175
c	4937	6455
d	5058	5905
f	4912	5869
g	4933	7023
h	4886	5213
i	4587	5718
j	4417	5787
k	4606	4520
l	4677	4811
m	4370	5737
n	4552	7200
o	4707	7721
p	4666	6783
weighted average	4709	5973

Annex D: Latest costs for England from the TTA

Units of mainstream funding and weighting factors for the AY2004/05

Phase-subject group	Location of place	Level-mode of study ^{Note 4}	Weighting factor	Unit of Mainstream funding per FTE place ^{Notes 5 and 6}
Secondary non-shortage ^{Note 1}	Outside London	UG	1.1230	4,177
		PG	1.1370	4,229
		PG flexible	1.1910	4,430
	Inner London	UG	1.2130	4,512
		PG	1.2260	4,560
		PG flexible	1.2840	4,776
	Outer London	UG	1.1790	4,385
		PG	1.1930	4,437
		PG flexible	1.2490	4,645
Secondary shortage - standard cost ^{Note 2}	Outside London	UG	1.1630	4,326
		PG	1.1740	4,366
		PG flexible	1.2300	4,575
	Inner London	UG	1.2550	4,668
		PG	1.2660	4,709
		PG flexible	1.3260	4,932
	Outer London	UG	1.2200	4,538
		PG	1.2320	4,582
		PG flexible	1.2900	4,798
Secondary shortage - high cost ^{Note 3}	Outside London	UG	1.2960	4,820
		PG	1.3070	4,861
		PG flexible	1.3700	5,095
	Inner London	UG	1.3990	5,203
		PG	1.4100	5,244
		PG flexible	1.4780	5,497
	Outer London	UG	1.3600	5,058
		PG	1.3720	5,103
		PG flexible	1.4370	5,345
Primary – HEI/FEC providers	Outside London	UG	1.0000	3,719
		PG	1.3080	4,865
		PG flexible	1.3700	5,095
	Inner London	UG	1.0790	4,013
		PG	1.4110	5,248
		PG flexible	1.4780	5,497
	Outer London	UG	1.0500	3,905
		PG	1.3720	5,103
		PG flexible	1.4380	5,348
Primary – non-HEI/FEC	Outside London	PG	1.3550	5,040
		PG flexible	1.4200	5,281
	Inner London	PG	1.4620	5,438
		PG flexible	1.5320	5,698
	Outer London	PG	1.4220	5,289
		PG flexible	1.4900	5,542

Note 1 Secondary non-shortage subjects include applied art & design, applied business, art & design, business studies, citizenship, English, geography, health & social care, history, leisure & tourism, other and physical education.

Note 2 Secondary shortage standard cost subjects include applied ICT, ICT, mathematics, modern languages, music and religious education.

Note 3 Secondary shortage high cost subjects include applied science, design & technology, engineering, manufacturing and science.

Note 4 PG also includes fast track.

Note 5 This column shows units of mainstream funding per FTE place. The unit of mainstream funding for part-time places is 50% of the FTE unit and the unit for assessment only places 25% of the FTE unit.

Note 6 These units of mainstream funding do not include the additional units of mainstream funding for Teachers Pension scheme contribution that some providers will receive.