
CHAPTER TWO

DISSEMINATION

INTERVENTION

Our previous report suggested that the relationship between intervention and innovation is such that all action, however passive, can be perceived to be a form of intervention. We suggested that, broadly speaking, intervention may take three forms. Firstly, intervention through **exhortation** encourages people to take action on a particular issue. It may involve statements of support from government officials and education advisors, and the dissemination of information about sources of support. A second form of intervention is **catalytic** and might include access to extra funding and well-organised communication, administrative and in-service networks to ensure that available energy is exploited in a positive way. A third form of intervention is more **formative** in that institutions are actively supported to follow particular procedures and practices. Each is important. Exhortative interventions draw attention to the initiative, catalytic intervention encourages a degree of experimentation and throws up a broad base of practice, and formative intervention suggests that decisions have been taken about the way policy might best be implemented.

Following publication of its first report the project became more overtly drawn into a process of dissemination with a wider audience which embraced all three forms of intervention.

FOLLOW UP TO THE PREVIOUS REPORT

Local and national press reaction to the report was quite positive and this led to a number of enquiries to the schools and project personnel. A display of project work became available and was used extensively to disseminate the ideas of the project. This included invitations to speak at seminars and in-service courses for teachers organised by the Inspectorate, Queen's University and the University of Ulster. Presentations were given to a conference of the British Council of Churches, staff of teacher training institutions, teacher centre organisers in the Western Education and Library Board and undergraduate students. An invitation to Chief Officers of all five area Boards was not picked up, but the Western Education and Library Board arranged for a presentation of the project's work to be given to its members prior to a monthly meeting of the full Board. This was an ideal opportunity to discuss the work with Board nominees to the governing bodies of Western

Education and Library Board schools. Teachers involved in the project attended receptions where they met colleagues also involved in contact work, and received requests for information from other schools. Particular interest was shown in obtaining copies of the 'Peoples of Ireland' booklet. Radio interviews also helped stimulate interest, the schools were asked to participate in a television documentary, and an educationalist from Cyprus visited some of the schools to learn from their experiences. All this encouraged teachers to value their achievements and the underlying tone of much of it was to exhort a wider audience to action. This activity coincided with information emerging from the Department of Education about curricular reforms which proposed to give greater emphasis to community relations through education, and this undoubtedly increased interest in the project. Given the introduction of EMU as a cross-curricular theme the liaison committee encouraged the project Director to write to the Chief Officer of the Western Education and Library Board with suggestions for future developments. A letter was sent suggesting the appointment of a permanent Board officer with responsibility for continuity of policy development in EMU, provision of an in-service programme for teachers, and co-ordination of field support for schools. It also suggested that, given the level of interest in EMU, the appointment of at least two field officers would be realistic along with administrative support.

Conference papers and articles published in academic journals (see bibliography) ensured dissemination to the research community, and academic links were made with interested parties in the United States, Sri Lanka and Israel, opening up future possibilities for comparative study. The work was also referred to in a recent report from the Council of Europe on violence and conflict resolution in schools (Walker, 1989).

Some of the more catalytic outcomes, such as increased co-operation between teachers, movement toward joint in-service days and discussion of EMU at parent evenings, have already been mentioned. A number of teachers also put themselves forward for roles involving EMU within the support service, and at least one Principal used the experience of the project as a focus for part-time study. A number of students also became associated with the project resulting in dissertations on the project's activities.

The most interventionist and formative aspect of the dissemination process involved identifying and approaching schools in two other communities. The intention was to encourage them to proceed with links according to the general principles established by Strabane schools. The schools approached were identified in consultation with the Western Education and Library Board advisory service. The choices were based less on the individual characteristics of these schools, more on the fact that Limavady and Enniskillen represent communities at opposite ends of Western Education and Library Board territory. Schools in Limavady are farthest away from Board headquarters which sometimes makes them feel more isolated from the support service. In Enniskillen a bomb on Remembrance Day in 1987 had a deep effect on the whole community including the schools. One consequence was renewed commitment from the schools to work together for the benefit of pupils. In both situations Western Education and Library Board felt it would be appropriate to give schools what extra support was available.

LIMAVADY PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Limavady is a town in the north of the province, midway between Coleraine and Londonderry. The district has a population of 27,100 of which 50% are Catholic according to analysis of the 1981 Census (Eversley and Herr, 1986). The same report puts the under-fifteen population at 5,700 of which 55% are Catholic. The Field and Research Officers initially approached the Principals of three primary schools in the town in the 1988/89 school year. The schools were all co-educational, one maintained and two controlled with approximate enrollments of 735, 550, and 400 respectively.

Initial Meeting with Limavady Principals

The Principals had responded to an initial letter by suggesting that we meet them collectively in one of the schools. It soon became clear that a good deal of consultation and co-operation between Principals was already part of the pattern of relationships between the schools. At this initial meeting we outlined the previous work of the project in Strabane, the principles which had emerged and our desire to see if a similar approach could be adopted in Limavady. The Principals outlined joint activities which had already taken place, the most recent being a joint entry to the 'Studying Our Past' history competition. They were at pains to point out that, whilst the benefits from this had been considerable, the schools were reluctant to undertake the work again because of the extra workload it had imposed. We explained some of the principles we were starting from, particularly that any work undertaken should take place as part of the school day and with support for the teachers. On the understanding that this would be the case we then explored how a start could best be made. Given

the time of year, it was suggested that an initial link might involve P7 pupils once they had completed the selection procedure for entry to post-primary schools. It was then agreed that the next step would be a further meeting with Principals and P7 teachers from each school to explore possibilities.

Development with Limavady Teachers

The initial meeting with Principals clarified a number of issues. There was agreement to proceed with planning a programme involving contact between one P7 class from each school which would operate during the summer term. It was agreed that the children would meet together at a common venue in the town and this could be block timetabled for Friday afternoons over a number of weeks. Access to extra funding and teacher cover through the Cross Community Contact Scheme was outlined and it was agreed to proceed with a series of meetings with teachers after school to identify a focus for the programme.

These meetings threw up a number of suggestions for the programme. One was for an activity-based programme at the local leisure centre where pupils could have experience of a range of sporting activities. Another was a curriculum-based programme with an underlying cultural theme where pupils had workshops in art, craft, music and drama. A third suggested approaching an external agency which already offered support in organising cross-community workshops.

Discussion of EMU and its underlying aims led teachers to be cautious about a programme which simply brought children together in large groups for the sake of it. It became an aim to have pupils working together in small groups, encouraging them to interact and share experiences. A decision was taken to invite organisers of the Quaker Peace Education Project to speak to the group and explain approaches they were using. Decisions were finally made to work with this agency and develop workshops which would operate at the local Technical College each Friday afternoon for a six-week period. A proposal was put together on this basis and submitted to the Cross Community Contact Scheme, one teacher agreeing to act as co-ordinator for this purpose. Financial support was requested for workshop materials, photocopying and planning expenses and the cost of a full-day outing for all pupils at the end of the workshop programme. A request for transport to bring pupils to and from the Technical College each Friday was submitted to the Western Education and Library Board.

Parental Involvement in Limavady

Attention turned to the logistical problems in organising contact. A particular concern was how approximately 90 pupils could be organised to work in small groups of eight or nine. The Technical College has two large halls so it would be no problem for each of these to house

five small groups. A bigger problem was deciding how each small group could work with an adult. Even with four teachers and additional support from the Peace Education Project some extra hands would be needed. One solution would have been to bring in extra teacher cover on workshop days. However, this had the disadvantage that the supply teachers would not have been involved in the preparation and planning prior to workshops. We suggested that an alternative solution might involve the participation of parents on a voluntary basis. We felt that this would not only resolve the logistical problem, but also underline parental support for the programme. The schools were initially a little reticent about this suggestion since they were aware of pitfalls to parental involvement if it is not thought out and planned properly. Perhaps the schools were initially wary that we were suggesting that the programme become 'open-house' for parents to come and go as they please. However, this was talked through and it was agreed that each school would try to identify one or two supportive parents who might be willing and able to join in planning sessions on a voluntary basis, and eventually participate in the programme as small-group workshop leaders. In the event each school identified at least two parent volunteers, either by approaching particular parents or, in one case, explaining the programme at a parents' meeting and asking for volunteers. This turned out to be an important innovative part of the programme as these parents then took part in planning sessions and running the workshops for pupils.

The importance of parental involvement was underlined in a statement from Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dr Brian Mawhinney, "*Given the tremendous interest and support from parents, I have decided that some of the funds (from the Cross Community Contact Scheme) may be used to assist activities involving parents of children involved in contact schemes at their schools and youth groups.*" (Northern Ireland Information Service, 14 September 1989). The opportunity is therefore created for parents to meet as part of the contact process, although we are unaware of the extent to which this opportunity has been taken up by the organisers of contact programmes.

The P7 Programme for Limavady Pupils

By this stage the initial group of four teachers had expanded to a group of about 18 adults which included parent volunteers, project staff and personnel from the Peace Education Project. It was decided that two full-day planning sessions would be necessary to define the programme and work out organisational arrangements. The approach used by the Peace Education Workshop was largely drawn from a manual produced by the Friends Workshop at Kingston Polytechnic and involved activities with particular aims. During the full-day planning sessions workshop leaders rehearsed the activities themselves, decided on the materials required,

discussed who would take on particular responsibilities and made decisions about the timing of sessions. The outcome was a Teachers' Booklet for the programme. This approach helped the planning group develop good rapport and a sense of group cohesion.

It was decided that the title for the programme would be 'Myself and Others'. The introduction to the booklet described the programme aims and suggested that, "*The ability to co-operate and communicate confidently within a group which contains a variety of social and cultural backgrounds is seen as particularly appropriate to P7 children who will shortly be moving to a new social environment in a post-primary school*". It mentioned that, "*The programme is one aspect of the schools' commitment to Education for Mutual Understanding which will soon be a feature of the curriculum in all schools in Northern Ireland*". The booklet described how the programme would operate and acknowledged the schools and individuals concerned with the programme. A leaflet for parents was derived from the booklet and this was distributed to the parents of each child who would be involved in the programme. A few controlled school parents did not wish their children to take part and arrangements were made for these children to work with another class in their own school.

Within the broad aims of the programme, 'Myself and Others', each workshop had a particular purpose:

Workshop 1 introduced children to the programme. Its aim was, "*to establish a co-operative atmosphere in taking turns to speak, agreeing ground rules*";

Workshop 2 was called 'Listening to Each Other' and had activities designed "*to practise skills in listening*";

Workshop 3 was called 'Co-operating' with activities designed "*to practise working together on joint projects*";

Workshop 4 was called 'Conflicts' and, through role plays of conflict situations (e.g. the bully in the playground), pupils were able to act out conflict situations, explore how they might develop and then discuss the sorts of things which help inflame or resolve conflict;

Workshop 5 was called 'Affirmation' with activities designed "*To appreciate each others qualities; to build up confidence and self-esteem*";

Workshop 6 was called 'Looking Forward' and, being the last in the programme, encouraged pupils "*To think about and discuss what we expect from moving to a new school*".

Pupils worked in the same small group throughout the six-week programme and this meant that they had the opportunity of getting to know at least some pupils from other schools. These groups had been arranged at the

first workshop so that each small group had pupils from all three schools. The pupils' final meeting involved a single-day outing for everyone involved in the programme.

Some Issues from Limavady

The group met on at least two occasions to discuss how things were going. The programme operated very well in practice largely because so much planning and organisation had gone into it. Timings were very tight with each workshop lasting just over an hour and travel to and from the venue taking up fifteen minutes either side. This led to some discussion about the time needed for this type of work. Some workshop leaders felt the time did not allow for proper discussion to develop naturally from the activities, whilst some of the teachers expressed the view that they would be reluctant to have workshops take up a longer period of time because of pressure to cover other curriculum matters.

This developed into a discussion about the educational value of the programme and the style of approach it demanded. The programme was activity based and, in the main, children experienced this as 'good fun' even though each activity had more serious aims. This caused some of the organisers to question the extent to which children were being challenged and encouraged to think hard about their ideas. Perhaps it raised more fundamental questions about the way children learn, whether the environment need necessarily be 'serious' for learning to take place, or that learning material needs to be suitably knowledge-based and 'weighty'.

Nevertheless, children not only enjoyed the programme, but many of the small groups generated a sense of intimacy within which children were able to share their views and opinions. To generate this the workshop leaders were encouraged to adopt a less formal style, explore ways of fostering discussion rather than adopt question and answer techniques. Frequently the nature of the activity required whole-hearted participation from the adults on the same basis as any other member of the group. On occasions the adults may have found it a little more difficult than the children to ignore their inhibitions.

The most interesting and innovative aspect of the programme was the way the organising group brought together a collection of people with diverse backgrounds. Besides the field and research officers, there were the teachers, the parent volunteers and volunteers from the Quaker project. The interaction of these threw up some interesting issues. Teachers took a professional interest, particularly in the educational aims of the programme, tended to have a concern for the organisation and structure of activities, and were adept at pacing the work within the allotted time. Parents took an enthusiastic approach and grew in confidence as they uncovered their talent to work with a group of children

which perhaps they had initially felt unqualified to do. As a group they tended to be closer to the teachers in outlook. The volunteers from the Quaker Peace Education Project were highly motivated to work with the children. Their dress and manner was generally less conservative than the rest of the group and this helped them identify closely with the pupils, perhaps encouraging children to see them more as a friend or older brother or sister, than an adult in a teaching role. This gave rise to discussion about different styles of working with children, and it became clear that those involved interpreted the programme's aims in different ways. A particular issue was the level of formalism required to be effective. Volunteers encouraged children to use first name terms, though teachers were less comfortable with this approach, having to reconcile it with the more formal terms of address used back in school. The emergence of these issues considerably enhanced the experience of the organising group and, rather than generating tension, encouraged issues to be discussed openly.

Current Situation in Limavady

The programme demonstrated how, with planning and support, contact could work on a class-to-class basis within the school day over a period of weeks. It is not clear, however, whether the programme will operate a second time in the same form, because teachers had begun to discuss the feasibility of moving to links which involved pupils working in each others' schools on projects with a more explicit curriculum focus. In part this would avoid some of the difficulties of working to a tight timetable at a neutral venue and reduces the dependency on an external agency. However, it may also mean the loss of the innovative dimension of parental involvement. The resources and timescale of this project have meant that we have been unable to sustain an intimate involvement with the schools, so a question mark must arise over the extent to which the principles of further links between different year groups which emerged from Strabane, will be pursued by these schools. Another limitation has been the absence of a field officer for mutual understanding during the 1989/90 school year whilst the Western Education and Library Board reorganise staffing arrangements in response to demands from the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Hopefully, once these matters have been resolved schools will experience a continuity of support for EMU on a permanent basis.

POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ENNISKILLEN

Enniskillen is the main town of Fermanagh in the south-west of Northern Ireland. The district has a population of 51,900 of which 57% are Catholic according to an analysis of the 1981 Census (Herr and Eversley, 1986). The same report puts the under-fifteen population at 14,000 of which 61% are Catholic.

Initial Contact with Enniskillen Schools

The project's first contact with post-primary schools in Enniskillen was facilitated by the Western Education and Library Board at a meeting of Principals in December 1988 to discuss bursaries under the Spirit of Enniskillen Awards, a scheme set up after the Remembrance Day bombing. The scheme helps Protestant and Catholic young people travel abroad together. At this meeting the research officer outlined the approach developed by Strabane post-primary schools in history and asked whether schools in Enniskillen might consider a similar approach. Although considerable interest was shown in the history material the project suggested that there may be other curriculum areas amenable to the same sort of approach. A discussion followed which indicated that much worthwhile contact already existed between the schools, including a very successful drama group involving about thirty pupils from different schools working together after school. There followed general agreement from the Principals that the project could approach members of the English departments to explore the possibility of a linked programme during school hours as part of their normal curriculum work. Following this the field officer made a series of individual visits to the seven schools in Enniskillen (3 secondary and 4 grammar) and sought a meeting involving the heads of each English department.

Development with Enniskillen Teachers

The first meeting with teachers discussed possibilities for a linked programme and which year group might be involved. Agreement was reached that the programme would focus on the study of common materials, involve third-year pupils and involve activities which would give pupils an opportunity to meet. It was decided to proceed with a series of meetings to identify curriculum materials for the programme before considering how a system of contacts could be established for the 200 pupils who would be involved. In principle it was accepted that the programme would be designed for use by all third-year pupils with a class from each school also being involved in contact. Teachers met on a further five occasions during the 1988/89 school year and two of these were full-day planning meetings. These established that the programme would look at the theme 'Growing Up', drawing on the work of local writers, but hopefully introducing some comparative material from texts set in other situations of social conflict. An initial plan was to base the programme on all pupils studying the text *'Shadows On Our Skin'* by Jennifer Johnston, supplemented by appropriate short stories and a common anthology of poetry related to the theme 'Growing Up'. A proposal was put together for the Cross Community Contact Scheme requesting assistance in purchasing class sets of the text, one teacher co-ordinated this and opened a joint bank account to administer the funds. Some initial planning

took place on this basis. However, it soon became clear that at least one of the schools would not be happy using this text with pupils, partly because events in the novel take place within a strongly nationalist household, and partly because there were objections to some of the language in the book. The cover of the latest edition has images symbolic of the conflict in Northern Ireland and some were wary that this might concern parents. The group acknowledged these concerns and, although a change of plan would mean a certain amount of frustration and loss of planning time, it would have been unwise to proceed without the full support of everyone involved.

An English Programme for Third-Year Pupils

The group continued to meet and plan during the 1989/90 school year. The title of the programme remained 'Growing Up', but the focus for the work shifted from study of a novel to study through a common anthology of short stories, *'The Genius and Other Irish Short Stories'*. This contained contributions from local writers and would be used in conjunction with poetry identified by the teacher group. The stories in this anthology give ample scope to develop issues related to the theme 'Growing Up' such as, relationships with parents and teachers, self image, dreams, vocation, friendship; and some stories allow development of issues relevant to EMU in the Northern Ireland context such as, political courage, religious hypocrisy and the power of words over physical violence.

The group have produced a booklet for pupils as part of the programme and pupils met at a local theatre before the programme was introduced. A number of possibilities were discussed for pupil contact and three distinct aspects emerged. Firstly, a series of workshops provided by a writer in residence for a week at the local Teachers' Centre, jointly sponsored by the Arts Council and the Western Education and Library Board, with schools linking pupils through drama workshops. Secondly, pupils working together to produce a booklet of their own work arising from the theme, using desktop publishing facilities. Thirdly, a residential trip involving visits to literary and cultural venues is being considered.

Some Issues From Enniskillen

As in Strabane the development of links between post-primary schools has proceeded more slowly than developments in the primary schools. This is largely due to the time involved in identifying appropriate curriculum materials, producing the pupils' booklet and identifying contact activities which are workable within the constraints of post-primary school timetables. The larger number of schools involved also means that a good deal more consultation and organisation needs to take place. Nevertheless, the pace of development means that deeper issues are addressed and the pro-

gramme which emerges is more likely to take a place within the normal curriculum work of a particular subject area.

The issues which arose over the choice of materials also indicate that a good deal of sensitivity is required, not only about community relations in Northern Ireland, but also over broader issues such as the type of language pupils are exposed to through school texts. English teachers obviously hold strong views in both directions about whether any use of language can be considered 'bad'. The dynamics of an adult group, where each is contributing work, also calls for tact and sensitivity so that critical discussion can take place about the quality of material being collectively produced.

Planning for the programme began before requirements for the Northern Ireland Curriculum in English were available. As the deliberations of government's English working party emerged, planning may have become too caught up in looking at how the programme related to levels of achievement and assessment criteria, rather than the original aims of the programme. However, it did reassure the group that their approach would fit with proposed curriculum changes. This process also revealed anxieties that the demands on English from cross-curricular themes might swamp the subject itself and, if teachers are not careful, they could find themselves operating somewhat contrived and contorted programmes in English. This is emerging as a general issue and will require further examination in the future.

Consideration was also given to the EMU guide (NICED, 1988) and the report of the Working Party on EMU as a cross-curriculum theme (DENI, 1989). There was clear encouragement in these that schools should develop programmes in EMU which lead to contact between pupils. The EMU working party report made it clear, however, that such contact could not be made compulsory and schools should respect the wishes of parents who do not wish their children to be involved in contact activities. However, this was contextualised by the notion that children also have an 'entitlement' to contact. This creates something of an anomaly for teachers implementing EMU. The most logical way to operate contact so that it is perceived by pupils as a routine and natural part of the curriculum would involve class-to-class work within school hours. If some pupils do not participate this detracts from its normative influence and brings about the added problem of making alternative arrangements for such pupils. A further issue is whether contact will be perceived as a normal part of curriculum activities if only some classes, for practical reasons, are offered the opportunity of contact. The voluntary nature of contact contrasts with the compulsory nature of EMU as part of the curriculum and the implication of this for funding is raised later in the report as part of a discussion about the Cross Community Contact Scheme (Chapter 7).

Current Situation in Enniskillen

The seven schools in Enniskillen have established a basis for pupil contact through English and considerable time has been spent in identifying a particular programme. The absence of a field officer during the 1989/90 school year has not prevented development from taking place as the group received considerable support from the organiser of the local Teachers' Centre. It is not clear whether the contact programme will grow to include more joint work on a class-to-class basis. Given the number of schools involved a pattern may emerge whereby schools operate a 'pooled' system of contact, common activities are identified and schools negotiate amongst themselves the extent to which each becomes involved by working in pairs or threesomes. As with Limavady, a question mark remains whether the programme established will stand alone or be followed by similar programmes between other year-groups.

SUMMARY

Dissemination took place at a number of levels. A wider audience was exhorted to action through conferences, presentations and circulation of information. The project was catalytic in involving a wider group of schools and individuals in the development of inter school contact programmes. The project worked with primary schools in Limavady and post-primary schools in Enniskillen and was formative in encouraging them to begin building curriculum-based links which were structured, and planned to give pupils experiences of contact. The extent to which these schools have taken on board the general principle of establishing such links between a variety of year-groups remains in doubt. Although future developments will in part be dependent on the commitment of the schools themselves, it will also be related to the form of in-service and permanent support which the area Board sets in place. This infrastructure will obviously influence the extent to which schools will be encouraged to proceed along the lines suggested by this project. Our work with schools in Limavady and Enniskillen confirms the view put forward in our previous report that it is not possible to distil a ready-made formula which all schools can apply, although broad guidelines can be established.

Development of contact programmes in EMU involves sensitive issues, often idiosyncratic to the particular community, which means that the development and evolution of such programmes demands a process which is slow and careful, requires considerable levels of support, and involves consultation, negotiation and time for reflection. The experiences in Strabane, Limavady and Enniskillen all support the view that the process cannot be short-circuited.