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**The Council for Integrated Education written response to the Interim Report of the Panel for the Independent Review of Education**

**18 May 2023**

# NICIE note first in the introduction from the panel that at the heart of this review process are the needs of the learner…at every level.

NICIE note also that ‘recommendations for change will be presented in the final report, which will suggest a direction of travel and recommended for steps…if education is to keep pace with the transformation in wider society.’

NICIE note also that you believe this vision should not be constrained by the existing policies and structures of education.

3.2 Excellent Education System.

NICIE note the importance of ‘respecting the reasonable rights of parents to ensure that children are educated in accordance with their religious and philosophical convictions’. However, this does not mean that parents have a right to have a school that only caters for such.

NICIE note also your aspiration to ‘promote community cohesion.’

No doubt, you will have noted the Integrated Education Northern Ireland Act 2022 and its duty to identify and assess the demand for Integrated Education.

NICIE reiterate the vision of Integrated Education and our submission in 2021.

NICIE would like the panel to be aware under 4.1 Early Years of the Integrated Education Act and that the statutory duty extends to preschool nursery units if attached to Integrated primary schools.

**NICIE Vision**

A society where children are educated together, confident to express their own identity and culture; and accepting of, and prepared to engage with, the identity and culture of others.

**NICIE Mission**

To promote reconciliation in Northern Ireland through Integrated Education

4.2 Disadvantage and Underachievement. NICIE note your importance placed on enhancing the life chances of those from disadvantaged backgrounds. NICIE would like to reiterate the lack of sixth form provision in post primary schools, for example, Downpatrick and the surrounding area and thus the parental drive to create a new Integrated School in the Mid Down area.

NICIE acknowledge the benefits to teachers and students of large schools with a broad curricular offer. NICIE would point to the Development Proposal from Strangford Integrated College for dual entry and the success of Lagan, and Slemish Integrated Colleges.

Under 4.3 Learner Support, Inclusion and Well-Being. NICIE would encourage the panel to ensure that the message goes out that all teachers are teachers of children with special educational needs and that special educational needs training should be mandatory in Initial Teacher Education. NICIE‘s vision is of all children being included and different pathways for children and young people within a school/campus.

4.4 Curriculum and Assessment

NICIE acknowledge your aspiration of good quality, career long professional development for teachers. NICIE believe that the reference to the over emphasis on successive examinations currently distort the educational experience, particularly in the later post-primary years, and that young people should be able to choose from a number of pathways with academic and vocational education in accordance equal esteem should be, referenced in 4.2

4.5 NICIE are pleased to see the reference to enabling pupil progression, having no dead ends and lasting a lifetime, and that the final report should not shirk these issues.

4.6. Further Education in reference to competition and duplication with other parts of the education system you are of the view that all education providers need to work in a more collaborative manner with the learner at the centre. NICIE would like you to consider the idea of building relationships with Further Education colleges earlier in the young person’s career.

4.7 Supporting the Education Workforce

NICIE acknowledge the importance of addressing under performance, where it exists.

NICIE would like the panel to consider the lack of a Teacher, Professional Body in Northern Ireland.

NICIE acknowledge the need for mentorship, career, breaks and secondment, including industry and business for teachers and leaders in schools.

NICIE, hope that you will take our vision of a single system of education on board. That is not to say that all schools should be Integrated, but that all schools strive to ensure a mix of cultures and religions, and those who have no faith, including a reasonable number of Catholics and Protestants as well as a socio-economic mix and different abilities in all schools. NICIE would suggest for this to happen that initially quotas for the different categories in school admission criteria or at least in any new school going forward could be useful.

NICIE would like to see proposals to end competition between schools.

NICIE would like the panel to reflect on the fact that only 6.5% of the schools estate are Integrated and up to 15% in total have a mix of at least 10% Catholic or protestant, whichever is the minority.

4.9 Institutional Governance, NICIE, note that you will be informed by your belief that increased delegation of decision-making to schools and other providers, along with appropriate support, will deliver your main objective: better outcomes for learners.

Please note that NICIE is not a statutory body but is responsible for governance when something goes wrong. NICIE need properly resourced for Grant Maintained integrated schools in the short term.

NICIE agrees at 4.10 that education should be viewed as an investment.

NICIE note that you are concerned that for some areas of significant investment, there is a lack of data to demonstrate the benefits and impact of this investment. NICIE also note the combined effect of financial uncertainty and underfunding as a major impact on our learners.

NICIE note that securing sufficient funding for education and ensuring it is efficiently used is important.

NICIE would also like the panel to take into account that only 6.5% of the schools estate is Integrated. NICIE would like to point to a book by Tony Carson Called *Integrate to Accumulate*.

5.2 Building Support

NICIE recognise that the recommendation, to secure support from stakeholders, decision-makers and delivery agents is important. NICIE also recognise that you will need to discuss key policy issues with stakeholders to consider options and test ideas. It is especially important for those who are most affected.

5.3 Delivery.

NICIE note that the report will adopt a timescale of some 20 years plus into the future, not only to offer recommendations to deal with immediate problems but also to ensure direction of travel for the longer term.

NICIE would like the panel to recognise, the work of NICIE and the IEF in relation to schools transforming to integrated status now.

NICIE would also note the recommendations for the immediate future will be practical, affordable, and deliverable; those aimed at the longer term will be ambitious, comprehensive, and more challenging.

NICIE would like the panel to acknowledge the demand for Integrated Education now with a huge surge in demand of such.

NICIE would also like to reiterate that the panel might have benefited from Integrated Education knowledge and experience, which we are hoping, won’t have been a deficit in the review.

NICIE, wish the panel well with their final report, hope that the recommendations will be both short-term and long-term, and to the benefit of the children and young people here in schools today and in the future.

Submission from



Roisin Marshall

Chief Executive Officer

The Council for Integrated Education