‘Hope and History’: Study on the Management of Diversity in Northern Ireland

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Local Advisory Group

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Front Cover Design

Valerie Leonard, of Smaointe, designed this as a pictorial representation of some of the important concepts contained in this report.

Each concentric circle represents the identity of people in their groups / communities: such identities are not fixed but different aspects move around other features. Different shadings within each concentric circle also signifies this. There are purposely more than two to make the statement that there are more than two communities in Northern Ireland. They interlock and overlap.

The single, bolder arc depicts an historical time-line running through and encompassing the identity groupings. The bottom left of the cover is dark while the top right is light depicting movement towards ‘hope’.
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Foreword

The most urgent societal and political challenge of to-day is the constructive management of diversity. In an increasingly globalised world, over ninety percent of our states are now multi-identity in nature. The work of UNU/INCORE and other institutions show that that the prevention and the management of conflict in the coming decades may be dependent upon our ability to constructively deal with the increasing diversity of our nation states and of our world.

Here in Northern Ireland, the last three decades in particular have shown us the necessity of addressing issues of both community equality and difference and, at the same time the need to develop a shared and responsible approach to society cohesion. This report is a reflection of some of the policy and practice developments that have occurred in Northern Ireland in the pursuit of such necessities. In particular it looks at developments that have occurred in areas of education, land management, participatory practices, equality, culture and policing. In addition, the report also attempts to identify some of the remaining gaps in these areas that may yet need to be addressed as Northern Ireland policy makers and politicians continue the task of trying to build a sustainable and shared political future together.

The report has drawn upon the excellent work undertaken by many within Northern Ireland who, even in the midst of sometimes terrible violence, have struggled with the development of a society that can more clearly recognise the positive value of diversity. Inevitably, the continuing necessities of the further development of such work often prevents us from realising just how useful and creative many of these processes have been, and, how many pointers such processes may in the future provide for societies elsewhere.

As a United Nations University, based within the University of Ulster, INCORE is committed to a shared global learning process on conflict issues emerging in the world to-day. We believe that the necessity to seriously address diversity will become the indispensable science of the coming decades. In addition, the search for effective strategies for the management of diversity will also become increasingly necessary for the prevention and management of conflicts both in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

We sincerely hope that this report can contribute significantly to such learning.

Prof. Mari Fitzduff
Director, INCORE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contains the findings of initial research work examining how public policy and policy makers can aid the process of effectively managing societal diversity in N Ireland. It examined policy and practice initiatives in the following focus areas: education, land management, participatory practices, equality, culture and policing. In addition the report highlighted numerous cross-cutting issues e.g.

Cross Cutting Concepts and Principles: Key Points

➤ the management of diversity by policy makers and politicians will be of the utmost importance in the immediate years ahead;
➤ the transitional nature of society in N Ireland, while having difficulties, still provides a real opportunity to manage change;
➤ policy makers should work proactively, garnering societal diversity for the good of all society;
➤ it is important that a ‘language’ of diversity is taken further, not just for semantic purposes, but rather to underpin policy and provide a public discourse that will aid achievement. The report established that diversity should include the term pluralism but the process of defining diversity for policy work has not yet taken place;
➤ we should no longer be consumed by ‘two community’ diversity and should recognise the many other ethnic and social group diversities that now make up society;
➤ it appears fundamental that a powerful and pro-active unit assumes main responsibility for government policy and actions. In this context the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) would appear to be the focal point and will be vital in the all-important ‘translation process from policy models to decision making to implementation’;
➤ care should be taken with ‘affirmative action’ measures to ensure that they do not increase group tensions;
➤ there is need for a constructive meeting of ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches to forge a strong policy vision of social justice;
➤ our interdependence appears to
indicate ‘responsibility’ as an essential component in policy terms. Serious consideration should be given to how groups and individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for the ‘bigger picture’ of the entire society;
➤ European or international dimensions of many issues should be beneficial to diversity policy in Northern Ireland;
➤ one of the most important issues that will infuse all others is that diversity requires at least some measure of ‘shared ambition’ in Northern Ireland. How that ‘shared ambition’ evolves in the medium to long term future will undoubtedly and greatly influence diversity issues;
➤ some of the ‘focus areas’ initially require broad vision statement type approaches to form benchmarks and standards from which to work. These would seize the opportunity of the transitional period, map the way ahead and, consign some ‘downsides’ to the past.

Education

The historical examination displayed both, the structural and curriculum difficulties in and, the opportunities for education’s contribution towards a society that positively welcomes diversity. International examples were referred to, drawn from and recommended. The following ‘Options for Consideration’ were outlined.

• assess the effectiveness of Social Civic and Political Education (SCPE) as the main vehicle for diversity in the primary / grammar / secondary / integrated system, evaluate its effectiveness and make changes where necessary;
  • complete review of how best to train teachers for SCPE teaching or any similar scheme;
  • investigate the feasibility of a group representing a cross section of Education to drive forward the ‘culture of tolerance’, ‘Promoting Equality’ and community / community relations aspects of education in N Ireland;
• investigate, by international comparison, a more holistic vision of the nature of learning, education and inclusive society;
• review of religious education
investigating if such teaching harmonises with the overall vision of pluralism, tolerance and diversity and if there is a synthesis of approach between those responsible for religious education in schools and the broader group of educators;

• examine the ways in which the Higher and Further Education sector could contribute to the management of diversity, building on some aspects of current practice.

Land Management

The central issues were the levels of housing integration and segregation. Variations and similarities in, rural, urban, public and private sectors were explored and, difficulties in promoting greater integration were accepted. Important over-arching points came to light. These were:

• it is appreciated that questions of integration and segregation in housing have to be placed into the larger societal context. Relative educational and social segregation play a part in this difficult scenario;

• it is recognised that fostering integration is a medium to long term process, requiring a multi-departmental approach (NIHE, DOE, DSD), local government and community involvement;

• it is known that slowing or stopping segregation trends may well be an achievement in some areas at present;

• it is appreciated that ‘enclave communities’ have provided a sense of communal security and spirit but their medium to long term viability should be assessed and addressed;

• it is appreciated that different communities may have experienced different tensions and local issues. However, it is also appreciated that core issues of polarisation, identity clashes and preservation of group identity apply;

• it is appreciated that Housing Associations have major responsibilities for building new houses and therefore many issues and the ‘options’ listed below will be relevant to them.

Options for further research work were as follows.

• methodologies are required for:
a/ approach and consultative techniques and processes maximising community involvement in integration and segregation planning issues
b/ ethno-graphic profiles of areas / communities;
- including ‘ethnic impact assessments’ into planning procedures;
- availing of best international practice where race and planning issues provide valuable insights to strategies. Britain and US were cited;
- prioritise areas for pilot study where the above strategies could ultimately be employed thus maximising evaluation and learning;
- a ‘response strategy’ for the private sector should emanate from the above work and could then be employed in policy measures;
- Travelling community issues.

**Participatory Practices**

The key point in this section was a vision that demonstrated a capacity for inclusion. From this starting point the report outlined issues relating to central and local government, community involvement, ‘joining up’ the tiers of government, electoral practices and civic society. A core idea was the establishment of an office(r) at local council level, called in the meantime the ‘Community Link’, which/who would have important responsibilities in making effective links from the communities to local and central government. Allowance was made for the transitional nature of numerous institutions following the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. Consequently to avoid overload several issues were raised as potential points of assistance at the review time prescribed by the Agreement. These were:

- relationships of the Assembly and its Committees to Government Departments;
  - relationships of the Assembly to the Civic Forum;
  - has the membership and work of the Civic Forum maximised participation, representation and inclusion? Could its membership be more representative?
  - could partial, non-territorial elections enhance the membership of the Forum?
- relationship of the Assembly to
local councils especially post re-organisation of the latter and in terms of their respective powers;
• relationship of the Assembly to Non-Departmental Public Bodies;
• can non-elected bodies continue to discharge extensive responsibilities and monies, when substantial local, central, accountable and elected bodies are in place?
• election systems for subsequent terms of the Assembly;
• public opinion on how representative and accessible the Assembly is;
• how the associated North-South and East-West bodies help the feeling of inclusion for the respective communities;
• do the structures render the most participative and representative system possible?

The main options for further consideration and work were:

• detailed research on the viability of the ‘Community Link’ and District Partnership model ideas as outlined in the report;
• overall review of functions to be discharged by local and central institutions instead of non-elected bodies;
• detailed research on non-territorial elections as a means of increasing participation by appropriate groups in bodies also considered appropriate;
• clarify vision of civic society in N Ireland. This would enable policy makers at the time of review provided for in the Belfast Agreement, to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of current structures and plan for the longer-term maximisation of civic society.

Equality

The background to and importance of Equality in our current context were outlined. The treatment of the subject was then divided into sections on, the ‘Language of Equality’ discussing key terms and their implications for policy matters, the ‘Structures of Equality’ examining important issues regarding the roles of the various interested bodies and, ‘Equality Legislation’. As work is continuing on the latter,
suggestions were made on some broader aspirational and more specific issues that could be included. The main options for consideration in this section were:

- research into the language of equality not with the emphasis on an alternative phrase but rather on outlining a relatively detailed vision;
- detailed research on how to help best practice in promoting the ‘good relations duty’ for immediate assistance to all public bodies;
- immediate research on how to effectively evaluate the Equality Impact Assessments;
- research into how appropriate the proposed legislative measures are for conveying matters such as the pro-active, multi-dimensional nature of equality work and, the need for ‘responsibility’ taking by groups;
- consideration of measures in the legislation applying to the private sector.

**Culture**

The fluid nature of culture, how politics, history, religion and education influence it and, present opportunities for advancement provided the main themes. Within these the research then explored key issues such as difficulties in defining culture, ‘meaning-making’ by cultural identity in a polarised community, the terminology, single identity work and the building blocks of ‘cultural separatism’. Options for further research are:

- research and furnish a comprehensive context friendly vision statement of cultural diversity. This process may lead to a working definition for cultural policy planning and implementation;
  - research with a view to implementing a model for evolving single identity type projects to include, relationship to and interdependence with other cultural groups;
  - research the theory of how politics, history and religion impact upon culture with a view to providing educational / training material on the subject;
  - research methodologies for
positively demonstrating culture and cultural identity in the wider context;
• compile framework and criteria for funding bodies which integrates the policy principles that emanate from the above.

Policing

Surveying the historical background through to the ‘Patten Report’ and research references resulted in a three stranded approach. Philosophies of policing in the NI context, Training and Accountability matters were therefore examined. It was considered better, given the relatively fast moving pace of reform and reorganisation, to work from general principles to some particulars. The main ‘options for consideration’ were:

• that a comprehensive socio-political vision of policing be drawn up and adopted by all bodies with responsibility for the entire policing enterprise in Northern Ireland;
• that this could also form the basis of ‘mission statement’ type documents and should profoundly inform the training of all members of the PSNI;
• that the PSNI and all those bodies with responsibility for policing be designated under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and thus come into the orbit of the equality legislation.
• police training should include sociology and social psychology concepts, different philosophies of policing with the main emphasis of displaying the value of ‘policing in and with society’;
• comparative research as to how best measure the success of training in this context;
• that review research is carried out after an appropriate time into the effectiveness of the new structures to deliver transparent accountability;
• critique of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 and implementation strategies to avoid difficulties in the management of diversity context;
• consider how to continue the management of change from RUC to PSNI.
Concluding Remarks

The report recognised the transitional nature of N Ireland society as giving an opportunity to move to an ethos of restructuring and refocusing. The necessary pro-active work must span macro and micro thinking and approaches: ‘vision statements’ and ‘community audits’ are both equally important to the process. But vital to the management of diversity is the political will and a unit to act as the ‘driving force’.
Introduction

Northern Ireland, like an ever-increasing number of regions in the world, is facing the complexities of societal diversity. Many aspects of this are rooted in the ‘two communities’ syndrome, but now we have become more aware of ethnic minority diversity as well as diversities encompassing age, gender, disability and others. The trend is likely to continue therefore policy, good practice and implementation will become essential parts of public life if we are to manage diversity effectively through to the point of it enhancing our society. It is therefore vital that the import of managing diversity in and through the transitional nature of post Belfast Agreement N Ireland is realised now: it is this recognition that provides the motivation for the research report which, hopefully makes a contribution to that most needed process.

The report is the initial research work examining how public policy and policy makers can aid the process of effectively managing societal diversity in N Ireland. It is the outcome of work funded by the Community Relations Unit (CRU) of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) from the Physical and Social Environment Programme (PSEP) of the European Regional Fund. It will examine policy and practice initiatives in the following areas: education, land management, participatory practices, equality, culture and policing. It is undoubtedly a broad swathe of public policy interest but the report will highlight points relating solely to and, cross cutting all these sectors. The report by review, identification of gaps and suggestions for further research and action should prove a valuable resource to policy makers, politicians and interest groups. It is essentially a preliminary work hopefully leading to more concrete and detailed examinations of issues considered essential to policy makers in their contribution to constructing a society in which diversities are regarded positively.

The research combined investigation into written material and internet sites, individual interviews with members of a ‘local advisory committee’ who then gave valuable input at first draft stage and other interested people whose experience was considered worthwhile to the research.
Parameters

Obviously time was a major factor. The research work therefore avoided an exhaustive trawl of all the written material and focused on that which informed the public policy perspective. Given the pace of change others may have examined some points raised in this report, but time did not permit investigation into all possibilities and avenues. The term diversity itself is expansive to say the least, but focusing on a single definition as a means of delimitation was avoided. It was considered better to reflect its breadth in the report as a whole.

Approach

At a general level INCORE brings to any research report of this nature considerable experience of both N Ireland issues and international comparisons. Having worked in conflict resolution and post-conflict situations in such a concentrated manner we can draw on knowledge and experiences which influence both directly and indirectly. They also inform us that there is an imperative to recognise, firstly the opportunity that now exists in Northern Ireland, even allowing for the ongoing difficulties, which likewise would be expected and secondly, the gravity of change that is required. A new dispensation agreed and voted upon presents a transitional opportunity to formulate new approaches and construct new paradigms while at the same time preserving that which was best.

This report will therefore reflect those imperatives. It will call for macro thinking on items such as the ‘management of change’, vision statements not as mere academic calls for some action but rather as and when considered important to really managing diversity in the evolving context. It will also call for micro thinking on very specific issues that are considered essential to changing to a positive and diverse society. In short, approaches in this report have been informed by considerable and meaningful experiences which, recognise the vital nature of new opportunities, new institutions, community involvement, social inclusion and the potential individual and social dignity of all human beings.

The structural approach will first concentrate on the numerous factors that impact upon all the individual policy areas under investigation in
this research report. It is necessary to provide this conceptual underpinning to diversity matters as cross cutting principles would be lost in a completely sector based approach and therefore be counter productive. It also means that approaches to diversity matters in other Departments / areas of public life not studied in this report could potentially benefit. It will then deal with the six focus areas individually reviewing literature and assessing gaps and difficulties for policymakers, list ‘Options for Consideration’ in each section and finally, examine some dissemination and implementation issues in the concluding remarks.

Diversity: Cross Cutting Concepts and Principles

There is little need to write expansively about the many theories that exist in this arena. However, key terminology is always present and can inform our situation in N Ireland by flagging relevant issues. As well as diversity itself the terms multiculturalism and identity constantly provide the conceptual framework. In one synopsis of multiculturalism (Kinchloe & Steinberg, 1997), terms such as ‘monoculturalism’, assimilation, liberal multiculturalism, pluralism, commonalities and differences are all well aired. But in the debate important points are raised. Assimilation by various means would all be seen as counter productive: raising one ethnic / cultural loyalty to be the benchmark to which others should assimilate is now accepted as totally redundant. Pluralism would perhaps be seen as the high point and obviously became part of the Belfast Agreement lexicon. However, there is a strong argument that ‘pluralism’ can avoid the realpolitik of power structures thus, for example, reducing cultural diversity to cultural enrichment. Therefore pluralism is the actual fact of there being more than one group / view / aspiration whereas managing diversity is the political process of balancing all of these in a coherent, peaceful manner in and through power structures. When translated into the N Ireland context this becomes extremely important to gender and ‘two community’ issues. In relation to the latter, one would perhaps welcome a perspective of cultural diversity but never deal with the underpinning layers of politics and history. The most likely result would
be cultural enrichment masquerading as cultural diversity without ever really being so (this particular point will be referred to again as the report progresses).

This report will therefore observe two main principles. Firstly on the basis of the above point, it will view diversity as including pluralism: diversity issues cannot avoid the realpolitik of power structures. It has already been noted that the report will not define diversity but will try to reflect its breadth. Ultimately a working definition for policy planning and implementation may evolve but it is considered that the required process leading to an informed context friendly definition has not yet taken place. Secondly and directly related, is the question of other definitions. The report will avoid these on the basis that our transitional period has naturally meant that necessary processes in the new paradigm leading to definitions have, likewise, not taken place. For example, one’s definition of culture can be easily debated to the point that important concepts underpinning such fluid terms are lost. Envisioning a ‘cultural continuum’ from Mozart to Drumcree surely reinforces the point.

The relevance of political power then informs what Kincheloe and Steinberg see as the most complete view of multiculturalism. One of their key points is, to understand how “dominant perspectives” shape opinions on politics, class, religion etc (Kinchloe & Steinberg, 1997: 23-26). Again, in the N Ireland context, managing diversity will require an understanding that ‘dominant perspectives’ have informed and shaped social structures, for example, media, sections of the executive, past legislative bodies and the administration. Efforts to establish an Assembly free from one party dominance, the tensions over the Patten Report and sensitivities on the Criminal Justice Review demonstrate the importance of this point and sounds a warning that diversity matters could still be anchored to dominant perspectives.

Additionally and crucially they strongly argue that merely establishing diversity should not be the final objective, rather the aspirational goal is diversity that understands the power of difference. This is not mere theoretical argument but an important factor influencing many aspects of diversity in our context and can be illustrated by contrasting two situations. A problem of diversity concerning age difference...
is likely to be met with social concern and a desire to resolve the issues; such resolution would not involve deep compromise. A problem of diversity concerning identity in unionist / nationalist terms ushers in a totally contrasting and more powerful mix of ethnic identity, both individual and group, and emotional taproot: compromise is more difficult. The ‘power of difference’ exerts heavily and without deep understanding resolution is all the more complicated.

Understanding the potency of ‘ethnic identity’ and ‘recognising’ groups (Taylor, 1992: 25) are therefore of paramount importance. Writers have debated the validity of social identity and ethnic identity theories to N Ireland and while there is considerable overlap it has been argued that the latter is more appropriate (Leonard, 1997). This is not merely academic debate: the emotional ties to one’s ethnic identity and the exacerbation of difference from the other’s ethnic identity have far reaching effects. As Kymlicka wisely states, national identity is based on belonging not accomplishment (Kymlicka, 1995: 89): to misunderstand the ties of belonging, mythical or real, in the public policy sphere could pose problems. Therefore, striving to effectively manage diversity with a good understanding of ‘difference’ is a difficult process. It requires policies and programmes which appreciate that difference, as in many contexts of polarisation, is not an anachronistic tribal confrontation but rather a profound phenomenon with a social, psychological, historical and political infrastructure.

The British / Irish identity tension is well known as is the fact that a simplistic divide fails to adequately address all ethno-national loyalties in N Ireland. Changes from pre ‘troubles’ perceptions were mostly the change of hardened attitudes as the situation declined (Moxon-Browne, 1991: 25 c/f Leonard, 1997: 23) and variations of Irishness or British / Ulster have manifested themselves since. However, a large part of policy approach will have to take into account a diversity that is largely based on ascriptions clustering around Britishness and Irishness, realising that these are not restricted to intra N Ireland differences but, look out to different foci of allegiance. The three stranded approach to the peace talks resulting in internal, north-south and east-west institutions is the clearest
manifestation of this and perhaps indicates some potential policy approaches in the future.

More generally, it is well known that our societal mosaic will continually evolve. There is little reason to doubt that present ethnic minorities will increase in size and that other peoples will be represented in N Ireland; their identities will obviously be of equal importance. Gender, sexual orientation and age, amongst others, will continue to be ingredients in people’s self-identification.

Finally, Darby notes that there is little debate now on whether pluralism or assimilation provides the cornerstone for public policy making. Pluralism is embedded but he notes that the intellectual basis for new policies is still the subject of debate (Darby, 1999: 139). By contrasting the following terms, tolerating, welcoming, promoting or embracing diversity, one can automatically see the vast difference diversity matters could be subject to. It follows that if we are to effectively manage our society’s diversity clarity on the ‘intellectual basis’ is of paramount importance. The Canadians while struggling with the evolution of diversity matters, state that there never has been a universal understanding or consistent usage of the term ‘diversity’ (Foundations Paper, Discussion Draft, 1997). We must therefore strive to at least confirm in the N Ireland context what the ‘building blocks’ of our approach are and flag up issues that will require much greater research and reflection.

Underpinning Considerations

1/ Terminology will be important. Even though this research is about ‘managing’ diversity the term ‘welcoming’, ‘promoting’ or something else may well be required. The language used should not convey anything in the arena of social control, containment or a mere utilitarian approach but rather should symbolise and be the bedrock of a very positive approach. A parallel in positive language leaving no room for ambivalence was provided by the Sports Council, which declared its move from being ‘non-sectarian’ to ‘anti-sectarian’ (Sport in the Community Policy Statement N.D.). The move from passivity to a pro-active approach signified in the terms is perhaps difficult in some instances but it displays a profound change. In addition Eyben et al. have, in the
community relations training sphere, argued that equity, diversity and interdependence concepts must lie at the heart of a policy framework in N Ireland (Eyben, Morrow & Wilson, 1999: 47). This signifies that broad and significant terms are automatically included in diversity matters and require clarification.

It is therefore important that a ‘language’ of diversity is taken further, not just for semantic purposes, but rather to underpin policy and provide a public discourse that will aid achievement. This process may lead to a working definition of diversity for public policy matters in N Ireland and in turn influence definitions in specific focus areas in this report, and others.

2/ It appears fundamental that a powerful and pro-active unit assumes main responsibility for government policy and actions; allowing the breadth of issues to become diffused blurs the focus. In addition the diffuse nature of public service bodies in N Ireland virtually demands a political focal point. Comparative EU experiences demonstrate the need for a national strategy to be sustained and co-ordinated (Coussey, 2000: 88-89).

In our context the OFMDFM would be the focal point and will be vital in the all-important ‘translation process from policy models to decision making to implementation’ (Inglis, 1996: 36). Two extremely significant points must be made. First, it will be vital that OFMDFM engender the positive vision of diversity including pluralism as already referred to so that all branches of government are relatively and similarly focused on the tasks involved. Secondly, it will be essential for this organisation to have and implement a ‘management of change’ strategy. This is a massive task but given the opportunity that now exists, despite the ongoing difficulties, it will be an investment for this society to target measures and areas and deliver change. Such a strategy will both, directly impact on government departments and public bodies and also act as a catalyst for such organisations to ‘manage change’ in areas of their responsibility. This will engender an ‘institutional coherence’ into issues such as overall vision, the pace of change and measurability.

Diversity matters will therefore require a blend of ‘coherence’ and multi-dimensional approaches and this will be very noticeable as this report
progresses. Fitzduff’s reference to levels of responsibility spanning top leadership to community groups typifies the organic approach (Fitzduff, 1999: 2-4 c/f Lederach, 1997). This in turn would be reflected by the ‘management of change’ being implemented at different levels for different areas in different ways. The commonality of change must be implemented in a context friendly way.

3/There is always debate on the need and/or desirability of targeting legislation and measures to specific groups. Present government policy admits the need to do this but increasingly the effectiveness of such approaches is questioned. Young explores some of the rougher edges to affirmative action such as fostering rigid group categories and resolving one equality at the expense of another (Young, 1998: 26). As policy evolves consideration on whether group or individual rights issues will be fairly enhanced without losses, both in intra and inter group terms, will be an important consideration. The ‘prescriptive challenge of peace’ (Murtagh, 1995: 210) should be investigated and employed wisely within an agreed framework and, under stringent review processes and timetables.

4/Our interdependence appears to flag an essential component in policy terms. Different groups request measures to protect their culture and identity. As government tries to balance the divergent needs of groups the entire concept of ‘responsibility’ looms large. Serious consideration needs to be given to how groups and individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for the ‘bigger picture’. In other words fostering an ethos whereby people and groups see their cultural and identity needs in the context of society at large, will play a key role in easing the Rawlsian conundrum of ‘freedoms colliding’.

5/ It would appear that an important key to avoiding group identities being in continuous negative tension is a strong policy vision of social justice (Inglis, 1996: 36). While the term itself can be commandeered for partisan manipulation, policy makers should give serious consideration and articulate such a vision in our context incorporating social inclusion at all levels and for all.

6/ European or international dimensions of many issues should be beneficial to diversity policy in Northern Ireland. For example, many
European laws and declarations and many international examples are relevant, providing ‘space’ in which principles can be analysed and applied. That broader picture provides part of the N Ireland context, a fact noted by McCrudden when referring to the Bill of Rights (McCrudden, 2000: 2). Reference to some European and international examples will be made in this paper. However, many will not be referred to but it should be taken as read that where applicable these examples, precedents and legal standards should be employed to aid and underpin diversity policy matters.

Lastly, this is perhaps one of the most important issues which will infuse all others. Frederico Mayor, former DG UNESCO stated that diversity requires “at least some measure of shared ambition” (Mayor, 1999). In the N Ireland context we have some measures which, even a polarised community shares. Many speak of social issues that transcend the well-known divisions and one could also say that generally there is an ambition that peace takes hold. In addition ethnic minority groups and other diversities will be satisfied within a purely N Ireland context. However, for the two main identity blocks state legitimacy is either continually contested or suspiciously viewed as insecure and, loyalties look outward to different power centres. Therefore, policy matters in relation to diversity will have to consider and reflect that ‘shared ambition’ both, in N Ireland and supra N Ireland contexts. Murray captures the import of this nexus by referring to the difference between state and nation; “Statehood implies citizenship, while Nationality suggests ethnic affiliation” (Murray, 2000: 5). ‘Shared ambition’ will find itself in the tension between citizenship and ethnic affiliation so how this evolves in the medium to long term future will undoubtedly and greatly influence diversity issues.

Having raised these general but still significant points which apply to all the individual sectors it is time now to deal with the first of these, education.

**Education**

When considering diversity issues in education there appears to be an automatic dialectic between questions about diversity within the education system itself and diversity within
society at large. It is not absolutely the case that one exactly mirrors the other, but in N Ireland correlations are obviously apparent. Therefore, my opening remarks will blend some contextual information in both the senses of education in the province and the more general field of education in society.

**Brief Historical Sketch**

Seamus Dunn traces the history of education in N Ireland from the Lynn Reports (1922 & 23) onwards and clearly demonstrates the difficult links between a divided society and education issues. Dunn comments that neither of the main identity groupings appeared to have “any understanding of the plural nature of the society that had been created in Northern Ireland.” Protestants felt that the link with Britain had to be copper fastened by all possible means and Catholics maintained the hope that Northern Ireland itself was only a temporary phenomenon. The latter did not take up the invitations to be represented in deliberations for the Lynn report, rationalising that Lynn’s work would be an attack on catholic schooling. Meanwhile, Protestants were initially happy with the outcome but then, particularly the Presbyterians, protested vehemently. Their worries focused on what they considered to be a secular education system failing to protect the rights of Protestants which, after all was the main reason for the inception of the ‘state’. From this protest changes emanated in 1925 and 1930 which satisfied the main Protestant churches and established the Protestant character of the state in state schools (Dunn, 1993: 16-20).

There is no need to rehearse the detailed history from that era to present but Dunn continues to flag the main milestones and issues (Dunn 1993: 20-28). These were religion, funding for Catholic schools, secondary education which was reorganised by the Education Act 1947, the genesis of Integrated schools, and the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989. The latter both provided a common curriculum with major steps being agreed History and Religion syllabi. It also reflected community relations issues under the banners of Education for Mutual Understanding and Cultural Heritage. This was an attempt to reflect the plural nature of society and teach children about the ‘other’ group by joint ventures.
However, segregation is still a dominant feature of schooling in N Ireland and Smith argues that it is a threefold phenomenon. There is segregation by religion, in that most children attend either their own ‘catholic’ or ‘state / protestant’ schools. Segregation by ability due to the selection procedure at age eleven resulting in a system which, despite successes at the top and middle levels largely fails the lower levels and, segregation by gender because of the number of single sex secondary and grammar schools. So our relatively small primary, secondary and grammar school system has a deep religious divide between ‘state’ and ‘catholic’ and, a small but growing Integrated sector (27 primary and 17 secondary in 1999) representing less than 3% of the school population. There are also schools teaching through the medium of Irish and independent Christian schools attached to the Free Presbyterian Church completing the picture. Ethnic minorities would, in the main, attend one of the ‘state’, ‘catholic’ or Integrated sectors (Smith, 1999).

**The Broader Context**

From this very brief summary of our local context the examination can be broadened to some general principles about education in society. Rex correctly contends that education transmits not only skills but also moral values, the latter being part of the socialisation process (Rex, 1996: 36). This transmission has obviously been utilised in many places and in a particular manner, that of nation building. Gallagher outlines both the assumptions underpinning the notion of the ‘homogenous nation-state’ and those countries where the schooling system played a major role in nation building. Examples include nineteenth and twentieth century Britain and US, twentieth century USSR, Namibia and Serbia (Gallagher, 1998: 6-8). It is therefore of little surprise that as societies strive for a more pluralistic view, education is now seen as an important element in equipping future generations for pluralism and tolerance. In fact, Young strongly argues that, if the same energies were put into teaching young people pluralism and diversity, than were employed teaching children about patriotism, then the citizenry of tomorrow would be much better equipped (Young, 1998: 16).

Morgan outlines examples, such as Germany, Norway and the Basque region where different methods are used to include study of
multiculturalism, cultural identity and citizenship and posits that there is now some consensus that schools are places where the young can learn co-operation (Morgan, 1996: 102-3). Taking this view further Ruth Goodwin speaks from a Council of Europe perspective. Forty three states have examined how education can, help promote human rights, strengthen pluralist democracy, bring the peoples of Europe closer together and, help the governments and people of Europe face the undoubted societal challenges of living in a multicultural age. Obviously arguing the value of such education she stresses the foundational points of intercultural education as, multiculturalism is a social and political reality, each culture has specific features to be respected and, cultural diversity is an enrichment of, and not a threat to, our societies (Goodwin, 1996: 115-116). There are obvious resonances with the N Ireland situation to which we now return.

The meeting point of this examination is a mostly, but not absolutely, segregated N Ireland system in a larger educational context which embraces the principle that education can contribute to multiculturalism, pluralism, tolerance, citizenship, in short, diversity issues. The main questions are, what are the main difficulties facing policymakers and how can education policy make a meaningful contribution?

**Secondary / Grammar Sector**

One is immediately confronted with the structural situation. Darby has expressed concern that the education system is developing along tripartite lines, Catholic, Protestant and Integrated (Darby, 1999: 146). Smith sees little room for future structural change. He argues that the changes brought about by the Integrated, Irish medium and independent Christian schools display “small but significant potential for fragmentation or diversification within the overall school system” (Smith, 1999). I would argue that within such a small system, there is next to no room for significant immediate to medium term change. The Irish medium and independent Christian will be for the foreseeable future very small sectors and the trend in integration is not expansion by new ‘green field’ schools but transfer by what have been previously classed as state / Protestant schools. This is an area requiring greater research. Smith states these schools are striving to become more open and inclusive.
(Smith 1999) but measuring how great the change has been for each school and catchment area and reactions to this process, would help gauge potential for further change. Donnelly has already indicated another particular difficulty. If this trend of transference from the ‘protestant’ schools continues will the catholic sector feel that integration is essentially ‘Protestant centred’ (Donnelly, 1998: 70)?

The tension is then one of continued mainstreamed structural segregation, the importance of parental choice (DENI 1988 & Hadden and Craig, 2000: 27) and a society that requires diverse structures and approaches. If the educational structures are not going to evolve in the near future the curriculum is an approach to be considered.

I briefly referred to curriculum matters such as EMU and Cultural Heritage. Overall reaction to these was circumspect. EMU moved from a voluntary activity to a statutory requirement and has been operational long enough for serious evaluations which showed the following. Teachers suspected a political agenda. Because EMU was implemented by cross-curricular means it became disparate and fragmented. A human rights approach was deemed a better framework than EMU. There was frustration that EMU did not deal with important political social and cultural matters while some teachers expressed reservations about their confidence and capacity to undertake sensitive and challenging ‘community relations’ type work (Smith, 1999). Obviously the contradictory nature of some of these points indicates different opinions but overall the research confirmed that the evident minimalist approach would not secure the objectives of EMU (Smith and Robinson, 1996: 83). Arlow has also noted the lack of universal support for the project with many seeing it as social engineering (Arlow, 1999: 14). These points indicate important considerations which, carry over to the next curriculum attempt to deal with diversity matters.

It is now intended that curriculum time will be given to teaching Social Civic and Political Education (SCPE). A pilot scheme is well under way including a timetable for internal and external evaluations and, full implementation as a compulsory part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum is already scheduled for September 2003. The core concepts of SCPE are ‘Diversity and Interdependence’, ‘Justice and Equality’ and ‘Democracy and democratic participation’ (Arlow, 2000: 3&6).
This type of approach is favourably considered as a means of enabling “the emergence of thinking citizens” (Gundara, 2000: 54). In my own indicative research study (Leonard, forthcoming) there were several important points that inform this study of the curriculum approach to education and diversity. For instance, there were concerns about, segregated schooling largely theorising about rather than experiencing difference; replicating the patchy response to EMU; those schools which were negative about EMU and the more contentious N Ireland module in GCSE History being similarly reticent about teaching contentious citizenship issues. In addition there were very great practical concerns about, teacher training, timetable time and the ‘standing’ of such a subject if it was not formally assessed. In other words staff and pupils not taking it seriously because it will not get the latter a grade on a certificate.

It would therefore appear that the structural framework of education in N Ireland is unlikely to change in the near future to one that naturally acts as a catalyst for diversity. Curriculum processes, mostly by SCPE, provide a vehicle but due to its status as a pilot scheme evaluation will have to take place before one can say whether it has achieved its worthwhile objectives or not. However, more recent Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI) consultations and reports strongly indicate an evolving ethos which reflects many diversity issues.

A departmental working group examined how the education system could contribute to a ‘culture of tolerance’ and education for diversity, noting that tolerance was “too feeble a term to express the value of inclusiveness”. The Group thought society should not be satisfied with mere ‘putting up with one another’, and education should develop in young people “an active and informed respect for and appreciation” for the diversity of cultures in this society. The department’s response to the Group’s work recognised the evolving importance of SCPE over EMU and Cultural Heritage in delivering some of their recommendations (www.deni.gov.uk/strategies/tolerance/A_Consultation_Document.pdf). The Department’s business plan has emanated from this type of examination and has selected ‘Promoting Equality’ as one of its six strategic themes. Structural and technical issues such as equity of funding and out of school hours learning are complemented by the

While the overall educational structures remain mainly unchanged there is a real need for these laudable objectives to be driven forward by an effective group which includes the major component parts of the education system, Department, Boards, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), Teacher representatives etc.

**Religion**

As well as religion providing a sizeable structural divide in education it is of interest to syllabus issues. Again it is impossible to rehearse all the arguments but the following points are essential ingredients. Barnes, when outlining the history of religious education in N Ireland, points to the highly confessional nature of religion teaching in Catholic schools thus differing from the Protestant / state schools. It is therefore evident that even within a core, and legally underpinned religion syllabus (Barnes, 1999; 3), dominant perspectives in delivery can differ greatly between the main school sectors.

In addition Barnes points to religious education, as it is presently delivered, developing religious commitment but not religious discernment (Barnes, 1997: 81). Ally this to the broad area of how religious views shape worldviews and value orientations (Leonard, 1997: 14-15) one can begin to see the need to ascertain how religious views, as taught in the schools, relate to positive views of societal diversity. In addition, there would appear to be a real need for the Church personnel who, in essence, control religious education in schools to work with, and appreciate the directions taken by, the broader group of educationalists. If a reasonable synthesis of vision is proving difficult the pupils, the future key participating citizens, could suffer therefore an examination of this issue should be carried out.

**International Examples**

Reference has already been made to international examples and in the course of this research we have
availed of expertise in education and diversity. Two core ideas have come to light and are seen as worthy of further investigation. Some reflection on differences between the US and N Ireland contexts has already taken place as is evident from the following remarks. In addition the possibility of further helpful models should not be ruled out.

Local US schools are increasingly forming ‘Diversity Task Forces’ as a means of encouraging collaboration within the school community on such issues. The membership comprises teachers, administrators, students, parents and community members and the role is to plan and monitor diversity issues ranging from recruitment to curriculum and instruction. Race, ethnicity, gender, economic status, learning styles, physical disability, religion and, more recently sexual orientation are the areas identified by a national association to be addressed and which the ‘Task Forces’ focus on. Diversity is seen as a positive force, cultural identity is valued and affirmed and institutional forms of discrimination are identified and challenged.

It is obvious that this model cannot be directly applied to the N Ireland context. Central core curriculum mitigates against the more locally driven US model. However, it could be very beneficial to re-work the core idea in the following manner. Set up a central but still compact and dynamic ‘Diversity Task Force’ which represents the N Ireland spectrum. Include business and professionals along with ethnic and other minority groups with educators from the main schools sectors. From their breadth of experience this group could generate ideas which they feel should be transmitted to pupils, offer suggestions on classroom delivery and review effectiveness. The international dimension should not be omitted and could possibly be generated from within the Task Force membership. If, on the other hand, this was a shortfall the Task Force should be supplied with key international principles and examples so that they can balance the ‘local and the global’. By this or a similar model educators will benefit from, and give input to, numerous other experiences and perspectives of diversity rooted in the broader world.

The second idea particularises the theme of community involvement in schools. Whereas the ‘Diversity Task Force’ suggestion, in the NI context, was more central and professional, the
'Around the World' idea (part of work by The National Network of Partnership Schools, sponsored by John Hopkins University - http://scov.csos.jhu.edu) could work as a local, bottom-up contribution to SCPE, or similar, scheme. Essentially the US model involved parents from different ethnic backgrounds imaginatively present to pupils in class time information about their respective cultures. It would be straightforward to re-work this aspect but two additional points should be made. Firstly, that all our diversities should be reflected and secondly that in relation to the ‘two communities’ the following core idea could be considered. If there were parent volunteers from both communities willing to jointly tell their stories about how pluralism and tolerance were both denigrated and upheld, in ‘their generation’ the effect could be profound. Essentially pupils would be receiving from voices other than the teachers’, first hand experiences from which they could see the value of diversity rather than its disparagement.

Higher and Further Education Sector

Higher education centres in N Ireland already play some role in diversity issues. At a general, but still essential level, they have an integrated student enrolment, many related courses such as History and Irish Language & Literature degrees and, the holistic vision that education broadens horizons. However, their structures, role and the financial considerations attached to higher education delimit the direct impact on diversity considerations. There are examples of Universities validating or accepting for entrance to degree level courses, Institute of Further Education courses some of which are in the cultural diversity mould.

The Institutes of Further Education have themselves recently instigated a ‘Cultural Diversity Working Group’. It is hoped that this will build up a more pro-active policy on diversity issues, both at the level of staffing and employment issues and also in curriculum development. The Institutes’ excellent links with communities could be further harnessed by introducing more cultural diversity and awareness type courses within, for example, their Community Education, Adult Basic Education, Access, and Lifelong Learning programmes. The potential
of this sector is indicated by the enrolment figures: 86,300 in vocational courses (http://www.deni.gov.uk/statistics) and an estimated 60,000 in non-vocational, in 1998/99.

Overall there appears to be an upsurge in interest in how best to promote and manage diversity in the tertiary sector (NUS-NUI, 2000) but the overall picture is patchy and requires further focus (Gilpin Black & John Quinliven Consulting Audit 1999).

Options for Consideration

The possibilities requiring further research to clarify issues for policy making appear to be as follows.

1/ Assess the effectiveness of SCPE as the main vehicle for diversity in the primary / grammar / secondary / integrated system, evaluate its effectiveness and make changes where necessary. Mechanisms for the pilot scheme will have much of this in place but I would add the following. Consideration should be given to assessing the impact of SCPE education in the different sectors of NI schools. This suggestion is not to pit school against school but is designed to evaluate if a particular school ethos and perspective delivering diversity matters, impacts upon young minds in particular ways.

2/ Complete review of how best to train teachers for SCPE teaching (and any future system incorporating diversity issues to be subject to similar analysis). Initial teacher training, Early Professional Development and in-service training for more experienced teachers would be the major areas of focus.

3/ In keeping with the theme of ‘management of change’, review the need for structures to drive forward the ‘culture of tolerance’, ‘Promoting Equality’ and community / community relations aspects of education in N Ireland. If required investigate the feasibility of an effective group including the major component parts of the education system, Department, Boards, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), Teacher representatives etc.

4/ to investigate, by international comparison, a more holistic vision of, the nature of learning, education and
inclusive society. The goal would be setting out models that combine:
• the essential of high standards of education and learning, including and maximising the potential of all pupils;
• recognition of the difference between ‘schooling’ and the broader term ‘education’ and under which of these headings different subjects come (or how they straddle both). Investigate how these could become the bedrock of a high standard and still flexible education system;
• how the community aspect of schooling could enhance diversity matters.

It is considered appropriate that a ‘think tank’ approach is best to deliver on this option and would be in line with Morgan’s appeal for imaginative choices from existing options and openness to quite new ideas (Morgan, 1996, 104).

5/ Review of religious education in the following arenas: does such teaching harmonise with the overall vision of pluralism, tolerance and diversity? Is there a synthesis of approach between those responsible for religious education in schools and the broader group of educators?

6/ Research into models such as those highlighted in the section, ‘International Examples’.

7/ Examine the ways in which the Higher and Further Education sector could contribute to the management of diversity, building on some aspects of current practice referred to above. The overall aim should be maximising current links with the community and examining potential new methods.

**Land Management**

As in any arena of conflict land, territoriality, segregation and integration become keywords, but more importantly key issues. The deepening polarisation from 1968 onwards greatly impacted on many districts resulting in high level violence and major population movements. Estimates of 60,000 people leaving their Belfast homes between 1969 and 1973 have been made.
(Murtagh, 1995: 212). Demographic change continued as the ‘troubles’ became a tragic long term reality in the province ushering in additions to the lexicon such as, peace lines, residualisation, ‘chill factor’ and enclaves. But the link between ‘land management’ and policy issues with an emphasis on diversity matters is not restricted to the ‘troubles’, it extends further back thus pointing to the depth of the problem and the difficulty of resolving it.

**Historical Background**

If we take Belfast, as the major population centre of N Ireland, the evidence points to major long-term segregation issues. The latter part of the nineteenth century displays, even with poor census material, growing segregation as migrant workers settled into areas of the expanding city which housed those with similar religion. The first decade of the twentieth century displayed a relatively constant situation but rapidly soaring segregation followed between 1911 and 1926 as the major political issues and related violence unfolded. After partition there were similar ‘plateaux’ before the already mentioned movements of the early ‘troubles’. But the conclusion by Doherty and Poole after their analysis is chilling. They confirm that although there are periods of demographic calm after conflict, segregation does not (my emphasis) fall back to pre violence levels: the ‘ratchet effect’ displays an inexorable upward trend (Doherty and Poole, 2000: 180-3).

Evidence also exists to demonstrate segregation in the smaller towns, village and rural areas. Housing allocation, housing search patterns, selling land to one’s own ethnic / religious group are all well documented (Murtagh, 1999: 49 & Adair et al., 2000:1090). The net result has been articulated in different ways. About half the population lives in areas more than 90% Protestant or more than 90% Catholic (McKittrick, 1993: 5). Only around 7% of the NI population live in areas that reflect the balance between the two communities (Glendinning, 1999: 75). Seventeen towns classified as highly segregated in terms of dominance, contain 78% of the population (Poole and Doherty, 1996: 246). These figures are obviously highly significant but Boal and Douglas’s 1982 conclusion is just as important. Segregation is not pre-ordained; its political and cultural reality results from human behaviour (Boal & Douglas, 1982: 357).
That there is a large body of research on ‘two community’ problems is understandable, but mention has to be made here of other diversities. Social segregation is also a problem, the special needs of the travelling community and the potential growth of ethnic minorities all require attention in the years ahead and will feature in the discussion to follow.

**The Main Issues**

The obvious difference between the public and private sectors is the relative freedom of those within the latter group to decide on location and those to whom they will sell. Anecdotal evidence abounds of people not selling farms to people of the ‘other side’ (for example, *Irish News*, 3/8/00) and despite recent legislation (The Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998), it is virtually impossible to stop this practice. Connaughton’s remark that ‘religion runs in the soil’ (quoted in Murtagh, 1999: 34) indicates the difficulty of legislation encountering profound ethnic hostility. In some areas there will obviously be the concomitant phenomenon whereby members of one community largely buy in particular new developments which house that community. Ethno-religious demographics of the area, easily known to the locals, will influence individual decisions. The writer knows of a recent instance when an enquirer was directly asked about his religion; he was told that the ‘R [religion] factor’ was important in that particular area.

It follows that the three points below are perhaps more appropriate to initial policy direction in the private sector but longer term issues are considered in the main ‘Options for Consideration’ section. The ‘Equality’ section of this report also refers to the private sector: points made there may be relevant to ongoing consideration.

- that voluntary and aspirational measures are the most one can aim for in some circumstances
- discussions with all the professional bodies involved to put in place best practices reflecting both the legal position and the ‘spirit’ of the law
- that improvements will take place along with more general advances.

**The Public Sector**

Although public sector housing has decreased the fact that Government policy and finance is directly involved
means a major responsibility rests on the main players for the present situation and the potential for change. It is generally acknowledged that the public housing situation prior to the inception of Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) in 1971 was bad. Since then major improvements have taken place in terms of housing stock, fit dwellings and allocation. It would be impossible to separate housing from politics so whatever approaches were adopted by NIHE, particularly in a deeply polarised ‘baptism of fire’, a difficult legacy was predictable. Obviously the main issues in relation to diversity cluster around the present levels of segregation and integration. When trying to promote an inclusive society, patterns of both are important and this has been given greater impetus by the Belfast Agreement, which calls for mixed housing.

However, the socio-political factors are immensely difficult. Segregation can happen relatively quickly in circumstances of intense violence or, a trend gathers pace as one community’s representation on an estate decreases to the point that others move fearing insecurity and isolation. Yet there are also examples of what are described as ‘enclave communities’ such as the Fountain area in Derry/Londonderry, which cleave together ensuring a sense of communal identity and security. The downside of this is an admitted lack of understanding of the ‘other’ community (Smyth, 1996). The longer-term question is of course; can segregated communities really be ultimately good for a diverse and pluralist N Ireland? But in addition it should be realised that a rush to integration could be a very difficult process for people and communities still distrustful of and in some cases hostile to, the ‘other’. It is therefore worthwhile to review some of the suggestions, tensions of thought and possibilities for further research and policy considerations.

NIHE was criticised for adopting a ‘religion blind’ approach, that is not monitoring religion of householders and applicants, from the outset. They claimed that they would be accused of direct discrimination and subject to a hostile public reaction. In 1991 they changed this stating that they would seek information on religion in research surveys and by a common religion question on the standard application form (Melaugh, 1994: 73, 78 & 90). Despite this change some believe that there is great need to not only monitor the ethno-religious affiliation of
householders but also employ a multi-dimensional approach to this difficult arena. Allocation, demographic changes over time and the degree thereof, are essential parts of monitoring the balance of segregation and integration.

Keady and Tandragee provide excellent examples of demographic change. Between 1971 and 1991 the proportion of Catholics in Keady rose from 79% to 89% whereas the proportion of Protestants declined from 9% to 3%. In the same period in Tandragee the reverse was happening; the proportion of Catholics declined from 16% to 13% whereas the proportion of Protestants rose from 46% to 64% (Murtagh, 1999: 20). Having the information to see the genesis of this trend would of course have potentially enabled a process of dialogue and measures to halt this social polarisation. The difficulties of such a process in that period are fully appreciated. However, the lesson of this example, and there are many others, is an indication of a policy gap to be filled now that conditions have undoubtedly improved and moves towards a more pluralist society are an investment in peace and stability. Murtagh has described former policy approaches as ‘techno-rational’ and ‘objective needs-based’. These avoided the “sectarian realities of housing management and planning”. In essence his argument is that the tension of conflict, territory and ethnic identity were not part of planning strategies therefore monitoring territorial change and demographics of religion were missing components (Murtagh, forthcoming).

There are only two very small examples of NIHE attempting a planned approach to integrated housing, both in Belfast from the difficult early 1980s. Upon re-development local managers of the Executive tried to retain the ‘mixed’ community living in Clovelly Street off Springfield Road: this area would still be integrated. The newly developed Ashfield estate off Skegoneill Avenue was the second example. This small development of 30 houses did not retain its integrated nature (NIHE Information Officer).

It must also be noted that NIHE published “Towards a Community Relations Strategy: A Consultation Paper” (1999) which refers to issues such as, protecting community integration where it exists and facilitating further integration where desired. However, the follow up document “Community Relations
and Community Safety: A Housing Perspective” (2000) which is based on responses from interested bodies and people, seems to present a subtle shift of emphasis. While acknowledging they had received responses about ‘fostering integration’ the Executive summarises its “comprehensive community relations/community safety strategy” as covering, intimidation, sectional symbols and segregation, community safety and anti-social behaviour. In addition they explain that their policy aim to reduce segregation is built around creating conditions where the demand for neighbourhoods is based on excellence of environment, services and facilities available. There does not appear to be a pro-active plan to, understand how integrated communities have remained so, monitor community / identity tensions and the concomitant demographic shifts and, implement measures to avoid these.

This overall tension of thought is illustrated by the launch of The North Belfast Housing Strategy (NIHE, Oct 2000). This area has deep segregation problems a point obviously acknowledged in its report but addressed by the Executive’s attitude that it could not “impose any form of territorial adjustment” (p9). Imposition is very obviously not a solution but it would appear reasonable to suggest that more permutations should be available for consideration.

An additional issue must also be mentioned. In a highly segregated public housing market, mixed marriage couples face particular problems. Living close to one of or both family networks can be difficult; they may be forced to consider more distant and mixed housing areas and, they have been targeted as sectarian tensions increased. NIHE has no particular policy for such couples, having in the main relied on housing officers to deal with such couples at application stage (Morgan et al., 1996: 41-44).

Points salient to diversity policy matters therefore come to light in this tension between a broader, layered strategy of housing in an ethnically polarised community and the NIHE approach. These are as follows.

- it is appreciated that questions of integration and segregation in housing have to be placed into the larger societal context. Relative educational and social segregation play a part in this difficult scenario;
• it is recognised that fostering integration is a medium to long term process, requiring a multi-departmental approach (NIHE, DOE, DSD), local government, community involvement in consultation and implementation and, prioritising which communities are more amenable at any given point;
• it is known that slowing or stopping segregation trends may well be an achievement in some areas at present;
• it is appreciated that ‘enclave communities’ have provided a sense of communal security and spirit but their medium to long term viability should be assessed and addressed;
• it is appreciated that different communities may have experienced different tensions and local issues. However, it is also appreciated that core issues of polarisation, identity clashes and preservation of group identity apply;
• it is appreciated that Housing Associations have major responsibilities for building new houses and therefore many issues and ‘considerations’ will be relevant to them.

It follows that there are serious issues with policy implications to be targeted for further research and recommendation. This will provide critical material for the meeting point of land management and diversity issues.

Options for Consideration

1/ Methodologies are required for the following areas:
• Approach and consultative techniques and processes maximising community involvement in integration and segregation planning issues. These will assist precise measurement of not only community desire for further integration but also ‘area specific issues’;
• Ethno-graphic profiles of areas / communities.

2/ Including ‘ethnic impact assessments’ into planning procedures.

3/ Availing of best international practice. There are many areas e.g. Britain and US where race and planning issues provide valuable insights to strategies.
4/ Prioritise areas for pilot study. A cross section of urban, rural, hard interface, different dominant and minority groups, could be readily decided upon to maximise evaluation and learning.

5/ A ‘response strategy’ for the private sector should emanate from the above work and could then be employed in policy measures.

6/ Travelling community issues.

It must be emphasised that pockets of this work or the conceptual thought that will underpin it are readily available. Acorn Population Analysis (Murtagh, 1999: 20) international comparisons, methodological strategies, role of the planner in context of planning and ethnicity (Murtagh and Boal, 1998) are examples. Therefore, some of the work will be bringing together strands of thought under the specific focus of a policy implementation strategy.

Participatory Practices

The central idea underpinning ‘participatory practices’ is that society and the democratic process demonstrate a capacity for inclusion. It almost sounds an automatic given, yet all societies face the problem of ensuring that the population feels included, represented and that it has a voice. Perceived disillusionment with political systems in many western countries, signified primarily by lower polling figures, points to a feeling of disenchantment. N Ireland has not experienced this indicator but disenchantment can come from a deeply polarised community producing hostile voices on key issues thus overpowering the rest of political discourse. In addition all the other sectors of N Ireland society, for example ethnic minorities, should likewise feel confident that their voices are heard and respected.

However, aspiration must meet the societal reality of local, central and voluntary structures.

Presently Northern Ireland is in a period of great transition, a factor that must inform this research. The Executive and Assembly, with the linking North-South and East-West bodies, are far from bedded down, local council re-organisation is in the pipeline and the Civic Forum could only be described as embryonic. Paradoxically, sizeable measures of public money
and responsibility continue to be spent and discharged by non-elected bodies, for example in housing, health and education. Therefore, despite the plethora of post Belfast Agreement institutions many functions and forms of public life can be perceived as relatively distant from the community. Yet the dynamic of that community continues and thought must be given on how to effectively maximise democratic participation thus managing diversity while simultaneously avoiding overload and consultation fatigue.

My approach to this section understandably avoids a survey of all the sectors of our infrastructure but describes some of the tensions and overlaps. It will also allude to broader electoral issues.

*The Main Issue*

The term ‘joined up government’ mostly refers to positive aspiration but can include the downside of public administration. The ‘joining up’ of numerous government departments and local councils can render an effective service or, it can be too multi-dimensional and tortured. Examples and questions highlight the tension. Local councils and central government have responsibilities for planning and housing along with the NIHE but does such an approach mean that diversity issues, such as those articulated in the section on land management, are effectively dealt with? How will the Civic Forum perform as a “consultative mechanism on social, economic and cultural issues” to the Assembly and Executive (Belfast Agreement, ‘Democratic Institutions in NI’, 34)? Would it represent those interests any better than thriving and broader based District Partnerships? Should we consider electing people from targeted groups (or appointing their nominees) to ensure greater diversity awareness and representation? This nexus of joining the ‘top-down’ and the ‘bottom-up’ is extremely important. UNESCO and the Commonwealth Secretariat have pointed out that strategies for handling pluralism are best when, state mechanisms offering top-down opportunities forge common approaches and co-operative solutions with the “indispensable bottom-up channels” of civil society (UNESCO & Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000: 11).
Central Government and Institutions

The transitional nature of political and public institutions at this level and time virtually dictate that more proposals would simply be overload. The Belfast Agreement provisions will be reviewed four years from its effective implementation date. There are and will continue to be numerous ‘learning curves’ and political difficulties as attempts are made to consolidate. However, there are numerous issues that will be extremely pertinent to such reviews: these are listed below as a contribution to the debate and discussion that will take place.

- relationships of the Assembly and its Committees to Government Departments;
- relationships of the Assembly to the Civic Forum;
- has the membership and work of the Civic Forum maximised participation, representation and inclusion? Could its membership be more representative?
- could partial, non-territorial elections enhance the membership of the Forum? (see below on electoral systems)
- relationship of the Assembly to local councils especially post re-organisation of the latter and in terms of their respective powers;
- relationship of the Assembly to Non-Departmental Public Bodies;
- can non-elected bodies continue to discharge extensive responsibilities and monies, when substantial local, central, accountable and elected bodies are in place?
- election systems for subsequent terms of the Assembly;
- public opinion on how representative and accessible the Assembly is:
  - how the associated North-South and East-West bodies help the feeling of inclusion for the respective communities;
  - do the structures render the most participative and representative system possible?

The centrality of the Assembly is obvious. If it consolidates its place on the political landscape these questions and many more should be asked. An organic approach to the function of central government bodies will be an
essential and strategic component of moving from transition to the longer-term vision of a society that welcomes diversity.

On the other hand if the Assembly, in its present form, does not consolidate its position some of the same questions can still be asked. However, the potential, but unknown permutations of what would be in place, render any discussion here superfluous.

**Local Government and Institutions**

Again potential change cannot be totally anticipated but there are still numerous factors of local government structures that impact on participatory and inclusive facets of a diverse society. Re-drawing boundaries to decrease the number of councils does not necessarily impinge upon suggestions made here. The potentiality of local government to ‘participatory practices’ requires a brief sketch of particular developments.

Some local councils were actually synonymous with the difficult social and economic issues at the outbreak of the ‘troubles’, epitomising polarisation and tension. The main historical events, particularly the 1970 Macrory Report which, reduced the number of Councils and centralised many previously held functions for example housing, thus considerably reducing the power held by the councils are well documented (Birrell, 1992: 12-15). The use of Proportional Representation (PR) in the May 1973 local government election helped the situation. However, some councils retained the image of tension filled polarisation and took longer than others to move to ‘power sharing’ whereby nationalist and unionists share the posts of Chair and Deputy Chair (Birrell, 1992: 16). It is therefore interesting that a 1989 decision by the Central Community Relations Unit led to all local councils becoming involved in an initiative to improve community relations. The Government funded programmes with cross community emphasis and staff, mainly a Community Relations Officer. By 1993 all councils participated in the scheme (Fitzduff, 1996:29). A review of the scheme, although very early for some later entrants, suggested much that was positive. Concerns about, aspects of funding particularly, effective targeting and false divisions between community development and community relations were apparent (Knox et al., 1994: 12). These two roles have in fact merged
in some councils and it is an understandable evolution given actual and potential overlaps. Additionally, community relations work has often been criticised for taking on the ‘softer’ projects and issues thus avoiding the ‘harder’ (Eyben et al., 1999: 48).

District Partnerships are another development involving councils and which point to greater participation and inclusion. These were set up to deliver European Union Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (EUSSPPR) funds which very obviously had community development and relations potential and focus. The ‘District Partnership for the Derry City Council Area’ provides an example of cross community membership. It is comprised of, seven local Councillors from four of the main NI parties, seven people from the voluntary / community sector, two each from the business and trade union sectors and three from the statutory agencies. It is immediately apparent that the membership could have been more conscious of other members of our diverse community, for example the ethnic minorities.

The Board identified areas and schemes, which could receive funding. The different ‘Measures’ to which funds were directed indicate the participative, inclusive and diversity conscious emphasis of the Board’s work. They included, ‘Community Healing Programme’ ‘Coming out of Violence’ ‘Shared City and District’ ‘Promoting Employment Opportunities’ ‘Children and Youth’ and ‘Collaboration’. (The District Partnership, “Action Plan” 1999-2000; also see Hughes et al. (1998): Appendix 1, for detailed ‘Resource Allocation’ & ‘Expenditure by Theme’ figures for all District Partnerships).

By using the models and examples above several points have come to light and they cluster around, participation, inclusion and making constructive links in an intricate web of public service. Bringing these successfully together would be a great boost to ‘participation’ and thus to managing diversity.

**Linking Tiers of Government and the Community**

Obviously the option beginning to take shape here would be part of a larger picture of local government reorganisation. As the heading indicates the thrust is not one of concentration on a single tier, rather working
towards a ‘joined up’ system which balances ‘top-down’ with ‘bottom-up’. Two key factors raised by Carmichael et al on reform of local government are being specifically addressed: what system of local government best provides for a sense of community identity and focus and, how should local authorities relate to central government (Carmichael et al, 2000: 4)?

Consideration could be given to a separate post/office or, expanding the role, service and expertise of the community relations/development office(s) to a broader role which will be called, in the meantime, the ‘Community Link’. The broad vision of this office would be:

- the ongoing assessment of the needs of the community in the council area with an emphasis on welcoming and promoting diverse communities;
- one of the main methods of assessment would be ‘community audits’ which would enable,
  a/ gaining extremely particular knowledge of community need
  b/ prioritisation of those needs
  c/ professional listening to and involvement with the community
  d/ well timed and nuanced approaches to diversity matters. The “Way It Is” audit report presented by ‘Fermanagh Partnership in Practice’, and which informed the ‘Fermanagh Integrated County Development Strategy 2010’ provides an example;
- as a council official(s) the ‘Community Link’ would work constantly with the elected council;
- being in touch with the community, the ‘Link’ could liaise with, inform and give feedback to, central government departments and agencies on issues pertaining to them. Under present arrangements OFMDFM might have particular interest in and contact with ‘Community Links’;
- further consideration could be given to applying the ‘District Partnership’ model to a consultative role with and for the Community Link and simultaneously the councils. If membership accurately reflected their diverse communities, the expertise, knowledge and breadth of ‘Partnerships’ could provide an invaluable resource. Hughes et al have examined this model in detail and argue that a partnership approach between
councils and District Partnerships could cultivate the seeds of participative democracy…” (Hughes et al, 1998: 214-5). Obviously if it was considered appropriate the ‘Partnerships’ could continue to disburse EU (if applicable) or other funds as appropriate. It is also interesting to note the importance of the ‘District’ voice is also highlighted by the District Police Partnership Board model proposed in the Patten report (Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland, 1999: recommendation 27).

In terms of Participatory Practices, the Community Link idea has the following potential:

- with further research aimed at defining a detailed role, the ‘Link’ office(r) idea could simultaneously help clarify and / or build on the community relations and development roles. For instance the criticism of CROs mainly dealing with the ‘soft’ topics and programmes: the ‘Community Link’ is undoubtedly aimed at concrete issues in building tolerant diverse communities;
- ‘top-down’ policy is disseminated by staff with expertise and drive informed by a deep knowledge of community;
- ‘top-down’ policy is informed by ‘bottom-up’ knowledge and expertise;
- the ‘Link’ could play an important role in the areas of this research study (and more). For example, one of the land management issues was maximising community involvement in integration and segregation planning issues. A credible ‘Community Link’ office(r) could be a conduit in such a process;
- community involvement is channelled to both local and central government;
- the process is therefore inclusive, a listening one and, gives voice in a structured way.

**Electoral Practices**

This is a vast area that deserves much more attention than can be afforded in this report. In recent elections for both the peace talks and to the Assembly and, the voting systems within the institutions, we have witnessed much more than the ‘first past the post’ system. Top-up seats (in the 1996 Forum elections), cross community support, weighted majorities and
d'Hontd have entered the local political lexicon. Assessing each and arguing their merits and demerits could lead to book length examinations and, is impossible. De Silva examined ‘extreme PR’ (which imposes few barriers to very small parties), ‘moderate PR’ (which limits the influence of very small parties) and Canada as an ethnically diverse society which does not use PR. He concludes that the debate must continue as to which system is the most appropriate for maintaining ethnic harmony (de Silva, 1998: 82-84 & 102-3).

As pointed out in the section on central government our period of transition will necessitate reviews and by definition electoral methods are an integral part of that process. Therefore one particular issue which could be relevant to facilitating diversity and which was briefly referred to in relation to the Civic Forum, should be referred to.

The one core concept that could possibly be considered is elections on a non-territorial basis, that is, possibly targeting a community that could elect representatives to increase their participation in society. For example, Kymlicka refers to the growing international interest in legislative seats for disadvantaged or marginalised groups (Kymlicka, 1995: 32). The electoral ward and constituency approach obviously favours parties with a broad support base. Sectors in our society that should have a voice are so small they will virtually never have the numbers to compete territorially. It is admitted right away that there are other methods of dealing with this shortfall. However, there is still need to research this further. Points that are not immediate research priorities will nonetheless become important and are referred to here for purposes of highlighting. What guidelines are appropriate so that non-territorial elections do not merely become additional arenas in which established parties compete? For instance, if it was considered that a gender or age specific non-territorial election was appropriate how could one avoid domination of the process by the parties? The difficulty would be somewhat less for ethnic minority specific elections.

Research could be undertaken with the overall aim of clarifying models, specific purposes and difficulties in the following way:

- research international examples, evaluate their appropriateness to our context;
- identify the main objections to these schemes;
• identify which of the current NI bodies are most appropriate to these elections, for example, could it ever be envisaged that some form of such elections would be appropriate to a Civic Forum, Police Board or District Policing Partnership Boards?
• identify any additional types of bodies which might be appropriate in the future;
• evaluate worthiness of this type of election against nomination systems.

Civic Society

At the outset of this research project consideration was given to devoting a separate section to Civic Society. As work progressed and ideas and suggestions crystallised it became obvious that within the project’s focus categories and particularly with what has been mooted in this section, important facets were already present. This, allied to the transitional nature of many of our structures and the review provisions of the Belfast Agreement means it is perhaps best to proceed as follows.

To propose anything approaching a framework for Civic Society at the moment would be redundant. The learning curves of our present structures, the possible implementation of suggestions in this document and effective review procedures based on the Belfast Agreement timetable will automatically give a period of reflection as to moving from the transitional to the longer term. That would be the time to say, in the context of civic society, what has not been effective, what can be ‘fine-tuned’ and, what needs to be introduced.

However, there is a need to prepare and apply a ‘philosophy’ of civic society at the time of such a review. Some ‘pieces’ of civic society have understandably grown on an *ad hoc* basis but these and groups such as the churches, business and Trade Unions, all play an important role. Fearon stresses the need for civic society and political elites to work out how they can combine collective experiences and talents to benefit all (Fearon, 2000: 27). This needed interaction can be best achieved when we apply the learning curves of our period of transition to a philosophy of civic society that best caters for diversity. The meeting point of civic society, citizenship, diversity and democratic governance is a
difficult yet vital one. Cohesion or fragmentation can be determined by how this meeting point is handled (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000: 30-31).

Research could therefore be carried out within the following context.

- defining clear vision of the difference between ‘civic’ and ‘civil’ society;
- defining clear vision of a ‘citizenship’ which combines rights and responsibilities, the individual and the community;
- articulate clear aspirations for a civic society that works in partnership with democratic governance and embraces diversity;
- select best practice models for maximising potential of civic society;
- solicit input from key organisations on the above points;
- target this work to be completed before the review period so that the natural opportunity for longer-term planning is maximised.

**Options for Consideration**

1/ Take as a contribution to future reviews the points listed in the section ‘Central Government and Institutions’.

2/ Detailed research on the viability of the ‘Community Link’ / District Partnership model idea as outlined in the section ‘Linking Tiers of Government and the Community’.

3/ Mention of the responsibilities and finances disbursed by non-elected bodies has been made in this report. The ‘Link’ and District Partnership idea could be part an overall review of functions to be discharged by local and central institutions instead of non-elected bodies.

4/ Detailed research on non-territorial elections as outlined in the section ‘Electoral Practices’.

5/ Clarify vision of civic society in N Ireland as above. This would enable policy makers at the time of review to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of current structures and plan for the longer-term maximisation of civic society.
Equality

This quickly became one of the key areas leading up to and following on from the Belfast Agreement. The ‘equality agenda’ has become shorthand for advancement for many in one community while many in another community view it with suspicion. However, if we allow such an important area become the domain of the ‘two community syndrome’ we will contradict the very concept by ignoring the many other ethnic and social groups who rightly and likewise seek their protection and propagation of rights under the equality banner. Equality issues are therefore central to the management of diversity.

The Immediate Background

The main issues of housing, voting and employment reform have received considerable attention with the latter still giving rise for concerns despite legislation and measures through recent decades. Unemployment blackspots, rates of unemployment in certain sectors, the link between education and employment all reveal a complex situation in which it is difficult to deliver equality, as is evidenced in the following.

The Fair Employment Act of 1976 made discrimination in employment on religious or political grounds illegal and established the Fair Employment Agency to investigate complaints of such malpractice. More than a decade later with evidence revealing that the unemployment differential between Catholics and Protestants had not narrowed, increased powers and resources were given to the Fair Employment Commission which replaced the Agency. Employers with more than 25 employees had to register with the Commission and monitor the religious composition of their workforces. By the early 1990s it was still considered necessary to implement the Targeting Social Need (TSN) programme under the control of the Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU). This targeted government policies towards those areas suffering high deprivation levels. Action for Community Employment (ACE) was another programme from that time which targeted resources at the long-term unemployed, this traditionally being greater among Catholics. In 1994 CCRU became responsible for Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT)
measures which were aimed at ensuring equality and equity perspectives influenced all government activity. All government departments and agencies are now subject to these guidelines (Fitzduff, 1996: 44-49).

Many of these responsibilities now rest with the Equality Commission which was set up in October 1999, taking over the responsibilities of the Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland, the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland, the Fair Employment Commission and the Northern Ireland Disability Council. It is also responsible for relevant matters in the extension of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 which covers the provision of goods, facilities and services and the management and disposal of premises. Equality schemes, impact assessments, Section 75 have now become the language of a multi-faceted approach to equality including elements of the Draft Programme for Government (www.nics.gov.uk/pfg/annexb.htm).

Language of Equality

It is not mere semantics to debate the different terms. The language associated with equality has profound implications for everyone and, given that it is politically imbued it seems essential we make serious attempts to understand the implications of different terms. As legislation and practice depend on language we need to avoid, as far as is possible, distilling the same word or phrase to mean different things to different key players: effective management of diversity will ultimately suffer in this environment.

The most apparent difference comes with the basic terms ‘equality of opportunity and ‘equality of outcome’. One can easily argue that at one level all people have equality of opportunity: education and health services, for example, are open to all. However, social scientists will argue that people on low income generally do not perform as well in education and suffer ill health more than their higher income counterparts. If one was to try and ensure equality of outcome in this scenario one is confronted with a plethora of issues that policy makers would find impossible to resolve. This simple example illustrates the profound difficulties of ‘equality’ from the perspective of public policy meeting individual lives:
it is an immensely difficult task to sum up ‘equality’ in a phrase.

Wilson has taken these tensions of thought further and declared that the two traditional positions have real limitations and proposed an ‘equality of life chances’ approach (Wilson, 2000: 3). It is interesting to note that the Draft Programme for Government (2000) veered in this general direction by referring to “the inequalities in the life experiences of our citizens” yet continued to propose that everyone should enjoy ‘equality of opportunity’ (Sec 1.3 http://www.nics.gov.uk/pfg/contents.htm). Wilson then refers to other writers whose analysis of equality include underpinning principles such as, ‘inclusion’, regulation of ‘the distribution of strategic goods’ and, an ‘equal chance condition’. At one point the Belfast Agreement refers to ‘equality of treatment’ in the context of a potential Bill of Rights imposing obligations on government and public bodies to respect the identity and ethos of both communities (Belfast Agreement, ‘Rights Safeguards & Equality of Opportunity’ para. 4).

Some linkage of equality to upholding the dignity of each member of society would also enhance the vision of the concept and could also feed into practice and implementation. The principle of equal dignity implies the same respect for everyone’s identity (Waldron, 2000: 157), something that is vital to our context. It is interesting to note that Hepple et al. recommended that one of the purposes of an Equality Act in the UK should be explicitly stated as “the protection of the dignity, autonomy and worth of every individual” (Hepple et al. 2000: 35). In addition the non-legally binding EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, acknowledged by member states in December 2000 includes ‘dignity’ along with equality among its key ‘rights’ for all EU citizens (http://europa.eu.int/comm/nice_council/index_en.htm).

It is therefore extremely clear that there is still a debate, not one of mere semantics, as to the real meaning of equality in the political policy context. In a polarised community it is entirely plausible that, as with emotive terms such as ‘law and order’ and ‘justice’, communities and sometimes their representatives will use the same word yet have entirely different visions of what they mean and, aspire to.

Yet, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act has opted for “the need to promote equality of opportunity”
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(Equality Commission, 2000: 47). It is therefore easy to see from the above synopsis that policymakers face a dilemma. The opted route for the legislation is very singular and therefore may not ultimately be the most effective if applied as a constant across all arenas. As Wilson put it equality of opportunity approaches may just lead to a bureaucratic burden to be got over and growing “routinism”. One person described it to this writer as the ‘curse of realised dreams’ when considering the administrative burden of creating a Schedule 9 ‘equality scheme’ and reflecting on its real effectiveness in daily life.

In his review Gillespie found a worrying trend in the promotion of the Sec 75 (2) ‘good relations duty’. This important and potentially pro-active concept was sometimes linked to the equality impact assessments, which seems incongruous to the whole idea and legal responsibility to ‘promote’. Gillespie also commented that there was a lack of clarity on lines of responsibility and in some cases the equality scheme was seen as an end in its own right rather than a means to ‘mainstream’ (Gillespie, 2000: 8). Signs of early day inadequacies are apparent.

One of the ‘expert’ interviewees who contributed to this research raised another important point saying that equality measures are not symmetrical. By this it was meant that there are instances whereby the context requires strong affirmative (or other) action: quotas for police recruitment was an example. On the other hand this may not be appropriate in different sectors. In a society which has practised ‘what aboutery’, the paradox of divergent treatment in different sectors, especially in the ‘equality agenda’, leads to misunderstandings and criticism. This is an important issue that has to be considered and efforts made to explain to the public via a more detailed treatment of equality.

It therefore appears that there is need for further research to garner an approach to equality that combines the need for both clarity and flexibility for multi-issue and sector application. It is fully appreciated that much has been done in a very short time and many people have contributed a great deal. Additional research would feed into the many understandable learning curves of this process and not work against that which has been positively achieved.
**Structures of Equality**

Some of the general background information in the introduction to this section on Equality alludes to structural issues. Essentially there is the core Equality Commission, the Equality Unit of the OFMDFM, the Human Rights Commission with obvious interests in equality matters and, the NI Assembly in general and its Committee of the Centre in particular. This latter body has been effectively inoperative with serious political tensions, indicative of partisan approaches to equality, at the heart of the problem (Wilford and Osborne, 2000). A consultative council, required by law, was to advise the Equality Commission on areas previously administered by its four constituent parts. As yet there has been little development, with its role seen as possibly superfluous if the Civic Forum runs successfully (Gillespie, 2000: 4). It is clear from the above that with the very recent introduction of all these component parts, options for further research and major action are circumscribed by the need for a period of settling.

However, there are points worthy of consideration.

- at present the role of the Equality Unit seems to be one of implementation rather than creating policy. This may be understandable given the early stages of the process and the inherited work of TSN and Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI). However, a clear vision of equality in our evolving context would be required;
- the role of the Equality Unit to other departments. Is the unit, liasing, recommending, directing or requesting procedures etc? The principle of OFMDFM being the ‘lead body’ or ‘driving force’ in diversity matters has particularly strong resonances in equality issues;
- how is Equality Commission communication to government departments affected by the Equality Unit’s responsibility for all departments?
- evaluate impact assessments as they take place. This is the crucial vehicle, which carries the evidence for the effectiveness of the legislation. There are suggestions in other parts of this research, which could ultimately help in this evaluation. The intent of the ‘Community Link’ idea is one of proximity to communities therefore having both the access and
ability to audit issues such as these;
• given the concerns about few references to the promotion of
good relations duty, how can this be improved upon given the
pro-active intent of the legislation;
• what are the concerns of the Equality Commission and
Human Rights Commission on areas of overlap and legislative
responsibility? If appropriate, how can these be resolved?
• is funding sufficient for the discharge of immediate and
future responsibilities in this crucial area?
• A review from a cross-section of public bodies on their
response to a/ the drawing up of Equality Schemes and, b/ how
effective they see them as being.

**Equality Legislation**

This Bill of Rights was called for by the Belfast Agreement and is
under consideration by the Human Rights Commission. Livingstone
reminds us that the Agreement was silent on what should be included
in the Bill apart from two points on equality (Livingstone, 2000). By
inclusion of these at the expense of other potential issues it would
appear that linkage of equality to the Bill of Rights is viewed as
important. However, the two points have problems. Firstly, the call for
the formulation of a general obligation on government and public
bodies to fully respect, “on the basis of equality of treatment” the
identity and ethos of both communities. This omits social and ethnic
groups, those bodies not declared ‘public’ by the Secretary of State,
and the private sector (see below). Secondly, the call for a clear
formulation of rights not to be discriminated against and to equality of
opportunity in both public and private sectors, obviously restricts
potential impact to ‘equality of opportunity’. However, it is interesting
to note that, given what has been said about language of
equality, the Agreement here uses both equality of
treatment and equality of opportunity.

After considering numerous NI, UK and EU
legislative measures, Livingstone’s main concern
is that equality protection in the Bill of Rights
i.e. at constitutional level, does not
fragment in the way it did at statutory
level. Yet as well as the proposed Bill
of Rights a single Equality Bill is also
proposed and is the responsibility of
OFMDFM. The scope of this Bill has
still to be decided but its essence is obviously anti-discrimination thus germane to human rights. The minimum the Bill could do is to bring together the anti discrimination areas subsumed by the Equality Commission or, it could broaden its scope to include other issues such as age and sexual orientation and reflect / include the thrust of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The inclusion of the European dimension was certainly indicated in the Draft Programme for Government (2000 - Annex B, 3.1 http://www.nics.gov.uk/pfg/annex.htm).

Whichever route is decided upon there is potential for some overlap, malign or benign, in the two pieces of legislation as the Human Rights Commission has obviously included equality in its Bill of Rights remit.

However, it has also indicated a much broader approach to the Bill of Rights. Nine Working Groups have submitted reports to the Commission, one on Implementation Issues and the rest on the following ‘Rights’, Children’s, Criminal Justice, Culture and Identity, Education, Equality, Language, Socio-economic and Victims. These are forming the basis for a consultation period leading to the Commission’s final advice on the Bill to the Government at the end of 2001 (www.nihrc.org). The breadth of considerations is impressive and perhaps indicates that the Bill of Rights could be a better vehicle for including some of the matters below.

Therefore, as both the Bill of Rights and Equality Bill are in the process of formulation, at least consideration can be given to either or both incorporating and indeed consolidating some of the important issues referred to in this report and elsewhere. The following points are recommended as worthy of further consideration.

That those with the necessary expertise consider if and how the proposed Bill of Rights and / or the Equality Bill could convey the following:

- aspirational matters to demonstrate equality as pro-active and evolving work and not merely reactive to matters of prohibition;
- the multi-dimensional nature of equality;
- combination of equality concepts reflected in terms such as those referred to above;
- the need for individual and group responsibility taking thus, seeing ‘rights’ in the bigger societal picture;
• if some or all of these are deemed as inappropriate to either or both Bills, alternative methods of conveying the import of these matters, memorandum, statement, other, should be evaluated.

Limits of Legislation

Hepple et al. considered the enforcement of UK anti-discrimination legislation and found that there was “too much emphasis on state regulation and too little on the responsibility of organisations and individuals to generate change.” Drawing from international comparisons, including N Ireland, it was felt that a blend of positive action, enforced self-regulation and the avoidance of bureaucratic procedures was best (Hepple et al., 2000: xiii - xv). Admittedly it is impossible at this time of great transition to see the effects of all the actual and forthcoming legislation. However, there will be a need to review the effects and Hepple’s pointer to generating responsibility, albeit a longer-term goal given our level of polarisation, should be given serious consideration. Likewise, strategies to achieve this should be researched.

The Private Sector

Northern Ireland’s private sector has traditionally been smaller than most west European societies but it is still a vital and growing one. Its role in equality issues cannot be ignored and research should be carried out on how to improve on present practices and advance the process. Procurement policies of public bodies and the triennial fair employment reviews could be vehicles for advancement but it is anticipated that further options could be investigated. New thinking on the distinction between public and private sectors may be required. Having ‘an impact on’ and ‘responsibility for’ facets of society could be potential benchmarks by which any organisation would be required to promote equality and good relations. McCrudden considers a Bill of Rights as a vehicle for taking certain issues further than any existing legislation. One of these is enforcing a provision whereby both public and private sectors cannot either directly or indirectly discriminate against people on a broad (but unspecified) range of grounds. A second would place a legal obligation on both public and private sectors to promote equality of
opportunity (McCrudden, 2000: 9). It is therefore clear that consideration has been given and should continue to be given to equality in the private sector.

**Options for Consideration**

1/ Research into the language of equality not with the emphasis on an alternative phrase but rather on outlining a relatively detailed vision for the N Ireland context of, the meaning of equality, the implications for the society and the difficulties. This to underpin the policy approach to equality.

2/ Research into the questions raised in the section ‘Structures of Equality’. While realising the immensity of the tasks already undertaken, focused research into aspects of the structures could help avoid pitfalls.

3/ Detailed research on how to help best practice in promoting the ‘good relations duty’ for immediate assistance to all public bodies.

4/ Immediate research on how to effectively evaluate the Impact Assessments. The first such assessment may be the bedrock of the system with subsequent assessments being the driving force. It is of the utmost importance that these are effective. If the Equality Commission is already planning how this can be achieved research efforts could be co-ordinated.

5/ Research into the points raised in the ‘Equality Legislation’ section including ‘Limits of Legislation’ and the ‘Private Sector’.

**Culture**

Culture is simultaneously an elusive and imminent phenomenon, especially in a polarised community. Elusive in the sense that it is hard to objectively list its component parts and imminent in the sense that its effect on issues and events can sometimes be seen, literally ‘on the streets’. The regularity of the Drumcree issue, although changing over recent years,
epitomises collisions of cultures, its surreal nature to the outside world and difficulties in resolving when the central issue is underpinned by layers of history, worldview, rights and tension.

**Background**

The path to cultural diversity being firmly on the public agenda illustrates the difficulties of the task ahead (Cultural Traditions Group, nd: 5-7). Nearly twenty years of violence led to the recognition that community relations had to improve so research was commissioned on the subject. This in turn led to a new Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU) being created in 1987, attached to the office of the Secretary of State. From discussions with interested people and groups the Cultural Traditions Group was established. Conferences such as ‘Varieties of Irishness’, ‘Varieties of Britishness’ and ‘All Europeans Now’ spanning the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Cultural Traditions Group became a sub-committee of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council when it was formed in 1990 with grant-giving powers and responsibilities. Funds were purposely directed to publications, media and cultural heritage and language.

In addition, ‘diversity 21’ (www.diversity21.co.uk) is a joint venture between the Community Relations Council and Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) with financial support from the EU Special Support Programme. DCAL has particularly outlined its approach to diversity matters (Futuresearch Conference Report www.dcalni.gov.uk) with the following points alluding to future possibilities. Cultural diversity should be regarded as a positive force in N Ireland and consultations should take place to explore developing focus on opportunities and common themes. Its longer-term aims are:

- to examine its own role in cultural diversity;
- facilitate and/or support mechanisms relevant to cultural diversity and initiate pilot programme;
- examine existing legislation, policies and projects.

This research should be seen as a contribution towards that process. The complexities and difficulties of the subject are evidenced in the following.
The Issues

The problems of defining culture to render a policy-making infrastructure in the post Belfast Agreement paradigm have already been referred to in the section on ‘cross cutting concepts and principles’. Reference to defining culture as a language in the sense that it consists of signs which are structured and organised like language (Bryson and McCartney, 1994: 4) indicates the difficulty. The overall problem is that a restricted definition is too limited to describe the complexity and an ‘over-extended definition’ can make it meaningless (Hayes, 1990). Cultural identity is likewise difficult. It is described as a fluid and volatile concept including, amongst other things, coded, expressive modes of behaviour, language, dress, kinship patterns, institutions, religion and the arts (European Task Force, 1997: 45). Whatever about its many descriptions the importance of cultural identity is summed up by its classification as an ‘anchor’ for people (Kymlicka, 1995: 89). The processes for arriving at working definitions that balance all these concepts have yet to take place.

From the above one can also see the breadth of the topic, the inherent difficulties of taking one definition to underpin public policy and the necessity of working from broader principles to specifics. For example, the Council of Europe suggests the keys to cultural policy are the promotion of, cultural identity, cultural diversity, creativity and, participation and breaks these down further to include many issues. It is also stressed that these four are not stand alone aspirations but that they should be “translated into the practical politics of interdependence” (European Task Force, 1997: 45-49 & 268). These laudable ‘keys’ quickly confront some of the concepts outlined in the section of this report ‘Diversity: Cross Cutting Concepts and Principles’; these included, dominant perspectives, identity, shared ambition, power of difference and reducing cultural diversity to cultural enrichment. The tension of these is witnessed in some of the following information.

Aspects of so-called high culture may well escape political and historical issues but very few other areas do. The political was well illustrated by the following example. At the Cultural Traditions Group Conference in 1990 discussions on the standing of the
Irish language witnessed some repetition of a local politician’s ‘number crunching’ approach to culture. It was stated that Irish could not be regarded as the second language; the Chinese occupied this place! Nationalists wanted increased acknowledgement of the language as recognition of the diversity of cultural backgrounds in N Ireland. Unionists on the other hand thought it represented a step towards a united Ireland and eroded their sense of belonging (Crozier ed., 1990: 66). Obviously things have moved on since then and the Belfast Agreement outlines an approach to both Irish and Ulster-Scots.

Attempts to de-politicise cultural questions have been proposed. The ‘fifth province’ idea was one which tried to extract cultural questions from the ‘narrowness’ of nationalisms and saw European and global identity ascriptions as a way forward (Kearney, 1997: 100-102). However, while multi-layered or concentric circle approaches to identity are a reality for some people the ethnic or ethno-national core is still seen as a powerful factor in identity the world over.

It follows that politics imbues the cultural with a potency in N Ireland that needs to be understood and addressed. Ruane and Todd spoke of the conflict being over the constitutional question rather than any cultural intransigence among the Northern Irish (Ruane and Todd, 1991: 32-3). Darby argues strongly that while the “central constitutional conundrum remains unsolved” laudable moves to pluralism should be aware of their limitations (Darby, 1998: 11). Writing just prior to the Belfast Agreement, Darby is nonetheless making a very important point. The Agreement did not ‘solve the conundrum’ but it has recognised foci of allegiance and this actually elucidates the import of Darby’s remark. Central to the issue of culture for the broad number contained in the ‘two community’ description, is the difficulty of restricting cultures to within N Ireland itself. The ‘conundrum’ axiomatically means intense cultural loyalties look outward from N Ireland, the political corollary of which is recognised by the three stranded approach in the Agreement.

Constant reference to and articulation of cultures within N Ireland can lead to reading N Ireland itself back into history with obvious cultural implications. Two very brief examples indicate the point. A senior
history educationalist speaking to history teachers used an example including the question what would Northern Ireland have thought about the Battle of the Somme: the fact that N Ireland did not exist at the time was ignored. This can lead to a sub-conscious denial of the involvement at the Somme of soldiers from all over Ireland with obvious and profound cultural implications given the emotional taproot of that event. Secondly, in the case of FSL Lyons, his chapter on the roots of difference likewise seemed to concentrate on reading ‘Ulster’ back into history to propose distinct lifestyles (Lyons, 1979), rather than on how the situation evolved with its many twists, turns and overlaps.

These examples suggest important points in the politicisation of culture which need to be understood and thus inform policy making and implementation. These have been articulated by Merry but analysed by Wright (Wright, 1998: 9). Culture can be viewed as a “contested process of meaning-making” with terms and concepts the key areas of contest. The tension about Irish and Ulster-Scots is an excellent example. In the desire to express and give meaning to ‘protestant identity and culture’ some have extolled the virtues of the Scottish link via what is perceived as Ulster-Scots language. It could be argued that this ‘meaning-making’ process serves simultaneous purposes of confirming identity while distancing, to some degree, from another identity. Other issues such as flag flying, the RUC harp and crown symbol and, the right to march on ‘traditional routes’ obviously resonate with ‘meaning-making’ tensions in the N Ireland context.

There are three stages to the process of ‘meaning-making’. The first is defining key symbols that give a particular view of the world and what people should see as the ‘reality’ of their society and history. The second stage is when this world-view becomes institutionalised and the third is when a key term carries a new way of thinking and becomes the prevalent way of thinking in everyday life. One could go into great detail on this topic but the following references are briefly made for purposes of demonstration and to indicate the immensity of the cultural task now facing policy making in this arena.

Some issues from the partition era show the three stages at work in concrete terms with continuing
implications. One symbol of ‘loyalty’, Ulster casualties at the Somme, became deeply entrenched in the embryonic N Ireland and contributed to defining a world-view of loyalty and service to the Crown to the degree illustrated above. What was viewed as democratic and just in many areas of government was actually partisan and became institutionalised, if not exclusively then dominantly. Internal boundary drawing perhaps epitomises. Ulster became synonymous with the new six counties of N Ireland with a societal power and prevalence that some of today’s school pupils are surprised when the historical nine county Ulster is taught.

These are subtle but still powerful influences. Cultural enrichment will take place when they are not recognised and exposure to ‘other cultures’ is within delimited social, political and historical boundaries. Cultural diversity will be nourished if policies and practices are in place which, are truly informed by and accept the difficulties of, ‘contested processes of meaning-making’.

While the above points deal with the political it is obvious that history and aspects of education also impact upon the debate. There is no need to re-iterate the ‘options for consideration’ from the education section but obviously some would impact on cultural matters. Additional points in this context are still important. History, whether it is popular ‘street history’ or that in the classroom exerts a cultural impact: the ‘story’ of traditions can range from credible history to hagiography. There is a need to understand models of history and their abuse: history as emotional taproot, as national narrative, history from the points of view of the ‘defeated’ and the ‘victor’ and, changing contexts are a relatively few examples. It might also be helpful for both cultural and indeed educational projects to look at comparative international examples under the banner of ‘moral history’. This may be a challenge but one that could nonetheless be risen to in certain contexts. Glover’s work is a recent example (Glover, 1999).

UNICEF in their study of education in areas of ethnic conflict made numerous and particular references to history. Intentional or unintentional distortion of history takes place by acts of commission as well as omission, segregated education emphasises difference and, the profound general effect history has on people’s understanding of the
past and thus how they interpret the present, are all referred to (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: 12-15). It is appreciated that history teaching in N Ireland has progressed. Local history projects have grown with the Ulster Federation for Local Studies acting as a catalyst (Fitzduff, 1996: 38) and secondary / grammar school history has undergone curriculum change within the period of the ‘troubles’. However, as has already been pointed out reticence by some to teach the more imminent and controversial GCSE Northern Ireland module still exists and, concerns about this reticence are rippling outward to concerns about the pilot SCPE project.

The Council of Europe’s detailed study of culture wisely points to the following. There is no culture without tradition and no tradition without continuity (European Task Force, 1997: 71). It is in this confluence that history, ‘street’ or formal, education in general and political outlook can forge a ‘continuity’, real, false or mythical, which informs cultural identities and worldviews. This is not unique to N Ireland as the Council’s numerous examples prove. But it has to be understood if we are to have enduring policies for cultural diversity.

**Policy Implications**

The evolution of cultural matters in N Ireland has occurred in great political tension. From partition to ‘troubles’ social polarisation was the largely the order of the day. Early to mid ‘troubles’ squeezed out any hope of constructive engagement but, as noted above, mid to later ‘troubles’ witnessed brave efforts in the realisation that engagement had to take place. The Belfast Agreement enshrined cultural aspects, increasing possibilities for greater engagement but leaves much policy work to be done. With, and even because of, that background it is vital that cultural diversity policy has a clarity never before achieved. It follows that this is now the time to articulate broad but vital conceptual thinking that will underpin the many sectors and projects. It would be too easy to allow this research to ‘run’ with ideas for programmes or analyse funding. The preferred approach is, to concentrate on that which could influence programmes, funding, and organisations with specific and general interest in such matters.

**Terminology** – as with equality, difficulties can arise even when using the same term. Cultural Diversity
could mean welcoming ‘difference’ which in turn and via programmes could unintentionally exacerbate and rigidify difference. Diversity should mean both difference and commonalities (my emphasis). The latter automatically has a balancing influence, guiding cultural groups and individuals to ‘see the other(s)’ and their relationship. Interdependence is a building block of diversity: otherwise policy makers and implementers could be a catalyst merely rigidifying and perhaps funding, homogenous self-contained groups with little real sense and/or experience of others.

**Single-identity work** – sometimes also referred to as identity affirmation – it is fully appreciated that this work can be extremely important to the groups concerned and has real benefits. However, it is important that an additional dimension is present, if not from the very start then at least as a realistic goal to work towards. Single identity work should be seen as evolving to a process of appreciating their cultural relationship to others and thus their interdependence.

**Building blocks of cultural separatism** – it is admittedly difficult getting individuals and groups to see potential (and actual) negative separatist tendencies in their worldviews. Positive cultural diversity requires candid, but still diplomatic, training and education approaches to these tendencies. To build a society in which diversity is a genuinely positive force ‘cultural maturity’ must be nurtured: this can only be done if that which militates against such maturity is ‘unpacked’. There may be much in anti-sectarian training programmes that can be utilised and there are readily available descriptions of bias (Leonard, 1997: 35-43). If policy does not face this we will continue to address the ‘softer’ areas without dealing with the ‘harder’ issues which are essential to long term stability.

**Political and historical influences** – the confluence described above displays the need to understand how this process works and target a policy approach enabling people and groups to benefit. Much academic work has already been done and possibly only needs to be brought together within and for this context. It is important to look, to some degree, outside the boundaries of the province so that genuine cultural diversity is upheld rather than it disguising a lesser goal of cultural enrichment. It is envisaged that work on these issues would prove
beneficial to many in the education, training and voluntary / community development sectors.

Religion and its influence - the informing of worldviews by people’s religious views has cultural implications: these can be both benign and malign. Secularisation has not made the dramatic inroads of say, England so religion, both in terms of practice and society, exerts influence in our context. Some general conceptual and particular Irish / N Irish work has been carried out and could be amalgamated to inform a vision of culture and diversity.

The wider context – many cultural attachments throughout Irish history have undoubtedly been in the wider context of Europe and America. These should not be overplayed or simplified to the trite but likewise they cannot be ignored. Links of the Irish to, France and Spain, continental royal families, the Europe wide reformation and counter-reformation, the United Irishmen era, emigration to America, the British Empire and world wars are all present. To look at the modern era of wider cultural influences and identities should not, given those historical connections, be a threat and indeed could help engender a vision of culture and identity in the bigger picture.

This context should also help society at large positively include the increasing number of ethnic minorities. Interdependence, seeing the importance of one’s own culture and thus appreciating the value of another’s, seeing the value and creativity of others expressing their culture should contribute to positive multi-culturalism in N Ireland.

Impact on funding – crystallisation of thought and a detailed policy vision on the above areas would render criteria for many different types of funding. Programmes which, disseminate this information, lead to cultural relationships and knowledge of interdependence and, those that lessen cultural separatism are all possible as stand alone programmes. They could also be integrated with existing schemes and courses. Setting criteria and evaluating success would both be easier.

Options for Consideration

All of these options include the more detailed points made immediately above.
1/ Research and furnish a comprehensive context friendly vision statement of cultural diversity. From this a working definition for cultural policy planning and implementation could emerge.

2/ Research with a view to implementing a model for evolving single identity type projects to include, relationship to and interdependence with other cultural groups. This to include training and education on, the pitfalls of and avoiding ‘cultural separatism’. Research is required to further articulate this and develop the necessary material. It is envisaged that this would be widely used in other sectors of cultural diversity promotion.

3/ Research the theory of how politics, history and religion impact upon culture with a view to providing educational / training material on the subject. Again, it is envisaged that this could be widely distributed.

4/ Research methodologies for positively demonstrating culture and cultural identity in the wider context.

5/ Compile framework and criteria for funding bodies which integrates the policy principles that emanate from the above.

**Policing**

The process of the Patten Report from commissioning through to public meetings, report stage and reaction, epitomises the centrality and difficulties of policing in a polarised community. Defence by reference to suffering and professionalism is met by accusations concerning the RUC’s role in key emotive events during the ‘troubles’. Promoting diversity in society and the importance of policing in society means that policing and diversity issues are inseparable. How this important confluence is handled will have a major impact.

*The Background*

Policing has been inextricably linked to the politics of N Ireland. The organisation of the police reflected the nature of the post partition
politics. The need for security, paramilitary approaches, part time volunteers (the Specials) mobilised alongside the full time force, control mechanisms which locked it into unionist political control and partisan membership indicated the priorities of the RUC. There have always been Roman Catholics in the force, many in fact transferring in from the Royal Irish Constabulary, but the overwhelming number and ethos has displayed protestant and unionist credentials. Changes have occurred more recently but the decades which preceded these have resulted in creating a climate of distrust over the whole issue of police and policing.

At the outbreak of the ‘troubles’ RUC resources were stretched to literal breaking point and reviews such as the Cameron, Hunt and Scarman resulted in both criticism and reform of the force. The ‘B’ Specials were disbanded, replaced by the RUC Reserve (full and part time) which was put under the command of the re-organised RUC. A Police Authority for Northern Ireland (PANI) was instituted as a management body of the RUC but never became the effective organisation it was supposed to be. Security and operational matters remained the Chief Constable’s responsibility and much of the ‘political’ responsibility remained with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) thus effectively beyond PANI. Therefore, it came as no surprise that Patten (1999: rec. 8) recommended it’s replacement by a Police Board. However, it is interesting to note the ongoing debate about the powers of the incoming Board so the possibility of continued tensions about responsibility and powers is a matter of concern. The years of the ‘troubles’ saw the RUC, carry out normal civic policing matters through to covert paramilitarism, remain as a force with a largely protestant membership, suffer considerable losses and being simultaneously regarded as a protector of law, order and the state and, as an unacceptable force. The extremities of these views typify the polarisation.

Some changes did occur. The period of the Anglo-Irish Agreement witnessed widespread violent loyalist / unionist reaction, many times against the RUC. The then Chief Constable Sir John Hermon is credited with the operational success of ensuring the unrest was effectively dealt with, claiming this displayed the force’s impartiality. In 1993 RUC recruit training began to include a Community Awareness Programme, designed by Mediation
Network. The Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs records this move as recognition by the RUC of the differences within society and confirms that such instruction is now part of every training programme for all officers. However, the Committee says it is unclear if the good intentions of the training have been translated into changed attitudes among recruits and records various authoritative opinions that it has not. Therefore this and other reservations are still held (Select Committee on N Ireland Affairs – Third Report, 1998: paras 76-89).

**The Issues**

Considerable research on the RUC has been conducted from the 1970s onwards and it would be impossible to record it all in a document of this nature. The selection made here illustrates essential points in the context of managing diversity and leads into the ‘Options for Consideration’. Enloe recorded what she called an ‘occupational culture’ which, “to a greater or lesser extent” inculcated into unionist ideology and that a number of officers express the attitudes, fears and prejudices “that are reflective of the wider protestant community” (Enloe, 1978: 245, 251 & 255). Two decades later the Chairman of the Independent Commission on Police Complaints noted that despite the Community Awareness Training programme, recruits appeared “quite comfortable with their prejudices” (Select Committee - Third Report, 1998: para 81). Obviously issues such as social conditioning and dominant perspectives come into play impacting upon acceptability of the force by society at large.

Acceptability is of course a vital component of police in society and Brewer noted an important combination of views. He recorded that Protestants’ support for the RUC weakened in the wake of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the corresponding change in police policy on protestant marches and demonstrations. Catholic support levels are regularly contested (Ellison and Smyth, 2000: 150-176) but whatever their level Brewer contends that it is immediately qualified as the police’s paramilitary role becomes more prominent (Brewer, 1991:267-8). Translating the potentiality of conditional support levels within the two main communities into the new paradigm of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), one can automatically see that the ‘central ground’ of support
for such a service will be vital to diversity matters. There will be voices from both end points on this continuum against facets of the force and its operation and, how they compare with that ‘central’ level of support will be a key test.

Reference to two other important works will suffice in flagging up relevant issues for our context. Hamilton et al. after their mid 1990s examination made various recommendations. Among these were, independent investigations procedure for complaints not involving any serving police officers and, a change of name and removal of much of the symbolism as an essential first element in seeking to make the police more acceptable to nationalists. They also recommended extensive re-training of officers to equip the police for a dramatically changed role with a larger emphasis on community policing and, measures on accountability which were obviously articulated in the pre-Patten scenario (Hamilton et al., 1995: 145-157).

Secondly, the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) conducted research in 1997 and three particular clusters of points are important. The first is their identification of key values for policing in a democracy. These were equity, delivery of service, responsiveness, distribution of power, information, redress and participation (O’Rawe & Moore, 1997: 11). Secondly, important points are illustrated by identifying some of the issues on which their recommendations were made. For example, on representation their overall aim was an inclusive membership not only in terms of the ‘two communities’ but also across the societal board. On training the authors accepted that training alone does not guarantee impartiality and that its content should derive from analysis of the needs of the community and, on legal accountability they considered that police legislation needed to be informed by principles laid down in international law and human rights conventions. On democratic accountability, civic oversight bodies and local systems of communication and consultation were recommended (O’Rawe & Moore, 1997: 61, 90-91, 127-8 & 173-5).

Lastly, their report included the following three conclusions which again inform the context of this report. O’Rawe and Moore considered it vital that a police service “be as representative as possible of the diversity in society”. They thought that the importance of political will at the highest levels could not be over
emphasised and, that changes in policing should be seen in the wider context of “institutional and even social change” (O’Rawe & Moore 1997: 57-58).

The above points ultimately gather around some core policing and socio-political ideals. These were also reflected in Patten’s report as is immediately evident from the following breakdown. Seven recommendations were made on ‘Human Rights’, thirty-six on ‘Accountability’, eight on ‘Policing with the Community’, eighteen on the ‘Composition and Recruitment of the Police Service’, twenty-one on ‘Training, Education and Development’ and seven on ‘Culture, Ethos and Symbols’. These comprise a large majority of the 175 recommendations, thus firmly indicating the Commission’s concerns. Therefore, broad but agreed important standards on policing are evident and inform the management of diversity in N Ireland.

I would suggest that in the context of this report three broad but still core areas are essential to the police and policing debate. These are a philosophy of policing for a diverse and evolving society, training and accountability. It is fully appreciated that many issues cluster around and cross cut these but if core thinking and approaches are clear, issues and structures will automatically benefit.

**Philosophy of Policing**

If one contrasted policing as the rule of ‘law and order’ with policing as ‘community partnership’ one is automatically considering two entirely different philosophies. Neither excludes the other but they are deeply divergent. The public arena debate about policing from Patten to legislation has mostly, and in many ways understandably, been about losses, gains and focusing primarily on relatively few individual points, such as symbols. The composite whole needs to be articulated with and for the public and recognised by not only police officers but also by all component parts of the policing enterprise for example, Police Board and Ombudsman. These are quite numerous therefore it is important that all appropriate sectors are approaching this vital area with relatively similar methodologies and understandings. To allow change implementation and the early days of PSNI to potentially drift without co-ordinated vision and pro-active work is to invite continued tension. In the
interests of successfully managing diversity, society should not constantly look at and remain ‘anchored’ to, that which we have changed from but rather clarify and articulate its vision of what we are changing to (my emphasis).

It therefore seems important that a socio-political vision of policing is constructed and becomes a benchmark from which all can work. The main component parts have obviously been highlighted in Patten and the linking legislation has now been passed. But there have been other reviews that could impact, for example, the MacPherson report on the Stephen Lawrence murder. It is also known that the RUC have been producing a document ‘Vision of Success’ and this could inform work on such a task. The job ahead is to research how to form the content of a comprehensive vision emphasising the following. Policing in, an evolving and diverse society, partnership and consultation with communities, policing as everyone’s concern, policing that welcomes measures of accountability as methods by which partnership is protected (see below) and, policing which welcomes civilian and professional knowledge and expertise. Such an articulation could be used for ‘mission statement’ type documents, benchmarks for all organisations with responsibility e.g. PSNI itself, Ombudsman, Police Board, DPPBs, NIO Policing Division etc. and, a component part of the training programme for PSNI recruits and all transferring members.

Designating PSNI and all bodies concerned with policing as public authorities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 could make a key contribution to this comprehensive vision. The concomitant responsibilities of equality schemes, promoting good relations and impact assessments would harness the entire policing enterprise into the mainstream of ‘equality proofing’ and form part of the philosophy as suggested above.

Training

Patten’s recommendations on Training, Education and Development were wide ranging. My comments are not to compete but to add where considered appropriate. For example the inculcation of the comprehensive vision of policing into training as immediately above should not be a ‘bolt-on’ or stand alone section but rather imbue the entire thrust of such
a programme. This does not run contrary to Patten’s specific recommendations such as those on the impact on policing of the new constitutional arrangements for Northern Ireland and the Human Rights Act 1998 (recs. 141 & 142). In addition it is also appreciated that much work on training is under way, time is a major factor for all sectors of police training, the emphasis on outside courses and accredited courses is increasing and, there is a blend of training carried out centrally and at ‘Divisional Schools of Instruction’. District organisation may become more appropriate than Divisional in PSNI but the conceptual points made below can be tailored as considered appropriate.

It would appear worthwhile that the impact of the points made on a vision of policing should follow through to training. Optimisation of that would be best achieved by education / training / instruction which placed different philosophies of policing within both sociological and social psychology contexts. This approach shifts the emphasis from a dominant outlook of ‘policing a society’ to ‘policing in and with a society’. Emphasis in the latter can promote community, consultation, partnership, communications, interpersonal relations, problem solving and the place of the law, justice, human rights and equality in this complex situation. It should not present too many difficulties to prepare material on key sociological concepts, various views of policing, law, justice and authority. Initial and ongoing training would therefore work from the bigger picture of policing as part of a broad societal network through to the skills required for this important task. Officers would therefore be able to see the thinking behind their corporate and individual role.

I referred to the limitations of Community Awareness Programme and this points up the difficulty of measuring the impact of training: in short does it make a real difference? This is a difficult task but it would appear very important to the entire spectrum of operations that such measurement is attempted. There are no quick-fix solutions so further research on best practice would be of great benefit. Possibilities could be garnered from international examples and core principles could include qualitative measurement among interested groups and people. Community groups, DPPBs and members of the legal profession would be a start to the process of reviewing effectiveness in a cross-section of the public.
Accountability

It is realised that accountability is a multi-dimensional phenomenon but it is important to concentrate on the ‘who is guarding the guards’ syndrome as it has given rise to great controversy about the handling of complaints against the police: distrust of police officers investigating fellow officers was the core issue. Even when police officers from other forces rigorously investigated, bringing cases to fruition was never easy. The Stalker saga perhaps epitomises.

‘Patten’ made numerous specific recommendations about the Police Board, Ombudsman, transparency and commission for covert law enforcement in an effort to consolidate accountability. Obviously as with much in the policing context these structures need time to ‘bed down’ but there is an imperative for critical review to ensure that accountability is best served by these structures and changes made when this is not the case. Concerns have already been expressed about the powers of the Board in this context and it may well be that specific difficulties will only be truly evident after a time and certain examples. However, this specific issue illuminates a larger point. At the time of writing the legislation based on Patten’s report has just been passed and Patten himself has just published his appeal to move the process on, avoiding the politicisation of policing (Belfast Telegraph 28/11/00). The controversy that runs over how the legislation reflects Patten renders desirable a prompt examination of the Act and implementation strategies from the management of diversity perspective. Research into the potential pitfalls in the post legislation and implementation phase could help avoid damaging issues and ensure that all diversities can be adequately included and protected.

I noted above that accountability measures should be looked upon as protecting the police – community partnership. Contrasting this with many of the attitudes to the complaints procedure, both police and public, it is easy to see that a major sea change in attitudes is required. Protectionism among the police and cynicism among members of the public have to be overcome. Obviously this should be part of the philosophy of policing which, if handled pro-actively would make a strong public statement that accountability measures are not part
of a ‘battle’ in a polarised society but rather a way of ensuring that the police and community partnership is protected and sustained. As far as the police officers are concerned this type of vision should be included as part of their training and methods of articulating this principle should be designed. This would not be a time consuming part of training but would be an essential element to recruit and other courses. Transparency should be seen as an investment, not something to fear and if international examples and procedures are helpful they should be used.

**Transition**

Two practical points remain to be mentioned on the transition from RUC to PSNI. The RUC has appointed a Change Management Team and has already completed much analytical and conceptual work on ‘change issues’. The need for a focused group to oversee transition both for internal and operational needs, but especially in recruitment, would appear to be a sensible option. The evolution of the Change Management Team to involving PSNI staff and focusing on the early stages of its operation or a different type of group could be considered. As mentioned earlier in the more general policing context civilian and professional input should continue to be welcomed and extended where necessary.

Additionally it would appear essential that OFMDFM prioritise forming close relations with those responsible for this transition in the RUC and what will become the PSNI. The political and societal centrality of policing issues is clear and as a ‘lead body’ or ‘driving force’ OFMDFM involvement in these matters would be a much-needed investment.

**Options for Consideration**

Further research into and action in the following areas could be considered.

1/ That a comprehensive socio-political vision of policing be drawn up. Much of the community interest in this could be acquired from the Patten public meetings. Where deficiencies existed, streamlined effective consultation could take place. The key emphasis should be ‘policing in and with society’.
2/ That this should be adopted by all bodies with responsibility for the entire policing enterprise in Northern Ireland.

3/ That this could also form the basis of ‘mission statement’ type documents and should profoundly inform the training of all members of the PSNI. This to also include the premise that accountability measures are an investment and that they are designed to protect the ethos of partnership.

4/ That the PSNI and all those bodies with responsibility for policing be designated under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act thus come into the orbit of the equality legislation.

5/ Police training should include sociology and social psychology concepts, different philosophies of policing with the main emphasis of displaying the value of ‘policing in and with society’.

6/ Comparative research as to how best measure the success of training in this context.

7/ That review research is carried out after an appropriate time into the effectiveness of the new structures to deliver transparent accountability.

8/ Critique of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 and implementation strategies to avoid difficulties in the management of diversity context.

9/ Consideration to be given on how to manage change, especially recruitment, within the structures from RUC to PSNI. Utilisation of the present Change Management Team to evolve through to PSNI or another mechanism could be considered. Civilian and professional input to be considered for all aspects of the transition.

10/ OFMDFM prioritise forming close working relations with those responsible for transition from the RUC to the PSNI.
Concluding Remarks

While it may be severe, and obvious, to say that N Ireland has not been a place where diversities have been handled well, we must be personally, socially and politically honest to admit the point. However, the current situation, while not disregarding the difficulties, presents opportunities to consign the downside to history and build a society in which diversities (and commonalities) are positively regarded. Politicians and policy makers have major responsibilities in this area. The ‘slow, defensive and sometimes desperate’ approaches to policy making can now be replaced by an ethos of restructuring and refocusing our society (Fitzduff, 2000: 112). This in essence demands a pro-active approach positively garnering the transitional nature of N Ireland society to mould a longer-term vision.

But that pro-active work must span macro and micro thinking. That is why reference was made to such things as the ‘bigger picture’ approaches to, a vision statement for cultural diversity, the language of equality and a philosophy of policing. But we must simultaneously deal with the micro and reference to ideas such as community audits as a means of confirming local needs and bottom-up approaches, illustrates the point. The broad visions and philosophies must meet, inform and interact with local needs.

In addition policy making must attempt to deal with the organic whole. If our approaches are merely sector based, results will be diffused and patchy. The Community Link and expanded District Partnership ideas reflect this concept by trying to grapple with both, the need to effectively join up government in terms of administrative tiers and people and, giving effective voice to the population. Reference to the population should now automatically mean that we look to all our diversities and avoid being consumed by the ‘two community syndrome’.

I also referred to the importance of political will and the need for a ‘driving force’ on diversity issues. These are essential. The political will must be generated so that our diversities are not merely passively but positively accepted and respected. Whatever political evolution takes place the same and possibly new diversities will be present. OFMDFM is the unit
with major responsibilities. As the ‘driving force’ it can make a real difference at all stages, from ideas to strategies to implementation and review. The diffuse nature of present organisations, new bodies and their role in these issues, means a dynamic, pro-active and co-ordinating unit is required. Without this, the focus will be blurred and the entire process will suffer. Our society is such that the handling of difference should never return to the overtly negative and adversarial: managing diversity will be all-important to this.

There is no need to repeat the ‘Underpinning Considerations’ and ‘Options for Consideration’. However, two additional points are required. Firstly, mention has already been made about prioritisation both in terms of comparing approaches and time scale. It is appreciated that priorities must be considered but the following point is important. Many of the options are inter-related and cross cut the various focus areas. For example, options in the culture section could help in education sectors and so on. It is therefore considered appropriate to retain, as far as is possible, an integrated approach to the report.

Secondly, dissemination is considered a high priority and one idea to help is the production of a ‘Research Summary’ containing the main points of the report. On the broader front, the very nature of this project is one of analysing a comprehensive swathe of public policy issues thus relevant to numerous organisations. It would be best if the report was shared with many such organisations to explain the thinking behind it, the potential of the situation and, invite responses. This would give issues initial exposure, begin the process of fine tuning ideas and increase ownership. Further research would benefit from this exchange. In short an effective dissemination process would consolidate the work thus far and prepare for the next phase.

Finally in submitting this report I give due thanks to various INCORE staff, members of the ‘local advisory group’ and other interested individuals who all contributed in various ways. Final responsibility is of course mine.
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