Children's education rights at the transition to secondary education: school choice in Northern Ireland

Henderson, L. (2020). Children's education rights at the transition to secondary education: school choice in Northern Ireland. *British Educational Research Journal*, 1131-1151. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3620>

Published in:
British Educational Research Journal

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

Publisher rights
© 2020 British Educational Research Association. This work is made available online in accordance with the publisher's policies. Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact openaccess@qub.ac.uk.

Children's education rights at the transition to secondary education: school choice in Northern Ireland

Leanne Henderson^{a*}

^aSchool of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, UK

leanne.henderson@qub.ac.uk @LeanneHend

*corresponding author Leanne Henderson Leanne.Henderson@qub.ac.uk

Abstract

The principles of school choice and diverse provision underpin transition to secondary education in a majority of countries. This paper focuses on the potential for structural diversity to constrain rather than promote choice. Although intended to improve equity in access and quality of provision, choice-based systems serve to homogenise school intakes and magnify attainment differences between schools. School choice decisions become high-stakes in such contexts because eventual school placements influence the future character of children's schooling. In Northern Ireland, existing community divisions are reflected in the available school types, with a majority of places at either Catholic or *de facto* Protestant schools, and only a small number at Integrated schools. This results in high levels of homogenisation along community lines. In addition, the provision of separate grammar and non-grammar schools means that intakes are also academically stratified, resulting in the extreme between-school attainment differences characteristic of systems arranged in this way. Drawing on documentary evidence and a survey of transition age children, this research discusses how school choice within structurally complex systems can be constrained. The main focus is on how children's education rights, as set down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are placed at risk by the interaction of system-level divisions. It concludes that school choice arrangements in Northern Ireland do not operate in compliance with children's education rights when tested against each of the requirements set out in Tomasevski's 4-As scheme, namely that education provision must be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable.

Keywords: children's rights, school choice; transition; student views; education policy

Introduction

The right to good quality education which is provided on a basis of equality is set down by Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC) (United Nations, 1989). In public perception education rights are thought to be safeguarded within many national education systems, particularly in industrialised societies. However, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) which discharges the duty to monitor compliance with the CRC has made repeated criticisms of EU countries for failures in assuring education rights (Lundy, 2012). Achieving compliance with this feature of international law, across Europe, requires countries to improve universality and equality of access and to address issues of quality in relation to academic attainment (Lundy, 2012). The Committee, in its monitoring of the extent to which Northern Ireland fulfils its obligations under the CRC, consistently highlights the impact of separate education provision, by academic selectivity and religious character, on children's educational experiences (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2002; 2008; 2016). However, whilst these two key structural dimensions have both been identified as failing to comply with the the principles of the CRC, to date, their intersection has not been examined from a children's rights perspective and this paper addresses that gap.

Academic tracking is not uncommon in European contexts despite its potential to exacerbate inequalities in access and outcome (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2011): the two most common criticisms of European education systems made by the Committee (Lundy, 2012); and a long-standing focus of research into the effects of academic selection in the NI context (Gallagher & Smith, 2000). Separate schooling along ethnic, cultural or religious lines is also relatively common in European contexts and can be (re)produced in multiple ways, both structural and social. For example, within choice-based systems, the provision of public or private schools with an explicit or implicit religious ethos and the effects of parental self-selection magnify within school ethnic, religious or cultural homogeneity (Musset, 2012). Both structural and social factors lead to the replication of existing social differences in the education systems of many divided societies, including Cyprus and Northern Ireland (Loader & Hughes, 2017). However, in divided societies, the consequences of structural separateness, such as the potential for 'entrenchment of segregation', constrain reconciliation aims (Loader & Hughes, 2017, p. 4-5).

This paper explores how the multi-dimensional separateness of secondary education provision in Northern Ireland (Hughes, 2011) has a particular influence on school choice at transition. It is argued that the structures of diverse provision present multiple challenges to the safeguarding of children's education rights (Articles 28 and 29) as set out in the CRC. These are

evident when examined through the lens of Tomaševski's 4-As framework (2001) which conceptualises education rights as requiring that education should be made available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable for all children. The 4-As outlines a full range of governmental obligations which underpin compliance with the CRC's education rights: adequate provision of places which match the number and diversity of the school-aged population; elimination of administrative or structural barriers to access; recognition of children as rights-holders; and ensuring that the educational offering meets the needs of all children. Furthermore, due to the indivisibility and mutually reinforcing nature of rights, children's rights *to*, *in* and *through* education ought to be assured in accordance with each of the other substantive rights set out in the CRC (Tomaševski, 2001). For the purposes of the data presented in this paper the principles of non-discrimination (Article 2), best interests (Article 3) and participation (Article 12) are considered to be particularly relevant.

Drawing on documentary evidence and the views and experiences of children it is possible to identify serious inequities within a policy environment which gives priority to the principle of choice. Data relating to the principles and practices of transition in several areas are presented. Firstly, intersectional analyses of school place provision demonstrate the differential availability of places by school religious character, academic selectivity and gender profile. Secondly, the differential representation of Free School Meal Entitled (FSME) pupils and varied patterns of school over-subscription point to high levels of socio-economic stratification. Thirdly, consideration of children's preferences for different school types shows variation in the extent to which individual preferences are realised. Despite the positioning of choice as an underpinning value of current transfer policy the analyses presented here show that diversity in provision is likely to constrain choice for many children which represents a violation of their rights under the CRC. Transition to secondary education in Northern Ireland

The two 'signature dimensions' of Northern Ireland's education system have sustained many decades of policy and research interest (Gardner, 2016, p. 347). The principle of academic selection and the mechanisms used for selecting students for admission to grammar schools have received significant attention in the research literature and in the public eye (Elwood, 2013; Gardner, 2016; Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2010). In this context, the consequences of transition are well documented and include: for example, disruption of friendship groups; negative effects on children's self-esteem; and a narrowing of the Key Stage 2 curriculum (Gallagher & Smith, 2000; Gardner & Cowan, 2005; Shewbridge, et al., 2014). Such factors represent a challenge to the acceptability and adaptability of education and can be understood as

operating against the Best Interests (Article 3) principle. Calls to reform the processes of secondary transition within Northern Ireland's academically selective system are a long-standing feature of education policy debate (Gallagher, 2006). A key concern is that academic selection magnifies socio-economic stratification and has negative consequences for children's educational experiences and outcomes (Connolly, et al., 2013; Gallagher & Smith, 2000; Shewbridge, et al., 2014).

In addition to separate grammar and non-grammar schools the system is characterised by predominantly separate provision according to existing divisions by community and religious identity with a majority of schools being of Catholic or Protestant character and a small number of Integrated schools (Hughes, 2011; Gardner, 2016). Due to the enduring nature of segregation in NI society (Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 2008), and the fact that more than 92% of pupils are educated in separate schools attended primarily by their co-religionists (Hughes, 2011), the provision of separate Catholic and Protestant schools should not be equated to the existence of faith schools in other contexts. Tomaševski (2003a), highlighting the potential for inclusive education to enhance social cohesion in Northern Ireland, reflects on the United States Supreme Court finding that 'separate educational facilities are inherently unequal' (p. 11). Therefore, in addition to separate provision limiting school choice in potentially discriminatory ways (Articles 2 & 28.1), there is an ethical argument related to the perpetuation of existing social divisions. Furthermore, the likelihood that parental self-selection serves to reinforce or magnify existing structural separateness (OECD, 2012) by academic selectivity and by religious or community identity must also be recognised.

Divisions by school religious character and academic selectivity have been repeatedly criticised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2002; 2008; 2016) and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People has been outspoken on these issues (NICCY, 2018). A third system-level division by school gender profile (co-educational and single-sex, all-girls and all-boys, schools) has received comparatively little attention in the literature but is nonetheless important because it has further potential to limit which places are available to an individual child depending on their sex (Tomaševski, 2003a). Administrative and structural barriers have the potential to lead to discriminatory denials of access (Tomaševski, 2001) with direct consequences on the extent to which choice can be safeguarded.

School Choice

Social policy reforms since the early 1990s have formalised the principles of diverse provision and quasi-marketisation in education (Glennerster, 1991) within a broader neoliberal policy context,

which has both economic and social consequences. Lingard (2014) describes ‘an ideology which promotes markets over the state and regulation and individual advancement/self-interest over the collective good and common well being’ (p. 80). Between school competition is fundamental in choice-based systems: school viability and funding levels rely on being successful in competing for students. The state is effectively absolved of responsibility for assuring quality education provision for all children because that responsibility is transferred to schools, which are expected to improve the quality of provision in order to attract students, and to individual consumers (in this case students supported by their parents), who are expected to effectively navigate the system to access a good quality school (Butler & Hamnett, 2011). From this perspective, the key argument against increased choice is the resulting emphasis on individual, rather than collective gain which justifies the existence of winners and losers in the education system (Apple, 2006). Quasi-marketisation has not improved educational quality or equity, as originally intended, and has instead created the potential for exacerbating social stratification (Musset, 2012).

‘Equity in education means that personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background, are not obstacles to achieving educational potential (fairness) and that that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills (inclusion)’ (OECD, 2012, p. 9).

The global trend to diversify provision aligns with liberal aspirations towards individual choice (Francis, et al., 2017) and the ideals of school choice have become deeply embedded in many national education systems (UNESCO, 2017). School choice underpins admissions to compulsory secondary education for an average of 60% of students across OECD countries, albeit with significant national policy variation in whether choice is universal or targeted (Gewirtz, et al., 1995; Musset, 2012). Initiatives such as open enrolment, where all families have the possibility of exercising choice, are universal, whilst voucher schemes, which offer choice to certain groups of (disadvantaged) families based on need, are targeted (Musset, 2012). School choice policies present a challenge to equity by homogenising individual schools’ pupil populations, thereby increasing pupil segregation by ability, socio-economic status and ethnic background (Musset, 2012; OECD, 2012). In addition to the role of selective school admissions, parental self-selection, whereby better-off and better informed parents are more likely to exercise choice and to do so effectively, increases between school differences in terms of performance and social background (OECD, 2012). Indeed, increasing choice in Finland, a system internationally lauded as providing equal access to quality education, led to the most advantaged parents making the ‘best’ choices on behalf of their children and ultimately increased social stratification (Kosunen, 2016).

Northern Ireland's system of open-enrolment is an example of a universal parental choice scheme whereby all families have the possibility of exercising choice through the expression of school preferences. McKeown (2006) conceptualises school competition as taking place in two main ways: competition between schools of differing religious character within a horizontal market; and grammar and non-grammar schools competing within a vertical market. The potential for the intersection of different types of school competition to magnify inequities in access to grammar school places has been highlighted by recent evidence drawing on Millennium Cohort data for Northern Ireland (Jerrim & Sims, 2019). Such inequities have children's rights implications, both in terms of the non-discrimination principle (Article 2) and in the mandate placed on state parties to assure that the right to education is provided on a basis of 'equal opportunity' (Article 28.1), framed by Tomaševski's (2001) as requiring the 'identification and elimination of discriminatory denials of access' (p. 12).

Academic and socio-economic stratification

International trends show school systems with higher socio-economic inclusion tend to also have higher academic inclusion (OECD, 2016, p. 173). Socio-economically and academically inclusive systems are those where variations in socio-economic status and student performance are greater within than between schools (OECD, 2016). The equitable availability and accessibility of provision is safeguarded within such systems because specific groupings of students are not at risk of systematic exclusion according to academic or social categorisations (Tomaševski, 2001). Across OECD countries the general trend is for tracking from age 15 or 16 but some countries operate tracking for students as young as age 10 (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2011). Early tracking is strongly associated with attainment differences at the end of compulsory schooling for children of differing socio-economic status (SES) (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2011), thereby demonstrating that the enforcement of minimum standards, a test of acceptability, does not accommodate the full range of pupils, as the adaptability requirement would demand (Tomaševski, 2001). Extreme differences exist in the achievement of the 5 GCSE benchmark by school selectivity: headline figures for 2014/2015 showed 95.6% of grammar and 45.3% of non-grammar school students met the benchmark (Perry, 2016b). A pattern of differential attainment according to FSME status is evidenced in England and NI, however, it should be noted that it is more pronounced in the latter. For example, the odds of Non-FSME pupils achieving the 5 GCSE benchmark when compared to their FSME counterparts are three times higher in England and four times higher in NI (Connolly, et al., 2013). This difference is ascribed to the higher level of academic selectivity in the NI system

(Connolly, et al., 2013) and points to a gap in the quality of provision. Children of low SES perform better in systems which do not operate early tracking whilst the performance of high SES children remains at the same level. 'In countries with early tracking, inequality increases systematically, whereas it decreases in countries without tracking' (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2011, p. 155).

Variations in the proportions of children from different socio-economic backgrounds applying and being successfully admitted to grammar schools could be taken to suggest different aspirations for a grammar school place. An examination of grammar school entry patterns in England, found that school principals were likely to attribute lower proportions of FSME children attending grammar schools to lower educational aspirations amongst disadvantaged families (Cribb, et al., 2013). However, recommendations for improving grammar schools' representation of FSME children considered only school-level approaches, implying that access is limited by structural disadvantages: defined as 'the absence of opportunities and conditions for them to be realised' (Baker, et al., 2014, p. 539). Perceptions that low aspirations account for poorer progression or outcomes at worst ignore, or at best underplay, structural barriers (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2011) which limit school choice amongst those children which are emphasised in policy rhetoric as most likely to benefit from its potential for educational mobility. Such limitations represent state party failure to fulfil their obligation to remove all administrative barriers to accessibility (Tomaševski, 2001).

Secondary schools are legally required to admit applicants to all available places, in compliance with the Education (Northern Ireland) Order, 1997 - Articles 10, 13, 15 and 16 and the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, Article 27, and in line with the statutory guidelines (DENI, 2010; 2013). Schools which are oversubscribed rely on published admissions criteria to select, from the total number of applicants, a cohort equivalent to their approved admissions number. Schools perceived as 'high-performing' are more likely to be oversubscribed, indicating that they are favoured in parental preferences (Burgess, et al., 2017). It is argued here that within academically selective systems symbolic status is accorded to schools at a system-level with school admissions practices contributing to the accordance and perpetuation of those symbolic representations (Lubienski, 2006). The relationship between socio-economic status and access to grammar school places is well established in the research literature (Allen, et al., 2017; Connolly, et al., 2013; Leitch, et al., 2017; Jerrim & Sims, 2019). In Northern Ireland the pupil populations of different schools show variation in the proportion of FSME children, however, the most significant differences are between the grammar and non-grammar sectors (Perry, 2016a): indicating that academic selection represents a structural challenge to equity (Shewbridge, et al., 2014, p. 20) with selection procedures

criticised for acting as a proxy for social sorting (Wilson, 2016, p. 117). State provided education should be accessible to all children on the basis of equality (Tomaševski, 2001, p. 12). Therefore, evidence of differential access to a form of secondary education makes explicit the state's failure to fulfil its duty to identify and eliminate barriers to access which, in this case, results in the 'inter-generational transmission of privilege' (Tomaševski, 2003a, p. 10).

Children's rights at transition

Tomaševski (2001) argues that education is only meaningfully provided where school places match the population of school aged children in number and diversity. The potential for market competition to produce inequities in the availability of places which constrain choice are evidenced in the literature (McKeown, 2006). In addition to limiting the right to education (Tomaševski, 2001), both non-discrimination (Article 2) and participation (Article 12) are at threat in marketised systems. The interaction of system-level divisions has the potential to compound the differential availability of school places and the UN Special Rapporteur (Tomaševski, 2003a) has identified the effects of multi-dimensional separateness as a children's rights concern. She further argued that statistics relating to school places could assist in the monitoring of the delivery of education rights (2003b).

The power of school choice has been framed as a parental right (Musset, 2012, p. 6), which enables parents to make a decision about the most suitable school for their child (West & Currie, 2008). However, in many cases decision-making power does not lie with parents because it is restricted by school- and system-level constraints and parental preferences remain unrealised (West & Currie, 2008; West & Hind, 2016). Ball et al. (1996) argue that the policy and practice of choice are portrayed as neutral but that they perpetuate inequalities. Within school choice systems, such as open enrolment, the future viability of schools is secured by their capacity to perform competitively within the market (Musset, 2012). Academic selectivity in such systems is particularly problematic because the positioning of one school type as elite ensures that market-competition is unfairly weighted (Lubienski, 2006).

A great deal of research has attempted to gain a better understanding of school choice from the perspective of parents, however, less common is to prioritise the views and agency of children in the processes of choice (Reay & Lucey, 2003). Indeed, a neglect towards children's education rights in national policy with respect to school choice have been identified in the literature (Harris, 2009) and the priority given to parental choice is a long-standing children's rights concern (Tomaševski, 2000). The absence of children's perspectives in research and policy in this area is highly problematic because it is children who are the holders of education rights, under the CRC

(Tomaševski, 2001). Indeed, the 4-As framework could also be argued to place undue emphasis on parental choice which is surprising given that Tomaševski's perspective ordinarily gives priority to recognising children as subjects of rights. Nonetheless, the 'acceptability' (Tomaševski, 2001) requirement for recognition of children as rights-holders ought to include participation rights (Article 12) which could be addressed by the creation of a formal mechanism for children's own school choice preferences to be voiced and considered in school admissions arrangements.

This paper considers the child rights implications of structural diversity at the transition to secondary education by focusing on the potential for statistics relating to school places to assist in the monitoring of the delivery of the right to education (Tomaševski, 2001). Previous analyses have shown a surplus of secondary level school places (Education Authority (NI), 2016; Northern Ireland Audit Office, 2015), widespread availability of grammar places (Department of Education NI, 2015), and reportedly good provision of Catholic and Protestant schools (Lundy, et al., 2012). Although, this evidence would seem to suggest that the government has adequately fulfilled its obligation to make education available in NI what previous analyses have failed to show is how diversity in provision, rather than promoting choice, can operate as a structural barrier to its realisation.

Methods & analysis

This paper reports on several aspects of the data drawn from a larger doctoral study which adopted a mixed methods approach to better understand the policy, practices and experiences of secondary transition (Henderson, 2018). A documentary analysis considered school level admissions policies and available intake data of the 205 secondary schools (66 academically selective/grammar and 139 all-ability/non-grammar) operating admission to Year 8 (the first year of secondary education in NI) in September 2014. An online survey accessed and documented children's views and experiences of transfer. The survey was conducted in 24 schools (16 secondary and 8 primary) with transition age children (aged 10-12 years, in primary and secondary level grammar and non-grammar schools, n=1327). The focus of this paper is around the issue of school choice which, due to the dominant focus on academic selection, has been largely absent from the research literature on transition in NI.

The documentary analysis drew on pupil population data (Department of Education (NI), 2015) to produce descriptive statistics which were used to make comparisons about the availability of school places between different categories of school, taking account of the types of separate provision discussed above. Such an analysis had not previously been undertaken in the NI context and this original dataset allowed differences in provision to be identified and discussed. The analyses use the former Education and Library Board boundaries (now Education Authority Regions,

equivalent to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England) as a proxy geographical unit. Whilst admissions are often made across these organisational boundaries they are used here to show the geographical distribution of school place provision. In addition to the provision of places, a key aspect of the transition landscape is how and by whom those places are allocated to individual children. NI transfer decisions are taken at the school level and research in England has shown that social stratification is higher where schools are responsible for their own admissions (Allen, et al., 2012).

The survey of children included questions about school choice preferences, these included asking respondents to identify their preferences for different categories of school which allowed the research to better account for the extent to which these ‘abstract’ preferences have the potential to be realised within the system. The focus was on understanding children’s preferences for schools of different religious character, academic selectivity and gender profile. In exercising choice young people, and their families, are making decisions between individual schools and preferences are constrained by considerations other than the three categories of ‘school-type’ discussed here. The survey data presented contribute to our understanding of the extent to which children ascribe to these characteristics in principle.

Presentation of results

The analyses presented in this section address important aspects of the transition landscape in Northern Ireland. Each illustrates how structural diversity constrains rather than promotes school choice.

Differential availability of school places at transition

The need for alignment between school availability and the number and diversity of the school-aged population can be monitored through the use of statistics relating to school place provision (Tomaševski, 2003b). The data provided in Figures 1-3 bring to light stark disparities in provision at the school place level which previous analyses focusing on, for example, the number of schools, have failed to document. The least surprising pupil place analysis is given in Figure 1 which shows a comparable proportion of Year 8 places in the Catholic (46.5%) and Protestant (46.4%) sectors, similarly to previous research (Lundy, et al., 2012, p. 8). It is likely that regional variations are attributable to different proportions of Catholic and Protestant families living in these areas which is confirmed by the 2011 Census data which shows similar population distributions (Russell, 2014).

Figure 1 : Availability of places by school religious character (Catholic, Protestant and Integrated) (N=21739)

In light of the largely segregated provision of schooling there is a particular ethical concern raised by the differential provision of Integrated school places between ELB areas. The proportion of Year 8 admissions made to Integrated schools is 7.1% (Figure 1), markedly similar to Gardner's analysis which shows 7.0% of the 2014/15 pupil population attending Integrated schools (2016). However, variation in provision exists across the five ELBs, with the extremes being 3.7% of places in the Southern region and 11.6% in the South East. This difference illustrates a structural limitation on the opportunity to access a place in this school type despite the duty to promote Integrated education having been enshrined in domestic law for 3 decades (Education (Northern Ireland) Order, 1989) and reiterated by the Committee at every given opportunity (UNCRC, 2016). Furthermore, Figure 2 shows that grammar stream places in Integrated schools were found to be available in only two of the regions, with this category of place equating to 0.6% of all Year 8 places. Therefore, where a preference is for a grammar place this is much more likely to be accessible outside of the Integrated sector where more than 40.0% of places are at grammar schools. A further cause for concern relates to inequity in the overall proportions of grammar places within the Catholic (38.2%) and Protestant (48.8%) sectors shown in Figure 2. This pattern, of higher availability of grammar places in the Protestant sector, is repeated across the four areas which do not operate delayed selection at age 14

(i.e. the Southern ELB). The proportion of Protestant grammar places is higher than the proportion of Catholic grammar places, by between 9.9% (South East) and 27.5% (Belfast). In the Belfast ELB the figures equate to 73.5% of Protestant school places compared to 46.0% of Catholic school places being grammar places. In the NI context where the provision of schooling continues to be largely separated along community/religious lines, this disparity in provision evidences inequitable access to a selective school place for Catholic children when compared with their Protestant peers.

Figure 2 : Availability of grammar and non-grammar places within Catholic, Protestant and Integrated sectors (N=21739)

Figure 3 : Availability of co-educational, all-boys and all-girls places within sectors: Catholic Grammar and Non-grammar and Protestant Grammar and Non-grammar (N=21739)

When the gender profile of a school is added to the analyses multiple gaps are identified which further illustrate the extent of inequitable provision. The most striking example is the complete absence of Protestant co-educational non-grammar places in the Belfast ELB area (Figure 3). All Integrated schools are co-educational and are therefore only places at schools of Catholic and Protestant character are depicted in Figure 3. Differential provision of co-educational schools within the Catholic and Protestant sectors, and across the different ELB areas is serious and in addition to its potential to impact individual choices it is likely to disproportionately affect families with more than one child, particularly children of different sex.

Levels of over-subscription for different categories of school

Figure 4 : School oversubscription for grammar and non-grammar schools within Catholic, Protestant and Integrated sectors (N=205)

Over-subscription levels are an indicator of demand for places and the analysis presented in Figure 4 shows significant variations in oversubscription levels for school subgroups. Available schools (rather than places), in each area and overall, are shown as a percentage and the proportions of oversubscribed schools are shown within each category. As might be expected, places at grammar schools are in high demand with 65 of 66 grammar schools oversubscribed. Therefore, although non-grammar schools account for the majority of schools the total number of applications in many cases does not exceed their approved admissions number and they are therefore not oversubscribed.

However, there are several notable exceptions, both specific and general. Firstly, there are significant variations across ELB areas, for example in the Western area, despite having the highest availability of Catholic school places across the five areas, large proportions of Catholic non-grammar schools are oversubscribed which implies that provision may be inadequate. A further concern is that within the Protestant sector grammar schools outnumber non-grammar. Secondly, within the Integrated schools category many schools with no grammar ‘stream’ are oversubscribed and although Integrated schools are disproportionately oversubscribed (by comparison to Catholic and Protestant non-grammar schools) this is not always the case. Finally, in the Southern Board, largely due to the operation of delayed-selection (at age 14), a large proportion of 11-14 ‘Junior High’ schools, which are non-grammar (all-ability), are oversubscribed.

Academic and socio-economic stratification in NI

As discussed earlier in this paper, there are long-standing concerns around differential representation of FSME children in the populations of grammar and non-grammar schools (Gallagher & Smith, 2000). Table 1 confirms that the average proportion of FSME pupils is much higher in grammar (37.8%) than non-grammar schools (12.4%). Only one non-grammar school has a FSME representation which falls below the Grammar school average. The data shows representation of FSME pupils to be higher in Catholic schools than Protestant schools, reflecting a broader pattern of higher levels of economic poverty (measured using household deprivation indicators) amongst the Catholic community compared to the Protestant community (Nolan, 2014). The dichotomous pattern of lower concentrations in grammar compared to non-grammar schools emerges in both sectors and overall. However, there are also significant differences within sectors, For example, amongst Catholic grammar schools 16.7% have fewer than 9.99% of FSME students but at least 30.0% of this school type have double that proportion. Similarly to other analyses provided here, the intersection of system-level divisions shows stark disparities which are not always evidenced with a dichotomous analysis. For example, 83.3% of Protestant grammar schools have a FSME population lower than the grammar school average whilst this figure is only 33.3% for Catholic grammar schools. The evidence points to extreme levels of concentration of the most socio-economically disadvantaged students in some schools, for example, 29.4% of Catholic non-grammar schools have more than 50.0% of their students in the FSME category. The magnification of socio-economic stratification resulting from academic selection is widely accepted, however, in the Northern Ireland context it appears to be exacerbated by the separate provision of Catholic and Protestant schools.

Table 1 : Representation of FSME pupils by school religious character and selectivity (N=205)

Rel Char Selectivity	Catholic				Protestant				Integrated		Overall			
	Grammar		Non-Grammar		Grammar		Non-Grammar				Grammar		Non-Grammar	
FSME Avg (within category)	15.8%		43.3%		9.6%		31.4%		36.2%		12.4%		37.8%	
FSME pupils % in bands	Number of schools	Cum. % within sector	Number of schools	Cum. % within sector	Number of schools	Cum. % within sector	Number of schools	Cum. % within sector	Number of schools	Cum. % within sector	Number of schools	Cum. % within sector	Number of schools	Cum. % within sector
0-4.99	1	3.3			7	19.4					8	12.1		
5-9.99	4	16.7			13	55.6					17	37.9		
10-14.99	5	33.3			10	83.3	1	1.8			15	60.6	1	0.7
	5	50.0			2	88.9		1.8			7	71.2	0	0.7
15-19.99	6	70.0	2	2.9	3	97.2	7	14.5			9	84.8	9	7.2
20-24.99	6	90.0	6	11.8			7	27.3	3	18.8	6	93.9	16	18.7
25-29.99	2	96.7	5	19.1	1	100.0	13	50.9	4	43.8	3	98.5	22	34.5
30-34.99			7	29.4			8	65.5	2	56.3			17	46.8
35-39.99	1	100.0	5	36.8			6	76.4	2	68.8	1	100.0	13	56.1
			4	42.6			2	80.0		68.8			6	60.4
40-44.99			6	51.5			3	85.5		68.8			9	66.9
45-49.99			13	70.6			4	92.7	2	81.3			19	80.6
50-54.99			6	79.4			3	98.2	2	93.8			11	88.5
55-59.99			5	86.8			1	100.0	1	100.0			7	93.5
60-64.99			4	92.6									4	96.4
65-69.99			2	98.5									2	97.8
70-74.99			2	98.5									2	99.3
75-79.99			1	100.0									1	100.0
Total	30		68		36		55		16		66		139	

12.4%
Grammar
average

37.8%
Non-
grammar
average

Children's school choice preferences

Figure 5 : Survey respondents' self-reported school preferences

School choice policies are often framed as an opportunity to ensure that young people access the school most suited to meeting their educational needs and aspirations. Although there is no mechanism for children's preferences to be formally considered in transfer decisions, the current policy does recommend that parents take their child's views into account in decision-making (Department of Education (NI), 2013). The analysis presented in Figure 5 is intended to show the extent which children's preferences for schools, of different religious character, academic selectivity and gender profile, are reflected in their school placement.

Respondents' preferences for the religious character of their current school (Figure 5a) is higher amongst pupils who attend Catholic and Integrated schools, with pupils of Protestant schools least likely to express that this was their preference. Whilst it is unclear why this is the case it could be argued that it is illustrative of the ambiguous status of *de facto* 'Protestant' schools (Hughes, 2011) wherein pupils do not necessarily perceive their school's identity as Protestant. Relatively large proportions of Catholic and Protestant school students indicate that they 'don't really care' about the religious character of their school but this group is much smaller in the Integrated sector. These analyses show that many children do not attend a school with a religious character for which they express a preference. This applies to children who have a preference for Integrated schooling

and for those who *'don't really care'* about the religious character of their school and yet attend schools where a majority of their peers are co-religionists and which can be identified as being of either explicitly Catholic or implicitly Protestant character (Hughes, 2011).

Considering preferences for grammar and non-grammar schools (Figure 5b) grouped by the selectivity of the school they currently attend we see that in a majority of cases placements do reflect pupil preferences. Amongst grammar pupils almost two thirds (63.5%) express a preference for that school type whilst more than half (54.2%) of pupils attending All-Ability schools express that to be their preference. However, the same data for primary school students shows that an average of 41.9% of students expressed a preference for grammar schools, 28.8% preferred a non-grammar school and 29.3% didn't have a clear preference. The analysis of post-transition data seems to demonstrate that once children have been placed in a particular school type they accept it as the most suited to them. Nonetheless, it is notable that an average of 35% of Year 8 respondents indicate that they *'Don't really care'* about a school's selectivity. As would be expected a Chi-Square test showed a statistically significant relationship between the type of school currently attended and preference for selectivity of school ($p < 0.001$, Chi-Square=379.465, $df=2$) with a large effect size (Cramer's $V=0.639$). This finding further reinforces that students develop an acceptance of the school type in which they are placed.

Secondary provision is at Co-Educational, single-sex all-boys and all-girls schools in NI whilst at primary level all schools are co-educational apart from a small number of fee-paying preparatory schools (which were not sampled in this research). The data shown in Figure 5c illustrates moderate preferences for single-sex schools amongst those who currently attend a single-sex school: within all-boys schools 24.1% prefer an all-boys school; and within all-girls schools 29.8% of pupils prefer that school type. An overall majority of Year 8 respondents (60.4%), express a preference for co-educational schooling. This preference is also the most popular choice amongst respondents regardless of the gender profile of their current school, accounting for 84.2% of co-educational, 54.4% of all-boys, and 41.5% of all-girls pupils. Overall, 20% report that they *'don't really care'* about the gender profile of the school with this choice being most popular with respondents attending an all-girls school (28.4%) and least popular with those attending a co-educational school (12.3%).

Discussion

Transition research in the NI context has tended to focus on academic selection as the key barrier to accessing a secondary level school and both the principle and practices of selection have been repeatedly criticised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2002; 2008; 2016). Furthermore, since 2002, the Committee has continued to identify the need to ‘address segregation of education’ (2008, p. 16) in the NI context. School choice policies in this context are, as elsewhere, not neutral (Ball, et al., 1996). The findings of this research show how the interaction of the two ‘signature dimensions’ of NI’s education system place a limitation on the extent to which children’s school choice preferences at transition are realised within the system. This research has shown that education rights at transition are limited in unacceptable ways by structural and administrative barriers. As signatories to the CRC, the extent to which state parties have achieved compliance with its Articles are periodically monitored by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (Lundy, 2012). In the case of transition, failures in compliance have been described in the concluding observations of the Committee (2002; 2008; 2016).

Unlike previous research, the analyses outlined in Figures 1-3, by considering the interaction of system level divisions, highlight inequities in provision which are hidden when only one characteristic is under consideration. Some evidence has been reported in the media which demonstrates that cross-sectoral attendance of Catholic children at Protestant grammar schools is much higher than of Protestant children attending Catholic grammar schools (Doyle, 2015). This has been interpreted by commentators as an indication that a perceived overt religious ethos in Catholic schools may dissuade Protestant parents from choosing to make a cross-sectoral school choice. However, the evidence from this research suggests that the structural barrier presented by the more limited availability of Catholic grammar places may account for the higher proportion of cross-sectoral choice amongst the Catholic community.

The differential availability of school places represents system-level disadvantage for sub-groups of children. The UNCRC specifies that the right of the child to education must be provided ‘on the basis of equal opportunity’ (Article 28.1) and ‘without discrimination of any kind’ (Article 2) (UN, 1989). The specific categories discussed in Article 2 include sex, religion, and ‘other status’ which are all evidenced in the data resulting from this research. In order for education to be provided on an equitable basis differential availability of school places must be addressed by policy-makers and an acceptable remedy implemented. Existing research points to ‘consistently strong public endorsement’ (Gardner, 2016, p. 350) for integrated schooling. It has been suggested that ‘abstract’ preferences for the ideals of Integrated education do not reflect ‘real’ choices because the

decisions of individual families are being made between specific local schools which are considered viable options (Gallagher & Hughes, NIA Committee for Education, 2014). Nonetheless, the analysis of school oversubscription carried out as part of this research found Integrated schools to be disproportionately oversubscribed (Figure 4).

One element of Tomaševski's (2001) test of acceptability is adequate recognition of children as rights-holders, in the context of transition this would include their participation rights (Article 12): in effect the ability to express, and have taken into account, their own school choice preferences. In addition to the absence of a formal mechanism to facilitate children's involvement in decision-making it is clear that the 'abstract' preferences of child survey participants in this study for schools of different religious character, academic selectivity and gender-profile reflect demand for a school place other than at the school-type currently attended (Figure 5). Abstract preferences are those choices indicated by children without consideration of potential constraints which may emerge in performing a 'real' choice between different specific schools. An example is the 27.6% of Year 8 Protestant school pupils who express an abstract preference for Integrated education. These disparities are evidenced despite overt policy priorities of promoting school choice (The Education (Northern Ireland) Order, 1997, Article 9) and Integrated education (The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order, 1989, Articles 64-93). For a significant proportion of children there is a mismatch between 'abstract' preference and 'real' choice, with the data confirming the suggestion of Gallagher and Hughes (NIA Committee for Education, 2014) and providing much needed evidence that structural barriers limit school choice for individual and groups of children. Structural barriers, in terms of 'the absence of opportunities and conditions for them to be realised' (Baker, et al., 2014, p. 539) are known to exert limits on children's educational aspirations. It is argued here that such barriers represent a challenge to the realisation of children's school choice aspirations and that such discriminatory denials of access are a children's rights concern when examined against the criteria set out by Tomaševski (2001).

'The extent to which education is designed to reflect or obliterate societal fault-lines is a political choice made by adults and imposed upon children. The rights of the child represent an indispensable corrective for such adult choices.' (Tomaševski, 2003b, p. 14)

The first UN Special Rapporteur believed that the most effective means of opposing violations and denials of rights was through their identification and exposure (Tomaševski, 2003b). The 4-As framework and accompanying scheme was developed as a means of making explicit governmental obligations under international law with regard to children's education rights (Tomaševski, 2001). As this paper illustrates, it provides a mechanism by which current provision

can be thoroughly examined in order that shortcomings be identified, exposed and thus opposed, failures in compliance include: inadequate availability of school places to match the diversity of the transition-age population; significant levels of socio-economic stratification within the system which demonstrate that school places are not accessible on a basis of equality; multiple failures to recognise children as rights-holders, one pertinent example being a neglect towards their participation rights (Article 12) at transition, place the acceptability of education in jeopardy; and finally, disconnect between abstract preferences and eventual placement suggests that rather than transition arrangements which are adaptable to the needs of every child it is children who must be adaptable.

Data availability statement

Research data are not shared.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Prof. Jannette Elwood and Prof. Laura Lundy for supervising the PhD research upon which this paper is based. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments.

Ethical approval

This research was carried out in accordance with guidelines published by BERA (2011) and the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (NI) (Connolly, 2003) concerning responsibilities to participants with regard to voluntary informed consent, privacy, and respect. Ethical approval was granted by the School of Education Ethics Committee in accordance with Queen's University Belfast's ethical guidelines (2014).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

Leanne Henderson received a doctoral scholarship to complete the research for this project from the Department of Education and Learning Northern Ireland.

References

- Allen, R., Bartley, J. & Nye, P. (2017, May 5). *The 11-plus is a loaded dice: Analysis of Kent 11-plus data*. Education datalab report. <http://educationdatalab.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/The-11-plus-is-a-loaded-dice-Report.pdf>
- Allen, R., Coldron, J. & West, A. (2012). The effect of changes in published secondary school admissions on pupil composition. *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(3), 349-366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2011.604137>
- Apple, M. (2006). Understanding and Interrupting Neoliberalism and Neoconservatism in Education. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 1(1), 21-26. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15544818ped0101_4
- Baker, W., Sammons, P., Siraj, I., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E. & Taggart, B. (2014). Aspirations, education and inequality in England: insights from the Effective Provision of Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education Project. *Oxford Review of Education*, 40(5), 525-542. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2014.953921>
- Ball, S., Bowe, R. & Gewirtz, S. (1996). School choice, social class and distinction: the realization of social advantage in education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 11(1), 89-112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093960110105>
- Burgess, S., Greaves, E. & Vignoles, A. (2017, October 25). *Understanding parental choices of secondary school in England using national administrative data (Discussion paper 17/689)*. Department of Economics, University of Bristol. http://www.bristol.ac.uk/efm/media/workingpapers/working_papers/pdf/files/dp17689.pdf
- Butler, T. & Hamnett, C. (2011). Location Education: place, choice, constraint in London. *Children's Geographies*, 9(1), 35-48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2011.540438>
- Connolly, P., Purvis, D. & O'Grady, P. (2013). *Advancing Shared Education*. Ministerial Advisory Group for the advancement of shared education in Northern Ireland, QUB. https://pureadmin.qub.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/14596498/Filetoupload_382123_en.pdf
- Cribb, J., Jesson, D., Sibiet, L., Skipp, A. & Vignoles, A. (2013, November 8). *Poor Grammar: Entry into Grammar Schools for disadvantaged pupils in England*. Sutton Trust. <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/poogrammarreport-2.pdf>
- Department of Education (NI) (2010). *TRANSFER 2010 - Guidance*. Retrieved March 2, 2015, from http://www.deni.gov.uk/final_transfer_2010_guidance_25_june_2009.pdf
- Department of Education (NI) (2013). *Post-Primary Transfer Policy*. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from http://www.deni.gov.uk/post-primary_transfer_policy_from_september_2013_english_pdf_1.76_mb.pdf
- Department of Education (NI) (2015, June 10). *School Enrolments: School Level Data 2013/14*. <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolments-school-level-data-201314>
- Doyle, S. (2015, March 24). Top schools enjoying greater religious mix. *The Irish News*. <http://www.irishnews.com/news/2015/03/24/news/top-schools-enjoying-greater-religious-mix-118975/>

- Education Authority (NI) (2016). *Admission to Post-Primary Education - Transfer 2017 - A Guide for Parents*. Retrieved July 24, 2017, from http://www.eani.org.uk/_resources/assets/attachment/full/0/36156.pdf
- Elwood, J. (2013). Educational assessment policy and practice: a matter of ethics. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 20(2), 205-220. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2013.765384>
- Francis, B., Mills, M. & Lupton, R. (2017). Towards social justice in education: contradictions and dilemmas. *Journal of Education Policy*, 32(4), 414-431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2016.1276218>
- Gallagher, T. (2006). The impact of devolution on education policy: two case studies. in: C. Donnelly, P. McKeown & P. Osborne, (Eds) *Devolution and pluralism in education in Northern Ireland*. University of Manchester.
- Gallagher, T. & Smith, A. (2000, September 1). *The Effects of the Selective System of Secondary Education in Northern Ireland*. Department of Education NI. <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/gallagher-and-smith-research-research-papers>
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2016.1184869>
- Gardner, J. & Cowan, P. (2005). The fallibility of high stakes "11-plus" testing in Northern Ireland. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 12(2), 145-166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09695940500143837>
- Gewirtz, S., Ball, S. & Bowe, R. (1995). *Markets, choice, and equity in education*. Open University Press.
- Glennerster, H. (1991). Quasi-markets for education. *The Economic Journal*, 101(408), 1268-1276. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2234442>
- Hanushek, E. & Woessmann, L. (2011). The Economics of International Differences in Educational Achievement. in: E. Hanushek, S. Machin & L. Woessmann, (Eds) *Handbooks in Economics: Economics of Education Vol. Three*. Elsevier.
- Harris, N. (2009). Playing catch-up in the schoolyard? Children and young people's 'voice' and education rights in the UK. *International Journal of Law, Policy and Family*, 23, 331-366. <https://doi.org/10.1093/lawfam/ebp007>
- Henderson, L., 2018. *Transition to secondary education: children's aspirations, assessment practices and admissions processes* (PhD Thesis). School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast. https://pure.qub.ac.uk/files/161393474/Thesis_2018_Leanne_Henderson.pdf
- Holloway, S. & Pimlott-Wilson, H. (2011). The politics of aspiration: neo-liberal education policy, 'low' parental aspirations, and primary school Extended Services in disadvantaged communities. *Children's Geographies*, 9(1), 79-94. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2011.540441>
- Hughes, J. (2011). Are separate schools divisive? A case-study from Northern Ireland. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(5), 829-850. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.506943>

- 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*, March, 45(3), 425-457. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/berj.3502>
- Kosunen, S. (2016). *Families and the social space of school choice in urban Finland* (PhD Thesis). Institute of Behavioural Sciences, University of Helsinki. <https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/158936/families.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Leitch, R., Hughes, J., Burns, S., Cownie, E., McManus, C., Ievers, M. & Shuttleworth, I. (2017, September 5). *Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation (the ILiAD study) - Final Report Vol. Three*. Queen's University Centre for Shared Education. <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/iliad-report-sept-17.pdf>
- Lingard, B. (2014). *Politics, Policies and Pedagogies in Education: The selected works of Bob Lingard*. Routledge.
- Loader, R. & Hughes, J. (2017). Balancing Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion in Education: The Potential of Shared Education in Divided Contexts. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 65(1), 3-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2016.1254156>
- Lubienski, C. (2006). School Diversification in Second-Best Education Markets. *Educational Policy*, 20(2), 323-344. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0895904805284049>
- Lundy, L. (2012). Children's rights and educational policy in Europe: the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(4), 393-411. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.704874>
- Lundy, L., Emerson, L., Lloyd, K., Byrne, B. & Yohanis, J. (2012). *Education Reform in Northern Ireland: A Human Rights Review*. Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. https://pureadmin.qub.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/33277781/education_reform.pdf
- McKeown, P. (2006). Perpetuating inequality through the education market in Northern Ireland. In: C. Donnelly, P. McKeown & B. Osborne, eds. *Devolution and pluralism in education in Northern Ireland* (pp. 92-106). Manchester University Press.
- Musset, P. (2012, January 31). *School Choice and Equity: Current Policies in OECD Countries and a Literature Review - OECD Education Working Papers, No. 66*. OECD Publishing. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k9fq23507vc-en>
- Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (2010, September). *Talking Transfer*. <https://www.niccy.org/media/2581/niccy-transfer-report-part-1-sept-10.pdf>
- Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (2018, September 14). *Submission to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Inquiry into Education Funding in Northern Ireland*. <https://www.niccy.org/media/3116/niccy-submission-ni-affairs-committee-inquiry-into-education-spending-september-14-sept-18.pdf>

Nolan, P. (2014, March). *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report (Number Three)*. Community Relations Council. <https://www.community-relations.org.uk/sites/crc/files/media-files/Peace-Monitoring-Report-2014.pdf>

Northern Ireland Audit Office (2015, June 30). *Department of Education: Sustainability of schools (Report by the Comptroller and Auditor)*.
http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/135119_niao_sustnblty_in_schls_for_web_v6.pdf

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (2008, December 10). *A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland: Advice to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission).
<https://www.nihrc.org/uploads/publications/bill-of-rights-for-northern-ireland-advice-to-secretary-state-2008.pdf>

OECD (2012). *Equity and quality in education: supporting disadvantaged students and schools*. OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264130852-en>

OECD (2016, December 6). *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*. OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>

Perry, C. (2016a). *Academic selection: a brief overview - Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service Briefing Note (NIAR 300-16)*. Northern Ireland Assembly.
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2016-2021/2016/education/4816.pdf>

Perry, C. (2016b). *Programme for Government: Education - Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service Briefing Note (NIAR 209-16)*. Northern Ireland Assembly.
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2016-2021/2016/education/4516.pdf>

Reay, D. & Lucey, H., 2003. The Limits of 'Choice': Children and Inner City Schooling. *Sociology*, 37(1), 121-142. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0038038503037001389>

Russell, R., 2014. *Census 2011: Key Statistics at LGD 2014 Level - Research and Information Service Research Paper (NIAR 296-14)*. Northern Ireland Assembly.
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/general/6014.pdf>

Shewbridge, C., Hulshof, M., Nusche, D. & Stenius Staehr, L. (2014). *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Northern Ireland, United Kingdom*. OECD Publishing.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264207707-en>

The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (1997, March 19).
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1997/866/contents>

The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 (2006, July 19).
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2006/1915/contents/made>

The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (1989, December 19).
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1989/2406/contents>

Tomaševski, K. (2001). *Human rights obligations: making education available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable (Right to Education Primers: Number Three)*. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/Tomasevski_Primer%203.pdf

- Tomaševski, K. (2003a). *The right to education: Mission to the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)* (UN Doc. E/CN.4/2003/9/Add.2). United Nations Economic and Social Council. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/488900/files/E_CN-4_2003_9_Add-2-EN.pdf
- Tomaševski, K. (2003b). *The right to education: Report of the Special Rapporteur* (UN Doc. E/CN.4/2003/9). United Nations Economic and Social Council. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/487675/files/E_CN-4_2003_9-EN.pdf
- UNESCO (2017). *Global Education Monitoring Report: Accountability in education: meeting our commitments*. UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259338>
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2002). *Concluding observations: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* (UN Doc. CRC/C/15/Add.188). United Nations. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/481009/files/CRC_C_15_Add.188-EN.pdf
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2008). *Concluding Observations: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* (UN Doc. CRC/C/GBR/CO/4). United Nations. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/639907/files/CRC_C_GBR_CO_4-EN.pdf
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016). *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* (UN Doc. CRC/C/GBR/CO/5). United Nations. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/835015/files/CRC_C_GBR_CO_5-EN.pdf
- United Nations (1989). United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>
- West, A. & Currie, P. (2008). School diversity and social justice: policy and politics. *Educational Studies*, 34(3), 241-250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055690701811362>
- West, A. & Hind, A. (2016, May). Secondary school admissions in London 2001-2015: compliance, complexity and control. *Clare Market Papers*, 20, 1-26. London School of Economics and Political Science, Department of Social Policy. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/66368/>
- Wilson, R. (2016, September). *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report (Number Four)*. Community Relations Council. <https://www.community-relations.org.uk/sites/crc/files/media-files/NIPMR-Final-2016.pdf>