

NOTES ON WORKSHOPS

The Workshops will be lead by speakers covering the following topics.

1. EQUALITY

The subject matter of this workshop should cover the rationale of equality in an integrated school and illustrate the practical expressions of equality in staff; pupils and governors/directors.

2. OPEN - CHRISTIAN - INSTITUTION

This Workshop will deal with three key and often contradictory elements required in an integrated school. It will be important to illustrate the difference between liturgical expressions of Christianity and its principles. In particular it should deal with the need to promote understanding and respect for different religious beliefs and practices.

3. HISTORICAL/CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

This Workshop will deal with the requirements to have a formal input in the curriculum of the two major cultural and historical traditions within Northern Ireland. The need to understand the breadth of the variations within these two traditions and ways to explore them should be covered by the Workshop.

4. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

This Workshop will deal with these dilemmas for integrated schools given that they are founded on the basis of parental commitment, consent and co-operation. It will cover the practical ways that parents responsibility for their children's welfare and education can be expressed within the structures and curriculum of the school. Such areas of concern under the headings of:-

- (a) The Preservation of the Professional Status of Teachers.
- (b) Attitudes of Parents
- (c) Constraints of the School Time-table.
- (d) The Type and Extent of Support Required by Teachers and Parents.

5. PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

This Workshop will deal with the need to have a philosophy of education on which the practical expression of the integrated school can be implemented in the school curriculum and in teaching methods. Issues such as co-education, comprehensive education - the balance between the demands and expectations of the wider society and the needs of the individual children will help to focus the debate.

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NOTE

All Workshops will take place from 1.15 p.m. - 2.30 p.m. Rapporteurs will be expected to have a report for typing immediately on completion of the Workshops. It would therefore be advisable that the last 10 - 15 minutes of the Workshop should be devoted to the main items to be reported.

Participants are requested to contact the office at 74 Whitewell Road, Telephone 774258 to indicate their preference of Workshop in order of priority, otherwise they will be allocated to a Workshop on the basis of achieving balanced numbers.

Paper considered in Workshop 5 - "Philosophy of Education".

● THE ACHIEVEMENT OF INTEGRATION IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

1. An individual is born with the capacity for positive or negative behaviour.
2. (a) Behaviour and attitude patterns are learned indirectly through imitation.
2. (b) Behaviour and attitude patterns are learned directly through specific culturally based instruction.
3. Behaviour and attitude patterns are the outcome of primary socialisation in the home and secondary socialisation in the immediate environment, peer group and schools.
4. For schools to influence attitudes and behaviour effectively they must reproduce the conditions of primary socialisation. Parents are the ideal partners in the reinforcement of this school environment.
5. The conditions of primary socialisation are empathic understanding, unconditional positive regard and genuineness.
6. These three are also the pre-conditions of a therapeutic environment.
7. For a school to be effective in influencing behaviour and attitude patterns it must create the appropriate learning or therapeutic environment.
8. This therapeutic environment is called usually the ethos or the hidden curriculum (made up of abstract and concrete components).
9. This ethos/hidden curriculum is produced by every individual in the school community.
10. It is essential then for every individual to understand the ethos and apply it according to their capacities and understanding.
11. The traditional purpose of schools was and is to replicate the conditions of an existing society and therefore reproduce it in the future.
12. The components of the ethos/hidden curriculum are those which form an ideal society, which should be our aim to see exist.
13. The ethos of the school should be based around concepts like justice, openness, honesty, reciprocity.
14. The development of the self-esteem of the individual is a key to their acceptance of others
15. The development of self-esteem is also the key to cognitive development.
16. The development of self-esteem is a precondition to acceptance and internalisation of anything or anyone new.
17. The development of the self-esteem of the individual is central to the concept of child centred education - such an education aims at the development of the child's own moral, cognitive, social and personal awareness.

18. Child centred education takes place in the context of the ethos/philosophy of the school.
19. Child centred education in an integrated school also involves a specific content and methodology.
 - (a) content - the child must be made aware of other cultures, religions, classes, ideas etc.
 - (b) methodology - a "forms of knowledge" approach is the most appropriate encouraging children to take an active part in the learning process - knowledge is something achieved by the pupil, not given by the teacher
20. Child-centred education aims therefore at encouraging the development of autonomous individuals who have the capacity to think, question and research.
21. Such autonomous individuals are more capable of coping with novel or threatening situations (like a totally unknown future).
22. Autonomy must be coupled with social awareness - this is learned from the experience of the child's environment and from direct instruction.
23. The essence of social awareness is perception of empathy with and acceptance of others.
24. The function of the school is therefore to produce a socially aware environment coupled with the encouragement of altruism through various projects.
25. Social awareness or social intelligence can be developed through the experience of and teaching of empathic understanding - this can be done most obviously in drama, moral education, history and english.
26. A socially aware, autonomous individual may be perceived as a threat and schools which aim at developing such children may be regarded as threatening or subversive.
27. All schools are manipulative, whether they are aware of it or not, our duty is to recognise this fact and act positively on it.

- 1) Existing schools often provide limited access for parents, starting school can often be a traumatic experience. Frustration of being unable to influence any aspect of the school.
- 2) Existing parent teacher associations often just about fund raising. This causes more frustration.
- 3) Integrated school attempts to provide Parent's Council/or meetings which allow structure for range of types of parent participation.
- 4) Planning phase for a new school involves parents very actively but when school opens there is a "danger zone" - loss of interest
 - exhaustion
 - getting people outside the core group interested.
- 5) Need mechanism to keep parental involvement going, to bring people forward to take up leadership roles and to ~~implement~~ ^{articulate} parental ideas and wishes.
- 6) Some parents anxious and unsure about interacting with teachers and for more articulate parents, lack confidence to be involved with things like curriculum.
- 7) Parents meetings need to be well structured - allow parents to feel things are achieved and progress made, otherwise interest and participation falls off.
- 8) In some situations have to have decision making structures or nothing will get done - issues go "round and round". Getting structures right "crucial".
- 9) Good lines of communication between the various interest groups - parents/teachers/governors essential.
- 10) Can the same structures work in a larger school as in a smaller one. In large school Board of Governors may need to decide a policy and then Parents Council can react and modify the policy - but have to have a policy on which to go forward.
- 11) Does parental involvement threaten the professionalism of the teacher, Again the existence of clear structures can be useful - e.g. a workshop for parents of a specific class given by the class teacher. Two way communication and respect essential, so that they can discuss curriculum issues, reading schemes, home work. Teachers need support as well as parents, they can feel unsure and lacking in confidence.
- 12) Can parents have direct input into planning of curriculum? This might be done through a small parent/teacher working group - (though in the case where this is used the parents involved are ones who have a professional background in education) - would it work if the parents didn't have any specialist education background?
- 13) Need to have clear structures to avoid personalisation of issues. Parents may want to be involved in questioning policy but do not want this to become questioning of individual teacher actions. A grievance procedure may be important.

Worksheet 3

- 1) The teaching of history has changed in all schools and the emphasis now is on using more general historical methods (treatment and evaluation of evidence, understanding bias, etc), These are common to all history teachers.
- 2) The sequence in which history is taught means that by the time the conflict is reached children/pupils have been trained to think clearly about it, have learned about other conflicts, and are better prepared to deal with it. ("Not all (Irish) history is controversial").
- 3) The choice of content is crucial and must be thought about very carefully. The material chosen within an integrated school will reflect the fact that it is integrated.
- 4) The issues of individual perceptions of such things as historical events must always be borne in mind. Integrated schools can offer a wide range of points of view.
- 5) Cultural studies faces the problem of deciding whether it should be immersed in all subjects, or should be a special subject such as Ulster Studies, or both.
- 6) There is also the problem of knowing about what is common culture and what is specific.
- 7) Perceptions vary a great deal and are also of great importance. There should be a deliberate policy of educating others, such as parents, to avoid misunderstanding. "Catholic and Protestant adults are also learning together.
- 8) This work demands time and resources to plan and think about.
- 9) The differences between other schools and integrated schools, with regard to these issues are in context/climate, interaction possibilities, and choice of content.
- 10) It is important for teacher to learn about the clarification of their aims, the creation of suitable materials, and the development of in service training.

Workshop 1.

EQUALITY

The discussion opened with remarks by the chairman in which he stressed the need for equality as a principle because in the past integrated schools have collapsed when equality has faded. He also emphasised equality in terms of equality between the 2 communities and equality between children.

Some anxiety was then expressed as to how the present discussion related to the morning session.

The discussion of equality was then extended to include social class and gender.

A dilemma was recognised in relation to the question of how integrated schools should be defined - by stressing their similarities with other schools or by focusing on differences.

The point was made that the equality principle can cause practical problems e.g. in the appointment of new staff. Should this be done with balance in mind or purely on teaching merit?

Parental involvement was seen as a vital issue and the need to pass on this ethos to new integrated schools, especially those created from existing schools was seen as a vital issue.

The question of equality among integrated schools was also raised. The problem is to set up structures in order to deal with outside bodies (DENI, funders) and at the same time to remain fluid.

Equality among pupils and the issue of different abilities and the comprehensive ideal was also recognised as an important issue.

Finally, It was generally agreed money was the greatest barrier to future developments.

cf. main text
re: school

Discussion centred on various interpretations of the term "open".

1. While pupils in the integrated schools should be "firmly rooted" in their own tradition and culture, there is possibly a need for some uprooting. It was agreed that the schools should do more than maintain the different traditions; being open implies openness to change and movement towards a shared core of values which might mean abandoning some aspects of both traditions.
2. The Christianity ~~of~~ the schools should find its expression in their openness to children of all classes, creeds and abilities. One cannot be open in some things but closed in others.
3. The schools should remain open to parents. Some anxiety was expressed that as a school gets bigger, it may take on a more institutional character. It was also felt that being open to parents implied not just ^{input} from parents but output to them. The school should as it were reflect its ethos to the wider community through its impact on parents.
4. Also discussed was the question of how open a school could be to children from non-religious backgrounds. The Christian ethos of the school might be diluted if larger proportions of such children were enrolled. All parents seeking admission for their children should be told clearly that the schools are christian in character.

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The basic working model for all integrated schools, primary and secondary is

- a) that they be balanced in terms of religion
- b) they are co-educational
- c) they are comprehensive
- d) they are democratic in all relationships
- e) they have parental involvement
- f) that education is child-centred

- this unique combination of aims and objectives must be actively pursued structurally and intellectually by all members of the educational community.
- the core activity is the development of self esteem.
- the ethos of the school has to be deliberately constructed in terms of honesty, respect, justice and reciprocity. This is the educational context.
- the educational practice is defined as child-centred. The child must be made aware of other cultures, religions, classes, ideas and as complete a range of knowledge and experience as possible.

Child-centred education aims at encouraging the development of autonomous individuals who have the capacity to think question and research. The autonomy so achieved must be coupled with social awareness and therefore the development of empathic understanding.