12

The Evolution of Academic Selection in Northern Ireland

Martin Brown, Craig Skerritt, Stephen Roulston, Matthew Milliken, Gerry McNamara, and Joe O'Hara

Almost all countries throughout the world have in place various means of academically sorting students that in most cases occurs at the higher educational level. In the main, those students who achieve the highest scores in externally devised examinations have a greater choice of what higher education course they wish to pursue. However, in Northern Ireland, there also exists a unique situation whereby primary school students also sit a highly competitive examination referred to as the 11 plus examination in order to gain entry into what is referred to as a selective grammar

M. Brown (✉) • G. McNamara • J. O'Hara
EQI - Centre for Evaluation, Quality & Inspection, School of Policy and Practice, Dublin City University Institute of Education, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: martin.brown@dcu.ie

C. Skerritt
Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: craig.skerritt2@mail.dcu.ie

S. Roulston • M. Milliken
UNESCO Centre, School of Education, Ulster University, Belfast, Ireland

B. Walsh (ed.), *Education Policy in Ireland Since 1922*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-91775-3_12

school. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the cause and effect of maintaining such a sorting and testing regime that has almost vanished from other regions education systems. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the establishment of Academic selection in Northern Ireland from 1947 to present which is subsequently followed by a review of the literature relating to the benefits and limitations of Academic Selection. The penultimate section provides an overview of the impact of and unintended consequences of Academic Selection and concludes with a discussion and analysis of the place of Academic Selection in Northern Irelands Education system.

Introduction and Background

The roots of organised education in Ireland can be traced back to the creation of monastic schools in the sixth century. Ecclesiastically orientated studies, delivered mainly in Latin, were provided for prospective clerics and the sons and daughters of wealthy landowners. The English (Protestant) Reformation in the sixteenth century saw the introduction of sanctions on the manner in which education could be provided under the Penal Laws. Henceforth teaching in Ireland was to be conducted only in English and restrictions were placed on any teaching by denominations other than established Anglican-episcopal church—including the Catholic Church (which accounted for the majority of the population across the island) and the "dissenting" Presbyterian church (which had a significant following in the north eastern province of Ulster). Those convicted of involvement in running clandestine "hedge schools" faced possible transportation to penal colonies in Australia and elsewhere. These laws remained in place until 1829 (Dowling, 1968).

In 1831 the Chief Secretary of Ireland, Lord E. G. Stanley, tabled a template for a national education system in Ireland (Brown et al., 2016). The Stanley Letter set out a vision of a non-denominational system that would "unite children of different creeds". Children would be taught non-spiritual subjects together, and religious instruction was only to be conducted outside of school hours. This secularism appalled both the Catholic bishops and the Presbyterian Synod of Ulster. The bishops

successfully lobbied the National Schools Board to allow them to control their own schools while the Synod passed a resolution rejecting the Education Act. According to Magee (1995) Presbyterian opposition to the national school system saw teachers being intimidated and schools in Ulster being burned. Resistance was so effective that, by the mid-nineteenth century, only 4% of national schools were under mixed management. Indeed, Akenson (1973) observed that education was broken and divided along sectarian lines long before constitutional partition of Ireland in 1921 when the new state of Northern Ireland (NI) was afforded its own government in Stormont—the Northern Ireland Assembly—to run and legislate on a number of devolved matters—including education.

Politically part of the United Kingdom (UK) but geographically part of the island of Ireland (Roulston & Hansson, 2021), Northern Ireland formally came into existence in 1921 (Gardner, 2016). A divided society since its establishment (Gallagher, 2021), the "deep societal, sectarian schisms remain evident" (Milliken et al., 2021: 133). A division between Catholics and Protestants dominates many aspects of life in Northern Ireland, including education (Roulston & Hansson, 2021). Northern Ireland's education system is distinctive in the United Kingdom and on the island of Ireland in that unlike countries such as Ireland where academic selection is used to allocate places to students, particularly at the higher education level (Brown et al., 2021); in Northern Ireland, after primary school, students not only continue to be largely separated based on their religious orientation, but they also become separated by a measure of academic attainment at age 11 via a competitive academic selection process which decides whether children continue their studies in selective Grammar schools that are considered to offer a more academic route than non-Grammar, secondary schools (McConkey, 2020). Inextricably linked to Northern Ireland's divided and complex education system, this chapter provides an outline of the evolution of, and an examination of the arguments for and against academic selection. The chapter begins with an overview of the establishment of Academic selection in Northern Ireland from 1947 to present which is subsequently followed by a review of the literature relating to the benefits and limitations of gaining a place in a selective grammar school. The penultimate section provides an overview of the impact of and unintended consequences of

Academic Selection and concludes with a discussion and analysis of the place of Academic Selection in Northern Ireland's Education system.

Academic Selection in Northern Ireland: From 1947 to the Present

The system of education inherited in 1921 by Northern Ireland's first Minister of Education, Lord Londonderry was dominated by a pattern of denominational schools under clerical control. Londonderry set up a commission—chaired by the editor of the (strongly pro-union) *Belfast Newsletter*, R.J. Lynn—to design a new system. The Catholic authorities declined an invitation to take part in the process. Fleming (2001) cites the bishop of Armagh, Cardinal Michael Logue, as having declared that the committee was "an attack… organised against our schools". The legislation that emerged (the 1923 Education Act) proposed to amalgamate the existing array of schools under a single, unified, non-denominational system; all elementary/primary schools would be placed in the control of the state, and religious "instruction" was not to be permitted during school hours. Schools that opted to remain outside this new system would still receive some state funding, but the less control the government had over a school the smaller that level of support would be offered.

The arguments that had been played out by the churches in 1831 resurfaced in 1923. The Protestant churches were dismayed by the Act's perceived secularism and the Catholic Church, who already mistrusted the new state, saw the Act as a direct attack on the schools that they managed. They considered the funding system to be discriminatory and felt that their ethos could only be guaranteed if they were able to keep complete control of their schools.

While the non-denominational aspirations of the Lynn Committee have been noted, allowing schools to be taken under state control was wholly anathema to the Catholic Church. As Gardner observes (Gardner, 2016: 348), Northern Ireland had been "formed on the basis of a deliberate anti-Catholic and anti-nationalist rationale" and the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland declared that the Northern Ireland

Parliament was a "Protestant Government for a Protestant People" (Craig, 1934: 73). The desire to bring schools together into a single system was eroded and eventually abandoned. In the replacement legislation, schools were *required* to provide Bible instruction and church representation was guaranteed in the management of schools and the overall education system. Subsequently, between 1926 and 1947, the control of around 500 schools that had previously been managed by the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian church and Methodist church were transferred into state control. The Catholic Church however elected to keep their schools outside of the new *Controlled* system, receiving less funding. Over subsequent years compromises on the part of both the state and the managing authority for these Catholic *Maintained* schools enabled a further series of legislation changes. Today both Controlled and almost all Maintained schools receive comparable funding.

Thus, a system of national schools offering universal primary education in Northern Ireland, as established across Ireland in 1831, alongside a small number of elite grammar schools, remained largely unchanged until after World War II. In 1944 the Butler Act had introduced extended free education to children up to fifteen years old in England and Wales and established a tripartite system of secondary modern, grammar and technical schools, although Garratt and Forrester (2012) point out that, due to the lack of technical schools, the reality was a bipartite system. Pupils were assigned a place in one or other sector on the outcome of a series of verbal and non-verbal reasoning tests known as the eleven plus (11+), the qualifying exam or the transfer test, in a policy of attainment-based entry (Francis et al., 2017). Shortly after, this system was replicated in Northern Ireland with all of the key elements of the Butler Act incorporated into Northern Ireland's 1947 Education Act.

The new act brought non-grammar secondary schools into existence. These were established in line with the separation of Controlled and Maintained primary schools with some under state control, but *de facto* Protestant, and some maintained by the Catholic Church. The small number of grammar schools which already existed, termed Voluntary Grammars, were largely self-governing selective schools which had been established in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These were designed to serve as gateways to professional careers and

higher education. The control of some of these voluntary grammar schools was transferred to the state, however most (including *all* of those with a Catholic ethos) declined the offer of greater levels of state funding in return for retaining a higher level of autonomy. Additionally, more grammar schools were created at that time to supplement those already in existence. In this way, the 1947 Act effectively created a similar system of education in NI to that in England and Wales, except that the divisions by community affiliation were more widespread and greater in NI.

In 1965 Anthony Crosland, the Labour Minster for Education, introduced legislation to dismantle the two-tier selective system of post primary schooling that had been created by the Butler Act in England and Wales, replacing it with a Comprehensive model. It was envisaged that Comprehensive schools would provide equal educational opportunities for all children without the need for selection or the use of an 11+ exam. Between 1965 and 1980 most Local Education Authorities in England and Wales withdrew their financial backing for grammar schools. In response, some transformed to become Comprehensives whilst others became fee-paying private schools. When the Conservative party regained power in the 1970 election, their Education Minister, Margaret Thatcher, intervened to support the selective system. As a consequence, some Conservative-controlled local authorities were able to retain state-sponsored grammar schools but the numbers of such schools were small. By 1979, for example, grammar schools constituted less than 5 per cent of English and Welsh state-funded secondary schools (Scott, 2016). Despite the role of grammar schools as an "essential structural feature of the English school system" having long passed, there are repeated calls for their reintroduction (Morris & Perry, 2017: 1), including from Conservative governments (Gorard & Siddiqui, 2018; Jerrim & Sims, 2019, 2020). There has not been, however, a wholesale return to the previous system in England and Wales which retains, for most of the population, a comprehensive system of education.

In contrast, the Unionist government in Stormont (most of whom had been beneficiaries of the grammar school system in Northern Ireland) remained implacably steadfast in their commitment to academic selection and a system of academic selection has continued there since 1947 (Abbott, 2006; Gallagher, 2021). Northern Ireland was afflicted by

violence from the late sixties until the end of the century as part of what became known as "the Troubles" and little attention was paid to the issue of academic selection during this time. As part of this conflict, the minority Catholic-Irish-Nationalist population challenged state discrimination against them and sought the unification of Ireland, whilst the larger, politically dominant, Protestant-British-Unionist community defended Northern Ireland's constitutional place within the United Kingdom (Milliken, 2021). Nonetheless, the combination of both selective schooling and religious segregation survived the civil unrest and the model of education offered in Northern Ireland is uniquely distinguishable from the rest of the UK (Gardner & Gallagher, 2007).

One part of Northern Ireland, in and around the 1960s planned "new town" of Craigavon, departs radically from the established model. In 1969 the Dickson Plan heralded change for Controlled and Maintained post-primary schools moving to a system where, at the age of 11, pupils would transfer from their primary schools to a comprehensive Junior High school. Academic selection did take place, but it was deferred to age 14 at which stage pupils would transfer to a Senior High—three of these were designated as Grammar schools. Notably, the Dickson Plan left the separation of Controlled schools and Catholic Maintained schools unaddressed.

The evolving systems of denominational school ownership and governance, combined with academic selection, have resulted in a convoluted school system in NI. Gallagher asserts that "Northern Ireland has the smallest school population in the United Kingdom, yet its structural design is amongst the most complex" (Gallagher, 2021:147) and the OECD (Fitzpatrick, 2007) observe that Northern Ireland's education system

> …is both complicated and complex. It is complicated in that there are many component parts, areas of responsibility, policy and influence, that impact on current schooling and future perspectives for education. It is complex in that although the system works and is generally held to do so in a way that has produced a high level of public confidence; it has within it a number of tensions or even contradictions (Fitzpatrick, 2007:.88).

The result of the evolution of the Northern Ireland education system has produced a bewildering array of complexity in educational provision (Table 12.1).

In addition to the selective/non-selective and Catholic/Protestant divisions, two new school types have emerged in recent years. Integrated schools were initiated by parents with the aim of educating Protestants and Catholics in the same schools. Smith (2001) points to how radical this development has been as

> …the impetus has not come from state or church authorities. The main activists have been parents and the motivation has been a community development process involving parents from different traditions working toward a common goal (Smith, 2001: 564).

This type of school is still growing in terms of the number of children educated, with 24,900 pupils constituting 7% of all enrolments. Another school type is that of Irish Medium schools, with the first such school established in 1971 (Ó'Baoill, 2007: 411). While small, with 7,000 pupils in 2020-21, this accounts for around 2% of all enrolments and it continues to grow.

When the conflict in Northern Ireland was brought to an end (although not fully resolved) by the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in 1998, a regional assembly was established in Northern Ireland with full responsibility for devolved matters, including education, and some understanding of the operation of that devolved parliament is necessary to understand the subsequent decisions concerning schools.

There is little conventional right/left politics in Northern Ireland and most political parties represent factions, which could reductively if still usefully be characterised as Protestant, British, Unionist or Catholic, Irish, Nationalist. The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement established a consociational form of government in Northern Ireland, based on the theory developed by the Dutch political scientist, Arend Lijphart, in the 1960s (Noble, 2011). An Executive Committee of all the Ministries, including the Ministry of Education, share power, a key constituent of consociationalism requiring, in this case, Nationalist and Unionist politicians working together in the same government. Another core element to

Table 12.1 School numbers and religious composition in Northern Ireland, 2020-21

School type	School management	Number of units/ schools	Number of Catholics	Number of Protestants
Pre-school education (< 4 year-olds)				
	Controlled	64	1,141	1,856
	Catholic Maintained	31	1,465	40
Nursery classes and reception (<4 year-olds)				
	Controlled	134	539	2,214
	Catholic Maintained	119	3,623	81
	Other Maintained	16	333	34
	Controlled Integrated	7	52	47
	Grant Maintained Integrated	17	220	179
Primary schools (4-11 year-olds)				
	Controlled[1]	360	6,381	46,896
	Catholic Maintained	358	74,171	672
	Controlled Integrated	22	1,184	1,486
	Grant Maintained Integrated	23	2,530	1,837
	Other Maintained (Irish Medium)	25	333	34
	Other Maintained (Other)	3		
Post-primary Schools (11-16/18 year-olds)				
Non-grammar schools	Controlled	48	1,330	22,998
	Catholic Maintained	57	36,837	[2]
	Controlled Integrated	5	523	1,642
	Grant Maintained Integrated	15	4,236	3,770
	Other Maintained (Irish Medium)	2	962	[3]
Grammar schools	Controlled	16	1,578	9,614
	Voluntary (under Catholic management)	29	27,732	409
	Voluntary (under other management)	21	3,002	12,091
Special schools (4-18 year-olds)				
	Controlled	39	2,452	2,079
	Catholic Maintained		297	12
	Other Maintained		27	24

Source: adapted from Department of Education Northern Ireland (2021a)

[1]Includes a number of ethnically/religiously mixed special schools

[2]Total enrolments are higher as there are 'Other Christian, non-Christian and no religion' returns on the annual DENI census, and numbers can be suppressed or withheld if less than 5 individuals.

[3]Less than five

consociational government is the power to veto decisions made by other parties. The allocation of Ministries in the devolved parliament are decided by the D'Hondt formula, with nominations in turn according to the number of elected members of each party. The post of Education Minister was held by Sinn Féin (SF) (a Nationalist party) between 1999 and 2016, and then was held by the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) (a Unionist party) between 2016 and the present. Consociationalism can be seen as a remarkably effective form of government, particularly suited to post-conflict situations. Others, however, view it as an approach which exaggerates differences between political viewpoints rather than supporting political moderation (Noble, 2011: 8).

Politicians in Northern Ireland are always aware of their base support from the communities which they represent, and political policies are influenced by the "salience of communalism …[and] politicians' ideas reflect the ethnic, religious and, national identity divisions" (Birrell & Heenan, 2013: 777), rather than decision-making being based around wider social need. While it had been hoped that the devolved Assembly would be arrive at consensual decisions

> …experience demonstrated that consociational arrangements had the potential to lead to other outcomes in policy style, to impasses and no or delayed decision making (Birrell & Heenan, 2013, 769).

Wilford (2010) points to government departments working in silos, and not communicating with other departments run by politicians from parties representing the "other" community. Instead of fostering collaboration, this form of government has tended to produce policy, including educational policy, which entrenches differences (Gallagher, 2021).

Political divisions led to five acrimonious suspensions of the Northern Ireland Assembly between its inception in 1998 and 2021, some of which resulted in Direct Rule from Westminster. During Direct Rule, day-to-day running of Northern Ireland was taken over by Westminster government-appointed Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland with junior ministers appointed to lead the Northern Ireland Government departments, including Education.

Thus, the power-sharing Assembly in Northern Ireland that had been established in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement has been unstable from its inception. Political and community divisions persist and there remains "…the potential for ethnocentric tension to re-emerge" (Shirlow, 2018, 193). These divisions are very apparent in the education system in Northern Ireland.

The Labour Party, under Tony Blair, remained committed to the comprehensive system that had been introduced in England and Wales decades earlier. It commissioned research into the effects of the selective system of secondary education in Northern Ireland and, when Martin McGuinness of SF became the first Education Minister in the devolved NI Assembly, he set up a review body to examine this research and make proposals for the future direction of post primary education in Northern Ireland. The resulting publication (the Burns Report) recommended that selection by academic ability should end as soon as possible (Department of Education, 2001). However, the report failed to gain favour across the political parties.

During a period of Direct Rule, one junior minister, Jane Kennedy, established a further Post-Primary Review Working Group which recommended that transfer tests should be replaced by pupil-centred decisions, informed by a pupil profile which would document each child's progress (DE, 2002). However, after the regional assembly recommenced, no consensus on academic selection could be found between the parties in Stormont (Berglund, 2013) with Unionist parties resolutely in favour of retaining grammar schools and the 11+ system, and most other parties just as determined to promote a comprehensive system. In 2006 the NI Education Minister, Catriona Ruane (SF), drew on a provision in the Education Order (NI) 1997 that "the Department may issue and revise guidance as it thinks appropriate for admission of pupils to grant-aided schools". Without the explicit backing of the Assembly or the Executive, she introduced legislation that barred Boards of Governors from using academic ability as an admission criterion (Education (NI) Order, 2006) thereby ending state-sponsored transfer testing. The last such exam took place in 2008 and guidance for the transition between primary and post-primary was published for the 2009-10 school year informing schools that they must admit applicants to all available places, that decisions on

admission should not be based on academic ability, and that priority should be given to pupils entitled to free school meal entitlement (FSME), those with a sibling at the school, applicants coming from feeder schools and applicants residing within a local catchment area. This guidance also instructed primary schools that they must refrain from facilitating unregulated tests in any format (including supplying materials, coaching within core teaching hours, offering afternoon tutoring or familiarisation with a test environment) (DE, 2021b).

The grammar schools and their advocates were deeply unhappy, and they began to investigate setting up their own admission tests. Two consortia emerged, broadly aligned on either side of the traditional community divide, establishing two wholly different transfer procedures. The Post Primary Transfer Consortium (PPTC), represented mainly Catholic grammars, while the Association for Quality Education (AQE) catered for those grammar schools whose ethos and history lay within the Protestant/British tradition. AQE formed a limited company to manage and administer their own Common Entrance Assessment (CEA) while PPTC bought in tests through the GL Assessment company. Both claimed that their tests were based on Key Stage 2 Maths and English, with the first of these taking place in November 2009 (Perry, 2016). The turmoil and political "stalemate" is described by Elwood:

> The continued operation of this new transfer system at 11+ is immensely controversial as it defies current education policy commitments and is not statutory for primary schools to administer. The Minister for Education has statutorily removed selection…yet its proponents (mostly from opposing political parties) have continued to counteract this action. Thus, a policy stalemate exists, the impact of which has serious implications for the educational experience of children going through this process…in the political vacuum that surrounds selection, a non-statutory, un-regulated and private transfer system operates without evaluation or scrutiny but yet continues to decide the educational fate of many children. With two different tests being used, possible issues of variability in validity, reliability, comparability and difficulty arise which have major implications for the consequential use of these tests (Elwood, 2013: 211).

However flawed, the old system had provided a common transfer procedure that was undertaken by pupils in both Maintained and Controlled primary schools; by both Protestant and Catholic pupils. Its removal precipitated the creation of a system where, for the most part, Catholic pupils would take one set of exams whilst Protestants sat a wholly different set. Norton (2017) reports young people speaking of "sitting the Protestant test or the Catholic test". Neither set of tests was subject to any official regulation. In June 2012 the Catholic bishops endorsed plans to phase out academic selection and as a result a small number of Catholic voluntary schools announced that they would follow the bishops' guidance and become comprehensive (Fergus, 2012). However, many other Catholic Grammar schools have resisted any pressure to change.

In 2015, the Department of Education reiterated the guidance on transfer that they had given schools in 2009-10. However, in September 2016, Peter Weir the new (DUP) Minister for Education reversed the previous policy on preventing primary schools from facilitating unregulated tests saying that he supported "the right of those schools wishing to use academic selection as the basis for admission" (Doyle, 2020). Primary schools were henceforth permitted to return to supporting their pupils in their preparation for the transfer tests, with the new guidance and policy supporting "the right of those schools wishing to use academic selection as the basis for admission", allowing primary schools to carry out test preparation during core teaching hours, to coach pupils in exam technique, and to familiarise them with a testing environment (Perry, 2016). Northern Ireland therefore continues to operate a system of academic selection (Duffy & Gallagher, 2017) and there remains highly differentiated school performance embodied by what can be described as "high performing" grammar schools and a long tail of underachievement in secondary non-grammars (Borooah & Knox, 2017).

The tests remain popular. Approximately half of pupils sit the tests in one or other system and a proportion sit both. The *Belfast Telegraph* recorded that in the 2018/19 academic year 8,637 pupils sat the AQE and 7,620 sat GL (O'Neill, 2020). There are no available statistics that record how many pupils sat both tests.

Today, while there are a small number of grammar schools still in operation in England, selective schooling has largely been abolished in the rest

of Britain (Gorard & Siddiqui, 2018). In contrast, however, it has been maintained and remains firmly in place in Northern Ireland (Jerrim & Sims, 2019). Although academic selection was largely abandoned in the rest of the UK in favour of comprehensive schools (Donnelly & Osborne, 2005), it remains a core feature of the education system in Northern Ireland and the levels of selection are above the OECD average (Jenkins et al., 2008).

The Grammar School Debate

Harris and Rose (2013) describe how those in favour of a return to an academically selective system argue that there are not only educational benefits such as higher learning outcomes for students, but that selective schools such as grammar schools also offer social mobility to academically able students from the lowest income groups. According to Thompson (2019: 79) advocates see these schools as "the forgotten engine of social mobility, a beacon of opportunity for bright working-class children".

The popularity of academic selection is understandable as for many parents there is a belief that their children will have a higher quality education by attending selective grammar schools. As Bergin and McGuinness (2021: 151) remind us, "Access to and take-up of high-quality educational provision is the single most important factor determining career success, wage growth and social progression and, therefore, can be interpreted as a key measure of opportunity in each region". It has also long been argued that grammar schools can compensate "poor but able" children (Edwards & Whitty, 1997) as places are available for students who have the capacity to excel in a particular subject but otherwise would not fit the other criteria to be accepted (Coldron et al., 2009). Furthermore, not only are grammar schools proposed as being meritocratic, but there are claims that it is appropriate for different types of pupils to have different kinds of education, and that teaching can best be targeted at a narrow ability range via selection (Coe et al., 2008).

The Academic Performances of Students in Grammar Schools

In Northern Ireland in 2016/17, 96.5% of grammar school students achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, compared with 74.4% of non-grammar school pupils (Department of Education, 2017: 9), and when consideration is given to achievement in 7 or more GCSEs (including equivalents) at grades A*-C, the gap widens with 91.2% of grammar school pupils achieving this standard compared with 54.0% of non-grammar school pupils (Department of Education, 2017: 10). However, "the gap between the proportion of learners achieving five or more A*-C GCSE grades at grammar and non-selective schools has been steadily narrowing. The difference was just 16.4% in 2018/19, having dropped from 43% in 2008/09" (Roulston & Milliken, 2021: 5). Indeed, despite claims made about grammar school effectiveness, most existing studies report no clear advantage to either selective or non-selective systems as a whole (Coe et al., 2008). These studies have, however, reported that pupils who attend grammar schools do better than equally able pupils in comprehensive schools (Coe et al., 2008). More recently, research by Gorard and Siddiqui (2018), with the full 2015 cohort of pupils in England, shows that the results from grammar schools are no better than expected, once poverty and socio-economic status are accounted for. This research contends that grammar schools are no more or less effective than non-selective schools, once their clear difference in intake has been taken into account (Gorard & Siddiqui, 2018). In addition, further research in the United Kingdom shows that exam differences between school types, including state-funded selective and non-selective schools, are primarily due to the heritable characteristics involved in pupil admission (Smith-Woolley et al., 2018), and that grammar school attendance has little positive effect on other essential aspects of school life such as school engagement, academic wellbeing, peer relationships, self-esteem, aspirations for the future, and mental health (Jerrim & Sims, 2020).

The Composition of Students in Grammar Schools

According to Cribb et al. (2013), less than 3% of entrants to grammar schools qualify for free school meals, an important indicator of social deprivation, and pupils are less likely to attend a grammar school if their primary school had a high concentration of pupils from deprived backgrounds. Thus, grammar schools can be strongly associated with social segregation (Coldron et al., 2009). The evidence also suggests that selective admissions criteria are not only associated with high performing students and low levels of poverty, but low levels of special educational needs (West & Hind, 2007). As a school Principal in Brown et al. (2021) points out in relation to academic selection in Northern Ireland:

> A lot of children are absolutely gutted, and they have no school for September. As far as they feel, not only have they failed that examination, but nobody wants them, and more so the special needs children. I have about ten special needs children who are trying to get in with us, and those poor children have their own difficulties but imagine what that is doing to their mental health and not only that but what it's doing to the family unit (Brown et al., 2021: 494).

Furthermore, due to the importance and value attached to league tables in England, grammar schools may face greater pressures to attract students more likely to perform well in examinations, and as a result, selective schools may therefore operate practices that may be socially selective (Coldron et al., 2010). The official production of league tables of performance by individual schools was abolished in Northern Ireland in 2001 (McGuinness, 2001). However, schools publish their own results each year and these are picked up in the local press. Thus, pressures to produce "good" examination results relative to other schools remain.

In Northern Ireland, students from deprived backgrounds and students with special education needs (SEN) are grossly underrepresented in Northern Ireland's grammar schools (Borooah & Knox, 2015). For example, the most recent figures from the Department of Education

(2021c: 10) report that only 13.7% of grammar school pupils are entitled to free school meals, compared with 37.1% of non-grammar school pupils. The selective system could therefore be considered as being "anti-inclusionist" (Lambe, 2007) in that it is far from anything that could be regarded as inclusive (Lambe & Bones, 2006a, 2006b, 2007). There is a considerable body of evidence that would suggest that selection is as at least as much by social class as by ability, given the widespread coaching available to more affluent parents (Connolly et al., 2013; Shewbridge et al., 2014; Wilson, 2016). In consequence, "…the division into grammar and non-grammar schools facilitates a form of social segregation." (Nolan, 2014: 93). In the Department of Education *Report of the Strategic Forum Working Group*, there was a recognition that academic selection resulted in lower achieving pupils being disproportionately enrolled in certain schools and that "this concentration of disadvantage in some schools further exacerbates the negative influences of academic selection" (Department of Education, 2017: 4.6).

The acceptance of students from deprived backgrounds into grammar schools is purely based on how they fare in the Transfer Test compared with other students, while in order for Special Educational Needs students to gain acceptance they need to be deemed as being capable of benefitting from an academic setting (Lambe & Bones, 2008). What largely tends to occur therefore is that more affluent, non-SEN students, are more likely to gain acceptance to grammar schools while the remaining cohort goes to non-selective secondary schools. The outcome of this segregation is that educational disadvantage can be intensified. As Gallagher and Smith (2000) point out, the disproportionate amount of schools in which low ability students and disadvantaged students are combined ultimately compound the educational disadvantage of both factors.

Impact on Achievement

Supporters of the grammar system in Northern Ireland point to what they see as the success of the education system there, compared to those countries which have removed or reduced academic selection, such as

England. A recent Education Minister argued that academic selection provided "every child, regardless of background, postcode, social group, religion or ethnicity the opportunity to get into one of our grammar schools" (cited in McMurray, 2020, 11) and claimed that the numbers of pupils who sit the test each year are a testament to its popularity. Even if the presence of academic selection were to increase educational opportunities and improve educational outcomes, that has come at a cost as "the Northern Ireland education system is highly differentiated in terms of school performance [with] high performing grammar schools but a long tail of underachievement in secondary non-grammars" (Borooah & Knox, 2017, 320). Additionally, comparisons with England suggest that the system in Northern Ireland is not delivering for young people from poor backgrounds; for instance, the chances of "…young people entitled to free school meals not achieving the basic standard of five GCSE A*-C passes at 16 are three times higher than other young people in England, and this figure rises to being four times higher in Northern Ireland" (Connolly et al., 2013, xxii). Under-achievement is particularly focused in some groups: "Protestant FSME boys are close to the very bottom, just above Irish Travellers and Roma children" (Nolan, 2014, 97).

Furthermore, the evidence that grammar schools are "high performing" schools is challenged. It is demonstrably true that examination results of grammar school pupils, in Northern Ireland as elsewhere, tend to be higher than in non-grammar schools. However, it has been argued that any apparent additional achievement can largely be accounted for by the fact that grammar students are selected at the age of 11 (Manning & Pischke, 2006, 17). In terms of value added, grammars might not fare as well as they seem to as, "if the intakes to grammar schools really are already on a path to success …subsequent success at Key stage 4 (KS4) aged 16 must not be mistakenly attributed to having attended a grammar school in the meantime" (Gorard & Siddiqui, 2018, 912). While Borooah and Knox (2017), for example, use the term "high performance" to describe some grammar schools, they do not take into account differentials in funding or the impact of academic selection in that value judgement. It may be that non-selective schools are where the best performance is being demonstrated, relative to other factors.

The Unintended Consequences of Academic Selection

Perhaps the greatest concern surrounding selective schooling is that there are unintended consequences for students in other schools. It has been argued that grammar schools maintain social order between social strata (McCulloch, 2006) and facilitate inequality of opportunity (Haydn, 2004). According to Carmichael et al. (2017), the principal reason for the discrepancy between the performance of grammar school students and comprehensive school students is due to "resource sorting", with grammar schools "creaming off" resources, teachers, and pupils from local non-selective schools. Grammar schools, for example, are better funded per pupil compared to other schools because they are more likely than non-selective schools to have a high proportion of learners who are between 16 and 18 years of age, and this age group figure highly in the funding weightings. The corollary is lower funding levels for schools that may be more reliant on finances for school improvement. The whole system is also more expensive. For example,

> A selective system costs more to operate than a non-selective system because students are less likely to attend the school closest to their home and therefore require public subsidies for transporting them to school (Levaçić & Marsh, 2007: 171).

Indeed, The Department of Education states that they "…currently fund daily transport assistance to around 84,000 pupils at an annual cost of approximately 81 million per year" (DENI, n.d.). Grammar schools also tend to have fewer unqualified or inexperienced teachers, more teachers with an academic degree in the subject they teach, and lower overall teacher turnover (Allen & Bartley, 2017) as teachers may be less willing to teach in what might be perceived as "bottom-rung schools" (Carmichael et al., 2017).

In terms of the pupils, "when poor pupils are educated in schools with concentrations of other poor pupils, they do not progress as well as they would in a school with a more balanced intake" (Coldron et al., 2010:

19), and "if children's performance at school depends on their peers, higher levels of social segregation lead to greater inequality in academic achievement and hence to greater inequality in later-life outcomes" (Jenkins et al., 2008: 21). The Association of School and College Leaders (2016) contend that, although the minority of deprived students that do gain access to a grammar school may benefit from being enrolled there and benefit from social mobility at an individual level, the opposite effect can be seen at system level, with more selection creating a less equal society. Arguments for selective schools therefore stand against the primary reason that most grammar schools were abolished: "because they were seen as elitist, perpetuating social class divides and limiting the educational prospects of the greater number of pupils not attending those schools" (Harris & Rose, 2013: 152). In short, it could be argued that grammar schools are not serving the students that they claim to be offering opportunities and social mobility to, and that the performance benefit to grammar school pupils is offset by a negative effect for those in nearby non-selective schools (Morris & Perry, 2017).

It must also be noted that not every child wishing to attend a grammar school can do so and places great pressure on students and on their families. The personal disappointment of not getting a place at a grammar school (where siblings may have already attended), coupled with a sense of failure is something that children may never recover from (Gardner & Cowan, 2005). Byrne and Gallagher (2004: 171) found that grammar schools and secondary schools attached considerable importance to induction and pastoral care in secondary schools, with "an explicit aim of rebuilding the self-esteem and confidence of their pupil intake, particularly in the aftermath of selection". They report that senior staff often talked about dealing with the "casualties" of selection and of having to "pick up the pieces". For example, one secondary school principal spoke of having to nurse students "back to mental health" and raise their perceptions:

> … just really trying to get them to believe in themselves. There is no question that some (pupils) when they arrive here do perceive themselves as not good enough. They maybe don't perceive themselves as failures necessarily, but they perceive themselves to be not as good as some of their friends who

> have gone elsewhere. We really need to start working on that very quickly. And we do that at all levels, from the lowest ability right up (Byrne & Gallagher, 2004: 171).

The intense pressure to perform in the Transfer Test has also been reported to distort the curriculum and teaching and learning in primary schools (Brown et al., 2021; Gallagher & Smith, 2000; Gallagher, 2006) as teachers try to prepare students for such a high-stakes examination.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also caused a new flurry of attention on academic selection, with some in the media claiming that the delays or abandonment of the tests undermine the rationale for previous testing systems (Miller, 2020). Dickson and Macmilllan (2020) note the inequalities in access to grammar schools in England in pre-pandemic times, but caution that "the likely widening attainment gap as a result of Covid-19 school closures will exacerbate inequalities in access to grammar schools" (Dickson & Macmilllan, 2020: 1). In Northern Ireland, the transfer tests were cancelled for 2021 entry to grammar schools as a result of the pandemic, and schools set their own criteria which were non-academic. A number of schools (mainly Catholic grammars) and one Integrated school with a grammar stream announced that they would not be using academic selection for entry to their schools in 2022.

Conclusion

Academic selection has been firmly established in Northern Ireland since 1947 and has been resistant to any of the arguments for change despite being widely and regularly the subject of debate in Northern Ireland (Gardner, 2016). Its supporters argue that academic selection "creates a culture of academic excellence and avoids the alternative of a system that is driven by parental wealth" (cited in McMurray, 2020: 5). The link between selection and the noted under-attainment for some groups in society is rejected. The Education minister, Peter Weir, stated in the NI Assembly in July 2020, that "the obsession with transfer tests as being critical to underachievement massively misses the point. It creates both a

distraction and also actually I think focuses in, largely speaking, on the wrong issue" (cited in McMurray, 2020: 11).

However, there are two key components which crystallise the debate. One focuses on the broader purpose of education. The distorting impact that academic selection has on the curriculum for all children, and not just restricted to the years approaching the transfer test but throughout much of primary education and, to compensate for the focus on the test in upper primary, on early secondary education has been well documented (Gallagher & Smith, 2000; Shewbridge et al., 2014). It can also skew parental perceptions. Parents seem to feel that the unregulated transfer tests have more authority than Key Stage tests for example (Shewbridge et al., 2014: 66) and there is a pressure, when assessment is focused on a summative high-stakes examination, that formative assessment can lose credibility for teachers, learners and parents (Looney, 2011).

There is also a wider question of rights as all children are entitled to an effective education in accordance with Article 29(1) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. It has been noted that "The use of academic selection at transition has been identified as presenting a challenge to the provision of an effective education and has been repeatedly criticised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child" (McMurray, 2020: 28). Indeed, a United Nations Committee explicitly recommended that the NI Executive should "abolish the practice of unregulated admission tests to access post-primary education in NI" (UNCRC, 2016), a call which has been echoed by the Children's Commissioner (NICCYP, 2017) and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (2018). Similarly, Shewbridge et al. (2014) in the OECD report noted "clear structural challenges to equity at the post-primary level, with a high concentration of less socially and economically advantaged students in the non-selective post-primary schools" (2014: 21).

The last suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly ended in January 2020 and a blueprint for the future, New Decade, New Approach, was unanimously agreed by all parties, committing the Northern Ireland Assembly to a radical examination of the current education system in Northern Ireland through an Independent Review. The then Education Minister accepted that such a review would include consideration of the system of academic selection (McMurray, 2020, 11). The outcome of that process will shape Northern Ireland's education system for a generation or more.

References

Abbott, L. (2006). Northern Ireland head teachers' perceptions of inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 10*(6), 627–643.

Akenson, D. (1973). *Education and Enmity: The Control of Schooling in Northern Ireland 1920-1950*. David and Charles Ltd.

Allen, R., & Bartley, J. (2017). The Role of the Eleven-Plus Test Papers and Appeals in Producing Social Inequalities in Access to Grammar Schools. *National Institute Economic Review, 240*(1), R30–R41.

Association of School and College Leaders. (2016). *Will Increasing Selection Improve Social Mobility?* Association of School and College Leaders.

Bergin, A., & McGuinness, S. (2021). Who is better off? Measuring cross-border differences in living standards, opportunities and quality of life on the island of Ireland. *Irish Studies in International Affairs, 32*(2), 143–160.

Berglund, E.H. (2013). *The Battle of Academic Selection: A study of the debate on the selective education system in Northern Ireland, 2000-2011*. Master's thesis. Bergen: University of Bergen and Bergen University College.

Birrell, D., & Heenan, D. (2013). Policy style and governing without consensus: Devolution and education policy in Northern Ireland. *Social Policy & Administration, 47*(7), 765–782.

Borooah, V. K., & Knox, C. (2015). Segregation, inequality, and educational performance in Northern Ireland: Problems and solutions. *International Journal of Educational Development, 40*, 196–206.

Borooah, V. K., & Knox, C. (2017). Inequality, segregation and poor performance: The education system in Northern Ireland. *Educational Review, 69*(3), 318–336.

Brown, M., Donnelly, C., Shevlin, P., Skerritt, C., McNamara, G., & O'Hara, J. (2021). The Rise and Fall and Rise of Academic Selection: The Case of Northern Ireland. *Irish Studies in International Affairs, 32*(2), 477–498. https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2021.32b.38

Brown, M., McNamara, G., & O'Hara, J. (2016). Teacher Accountability in Education: The Irish Experiment. In B. Walsh (Ed.), *Essays in the History of Irish Education*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51482-0_14

Byrne, G., & Gallagher, T. (2004). Systemic factors in school improvement. *Research Papers in Education, 19*(2), 161–183.

Carmichael, N., Allan, L., Austin, I., Donelan, M., Fellows, M., Fernandes, S., Frazer, L., Greenwood, L., McKinnell, C., Mearns, I., & Wragg, W. (2017).

Evidence check: Grammar schools: Fourth Report of Session 2016–17. House of Commons Education Committee.

Coe, R., Jones, K., Searle, J., Kokotsaki, D., Kosnin, A., & Skinner, P. (2008). *Evidence on the effects of selective educational systems: A report for the Sutton Trust*. University of Durham CEM Centre.

Coldron, J., Willis, B., & Wolstenholme, C. (2009). Selection by attainment and aptitude in English secondary schools. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 57*(3), 245–264.

Coldron, J., Cripps, C., & Shipton, L. (2010). Why are English secondary schools socially segregated? *Journal of Education Policy, 25*(1), 19–35.

Connolly, P., Purvis, D., & O'Grady, P. J. (2013). *Advancing Shared Education. Report of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education*. Department of Education (Northern Ireland). https://pure.qub.ac.uk/files/14596498/Filetoupload_382123_en.pdf.

Cribb, J., Jesson, D., Sibieta, L., Skipp, A., & Vignoles, A. (2013). *Poor Grammar—Entry into Grammar Schools for disadvantaged pupils in England*. The Sutton Trust.

Department of Education NI. (n.d.) *Review of Home to School Transport Policy*. Available at https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/review-home-school-transport-policy-0.

Department of Education NI. (2002). *Future Post-Primary Arrangements in Northern Ireland (The Costello Report).* Available at https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/costello-report-full

Department of Education NI. (2021a). *Annual enrolments at schools and in funded pre-school education in Northern Ireland 2020-21*, Available at https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolments-2020-21-statistical-bulletins

Department of Education NI. (2021b). *A timeline of the development of transfer policy*—Available at: https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/timeline-development-transfer-policy

Department of Education NI. (2021c). *School meals—2020/21 statistical bulletin—29 April 2021.* Available at: https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-meals-202021-statistical-bulletin-29-april-2021

Dickson, M., & Macmilllan, L. (2020). *Inequality in access to grammar schools* (No. 3). Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities, UCL Institute of Education. Available at https://ideas.repec.org/p/ucl/cepeob/3.html

Donnelly, C., & Osborne, R. D. (2005). Devolution, social policy and education: Some observations from Northern Ireland. *Social Policy and Society, 4*(2), 147–156.

Dowling, P. J. (1968). *The Hedge schools of Ireland*. Mercier Press.

Doyle, S. (2020). Education minister has 'no authority' to halt 11-plus Irish News, 21st April 2020. Available at https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2020/04/21/news/education-minister-has-no-legislative-authority-to-halt-11-plus-1908922/

Duffy, G., & Gallagher, T. (2017). Shared Education in contested spaces: How collaborative networks improve communities and schools. *Journal of Educational Change, 18*(1), 107–134.

Edwards, T., & Whitty, G. (1997). Specialisation and selection in secondary education. *Oxford Review of Education, 23*(1), 5–15.

Elwood, J. (2013). Educational assessment policy and practice: A matter of ethics. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 20*(2), 205–220.

Fergus, L. (2012). Three Catholic grammar schools vow to bin academic selection. Belfast Telegraph 29th June 2012. Available at https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/three-catholic-grammar-schools-vow-to-bin-academic-selection-28765942.html

Fitzpatrick, R. J. (2007). *Improving school leadership: Country background report for Northern Ireland*. Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. http://www.oecd.org/education/school/38752145.pdf.

Fleming, N. (2001). *Lord Londonderry and Education Reform in 1920s Northern Ireland* https://www.historyireland.com/troubles-in-ni/ni-1920-present/lord-londonderry-education-reform-in-1920s-northern-ireland/

Francis, B., Archer, L., Hodgen, J., Pepper, D., Taylor, B., & Travers, M. C. (2017). Exploring the relative lack of impact of research on 'ability grouping' in England: A discourse analytic account. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 47*(1), 1–17.

Gallagher, T. (2006). The impact of devolution on education policy: Two case studies. In C. Donnelly, P. McKeown, & R. Osborne (Eds.), *Devolution and pluralism in education in Northern Ireland* (pp. 139–148). University of Manchester.

Gallagher, T. (2021). Governance and leadership in education policy making and school development in a divided society. *School Leadership & Management, 41*(1-2), 132–151.

Gallagher, T., & Smith, A. (2000). *The Effects of the Selective System of Secondary Education in Northern Ireland*. Department of Education.

Gardner, J. (2016). Education in Northern Ireland since the Good Friday Agreement: Kabuki theatre meets *danse macabre*. *Oxford Review of Education, 42*(3), 346–361.

Gardner, J., & Cowan, P. (2005). The fallibility of high stakes '11-plus' testing in Northern Ireland. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 12*(2), 145–165.

Gardner, J., & Gallagher, T. (2007). Gauging the deliverable? Educational research in Northern Ireland. *European Educational Research Journal, 6*(1), 101–114.

Garratt, D., & Forrester, G. (2012). *Education policy unravelled*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Gorard, S., & Siddiqui, N. (2018). Grammar schools in England: A new analysis of social segregation and academic outcomes. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 39*(7), 909–924.

Harris, R., & Rose, S. (2013). Who benefits from grammar schools? A case study of Buckinghamshire, England. *Oxford Review of Education, 39*(2), 151–171.

Haydn, T. (2004). The strange death of the comprehensive school in England and Wales, 1965–2002. *Research Papers in Education, 19*(4), 415–432.

Jenkins, S. P., Micklewright, J., & Schnepf, S. V. (2008). Social segregation in secondary schools: How does England compare with other countries? *Oxford Review of Education, 34*(1), 21–37.

Jerrim, J., & Sims, S. (2019). Why do so few low-and middle-income children attend a grammar school? New evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study. *British Educational Research Journal, 45*(3), 425–457.

Jerrim, J., & Sims, S. (2020). The association between attending a grammar school and children's socio-emotional outcomes. New evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 68*(1), 25–42.

Lambe, J. (2007). Northern Ireland Student Teachers' Changing Attitudes towards Inclusive Education during Initial Teacher Training. *International Journal of Special Education, 22*(1), 59–71.

Lambe, J., & Bones, R. (2006a). Student teachers' attitudes to inclusion: Implications for initial teacher education in Northern Ireland. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 10*(6), 511–527.

Lambe, J., & Bones, R. (2006b). Student teachers' perceptions about inclusive classroom teaching in Northern Ireland prior to teaching practice experience. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 21*(2), 167–186.

Lambe, J., & Bones, R. (2007). The effect of school-based practice on student teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Northern Ireland. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 33*(1), 99–113.

Lambe, J., & Bones, R. (2008). The impact of a special school placement on student teacher beliefs about inclusive education in Northern Ireland. *British Journal of Special Education, 35*(2), 108–116.

Levaçić, R., & Marsh, A. J. (2007). Secondary modern schools: Are their pupils disadvantaged? *British Educational Research Journal, 33*(2), 155–178.

Looney, J. W. (2011). Integrating Formative and Summative Assessment: Progress Toward a Seamless System? *OECD Education Working Papers, No. 58*, OECD.

Magee, J. (1995). From national schools to national curriculum: popular education in Ulster from 1831 to the 1990s. In E. Phoenix (Ed.), *A century of northern life: the Irish News and 100 years of Ulster history 1890s-1990s*. Ulster Historical Foundation.

Manning, A. & Pischke, J. (2006) *Comprehensive versus Selective Schooling in England in Wales: What Do We Know?* IZA Discussion Paper No. 2072. Available at: http://ssrn.com/abstract=898567

McConkey, R. (2020). The increasing prevalence of school pupils with ASD: Insights from Northern Ireland. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 35*(3), 414–424.

McCulloch, G. (2006). Education and the middle classes: The case of the English grammar schools, 1868–1944. *History of Education, 35*(6), 689–704.

McGuinness, M. (2001). *Why I ditched a divisive system.* The Guardian 14th January 2001. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/education/2001/jan/14/schools.news

McMurray, S. (2020). *Academic Selection* Research and Information Service Briefing Paper. Northern Ireland Assembly. Available at: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/committees/2017-2022/education/post-primary-transfer-survey/academic-selection-briefing-paper-niar-209-2020.pdf

Miller, F. (2020). *Covid-19 is about to expose the myth behind grammar school selection.* The Guardian. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jul/14/covid-19-is-about-to-expose-the-myth-behind-grammar-school-selection

Milliken, M. (2021). United we stand? Teaching unions and the separation of teachers in the divided education system of Northern Ireland. *Irish Educational Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2021.1910970

Milliken, M., Bates, J., & Smith, A. (2021). Teaching Across the Divide: Perceived barriers to the movement of teachers across the traditional sectors in Northern Ireland. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 69*(2), 133–154.

Morris, R., & Perry, T. (2017). Reframing the English grammar schools debate. *Educational Review, 69*(1), 1–24.

NICCYP. (2017). *Educational Inequalities and Inclusion Position Paper* [online] Available at: https://www.ief.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2017/08/educational-position-paper-july-2017-final.pdf

Noble, E. L. (2011). *A Field Study of Consociationalism in the Northern Ireland Assembly: A Moderating Influence or Threat to Democracy?* Available from https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2226&context=isp_collection.

Nolan, P. (2014). *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report No.3. Belfast*, Community Relations Council. Available at http://www.community-relations.org.uk/sites/crc/files/media-files/Peace-Monitoring-Report-2014.pdf.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. (2018). *The 2018 Annual Statement Human Rights in Northern Ireland.* Available at http://nihrc.org/uploads/publications/2018_Annual_Human_Rights_Statement.pdf

Norton, C. (2017). Grammar Schools Do They Work? A Northern Irish Perspective *Young Fabians 7th March 2017* http://www.youngfabians.org.uk/grammar_school_northern_ireland

Ó'Baoill, D. P. (2007). Origins of Irish-medium Education: The Dynamic Core of Language Revitalisation in Northern Ireland. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 10*(4), 410–427.

O'Neill, L. (2020). Decade after end of 11-plus, transfer tests popular as ever with parents *Belfast Telegraph 24th January*, Available at https://www.belfast-telegraph.co.uk/news/education/decade-after-end-of-11-plus-transfer-tests-popular-as-ever-with-parents-38890320.html

Perry, C. (2016). *Academic selection: a brief overview*. Northern Ireland Assembly. Research and Information Service Briefing Note. Paper 48/16.

Roulston, S., & Hansson, U. (2021). Kicking the can down the road? Educational solutions to the challenges of divided societies: A Northern Ireland case study. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 42*(2), 170–183.

Roulston, S., & Milliken, M. (2021). *Academic Selection and the Transfer Test* Transforming Education Briefing Paper #10. Available at: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/828901/TEUU-Report-10-Academic-Selection.pdf

Scott, E. (2016). *Extension of Grammar Schools and Selection in Education*. House of Lords.

Shewbridge, C., Hulshof, M., Nusche, D., & Stenius Staehr, L. (2014) *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Northern Ireland.* OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing.

Shirlow, P. (2018). A Reminder from the present. In C. Coulter & S. Coleman (Eds.), *The end of Irish history? Critical reflections on the Celtic Tiger*. Manchester University Press.

Smith, A. (2001). Religious Segregation and the Emergence of Integrated Schools in Northern Ireland. *Oxford Review of Education, 27*(4), 559–575. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980120086248

Smith-Woolley, E., Pingault, J. B., Selzam, S., Rimfeld, K., Krapohl, E., von Stumm, S., Asbury, K., Dale, P. S., Young, T., Allen, R., & Kovas, Y. (2018). Differences in exam performance between pupils attending selective and non-selective schools mirror the genetic differences between them. *npj Science of Learning, 3*(3), 1–7.

Thompson, R. (2019). *Education, Inequality and Social Class: Expansion and Stratification in Educational Opportunity*. Routledge.

United Nationals Committee for Rights of the Child. (2016). 'UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations on the Fifth Periodic Report of the UK of Great Britain and NI', CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, 12 July 2016, at para 72(a)

West, A., & Hind, A. (2007). School choice in London, England: Characteristics of students in different types of secondary schools. *Peabody Journal of Education, 82*(2-3), 498–529.

Wilford, R. (2010). Northern Ireland: the politics of constraint. *Parliamentary Affairs, 63*(1), 134–155.

Wilson, R. (2016). *Northern Ireland peace monitoring report No.4*. Belfast, Community Relations Council. www.community-relations.org.uk/sites/crc/files/media-files/