

## SCALE OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS AUTHORITY

### Introduction

1. The '*Final Decisions of RPA*' document,<sup>1</sup> published in March 2006, stated that an Education and Skills Authority (ESA) would be established to support the operational delivery of Education across Northern Ireland and across all sectors of Education. In relation to the ESA the statement added that:
  - It will have responsibility for the functions performed currently by the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, and the Regional Training Unit.
  - It will also have responsibility for the front-line support and related functions currently undertaken by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.
  - It will be the employing authority for all teaching and other support staff employed in grant-aided schools, and this will result in greater coherence and consistency in how things are done.
  - Some of the operational functions currently performed by the Department of Education will also transfer to the new Authority. The ownership of the controlled schools estate, currently with the ELBs, will transfer to the new Authority.
  - A Director of Children's Services will be appointed to co-ordinate the Authority's responsibilities for children.
  - The Authority will play a key role in taking forward the curriculum for 14- to 19- year-olds.
2. The recently published draft Programme for Government<sup>2</sup> has underscored the Executive's commitment to the creation of the ESA. A specific objective under the key priority "Deliver High Quality and Efficient Public Services" is to have it established by 2009.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Better Government for Northern Ireland - Final Decisions of the Review of Public Administration (March 2006) [http://www.rpani.gov.uk/pdf\\_rpa\\_21\\_march\\_doc.pdf](http://www.rpani.gov.uk/pdf_rpa_21_march_doc.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pfgbudgetni.gov.uk/pfg241007new.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Website <http://www.esani.org.uk/>

3. This briefing note is designed to provide information against which to benchmark the potential scale of the ESA. Strict comparisons of the size of education authorities within the UK and more widely are not possible for a number of reasons. These include the differing functions undertaken by authorities and the differing levels of education which they administer (e.g. nursery or higher education). For the purposes of enabling a broad comparison, a focus on the size of the school sector which falls within the authorities' remit is possible. This comparison will may produce different results however, depending on whether one considers school budgets; number of teaching staff; number of schools; number of pupils; or number of support staff (or any combination of these factors). As data is most readily available on number of schools falling within an authority's remit, this has been used as a basis upon which to make broad comparisons.
4. Comparison based on the number of schools falling within the remit of an authority indicates that under current proposals the ESA will become the largest education authority in the United Kingdom. It appears, however, that it will not be the largest education authority in Europe. At least in respect of some functions, France (a highly centralised state) and Catalonia (a 'region within Spain's devolved government system) appear to have larger authorities. In each of these two cases, however, geographic divisions exist within authorities in relation to a number of functions.

### **Northern Ireland**

5. The Northern Ireland School Census 2005/06 reports that in Northern Ireland there are just over 1,300 schools (100 nursery schools, 900 primary schools, 17 preparatory departments of grammar schools, 230 post-primary schools, 45 special schools, 19 independent schools and 3 hospital schools).<sup>4</sup> These schools cater for around 330,000 pupils<sup>5</sup> with just over 19,000 full-time equivalent teaching posts.<sup>6</sup>

### **England and Scotland**

6. In UK terms, the ESA, which will potentially have approximately 1,300 schools within its remit, will become the largest education authority. Administration of education in England and Scotland is a local government function. In England, Kent is the largest education authority with just over 700 schools<sup>7</sup> and 232,000 pupils.<sup>8</sup> In Scotland, Glasgow is the largest authority with just over 350 schools and just over 74,000 pupils.<sup>9</sup> Scotland no longer has a regional tier of local

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<sup>4</sup> Northern Ireland School Census 2005/06  
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/Source.asp?vlnk=1028&More=Y>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/enrolment\\_time\\_series-10.xls](http://www.deni.gov.uk/enrolment_time_series-10.xls)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/fte\\_teachers\\_by\\_board\\_and\\_mantype-5.xls](http://www.deni.gov.uk/fte_teachers_by_board_and_mantype-5.xls)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000682/SFR38-2006web1.xls>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000682/SFR38-2006web1.xls>

<sup>9</sup> 108 nursery schools (6,680); 170 primary schools (37,831); 30 secondary schools (27,876); 46 special schools (1,685)

School and Pupil Numbers by Sector and Local Authority, 2007  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/02/25145216/69>

government with responsibility for education. The 12 Regional and Island Authorities (one of which was Strathclyde), which were responsible for education in Scotland until 1 April 1996, handed over their responsibilities to 32 local (district) authorities following a reorganisation of local government.

7. In terms of the number of school establishments within its remit, the scale of ESA would be largely comparable with the area covered by the North East Government Office Region. In England, there are nine Government Offices for the Regions each headed by a regional director. They aim to ensure the effective delivery of government programmes regionally and locally, working with regional partners, including local authorities regional development agencies and other organisations to achieve the Government's aims. They have only a limited role, however, in delivering some government plans and programmes within the field of education and skills. The Government Office for the North East covers 12 local authorities (including Newcastle Upon Tyne and Sunderland) which in total have responsibility for 1,300 schools (Nursery 40 - Primary 930 - Secondary 206 - Other 124) and 414,000 pupils.<sup>10</sup>

## **France**

8. France has historically been a highly centralised state and one would, therefore, expect to see administration of the education system on a relatively large scale. To some extent this is true. The Ministry for Education recruits, trains, and manages the teaching staff in public education, which admits more than 80% of pupils. Clearly, therefore, the Ministry will employ more teachers than the ESA might employ. Furthermore, the Ministry for Education functions (including what are described as 'numerous management tasks')<sup>11</sup> would also relate to a larger number of schools than those that might be administered by ESA. In this context, however, it is worth noting that in order to implement policy and accomplish its numerous management tasks:

...the ministry has 'external' administrative departments known as *académies*. France is thus divided into 30 such *académies* each headed by a rector acting directly on behalf of the minister. An *académie* is the administrative level enabling the regional application of education policies as defined by the government. It allows action to be taken according to local contexts in collaboration with regional groups: *communes* for primary education, *départements* for *collèges* and *régions* for *lycées*. Within the overall system established at national level, schools are to some extent independent as regards their administrative and teaching activity and, at secondary level (in *collèges* and *lycées*), their financial affairs too. In practice, this relative independence is expressed in a plan for each school,

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Number of local authority and partnership pre-school education providers by type of centre and local authority, January 2007

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/26094517/26>

Number of children registered for local authority and partnership pre-school education by pre-school centre type and local authority, excluding children under 3 years old, January 2007

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/26094517/28>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000682/SFR38-2006web1.xls>

<sup>11</sup> Eurydice (2007) National Summary Sheet on Education Systems in Europe and Ongoing Reforms - France

known as a *projet d'école* and *projet d'établissement* at primary and secondary levels respectively.<sup>12</sup>

9. By way of example of scale, the *Académie de Paris* contains a total of 842 of schools within its geographical limits.
- Nursery (Maternelles) 322
  - Primary (Elementaires) 337
  - Colleges (First 4 years of Secondary Education) 110
  - Lycees (Next 3 years of Secondary Education) 73<sup>13</sup>

### **Spain – Catalonia**<sup>14</sup>

10. Spain provides an example of a state which, like the United Kingdom, has devolved power to 'regional' levels. The Spanish Constitution provides for the creation of 17 'Autonomous Communities' which have wide legislative and executive autonomy, with their own parliaments and regional governments. The distribution of powers, as laid out in an "autonomy statute" (estatuto de autonomía), is different for every autonomous community.
11. At state level, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) is the State body that has the power to, amongst other things, set the basic standards underpinning the constitutional right to education through the general organisation of the education system. The government of each Autonomous Community, however, has '...administrative authority over the establishments in its region and the functions deriving from it and is empowered to create, authorise and administer public and private educational establishments and to administer the personnel, construction, infrastructure and reform of such establishments'. As regards 'local' authorities, legislation does not grant them Education Authority status, but rather recognises their capacity to cooperate with the State and the Autonomous Communities in the field of education. There is no common body in all Town Councils in charge of such tasks but they generally assume powers related to the following:
- granting land for the building of public establishments,
  - the payment of expenses for the maintenance, repair,
  - monitoring and upkeep of pre-primary and primary education establishments, the monitoring of compulsory education and educational services; and the provision of complementary services and activities.
12. Catalonia with a population of approximately 7 million people is the second largest Autonomous Community in Spain and it is governed by the *Generalitat*. The Departament d'Educació (Department of Education) is responsible for the proposal and execution of education and learning policy below university level. In regards to a number of functions, including employing authority for teachers, the number of schools within its remit is greater than the number which will fall within the remit of the ESA. Details of the number and type of schools in Catalonia are set out in the table below.

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/047DN/047\\_FR\\_EN.pdf](http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/047DN/047_FR_EN.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.ac-paris.fr/article.php3?id\\_article=99](http://www.ac-paris.fr/article.php3?id_article=99)

<sup>14</sup> Eurydice (2003)

<http://www.eurydice.org/portal/page/portal/Eurydice/ByCountryResults?countryCode=ES>

Schools	Total	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Child Primary Secondary	Special Education
Public	2,809	592	1,624	529	2	<b>62</b>
Private	1,360	571	127	119	476	<b>67</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,169</b>	<b>1,163</b>	<b>1,751</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>129</b>

Source: Departament d'Educació. Servei d'Estadística, Informació i Documentació. Estadística de l'Educació.<sup>15</sup>

13. Within the *Departament d'Educació* there are, however, eight units which relate to specific geographic areas and which carry out the following functions: schools and pupils; information; teaching Staff; buildings and works; training; inspection; and health and safety.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.gencat.net/educacio/centres/centres.htm>