

GTCNI

Professional

UPDATE

YOUR PROFESSIONAL BODY • ENHANCING YOUR PROFESSIONAL VOICE • PROMOTING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

▶ Issue 2: Inspection and School Improvement 'Striking the Right Balance'

Towards a Framework of School Accountability for 21st Century Learning

This edition of *Professional Update* presents a summary of GTCNI's response to the Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee's *Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement*.

As your professional body, we have compiled a detailed research-based response in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC).



Let's Speak Together with One Professional Voice

The June survey on assessment received 500 replies from 500 schools and is reported in *Professional Update* Issue 1. A big thank you to all those teachers and schools who have helped send a loud and clear message to policy makers. **Let's do the same again.**

NITC, which represents your Union voice on policy matters, has endorsed this report. We are now asking every school to endorse it. **Please register your support for a more positive and equitable approach to school inspection, school improvement and accountability by:**

- sending the electronic version of this *Professional Update* from your school inbox to each teacher's individual inbox;
- photocopying this hard copy for each member of staff;
- downloading the full report from the GTCNI website;
- discussing the report with your staff and Board of Governors; and
- completing our '*Striking the Right Balance*' survey on the GTCNI Website.

We will report your responses directly to the Assembly Education Committee and update you further in the next issue of *Professional Update*. ■



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► Inspection and School Improvement

In response to the Education Committee's Terms of Reference GTCNI's *'Striking the Right Balance'* cites a wide range of evidence which highlights:

1.

Concerns about the current 'risk-based' approach to inspection, including: its potentially in-built socio-economic bias, its excessive reliance on quantitative data and assessment and examination outcomes, the reductive style of reporting, the shift towards an increasingly deficit approach within the proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process (*DE 2013*). The evidence presented in the GTCNI response highlights that the current proposals and pressures on schools run contrary to robust international research, which highlights that significant time and considerable support is needed to bring about genuine and sustainable change to the ethos, culture and performance of schools facing difficulties.

2.

Concerns about the current approach to assessing value - added, including: the unreliability of many of the measures used, such as free school meals, the distorted picture of performance presented by the narrow reliance on 5A* to C at GCSE, the systematic and random errors that are not taken into consideration, the lack of attention to confidence intervals, the total lack of confidence in numerical ('level') outcomes from statutory assessment starkly demonstrated by the 500 responses to GTCNI's recent survey (*June 2013*) reported in the last issue of *Professional Update*.



3.

The key issues impacting on schools, including: insufficient use of base-line measures, a lack of understanding of the research related to family and community factors, the impact of selection and the peer effect, and the pressures on pupils which can result in 'compliance without engagement' (*Harland et al., 2002*)¹ and student underperformance and

drop out (*Purvis et al., 2011*)².

4.

Gaps in the ETI review process, including: a lack of analysis of effect sizes and adequate correction for student intake as well as over-estimation of the school effect, which widespread research has established is between 5% and 18% (*Chevalier et al; 2005*)³. This has led to a conflation of the term 'effective' (a statistical term borrowed from economics) with the perception of 'good' (which is a value judgement) (*Mc Beath 2012, 2008*)⁴.

5.

Gaps in DE and ELB support including: delays in strategy setting, for example, the decade-long delay in the Review of Teacher Education, the current gaps between policy direction and support capacity, for example, the current Formal Intervention Proposals (*DE 2013*) which assume a CASS capacity to provide the level of tailored support needed, the run down in provision for teachers' professional development, the gap in the policy drive towards 21st Century learning 'to ensure that 21st Century skills that are considered important become valued in the education system' (*OECD, 2011*)⁵, and the pressing need to develop a coherent professional development framework for teachers and to consult on the shape of a future advisory and support structure.

6.

Models of good practice from elsewhere in the world including:

- **Finland**, which does not have a School Inspection Service and invests 30 times more funds in the professional development of teachers than in evaluating the performance of students. (*This ratio is the opposite of many countries where the majority of funding goes to evaluation and standardized testing*) (*Sahlberg; 2010*);
- **Scotland**, which has developed a constructive model of inspection closely aligned to support;
- **New Zealand**, which uses census information to stratify schools by socio-economic intake in order to allocate resources efficiently and help assess value added; and
- **Hampshire (England)**, where value-added estimates were utilised by the authority and head teachers as an unpublished 'screening device' and 'school improvement'

► Striking the Right Balance

Recommendations

To ensure that future educational policy is based on sound research evidence GTCNI offers the following 20 research-informed recommendations.

► To improve the approach to school improvement...

1. **Undertake a cost benefit analysis** of the relationship between inspection and school improvement (*Whitby, K. 2010 in Perry, C. 2012*).⁶⁻⁷
2. **Develop a supportive quality assurance model** (*Finland/Scotland*) which uses positive language (*for example, Very Confident, Confident, Not Confident*) aligned to support systems that involve more seconded teachers.
3. **Stream-line future school evaluation processes** to provide clearer guidance on data requirements; permit verbal (*and written*) challenge, reduce reporting timescales, and improve the qualitative detail of unpublished reporting to schools.

► To improve the assessment of value-added...

4. **Use NISRA census information and geographical information system (GIS)** to identify school characteristics and to stratify schools by socio-economic intake to help allocate resources effectively, target social need and calculate value-added.
5. **Assess productive language (oracy) on entry to school** as a key indicator of future educational potential and as a base-line measure of school value-added.

► To improve system monitoring...

6. **Use light sampling** to provide reliable and independent monitoring data over time, disentangling teacher assessment from accountability (*Tymms & Merrill 2007*).⁸
7. **Use International data (PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA)** to provide additional quantitative and qualitative information as a broader comparative measure.

► To improve measures of achievement...

8. **Commission international research and development** to assist CCEA in developing innovative 21st Century assessments and examinations.
9. **Separate teacher assessment from accountability** to safeguard assessment for learning.
10. **Develop wider indicators** to '*enable progress in all important learning goals to be reported*' (*ARG 2008*)⁹ and to broaden measurement of '*value-added*'.
11. **Use standardised testing data sensitively** and only within schools for diagnostic, formative and value-added purposes to prevent teaching to the test.
12. **Use pupil attitudinal and 'well-being' surveys sensitively** to gain insight into the correlation between '*motivation*', '*liking*' and achievement (*Sturman, 2012*)¹⁰.



13. **Develop 'unseen' thinking skills assessments** '*to ensure that important 21st Century skills become valued in the education system*' (*OECD, 2011*).
14. **Develop new qualifications for N. Ireland** which reflect the needs of young people, the economy and employment in the 21st Century (*CBI 2012*)¹¹.
15. **Introduce a measure to reduce the number of pupils leaving school with no qualifications** by an agreed percentage.
16. **Review the Programme for Government Targets and NI Audit Office Monitoring** to reflect these recommendations, based on a better understanding of supportive accountability.

► To improve governance and transparency...

17. **Ensure accurate and transparent media reporting of educational outcomes.**
18. **Require that the evidence-base for ETI judgements is open and transparent.**
19. **Invest in teacher professional development** by re-routing spending away from statutory assessment and inspection services towards teachers' professional development (*as in Finland*).
20. **Improve political and public respect for teaching as a profession.** Politicians and DE should encourage greater appreciation of the complexity of teaching, a greater public understanding of the issues posed by socio-economic deprivation and inequity, and stronger support for the quality of the public service which teachers and schools provide.

► About this report - Striking the Right Balance

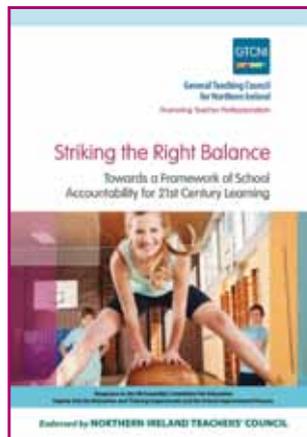
Towards a Framework of School Accountability for 21st Century Learning



The author of **Striking the Right Balance**, is **Dr. Carmel Gallagher, Registrar of GTCNI**, who was responsible for overseeing the development of the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum 1996-2006 and has since undertaken comparative research

into curriculum and assessment policy making in Northern Ireland, the UK and internationally.

The full publication will be available to download from the GTCNI website. ■



Striking the Right Balance - References

1. Harland et al. (2002) *Is the Curriculum Working? The Key Stage 3 Phase of the NI Curriculum Cohort Study*, Slough: NFER.
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5. OECD (2011) *Education at a Glance 2011 Indicators*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
6. Whitby, K. (2010) in Perry, C. (2012) *School inspection - An overview of approaches to inspection in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and internationally*. Research and Information Service, NIA.
7. Perry, C. (2012) *School inspection - An overview of approaches to inspection in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and internationally*. Research and Information Service, NIA.
8. Tymms, P. & Merrill, C. (2007) *Standards and Quality in English Primary Schools Over Time: the national evidence. (Primary Review Research Survey 4/1)*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge Faculty of Education.
9. Assessment Reform Group & TLRP (2008) *Assessment in Schools: Fit for Purpose?*
10. Sturman, L., Twist, L., Burge, B., Sizmur, J., Bartlett, S., Cook, R., Lynn, L. and Weaving, H. (2012) *PIRLS and TIMSS (2011) in Northern Ireland: reading, mathematics and science*. Slough: NFER
11. CBI (2012) *First Steps Report*.

Face to Face

We welcome the opportunity to meet with Area Learning Communities and Primary Principals' Associations (or any other professional grouping) to hear your views in person in relation to future approaches to:

- Inspection and School Improvement;
- The development and assessment of 21st Century skills and any other issues relating to teaching, learning and assessment that are of concern to the profession; and
- Teachers' career-long professional development.

Please get in touch so that we can arrange to attend one of your area meetings (or if your school is willing to host a GTC Council meeting sometime in the future).

(Please note that because of limited staffing we will respond on a first come basis).



MyGTCNI

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