

Emerging lessons from the Emerald Isle about the role of ICT in community cohesion

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What is the Challenge?

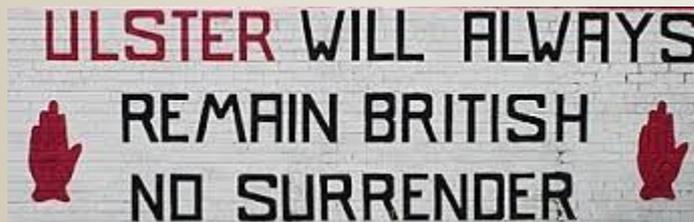
- Map of Ireland showing the border.



The Long Shadow of History

Low level conflict both cross border and within Northern Ireland.

The reasons for so many years of conflict are mainly political. Some in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland would like a united Ireland, many of these people are Catholic.



**ULSTER WILL ALWAYS
REMAIN BRITISH
NO SURRENDER**

While others, mainly Protestant, want to retain Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom.

Conflict and Post-Conflict?

1968-1999 The Troubles

- The British army moved into Northern Ireland to '*keep the peace*'; seen by armed Republican insurgents (AKA Irish Republican Army - IRA) as 'an occupying force'.
- IRA action also countered by loyalist paramilitary groups, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA)



Conflict and Post-Conflict?

1968-1999 The Troubles

During the Troubles the number of deaths rose to 3,491.

The table below clearly breaks down the deaths into different groups between 1969 to 1998.

Year	Civilian	British Security	Republican Paramilitary*	Loyalist Paramilitary	Irish Security*	Totals
1969	12	2	1	1		16
1970	17	2	6		1	26
1971	89	60	20	2		171
1972	249	148	70	11	1	479
1973	119	82	37	15		253
1974	191	73	23	7		294
1975	174	35	24	27		260
1976	207	61	17	9	1	295
1977	49	50	6	6		111
1980	34	37	6	2	1	80
1981	42	51	18	2		113
1982	36	58	10	5	1	110
1983	34	39	8	2	2	85
1984	22	32	13	1	1	69
1986	27	25	7	2		61
1988	38	46	15	5		104
1989	30	40	3	3		76
1992	58	11	17	3		89
1993	62	18	6	2		88
1994	48	7	3	6		64
1995	6	1	1	1		9
1998	46	2	2	5		55
TOTAL	1,837	1,115	393	136	10	3,491

Source: CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet)

DATALINK: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton>

The Good Friday Peace Agreement, 1989



- Ceasefire and peace deal brokered by British, Irish and Americans.
- The ceasefire led to power sharing executive in Northern Ireland (political parties reflect broad lines of division, for example Sinn Fein supporters seek United Ireland, Democratic Unionist Party wants to retain ties with UK).



Conflict and Post-Conflict?



The Troubles

In 2010 it was estimated that 107,000 people in Northern Ireland suffered some physical injury as a result of the conflict. From 2001 – 2014 the number of deaths due to conflict has continued. The most publicised incident was of two soldiers Mark Quinsey and Patrick Azimkar who were killed during an ambush at Massereene Barracks in Antrim Town, March 2009.

Schools; Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?

- **95%** of children in NI attend schools that are denominationally separate; schooling apart reinforced by different housing patterns, different sports and different culture
- Community cohesion between schools promoted by government through the curriculum (citizenship), integrated schools and shared education



A Catholic and a Protestant girl swap school uniforms.

Courtney Cooke is from Lisneal college, in the loyalist Waterside, on the Protestant east bank of the river Foyle; Yvonne Weir attends Catholic St Cecilia's college across the river in Creggan, fortress estate of republican Bogside, once the IRA-controlled "Free Derry".

Shared Education & ICT

- Given resistance of churches and some political parties to integrated education, some support for 'shared education' .
- Based on principle of schools remaining separate but working together.
- Since 2007 most work based on face to face contact, pupils bussed to neutral venues or to other schools



The Role of ICT

- Evidence from the Dissolving Boundaries Programme over 15 years with 50,000 children aged 8-17, in schools in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland showed the following;
- The year-long contact had a significant effect on pupils' attitudes (NFER -2012, ETI - 2011) even a year after the end of the programme (Rickard et al, 2014), enhanced pupils' ICT skills and secured commitment from teachers who valued ongoing professional development and support.



Researching impact

- Data gathered a year after conclusion of programme
- Survey of pupil attitudes compared those who had taken part in the programme and matched pupils in the same school that had not
- Data showed that pupils who had taken part were positive about their experiences, had a more grounded understanding of 'other' and a desire for more contact

DB Programme Findings 1



The successful factors of this programme include:

- Designing the programme using the contact hypothesis and constructivist principles, allowing small teams in each class to work with similar groups in other schools on cooperative tasks.
- The work was based on the curriculum which teachers had to follow anyway, this built a band of trust.
- It allowed for funding which was used for face-to-face contact as well as sustained link using video-conferencing and Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

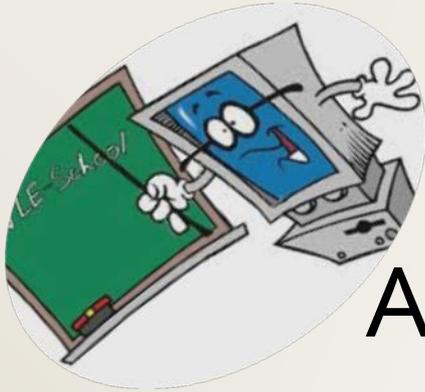
DB Programme Findings 2



- Teachers' initial planning conference was vital, based on residential event, ICT training and creation of learning agreement.
- Role of Project team in monitoring/ supporting teachers. The role of third parties in managing programme.
- Cost: £70 per pupils per annum
- Links sustained for average of 4 years.

Reflections and implications

- Independent evidence from Walther, Hoter, Ganayem and Shonfeld (2014) in Israel showing similar positive results.
- DB research assessed as best in the UK in 2014 analysis of 'research impact' (REF 2014)
- It's not contact per se that matters but the nature of the contact.
- Applying Dissolving Boundaries lessons to work within NI



ePartners

A Modest 1st Step



- **26** schools working in 13 cross-community partnerships. These include schools that are predominantly catholic or protestant.
- Mainly supported by University of Ulster students who are on placement for 32-50 hours as additional voluntary activity to improve their employability.
- VLE, Video Conference and Face-to –Face.
- ePartners is funded by University of Ulster.
- Possible accredited course for teachers, the Certificate in Online Shared Education(COSE).

Research Questions



In order to get the very best out programmes like this, some possible research questions

1. What's the best way of mixing online and face to face contact? Cultural variants, example between Israel and Northern Ireland.
2. Current research shows tension between traditional view of Face-to-Face as end of year treat and recognition of its role earlier.
3. However research also shows high level of support from schools for blended contact.
4. How to sustain this work? Teacher role critical; models of teacher CPD

But, how do we reach every School?

- Draft policy on shared education out for consultation.
- The Department of Education's policy is based on 10 Multi-Campus Schools and Partner Schools working together with financial support.
- No reference to ICT.
- Shared Education is also supported by Queens University Belfast; again no use of ICT.
- It is not yet clear how remote or isolated schools can get involved.



And make links sustainable?

- Current government thinking based on voluntary links between partner schools with funding going direct to school. Some third party involvement, evidence needed to test models of sustainability.
- Should ICT be optional?
- Should schools be allowed to opt out?



Dealing with obstacles

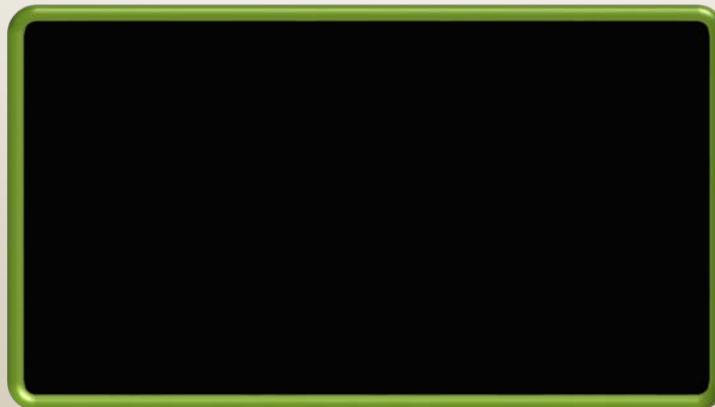
- Institutional rivalry.
- Political will and funding.
- School/parent/teacher attitudes.
- Tensions between stakeholders; different agendas and priorities, example between government and University.



Some hopeful signs in Northern Ireland and Israel



- 2015 much better than 1985, reduced levels of violence.
- Extra £200m funding for shared education.
- Readiness to embrace some sport and music that is shared, such as popular TV shows, example Mrs Browns Boys and Danny Boy.
- President 'Rubi' Rivlin's video for the Jewish New Year. 'We are exactly the same'



ANY

QUESTIONS

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