Education Policy in Ireland Since 1922

Edited by
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palgrave
macmillan

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For my father Louis Walsh 1939–2014

Abstract

Irish Education Policy: 1922 to the Present covers a range of themes in relation to educational policy at primary, secondary and university level in Ireland from the foundation of the State to the present. Primarily, an attempt to set policy within a historical context, the book offers essays on the evolution of key changes in topics as diverse as the use of corporal punishment, the evolution of skills policy in post-primary settings and the development of the universities in the post-1922 period. The book includes detailed analysis of more recent policy initiatives and changes in, for example, initial teacher education, curriculum change, and special and inclusive education and will be of interest to those working in the various fields, students and the general public. The collection presents detailed discussions of change in the Irish education system demonstrating how policy initiatives, particularly since the early 1990s, have brought about significant transformation at all levels. The collection also demonstrates that the origin of change often lay in earlier developments, particularly those of the mid-1960s. Policy development is closely linked to external factors and influences and chapters on academic selection and teachers' recollections of policy, for example, set developments within the wider historical context employing the views and recollections of teachers so that the influence of change on day-to-day practice is revealed.

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Notes on Contributors

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Marie Clarke served as Head of School of Education at University College Dublin from 2007 to 2011. In 2015 she was appointed Dean of Arts and is currently Dean of Undergraduate Studies. She lectures in the School of Education and is Director of the UCD Centre for the Study of Higher Education. She is a lead Investigator on a number of funded research projects in the areas of higher education, teacher education and development education. She is the UCD representative and Chair of the Worldwide Universities Network, Global and Higher Education Research Steering Group (GHEAR).

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Jim Gleeson is Adjunct Professor at the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education, Dublin City University. Having worked as a post-primary teacher in Dublin and his native Tipperary, Jim Gleeson spent much of his professional life as a teacher educator and researcher at University of Limerick (1981–2011) where he filled a variety of roles including Department Head. He was the inaugural Professor of Identity and Curriculum in Catholic Education at Australian Catholic University (ACU), Brisbane from 2012–2018. His recent book, *Faith-based Identity and Curriculum in Catholic Schools* (eds. Jim Gleeson and Peta Coldbury) was published by Routledge in 2020.

Akira Iwashita is an Associate Professor at the Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo, Japan. His doctoral research focused on popular education and conservatism in early nineteenth-century England. His studies are concerned with the comparative history of popular education, focusing on state intervention in popular education in modern Ireland. Recent publications include Politics, state and Church: forming the National Society 1805–c.1818,' *History of Education* 47(1) (2018), and several articles in *Research Bulletin of the Japan Society for Historical Studies of Education*.

David Limond lectures in history of education at Trinity College Dublin and has previously held posts in universities and colleges in the UK. His research interests are primarily concerned with progressive edu-cation in the UK in the 1960s and 1970s and the past and future of universities. He was previously reviews editor of *History of Education Researcher*.

Anthony Malone has lead significant curriculum design, reform and implementation at third level and served as Course Leader for the Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership, the Professional Diploma in Education, the Masters in Education and the Masters in

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Antonia McManus is formerly of the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin where she completed her PhD and taught the history of education for two decades. She was director of the pioneering primary education teacher training programme in Hibernia College, Dublin. She is author of *The Irish Hedge School and Its Reading Books, 1695–1831*, and of *Irish Education: The Ministerial Legacy, 1919–1999*. Her latest book on Dr Thomas J. O'Connell (1882–1969) General Secretary of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, Irish Labour Party Leader, Senator and author is due for publication, Easter 2022.

Gerry McNamara is Professor of Educational Evaluation in the School of Policy and Practice, DCU Institute of Education, and Co-director of the Centre for Evaluation, Quality & Inspection (EQI). From 1997 to 2007, he was Head of the School of Education Studies, Dublin City University. He was course director of the Doctorate in Education, a taught doctoral programme in the field of educational leadership and evaluation.

Matthew Milliken grew up in Northern Ireland (NI) as the son of a police officer at the height of the troubles. Whilst still at school he began working with young people in cross-community reconciliation projects in Belfast. Milliken studied BA (Hons) in Youth and Community Work in Jordanstown (1981–1985) before relocating to Berlin where he worked in a range of social projects and gained German state accreditation as a *Sozialpaedagog* (social educator). Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, he returned to Ireland and took up a youth work post. Over subsequent years he delivered community relations projects and training programmes, developed a multi-agency Youth Strategy and managed a number of international exchange programmes in contested and conflict-affected regions. He was instrumental in the drafting and implementation of the NI Department of Education's Community Relations Equality and Diversity policy. Milliken's youth work received many awards and was

widely profiled in the media and peer-reviewed journals. He completed an MSc in 1999 and a PhD in 2018. He is a researcher in the UNESCO Centre at Ulster University. His research interests lie in the manner in which education policies and sectoral practices serve to maintain the enduring community divide in NI.

Shivaun O'Brien is a Director of School Placement for the B.Sc. in Science Education, B.Sc. in PE with Biology, B.Sc. in PE with Mathematics and the Professional Master of Education. She is a senior researcher in the Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection (EQI) and has expertise in the areas of quality assurance, school self-evaluation and school improvement. In 2015 she established the Dublin City University Partnership for Learning Programme, which involves the coordination and provision of a wide range of certified and evidence-based, CPD opportunities for teachers in Dublin City University Cooperating Schools.

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Brendan Walsh is Associate Professor of Education at the School of Policy and Practice, Dublin City University. His primary research interests are the history of education, policy and initial teacher education. He is the author/editor of a number of books including *Essays in the History of Education* (Palgrave, 2016), *Knowing Their Place? the intellectual life of women in nine-teenth-century Ireland* (History Press, 2014), *Boy Republic: Patrick Pearse and Radical Education* (History Press. 2013) and *Degrees of Nonsense: the demise of the university in Ireland* (Glasnevin Publications, 2012).

Thomas Walsh is a lecturer and Deputy Head of Department in the Department of Education, Maynooth University. Tom joined the Department in 2014 having previously worked as a primary school teacher, an education researcher and a primary school inspector at the Department of Education and Skills. His book, *Primary Education in Ireland 1897–1990: Curriculum and Context*, was published by Peter Lang International Academic Publishers in 2012.

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Introduction

Brendan Walsh

This collection of essays on policy initiatives in Irish education since 1922 serves to present change, as far as possible, within its historical context. This is not, necessarily, in terms of wider socio-economic change, although, of course, where this is relevant it is included, but rather in terms of education policy where it existed. The reservation 'where it existed' is an important one because, as the attentive reader will realise, some policy initiatives, for example in the field of initial teacher education (ITE), appear to have little ancestry and to gradually emerge in the early 1990s. What is interesting, where a longer ancestry of policy change is, or appears to be, absent, is the extent to which the practice or feature concerned suffered by neglect, such as that highlighted by John Walsh in his chapter on university and college education. Such a consideration would form the basis of another volume perhaps but it is tempting to reflect on the extent to which, initial teacher education, to take one example, suffered—that is to say children learned less well—or

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'effectively' to employ the current jargon—due to an absence of fairly incessant policy review, initiative and change of the sort that has characterised ITE since the mid-1990s.

Not all the contributors to this volume are historians and few are engaged, primarily, in education policy research. Hence, the collection does not offer itself as a standard policy narrative or analysis along the lines, let us say, of Séamas Ó Buachalla's *Educational Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin 1988) or Denis O'Sullivan's *Cultural politics and Irish education since the 1950s: policy paradigms and power* (Dublin 2005) and I would suggest to those seeking a thorough narrative overview or an analytic and theoretically framed interrogation to seek out these excellent works. My task has been a humbler one in that, rather than attempt a comprehensive narrative of education policy since independence, I opted to concentrate on a number of areas that, frankly, I found personally interesting, are of interest to students and some of which were often absent in general narrative accounts. I had initially hoped to include a number of other topics including Sport, Information Technology, 'new' programmes such as Social Personal and Health Education and the increasingly diverse school-going cohort and what, if any, policy initiatives were required in terms of the quite rapidly changing makeup of schools in terms, for example, of pupils' background, religion, and heritage. It will come as no surprise that the advent and subsequent impact of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that many who wished to contribute to this volume found that they could not. I wish to record my gratitude to them for their initial offers and valiant struggle even if, finally, it had to be abandoned in the face of very much more pressing matters. The collection deals with primary, post-primary and third-level education. It may be faulted, amongst other things, for its over-emphasis upon post-primary education. This was not my intention and the fault, if it exists, belongs to the disarray wreaked on colleagues' lives during the recent lockdowns.

Thomas Walsh's chapter provides an overview of curricular developments at primary level and captures the rich and innovative change that has occurred in primary schools, particularly since the late 1970s. The embrace of child-centeredness by the primary school teaching community, in particular, is noteworthy. Readers unfamiliar with Irish education

may be surprised that our conversion came so late, especially given the prevalence of more progressive forms of schooling, in aspiration if not always in practice, in other parts of Europe in the twentieth-century. The practical challenges facing primary schoolchildren and their teachers in the immediate decades after independence are detailed in Antonia McManus' chapter on T.J. O'Connell, each chapter, it is hoped, providing further context for the other.

Jim Gleeson's chapter on curricular reform presents an analytic overview of curricular change including the contrasting directions taken at primary and post-primary levels, the latter finding itself rudderless in the 1980s and increasingly at the mercy of ideologies or theories such as utilitarian economic dogmatism, curriculum as cultural inheritance or a form of social change or activism. Gleeson reveals the increasingly 'open' field that post-primary curriculum thought became from the 1980s, particularly given the climate of very high youth unemployment, the evolving understandings in Europe of education as inextricably linked to the economic growth of individual states and the collective community and the increasing influence of performativity and competition. Curriculum studies, it may be ventured, when undertaken well, are essentially exercises in the analysis of competing philosophies, not just of education but of how it is that we should live well (presumably the proper end of all education). It is the competing tensions underlying the varying views and their articulation over recent decades that informs Gleeson's chapter.

Returning to the primary community, Akira Iwashita's chapter deals with the role of religion in Irish schooling. The theme is always contentious and debates about definitions of 'control' and 'influence' and the place of religious instruction in an all-inclusive democracy are constants. Iwashita assembles a history of the place of religious instruction and places it in the context of campaigns that sought, and seek, to exclude either instruction or religious ethos in schools. Some of the same landscape is traversed by Sandra Cullen in her chapter on religious education and instruction in post-primary schools. Iwashita's reflections on the meaning and implications of liberalism, secularism and pluralism are pertinent and thought provoking—and, again, essentially philosophical in nature. As mentioned, Cullen deals with similar themes in her chapter on post-primary Religious Education from 1998 to 2020. Cullen

investigates the differences between instruction and education, the State's understanding of instruction prior to the Education Act of 1998, how the Act delineated terms and the emergence of Religion as a subject for examination and evolving understandings of the benefits of the study of religion(s). Particularly striking is Cullen's discussion concerning the troublesome conflation of the terms 'religious education' and 'religious instruction' and how this has had the effect of 'hinder(ing) progress in developing a philosophical rationale for religious education in the public space' while the 1998 Act marked 'the beginning of a divergence in policy between the State and the churches, exemplified in the various ways that the terms religious education and religious instruction have been used'. One suspects, reflecting upon Cullen's essay, that the 'uses' of religion in schools may become a matter of heightened debate between the State, commentators and religious patrons as each refine and seek acceptance of their position as representing equal claim in democratic discourse.

Turning to professional development, Anthony Malone's chapter charts the rise of in-career development for post-primary teachers. Malone cites the baleful influence of the terminal examinations of the Intermediate Education System as restricting both the practice of teachers and wider understandings of the teaching endeavour—features repeatedly lamented by the Intermediate Inspectorate throughout the lifetime of that system. It should be noted, in passing, that the inspectors repeatedly pressed for the provision of formal training for secondary teachers. Malone's detailed analysis of the development of in-career support describes how concerned parties advocated for in-career development from the early 1970s, a time of seismic change in the Irish education system following the introduction of free education in the mid-60s. The momentum for reform was lost during a series of economic recessions between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s but resurfaced in the early 1990s leading to specific policy aspirations. The theme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) emerged as a constant in education discourse in the following two decades and discussions about how to embed it within the teaching career, in particular the suggestion of linking engagement in CPD with renewal of teacher registration led to the more collaborative and consultative model being adopted. The journey charted by Malone reflects the changing understandings of the challenges

of teaching and demonstrates that initial teacher education, of whatever duration or merit, must be accompanied by sustained, resourced and targeted in-career support.

Shivaun O'Brien's chapter is also concerned with policies that concern the 'quality' of teaching and learning in schools. Largely influenced by developments abroad the concepts of school effectiveness and improvement have, over the last two decades, entered mainstream evaluation discourse. The gradual introduction of the vernacular of 'effectiveness' and measurement is inextricably linked with the application of these in the wider social and economic sphere. They are related to transparency, value for money and accountability in terms of public expenditure. School self-evaluation, in Ireland, has its origin in the advent of school development planning—an initiative, again, belonging to the 1990s. But, as O'Brien demonstrates, and not unlike the debates surrounding in-career professional development described by Malone, the emphasis has shifted in the last fifteen years or so causing the more nuanced approach of school self-evaluation (SSE) to emerge. A type of institutional reflective practice, SSE encourages schools to conduct a form of internal audit as a way of enhancing not only teaching practice but also wider school improvement. Advocates believe SSE to be empowering for teachers and their schools while enriching formal evaluation methods. The appearance of SSE throws up interesting questions. One is tempted to believe that, historically, schools used the results of terminal examinations as a yardstick of success but, as my own chapter suggests, schools were industrious and focused places long before the introduction of "points". Indeed, as O'Brien points out, old practices and methods are not infrequently rebranded as 'new bows' but a process of self-evaluation that leads to better learning for pupils, especially one that is supported rather than demanded, is surely a welcome development in any education system.

The role of vocational education in rural Ireland, the theme of Marie Clarke's chapter, provides a welcome exploration of a neglected topic in Irish education studies. Set within the context of Ireland's precarious economic climate in the 1940s and 50s, Clarke traces the evolution of this new, state, system of education highlighting the complexity of its initial evolution and intention to provide for local communities. The role that the new system was to place in 'socialising the nation state' is unpacked

by Clarke and, in a sense, returns us to those undercurrents in Gleeson's chapter, as we are reminded of broader questions concerning who and what schools are for and who gets to decide. Clarke's chapter reveals how, in a sense, the state's initial understanding of the purposes of vocational education were somewhat vague becoming clearer in the course of the 1940s and 50s. But the system faced innumerable challenges. Traditionally, the very children living in the rural areas it was designed to serve usually left school at aged 12 or thereabouts (a theme taken up by Mc Manus in her chapter on T.J. O'Connell) and, throughout, vocational schools were considered less prestigious than their secondary counterparts. But the extent of their reach and work in providing practical, work-orientated, training was crucial at a time of economic stagnation as was the commitment to adult education, themes Clarke explores in detail.

O'Sullivan and Rami traverse related ground identifying the key milestones in the evolution of skills policy in Ireland, with an emphasis on intermediate skills and Further Education and Training (FET) which began to emerge more formally in the years following the establishment of the Vocational Education System. Like that system, the development of FET faced competition from the standard, mainstream system and, until recently, lay on the periphery of the Department of Education's priorities. The neglect has left a capacity deficiency within the FET sector and its provision remains negligible within Irish higher education. Nonetheless, significant advances have taken place over the last decade and the launch of the second FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2020), primarily focused on the local with the centrality of the 'FET College of the Future' concept, should see the "evolution of FET facilities and provision into a distinct integrated college of FET that can serve as a beacon of community-based learning excellence" (SOLAS, 2020: 38).

In treating of inclusive education Geraldine Scanlon reviews a theme which has gained considerable traction not only in education but in wider social justice discourse recently. Setting Special Education within the emerging framework of human rights, Scanlon traces the evolution of understandings of Special Education and its provision in Ireland before turning to a consideration of the subject as increasingly embedded within global human rights legislation. As so often in the evolution of policy considered in this volume, Scanlon notes that, in Ireland, formal policies

relating to providing services to people with disability did not begin to emerge until the 1980s while, in 1996, the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities *A Strategy for Equality* report noted that "public attitudes towards people with disabilities are still based on charity rather than on rights" (p. 5) adding that "a failure to provide comprehensive education for people with disabilities results in their being denied access to employment and training opportunities comparable to those available to people without disabilities" (p. 6). The early 2000s witnessed a number of key policy documents concerning a wider range of disabilities but, Scanlon notes, "uncertainty, indecision and lack of consensus has resulted in a continual back and forth between the philosophies of segregation, integration and inclusion…". Despite progress, under the heading 'Constitutional Right to Education for Children with Special Educational Needs' the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) awarded the government a "D" grade in 2021. Genuine progress, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities requires, Scanlon concludes: appropriate budgetary provision; the development of infrastructure needed to facilitate inclusion of students with SEND and the provision of continuous personal development in the area of inclusion for teachers.

A topic that touches closely upon the rights of the child is unpacked in David Limond's chapter concerning corporal punishment in Irish schools. It seems, at this distance, quite remarkable that such practices as caning and slapping were part of everyday life certainly until the late 1970s. So often we are repelled by a practice common in former times but are equally struck by the indifference of the society in which it took place and Limond's chapter captures both the relaxed attitude of society toward corporal punishment which was accepted as inevitable and supposedly moderate. Limond traces the evolution of the debate highlighting the contribution of Owen Sheehy Skeffington, Noël Browne, the School-Children's Protection Organisation (whose 1955 *Punishment in Our Schools* is a salient reminder of everyday punishments) and its successor Reform. Limond's chapter is a reminder that we never reach the end of history. Practices considered necessary and formative by one generation are correctly abhorred by the next. G.K. White recorded, in his memoir of teaching (*The Last Word*, Dublin 1977), that a colleague mentioned in

passing how he managed an uncooperative pupil: "I just give him a punch in the belly when I meet him" (p. 94). The conversation occurred in the 1940s but when White published *The Last Word* in 1977, five years before corporal punishment was banned in schools, he mused "punishment is a matter which exercises the minds of people outside schools rather more than those of the pupils and teachers" (p. 127). Limond's examination demonstrates that such views, by the mid-1970s, were a minority and underestimated the indignation caused by corporal punishment.

The chapter on academic selection in Northern Ireland by Brown et al. demonstrates the divergent paths taken after independence. Northern Ireland's commitment to the 11+ and academic selection is a distinctive feature of schooling there and Brown et al. discuss the impact of a high-stake terminal examination on those of primary school age and note that commentators have repeatedly highlighted the 11+ as, in Murray's words "presenting a challenge to the provision of an effective education". The examination has been criticised by several bodies including the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the grounds of exclusion. The examination, Brown et al. argue, limits, in particular, the opportunities of socially and economically disadvantaged children.

Paul van Kampen's chapter on Science in Irish schools, like Cullen's, deals with a specific discipline. Certainly, prior to the advent of the Intermediate System, some schools, such as St Kieran's, Kilkenny and Clongowes Wood, Kildare, provided science lessons but the curriculum generally, and certainly after 1878, reflected the values of classical humanism. The new Intermediate Board allocated 500 marks to Science subjects [200 to botany and zoology] whereas, Greek, Latin and English were awarded 1000 marks. Hence, the development of Science in schools and therefore more generally was significantly handicapped from the outset. Science education, as van Kampen, notes "suffered from a late start" and its fortunes have waxed and waned over the last two centuries. In particular, van Kampen highlights the tension that exists between teacher-led and more holistic and inductive approaches toward developing scientific literacy. It is, perhaps, a tension that those engaged in teaching any discipline will recognise.

Antonia McManus' chapter on the life and work of T.J. O'Connell (1882–1969) is a reminder of the dearth of such biographical studies in

Irish education studies and McManus' *Irish Education: The Ministerial Legacy, 1919–1999* (Dublin, 2014) was a welcome contribution to the field. O'Connell's many achievements are detailed by McManus but may be said to rest upon two convictions—the centrality of the child in education and the professional dignity of the teacher. O'Connell's foresight is remarkable. He agitated for better school conditions to protect children's health; to prevent their use as casual labour and supported teachers who found the Irish teaching demands of the National Programme of Primary Instruction—a programme O'Connell was closely associated with—too difficult to meet. A progressive who believed in education as an inherently worthwhile endeavour he proposed a school-based assessment scheme for primary schools in 1943. He proposed that the Department of Education publish a journal of education research which finally appeared (*Oideas*) in 1968, a year before O'Connell's death. McManus' forthcoming biography of T.J. O'Connell will be a most welcome addition to the history of Irish education and politics.

The role of university and college education is considered by John Walsh who details the emergence of higher education in the decades following independence when the universities, in particular, were insular and disconnected from public and economic life. The preserve of those who could pay, they were somewhat removed from wider educational policy as they did not come within the remit of the Department of Education and operated as independent, self-governing, institutions. Funding lay with the Department of Finance and Walsh details the often torturous discussions between university presidents and department officials. The peripheral position of the universities in the two decades after independence reflects, according to Walsh, "the narrow conceptualisation of higher education prevalent among the political and official elite" further undermined by Ireland's economic weakness. Walsh's narrative concludes in the mid-1940s but his dissection of the first twenty years of third-level provision after independence reveal a lamentable cross-current of underfunding, indifference and limited appreciation of the potential cultural and economic contribution of higher education.

The final chapter in this collection employs the recollections of a number of retired teachers in an attempt to draw out to what extent, if any, policy initiatives impacted upon their working lives. As we suggest in the

chapter, it appears that, largely, the teachers interviewed remained unfamiliar with wider policy discourse, especially that of the 1990s. However, they vividly recalled the impact of key events such as the introduction of free education and campaigns for improved remuneration and security of tenure. They had little familiarity with, for example, the Green and White papers of the mid-1990s although those in management recalled the advent of the Education Act (1998). Change, emanating from policy initiatives, was incremental and almost imperceptible. On reflection, they identified key events such as the disappearance of corporal punishment, the introduction of points and posts of responsibility and changes in curricula. These impacted directly on their working lives but usually in a gradual manner as if policy was 'done' elsewhere before seeping into schools. Other 'outside' changes, such as those concerning initial teacher education were not apparent but, collectively, the interviewees welcomed a more engaged, less formal and pupil-focused cohort of younger teachers emerging from university and college. While this cohort of retired teachers cannot reflect the teaching body as a whole it is, nonetheless, reassuring that, despite the challenges that accompany any endeavour as complex as a national education system, they held that the changes initiated by policy over the last five decades were welcome.

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Primary Curriculum Policy Development in Ireland 1922–1999: From Partisanship to Partnership

Thomas Walsh

This chapter focuses on the primary school curriculum development processes from the advent of political independence in the 1920s until the end of the twentieth century. It specifically analyses the three main curriculum reforms of 1922/1926, the 'New Curriculum' of 1971 and the 'Revised Curriculum' of 1999, as well as smaller curricular reforms in the interim. The processes and strategies that underpinned the development of the curriculum in each era is delineated, drawing on a range of archival and unpublished documents. The key discourses that underpinned and the controversies that ensued in the framing of each curriculum are explored. A key focus will be placed on the various stakeholders that exercised power and agency in the curriculum development process, most particularly religious and political influences, and their relative impact on the philosophy and content of these curricula. Given the longitudinal nature of the analysis, the increasing complexity of curriculum development and the wider range of stakeholders involved in curriculum

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development in later eras is delineated and critiqued. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the salient points relevant for contemporary curriculum development work. Overall, the chapter delineates the change from a secretive and partisan approach to curriculum development in the 1920s to a more engaged, consultative and partnership approach by the 1990s.

Introduction

There has been an exponential growth in the complexity of developing national curricula owing to the increased understanding of curriculum theory, both in terms of development and enactment. Curriculum development is impacted by a multiplicity of factors, including historical, ideological, cultural, political, economic, theoretical and practical considerations (Livingston et al., 2015). The contested nature of the curriculum is understandable considering its embodiment of the most important values, purposes, priorities and content for inclusion from the culture of a society (Lawton, 1989; Vitikka et al., 2012). Kelly (2004, p. 163) asserts that education is essentially a political activity, with the curriculum viewed as "the battleground of many competing influences and ideologies", resulting in many internal tensions and contradictions. Increased globalisation and diversity of opinion among education stakeholders makes the identification of curriculum priorities and values more challenging and contentious, with many competing voices articulating a view on the purposes of education (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Sahlberg, 2011).

Flinders and Thornton (2013) trace the emergence of curriculum as an area of scholarship and practice in the early twentieth century and the ways in which curriculum understanding and conceptualisation have changed and evolved in the interim. While initially "curriculum decisions were largely left to that small, usually elite, portion of the public most directly concerned with the operation of schools" (Flinders & Thornton, 2013, p. 3), the advent of mass schooling widened interest in curriculum development and content. Ornstein and Hunkins (2018, p. 209) assert

that there are different ways to define curriculum development processes, outlining their evolution from a technical-scientific model to a current postmodern, post constructivist perspective. The curriculum development process in Ireland did not align seamlessly with trends in the UK or in the USA where the objectives model was highly influential (Stenhouse, 1975).

While traditionally the main focus in curriculum development has been on the written text, there is now a growing understanding and acceptance that the curriculum is a social construction that is continuously negotiated and created at a policy and practice level by a range of partners, most particularly teachers (Elliott, 1998; Goodson, 1998). This historical understanding placed great value on the 'policy as text' (Ball, 2016) and the writing and framing of curriculum texts were hotly contested. The process was often a closed and secretive process with limited stakeholder involvement. The right to be involved in the curriculum development process, or to be consulted as part of the process, was highly prized and in much of the period under review, limited to a small number of powerful stakeholders.

This chapter now progresses to explore in turn the development process for each of the three main curricula in Ireland following the advent of political independence to the end of the twentieth century. First, the curriculum development processes for the curricula introduced in the 1920s (1922 and 1926) are delineated. A particular focus on the contribution of Rev. Professor Timothy Corcoran SJ is included in this section, as is a brief overview of some minor curriculum development in the 1930s and 1940s. Second, the process for developing the 'New Curriculum' of 1971 is presented and critiqued, with a particular emphasis on the piloting process between 1969 and 1971. Third, the role of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in the development of the 1999 curriculum is analysed, critiquing, in particular, the representational structures of the subject committees. While each of the three sections has a short conclusion, the final discussion and conclusion will be reserved to summarise and explore the key issues from the longitudinal analysis and the key implications for contemporary curriculum development.

Development of Curricula in the 1920s

Before moving to critique the process of primary school curriculum development in Ireland in the 1920s, a brief focus on the development process of the preceding curriculum is worthwhile. The *Revised Programme*[1] *of Instruction* 1900 (Commissioners of National Education, 1902) was drafted by the Commissioners of National Education but was informed by an extensive body of research, consultation and public debate. This evidence-base was generated through an independent and public Commission of Inquiry, the Commission on Manual and Practical Instruction (CMPI), which sat between 1897 and 1898. It was comprised of 14 members and included two external educational experts, one from England and one from Scotland. It held 93 public meetings, at which evidence was taken at 57 from 186 witnesses, such as teachers, managers, inspectors, industrialists and agriculturalists. Commission members also visited 119 schools in Ireland, England, Scotland, Germany, Holland, Switzerland and Denmark, and appointed Assistants to review and document curriculum practice in France, Germany, Belgium and Holland. Oral evidence was complemented by the analysis of in excess of 60 national and international reports relating to primary school curricula. The Commission published four voluminous interim reports with appendices prior to the publication of the final report in June 1898 (CMPI, 1898). The breadth, sophistication and transparency of this curriculum development process set a high standard for curriculum development in independent Ireland. It was not a model that was followed by the Irish Free State in the 1920s.

The First National Programme Conference (1922)

As political independence became an increasing reality, the Irish people had their first opportunity to frame a curriculum free from British influence and oversight. Given the political and societal turbulence of the 1919–1921 period,[2] it was a resolution at the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) annual conference which initiated the first National Programme Conference as opposed to a government or

departmental authority. It called for the framing of "a programme, or series of programmes, in accordance with Irish ideals and conditions—due regard being given to local needs and views" (National Programme Conference, 1922, p. 3). The first National Programme Conference, instituted in January 1921, was the initial curriculum making body for primary education in Ireland. It operated and deliberated in the context of the War of Independence and its report, published in January 1922, captured the nationalist fervour and patriotic elation of the achievement of political independence.

As the organising body, the INTO issued invites to a number of educational stakeholders to attend and be represented at the conference. The political context, societal instability in the midst of a War of Independence and the view that the INTO was not the appropriate body to establish such a Conference resulted in a narrow engagement. For example, invited Protestant representatives did not view the Conference as a legitimate body and refused the invite to participate (Farren, 1995, p. 116). The Boards of Education from the previous British administration were not represented due to the political climate, school management associations did not attend, while the Inspectorate or representatives from the training colleges were not invited. The Professors of Education (with the exception of Rev. Timothy Corcoran SJ, who acted as an external advisor) did not participate. The Conference was chaired by Máire Ní Chinnéide, an Irish language activist within the Gaelic League, and T.J. O'Connell of the INTO acted as Secretary. The 11 members of the Conference were comprised as follows:

- Ministry of Education (1)
- General Council of County Councils (1)
- National Labour Executive (1)
- Gaelic League (2)
- INTO (5)
- Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (1)

This represented a narrow membership for the development of a national curriculum, with 55% emanating from teacher unions.

At its first meeting on 6 January 1921, the members agreed on the adoption of a 'minimum' programme for schools, to explore the inclusion of additional subjects and consider issues of school administration, teacher training and the provision of textbooks (National Programme Conference, 1922, p. 4). There is almost no surviving documentation from the work of the first National Programme Conference over the period from January 1921 to January 1922 so it is difficult to determine the exact process by which the programme was developed or the way in which the views of members were reflected within it. It is evident that the conference met on a number of occasions and a draft programme for national schools was issued in August 1921 for consultation with INTO members (INTO, 1921). Such a level of consultation with teachers was innovative and INTO members were urged to submit views on the draft programme. Overall responses from teachers at this time were positive— but it must be noted that certain provisions, including the use of Irish as the teaching medium in infant classes, were not included in the draft circulated in August 1921.

The final report was signed by all 11 members of the conference and its tone and content reflected its membership. It captured the nationalist fervour of the era, framed as it was within the period of the War of Independence, and the quest to build national identity through the Irish language revival (Walsh, 2021). The pervasive influence of Gaelic League ideology in terms of language and education is evident in the widespread support for Irish within the programme. It proposed a much narrower programme of study than its predecessor and placed a central focus on the use of Irish as a medium of instruction and on its teaching as a subject. This is surprising given the objections of many teachers to an over-emphasis on Irish owing to the poor levels of competency in the language among many teachers in the system. This concern was expressed by an INTO delegation to the Minister in November 1921, at which point ministerial assurances were given that there would be "no undue hardship or injustice inflicted" on teachers who were unable to meet the expectations of the programme in Irish (National Programme Conference, 1922, p. 30). Despite the inclusion of administrative structures in its terms of reference, this sensitive issue was not explored within the programme report. This may have been due to the absence of members with the

authority to alter the administrative structures as well as the sensitivities to altering the existing system by the churches, perhaps as communicated by Rev. Corcoran. The provisions of the report were also reviewed prior to publication by a Coordination Committee to ensure alignment with curricula at second- and third-level education.

The Second National Programme Conference (1926)

Following two years of implementation, the INTO requested a review of the programme owing to challenges in its implementation in schools. The INTO initially initiated the review but the Minister for Education refused to send representatives to this forum. Ultimately, urged by the INTO, the Minister for Education Eoin MacNeill agreed to convene a conference to review the programme in May 1925 (INTO, 1925). However, he asserted it would be an Advisory Body and he would not be bound by its recommendations. The composition and *modus operandi* of the Second National Programme Conference reflected the increased political and social stability of Ireland. It was convened by the Minister and was more representative of the educational stakeholders. It was comprised of the following 21 representatives:

- Gaelic League [1]
- General Council of County Councils [1]
- School managers [3]
- INTO [5]
- Ministerial nominees [11]

Interestingly the Terms of Reference were much narrower than in 1921, focusing exclusively on the suitability of the national programme, with no focus on school facilities or administration. Rev. Lambert McKenna SJ was appointed to chair the conference, an astute choice by the Minister given his strong advocacy for the learning of Irish in schools (McKenna, 1912). Moreover, the Minister had an inbuilt majority of 11 representatives which afforded him particular control of deliberations and outcomes. Unlike the first Conference, there were three Protestant

representatives at the Second National Programme Conference. However, there were no direct representatives of the training colleges, Professors of Education, secondary schools or wider educational interests.

Archival materials shed light on the impressive and comprehensive approach the Conference took to its work. A sub-committee of the Conference was elected at its first meeting on 9 June 1925 to support wide consultation. It resulted in an invitation in the national press requesting "reasoned statements" from interested and knowledgeable parties, the selection of witnesses to provide oral evidence and the issuing of specific questions to individuals and public bodies not represented at the conference but which the conference believed important to consult (National Archives Box 244: File 12842). The request for "reasoned statements" proved fruitful and the Conference received submissions from 54 bodies, 150 individuals and 1260 teachers on summer courses. The responses in relation to the questions issued were analysed and collated by the Conference (National Archives File 12850). A total of 19 witnesses were invited to give oral evidence, including Rev. Corcoran, three inspectors and a range of teachers from schools of varying sizes and contexts. These were interviewed by a second sub-committee of 12 members. In addition to the above, inspector reports, educational documents and reports, school statistics, draft syllabi and European school timetables were circulated among conference members to inform their deliberations (National Archives Box 250: File 12848). Once all the data had been collected, the conference spent 10 days in November 1925 deliberating the major aspects of the programme, reporting that "in nearly every instance, we had the great satisfaction of arriving at unanimous decisions" (National Programme Conference, 1926, p. 8). Two further sub-committees were then established: one to draft the report and the other to draft the programme for schools.

An examination of the evidence to the Second National Programme Conference reveals a polarity of views in terms of the suitability, structure and content of the 1922 programme (see Walsh, 2012, pp. 145–150). Many of the witnesses and submissions requested differentiated provisions for Irish- and English-speaking areas, a more detailed and definite outline of requirements within the programme and a broader range of subjects in the programme. The diversity of opinion must have

challenged the Conference members to reach "unanimous decisions" and to frame a programme that took into account the views of all. This was an endeavour completed in early 1926 through conciliation, negotiation and compromise. One of the key influences and architects of the programme, as in 1922, was the external advisor Rev. Corcoran.

Rev. Professor Timothy Corcoran SJ

While a conference of people was responsible for the development of the curricula published in 1922 and 1926, the influence of their external advisor, Rev. Professor Timothy Corcoran SJ, Professor of Education in University College Dublin, cannot be underestimated. Rev. Corcoran had been previously involved in the development of the 1918 Gaelic League Education Programme and was influential in clerical, educational and revival discourses. Akenson (1975, p. 44) asserts that Corcoran's role as an external advisor rather than an individual member of the conferences was a strategy to augment his influence. Corcoran had published widely on educational and other matters in the 1920s, especially with a focus on using the schools as vehicles for Irish language revival (Corcoran, 1923, 1924a). He advocated that the "early age is the language age" (Corcoran, 1925, p. 380) and called for the initiation of Irish language preschools to support language revival. His writings also display his belief in the Doctrine of Original Sin and the need for strict control and punishment to manage the potential inherent weakness and corruption of the child (Corcoran, 1930, p. 204). Central to this control was didactic and rigorous teaching methods, placing an emphasis on memorisation and repetition, advocating that "large masses of facts must be known" (Corcoran, 1925, p. 286). He also castigated the progressive educationalists, particularly Maria Montessori, advocating a shift from the child-centred and progressive nature of the 1900 curriculum (Corcoran, 1924b, 1926).

Overall, Corcoran's assertions carried weight in the 1920s and the curricula developed incorporated much of his thinking and ideology. Corcoran's conceptualisation of the child as a passive recipient of information and in need of rigorous, didactic teaching permeates both

programmes. His emphasis on immersion education and of the direct method of teaching underpinned Irish language provisions in the 1920s. J.J. O'Neill, first Secretary at the Department of Education and well positioned to assess his impact, evidences Corcoran's influence on the curriculum in the 1920s:

> In the reconstruction of the Irish State, he was, from the beginning, the master-builder in Education. The Commissions on Education, set up in 1921, were guided so largely by him that it may be said that the curricula, aims and methods in Primary and Secondary Education which emerged from them were, in the main, the work of his hands. (O'Neill, 1943, p. 158)

Revised Programme of Instruction (1934) and Revised Programme for Infants (1948)

Continued challenges with the enactment of the 1926 programme resulted in numerous requests by the INTO for a revision of its provisions (INTO, 1934). Following negotiations between Minister Derrig and the INTO, a *Revised Programme of Primary Instruction* was introduced into schools in October 1934. Interestingly there was no wider consultation with education stakeholders and the revised programme was not preceded by any rationale or discussion regarding the alterations. It simply stated:

> The Minister of Education has decided on certain modifications in the programme of instruction for Primary schools. They come into operation immediately. (Department of Education, 1934, p. 3)

One final alteration to the programme was introduced in 1948 with the *Revised Programme for Infants* (Department of Education, 1948). Preparatory work for the revised programme was undertaken by a group of inspectors, particularly the Organising Inspector, Eileen Irvine. This was followed in 1951 by *Notes for Teachers* (Department of Education, 1951). The centralised way in which the programme and notes were developed diminished their impact on practice and many teachers did

not adopt the revised measures in their infant classes (O'Connor, 2010, pp. 227–250).

Summary of the 1922/1926 Curriculum Development Process

Curriculum development in the period from the advent of political independence to the 1970s was characterised by centralised and often secretive processes that excluded wide stakeholder participation. One of the main issues with the composition of the first and Second National Programme Conferences was the lack of diversity of opinion among constituents, with most highly sympathetic to the revival of the Irish language through the school system. The twin pillars of Catholicism and nationalism that underpinned Irish education in the era were the key influences on curriculum policy and these were the key discourses that impacted on policy development and redevelopment. It is evident that certain stakeholders wielded more power than others, such as the Gaelic League and Rev. Corcoran, and their evidence considered more authoritative than that of others. Dissenting and diverse voices were not present or welcomed and there was a sense that questioning the revival of Irish through the schools was akin to questioning the legitimacy of the new Free State (Walsh, 2021). Terms of reference for educational reform were generally narrow and ministerial power was exercised to ensure outcomes in line with government policy. There was a reluctance to formally review the curriculum in place or to establish more democratic structures to widen stakeholder participation throughout the era. Indeed, the *Report of the Council of Education* (Department of Education, 1954), comprised of a narrow range of stakeholders, reinforced rather than challenged the status quo. Wider societal changes in the 1960s catalysed the realisation that a substantive review of the primary school curriculum was necessary and overdue, a process that began in 1966.

Development of the 'New' Curriculum (1971)

The Minister for Education, George Colley, announced a formal review of the primary school curriculum in June 1965 (Colley, 1965). This announcement was advanced by his successor, Donagh O'Malley, who established an internal departmental Steering Committee to prepare the groundwork for a White Paper on Education in December 1966. This Steering Committee was directed by Deputy Chief Inspector, Mr. Ó Foghlú. Mr. Ó hUallacháin, Deputy Chief Inspector, had responsibility for the primary section of the White Paper and he was assisted by Mr. Ó Muircheartaigh (Secretary), Mr. Ó Suilleabháin (Divisional Inspector), Mr. Ó Cuilleanáin (Divisional Inspector), Mr. Ó Domhnalláin (District Inspector) and Mr. de Buitléar (District Inspector). The Committee's work was supported by a number of sub-committees, comprised of close to 30 inspectors, which advanced particular aspects of the work (de Buitléar, n.d.). These processed and analysed submissions invited from wider members of the Inspectorate and evidently were influenced by the preparation of the Plowden Report in England. It completed a draft 120-page report in Spring 1967, *Towards a White Paper on Education* (Department of Education, 1967).

Although the draft report remained unpublished, the seminal lines of thinking within it formed the basis of curriculum development over the following five years. However, the impressive timeframe for its development impacted negatively on its coherence and breadth, limiting its value as the basis for curriculum planning it subsequently became. These limitations included inadequate reference to the available curriculum research and a lack of wider stakeholder engagement in its preparation, resulting in a vision and content framed primarily by departmental inspectors. The lack of discussion and tempering are evident in its ambitious tone, reflecting an aspirational future rather than a considered and cautious White Paper. Seán O'Connor, Head of the Development Unit from 1965 and subsequently Secretary of the Department of Education, attributed the blame for not proceeding with the preparation of a White Paper to Minister O'Malley, who was interested in progressing curriculum development quickly. O'Malley feared that the consultative processes needed

to develop a Green and then White Paper on Education would take up to five years and he wished to press ahead with curriculum reform (O'Connor, 1986, p. 191).

The next phase in the process was the development of a Working Document in 1968 which was the first draft of the curriculum. This work was undertaken by a New Curriculum Steering Committee established in December 1967, chaired by Deputy Chief Inspector Mr. Ó hUallacháin. Again a large number of sub-committees were formed in January 1968 to advance particular aspects of curriculum formation, including individual subject committees. The resultant *Primary Education—A Working Document* (Department of Education, 1968) was in effect a development of the earlier draft White Paper, with enhanced detail on subject content, principles and methodologies.

As promised by Minister O'Malley in February 1968 (O'Malley, 1968), a draft of the Working Document was shared with the INTO in September 1968, and with managerial bodies and the training colleges in October 1968. There is no evidence to suggest it was shared with any post-primary stakeholders or wider educational or public bodies at this time, or indeed ahead of its publication in 1971. The INTO welcomed the philosophy and direction of the new curriculum (INTO, 1969a) and individual members were asked to submit written feedback within two months. In December 1968, *Notes on the Draft Curriculum for Primary Schools* were added to the original draft *Working Document*. A *Plan for the New Curriculum* were shared in the *Irish Times* in December 1968 (*Irish Times*, 1968) and the *Irish Times* carried a three-part editorial on the New Curriculum in July 1969 entitled 'The End of the Murder Machine?" (*Irish Times*, 1969, p. 10). A full copy of the most up-to-date draft *Working Document* was published in the INTOs journal, *An Múinteoior Náisiúnta*, in February 1969 (INTO, 1969b).

In addition to direct consultation with teachers and management bodies, inspectors and departmental officials took the unprecedented move of presenting and publishing widely on plans for the New Curriculum between 1968 and 1971. This activity reveals much in terms of the thinking, *modus operandi*, rationale and principles underpinning the curriculum that was not explicitly captured in the final documents in 1971. One such publication was *All Our Children* in 1969 (Department of Education,

1969a), a booklet issued by Minister Brian Lenihan to parents on the rationale for educational and curriculum reform. Minister Lenihan also focused on the need for a comprehensive curriculum reform of the primary school curriculum at his INTO Congress address in 1969, asserting the need for "the structuring from basic principles of an organic curriculum to meet the challenge and needs of a new era" (Lenihan, 1969). Maitiú Mac Donnchadha wrote an article in *Oideas* in Spring 1969 regarding the rationale for change in Mathematics based on new psychological insights on pupil learning (Mac Donnchadha, 1969). Inspector Séamus de Buitléar, who was centrally involved in developing and authoring the New Curriculum, wrote an article in *Oideas* in 1969 sharing an insight into influences on curriculum development (de Buitléar, 1969). Assistant Secretary at the Department of Education, Tomás Ó Floinn, published a wide-ranging article in *An Múinteoir Náisiúnta* in December 1969 on primary curriculum reform (Ó Floinn, 1969). Minister Faulkner delivered an extensive exposition to the Dáil in April 1970 on the structure, content and wider reforms that would support the introduction of the New Curriculum, reassuring teachers that they would be supported in enacting the new curriculum provisions (Faulkner, 1970).

Such widespread sharing led to a number of responses and submissions to the Department of Education. The INTOs response was one of warm welcome, "whole-heartedly endors[ing] the aims and principles upon which the suggested new curriculum is structured" (INTO, 1970, p. 13). It noted the ambitious elements of the curriculum and urged the provision of the necessary resources to support their enactment. There was a similar positive response from the Teachers' Study Group (Teacher's Study Group, 1969), but it too alerted the Department to issues with enactment if the necessary supports were not put in place. The submissions and responses of wider organisations, mostly managerial bodies and training colleges, were considered and collated into an unpublished digest of responses (Department of Education, 1970). An analysis of these submissions reveals a generally very positive welcome for the philosophy and content of the New Curriculum, welcoming the freedom it represented for teachers and schools. Again, the Department was urged by the submissions to support curriculum enactment through the provision of in-service training for teachers, reducing class sizes, providing grants for

equipment and resources and developing an information campaign aimed at parents. There were also calls for the redrafting of the section on Religion and a reduction in the requirements in some subjects such as Music, Art and Craft, and Physical Education. Copies of the Working Document were also disseminated to inspectors working in other jurisdictions and some submitted responses and observations (Walsh, 2012, pp. 248–251).

The information sharing activities were certainly effective in the years prior to 1971 to disseminate information and to prepare teachers, parents and the wider system for the curriculum changes ahead. Moreover, Coolahan (1989, p. 63) argues that these speeches and publications were used to test the waters in a process of pragmatic gradualism, "testing responses, slowing down or speeding up developments as circumstances permit."

Piloting the Working Document 1969–1971

Parallel to the information sharing outlined above, another key element of the curriculum development process was a pilot scheme which would precede universal introduction in a select number of schools. This initiative was shared with schools in a circular, which reassured teachers that the curriculum would undergo continuous review in light of the pilot. As it stated:

> the proposed curriculum is not to be regarded as being in any way final or definitive. Whatever shape the agreed curriculum takes, it should be subjected to a trial period of about five years… It should, therefore, be subjected to a continuous review so that it may benefit from educational research development. (Department of Education, 1969b)

The piloting process was undertaken in a representative cross-section of 600 schools (Department of Education, 1971a). It was structured across the forty-eight inspection divisions, with twelve schools piloting elements of the curriculum in each division (three schools piloting one of the four main subject areas: Language, Social and Environmental Studies and Music; Mathematics; Art and Craft and Physical Education). The purpose of the pilot schools was to trial the content and methodologies

of the Working Document. Specialised grants were provided to schools to purchase suitable equipment for the subjects being piloted. Pilot schools were also expected to facilitate study visits by local teachers, who were released to visit such schools for one half day with the consent of the school manager and district inspector.

Unfortunately, there is very little surviving documentation (if indeed there ever was any) on the operation of the pilot schools. It is unclear how many teachers visited the pilot schools or how much of a resource they became in their district. There was no official evaluation of the pilot project undertaken by the Department of Education to inform subsequent curriculum development or enactment. Short articles from the time become inadvertent sources of insight in relation to its operation and success. Mr Gillespie from St Andrew's NS in Rialto Dublin, lauded the positive impact of piloting Art and Craft on the classroom environment and on the classroom atmosphere in his school. However, he warned that the changes resulted in an exponentially increased workload for teachers to plan for and to integrate the subject, as well as the increased costs not covered by the grant (Gillespie, 1971). The positive impact of using projects and themes chosen by the teachers and pupils in a pilot school in Raheny, Dublin, were also extolled (Whelan, 1970). The selection of pilot schools was criticised by O'Connell (1979), arguing that schools were selected for their specialist expertise in subject areas rather than being representative of schools more generally. Walsh (1980) lamented the lack of support for the pilot schools beyond the already over-stretched Inspectorate. Following the dissemination of the first handbook of the New Curriculum in May 1971 (Department of Education, 1971b), all national schools were granted a day of special closure on 5 November 1971 to discuss its contents and to plan for its enactment at a school level (Department of Education, 1971c). A second day for such activity was granted in December 1976.

Summary of the 1971 Curriculum Development Process

The Inspectorate was the key architect of the 1971 curriculum, drafting almost exclusively the background draft White paper and Working

Document that informed the 1971 curriculum. In this context, there was some consultation with teachers and other education stakeholders at various points in the development process. This was undertaken through the publication of elements of the curriculum, through public speeches on the development of the curriculum and through the piloting process. Despite these innovative consultation procedures, cognisance was not taken of many of the issues relayed by the various organisations that submitted feedback to the Department. Indeed, there was no systematic review or evaluation of the piloting process and this valuable innovative strategy ultimately did not impact systematically on the curriculum development process. While there were some minor amendments, the curriculum remained largely unaltered following the piloting and consultation process to the draft White Paper prepared in 1967. While commendable processes, the information sharing and piloting could only pay dividends if there was an openness and a structure to listen to and incorporate feedback systematically into the curriculum policy. Regrettably this was not a feature of the development process leading to the publication of the New Curriculum in 1971 (Department of Education, 1971b, 1971d). The subsequent issues with curriculum enactment (Walsh, 2012, pp. 283–342) could have been mitigated through a more systematic process of curriculum planning and design.

Development of the 'Revised' Curriculum (1999)

Organisational Structures

The establishment of the Curriculum and Examinations Board (CEB) in 1984 was a significant innovation in democratising the operation of Irish education, enabling wider stakeholders and outside interests to play a role in educational policy making. As Minister Hussey stated, the purpose of the CEB was "to give a voice on curriculum issues to all bodies who would have a legitimate interest in them" (Hussey, cited in Crooks, 1987, p. 9). The work of the CEB was characterised by consultation with

interested parties, the use of experts in curriculum development and a focus on continuity between primary and post-primary curricula. While its work primarily focused on post-primary education, it published a number of reports on the primary school curriculum, focusing both on its structure (CEB, 1984) and content (CEB, 1985).

In 1987, instead of being established as a statutory agency as planned, the CEB was reconstituted as a non-statutory advisory body, the NCCA. Wider societal engagement in a process of social partnership from the mid-1980s resulted in efforts to democratise education policy development. As a result, the Council of the NCCA, appointed by the Minister for a 3-year term, "was constituted on the basis of representational partnership" (Gleeson, 2010, p. 245), directly and explicitly representational of the educational stakeholders and social partners (Granville, 1994, p. 38). The final authority for curriculum decisions still resided with the Minister, however. In addition to the chairperson, deputy chairperson and one member appointed by the Minister, the NCCA Council included nominees from 14 partner bodies as follows:

- Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) [1],
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) [1]
- National Parents' Council [1]
- Department of Education nominees [2]
- Teacher unions (including IFUT) [4]
- School management bodies (three post-primary and two primary) [5]

Following the Education Act 1998 (Government of Ireland, 1998), the NCCA was established on a statutory basis from 2002.

The function of the NCCA was to "advise on all matters relating to curriculum and assessment at first and second-level education" (NCCA, 1988, p. 1). The NCCA operated based on part-time committee and council members who were in most instances nominated by the partner organisations. The composition of curriculum and course committees was also delineated so that they were representative of the partners, the majority comprised of practising teachers (Granville, 2004). The chairperson was elected by the membership of the committee and as well as chairing meetings, s/he liaised with the Education Officer, the NCCA

Executive and the NCCA Council. One of the key roles in leading the curriculum development process in each of these committees was the non-voting Education Officer (normally a seconded teacher) who led the professional work of the committee and liaised with the permanent executive staff.

Development Process for the 1999 Curriculum

Alongside the new structures for curriculum development, two further catalysts for reform of the primary school curriculum were published in 1990: the *Report of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum* (Review Body on the Primary Curriculum [RBPC], 1990) and the *Report of the Primary Education Review Body* (Department of Education, 1990). Both of these committees were representative of the education partners and worked independently, the former focusing specifically on the primary curriculum and the latter on wider issues related to primary education (excluding curriculum matters). The RBPC examined aspects of the implementation of the New Curriculum (1971), with a view to recommending amendments for the future implementation of the curriculum (RBPC, 1990, p. 5). The Committee received 85 written submissions and progressed its work through five sub-committees, each focusing on a particular aspect of the curriculum. This report was a major catalyst and springboard for the decade of curriculum reform that followed in the 1990s.

The report of the RBPC resulted in further consultation and a request by the Minister for Education to engage in a continuing review of the primary school curriculum. From an operational perspective, the NCCA established 12 primary curriculum committees (representative of the overall groups represented at the NCCA) to advance the work of curriculum revision. Two committees (Level 1 focusing on junior infants to second class and Level 2 focusing on third to sixth class) addressed each of the six broad subject areas (Gaeilge, English, Mathematics, Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), Arts Education and Physical Education). Each committee was supported by an

NCCA-employed Education Officer. Each 12-person committee comprised the following representatives:

- Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) [4]
- Minister for Education appointees [2]
- National Parents' Council [1]
- Colleges of Education [1]
- Irish Federation of University Teachers [1]
- Catholic Primary Schools' Managers Association [1]
- Church of Ireland Board of Education [1]
- Teaching Brothers' and Sisters' Association [1].

This representation was wide and inclusive of the existing educational partners but it is interesting to note the numerically influential position of the INTO, forming one-third of the membership of each committee. Moreover, teacher representatives occupied the role of chairperson and Education Officer in almost all instances (INTO, 2000, p. 21).

The process of development was a protracted one, lasting a number of years for many of the subject committees. An insight into the *modus operandi* of the curriculum committees was provided by a number of NCCA officials and committee members (INTO, 1997). This reveals the significance of the RBPC report in influencing the direction of the curriculum committees, as stated by Regina Murphy in the context of arts education:

> To a large extent however, the parameters were already clearly established for the committee by the Report of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (Quinlan), 1990, which had accepted submissions from a wide range of organisations and individuals in the course of the review. (INTO, 1997, p. 27)

An analysis of research relating to the 1971 curriculum implementation and subject-specific research was also integral to the work of curriculum committees, as shared by Frank Bradley and Fiona Poole in relation to Irish and Maths respectively (INTO, 1997). In certain subjects like Physical and Health Education, Frances Murphy notes that the Level 1 and Level 2 committees merged after initial development work and

formed Working Groups to advance the preparation of curriculum documentation (INTO, 1997, p. 55). Given the protracted nature of the development, a new Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum committee was established in 1996, building on the work of the earlier Physical and Health Education Committees and SESE committees. The work of each committee involved the preparation of the Curriculum Content document and the Teacher Guidelines, as well as publisher guidelines, papers for parents and an overview of resource implications (INTO, 1997).

As the work of the subject committees drew to a close, a number of additional committees were established to bring coherence to the documents they had prepared. This is understandable as there is little evidence of communication or cooperation among the subject committees. First of all, a Primary Co-ordinating Committee was established in 1993 to help ensure the various aspects of the curriculum dovetailed, that there was coherence in the methodologies, to discuss time allocations and to ensure it did not lead to curriculum overload. This Co-ordinating Committee also advised the NCCA Council on the structure and format of the curriculum as well as strategies to support its introduction and implementation. A common format for all subject handbooks was developed and the process of preparing the curriculum documents was supported by a team of seconded teachers. An Assessment Committee assisted in ensuring that the issues of assessment and evaluation became an integral feature of the curriculum reform. Most importantly, an Implementation Committee established by the Department of Education and Science (DES) planned the groundwork to ensure that the aims of the Revised Curriculum were converted into the reality of practice in schools, a feature that had been neglected in previous eras. This provided for a phased introduction of the subjects alongside a range of supports for schools through the establishment of the Primary Curriculum Support Programme. The preparation of the *Primary School Curriculum Introduction* handbook was one of the final tasks undertaken in the preparation of the curriculum materials. Ultimately all of the materials prepared by the committees under the auspices of the NCCA were subject to the approval of the Minister. As stated by the INTO (1997, p. 3):

> All documents must be approved by the Minister before publication and his/hers is the final decision on timing and method of introduction and implementation.

The publication of the revised *Primary School Curriculum* 1999 marked the culmination of a decade of curriculum development by a broad range of stakeholders, co-ordinated by the NCCA. The resulting curriculum was published in 1999 in an attractive format of 23 full-colour handbooks. This comprised two booklets for each of the 11 subjects (one documenting the curriculum content and the other providing teacher guidelines) and the Introduction. The 23 handbooks (DES, 1999), comprising 2842 pages of documentation, represent an extensive 'physical face' (Alexander & Flutter, 2009, p. 6) to the curriculum for teachers. The extensive documentation, arguably a result of design by committee approach, impacted negatively on the clarity and accessibility of the curriculum message (Walsh, 2018).

Summary of the 1999 Revised Curriculum Development Process

The 1990s were characterised by an appetite for educational development and reform in Ireland, central to which was a comprehensive review and revision of the primary school curriculum. The participatory and representative nature of the PCRB augured well for continued participation, partnership and cooperation among the education stakeholders, when the Department, teacher unions, parent bodies, school managerial bodies, teacher educators and industry representatives came together to formulate curriculum policy. The establishment of the CEB and most particularly its successor, the NCCA, represented a significant shift in power for curriculum development from the Inspectorate to a wider, more representative structure. This altered the relative power dynamics among the various stakeholders in setting the agenda for educational change than had previously existed throughout the twentieth century. Moreover, it transferred the responsibility for curriculum design from a centralised, and often mysterious practice, to a more open and

participatory process (Granville, 2004). The bottom-up and democratic approach over close to a decade assisted the sense of ownership of the reforms being introduced by teachers and other educational partners. Despite these many positive features, the development process resulted in a number of challenges discussed below.

Conclusion

This chapter has delineated the key processes undertaken in the development of the primary school curriculum in Ireland from the advent of political independence in the 1920s to the end of the twentieth century. During this period, curriculum development moved from a highly centralised and often mysterious process directed primarily within the Department of Education (Coolahan, 2017) to a more participatory and open process (Granville, 2004). Overall, Ireland's predominant model of curriculum development has been a 'centre-periphery' model (Kelly, 2004, p. 122). Indeed, Ó Buachalla's (1988) analysis of the key stakeholders in Irish education reveals a small number of powerful brokers still charting the direction of Irish education towards the end of the twentieth century. However, societal changes, including the adoption of the social partnership model, was to institute some fundamental reforms in the management and administration of Irish education from the 1990s. This was particularly evident in the 1990s when the Department of Education loosened the reigns and involved wider stakeholders through the structures of the NCCA (Gleeson, 2010). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (1991) report was instrumental in this fundamental alteration of the traditional power structures when it recommended a decentralisation of the policy development process. Interestingly, the reverse of this direction policy was evident in the United Kingdom from the 1980s, with the curriculum development process becoming increasingly centralised, politicised and conceived in narrower terms (Kelly, 2004).

Despite the advances, the new democratic and representative structures for curriculum development in the 1990s were not to be without issue or controversy. While power was distributed across a range of partners from the 1990s, Sugrue (2004) argues that those afforded a seat at

the NCCA table was limited in nature, creating a new "policy elite" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 8). Granville (2004, p. 68) asserts that the structures of the NCCA had paradoxical consequences, leading to "ostensible devolution, with an underpinning element of increased central control." This resulted in a limited devolution of power from one centralised department to another largely centralised entity. As Sugrue (2004, p. 202) states:

> It would appear, therefore, that that power continues to be concentrated at the centre. What has changed is that the locus of control has shifted from DES personnel in general and the inspectorate in particular, to a newly emerging policy elite or group of educational entrepreneurs.

Moreover, the numerical strength of certain organisations, particularly the INTO, resulted in a predominance of teachers chairing and directing curriculum development and a weaker voice for other constituencies. This has the potential to stifle dissent and to control contestation by privileging consensus over dissonance, with the effect of maintaining the *status quo* through agreement on the lowest common denominator (Sugrue & Gleeson, 2004). Burke (1994) asserts that the structure and composition of the NCCA gave teachers a "virtual veto" over curriculum development policy in Ireland. Consultation has its part to play but as Brennan (2011) warns, design by committee can also run the risk of watering down the key messages and the conceptual basis for these.

One of the key challenges for the new structures was to consult with and engender a sense of ownership of the revised curriculum across the wider membership of the teaching profession. In reality, the partnership structures have operated well among the national agencies at the macro level of the Irish education system but there has been less success in terms of connectivity and transfer from the macro to the micro level of schools. For example, there are forums and contexts for national agencies and partners to come together to develop and share policy but there is less connectivity between this macro level and the site of curriculum enactment in schools. Such a disconnect is problematic considering the research asserting that curriculum reform is a change management

process that requires a process of support to ensure ownership, sense-making and integration at the school level (Fullan, 2018; Shirley, 2016). This has led to issues of symbolic ownership and adaptation and challenged real change in terms of pedagogical practices. Sugrue and Gleeson (2004, p. 269) also warn of the "systemic silences" deeply embedded in educational structures and processes. Over time, these structures affording power and influence over curriculum development, and wider education policy, have been enshrined in legislation with the Education Act 1998 (Government of Ireland, 1998). This seminal Act, establishing the NCCA as a statutory body, named the key actors and power brokers in the curriculum development process and these representative structures have altered little over the past two decades. More importantly, it enshrined in legislation a provision that the DES and its agencies (including the NCCA) would consult the key educational partners on any policy developments.

As Ireland moves towards another curriculum development process with the publication of the draft Redeveloped Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2020), issues of power, representation and ownership remain in current discourses. Representational structures, although slightly altered to include more voices, remain the core feature of the NCCA Council organisational framework. With representation comes the question of who is and is not represented. This *modus operandi* privileges certain voices within the national curriculum development process at this critical oversight level. While the NCCA is commendably inclusive in its consultative processes, affording a voice to all those with a legitimate interest in education, including children (NCCA, 2019a, 2019b), curriculum decisions are ultimately agreed upon by a 25-member Council representing a relatively small number of national educational organisations. Granville's (2004) call for an ongoing review and assessment of partnership structures remains current to ensure that curriculum development processes evolve in line with research, policy and practice.

Notes

1. 'Programme' was used as the term to denote what would be commonly understood as a curriculum nowadays. Both terms are used in this chapter as 'curriculum' became the more common term from the 1960s.
2. The War of Independence in Ireland was fought from 1919 and resulted in a ceasefire in July 1921. Following protracted negotiations, the Anglo Irish Treaty was signed in December 1921 bringing British rule to an end in the Irish Free State. This was followed by a bitter Civil War in 1922. For further information, see Collins (2019).

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3

Curriculum in Context: Evolution of Irish Curriculum Policy and Practice

Jim Gleeson

Introduction

This chapter is divided into three main parts. Key features of Irish curriculum policy developments, structures and reforms are set out in Part One. These include the dominant role played by the Department of Education prior to the establishment of an independent, now statutory, curriculum body, and the paucity of support for school-based curriculum development and action research. The significance of contextual factors, including social, cultural, religious and economic influences, is considered in Part Two, with particular reference to the prevailing anti-intellectual bias and the overarching focus on the production of human capital. Using the valuable lens of curriculum culture, the evolution of Irish curriculum policy and reform is considered in Part Three. Notwithstanding the emergence of a hybrid curriculum culture, some obvious tensions

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between the traditional Anglo-Saxon/American culture and the alternative Didaktik culture are evident.

Part One

Curriculum Policy Developments

In attempting to promote 'freedom of treatment', course outlines in the fledgling Irish state 'did not include specific texts but simple headings [with] Leaving Certificate] course content [being] left to the discretion of the teacher' (Coolahan, 1986, p. 44). However, when Taoiseach Éamon de Valera opined that the secondary school programme was 'too narrow and too vague', this heralded a return to prescribed texts and rigid curriculum control. From then on, curriculum was seen in terms of a document that was 'in place' and 'delivered', and the role of the teacher was one of 'covering' the syllabus. Teacher preference for this scripted approach to curriculum was highlighted circa 1990 when the proposed Junior Certificate English syllabus, which afforded teachers the freedom to choose their own texts, was met with strong teacher opposition.

Secondary-level syllabus committees, representative of the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI) and school management, came into being in 1965, chaired and controlled by members of the Inspectorate. As recalled by a Senior Inspector in conversation with the author, these committees produced content-heavy syllabi and were controlled by subject Inspectors who were primarily concerned with 'empire building', while university professors were revered at Leaving Certificate level (Gleeson, 2010, p. 95).

Immediately after the raising of the school leaving age, Minister Padraig Faulkner established the Commission on the Intermediate Certificate Examination (ICE) in 1970. The Committee Chairperson, Rev Paul Andrews, SJ, stated in his covering letter when submitting their report to Minister Dick Burke that the purpose of ICE was to 'to evaluate the present form and function of the Intermediate Certificate and to advise on new types of public examination' (Government of Ireland,

1975). While recognising the need for some form of external assessment, the Committee concluded that assessment 'needs to be more varied in its modes… wider in its scope… broader in its objects, … more flexible, allowing for various forms of curriculum development and innovation… frequent [and] school-based, involving the teachers concerned' (ibid., pp. v–vi). The associated Public Examinations Evaluation Project (PEEP) concluded that, 'subject to suitable provision for in-service training and adequate statistical back-up from research and statistical services', the ICE Committee's proposal for the introduction of school-based assessment was feasible and that 'teachers will be prepared to move in this direction' (Heywood et al., 1980, p. ii). However, as McGuinness (1991, p. 175) would subsequently recall, while 'the ICE Report was highly relevant… the biggest problem was actually getting someone to accept it'. Junior cycle curriculum would remain unchanged for twenty years after the raising of the school leaving age (Gleeson, 2018).

Meanwhile the post-primary sector was characterised by an academic/vocational divide, with members of the Secondary Schools Inspectorate based in Hawkins House, Dublin, while their colleagues in the Technical Instruction Branch (TIB), with responsibility for the Vocational Schools, were located in Talbot House before being relocated to Floor 11 in Hawkins House. A contemporaneous source would recall, in conversation with the author that 'there was a gulf between us; we never met' (Gleeson, 2010, p. 17). A former secondary inspector recalled 'a very obvious difference in outlook between the two groups … The TIB had been moulded by the 1930 Act … they were powerful people; the Act had defined their powers [whereas] the secondary Inspectors had no powers' (ibid., p. 304). When Department Secretary Sean O'Connor attempted to bring the two sides together the respective branches of the civil service trade union began to squabble over promotion issues. When the Director of Shannon Curriculum Development Centre, Diarmaid Ó Donnabháin, was invited to address the Inspectorate about Spiral 1 (1978–1982), this 'was the first time the Inspectors of secondary schools and vocational schools ever sat down together … we simply don't appreciate today the extent of the void between the academic and the vocational' (ibid.). Vocational and secondary Inspectors held separate annual conferences until the early 1990s.[1] This rigid academic/vocational divide

was graphically illustrated in the *Ages for Learning* (Department of Education, 1985, p. 8) which featured a vertical black line dividing post-primary education and vocational preparation and training.

Given the perceived ineptitude of official decision-making structures in responding to societal needs, the 1981 Fine Gael/Labour Programme for Government included a commitment to establish an independent Curriculum and Examinations Board, whose terms of reference would include school-based assessment. As Logan and O'Reilly put it, this initiative had the potential 'to broaden the social base of decision-making so that the process of selecting knowledge, skill or experience for inclusion on the national curriculum will address the common good' (1985, p. 475). The Interim Curriculum and Examinations Board (CEB), which was finally established when Fine Gael returned to government in 1983, published innovative and challenging discussion papers as a stimulus for curriculum reform, as evidenced in the Board's final report, *In Our Schools* (Interim CEB, 1986).

Education Minister Hussey's clear preference was for a representative Board where the Minister would nominate the members while ensuring that relevant interest groups were included. As her former Adviser Harris recalled, 'we wanted to be able to ensure that really good people were put forward who were suited to this job' (Gleeson, 2010, p. 141). However, when the Teacher Unions refused to participate under these circumstances, Hussey had little choice but to allow them to nominate their own representatives. This resulted in the consensus-seeking, representational partnership, approach to curriculum policy making (see Chap. 7, Gleeson, 2010), that was subsequently enshrined in Section 30 of the 1998 Education Act. While this model has proved quite effective in smoothing the way for top-down curriculum reform, there has been little sense of the participation of the wider education community in curriculum decision-making.

> … one of the missing or under-developed links in the curriculum planning and decision-making process is the participation of the social partners … Their participation would also be a means whereby the current preoccupation with book and verbal knowledge accompanied by instructional modes

of teaching and regurgitative practices in assessment and examinations should be reduced. (OECD, 1991, p. 75)

The primary focus of the CEB was on macro-curriculum issues:

- curriculum breadth and balance, defined in terms of core subjects
- elements of learning
- continuity between primary and post-primary schooling

Following yet another change of government, the CEB was replaced by the non-statutory National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in 1987. This afforded sectoral interest nominees a key role in curriculum policymaking and design on the national stage, giving them effective control of the 'secret garden of the curriculum' (Looney, 2001). In an environment where schools had waited twenty years for a curriculum response to the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen (Gleeson, 2018), the NCCA was essentially concerned with getting the new Junior Certificate programme[2] up and running as quickly as possible.

Reminiscent of the academic/vocational divide mentioned earlier, the curriculum structures of the day were characterised by fragmentation (Gleeson, 2010) with the NCCA being responsible for preparation of the Junior Certificate syllabi while implementation was a matter for the Department of Education Inspectorate with the Department's Examinations Branch having responsibility for assessment. The CEO of the CEB, Albert Ó Ceallaigh, would remark that there was a 'bamboo curtain' between the NCCA and the 'subsequent phase of the [curriculum] developmental process', while his Deputy, Gary Granville, recalled that, during implementation, the NCCA was invariably 'called on by the Department and expected to perform in a circus that we hadn't designed ourselves or hadn't responsibility for, knowing that, from the schools' perspective, the NCCA and the Department were indistinguishable' (Gleeson, 2010, p. 290).

The Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) conferred statutory status on the NCCA, resulting in an extended remit and increased funding for the Council which enabled increased staffing levels. From a starting point of IR£230,000 in 1988, the NCCA budget grew from €2.87m

(2003) to €4.4m (2006). The Council received €6.2m in DES grants and other income in 2018 (NCCA, n.d.-b), with pay-related expenditure of €3.59m to support 43 full-time staff (Office of Comptroller and Auditor General, 2018). Some €511,000[3] was spent on research in 2018 and expenditure on part-time staff was €690,000. While these figures represent enormous growth since the early days of the Council, state support is modest by comparison with other education bodies and with sister agencies in other jurisdictions. These increases enabled empirical and school-based research as well as wide-reaching consultation with stakeholders using discussion papers, surveys, focus groups and regional seminars. Whereas stakeholder nominees exerted enormous influence during the non-statutory days of the NCCA, the statutory Council operates on a broader, more evidence-informed and more independent footing.

Over the one hundred years since Independence then, Department of Education control of curriculum has been replaced by a consultative, partnership, approach that is now managed by the statutory NCCA. The primary role of the post-primary teacher has involved delivery of a uniform curriculum, supported by the liberal use of textbooks. One of the most persistent features has been the unwillingness of the teacher unions to participate in the assessment of students for purposes of national certification. The academic/vocational dichotomy that bedevilled post-primary education for many years has greatly diminished due to developments which are outlined below in my treatment of curriculum reform.

Curriculum Reform

Notwithstanding the fact that reform comes from the top, whereas meaningful change involves teachers, schools and classrooms, there is a strong tendency in Irish curriculum discourse to use reform and change interchangeably (Gleeson, 2021). Goodson's (2001) three stages of curriculum change—the school-based internal phase, the external mandating phase and his 'new millennium' compromise—provide a useful framework for considering Irish reform and change efforts. During the sixties and seventies school-based developments, which, regrettably, have gone

mostly undocumented in Ireland, were supported by regional Teachers' Centers (TCs)[4] that received minimal Department of Education support. Re-designated as Education Centers in the Education White Paper (Government of Ireland, 1995), the TCs would become the handmaidens of the DES in the 'delivery' of curriculum reform. As outlined in the White Paper, this re-designation would ensure financial support for 'a major building programme and the employment of full-time personnel [to] provide a focus for development programmes for teachers, parents and boards of management' (ibid., p. 141).

Meanwhile, structured curriculum development activity was limited to a small number of agencies, particularly the City of Dublin VEC's Curriculum Development Unit (CDU)[5] and Shannon Curriculum Development Centre at St Patrick's Comprehensive School.[6] The justification of progressive DES Assistant Secretary, Sean O'Connor, for establishing the Shannon centre, was to facilitate and back up the comprehensive education ideal in one of the first Comprehensive Schools in the country. While Department officials were happy to show them off to international visitors, these agencies were generally regarded as rather irrelevant to mainstream schooling (Gleeson, 2010). Former Director of the CDU, Anton Trant (1992), captures the counter-cultural achievements of the CDU in the title of his PhD thesis: *The Power of the Provisional*. These agencies, which would eventually be supplanted by the NCCA, were at their most effective (see McNamara et al., 1990) during the EU-funded Transition from School to Work projects (1978–1987), which, along with Vocational Preparation and Training (VPT) courses, exemplify what O'Sullivan (1992) calls the influence of 'cultural strangers'.

Curaclam na Bunscoile (Department of Education, 1971) was launched amid much fanfare in two glossy, hard-bound, volumes of more than 700 pages, at a time when resources for teacher development were very limited. This naïve approach to curriculum change is indicative of a prevailing failure to realise the complexity of curriculum reform and change. At the same time, its portrayal of children as active constructors of knowledge rather than receptors of information, together with the abolition of the Primary Certificate examination, with its exclusive focus on the 3Rs, represented a progressive and significant shift in Irish curriculum thinking. Walsh (2016, p. 10) remarks that the principles and content of

Curaclam na Bunscoile 'did not become common practice in classrooms' while Sugrue (1997, p. 25) observes that primary teachers were wont to endorse the rhetoric 'while practising a more formal pedagogical style'. Since Walsh deals with the primary curriculum in his chapter in the current volume, my treatment of curriculum reform primarily concerns post-primary education where the focus up to quite recently has been on syllabus content and meeting the needs of the economy.

Close on the heels of the raising of the school-leaving age and the introduction of so-called 'free education' (Harford, 2018), the fate of the aforementioned ICE recommendations is indicative of the prevailing malaise at official level as well as the significant clout of the Irish second-level teacher unions. From his vantage point as Director of Education at the OECD, Malcolm Skilbeck, remarked during an interview with the author that the strength of the Irish teacher unions was well above the international average. Opposition spokesperson on Education, Richard Bruton TD (*The Irish Times*, 10 November 1999) would remark that 'the voices which predominate are those of the providers. No one expects a union whose job it is to win better conditions for its members to be able to tell the whole story'.

The Junior Certificate, the first and most significant curriculum reform since independence, involved the amalgamation of two separate national programmes, the Intermediate Certificate previously offered in 'academic' private secondary schools, and the Day Vocational Group Certificate which had been provided in state-owned Vocational schools. From a curriculum perspective, the Junior Certificate was seen in terms of 'document making' rather than pedagogical change (Callan, 1995; Granville, 1995). NCCA Course Committees, constituted on a representational basis,[7] were responsible for preparing these syllabus documents. Rather ironically, Granville (1994, p. 67) found that Course Committee members gave themselves 'low ratings in the area of curriculum development', with 95 per cent of members 'never or rarely experiencing conflict between their personal views and those of their nominating body … [indicating] a degree of conformity that might inhibit the introduction of innovative ideas and initiatives' (ibid., p. 83).

Meanwhile, the first seven subject syllabi had been prepared before the overarching aims and principles of the Junior Certificate programme

were published. As noted by Hyland (1988, p. 42), this meant that there was no 'rationale for the new examination [and that there was no] overall curriculum framework for the junior cycle'. As Duffy[8] (1989, p. 3) put it: 'All subject committees are to work in isolation from each other, there are no general guidelines, and there is to be no overall debate eventuating in a philosophy which will inform the senior cycle review. Everything seems to be done at breakneck speed'.

In stark contrast with the neglect of aims and objectives in the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate syllabi over some sixty years (Mulcahy, 1981), Junior Certificate syllabus documents included comprehensive objectives and made provision for continuous assessment. In the face of teacher union opposition however, the latter plans were stillborn, while the recession of the eighties meant that provision for associated teacher professional development was totally inadequate (Gleeson, 2010). The OECD's *Review of National Policies for Education for Ireland* (OECD, 1991, p. 56) would note the 'mismatch between the stated goals of education and the declared needs for substantial structural change' in an environment where 'reliance on didactic instruction alone will not accomplish the tremendous educational tasks that lie ahead' (ibid., p. 75). Callan too (1995, p. 100) noted the proclivity towards 'piecemeal adjustments or alignments to a host of social and cultural issues [led] to an enlargement of curriculum contents with resultant pressures on schools to respond'. In attempting to amalgamate its two predecessor programmes, the Junior Certificate included three syllabus levels in English, Irish and Mathematics along with two levels in all other subjects—surely an incentive to stream students. Equally unsettling was the proposal to develop a new, inappropriately named, Junior Certificate Elementary Programme[9] 'to cater for a small minority of students whose learning needs are not adequately met by the present Junior Certificate' (Department of Education, 1996, p. 32).[10]

The NCCA then turned its attention to a revision of the primary curriculum and the development of a tripartite set of Leaving Certificate options—the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)[11] and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)—with all students being afforded the option of six years at post-primary that would include the innovative Transition Year

Programme (Jeffers, 2008) with its focus on student development and enrichment. The frequent calls around this time in national policy documents for senior cycle curriculum reform are indicative of an increasing emphasis on economy-related outcomes, with DES Secretary Lindsay (1990) suggesting the introduction of a German-style dual system—although there was no widespread support for such a move, and it would not feature in the Education Green Paper (Department of Education, 1992). The substantial EU funding available to the LCA, LCVP and Junior Certificate School Programme was welcomed in the National Development Plan (1994–1999) (Government of Ireland, 1993, p. 103) on the grounds that it would enable 'pupils to break the cycle of disadvantage and avoid the problems of early school leaving, to develop to their full potential and to participate fully as citizens in society, and to maximise benefit from the education system and equip them with the skills necessary for lifelong learning'.

The senior cycle consultative document published by the statutory NCCA proclaimed that education was failing 'to meet the needs of all students, to treat students equitably, to reward different kinds of achievement and support the independent self-directed learning' (NCCA, 2003, p. 1) and its *Proposals for the Future of Senior Cycle Education in Ireland* (NCCA, 2004) confronted the conservative culture of post-primary schools and encouraged students to take on more responsibility for their own learning. While Education Minister, Mary Hanafin, TD, would acknowledge[12] that the NCCA 'have come up with various imaginative [Leaving Certificate] reforms', she rejected what she called their 'Rolls Royce option' on the grounds that the 'Leaving Cert is an independent, objective assessment that is well regarded internationally. People have great confidence in it, and we should not undermine it' (Sean Flynn, *The Irish Times*, 18 January, 2006).

Redolent of Goodson's (2001) third phase, involving re-negotiation of 'the balance of internal and external forces [since] neither teacher-driven nor state-driven change appears to work' (2001, p. 54), the statutory NCCA moved beyond the preparation of curriculum documents to engaging with the wider education community and relevant research and working in collaboration with teachers and schools. Their next big undertaking was the publication of a discussion paper on junior cycle

curriculum (NCCA, 2010), drawing heavily on a commissioned longitudinal study of the experience of a cohort of second-level students over the whole post-primary experience (Smyth, 2009). This radical paper, the launching pad for the Framework for Junior Cycle (JCF) (DES, 2015), re-imagined the junior cycle curriculum, seeing schools as 'centres of innovation and change' and teachers as 'key agents of change' (NCCA, 2010, pp. 15–16). Some key features of the Framework include: a strong focus on learning and learning outcomes rather than subjects and knowledge; a new emphasis on school and student agency and curriculum flexibility; the reduction of core subjects from seven to three along with a new emphasis on Wellbeing; and a compromise attempt to introduce school-based assessment alongside external exams. The collaborative approach of the associated teacher development programme (JCT) recognises the importance of curriculum coherence, teacher empowerment, constructivist pedagogy and active student engagement in learning (Kirk, 2013). Meanwhile, recently revised Leaving Certificate subject syllabi, as with junior cycle, take the form of curriculum specifications, with a strong emphasis on learning outcomes and key skills. A wide-ranging review of senior cycle has been ongoing since 2016 and its publication is imminent.

In summary then, Irish curriculum reform has been piecemeal and fragmented in an environment characterised by top-down curriculum reform rather than teacher- and school-centred curriculum change. However, there have been some interesting exceptions, including the introduction of progressivist child-centred primary education beginning with *Curaclam na Bunscoile*, the introduction of the Junior Certificate as a replacement for the two-tiered junior cycle, and the subsequent introduction of the FJC with its focus on student agency, curriculum flexibility and learning outcomes rather than subject content, along with increased levels of collaboration between the main agencies involved. The main sticking points have included reform of the high-stakes Leaving Certificate Established and teacher union resistance to school-based assessment. These various issues and developments are located in context in Part Two.

Part Two: Curriculum in Context

As Cornbleth ([1990](#), p. 6ff) observes, 'curriculum as practice cannot be understood adequately or changed substantially without attention to its setting or context… When it is de-contextualized this leads to discrepancies between curriculum documents and curriculum practice [and] repeated disappointments with … technocratic curriculum change efforts'. The OECD ([1991](#)) drew attention to the influence of Ireland's colonial past and its political, economic and geographic peripherality on its public values and education system. As Lee ([1989](#), p. 627) remarked, the 'dependency syndrome that had wormed its way into the Irish psyche during the long centuries of foreign dominance [meant that] the Irish mind was enveloped in, and to some extent suffocated by, the English mental embrace'.[13] Irish education 'operates within the Anglo-American zone of influence for reasons of history, culture, language, colonisation and trade [and] displays many of the features of its powerful neo-liberal neighbours in terms of its social, health and educational policies' (Lynch et al., [2012](#), p. 5).

Meanwhile, 'cultural strangers' (O'Sullivan, [1992](#)) such as the OECD and the European Union (EU) have exercised considerable influence, with 'much of the pressure for change… emanat[ing] from outside the system' (Benson, [1985](#), p. 14). Furthermore, Ireland's multi-seat, Proportional Representation, electoral system is a recipe for populism, with the result that Ministers, as 'corporate soles', have tended to behave conservatively and civil servants have been reluctant to challenge the *status quo*. Irish policymaking has been characterised by fragmentation (O'Halpin, [1992](#); Lee, [1989](#)) both within and between government departments and by a rhetoric/reality dichotomy (Kane, [1996](#); Kearney, [1985](#); Lee, [1989](#))[14] that is reminiscent of John Healy's ('Backbencher' in *The Irish Times*) cynicism regarding the 'verbalism' of Irish political culture and De Valera's unflattering anecdote regarding the difference between the Irish and the English (see Lee, [1989](#), p. 109) to the effect that in England one could say what one liked as long as one did the right thing, whereas in Ireland one could do what one liked as long as one said the right thing!

Two aspects of the Irish context that are of particular relevance to curriculum policy and practice are now considered—anti-intellectual bias and the strong focus on the development of human capital.

Anti-Intellectual Bias

Notwithstanding Ireland's well-deserved international reputation for literature, commentators (e.g., Lee, 1989; Garvin, 1985) bemoan the quality of Irish intellectual life and this weakness is usually laid at the schoolhouse door. For example, Garvin (2004, p. 162) argues that 'the educational system achieved the intellectual isolation of Ireland much more effectively than Protection achieved economic isolation', while Ryan (1970) suggests that our formal education system stifled rather than fostered imagination. Meanwhile, Hogan (1983, p. 46) concludes that Irish secondary education involved 'a resolute censorship of the imagination' resulting in 'averageness' and 'intellectual anaemia' where '"to be" is to be "like the rest"'. Sugrue (1997) concludes that Irish primary teachers are characterised by a 'widespread anti-intellectualism where "docile minds"… appear to be the object of the system', while Kiely (2003, p. 95) concludes from her interviews with post-primary teachers that they regarded research publications and educational theory as "irrelevant" and "not practical". This mentality would appear to have infiltrated the Department of Education with former Ministerial Adviser Pat Keating recounting to the author that 'the Education White Paper was written in the time stolen from the normal running of the Department' (Gleeson, 2010, p. 77).

Whereas the Labour government of the day saw the introduction of comprehensive schooling in post-War England very much in ideological and egalitarian terms, Irish Education Ministers Colley and Hillery did not see their efforts on this side of the Irish Sea in similar terms. As Hillery put it (Dáil Reports, vol. 203, col 684, 11/6/1963), 'to do what is possible is my job and not to have the whole matter upset because of some principle or ideal'.[15] Lee (1989, p. 640ff) bemoans the 'enthusiastic and uncritical' response of the 'official mind' to the 'ideology of high technology' and the 'cult of relevance' and the failure to ask: 'relevant to

what?'. The OECD (1991, p. 36) remarked that Irish education had 'expanded in piecemeal fashion in order to respond to importunate pressures [resulting in a] patchwork of structures and processes', while Cromien's (2000, p. 2) review of the operations of the Department of Education concluded that 'detailed day-to-day work … has to be given priority over long-term strategic thinking [with the result that] the urgent drives out the important'.

Whereas *Curaclam na Bunscoile* was informed by progressivist ideologies, the Irish post-primary curriculum lacked a coherent, philosophically inspired 'world view or a well-grounded set of values' (Mulcahy, 1981, p. 127). When the Interim CEB attempted to fill this lacuna at a time when the notion of curriculum as a selection from the culture (Lawton, 1986) was gaining traction, its Deputy CEO recalled tensions at Board level 'between a "right-wing economic philosophy"' and a "left-wing socio-educational orientation" (Gleeson, 2010, p. 160), with the result that a 'very truncated version of curriculum as a cultural manifestation' (ibid.) appeared in the Board's final report, *In Our Schools* (Interim CEB, 1986).

As Fahey (1992, p. 252) remarks, the Irish education system 'gave unparalleled ownership, access and local control to the church, while the burden of the financial and central administration responsibility was carried by the state'. Church control is frequently invoked to explain the absence of an intellectual rationale for Irish education (see Lynch, 1985; Ó Buachalla, 1988; O'Flaherty, 1992; O'Donoghue, 1999). Until recently, primary teacher education was provided in Church-owned institutions, while National University of Ireland Education Departments, particularly the Psychology and Philosophy of Education, were also under clerical control, with Chairs of Education remaining unfilled for long periods and a reluctance to appoint sociologists of education. Against that background, Coolahan (1984, p. 4) observes that 'university education departments were in a weak position to contribute' to education debates, while Lynch (1985) characterises Irish teachers as 'generally practice-oriented [who] have lacked in their training the development of a critical intellectual tradition'.

At a time when vocations to the religious life were declining and post-primary enrolments were increasing, O'Connor[16] (1968) challenged the

Catholic Church's education policies. Noting that the role of the lay teacher in church-owned schools was very much that of the 'hired man' (sic), he wanted the religious in education 'as partners, not always as masters' (ibid., p. 249). With accelerating social and demographic changes, there is a strong move today towards inter- and non-denominational education, while the influence of the lay partners (Department of Education and Science (DES), Teacher Unions, school management bodies…) has increased exponentially and the role of the clergy is primarily one of trusteeship (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1995; Coolahan, 2006).

It is important to recognise however that the Church's role in Irish education may be more complex than is sometimes recognised. Lee (1989, p. 610) observes that 'self-interest of the dominant power groups rather than clerical hostility to independent thought offers the best explanation of "Irish intellectual retardation"' while O'Sullivan (1992, 2005) argues that, in the day-to-day operation of schools, it is market rather than religious values that predominate. On the other hand, Garvin (2004, p. 159) highlights 'the dead hand of the Catholic Church's obsessions with religious education, ideological control and patronage'.

Influence on Curriculum

The 'official' definition of curriculum[17] at post-primary level (Department of Education and Science, 2004, p. 4) as 'the list of those subjects[18] in which instruction is given to the pupils … in courses approved by the Minister', is indicative of an uncritical acceptance of an education tradition where 'teachers and the educational community are generally confronted by a bald list of required and approved subjects with their syllabuses and examination requirements' (OECD, 1991, p. 91). McKernan (1991, p. 171) notes the presence of an 'unshakeable belief in subjects as the curriculum', while Mulcahy (1981, p. 56) highlights the failure 'to show how the aims of a particular subject tie up with the overall aims of [the system]'. A retired Senior Inspector remarked to the author that the 'Interim Curriculum and Examinations Board had to be invented' because 'the inspectorate all stayed in their subject boxes' (Gleeson, 2010, p. 94).

This reified understanding of *the* curriculum as document has permeated official thinking in relation to curriculum reform. In conversation with the author, both Trant and Ó Donnabháin (Gleeson, 2010, p. 101) recalled that it was commonplace during the 1970s for senior members of the Inspectorate to ask: "… and when will you have finished developing the curriculum?" Callan (2006, p. 203) argues that this reified conception of curriculum 'focuses attention on design issues in curriculum construction [such as] content selection and assessment matters [while the] school context into which these new developments are to be implemented received little critical attention'. This technicist mentality, which is indicative of the strong influence of the Anglo-Saxon/ American curriculum culture in Ireland (Gleeson, 2021), is reflected in the dominance of bureaucratic rather than critical and independent (see McDonald, 2000) approaches to curriculum evaluation, in an environment where it is commonplace for the Department to conduct evaluations of its own programmes. A similarly technical mentality was evident in the official and public disinterest in the North Mayo/Sligo Transition from School to Work project (Kealy, 1982) due to its emphasis on process rather than product and its unwillingness to produce curriculum materials, and more recently, in the centrality of measurable performance goals in successive Education Strategy Statements in response to the EU's Lisbon Agenda (Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin, 2009).

While the 1980 White Paper defined curriculum in terms of 'the totality of learning experiences to which the pupil is exposed at school or in association with the school' (Department of Education, 1980, p. 43), it quickly added that, 'for the purposes of this chapter … curriculum will be taken to mean simply the range of subjects, with their individual syllabi, that are approved for study at a particular level' (ibid.). The Education White Paper (DES, 1995, pp. 7–8) includes a 'Philosophical Framework' that recognises the duty of the State to promote 'the full, holistic and lifelong development of the person… the centrality of our intellectual and cultural heritage… and the unique learning needs of each individual'. It also includes an enlightened definition of curriculum, encompassing 'the content, structure and processes of teaching and learning, which the school provides in accordance with its educational objectives and values' (ibid., p. 19). This White Paper places the learner 'at the centre of the

educational process' and portrays 'high quality' learning in terms of 'the quality of *the* curriculum, teaching and assessment and the quality of teachers in schools' (ibid., p. 9; author's italics). The ensuing Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) (Section 30) however offers a minimalist, reified, definition of curriculum where 'the Minister shall prescribe the curriculum for recognised schools [including] the subjects to be offered, the syllabus and associated instruction time for each subject and the guidance and counselling provision'.

With regard to the alleged role of the Church in our anti-intellectual proclivity, Irish educational thought has been influenced by the scholastic philosophy tradition with its roots in Aristotelian philosophy and its emphasis on 'man as a rational animal' and the intrinsic worth of intellectual activity. Meanwhile, the 1960 Report of the Council of Education (Post-Primary) saw the school in terms of cultural and religious transmission where the ultimate purpose of education was the religious, moral, intellectual and physical development of the whole person as expressed by the Conference of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools (1985, p. 115) while the OECD (1991, p. 68) would describe Irish post-primary curriculum as a 'derivation from the "classical humanist" tradition'. The preamble to *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (Department of Education, 1971, p. 12) stated that each 'human being is created in God's image. He (sic) has a life to be lived and a soul to be saved. Education is therefore concerned not only with life but with the purpose of life'. From the perspective of second-level education, the uncritical nature of the prevailing environment was reflected in Hannan and Shortall's (1991, p. 16) observation that the 'general aims of secondary education seem to be so taken for granted, or its values so deeply institutionalised, as not to require articulation or justification'.

As evidenced by their submission to the National Education Convention, apart from their engagement with Social, Personal and Health Education issues, Church representatives have been primarily concerned in recent times with ownership and control matters rather than curriculum and pedagogy issues. For example, Bishop McKiernan, Chairman of the Education Commission of Catholic Bishops (1974–1991) saw curriculum (meaning syllabus) reform as 'something laid down by the Department and accepted usually without comment…

The Bishops were happy with the curriculum as it was when taught within the atmosphere of Catholic schools … We're a bit like the police, we come in after the deed has been done' (Gleeson, 2010, p. 255). As O'Donoghue (1999, p. 149) observes, 'in concentrating much of its energy on ensuring that new management structures allowed it to maintain a major foothold in education, the Church lost much of its influence in the curriculum'. For example, Lynch (1985, p. 13) notes the disparity between 'the rhetoric' of Catholic teaching regarding the importance of educating the whole person and 'the realities of our institutions'. While the Conference of Major Religious Superiors (CMRS) Education Office (1989) highlighted the social divisiveness and ill-effects of the practice of streaming, it appears that some religious secondary schools remain reluctant to discontinue the practice of streaming and to admit students with learning and/or behavioural difficulties.

It is important to acknowledge however that some senior Church leaders have addressed philosophical questions regarding the purpose of education. The Archbishop of Dublin (McNamara, 1987, p. 71), redolent of TS Eliot, advised teachers that their 'role [was] to prepare your pupils for life… pupils cannot be satisfied with mere information, with knowledge of facts, methods and techniques. They are seeking a meaning and purpose in life'. Starting from the position that 'it is imperative that we should have a clear philosophy to guide us in the choices we make about education in an unpredictable world' (ibid., p. 4), Bishop Donal Murray (1991) identified the need for balance and integration between the material and spiritual, between facts and values, between preparation for a job and the development of the person and established five elements of a philosophy of education: wholeness, truth, respect, justice and freedom.

Focus on Human Capital

Sean Lemass, who became Taoiseach in 1959, saw education as fundamental to reforming the Irish economy (Harford & Fleming, 2018). When Sean O'Connor[19] and Sean MacGearailt[20] attended the OECD's Washington Conference on Human Capital in 1961, they volunteered Ireland's participation in a pilot scheme that involved a survey of trends

in Irish education. This culminated in the publication of *Investment in Education* (IIE) (OECD/Department of Education, 1966). O'Connor (1986, p. 62) would recall that the Washington Conference introduced 'a conviction of the importance of education in economic growth to the extent that education was canvassed as the most important factor in economic recovery' and Coolahan (1981, p. 165) describes the publication of *IIE* as 'one of the foundation documents of modern Irish education'. O'Sullivan (1992, p. 449ff) argues that the Department of Finance used *IIE* as 'a means of extending and legitimating a paradigmatic shift' where education was seen as investment in people for economic gain, so that 'it was necessary to operate within the human capital paradigm… to be given an audience within the policy community' (ibid., p. 464).

The concerns of economists with human capital production have been very influential in Irish educational thought (Lee, 1989; O'Sullivan, 2005). O'Connor (1986, p. 62) remarked that the positivist discourse of economists, 'based on empirical data dislodged the pedagogue … as the native educational authority' while the OECD (1991, p. 38) observed that Irish Ministers for Education were required to negotiate vital decisions 'among several ministries, including the Department of Finance, which has notable clout'. For example, when Minister O'Malley announced his 'free secondary education scheme' in 1966 without first obtaining his Department's approval, the Secretary of that Department expressed astonishment that such a major change in educational policy should be announced by the Minister, not at a party or government press conference, but at a weekend seminar organised by the National Union of Journalists.

Technological functionalism found a hospitable environment in the depressed economic climate of the 1980s where, as we have seen, there was little appetite for critical analysis of education policy. For example, then Minister Hussey (1990, p. 52) noted in her diary entry for 14 August 1983 that Finance 'demanded that we take £68 million off our [budget] figures, which seems to be total nonsense considering both the rising numbers at all levels and pay deals that the Government has already entered into'. As her Ministerial Adviser, John Harris, recalled, 'while the Taoiseach wanted to see change in education, the money wasn't there' (Gleeson, 2010, p. 36). According to Pat Keating, Minister Breathnach's

Adviser, when the student population was declining during the nineties, the Department of Finance sought to reclaim the resulting demographic dividend (ibid.).

Following the Maastricht Treaty, education was incorporated 'within major social development programmes' (Cussen, 1995) and Niamh Bhreathnach (Minister for Education, 1993–1997) argued[21] that 'money spent by government [on education] is investment in human capital which has paid off very handsomely'. Speaking at the National Education Convention (NEC) the Department Secretary remarked that 'the return from [education] expenditure provides the source of future economic growth' (Department of Education, 1993, p. 5). Meanwhile, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC, 1993) and Social Research Institute (ESRI) argued that investment in education promoted economic growth by 'enhancing the productivity of the labour force [and] increasing labour force participation' (Fitzgerald, 1998, p. 40).

It was commonplace during the first decade of the new millennium for politicians to suggest that investment in education was one of the main reasons for the Celtic Tiger. However, as former Minister Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, stated in her *Irish Times* column, while it 'may suit us to believe that [the] high level of education within our workforce… puts us in an impregnable position… for the vast majority of jobs a narrow set of trainable skills is what is required, and if those skills can be delivered by a country where wages are one-eighth the European going rate and where industrial unrest is unheard of, so much the better'. While Lee (1998, p. 27) saw 'our allegedly superior education system' as a 'permissive factor' in the boom, he did not see it as 'decisive'. Remarking that 'everything that could go right simultaneously has gone right', he suggested that, regardless of 'how good our education is…. if we were to lose… the dozen leading American firms…. our exports would plummet and our prospects would turn bleak at a stroke' (ibid.).

The twin goals of *IIE*—equality of opportunity and economic development—have dominated European Union (EU) and Irish Education and Training policies, with Ireland's Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) being inspired by the Lisbon Agenda ambition that the European Union would, over ten years, 'become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic

growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' (EU, 2000). The SMI, with its concern for human capital development and value for money, meant that performance indicators and contractual accountability became dominant features of our Education Strategy Statements (Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin, 2009).

Influence on Curriculum

Notwithstanding the economic difficulties and very high emigration levels of post-Independence Ireland (Garvin, 2004; Lee, 1989), the 1962 Council of Education Report, which was published a few years before *IIE*, would characterise the existing post-primary curriculum as 'of the grammar school type, synonymous with general and humanist education and appropriate for the inculcation of religious beliefs and values which was the dominant purpose of the schools' (Coolahan, 1981, p. 81), while dismissing plans to expand free secondary education as 'untenable, utopian, socially and pedagogically undesirable and economically impossible' (Ó Buachalla, 1988, p. 68).

Since the publication of *IIE* however, Irish education policy has been driven by considerations of human capital including 'technical knowledge and skill acquisition … with priority attached to cognitive development' (Hannan, 1987, p. 164). As Fuller (1990) observes, the educational ideal of the 'cultivated man' began to be replaced by that of the technical expert or the 'specialist', with instrumental, utilitarian, considerations becoming 'taken for granted assumptions' within Irish education discourse. Lindsay[22] (1990) called for the removal of the dichotomy between education and training, increased involvement of firms in school activities, promotion of Enterprise Education and improved languages provision, while the National Economic and Social Council (NESC, 1993) expressed concerns regarding Ireland's loss of competitive advantage due to a shortage of technical skills. Drudy and Lynch (1993, p. 214) concluded that 'Irish education has been guided for the last twenty-five years by the principles of human capital theory, informed by what might be called technical functionalism', while O'Sullivan (1989, p. 261) would observe that 'liberal functionalism … persists as the only salient

paradigm for linking school and society'. However, he North Mayo/Sligo Transition from School to Work Project (1978–1982), sponsored by the European Commission and the Irish Foundation for Human Development, challenged the prevailing technological functionalist ideology by raising fundamental questions about the future of employment and the nature of work. Meanwhile, citing Eisner's observation that the poet, the painter, the composer, the playwright, as well as the physicist, the chemist, the botanist, the astronomer, have something to teach us, Lane (1991, p. 11), calls for 'an explicit system of values that transcended the utilitarian'.

In today's prevailing environment the focus moves inexorably towards school league tables and 'getting into college' (McCormack et al., 2020). Carl O'Brien reports (*The Irish Times*, 30/11/20) that a recent OECD review concluded that the 'The Leaving Cert is "too narrow and rigid" for Ireland's aspirations of delivering a learning experience to the highest international standards… and [that] its main focus seems to be acting as a filter for entry into higher education'. This instrumental mentality was evidenced by Minister O'Rourke's introduction, purely on grounds of administrative convenience, of three bands for each letter grade in 1993[23] and by the focus on CAO points totals rather than individual subject grades when LC results were announced during the COVID19 (2020) Leaving Certificate.

Summary

When curriculum is considered in its Irish socio-cultural context, this reinforces Cornbleth's (1990) view of curriculum as contextualised social process. With its post-colonial mindset, anti-intellectual bias and populist politics, Irish curriculum thought lacks a well-developed philosophical basis that might supersede the influences of scholastic thought and Classical Humanism. Notwithstanding the adoption of a progressivist primary curriculum, *the* post-primary curriculum is seen as a document that sets out a course to be covered, just like a handicap steeplechase, where top weight is invariably carried by students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The waning power and control of the Churches has created

a philosophical void that is filled by a technological functionalist ideology characterised by an uncritical mentality and an overarching focus on human capital production. This ideology provides a welcome home for globalisation influences, market values and neo-liberal desirables such as key skills and learning outcomes along with the performativity promoted in the Strategic Management Initiative. The vociferous opposition of the teacher unions to school-based assessment resonates with a pedagogy of knowledge transmission rather than student-centric learning (Gilleece et al., 2009). This prevailing culture helps explain the paucity of curriculum and action research initiatives (Gleeson, 2010; McNiff & Collins, 1994) and the neglect of Curriculum Studies[24] in initial and continuing teacher education programmes. One of the cumulative effects of these contextual factors is that Irish education has been subject to little critical questioning in an environment where curriculum has been understood as a listing of subjects and topics that were mistakenly regarded as value free.

Part Three: Evolution of Curriculum Policy and Culture

This evolution is considered from the two related perspectives of changing curriculum policy and a shifting curriculum culture.

Curriculum Policy

As one might reasonably expect, certain aspects of Irish curriculum policy, practice, structures, and content have been evolving over the past century. Three separate agencies now share responsibility for curriculum design, implementation and assessment, and the NCCA is based on the principle of partnership between the main stakeholders. There has been, a shift towards a progressivist curriculum ideology at primary level, while the same can be said of Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate Applied, and the FJC, (DES, 2015) which has a strong focus on students as learners and Wellbeing. There is an increasing focus on generic skills such as critical and creative thinking, being personally effective and

communicating (e.g. NCCA, 2008; DES, 2015). While opportunities for action research and school-based curriculum development have been limited, the Department of Education no longer exercises curriculum control to the extent that it did for the first sixty years of Independence.

Most importantly, with the advent of the statutory NCCA, awareness of the complexity of sustainable curriculum change has increased. In its enlightened discussion document, *Leading and Supporting Change in Schools* (NCCA, n,d, a), teachers are seen as 'agents of change' rather than 'purveyors of knowledge and coaches for examinations' as they had been described by the OECD Examiners (1991, p. 63). The evidence-based approach adopted by the statutory NCCA is reflected in the heightened awareness of the international literature on curriculum change (rather than reform) that is evident in this Discussion Paper, which debunks the myth that change is manageable, controllable, and 'amenable to an input/output model' (NCCA, n.d.-a, p. 13), challenges 'teachers' fundamental beliefs, dispositions, and habits' (ibid., p. 14), and recognises teacher individuality and their continuing professional needs, as well as the importance of distributed leadership in schools as 'learning organisations'. Teachers and school management are portrayed as the 'gatekeepers of policy change [who] should be closely involved in policy development' (ibid., p. 16).

In certain other respects, however, little has changed. The opposition of the post-primary teacher unions to school-based assessment is stronger now than at the time of the ICE Committee. Curriculum debate remains dominated by technical concerns such as modes and techniques of assessment and the tweaking of the CAO Points System so as to promote participation in STEM subjects. In an environment characterised by performativity and governance by numbers (Grek, 2009), comparative international data has become the focus of much attention. For example, the Department of Education and Skills was motivated by concerns regarding the performance of Irish students in the OECD's 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) to introduce a *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy* (DES, 2011) in the interests of international competitiveness. Notwithstanding the notable inattention to cross-curriculum integration in our siloed, disciplines-based, curriculum, this new strategy proposed that 'teaching literacy and

numeracy is integrated across the curriculum' (ibid., p. 44). Reflecting much of the critical commentary on 'No Child Left Behind' in the United States and NAPLAN in Australia, Zhao (2020) draws together a significant body of international research-based criticism of PISA from the perspectives of its 'underlying view of education, its implementation, and its interpretation and impact on education globally' (ibid., p. 245).

Over the years the focus has moved inexorably towards school league tables and the challenges faced by young people around 'getting into college' (McCormack et al., 2020). As the most recent OECD review (O'Brien, *Irish Times*, November 30th, 2020) concluded, the 'The Leaving Cert is "too narrow and rigid" for Ireland's aspirations of delivering a learning experience to the highest international standards… and its main focus seems to be acting as a filter for entry into higher education'. This instrumental mentality was particularly evident in student and media reactions to the 2020 Calculated Leaving Certificate Grades system[25] where the focus was almost exclusively on CAO points totals rather than academic grades in individual subjects. Given the high-stakes nature of Leaving Certificate Examination grades, it is all the more surprising that so little attention has been devoted to the difficulties of establishing examination performance standards, to complex issues regarding the adjustment of marking schemes, and to the use of attainment referencing when Chief Examiners are not happy with the distribution of grades, so that that students are graded on their overall achievement in the subject rather than clearly defined standards and criteria (see Gleeson, forthcoming).

On a different front, while the controversy surrounding the Exploring Masculinities curriculum intervention afforded clear opportunities for 'a "public debate" [this] came to be seen as extended attention to particular [segmented] aspects' (Mac an Ghaill et al., 2004, p. 142) such as domestic violence, male suicide and singular feminism. Indeed, the difficulty of sustaining a weekly education Supplement in any of the Irish daily or Sunday broadsheets is indicative of the paucity of education contestation and debate. For example, while *The Irish Times* publishes a lengthy Health Supplement each week, various education supplements such as the *Education Times*, *Transition Times* and *Education and Living* have fallen by the wayside. The contextual factors identified earlier contribute to the

general absence of critical contestation—the failure to develop a philosophy of education; the abortive debate on the relationship between curriculum and culture; the politics of sectoral interest, the prevalence of fragmentation; and the focus on individual subjects at the expense of whole curriculum. Whereas curriculum objectives had been neglected for the first seventy years of Independence (Mulcahy, 1989), each reformed junior cycle subject includes large numbers of prescribed learning outcomes[26] This is in sharp contrast with traditional subject syllabuses where subject content was spelled out in considerable detail, while limited or even no attention was given to curriculum objectives or assessment. Meanwhile, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), where behavioural learning outcomes play a key role in credit transferability and student mobility, was adopted uncritically by the Higher Education sector some twenty years ago (Gleeson, 2013; Gleeson et al., 2021). This development, which will inevitably influence future teachers' thinking, arises in a context where the sole reference to curriculum in the Universities Act simply states that 'each university shall have an academic council which shall… control the academic affairs of the university, including the curriculum of, and instruction and education provided by, the university'.

Within the confines of the technical paradigm, education is treated in isolation from 'its cultural and socio-cultural contexts' (Cornbleth, 1990, p. 17), while curriculum, is seen as a document that is apolitical and value-free. Knowledge is objective, abstract, independent of time and place, and packaged neatly in subjects. *The* curriculum is seen in terms of a 'delivery system' (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 15), as 'a means to given ends' (ibid., p. 35), namely:

> … an educand who will behave according to the image of a person who has learnt what we set out to teach. To accomplish this, we must control both the learning environment and the learner. It is no surprise that educators talk of classroom management … [and that] one of the key words associated with such understandings of curriculum is 'objectives'. (Grundy, 1987, p. 20)

In this environment, curriculum problems are seen 'as technical problems to be solved by educational technology [such as] programmed instruction and packaged curricula[27]' (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 15). This approach 'tends to perpetuate myths of curriculum neutrality and benevolence' while ignoring 'questions about the nature of knowledge' and treating knowledge as 'an object that can be reproduced and given to students [and whose] possession is indicated by reproducing, recognising, or applying the appropriate knowledge on a pencil and paper test' (ibid., p. 18ff). For example, at a time when core curriculum was being radically re-conceptualised in terms of 'statements of learning' and 'key skills', debate regarding the FJC was dominated by student assessment and accreditation issues (Gleeson et al., 2020). This progressive and innovative Framework asserts 'that no single assessment event can provide evidence of the full range of student achievement [and that] the state-certified examination is just one element of a balanced, broader approach to assessment of junior cycle students' (DES, 2015, p. 35) which will contribute to the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). However, indicative of our Anglo-Saxon American curriculum culture, Irish educational discourse is replete with references to the terminal 'Junior Certificate examination' as if that is all that matters. Notwithstanding the improved working relationship between the NCCA and the State Examinations Commission (SEC), which has replaced the Examinations Branch of the DES, the assessment tail continues to wag the curriculum dog. (see Gleeson, forthcoming). While the NCCA is a National Council for Assessment as well as Curriculum, it is an advisory body, and the SEC has responsibility for the very complex task of attempting to assess, using external examinations, students' achievement of the Council's curriculum intentions.

Based on her experience of the Humanities Curriculum Project, Rudduck (1991, p. 32) suggests that we should 'try to see change not as a technical problem but as a cultural problem and … stop talking just about the management of change … and start talking instead about the meaning of change'. Drawing on multiple curriculum change cases, Fullan (2016, p. 23) identifies the crucial importance of 'reculturing', where 'teachers come to question and change their beliefs and habits'. While curriculum change has been seen, in the Irish context, as

something to be managed, there are hopeful indications that our curriculum culture is evolving in the direction suggested by Rudduck. For example, whereas the introduction of the Junior Certificate in the late 1980s basically involved the design of new subject syllabi by NCCA Course Committees,[28] the statutory NCCA's review of junior cycle curriculum twenty years later draws on research and widespread consultation.[29] This changed approach, which involved collaboration with volunteer schools during the piloting of key ideas, is indicative of the NCCA's belief that 'local innovation delivers better results than centralised command and control models' (NCCA, 2010, p. 5).

The ensuing FJC represents a significant evolution in curriculum thinking. As against the traditional focus on subject content, 'learning to learn' is one if its key principles (DES, 2015), and it recognises the integral relationship of teaching, learning and assessment where the teacher is seen as 'leader and facilitator of learning in the classroom' (DES, 2015, p. 29). The Framework's 24 statements of learning, which effectively constitute the new core curriculum, set out what 'students should know, understand, value and be able to do at the end of junior cycle' (2015, p. 5) and they are seen as 'central to planning for the students' experience of, and the evaluation of the school's junior cycle programme' (ibid., p. 12). The discourse of curriculum as document has been replaced by one of 'curriculum framework'. This facilitates curriculum flexibility while the FJC's use of 'curriculum *and* assessment' (author's italics) conjunctively is also significant. Redolent of *Leading and Supporting Change in Schools* (NCCA, n.d.-a), the teacher is seen as 'leader and facilitator of learning' (DES, 2015, p. 28), as curriculum maker, in an environment where greater autonomy and flexibility is devolved to schools, with freedom to 'decide what should be included in their junior cycle programmes and how it should be organised' (DES, 2015, p. 50). Meanwhile, the NCCA (2019) Senior Cycle Review document talks of 'curriculum/curricular components' without a single reference to *the* curriculum. The associated research and consultation process (Smyth et al., 2019) focused on stakeholders' opinions regarding structural issues such as pathways, flexibility and reporting arrangements as well as their perceptions of curriculum purpose and their concerns regarding student wellbeing, inclusion and assessment.

Hybrid Curriculum Culture

Curriculum culture (Westbury, 2000; Hopmann, 2007; Deng, 2018) provides a valuable lens through which to view curriculum policy and practice. Irish curriculum discourse, particularly in the sixty years immediately after Independence, reflects a deep-seated Anglo-Saxon/American[30] culture. The continuing strength of this curriculum culture was evidenced recently in *The Irish Times* by the trenchant demands of educationalists for extensive syllabus documentation regarding depth of treatment and examination specifications as well as notes for teachers (Gleeson, 2021). On the other hand, the classical German culture of Didaktik,[31] associated with Pinar's (2004) curriculum reconceptualization, and with the active Latin verb *currere*,[32] derives from Bildung. The primary concern of Bildung is self-formation of the learner, 'the ongoing process of personal and social maturation' (Stanley, 2011, p. 214), in an environment where 'subject matter is simply a tool that enables the development of the learner's individuality' (Pantic & Wubbels, 2012, p. 65).

Two particularly strong features of Anglo-Saxon/American culture that remain very much in evidence in Ireland are now considered briefly—the use of pre-determined learning outcomes and the associated tradition of external examinations.[33] The shortcomings of pre-determined learning outcomes have been highlighted by Postman and Weingartner (1971), Stenhouse (1975), Knight (2001) and many others. When teachers engage in curriculum planning, they are primarily concerned with finding the best way to organise the learning experiences to fit the circumstances. On the other hand, rational curriculum planning (RCP) is based on the assumption of 'a determinate and linear universe in which the specialnesses of setting are irritants that science should rise above… [and this] fits well with the managerialisms that have been sent to the public sector and plays well as a populist political position' (Knight, 2001, p. 372). Whereas RCP maps an 'elegant pathway from goals, to objectives, delivery, reception and so on', important learning experiences 'such as creativity, innovation and flexibility depend on there being slack, spaces or spare capacity in a system' (ibid., p. 374). As Stenhouse (1975, p. 97) observes, while pre-determined learning outcomes are appropriate

for the schooling processes of training and instruction, 'the process model is more appropriate than objectives model in [the case of] knowledge and understanding' and that 'education as induction into knowledge is successful to the extent that it makes the behavioural outcomes of the students unpredictable' (ibid., p. 82).

Our inherited Anglo-Saxon/American curriculum culture also involves a strong dependency on external examinations and performativity. JCF contestation was dominated by student assessment issues rather than the differences between training, instruction and induction or the shift of focus from teaching to learning. The initial version of the JCF (DES, 2012, p. 18) stated that the existing Junior Certificate examination 'was to be replaced by a school-based approach to assessment'. The revised version of the Framework would elaborate on this aspiration that 'all assessment in junior cycle, formative or summative, moment-in-time or ongoing, SEC, NCCA or teacher-designed, should have as its primary purpose, the support of student learning' (DES, 2015, p. 35). Teacher union opposition to school-based assessment for the award of national qualification was unrelenting (e.g. TUI, 2012: MacPhail et al., 2018) however, with the ASTI insisting that the role of the teacher is one of student advocate rather than judge,[34] and the TUI (2012) expressing reservations regarding teacher preparedness, work overload and resourcing. When Education Minister Ruairi Quinn suggested the complete abolition of the state examinations and the introduction of school-based Junior Cycle Student Awards, teacher union opposition resulted in industrial action and school closures. Following a change of Minister, a "compromise plan" (Humphreys, 2015) was eventually arrived at involving different arrangements for schools depending on whether teachers were members of ASTI or TUI.

In the Anglo-Saxon/American cultural environment teachers are expected to 'deliver' and 'cover' *the* curriculum. Notwithstanding its meaning in horse breeding, the verb 'to cover' has little to do with the illumination of minds. In the Didaktik culture on the other hand, teaching without spiritual and character formation is not teaching at all and, for this reason, teachers are 'guaranteed professional autonomy' (Westbury, 2000, p. 17). As Hopmann (2015, p. 18) puts it, teachers are delusional if they think they can exercise substantial autonomy when the sequence

of lesson content is dictated by prescribed competence-based curricula. For him, in an Anglo-Saxon/American environment, teacher accountability is limited to 'gaps in the competence chain' and involves 'nothing more than an attempt … to nail jelly to the wall. All that gets stuck is the nail, the test, which in this case represents the yardstick, which then unabashedly becomes the actual goal of teaching'. Forty-five years on from the ICE Report, in an environment where assessment issues have dominated the junior cycle debate and where the meaning of Leaving Certificate achievement is increasingly defined in terms of CAO points associated with various higher education options, the appropriateness of this yardstick is increasingly open to question.

Conclusion

It is somewhat ironic that, while Ireland's curriculum policy and practice have naturally been influenced by its colonial past, insularity, and peripheral location, recent curriculum reforms have been heavily influenced by globalisation, internationalisation and market values (Ball, 1994; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Au, 2011; Tomlinson, 2018). For example, the FJC is heavily influenced by neo-liberal values such as 'modernization', twenty-first century skills and competencies, and learning outcomes (Gleeson et al., 2020). Similar trends are evident in recent senior cycle developments where syllabus documents have been replaced by curriculum specifications where student learning outcomes and key skills are central. Hopmann (2007, p. 120) believes however that 'the uniqueness of professional teaching gets lost in the one-sided focus on generalised competencies', while Deng (2018, p. 706) argues that Didaktik curriculum culture 'provides a viable alternative to the OECD's discourse on twenty-first century competencies'.[35]

As we commemorate the centenary of Irish Independence it is important to acknowledge that, from a curriculum perspective, much has changed (Gleeson, 2021). Notwithstanding the influence of Anglo-Saxon/American culture on Irish curriculum discourse and policy, the FJC, Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Applied are indicative of a shift away from traditional definitions and understandings of

curriculum. Meanwhile there is a growing recognition of the limitations of curriculum "reform" and the complexity of curriculum "change". While the FJC represents a hybrid of both curriculum cultures, there are inevitable tensions. These include the new focus on curriculum flexibility and school/teacher autonomy notwithstanding the FJC's dependency on pre-designed learning outcomes, and an over-dependency on external examinations in the senior cycle that encourage rote learning (Baird, Caro, Hopfenbeck, 2016) at a time when learning to learn is a key FJC value. Given the Irish penchant for rhetoric/reality dichotomies, the effectiveness of FJC implementation will have a major influence on the next phase in the evolution of Irish curriculum culture and policy, as will the relationship between curriculum policy and assessment practice. The burning question now is: whither the Leaving Certificate? Given the dilemma of how to allocate scarce university places and the priority afforded the development of human capital, the recent NCCA (2019, p. 5) senior cycle consultatitve document comes down on the side of 'growth and development rather than radical overhaul … evolution not revolution'. Meanwhile, we await, with great interest, the Minister's response to the NCCA's final recommendations for Leaving Certificate reform.

Notes

1. From a cultural perspective, a former secondary schools inspector recalled that 'members of the TIB believed that the job of the teacher was to lecture … they criticised teachers for getting pupils to talk too much in class and they turned out examination papers like Smarties'. Another contemporaneous source recalled that 'there was always a bit of touchiness between Floor 11 and the secondary sector … certain primary and secondary Inspectors regarded themselves as the cream … the secondary people had been to university [whereas] the TIB people were more practical' (see Gleeson, 2010, p. 305).
2. This replaced the Intermediate and Day Group Vocational Certificate. Whereas the former was provided in secondary schools at the end of three years, the latter was a feature of Vocational Schools.

3. A relatively small amount from an international perspective!

4. The paucity of research literature on these Centres is indicative of the general disinterest in school and teacher-based curriculum development at that time.

5. The CDU was jointly managed by City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee and the School of Education at Trinity College. The journal of the Irish Association for Curriculum Development, *Compass*, published in two issues each year from 1971 to 1993, was edited by Dr Tony Crooks, CDU Deputy Director and member of the Education Department at Trinity College.

6. As well as a small number of Vocational Education Committees.

7. Teacher Union nominees hold a majority of the places on these Committees.

8. Head of the Secretariat of Secondary Schools.

9. This rather unfortunate title would subsequently be changed to Junior Cycle Schools Programme.

10. Instead, the Junior Cycle Schools Programme, which had been developed at the CDU during the aforementioned EU Transition Projects was adapted. It remains in place at time of writing.

11. See Gleeson and Granville (1996).

12. *Irish Times* interview with Sean Flynn, 18 January 2006.

13. See also Hannan (1987) and Browne (1985) along with Clancy's (1995) observation that the role of the education system in social selection remained largely unchanged since colonial days.

14. Lee refers to the 'say/do dichotomy'.

15. Minister Bhreathnach, in an interview on RTÉ Radio 1, Sunday, 27 July 1997, recalled a conversation with Minister Hillery where he told her that in his time as Minister for Education, it 'was quite acceptable to go to the country for the summer and come back in September'.

16. Assistant Secretary at the Department of Education (1965–1975) and Secretary (1973–1975) in a celebrated paper in the Jesuit edited journal, *Studies*.

17. *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools*.

18. What an Assistant Chief Inspector called 'an anthology of subjects' (Gleeson, 2010, p. 92).

19. Assistant Secretary at the Department of Education.

20. Secretary at the Department of Education.

21. After her departure from office; RTÉ Radio 1, Sunday, 27 July 1997.

22. Education Department Secretary who also served as Chief Inspector for a time.
23. This practice was discontinued in 2017 when some eleven possible grades at both Higher and Ordinary levels were reduced to eight at each level.
24. Curriculum Studies only became a Teaching Council requirement in 2010, influenced by the presence of two 'curriculum people' on the relevant working group.
25. Introduced because of COVID19.
26. For example, English has 39 learning outcomes for the three years of junior cycle while Business Studies has 37.
27. Sometimes called "teacher proof".
28. See Gleeson (1989).
29. The ESRI was commissioned to conduct a longitudinal study.
30. Example of cross-country 'policy borrowing' in a globalised world where market values are in the ascendency as highlighted by Ball (1994), Rizvi and Lingard, (2010) Au (2011) and others.
31. Didaktik is not to be confused with didactic (as opposed to constructivist) instruction, a feature of the Anglo-Saxon tradition (e.g. Nie & Lau, 2010).
32. The running of the course.
33. Hopmann (2015, p. 17) regards the dominance of learning outcomes as the triumph of the psychology of learning over Didaktik.
34. Again, it is noteworthy that Stenhouse (1975, p. 96) believed that any 'process model rests on teacher judgement rather than teacher direction'.
35. At a more theoretical level, Englund (2015) makes the case for a deliberative curriculum, drawing on the work of Didaktik theorists as well as William Reid, Wesley Null, and others.

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4

Denominationalism, Secularism, and Multiculturalism in Irish Policy and Media Discourse on Public School Education

Akira Iwashita

Introduction

A liberal view of the development of the national education system of independent Ireland might see a linear progress from religious education—begun with Independence, guaranteed by the Department of Education's Rule 68, and dominated by Catholic schools due to the historic association of that religion with Irish nationalism—toward secular and nondenominational education under a multicultural European Union. However, this chapter reveals more complex changes in policy and public opinion. Although with the establishment and diversification of the boards of management and the abolition of Rule 68 a religious component in education is no longer required, popular support for denominational patronage has persisted and gained a 'liberal' outlook. Moreover, the emergence of a significant Muslim minority has

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precipitated an opposition to multiculturalism in education which coexists in complex tension with liberal and secularist sentiment. Suppression of Gaelic Catholic culture under British rule was followed by a movement from Catholic dominance in the provision of public services toward a nondenominational model at a certain level, but this is greatly complicated by persistent popular affection for Catholic cultural institutions, tensions surrounding multiculturalism within the EU, and domestic regionalism and class struggle.

In independent Ireland, the education system was governed not by the education law but by administrative measures. The Rules for National Schools which the Department of Education laid down are typical examples, especially Rule 68, introduced in 1965, which stipulated that religious instruction should be 'a fundamental part of the school course, and a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school' (Department of Education, 1965 38). This means that a religious ethos should be maintained in all primary schools, whose pupils are supposed to receive indirect religious education.

About half a century later, Rule 68 was abolished. On 28 January 2016, Jan O'Sullivan, Minister for Education and Skills, addressing the Annual Conference of the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) said:

> Earlier today I rescinded Rule 68. A circular has been published on the Department website accordingly. The Education Act of course continues to provide for the patron to determine the ethos of a school. But Rule 68 was a symbol. A symbol of our past, and not our future. The language in the Rule was archaic. And I'm glad it's gone. (Department of Education and Skills, 2016a)

The abolition of Rule 68 had its origins in the 2011 Irish general election. Fine Gael and Labour formed a coalition government and produced a programme for Government entitled 'Government for National Recovery, 2011–2016', which provided an account of their key objectives, including educational reform. About the system of denominational patronage especially, it said that the government 'will initiate a time-limited Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector to allow all stakeholders including parents to engage in open debate on change of patronage in

communities where it is appropriate and necessary' (Fine Gael and Labour Party, 2011 42). This forum was established together with an advisory group to oversee its work immediately after the formation of the new Government, and it published its final report in April 2012. The Advisory Group recommended 'that, as a first step and in line with the general view expressed at the Forum, Rule 68 should be deleted as soon as possible' (Coolahan et al., 2012, 80). Rule 68 was then abolished in conformity with the recommendations of the Advisory Group (Department of Education and Skills, 2016b).

First, let us consider the media reaction to the abolition of Rule 68. There existed multiple views regarding the abolition of Rule 68. Kevin Williams' position reflected wider, modest, support for abolition, which may be called representative of moderate conservatives.

> Rule 68 is unnecessary because the Education Act leaves it up to individual schools to decide their own belief systems. Its removal would not affect the right of denominational schools to maintain their religious ethos. (Williams, 2016)

Meanwhile, conservative advocacy groups denied the practical importance of abolition. The Catholic Bishops' Council for Education declared that 'the Catholic ethos of primary schools in Ireland is not based on the Rules for National Schools,' and that 'Faith schools exist because there are parents who wish to have their children educated in accordance with their religious convictions. If the ethos of these schools is undermined, then the rights of such parents are compromised.' The statement concludes by assuring Catholic parents that the Minister's announcement would 'not alter the ethos of Catholic schools,' which would 'continue to find expression in all aspects of the life of the school' (Irish Catholic Bishop's Conference, 2016).

This also means that the abolition of Rule 68 was regarded as stopping short of secularising the public education system. 'Teach Don't Preach,' a campaign for secular education by Atheist Ireland, took an apathetic attitude towards abolition: interestingly they agreed with the Catholic Church, their usual opponents, that removing Rule 68 would not remove the religious ethos from national schools. They suggested that Section 15

of the Education Act 1998 indirectly sanctions the religious integrated curriculum in publicly funded schools and that all schools in Ireland are obliged to uphold the ethos of their Patrons, which are usually religious institutions. 'This is a breach of human rights law and the Constitution, as it disrespects the inalienable rights of parents to respect for their philosophical convictions' (Teach Don't Preach, 2016).

However, Rule 68 had not only a practical but a symbolic function. In this respect, abolition was perceived as a threat to the Catholic clergy, who expressed their concern immediately after the publication of the Forum Report. Eamonn Conway, a theologian at the University of Limerick, said that the call for abolition of Rule 68 is 'based upon an inadequate and somewhat reductionist understanding of what education is about'. According to him, 'Rule 68 protects against the secular/liberal view of education that the nature of the human person and the meaning and goal of life are merely matters of arbitrary opinion' (Conway, 2013).

Thomas Deenihan, General Secretary of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA), also expressed his resentment at its Annual General Meeting. Deenihan interpreted the call for abolition as part of a broader campaign against the Catholic Church, whose contribution to the development of education in Ireland had been underestimated and unjustly attacked by people who believe that 'our Catholic schools are grim places of indoctrination which parents are being forced to send their children to against their will!' Deenihan declared, 'We must educate our politicians as to the contribution that our Catholic schools are making to their constituencies' (Deenihan, 2016). This concern was not groundless: far more than just modifying the rules for national schools, the Forum intended to implement a massive overhaul of the education system. Its report made specific recommendations for divesting school patronage or allowing Stand Alone schools to opt out of denominational religious education or faith formation.

As of 2012, 96 percent of primary schools in Ireland were under denominational patronage, that is, under the patronage of individual clergymen of different denominations. However, attitudes to denominational schools and religion in schools are changing. While the majority of parents still consider religious education to be of importance, there are significant minority preferences which are more liberal, secular, or even

atheistic. There is a significant division of opinion among contemporary school principals on the current pattern of school patronage. According to a survey by Education Together, cited in the Advisory Group Forum report, 87 percent of parents agree that school should 'focus on a broad range of belief systems and religions' (Coolahan et al., 2012 44). Nevertheless, this conceals a highly diverse body of opinion: about half consider 'school with a strong religious influence' important (*ibid.*), while 26 percent prefer 'school where the study of religion is minimised,' and it was 'important or very important' that religion not be part of the classroom curriculum for only 18 percent (*ibid*). Opinion was almost evenly divided on the question of the churches' control of schools. The Forum report also cited the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN)'s questionnaire survey of principal teachers on attitudes to school patronage and pluralism. This survey found that 51 percent of school principals thought the current models of patronage should undergo 'a major overhaul' or 'be completely replaced' (*ibid.*). 45 percent felt that churches might legitimately manage schools, and this should not change, whereas 52 percent felt that 'it is no longer appropriate to have schools owned/managed denominationally' (*ibid.*). Surveys regarding parental preferences on primary school patronage by the Department of Education in 2013 show that there is sufficient parental demand in 23 out of 38 areas for immediate change in existing school patronage. Parents expressed a preference for multi-denominational patronage as envisioned by Educate Together in 20 of these areas (Department of Education and Skills, 2013 8-9).

It must be added, however, that religious instruction and denominational patronage were important problems even in the nineteenth century. When the national school system was established in 1831, religious instruction was supposed to be strictly controlled and separated from literary instruction to provide mass schooling for all children regardless of their religious beliefs. The national and non-denominational system had, however, become denominational by the mid–nineteenth century. Denominational patronage and religious instruction were maintained and legislated for in post-Independence policy. The 1960s and 1970s saw this trend reinforced as illustrated by Rule 68, or perhaps this was not a linear development but a reaction against post-war liberalisation.

The aim of this chapter is to consider the development of the status of religious instruction and denominational patronage in national schools during the twentieth century. To what extent did the national school system become secular and liberal? Can we interpret the history of religious instruction and denominational patronage of national schools as a process of secularisation and liberalisation? The first part of this chatper will focus on the cooperative relationship between church and state in education policy from Independence to the 1960s. The second part will explore the conflict between church and state and, in particular, the encroachment of the latter on the autonomy of the former in education from the 1970s to the 1990s. The third part considers the persistence of denominational patronage and its new logic of justification after the 2000s as the Irish landscape has expanded to include new minority religions and ethnic groups. Finally, some general conclusions are drawn.

From Independence to the 1960s: The Establishment of Church Control

The period from Independence to the 1960s were characterised by a cooperative relationship between church and state in education policy, where 'cooperative' means state-recognised Catholic Church autonomy in education. Ministers of Education such as Eoin MacNeill (1922–25), John Marcus O'Sullivan (1926–32), and Thomas Derrig (1932–48) maintained this system of education which was controlled by the churches. Symbiotic and pragmatic relationships between church and state took the place of the complicated and tense relations between the British authorities and the Catholic Church before Independence. The state afforded the Catholic Church a pivotal position and let it provide services like medicine, childcare, and elderly care (Drudy & Lynch, 1993). The Catholic Church developed Catholic schools, hospitals, orphanages and other charitable institutions in the nineteenth century and continued to play an important role as a social service provider throughout the early twentieth century.

Although the Department of Education was established after Independence as the central government body in charge of educational administration, local educational authorities were never established. The McPherson education bill of 1911 proposed to establish local education committees, but it was scrapped amid furious opposition from religious nationalists and of course the Catholic Church, which would continue to resist state intervention and keep its control over primary and secondary education.

After Independence the Department of Education was established, and its First National Programme Conference (1922) and Second National Programme Conference (1926) provided a blueprint for curricular reforms at the primary school level which set the position of religious instruction within the curriculum. While these reports had strong nationalist leanings, holding that Irish language, history and geography were to be compulsory, they also stressed the importance of religion as an extra-curricular subject. The Second Report, in particular, made recommendations for religious education, which were followed in the rules and regulations for religious instruction established by the Department of Education in 1932.

> 63. Religious Instruction is a fundamental part of the school course and a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school. The teacher, while careful in the presence of children of different religious beliefs, not to touch on matters of controversy, should constantly inculcate in his pupils the practice of the moral virtues and keep before their minds the importance of fulfilling their duty to God, to their neighbour, and generally to the community in which they are placed. (Department of Education, 1932, 40)

These early documents clearly state that religion should be a central part of the curriculum. We can also find the prototype of Rule 68 in these regulations of 1932, because they suggest that the whole school course and work must be infused with a 'religious spirit', even if children of religious minorities have a right to opt out, not of this 'spirit' of course but only of pronouncements on 'matters of controversy' taught by teachers as fact.

Moreover, denominational control over public education was enhanced by the Irish Constitution of 1937. Article 44 provides protection for denominationalism, because it guarantees the rights of all denominations to run schools and organizations according to their beliefs and values. Some Articles, such as 42.1 and 44.4, could be understood as recognising a parent's right to raise children free from denominational education. However, the implied premise of the Constitution is that the Catholicism is *de facto* the Irish national religion.

Not that there was no call for reform. The Irish National Teacher's Organisation (INTO) published a plan in 1947 for overall reform of the education system (INTO, 1947). The plan called for the establishment of a central advisory body, which came into being as the Council of Education in 1950. However, the council chair and 25 percent of its members were Catholic clergy, and Richard Mulcahy, Minister of Education at the time, emphasised a cooperative relationship between church and state. The Council of Education published a report on primary education in 1954 and on secondary education in 1962, but these were conservative in character and did nothing but propose small modifications of the existing system.

This policy trend toward denominational control over public education and greater autonomy of churches was clarified and enhanced in this period. According to the report of the Council of Education (1954), 'the undenominational principle underlying the "system of national education" was obnoxious to our people,' but 'the outcome of that past struggle is that our primary schools to-day are essentially religious and denominational in character'. Despite the fact that public money was spent for management and maintenance of national schools, the Council calls them 'in the main really parochial schools conducted on behalf of particular denominations' (Department of Education, 1954 130). Therefore, it was not the state's place to make recommendations in regard to religious education or religious instruction. 'The time to be allocated to Religious Instruction, the supervision of the teaching and the testing of the results are the exclusive concern of the religious denomination on whose behalf the school is conducted' (*ibid.*).

The rules and regulations of national schools in 1965, including Rule 68, were extensions of this. More noteworthy is the deletion of the phrases

requiring teachers to be "careful in the presence of children of different beliefs not to touch on matters of controversy". This meant the abolition of any safeguard for religious minorities against denominationalism.

What made it possible for the state to concede denominational control of the education system to the church in mid–twentieth-century Ireland? Of course, the most important factor is that most of the revolutionary generation were Catholic. After Independence, Catholic identity became one of the most important components of Irish nationalism. In addition, there were fiscal advantages to putting social services such as education and welfare in the hands of churches because of the severe financial situation caused by a low level of economic growth. Another factor is demographic change. Through the War of Independence, Civil War, and the establishment of the Irish Free State, the Protestant population in Ireland declined greatly. A part of Protestant emigration was 'forced' by religious, political and social reasons. Withdrawal of the British Army and disbandment of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) resulted in significant numbers of Protestants leaving the Irish Free State. Others left because the Gaelic nationalist, Catholic ethos of the new state was felt unfriendly to British Protestants. Some emigration may have been driven by violence, intimidation or terror during the revolution, but recent studies decline to apply the term 'ethnic cleansing' here. A good proportion of Protestant departures from 1911–1926 were demonstrably economic in motivation and voluntary with the end of opportunities for colonial exploitation (Bielenberg, 2013), and the decline of the Protestant population in the nascent Irish Free State was due not to migration but a halt in immigration (Fitzpatrick, 2013). In any case, Catholics represented 95 percent of the population of the Free State, and in this denominationally 'homogenised' environment only the minimum consideration toward religious minorities was felt necessary in public education policy.

The Beginning of State Intervention

Irish policy in education after Independence was dominated by a conservative consensus that the state's role should be limited to facilitating the activity of denominational stakeholders, who controlled the system.

Governments were content with limited power in education and guaranteed the autonomy of denominational institutions.

Education policy nevertheless underwent some changes during the 1960s. In this period, Irish policymakers tried to expand educational opportunity, especially for secondary education, by raising the school leaving age, building and refurbishing primary school buildings, establishing Regional Technical Colleges, offering the full second-level programme for vocational school students, and introducing the common Intermediate Certificate programme. These measures were the beginning of an overhaul of the Irish education system. It was not only growing domestic demand for education but international factors which motivated politicians and officers of the Ministry of Education in this. One is the human capital theory which the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) relied on, and the other is the Second Vatican Council, which had a significant transformative effect on the Catholic church's relationship with other Christians, other world religions, and the modern secular world. Both external factors served as catalysts to education reform.

John Walsh suggests that it would be misleading to say that the 1960s reform was supported by a consensus between church and state. According to Walsh, what characterised the education reform of this period was not so much consensus as conflict below the surface. Granted, representatives of church and state did not face the matter directly, but a superficial harmony concealed serious conflicts over education policy between state officials and Catholic Bishops.

Indeed, these latent tensions sometimes became apparent, as in July 1965 when George Colley, Minister of Education, informed the Dáil that he intended to replace one-teacher and two-teacher national schools with larger central schools. Catholic clergy opposed this planned reform under the leadership of Michael Browne, a conservative prelate who argued that the state's intervention was illegal, as national schools were vested in clerical trustees. Browne openly and directly challenged the legitimacy of state intervention to reform the educational system (Walsh, 2012).

Sean O'Connor, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education, also published a confrontational article in 1968, in which he insisted that education in Ireland should be modernised not in terms of political

ideology but of economic investment. Coeducational schooling, which Church authorities were reluctant to implement, was necessary, he argued, not for gender equality but for efficiency. There were a great number of unfilled teaching posts in secondary schools because the religious authorities were not able to staff separate classrooms for boys and girls with their own clergy and could not afford to take lay teachers whom they would have to pay full salaries. Although O'Connor agreed that the Catholic Church had made a contribution to Irish education, he suggested that there was a 'need for dialogue at the highest level between Church and State on the problems in education now surfacing' (O'Connor, 1968 249). His article was motivated not by a concern for minority rights, liberalisation, or secularisation, but rather by national efficiency and economic nationalism. The amalgamation of small national schools proceeded, with over 1,100 closed by 1973. The department amalgamated over a third of all national schools between 1965 and 1984, and the total number of schools was reduced from 4,743 to 3,270 (Walsh, 2012 117).

The power balance between church and state changed from the mid–1950s to 1970s, as state power was enhanced dramatically. While clergy and religious authorities retained influence over education policies, Minsters of education and their officials began to challenge the autonomy of the Catholic Church in the area of education. This does not mean that the denominational patronage system was undermined, or that a process of secularisation proceeded, but rather that 'the transformation in the balance of power between the Irish state and traditional Catholic elites was an enduring legacy of the policy changes of the 1960s' (Walsh, 2012 127).

From the 1970s to the 1990s

Religious Instruction in the National Curriculum

The changing dynamic between church and state, however, did not seem to have an impact on the place of religious instruction in the national curriculum. The rules and regulations of Religious Instruction were all but unchanged before and after the 1970s.

In 1971, the Curaclam na Bunscoile (Ir. 'Primary School Curriculum') was established. This can be regarded as a modernised curriculum, based on a child-centred ideology and encouraging inquiry learning on a wide range of subjects. Religious education was recognised as one of seven curricular areas (Department of Education, 1971 20). With only limited regulation, religious education and transcendent values were generally emphasised in the Curaclam na Bunscoile, while state intervention in religious education was avoided. Referring to the rules and regulations of national schools, it said as follows: 'As, however, the prescribing of the subject matter of Religious Instruction, the examination of it, and the supervision of its teaching are outside the competence of the Department of Education, no syllabuses of it are here set forth' (Department of Education, 1971 23). Religious education was still situated as an integral part of the whole in the 1971 curriculum, although its concrete implementation was left up to each school.

The overall revision of the primary school curriculum was proposed in the Report of the Primary Education Review Body and written up as a Green Paper *Education for a Changing World* (1992) and a White Paper *Charting Our Education Future* (1995). The Green Paper pointed out that the rules and regulations of national schools in 1965 could be seen to have the effect of weakening the protections that existed for children of religious beliefs different to those of the majority in the schools. It also recommended that the *1971 Teachers' Handbook for the Primary School*, as part of its promotion of an integrated curriculum, should be reviewed to ensure that the constitutional rights of children be fully safeguarded (Department of Education and Science, 1992 90–91). At the National Education Convention of 1993, an integrated curriculum was discussed. "There was an acceptance that a problem arose for parents who did not wish to have their children influenced by religious doctrine when a religious ethos infused all the work of the school" (National Education Convention, 1994 71).

The White Paper also took up the tension between the denominational ethos of national schools and the rights of minorities not to have religious education forced upon them. However, here it was presented not only as a conflict between school and parents but also between parents in the majority and those of a minority.

A sensitive balance is required between the rights, obligations and choices of the majority of parents and students, who subscribe to the ethos of a school, and those in a minority, who may not subscribe to that ethos, but who do not have the option, for practical reasons, to select a school which reflects their particular choices. (Department of Education and Science, 1995 25)

This interpretation will be problematised below.

The Primary School Curriculum was finally introduced in 1999. It was supposed to reflect the thinking and aspirations of the National Convention on Education, the White Paper on Education *Charting our Education Future* and the Education Act (1998). Religious Education was situated as one of seven subject areas in the new curriculum, where state intervention in religious education continued to be avoided.

Since the Department of Education and Science, in the context of the Education Act (1998), recognises the rights of the different church authorities to design curricula in religious education at primary level and to supervise their teaching and implementation, a religious education curriculum is not included in these curriculum documents. (Department of Education and Science, 1999 58)

Boards of Management

The 1970s and 1980s saw the development of parental involvement in Irish education. The multi-denominational movement originated among parents of children attending the local Church of Ireland school in Dalkey in south County Dublin. Their success in winning a multi-denominational school led to the formation of similar parents' groups whose efforts led to the opening of a second such school in Bray, County Wicklow, in 1981, as well as a third in Glasnevin, the North Dublin School Project, in 1984 (Hyland, 1989). These are the immediate origins of the Educate Together movement, although multi-denominational schools remained rare throughout the 1980s.

The establishment of boards of management would be another development in parental involvement. O'Connor proposed the introduction of boards composed of the school principal and parents in 1973, and they were introduced in many national schools in 1975. Granted, the board in this period was controlled by the patron because the patron was authorised to appoint the chairperson and nominees. Nevertheless, this was a big change in light of subsequent developments, because the introduction of the board of management can be interpreted as an alternative and indirect means of state intervention.

Two important issues regarding the board of management are the scope of its power and the makeup of its members. Although the boards of management were under the control of denominational patronage, they also empowered parents and other stakeholders. The power of the board was originally supposed to be limited to administrative tasks such as accounting control of state and local subscription and communication with the Department of Education. This means that the board of management was presumed not to be an autonomous executive power but an organization subordinate to and supportive of the patron (Coolahan, 1981 175). However, the expansion of parents' involvement was promoted under a centre-left Fine Gael–Labour coalition government headed by Garret FitzGerald, which in 1982 decided on the establishment of the National Parents' Council, which was set up in 1985 by Minister for Education Gemma Hussey. Labour proposed a more radical plan to give parents, teachers and owners equal representation on the board (Walshe, 1999 97). The Report of the Primary Education Review Body also recommended that the board of management be more autonomous and authoritative. It did not stipulate the composition of the board, but it did say that the chairperson should not always be a local clergyman (Department of Education and Science, 1990 37), which CPSMA saw as problematic (Walshe, 1999 92).

Subsequently, the 1970s and 1980s saw churches and patrons making gradual concessions to other stakeholders in the composition of the board of management. While state officials and teachers' unions insisted on increasing the number of parent and teacher members, churches tried to retain majority representation on boards. The original plan for the boards proposed that they be composed of six members, four of whom would be

appointed by the patron, while the remaining two would be parents (Walshe, 1999 89). The INTO was not satisfied with this plan and tried to persuade the minister and his officials that teachers should also be represented. While churches reluctantly agreed to reduce the number of the patron's nominees, they kept them in the majority and thereby retained the right to appoint the chairperson (Walshe, 1999 90).

The 1992 Green Paper *Education for a Changing World* proposed the following composition of the board for primary schools with four teachers or fewer: three nominated by the trustees or owners, two elected by parents who have children in the school, and one drawn from the local community. For schools with five teachers or more it proposed five board members nominated by the trustees or owners, two elected by parents who have children in the school, two elected by teachers in the school, and one drawn from the local community (Department of Education and Science, 1992 144). Note that nominees of the Patron would only be able to secure a bare majority under this proposal, which caused the churches to fear that they would be minorities on the boards of their own schools. The chairperson of the CPSMA, Rev. Ray Brady PP, criticised the Green Paper proposal for depriving patrons of their authority and suggested that it had a 'silent revolutionary character' which would ultimately abolish the patron system of management (Walshe, 1999 99–101). The Church of Ireland regarded the proposal as a threat because they accepted many children whose parents were not members of that church. They insisted that it was necessary for nominees of the patron to be a majority on the board in order to keep the denominational ethos of their schools.

In July 1994, Minister Niamh Bhreathnach published a position paper which suggested that the composition of boards should reflect the increasing desire for participation on the part of teachers and parents. It allowed the trustee to retain their majority on the board while proposing equal representation for parents, teachers and others, requiring the trustees to include teachers and parents of pupils among their nominees. The minister's proposal was discussed by stakeholders in September 1994 in Dublin Castle. Representatives of parents, teachers' unions and Educate Together supported equal partnership and the reduction of the number of nominees by the patron. Church bodies initially tried to take a very hard line

against any kind of state intervention. Church representatives such as those of the CPSMA, the Association of Management for Catholic Secondary School, the Federation of Catholic Lay Secondary Schools, and the Education Commission of the Conference of Religious of Ireland, expressed their concerns. Catholic spokesman Bishop Thomas Flynn regarded the proposal as an "attempt to push the Church out of education" (Walshe, 1999 108). Flynn said:

> It would be unconstitutional for the state to impose conditions which require the Church or Religious Orders to lose control of their schools as a condition of obtaining grants. … The state has a right and obligation to see that money paid to schools is well spent. But there is a big difference between making a school accountable for its use of state grants and interfering with the running of the school. (Walshe, 1999 108)

This concern was shared by the representatives of the Protestant churches. The Church of Ireland submission said:

> We have never been convinced, nor do we accept, that this desire should lead to an equality of representation for parents and teachers. It would be unusual, to say the least, for the owners, workers and representatives of the consumers to be represented in equal numbers in the management of any enterprise. (Walshe, 1999 109)

This was their last stand, however. Equal partnership in management of national schools could not be put back in the bottle. Moreover, Church bodies were aware that written legal guarantees would protect the ethos of their schools despite earlier doubts (Walshe, 1999 111). The 1995 White Paper proposed that the establishment of boards of management be made mandatory and their scope of power enlarged. It advocated that school plans be submitted to boards of management for approval, that annual reports be submitted by principals to their respective boards, and that these be assessed against specified aims and objectives contained in the plan. These proposals had the potential to make a significant change in the decision-making process, including not only the day-to-day administration of the school but implementation of the curriculum (Peck &

Ramsay, 1998, 139). Finally, the board of management was written into the Education Act of 1998, and its powers and responsibilities were legally specified.

Rule 68 and the Ethos of the School

It was the Rules and Regulations of the National Schools, especially Rule 68, that had been scrutinised and criticised as the embodiment of the denominational character of the national school system. The Report of the Primary Education Review Body pointed out the inconsistencies of the rules and regulations and suggested that 'such a review/revision, would be a major undertaking and should be initiated as a matter of urgency' (Department of Education and Science, 1990, 33). Moreover, its minority report made a trenchant criticism of Rule 68.

> Rule 68 states as follows: "Religious Instruction is a fundamental part of the school course and a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school." … This seems to be incompatible with Rule 69 which states, "no pupil shall receive, or be present at, any religious instruction of which his parents or guardian disapprove." Rule 69 continues, "the periods of formal religious instruction shall be fixed so as to facilitate the withdrawal of pupils to whom paragraph (a) in this section applies." How can this be done if secular and religious subjects are integrated? (Department of Education and Science, 1990, 123-124)

This statement pointed out a serious contradiction between Rule 68 and Rule 69.

The Green Paper *Education for a Changing World* also questioned the rules and regulations from a minority perspective. It said that 'Various changes made to the Rules for National Schools over time, and embodied in the Rules published in 1965, could be seen to have the effect of weakening the protections that existed for children of religious beliefs different to those of the majority in the schools' (Department of Education and Science, 1992, 90).

 Both the National Education Convention and the 1995 White Paper suggested that the national school system was in a dilemma: a religiously integrated curriculum could have a 'stigmatizing effect' on the children of a denominational minority, although the right to a denominational education is guaranteed by the Constitution (National Education Convention, 1994, 33; Department of Education and Science, 1995, 25). What was at issue here was not only Religious Instruction as a subject in the curriculum but the 'denominational character of a school' or 'ethos of a school' as various official documents put it, which can function as a kind of hidden curriculum with the effect of 'stigmatizing' minorities. The Education Act 1998 expressed it with the words 'characteristic sprit of the school'.

> [Schools shall] promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school. (9.d)

> The board shall … uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions. (15.2.b)

The Education Act of 1998 defined the 'characteristic spirit of the school' as the integrating principle of the whole work of the school. The word 'spirit' seems at first sight culturally secular, but if many denominational schools can interpret the 'spirit' as referring to their religious doctrine, then denominational discrimination and exclusion in national schools, which had been questioned in the 1990s, was thereby not outlawed but justified under the guise of multiculturalism. In fact, under section 7(3) of the Equal Status Act 2000, schools can discriminate by giving preference in admissions to children of a particular denomination or by refusing to admit a child where such refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school. Under the Employment Equality Act of 1998, 'certain religious, educational and medical institutions may give more favourable treatment on the religion ground to an employee or prospective employee

where it is reasonable to do so in order to maintain the religious ethos of the institution'.

From the 2000s to the Present: Parental Choice

The Education Act 1988 and Primary School Curriculum 1999 are not the end of the discussion about religion in national schools but rather the beginning.

One of the largest changes regarding the role and status of stakeholders in primary education relates to parents. It is clear that the Irish Constitution accords paramountcy to parental rights. It guarantees the parents' right and duty to provide for their children's education. It also says that the state requires that children receive 'a certain minimum education', in which the role accorded to the state is clearly limited (Nolan, 2007, 502). However, this was not an actual vindication of parental rights but rather a limitation on state intervention and approval of church control over education. In reality, parental rights were neglected even in the 1960s. When we look back on O'Connor's reform plan and the reaction to it from stakeholders in 1968, we will find that neither O'Connor nor his opponents relied on parental rights. Parental rights were referred to only when parents were of a religious minority, that is, Protestant (Milne, 1968).

Parental rights have, however, become the ground on which claims from all sides stand from the 2000s onward. It is easy to understand how Rule 68 or Article 15 of the Education Act could be criticised from the standpoint of minority parents, but religious minorities in Ireland are no longer limited to Protestants. The 2016 Census says that Catholics continue to be the majority of Irish religious population (78 per cent), but minority groups now practice such diverse religions as Judaism, Islam and Sikhism, and 'No Religion' accounted for 9.8 percent of the population, up from 5.9 in 2011. Even if secularisation meant state-secularisation in the 1960s, agents of secularisation have not been limited to politicians or officials after the 1970s. The multi-denominational school movement, represented by groups such as Educate Together, is a movement from below, based on 'liberal' parental rights.

Conversely, the Catholic Church also now makes use of 'parental rights' in defence of denominationalism. This is clearly shown in criticisms submitted in response to a discussion paper prepared by the Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) and inviting comment from the public using an attached questionnaire (IHRC, 2011, 8). Some respondents felt that the template response form focused disproportionately on the rights of those who want to 'opt out' of denominational education over those who wish to 'opt in', or that the paper spoke of religious freedom in the sense of 'freedom from' rather than 'freedom for' religion (IHRC, 2011, 39).

Catholic Schools Partnership, an organization established in 2010, published a book called *Catholic Primary Schools in a Changing Ireland*, in which they emphasised 'parental choice'. In this pamphlet, theologian John Murray says:

> Parental choice in education is recognised in most democracies and enshrined in the Irish Constitution, in the universal declaration of human rights, in United Nations and European legal instruments. It is also strongly affirmed in the teaching of the Catholic Church. This principle clearly holds that parents have the right to educate their children in accord with their social, political, cultural, linguistic, religious and moral convictions. Whilst others may disagree with these views, the parents' decisions concerning a child's education should be respected and, where practicable, should be facilitated. (Catholic Schools Partnership, 2015, 12-13)

This same logic was used in an argument for the abolishment of Rule 68. An article by the Iona Institute states:

> Faith schools exist because there are parents who wish to have their children educated in accordance with their religious convictions. If the ethos of these schools is undermined then the rights of such parents are compromised. (Iona Institute, 2012)

Such statements reflect changes in the discourse of justification for denominational patronage. No stakeholders would have felt it necessary or persuasive to appeal to parental rights or choice in the 1960s except

Protestant minorities. Both government officials and Catholic religious bodies were relatively indifferent to parental right of choice, even if they ostensibly admitted that the Constitution affirms the inalienable role of parents in education. After the 2000s, however, Catholic religious bodies frequently relied on the discourse of parental rights in defending their denominational patronage, which succeeds in giving their arguments the glow of democracy.

International Human Rights Norms

International human rights norms have become another ground for arguments about denominationalism and education. In the 1960s the primary effect of international and European organizations such as the OECD on education policy in Ireland was economic. Since the 1990s, however, state documents have emphasised the aim of educating European citizens, which means that the Irish government accepts European human rights guidelines such as tolerance and respect for others' beliefs. The 2000s also saw international organizations giving recommendations and requirements for education reform: the United Nations Human Rights Committee addressed its concerns and recommendations for primary education in Ireland as follows:

> The Committee notes with concern that the vast majority of Ireland's primary schools are privately run denominational schools that have adopted a religious integrated curriculum thus depriving many parents and children who so wish to have access to secular primary education. (arts. 2, 18, 24, 26)

> The State party should increase its efforts to ensure that non-denominational primary education is widely available in all regions of the State party, in view of the increasingly diverse and multi-ethnic composition of the population of the State party. (UN, 2008, 7-8)

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) published reports in 2005 and 2011 which pointed out the Catholic Church's control over the education system in

Ireland and recommended 'that the State party accelerates its efforts to establish alternative non-denominational or multi-denominational schools and to amend the existing legislation that inhibits students from enrolling into a school because of their faith or belief' as well as to 'encourage diversity and tolerance of other faiths and beliefs in the education system by monitoring incidents of discrimination on the basis of belief' (CERD, 2005; CERD, 2011 6).

However, churches also make use of international human rights norms discourse from the 2000s on. 'Freedom of belief', 'cultural diversity' and 'pluralistic society' are used in churches' arguments in favour of denominationalism. Murray begins from the assumption that Irish society is pluralistic: denominational schools 'have a place in modern Ireland' (Murray, 2008, 7). The pivotal position of the Catholic Church in Irish society is no longer asserted in his argument. Murray suggests that religion is a 'philosophy of life' or a 'world view', and that 'imposition of one type of school on all would be seen as contradicting or even undermining the world-view and deepest values of many parents' (Murray, 2008, 11).

The briefing note published by the Iona Institute to refute the report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage insisted that denominational schools are not in fact in breach of national or international law. The Advisory Group required the denominational schools to be more 'inclusive', but the Iona Institute argue that this 'inclusiveness' would have to come at the price of denominational school identity, when in fact denominational schools are protected by the European Convention on Human Rights, as established in the case of Lautsi v. Italy.[1] Meanwhile, interpretations of UN documents by UN committees and anti-denominationalist Irish NGOs have no standing whatsoever in either national or international law. On the contrary, they argue, provisions from these documents support the rights of parents who send their children to denominational schools (Iona Institute, 2012).

The Majority as 'Victim' or 'Socially Vulnerable'

Catholics still represent a majority of the Irish population, although their proportion has decreased compared to that just after Independence. Moreover, the proportion of Catholic denominational schools in the whole national system has fallen only slightly, from 91.8 percent in 2014 to 90.7 percent in 2018 (Department of Education and Skills, 2019, 15). Catholic schools maintain a dominant position among primary schools.

Nevertheless, many Catholic arguments are suggestive of a minority narrative. They often follow a pattern in which criticism of the denominational school system is assumed to be part of a campaign against the Catholic Church by some foreign enemy such as the EU or other international organizations, thereby ignoring the domestic popular demand for secular or multi-denominational education as in the 2013 Department of Education survey referenced above. In this narrative, it is the Catholics in Ireland who are held up as 'cultural minority' and 'socially vulnerable' in the international and European context. This victim discourse on the part of the majority relies on notions of 'parental choice' and a 'pluralistic society' to legitimate denominationalism in education.

Majority victim narratives are sometimes constructed with reference to the division of social classes. On the 20 February 2017 edition of RTE's *Claire Byrne Live*, Iona Institute spokesperson Maria Steen said Catholic schools were more 'inclusive' than multi-denominational schools. She suggested that Catholic schools have much greater numbers of children from lone parent families, and that a 2012 ESRI study (Darmody et al., 2012) showed that Catholic schools have greater numbers of children from lower socioeconomic groups, while multi-denominational schools tend typically to be middle-class. Educate Together responded to her comments on the following day. They said that it is disappointing that the Iona Institute would so easily reinforce a prejudicial stereotype of the children who attend Educate Together schools as 'middle-class' and that Steen quoted selectively from a 2012 ESRI study (*Irish Examiner* February 21, 2017).

It cannot be denied, however, that Catholic schools have actually become inclusive—they have a greater number of children from

vulnerable backgrounds—whether intentionally or not (Darmody et al., 2012). It may be asked how and to what extent socio-economic factors affect parents' school choices in the denominational school system. The research of Merike Darmody *et al*. suggests that students attending multi-denominational and minority faith schools are found to be more likely to come from middle-class backgrounds and have more highly educated parents. This pattern is explained by two interrelated processes. Firstly, middle-class parents are more likely to exercise active choice and send their children to schools outside the local area. Secondly, because many multi-denominational and minority faith schools are oversubscribed, admissions policies may tend to favour groups with more access to information such as middle-class families. This research shows that primary school choice in Ireland reflects both religious and socio-cultural factors, although social factors are largely absent from the public debate on school choice, which is overwhelmingly framed in terms of religious versus secular identity (Darmody & Smyth, 2018). It also suggests that religious preference and socio-economic background of parents might be constituting and legitimating a split between 'us and them,' through the medium of school choice, that is, denominational masses versus a multi-denominational and liberal middle class. In this way, a religiously pluralistic education system has contributed not to national integration but to segmentation.

Conclusion

The history of religious instruction and denominational patronage in Irish primary education is not a linear process of secularisation or unchanging church control. Generally, it would seem that Irish people are becoming more secular and liberal. Empirical research suggests that orthodox beliefs (in life after death, heaven, sin…) declined during the 2000s. Tolerance among Catholics for homosexuality, euthanasia, abortion, prostitution, divorce, and the use of 'soft drugs' increased significantly. Approximately one in seven Catholics is found to be either liberal or very liberal (Féich & O'Connell, 2015, 244). However, this changing attitude of Catholics is not paralleled in their attitudes toward the education system. Catholic

schools accounted for 90 percent of national schools, and multi-denominational schools did not multiply dramatically (Department of Education and Skills, 2019, 13). A great number of Irish people support or tolerate denominationalism in public primary education.

It is natural that the patrons of denominational schools want to keep their religious ethos. However, we need an explanation of how and why such a great number of people still support the denominational system: it is reasonable, given the evidence, to suppose that more than half of parents at least tolerate denominational patronage (Council for Research, & Development, Irish Bishops' Conference, 2008, 21, 25). How can we understand this if Irish Catholics have become so liberal in their private beliefs and attitudes during the 2000s? Grace Davie's argument is noteworthy in this regard. She proposed the idea of 'vicarious religion', 'the notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing' (Davie, 2013, 89). Féich and O'Connell suggest that the high and stable levels of support for religious ceremonies support Davie's hypothesis (Féich & O'Connell, 2015). What if we conceptualise this support for denominational schooling as an example of 'vicarious religion'? Is support for maintaining the denominational school ethos motivated by religious attitudes? Are so many Catholics in favour of Catholic denominational schools because the schools perform various religious exercises on their behalf?

This point of view may seem reasonable, but there are other possible interpretations. They may simply support the notion of Roman Catholic schools, but in the case of liberal Irish Catholics they may support only such an 'ethos'. We will want to examine whether the maintenance of faith school identity is really motivated by religious faith even if it is 'vicarious'. A clue to another interpretation can be found in Nathalie Rougier's 2008 study of the recent hijab debate in Ireland. The study comprised eleven semi-structured qualitative interviews with educationalists, principals, politicians, Muslim mothers, Muslim students, Catholics, and others (Rougier, 2013, 153). By exploring stakeholders' attitudes toward the hijab, Rougier reveals that the denominational character of a school can be important not because it guarantees parental rights to denominational education but because it works as an arena of symbolic politics. Rougier

concludes that those who demanded a ban on the hijab in school felt threatened not by competing religious doctrines but rather the presence or visibility of religious and cultural 'others'. Muslims are likely to be construed as 'outsiders' even within the 'established multi-denominational' liberal education system (Rougier, 2013, 159).

However, whether or not such conflicts arise seems to depend on the proportion of minorities in denominational schools. Two interviewees involved in the education system highlighted the issue of the relative numbers of Muslim pupils in any given school:

> The difficulty is if they drift towards a smaller number of schools… there are some schools where, for various reasons, they were made very welcome and the parents like those schools… but if the Islamic population in the school becomes half the school then it's no longer the school that it's originally set out to be. … I think tensions could emerge and, strange thing, the result could be that the quality of the school would go down.

> I think it was just when… when they became more than 10 in a school or something… the management started to get anxious… once parents start coming in then as well and making demands and saying, you know… "We know our rights…" you know, that's when the difficulty starts. (Rougier, 2013, 157)

These statements suggest that tolerance could be shown toward Muslim pupils only as long as they were minorities in any given school. If so, maintaining denominational identity cannot be the reason why it is important to keep a school a denominational space—if denominational identity itself were the real issue, then wearing the hijab would not be tolerated regardless of the number of Muslim pupils. We might suspect that what is important is that a hierarchy among religious denominations be publicly displayed, so that 'we' (Irish) may confirm that 'we are in the majority' and 'we are privileged'. Could we interpret it not quite as 'vicarious religion' but as a vicarious sense of majoritarian identity (superiority)?

Kissane's observation that pluralism and liberalism are not simply interchangeable is interesting in this regard. The recent changes in Ireland are often considered to be heralding the advent of a more 'liberal and

pluralist' society in the Republic, but the nature of the present church-state relationship suggests that the pluralism that is evolving is anything but liberal. In the contemporary Irish context, state neutrality can only be construed as even-handed intervention in the religious sphere (Kissane, 2003). This insight is consistent with our findings: 'pluralism' advocated for religious education is never a liberal principle which limits denominationalism, but an anti-liberal framework which promotes denominational splits.

Note

1. The case originated in an application against the Italian Republic lodged with the Court under Article 34 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, by Ms Soile Lautsi, an Italian national, on 27 July 2006. The case concerned the presence of crucifixes in State-school classrooms in Italy, which, according to the applicants, was incompatible with the obligation on the State to respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in accordance with their own religious and philosophical convictions. The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights finally held that there was no violation of the Convention (Lautsi v. Italy, App. No. 30814/06, 2011 Eur. Ct. H.R. (G.C.)).

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5

Two Roads Diverged: Policy Shifts in Second-Level Religious Education 1998–2020

Sandra Cullen

Introduction

New questions arise in every generation at local, national, and global levels concerning the intersections between religion and education in terms of school patronage, ownership of property, employment legislation, school ethos, parental choice, the rights of the child to freedom for, of, and from religion, as well as the diverse understandings of what the limits and scope of these relationships are. It is within this larger framework that any discussion of religious education is situated. However, in the complex debate about the relationship between religion, church patronage and a publicly funded education system, the subject 'religious education' can be overwhelmed by issues outside of its domain and in effect lose its identity and purpose. Stripped back to its most basic understanding religious education can be described as the activity of teaching and learning religion within the school context. Historically this activity

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has been the concern of faith communities wishing to teach people how to be religious in a particular way and how to understand the faith they profess. However, when religious education is taught in schools in receipt of any form of public money, then its provision must align with a State's particular social and historical context and overall vision of the purpose of education.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the evolution of policy developments and shifts in post-primary religious education in the Republic of Ireland. Drawing on the image of 'two roads diverged', the chapter proceeds to argue that 1998 marks the beginning of a divergence in religious education policy between the State and the churches. Prior to the Education Act of 1998, which emerges as a watershed moment in the development of religious education in post-primary schools in Ireland, the provision of religious education was solely the preserve of the churches. This chapter will trace the evolution of the State's understanding of religious education as demonstrated through the background papers, frameworks, curricula and syllabi for religious education from 2000–2020, the impact of Circulars 0013/2018 and 0062/2018, and *Religion and Education: A Human Rights Perspective* (IHRC, 2011). These documents have been selected because they are considered to be normative in the way that they have shaped the actual practice of religious education. From this practice, a policy direction for religious education provided by the State has begun to emerge. Arguably the evolution of the State's approach to curriculum and policy development in religious education has been shaped by what Gleeson describes as "legitimation, contestation and fragmentation" (Gleeson, 2000, p. 16). Where this is most evident is in the contested use of terminology to describe teaching religion in post-primary schools. This study suggests that tracing how the terms religious instruction and religious education have been used in Ireland offers a useful lens for considering how teaching religion has been both legitimised and contested as it is increasingly shaped more by the concerns of the public space than faith communities (Carmody, 2019).

The State's Understanding of Teaching Religion Prior to the *Education Act* (1998)

Prior to the Education Act of 1998, the status of teaching religion in the Republic of Ireland was determined by the declaration of the *Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act*, 1878, that "no examination shall be held in any subject of religious instruction, nor any payment made in respect thereof" (Section 5, subsection 4). In effect this meant that the State could not directly endow or involve itself in the teaching or assessment of religion such that it could be construed as promoting a particular religious viewpoint. The State could however provide *for* the teaching of religion through its inclusion within the school timetable and the payment of teachers who held formally recognised teaching qualifications. With no oversight from the State inspectorate, provision for in-career development, or resourcing of the subject other than in a voluntary capacity by the churches and religious communities, religious education was effectively the sole responsibility of the churches whose concern was for the faith formation of its members. The dominance of the Catholic Church in the provision of schooling ensured that nearly all religion teaching and the discourse around it reflected the theological and educational vision of the Church's educational mission and had, in some instances, more in common with international ecclesial trends than national educational priorities (King, 1970; Williams, 2005; Tuohy, 2013). The model for the teaching of religion within this system was in the sense that a single religious tradition was taught from the inside and teachers assumed to be believers who shared in the church's educational ministry (Hull, 2002). It is this understanding of teaching religion which the State adopts when it uses the term religious instruction in its legal sense.

The State's Understanding of Religious Instruction

In the Republic of Ireland, religious instruction is the constitutional and legal term to describe the provision which is made for education and practice in particular faiths (INTO, 1991, p. 2; Whyte, 2010; O'Connell, 2000; Williams, 2005). Though more publicly debated in the primary

sector through the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism (Coolahan et al., 2012), the focus here is on how the term is used in the post-primary context.

Although perhaps inevitable in twentieth century Ireland, where an emerging national identity was strongly tied to a particular confession (Fuller, 2002; Williams, 2005; Anderson et al., 2016), the close identification between the State's aims and the aims of a dominant church had notable effects on the way formal post-primary education was designed. This finds particular expression in how the purpose of continuation education (what later became known as vocational education) is described in *Memorandum V. 40* (1942, p. 230):

> To develop, with the assistance of God's grace, the whole man with all his faculties, natural and supernatural, so that he may realise his duties and responsibilities as a member of society, that he may contribute effectively to the welfare of this fellow man, and by doing so attain the end designed for him by his Creator.

To achieve such a purpose, pupils "should receive instruction in the fundamental truths of the Christian faith" (1942, p. 231). The insistence that such instruction be integrated into the whole organisation of the school underscores the claim that religious instruction was primarily concerned with facilitating nurture into a particular religion. Catholic secondary schools followed a prescribed *Programme of Religious Instruction in Catholic Secondary Schools and Colleges*, with written examinations each year, in Dogma, Holy Scripture, Sacred and ecclesiastical History, Sociology, Liturgy and Gregorian Music. With some minor revisions, this programme remained in effect until 1966 (King, 1970). Such instruction quickly became associated with the systematic teaching of the catechism, in question and answer format, twinned with an annual examination in religious knowledge, and was all too easily caricatured in the literature of James Joyce, Brendan Behan and Frank O'Connor. Significant changes to the Catholic Church's understanding of the nature, purpose and scope of religious instruction emerged in the decades post Vatican II which arguably had a greater impact on what was happening within schools

than any discussion in State circles (Lane, 2013; Tuohy, 2013; Coll, 2015; Hession, 2015).

The place of religious instruction in publicly funded schools emerged again in public awareness through the 1998 legal challenge taken by the Campaign to Separate Church and State against the Minister for Education in opposition to the funding of school chaplains (Irish Law Review, 1998). In his judgement, Justice Barrington distinguished between religious education and religious instruction, describing religious education as a "wider" concept than religious instruction. His view was that though Article 44.2.4 of the Constitution guaranteed the right of a child not to have to attend religious instruction at a publicly funded school, it did not protect the child from being influenced by the religious ethos or curriculum of the school, "provided this does not constitute religious instruction as such". The implication is that explicit religious instruction may be avoided but that a broader implicit ethos may not be preventable. Whyte (2010, p. 9) interprets Barrington to mean that "parents had the right to have religious education provided in the schools which their children attend and were not obliged to settle merely for religious instruction." Whyte's use of the word "merely" in this instance draws attention to the distinction between the specifically doctrinal aspect of denominational religious instruction and the Constitutional provision for the broader spiritual and moral formation of children (however that is to be conceived of) that may be considered to be better named as religious education. The constitutional provision for the right of parents to withdraw their child from religious instruction further underscores an assumption of its formative nature (Article 44.2.4). This right of withdrawal is reiterated in the Education Act Section 30(2), which states that: "The minister … shall not require any student to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years". Such legal protection is consistent with policy, if not necessarily with practice, across Europe (Valutytė & Gailiūtė, 2014; Fokas, 2019). In its 2010 Discussion Paper, the Irish Human Rights Commission drew attention to the human rights issues involved in the lack of provision of State education free 'from' religious influence. The concern raised by the IHRC is that the role of religious nurture implied in religious

instruction raises legitimate questions in "relation to the system of religious education/instruction in Ireland and its adherence to relevant human rights standards" (IHRC, 2011, p. 18; Mawhinney, 2015). What is of note for the purposes of this survey of policy directions in religious education is the use of language in the submissions to the IHRC consultative process. The term religious instruction is only used by those calling for the removal of faith based teaching of religion from school. Other than in that instance the respondents refer to religious education. It is apparent however that neither term is used univocally. What is apparent is that those involved in teaching religion prefer the term the religious education (Cullen, 2017).

Circular Letters 0013/2018 and 0062/2018

Circular Letter 0013/2018 from the DES (2018c) was addressed to the Management authorities of community and ETB post-primary schools on "Religious instruction and worship in certain second level schools in the context of Article 44.2.4 of the Constitution of Ireland and Section 30 of the Education Act 1998". The circular was an attempt to "ensure that the rights of children to attend the school without having to attend religious instruction will be conducted in a manner that takes account of the likelihood, given changing demographics, of an increasing number of families wanting to exercise their constitutional right to withdraw" (p. 1). Of particular concern to those teaching religious education in the ETB and Community School sector was Section 5:

> The NCCA developed curriculum for Religious Education currently also serves to meet the religious instruction requirements of the Catholic Church and schools can continue this arrangement for pupils whose parents elect for Catholic religious instruction or other parents who wish to follow the NCCA curriculum, and where that is the case it is important in the information provided to parents that they are made fully aware that the curriculum is not necessarily confined to learning about religions.

Section 5 does not acknowledge the vision of religious education being adopted by the NCCA through the *Background Paper and Brief for Junior Cycle Religious Education* (2017b); the *Consultation Report: Background Paper and Brief for the Review of Junior Cycle Religious Education* (2017a), in preparation for the *Junior cycle religious education specification* (2019b). In its response to Circular 0013/2018, the Religion Teachers' Association of Ireland (RTAI), representing teachers in all school types, drew attention to the problematic nature of the use of the term religious instruction in the circular, arguing that it "only serves to perpetuate misconceptions about the teaching of Religious Education by seeming to equate Religious Education with religious instruction in a particular faith". The concern of the RTAI is that students may not be given the opportunity to participate in Religious Education on the basis of the misrepresentation and that the efforts being made by schools to provide for the "fullest possible holistic education of their students" will be compromised" (http://www.rtai.ie/rtai-response-to-circular-0013-2018-2/).

Later in 2018, Circular 0062/2018 (DES, 2018b) provided a clarification in respect of Section 5 of Circular 0013/2018:

Where a school decides to offer religious instruction in line with the requirements of any particular individual religious denomination, it must not be associated with or integrated to any degree with the NCCA-developed Religion (sic) Education syllabus being provided in timetabled class periods. … Such religious instruction must be provided as a discrete separate subject which will be external to the Department-approved NCCA Religious Education syllabus. Where the school is providing religious instruction having regard to the legal instruments created when the school was recognised, the school may provide the teaching resources from within the school's overall teacher allocation and the delivery must be in full class periods devoted exclusively to religious instruction.

The accompanying press release (DES, 2018a), elaborated on the clarifications: (1) where a school intends to provide religious instruction/faith formation, parents must give consent before admission to the class. This means that opt out does not arise because the parent has requested a place in the religious instruction class; (2) classes following the NCCA Religious

Education syllabuses cannot have any element of religious instruction or worship, which also means that opt out does not arise.

The implications of this clarification for the provision of religious education in all schools are being worked out in practice. This will demand a balancing act between the rights of parents, management authorities, faith communities, the concerns of the State and the rights of the student, with due regard for the legally protected characteristic spirit of the school (Meehan, 2019). A concern being voiced is that separating students for religious education could mean that some young people may not be afforded an opportunity to engage in the questions and issues dealt with in religious education with their peers. In a multi-beliefs and multicultural society, religious education might well provide the only space where people can learn with and from each other as they think deeply about the variety of religious and other responses to life's questions. In a democracy that respects freedom of, for and from religion, students and their parents must be supported in exercising their right to opt-out; however, it is not always evident what people think they are opting out of.

The Emergence of the Use of the Term Religious Education

Arguably, the emergence of religious education as a concern of the State has its origins in a letter dated 16th February 1976, from the Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church in Ireland requesting that the Department of Education introduce Religious Studies as an examination subject. This request reflected an understanding of Religious Studies in which the in-depth presentation and study of the faith of a believing community, what the catholic church means by religious instruction, would become part of the State examinations system. The concern underlying the request of the Episcopal Commission was the perception that little was being done in schools in terms of the academic study of religion, with the result that religion was both losing academic credibility within schools and not providing a sufficiently rigorous education in faith. Providing a more rigorous academic programme, they argued,

would alleviate some of the difficulties being encountered by teachers of religion. This concern emerges within the context of the employment of appropriately qualified teachers of religion who were bringing to the table changing understandings of the distinctions between religious instruction and religious education and arguing for a shift from an ecclesial understanding of the study of religion in school to an educational understanding. Parallel to this was an emerging post-Vatican II vision of catechesis that resonated with the child-centred curriculum of post 1960s educational policy (Byrne, 2018; Coll, 2015; Looney, 2006).

In 1977, subsequent to the refusal of their request to the Department of Education, the Episcopal Conference set up a Working Party to draw up a draft syllabus for *Religious Studies for Leaving Certificate*, an amended version of which was submitted to the Department of Education in 1982. However, due to the prohibition on the State examination of religion neither proposal was accepted. This prohibition came under scrutiny again in 1986 when questions about the submission from the Episcopal Conference about the possibility of the introduction of Religious Studies as a Leaving Certificate examination subject were raised in the Dáil. The Dáil Proceedings show that the response of Minister for Education, Gemma Hussey, drawing on advice from the Chief State Solicitor, was that an amendment to the Intermediate Education Act, 1878 would be necessary in order to introduce religious studies as a subject in the Leaving Certificate programme, and that the issue was being considered by the DES. In 1989, Minister O'Rourke signalled that she was "considering the introduction of an examination in religious studies". She continued, "[in] this connection the question of amending the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act, 1878, is being considered at present in consultation with the Government's legal advisers". It should be noted that the term religious studies was taken in the Episcopal submission, and it appears in this instance, by the Department of Education, to mean the academic study of Catholic faith and doctrine, and is in line with what the Catholic church means by religious instruction, rather than what is generally perceived now to mean a phenomenological or sociological discipline (NCCA, 2017a).

Whither Religious Education? The Weafer and Hanley Report

Weafer and Hanley's (1991) Report *Whither Religious Education?* was a significant marker in the use of the term religious education to describe the teaching of religion at post-primary level in Ireland. This publication reported on the findings of the first national survey of post-primary religion teachers. Based on a survey of 665 religion teachers in a variety of contexts, the research size and wide sampling elicited a comprehensive overview of how those teaching religion understood their task. By the time of the publication of the Report the term religious education was being used increasingly to describe a model of educating in faith that was moving away from a transmissive model to a model engaging with contemporary educational practice, but still firmly rooted in the apostolate of catechesis. What is of note in the survey is that it assumes that all of the respondents were unanimous in their understanding of a religious education that is catechetical in nature, scope, and intent. This is in keeping with what the State understood as religious instruction, though it is clear again from the respondents that there was little inclination for using this particular term.

The findings of the Weafer and Hanley survey suggest that the majority of teachers understood that the primary aim of their task was to foster a personal Christian faith (41%) or to assist pupils' spiritual development (44%). Responses to the question on the 'desired impact of religious education on pupil's lives' stressed the personal and spiritual dimension of the lives of the pupils, with most emphasis placed on encouraging 'responsibility and personal development' (47%). The view that religious education is primarily, if not exclusively about faith development is also evident in the response to the question of the role of teachers' faith in the classroom. 74% of respondents strongly agreed that a teacher's faith is a vital component in fostering faith in the classroom, with 57% saying that one 'cannot teach religion without faith'. Commentaries on the survey share an unquestioned assumption that religious education in the post-primary school is understood as being an ecclesial ministry. The question

of whether religious education should be taught, or what form it should most properly take in the classroom, did not emerge in the research.

In its analysis of the examination status of religious education the survey found that those who had a formal qualification in religious education were more likely to be in favour of religious education being assessed as a Leaving Certificate subject (51%). When the question of certification and assessment at Junior Cycle was raised, only 34% were in favour of examinations, with 38% opposed and 28% who ticked the 'don't know' box. Of the responses opposing the introduction of examinations in religious education, the most common reason given was the fear that the introduction of an examination would 'destroy the faith dimension of religious education'. However, the introduction of the Junior Certificate Programme in 1989 established the role of assessment as an integral function of teaching. If religious education was to take a formal place in the suite of subjects offered for Junior Certificate, then it would have to be very clear about what could be assessed in a State examination. What could be assessed is the ability to understand religion and to empathise in a knowledgeable manner with the encounter with religions and with people of religious commitment. In the absence of a serious academic approach demanding an imaginative engagement with religion, it would be difficult in the future to convince schools that religion had a place in an academic curriculum, with the result that time for the teaching of religion would be eroded. The call for a State-certified examination of religious education was about more than assessment; it paved the way for a more public discussion about the nature and scope of religious education as both a societal task and a more formal educational task for which the State has some responsibility.

Though limited in its impact, the significance of the survey was two-fold (1) the voices of those teaching religion in a variety of post-primary school contexts were being heard in a public way and (2) the term religious education, however that is understood, had become the widely accepted term for the teaching of religion at post-primary level.

The Trajectory Toward State Provision of Religious Education

In the 1995 submission from the NCCA to the DES four reasons were advanced for advocating State provision of religious education on educational grounds and as no longer solely an ecclesial project. The reasons given were, (1) the increasing professionalisation of teachers of religious education, (2) the growing range of institutions offering specialist degrees in theology, religious education and religious studies, (3) the changing patterns of religious affiliation and practice, and (4) the political imperative to build relationships between the major religious traditions in Ireland. The submission also proposed an educational rationale for the inclusion of religious education in the curriculum:

> Religious education, in offering opportunities to develop an informed and critical understanding of the Christian tradition in its historical origins and cultural and social expressions, should be part of a curriculum which seeks to promote the critical and cultural development of the individual in his or her social and personal contexts. (NCCA, 1995; Looney, 2006)

The submission from the NCCA was situated within the context of the vision of education espoused in the concern of the 1995 White Paper, *Charting our Education Future* for a more comprehensive philosophy of education that prepares people to be engaged in a lifelong education that is both student centred and globally focussed in terms of emphases. Its vision that "education should value and promote all dimensions of human development and seek to prepare people for full participation in cultural, social and economic life" (Government of Ireland, 1995, p. 7), finds explicit expression in the aim of education adopted by the Department of Education and Science:

> The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual development, for personal and family life, for working life, for living in community and for leisure. (2000)

Underpinning these aims is a vision that all education is inherently formative of the whole person and that the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students is a concern of the State. This vision is reinforced in the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) which states in section 9 that one of the functions of a school is, "to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school". Section 15 (b) of the Act determines that the function of the Board of Management of a school is to "uphold the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school". The spiritual rather than the religious aspect of a person is identified in the general aim of education, however, religious and moral education was designated as one of the eight areas of experience included in the 1989 framework for the Junior Certificate curriculum. This decision suggests that, for the designers of the curriculum, spirituality and morality were to be understood in terms of their religious expression. Despite the reference to the 'non-religious interpretation of life', there appears to be a privileging of the contribution that religion makes to spiritual and moral development. While not all school subjects contribute in the same way to each dimension of the development of the student, all subjects must be taught in such a way as not to undermine any of the other dimensions. It is this inclusive approach to the education of the person that allows ideologically for the adoption of religious education as a legitimate activity of the State. The State assumes that religious education has something to contribute to the development of the learner; however, what that 'something' is, or its source, is continually in need of interpretation.

A Syllabus for Junior Certificate Religious Education

In 2000 the DES introduced a syllabus for Junior Cycle Religious Education (*JCRES*), the aims of which are:

- To foster an awareness that the human search for meaning is common to all peoples, of all ages and at all times
- To explore how this search for meaning has found, and continues to find, expression in religion
- To identify how understandings of God, religious traditions, and in particular the Christian tradition, have contributed to the culture in which we live, and continue to have an impact on personal life-style, inter-personal relationships and relationships between individuals and their communities and contexts
- To appreciate the richness of religious traditions and to acknowledge the non-religious interpretation of life
- To contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the student.

The *JCRES* presents a vision of religious education as a subject that engages learners in the process of constructing meaning from the knowledge they acquire. It places interpretation at the heart of learning. It is evident that the *JCRES* is envisaged as providing an opportunity for students to learn not just *about* but *from* religion. As used by Hull (2002), 'learning *from* religion' refers to "the kind of religious education which has as its principal objective the humanisation of the pupil, that is, making a contribution to the moral and spiritual development of the pupil" (Hull, 2002, p. 108). However, this sense that religious education contributes to the holistic education of the learner is not borne out in the 2002 information leaflet provided by the NCCA for students and their parents, which states that:

> In Religious Education (RE) you will learn about what people believe, why they believe and how these beliefs influence their own lives, the lives of others and the world around us. You will explore how many religions, particularly Christian religions, have shaped the Ireland you live in today.

According to this summary, the study of religion appears to be purely descriptive and a factual approach promoted. This factsheet, either as a result of an oversight or for some other reason, limits the study of religious education to a sociological or phenomenological approach. In this instance, the NCCA's approach is not entirely in line with the values

espoused by the syllabus. It is suggested here that religious education is solely a phenomenological study of religion that does not necessarily invite the learner to experience religion from the inside. The complexity the NCCA conjured with in defining religious education in the *JCRES* has, in this instance, been ignored or forgotten. Contrary to this, Byrne notes that the syllabus sought to avoid alignment with any one particular religion or denomination (2018). Instead it provided a framework for students of all religions and none, "for encountering and engaging with the variety of religious traditions in Ireland and elsewhere" (*JCRES*, p. 4), and emphasised that the students' own experience of religion and their search for meaning was to be both encouraged and supported. The notion of encounter expressed in the syllabus refers to the engagement between learner and religion in such a way as to facilitate students' negotiation of the complex world of religion, their own religious identity, and the personal demands of religious belief. It provides them with a compass to find their way in it. Like all education, religious education makes a claim on the learner. This commitment allowed for the syllabus to be adopted in schools under religious patronage. In the case of Catholic schools, the syllabus was supported by the *Guidelines for Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students* (1999), through which the Catholic bishops endorse the State syllabuses as an appropriate basis for religious education in Catholic schools while reinforcing the importance of ongoing faith formation and development so that young Catholics are supported in reflecting on their own faith tradition.

The approach advocated in the *Junior Certificate Religious Education Guidelines for Teachers* (2001), reinforces the principle that religious education is not just focused on learning about religions, it is also about critical engagement leading to the development of skills, attitudes and dispositions needed for living as a thoughtful, respectful and reflective citizen in a pluralist society. As such, religious education is both informative and formative. Of note however, is the confirmation that, "while students will draw on their experience in an examination: their personal faith commitment and/or affiliation to a particular religious grouping will not be subject to assessment of national certification' (2001, p. 55).

A Syllabus for Leaving Certificate Religious Education

Leaving Certificate Religious Education (LCRE) is situated within the context of preparing students for "their role as participative, enterprising citizens" by promoting "a spirit of inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving, self-reliance, initiative and enterprise". (Department of Education and Science, 2003). All subjects contribute to the programme but are independent of each other. Religious education is situated within the social groups of subjects which explore issues common to all people living in society and promote the skills and knowledge used to manage personal resources and guide human behaviour. The DES acknowledges that religious education has a particular contribution to make to a Leaving Certificate programme by facilitating a student's "reflective engagement with the particular knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes which form the foundation of the religious education syllabus" (DES, p. 4). The syllabus is constructed around key sections: The search for meaning and values; world religions; moral decision making; Christianity: origins and contemporary expressions; religion and gender; religion and science; religion: the Irish experience; the Bible: literature and sacred text; issues of justice and peace; and worship, prayer and ritual (Byrne, 2005). The emphasis in the syllabus is on the experience, expression and value of religious belief and is assessed in terms of the contribution that religions and religious belief can make to citizenship rather than in terms of what religion itself contributes. This suggests a phenomenological approach to the syllabus which, in keeping with the liberal democratic principles of tolerance, diversity and plurality, requires an understanding of a variety of religious and secular worldviews, but does not concern itself with any of the truth claims of any of the religions. One way of reading the LCRE syllabus is as a response to negotiating the cultural fact of religion.

The 2003 syllabus for LCRE has the same aims as the *JCRES.* However, the two syllabi describe the general aim of education in slightly different terms. In contrast to the *JCRES* statement about the aim of education, the syllabus for LCRE defines the aim of education in the following way:

> The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural,

emotional, expressive, intellectual, for personal and home life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure.

The marked difference between the two statements is the inclusion of the "expressive" aspect of the individual in the Leaving Certificate statement, but the exclusion of the "moral, physical, political, social and spiritual" aspects of the person. It is not clear what philosophical outlook held sway in arriving at this change. LCRE fits less comfortably within the general aim of education as articulated here. From this it seems that, for some, it is perhaps easier to argue for the inclusion of religious education at junior level than at senior level. If one's experience of the syllabus is restricted to only reading it, one could assume that despite its stated aims the actual content of the syllabus could be construed as a cultural religious education. Such a minimal approach, however, is at odds with the maximal approach suggested by the active and participative methodologies proposed in the *Guidelines for Teachers of LCRE*. The inclusion of methodologies such as a Shared Praxis approach, teaching controversial issues, critical questioning, and teaching for diversity, demonstrates a commitment to support an active pedagogical approach that belies any type of reductionism to learning about religion. As with the JCRE syllabus, LCRE is supported by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (2004).

Leaving Certificate Applied: Draft Syllabus for Religious Education

The two year Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA) is situated within the general framework for Senior Cycle education and shares the same general aim of contributing to the development of all aspects of the individual, but with a particular focus on preparation of the students for their role as "participative, enterprising citizens". The purpose of religious education within the programme is:

to support the holistic aims of education by promoting personal growth and facilitating spiritual development. It engages the students in the human search for meaning and offers them an opportunity to reflect, understand

and interpret that experience in the light of our changing world. It invites students to examine religious stories, and where appropriate, their own religious story, and to value their place within it now and in the future. It exposes them to a broad range of religious traditions and encourages the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance. It facilitates moral development through the application of a process of moral decision-making.

This rationale describes the purpose of religious education in terms of 'learning *from* religion', and addresses Hull's question, 'what is the educational advantage to be gained by the study of religion?' (2002, p. 106). What is it that people learn that is valuable for their lives? Consistent with the general aims of education adopted by the Irish State, religious education is justified insofar as it contributes to the personal growth of a student in the context of 'the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance'. Religion is for the person, not the person for the religion. In contrast to the citizenship education approach that is evident in the LCRE syllabus, the approach to LCA religious education owes more to a personal development approach than a phenomenological one.

A Curriculum Framework for Senior Cycle Religious Education

Popularly known as 'non-exam' RE, the *Curriculum Framework for Senior Cycle* outlines its rationale for religious education in the following terms:

> In exposing students to a broad range of religious issues, religious traditions and ways of understanding the human search for meaning, the framework can help contribute to the spiritual and moral development of students from all faiths and none. It can also help develop a healthy respect for the beliefs of others and an openness to dialogue in search of mutual understanding. (DES, 2005, p. 152)

The focus of this framework is on the personal, spiritual, and moral development of the student and merges the approaches of both the JCRE and LCRE. Though students will study a range of issues and traditions,

the overarching purpose is to contribute to their own spiritual and moral development in a manner that is respectful of the beliefs of others. This is in line with the JCRE approach, but somewhat at odds with the approach of LCRE which has a greater focus on the development of critical questioning with the aim of engaged citizenship. The inconsistency is that those students following the LCRE syllabus will have a different and arguably narrower experience of the aims of religious education than their peers who are following the Curriculum Framework.

Schools are required to provide religious education; however, they are free to opt in or out of taking the examination route, leading to the unfortunate designation within schools of 'exam RE' and 'non-exam RE'. RE is subject to the same evaluative processes as other subjects in the curriculum: publicly available subject inspection reports and whole school evaluation reports. Evaluation of student learning is done through the State examination system. As such it is accountable to the aims of the State. In 2019, 22,233 students (41.83% of all Junior Certificate students) sat the JCRE examination, and 1293 students (2.3% of all Leaving Certificate students) sat the LCRE examination. The publicly available *Chief Examiner's Reports* of 2008 and 2013 gives an understanding of the results up to that point. The optional nature of introducing the State curriculum for religious education has led to the situation in which schools that adopt the State curriculum, with its understanding of religious education, are resourced in this area by the DES, whereas schools which continue with a model in keeping with the characteristic spirit of the school do not receive such on-going professional development or resources from the State.

The Introduction of Junior Cycle Religious Education

Since the 1998 Education Act developments in RE respond to and are shaped by national policy developments in education. This is particularly apparent in the revised Junior Cycle curriculum, a framework for which was first proposed by the NCCA in its 2010 document *Innovation and Identity: Ideas for a New Junior Cycle* and adopted by the DES as *A Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015). The focus of this revision is on the

student as a learner engaged in learning for life. The justification for the inclusion of any subject in the revised framework is its potential to contribute to at least some of the twenty-four statements of learning identified as core aims of the syllabus. Religious education makes a distinctive contribution to the following statements of learning:

> The student creates, appreciates and critically interprets a wide range of texts … The student has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision-making … The student appreciates how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives … The student values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts … The student values local, national and international heritage, understands the importance of the relationship between past and current events and the forces that drive change … The student takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others. (DES, 2019)

The *Background Paper and Brief for Junior Cycle Religious Education* (2017) presents a vision of RE informed by CSO figures on religious and cultural diversity; human rights legislation; the voices of teachers and students; and European perspectives on how to conceive of religious education in the public space; sustainable development; a need for religious literacy in the public space; the celebration of the diversity of religious practices and beliefs; and a significant contributor to student wellbeing (Meehan, 2019). The concerns of faith communities are not evident in the text.

 Shaped by this context the argument for the inclusion of religious education in the *Framework for Junior Cycle* is based on a vision of RE as an educational pursuit which goes beyond an information based approach and instead facilitates a depth engagement with questions of meaning that offer wisdom and insight for the student's own life. Though the *Background Paper* (2017b) eschews the notion of specific faith or religious formation it operates out of the assumption that all education is deeply formative. The state cannot form somebody in a particular religious viewpoint, but the state has the right to form an informed citizenry regarding religion. Such an approach to RE is grounded in values of

freedom, dignity, inclusion, justice and equality which contribute to "building a more socially cohesive society; a society that is plural but integrated, diverse but responsible, truth-seeking but respectful and compassionate" (NCCA, 2017b, p. 7).

Junior Cycle religious education is an activity in the public domain and therefore accountable to the aims of the State. However, its implementation is, by virtue of the nature of the subject, shaped by the insights and concerns of school patrons and management bodies. In 2010 the Catholic Bishops offered a definition of religious education which allowed for religious education, as part of a holistic vision of education, to be seen as part of a continuum of the faith development of a Catholic student; the curricular subject religious education does not have to carry the whole weight of expectation:

> Religious Education is a process that contributes to the faith development of children, adolescents and adults … it can also teach people to think profoundly, allowing them to make free and consistent choices in the way they live their religious, and other, commitments. (*Share the Good News*, 2010, p. 57)

This is further refined by the Bishops in *Religious education and the framework for junior cycle* (2017), which observes that, "Religious Education seeks to be life-enhancing by promoting the freedom, dignity, equality and uniqueness of every student in the school irrespective of race, colour, sex and religious or belief stance … Engagement with other religious traditions and secular worldviews is also important. RE seeks to help students develop the necessary skills and attitudes to engage positively in this conversation, while at the same time providing them with an essential space for their own spiritual reflection and religious development" (2017, p. 6).

The context for religious education in Ireland is also responsive to developments in the European context. Across Europe there is an increasing expectation that religious education in the public space will equip students for responsible citizenship by helping them to cope with and engage constructively in a pluralist society. There is no agreed rationale for how this will happen but there is increasing cooperation between

stakeholders (Schweitzer & Schreiner, 2020). Developments such as the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* (OECD, 2007) situate teaching about religion in public schools in the context of a human rights framework and a commitment to religious freedom. Through its work on *Signposts, policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious worldviews in intercultural education* (2014), and *Competences for Democratic Culture, on living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies* (2016), the Council of Europe promotes teaching about religions as well as the development of sensitivity and respect, literacy and understanding. This background contextualises the rationale for religious education presented in the *Junior Cycle Religious Education Specification* (2019b, p. 6):

> Religious Education promotes the holistic development of the person. It facilitates the intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual and moral development of students. Religious Education provides a particular space for students to encounter and engage with the deepest and most fundamental questions relating to life, meaning and relationships. It encourages students to reflect, question, critique, interpret, imagine and find insight for their lives. The students' own experience and continuing search for meaning is encouraged and supported.

Religious education seeks to allow for a safe but challenging space where faith and reason can meet in a creative way to assist students in making sense of life. Religious education in the Junior Cycle, introduced in schools in 2019, is structured around three interconnecting strands: expressing beliefs, exploring questions and living our values. These strands are underpinned by the cross cutting elements of enquiry, exploration, and reflection and action. The specification then identifies a range of learning outcomes which invite the student to become active agents in their own learning. Though encouraged to draw on their own experience, students' personal faith commitment or religious affiliation is not subject to assessment.

Findings from research with post-primary students suggest that religious education has played an increasingly significant role in providing opportunities for them to engage with religious and spiritual questions

they may not get to consider in any other context. 85% of those surveyed said that studying religion in school helped them understand people of other religions, 84% agreed that we must respect all religions, and 71% said that studying religion in school shaped their own views about religion (Byrne et al., 2019). Data from the *Growing up Irish: Life perspectives among young people in the Republic of Ireland* research (Lewis et al., 2009) provides evidence of the continuing and active role of religion within contemporary Irish society, but also how religious expression is adapting. The data also suggests that young people perceive that religious identity may be a resource for identity formation, but it cannot be assumed to be the sole source of their identity formation. Religious identity is a choice rather than an inherited identity. The person chooses the religious option among the many options available to them, and may choose to express their identity within traditional religious categories or outside of a traditional frame (Cullen, 2019; Arweck, 2017). The views of students and teachers in Ireland, outlined in section 3.2 and 3.3 of the *Background Paper* (2017b), suggests that students value the opportunities for space to reflect on their own spiritual and moral development.

If the responses of students are indicative of what the perception of religious education is, then we can infer that, while there has been a positive attitude towards religious education and an arguably successful implementation of some of its aims, there has been a dramatic shift away from the sense of religious education as inherently education in faith within a particular religious tradition. The voices of young people are important constituents in the shaping of future policy direction in religious education.

Looking Ahead: Senior Cycle Review

The suggestion in *Proposals for the Future Development of Senior Cycle Education in Ireland* (2005), that religious education could be a short course designed by the school but not assessed by the State, has not made its way into the later documents. *Towards Learning: An Overview of Senior Cycle Education* (2009), observes that moral and spiritual values have been distinctive in shaping Irish society. No mention is made of the way

in which these values are expressed in religion. There is no mention of religious education in the *Interim Report of the Review of Senior Cycle Education* (2019a). The *Interim Report* affirms that the core purpose of senior cycle education is to help every student towards fulfilling their potential by deepening their knowledge, skills and qualities as they mature. The report emphasises the holistic development of every student, their agency and wellbeing, and their right to an education which equips them for diverse and sustainable futures (2019a, p. 7). To be included in a revised approach to Senior Cycle, religious education will have to be very clear about the value it offers to an already over-crowded curricular space.

Teaching Council Requirements

To be recognised as a teacher of RE by the Teaching Council (2013) an application must demonstrate that the applicant has studied the following modules as part of their degree: Sacred Texts including the Bible (b) Christianity—Origins and Contemporary Experience (c) World Religions (d) Secular Belief Systems (e) Ethics (f) Systematic Theology and Philosophy of Religion. This was in keeping with the theological studies undertaken by teachers of religious education. However, from January 2023 in order to meet the requirements applicants must demonstrate that their degree includes the study of 5 of the following: (a) Sacred Texts including the Bible; (b) Christianity—Origins and Contemporary Experience; (c) World Religions; (d) Secular Belief Systems; (e) Ethics; (f) Systematic Theology; (g) Philosophy of Religion. In effect, a teacher of religious education will not have had to study theology or anything about the Christian tradition in order to be recognised by the Teaching Council (2020). In opening up the subject to a broader range of perspectives from which to study religious education, the Council has changed the nature of the subject. This development could be significant in shifting religious education from its religious sources and resources and could perhaps be at odds with the NCCA's vision for the subject which invites students to grapple personally with the depth structures of the world's religions and the variety of responses to questions of meaning and values.

Conclusion

A number of conclusions have emerged from this review of evolving policy developments in the State's understanding and provision of religious education in the post-primary sector.

(1) The context for religious education in Ireland has traditionally been shaped by an ecclesial discourse rooted in an understanding of teaching religion as the concern of the churches. (2) The State's use of the term religious instruction has not kept pace with national and international developments in the broad area of religious education so has become somewhat arcane and pejorative in its usage. (3) The continuing conflation of the terms religious instruction and religious education has hindered progress in developing a philosophical rationale for religious education in the public space. (4) Developments in religious education have been reactive in response to issues pertaining to the complex intersections between religion and education. (5) The concern of the churches and faith communities for the identity and nature of religious education has played a significant role in curriculum development. On the one hand this allows for a textured understanding of the nature and purpose of religious education, but on the other it could lead to a separation between forms of religious education on the basis of what is perceived to be the aim of religious instruction. (6) There is a lack of consistency both between syllabi as well as within syllabi prepared by the State which suggests a lack of unity of purpose in the State's approach and demonstrates Gleeson's concept of fragmentation (Gleeson, 2000, p. 7). Arguably the *Specification for Junior Cycle Religious Education* (2019b) demonstrates a growing confidence in proposing a religious education that is educationally justifiable on the grounds of what it contributes to the common good and to the holistic development of students.

The 1998 Education Act allowed for the State to take an active role in the religious education of its citizens. What form and shape that takes continues to evolve. Drawing on the image of two roads diverging, we suggest that 1998 marks the beginning of a divergence in policy between the State and the churches, exemplified in the various ways that the terms religious education and religious instruction have been used. While there

are points of convergence between the aims of the State and the churches in the understanding of the nature, scope and purpose of religious education in post-primary schools, the increasing accountability of religious education to the concerns of the State will necessarily take precedence over the policies of religious patrons in schools.

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6

Post-Primary In-career Teacher Professional Development in Ireland

Anthony Malone

Introduction

This chapter will chart national and international policy initiatives that proved influential and salient in shaping formal and informal approaches to post primary in career teacher education in Ireland. A broad-based approach to policy analysis is intended with particular emphasis on the period since 1922 to the present. Policy phases and thematic concerns will be sketched with particular focus on influential structural changes and supports and a review of discourses will seek to surface policy allegiances, juxtapositions and perspectives and show how these worked to iteratively shape the current reality. Progressive shifts in policy rhetoric and practices will be explored ranging from in-service (INSET) provisions to Continuing Professional Development discourses through to more current emphases on frameworks that support joint practice development. These will be situated and reviewed through the lens of

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prominent support services such as School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI), Second Level Support Service (SLSS) and Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) amongst others. The chapter charts the development of professional learning from an era where it was optional but encouraged to an era where it was progressively linked to productivity and regulatory frameworks such as the Croke Park and Haddington Road agreements. Successive approaches adopted by Ministers for Education will be embedded across the narrative and the chapter will conclude with an outline of the Cosán Development Process initiated by the Teaching Council, Ireland in April 2016. It prioritises a policy focus on teachers' in-career professional education with the aim of acknowledging and identifying mechanisms for teachers in career learning. The chapter is not intended as an exhaustive treatment of the complete historic record but more particularly spotlights certain salient aspects which emerged as telling and significant.

Setting the Scene: The Professional Landscape from 1878

Normative expectations regarding the professional conduct of teachers were well established from the mid-nineteenth century but these in the main centred on moral and political aspects of teacher character rather than standards of pedagogic proficiency. In the main the history of post-primary teacher in-career education saw three kinds of provision; the needs of the system; the needs of the school and the needs of the teacher. Provision until recent decades focused particularly on addressing system needs. The term INSET or in-service was more commonly used, denoting an emphasis on needs of the system.

Formally established in 1878, the second level system in Ireland installed a long era of unimaginative teaching and conformist learning (McElligott, 1981). The early introduction of a payment by results system prioritised conformance and compliance through pedagogic emphasis on extensive memory learning and cramming tendencies (Inlow, 1973, pp. 193–194). Various reports (1898, 1900, 1901) of the Examiners of

the Intermediate Education Board stated the preoccupation of teachers with examination results and the rote-learning of notes.

This policy, Coolahan (1981) has shown, had strong roots in Adam Smith's philosophy, and in his rather negative view of teachers. Under Payment by Results teachers' incomes were linked to the results received by their students in public examinations or alternatively, the grants made available to schools from the public purse for the payment of teachers were based on such results. Criticisms of payment by results as a restrictive and counterproductive policy instrument became widespread in the 1880s and 1890s and persisted up to the establishment of the Irish Free State. Although abolished at that time its effects continued to hold sway in the system with little requirement for teacher professional development or in-career education. Coolahan (1981, pp. 65–66) captures the many defects of this system which:

> … included the cramming tendencies … the heavy stress on memory work, unhealthy rivalry and competition, bad effects on teaching, many schools being driven into a set groove, neglect of weak pupils…

Despite assurances from Eoin MacNeill (the Republic of Ireland's first Minister for Education, 1922–1925) that the system would be reformed it remained classically humanist and elitist in orientation. The close link of a cautious state and ultra conservative Roman Catholic Church over this period made for minimal State intervention in areas of systemic importance. Callan, drawing on the work of Gleeson and Crooks, described a level of stasis with minimal attention to 'curriculum analyses and educational discourse' at system and school levels in Ireland (Callan, 2006, pp. 27–28). The inherently conservative policy-practice nexus was less open to change (Garvin, 2004) requiring less emphasis on teacher in-career education.

For much of twentieth century paternalisms of the past continued to hold sway and these came to shape the system in specific ways through what might be deemed an articulation of preferred approach. This was especially evident in the annotation and exam content practices which sat explicitly behind or beneath the kinds of activities which many students were asked to do. They revealed the exercising influence of the

policy-practice nexus and showed how teachers and students could be socialised into occupying particular kinds of conformist identities within their practice requiring little by way of in-career professional development.

Discourses of teacher education in the form of professional development, gathered significant traction following the OECD review of 1965 albeit in a protracted way. Framed within a modernising imperative and responsive to a change agenda language of teacher effectiveness, *The Investment in Education* review set out an ambitious plan where "the best returns from further investment in teacher education will come from the careful planning and construction of a nationwide induction and in-service system" (1965, p. 98). Policy affordance towards and determination to normalise human capital discourse in the 1965 OECD review legitimated links between education and socio-economic discourses (O'Sullivan, 1992, p. 464). Over time in-career professional development aims were framed more in terms of addressing system needs and became normalised in taken for granted ways within policy spaces over subsequent decades. The influence of the *Investment in Education* report (1965) was without question, far reaching. Despite increasing normalisation of a human capital discourse, the absence of a formalised policy framework meant the system continued to afford teachers high levels of professional agency in relation to engagement with professional education.

Certainly, the emphasis on committed engagement to in-service education (INSET) progressively gained traction throughout the 1960s and the establishment of the Higher Education Authority in 1969 saw the publication of an important and detailed report on professional teacher education. In a written response to the report the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI), acknowledged the growing significance of it and stated, "the necessity to allow leave of absence with full pay to secondary teachers who wish to attend in-service training" (ASTI, 1971, p. 108).

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) Report on Teacher Education called for a more structured provision of in-service teacher education courses and signalled a new emphasis in direction for teacher education. This demand for in-service education assumed a level of significance and relevance given the implementation of national curricular reforms at that time. Both the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations had

been reformed in the sixties and reforms in the primary school curriculum highlighted a need for more active and pedagogic approaches. This contributed to a greater awareness and investment in in-service teacher education resulting in the establishment of twenty regional Teacher Centres in 1972. The introduction of these centres signalled the adoption of divergent provision of teacher professional development and provided purpose-built venues for professional development activities. The emergence of these centres alongside the recent launch of a revised Primary curriculum was fortuitous but resulted in an early identification of these centres with primary school teachers. Their significance for post-primary teacher development was much more peripheral. The Green Paper afforded them minimal significance beyond providing "a basis for informal support services" (1992, p. 158) and their full significance for the post primary sector was not fully realised until subsequent to the Education Act (1998) when a raft of curricular and system wide reforms prompted the establishment of an array of post-primary support services including the SDPI, Leadership Development for Schools (LDS), SLSS. Many of these support services were housed in varying centres which helped to further raise the profile of the centres amongst post primary teachers.

Teacher involvement and participation in in-service gained momentum during this time and the establishment of various subject associations afforded opportunity for teacher-led in-service provision. These subject associations were led by teachers for teachers who specialised in curricular subjects in post-primary education. The establishment of the Irish Association for Curriculum Development in 1971 further supported teacher efforts here. However, despite gains in the late sixties and early seventies significant momentum was palpably lost during the economic crises of 1973–1974 and again in the early to mid-eighties. Difficult national economic circumstances resulted in constrained budgets with notable cutbacks in available expenditure. Momentum which had been gathering for in-service education was now significantly slowed and the calls for a structured and more tightly regulated coordinated system of in-service education, which had been gathering apace, now failed to materialise. It was a significant missed opportunity and although

in-service initiatives did not cease entirely, in the main teachers were assumed to independently get on with their work as trusted graduates.

Other such missed opportunities included the publication of *The Report on the In-Service Education of Teachers* (1984) which was an influential broad-based report with notable recommendations for in-service provision. The Committee was constituted by a broad range of key stakeholders including representatives from the Department of Education, the Teachers' Unions, the Joint Managerial Board for Secondary Schools, teacher training institutions and the Association of Primary Teaching Sisters. It outlined the historic background to in-service provision in Ireland, the value of and need for in-service education, issues relevant to catering for the personal and professional needs of teachers, the need for incentives in addition to issues of resourcing and administration of in-service provision. The Report commented on the reality whereby the provision of in-service education had declined whilst the need for in-service had increased in almost every aspect of teaching. It proposed the establishment of a National Council for In-service Education supported by local Teacher Centres. Economic difficulties at the time meant the report recommendations were not actioned despite the Department proceeding to draft and implement extensive curriculum and policy initiatives, all of which required in-service support. With no clear structures or policy in place it resulted in the *ad hoc* development of in-service model.

In a similar vein the ambitious *Programme for Action in Education* (1984–1987) was constrained by the need for tight fiscal measures and scrutiny. The programme was replete with references to "training of teachers—pre-service and in-service" but with the caveat that they "will be given special attention within the overall limited resources that will be available for education" (Dáil Éireann, 1984).

The Green Paper, *Education for a Changing World* (1992) established links between teaching quality and teacher engagement with professional development activities. It noted important benefits of committed professional development such as enhanced teacher motivation "in helping teachers to respond positively to the changing role of the school" (p. 166). Cognisant of teacher unions sensitivity to any insistence on teacher

engagement with professional development the Green Paper stopped short of any form of prescription, appealing instead to personal and professional benefits such as enhancing teacher motivation and keeping up to date with changing social needs and the "changing role of the school" (p. 166). The lack of specificity as to these changing roles typified the Green Paper and its inherent inability to articulate a rigorous and convincing social vision dampened attempts to question deeply ingrained assumptions and professional practices relevant to in-career teacher education policy. Hannan and Shortall stated at the time:

> State policymaking shows a general disregard for clarity of goals. The general aims of secondary education seem to be so taken for granted, or its values so deeply institutionalised, as not to require articulation or justification. (1991, p. 16)

Niamh Bhreathnach, Minister for Education from 1993, stated a view of how the Irish education system seemed to be operating on an implicit philosophy that was rarely interrogated and reflected upon. At the National Education Convention, she stated her intention to move towards a coherent philosophical framework based on the principals of equity, broadness, and partnership.

These themes were taken up in *Report on the National Education Convention* (1994) which acknowledged the indisputable necessity of in-career teacher professional development and called for the "urgent need to make extensive and carefully organised provision for the in-service education of the teaching force" (p. 135). It proposed the establishment of a co-ordinating agency to plan in-service provision and emphasised a need for broad based forms of provision including regional as well school-based forms (p. 87). The policy focus here was aimed to promote a view of professional development which prioritised teacher agency and professional latitude and directional support. Acknowledging a broad range of professional development models in play *Report on the National Education Convention* (1994) spotlighted attention on those forms which not only addressed the needs of the system but also "the personal and professional needs of the teacher, as well as those of the school system" (1994, p. 87).

It further called for the establishment of a co-ordinating agency to plan in-service provision and a view was taken that a Teaching Council, should one be established, could have an important role to play in the planning of in career teacher professional education. The idea itself was not particularly novel and had been mooted since the beginning of the nineties when OECD reviewers indicated a need for a formal structured approach to INSET provision at national level. Supported by European Social Funds (ESF) the newly formed In-career Development Unit (ICDU) assumed responsibility for co-ordinating and funding all aspects of state supported in-service provision. What followed was a significant expansion in in-service teacher education or continuing professional development (CPD) as it came to be termed, which was made available across a variety of modes and across a variety of providers. Teacher Centres (see below) were upgraded under the new title of "Education Centres" with particular remit to accommodate and support CPD provision for key curricular and other reforms in the system at that time. The ICDU worked closely with the Education Centres with a real and noticeable shift towards a more regional and localised CPD provision.

To meet the increasing demand for professional development that arose in response to the unprecedented level of state mandated curricular reforms at that time variations in models of provision emerged. The shift towards modular design in addition to vertical, cascade type professional development approaches appeared to address issues of scalability in addition to envisioning a form of teacher professional development that was rooted in principles of progressive collaborative engagement such as the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI).

The significance of in-career teacher education was enshrined in the Education Act (1998), albeit minimally with just one reference to the school principal's responsibility for the creation of "a school environment which is supportive of learning among the students, and which promotes the professional development of the teachers." In keeping with the Green and White papers the emphasis remained on promoting rather than requiring a view of professional in-career education which was considered at the time to be especially contentious with significant procedural and logistical issues (1998 V, S.23 (c)).

Reforming the Professional Development Landscape from the 1990s

In the early years of the new millennium four policy documents relevant to teacher in-career professional development were published. Two were Irish and two were international. They were: (a) *Teachers Matter: Country Background Report for Ireland* (Coolahan, 2003); (b) *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (OECD, 2005); (c) *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* (European Commission, 2005) and (d) an evaluation report on the Second Level Support Service in Ireland, *Cultivating Professional Growth: An Emergent Approach to Teacher Development* (Granville, 2005). All four unequivocally identified the need for teachers to be highly qualified in their subject areas and highly competent in interpersonal and digital capabilities. All four documents recommended the need to prioritise and situate in career teacher education as a lifelong pursuit. The European Commission *Common European Principles* document outlined how:

> Teachers' professional development should continue throughout their careers and should be supported and encouraged by coherent systems at national, regional and/or local level, as appropriate. (European Commission, 2005, p. 3)

Though influential from the 1960s it was really from the early 1990s that the OECD had increased its epistemic agency as a policy actor in Irish education. The publication of the OECD report into Irish education in 1991 catalysed a swathe of curricular imperatives and initiatives guided through the lens of international developments and reforms. It reported how "no one concerned with Irish education disputed the amount of in-service education and training (INSET) available was grossly inadequate" (OECD, 1991, p. 129). Things had begun to gather pace from 1989 with increased provision required to support the introduction of the new Junior Certificate. In the main provision was in the form of one-day intensive courses rather than a form of provision that might be deemed progressive and sustained.

A sense of urgency and affordance emerged following the OECD review with a pressing need for responsive, flexible curricula along with and a fresh focus on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) within a system hitherto typified by instructive approaches to teaching and learning. In the main, models of provision remained grounded in what might be deemed to be INSET approaches but with a new energy and pedagogic emphasis. The Green Paper noted the importance of in-career development of teachers "in improving the quality of teaching, by helping teachers to develop their professional competence and to update their knowledge and skills to keep abreast of changing educational requirements" (1992, pp. 165–166). Identifying the significance of national and local forms of provision the Green Paper retained an emphasis on in-career development as desired suggesting it be "available periodically throughout a teacher's career" (p. 165). Recognising the significant need for further investment the Paper, much like the White Paper which followed (1995), implicitly drew attention to the serious level of under-investment and structural supports in this area over preceding decades.

Despite significant momentum for change built up during this unprecedented era of policy review and debate certain momentum was lost as policy "wobbles" (Coolahan, 2004, p. 9) and a "pragmatic gradualism" (O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 175) surfaced. That is not to suggest there was no change but a notable delay in implementing certain initiatives were significant. For example, the Teaching Council. Although legislated for in 2001 it was not formally commended until spring 2005 and formally established a year later in 2006. Given the specific remit of the Council with regard to teacher in-career learning and development this was a notable delay.

Some change came with the establishment of the In-career Development Unit (ICDU) in 1994 and the increased multi-annual investment devoted to it. The ICDU assumed important policymaking and coordinating responsibilities regarding state mandated in-service provision. With the assistance of European Union funding through the Human Resources Operational Programme (HROP) a figure of just over £35 million was allocated to the ICDU between 1994 and 1999. At the same time £10 million funding acquired through the European Regional

Development Fund (ERDF) was ring-fenced for the development and refurbishment of the Education Centres, which grew from 6 to 21 full-time Centres in the same period, 1994–1999 (Egan, 2004, p. 12; Coolahan, 2017, p. 10).

A major restructuring process of in-career policy support was undertaken in 2004 when the ICDU was rebranded as the Teacher Education Section (TES), with increased responsibilities and a broader remit including policy formulation, co-ordination, financial and quality control as strategic responsibility "to empower appropriate groups, bodies and institutions to design, develop and deliver in-career development programmes effectively and efficiently" (Egan, 2004, p. 11).

In September 2010 all support agencies were absorbed into the newly established Professional Development Support Service for Teachers (PDST). Its remit was to provide cross-sectoral, integrated supports for schools in areas such as: Literacy, Numeracy, Leadership, Well-Being, Languages, Technology in Education, STEM as well as other curricular supports at Junior Cycle, Transition Year and Leaving Certificate level.

Maximising Efficiencies in Teacher In-career Professional Development

Like many Western countries during the first two decades of the twenty-first century "evidence-based" approaches have become widely embraced among Irish educational policymakers. At a glance it is a development that would appear to offer several key systemic advantages such as concentrating energies on target-setting whilst curtailing nebulous good intentions that fail to translate into clearly specified educational goals. Moreover, it might serve to keep evaluations focused on outcomes that can be objectively verified.

In September 2007 the Department of Education and Science published *A Value for Money Assessment of Programmes managed by the Teacher Education Section*. An emphasis on key performance indicators emerged in the lexicon based on a Programme Logic Model evaluative framework with accountability framed by quantitative indicators such as attainment

of programmatic outcomes, programme effectiveness including data points on programmatic reach, attendance levels and teacher satisfaction ratings. Focus in the main was towards policy compliance and results-driven accountability with implications that were far-reaching with performance indicators "used by the TES for future monitoring of performance" (2007, p. 225). In-service training and professional development indicators comprised the following (ibid., p. 228):

In-service training and professional development indicators	
The unit cost of in-service training and professional development per teacher trained on an annual basis. • The allocation to each programme of CPD/ Education Centre on an annual basis. • The number of teachers trained in each programme of CPD (National Support Programmes and local courses) on an annual basis	The level of satisfaction among participants with the quality and relevance of the training provided. The relevance of the training provided to teachers' professional needs. • *Participant evaluation sheets.* The number of teachers implementing the revised curricula (in which training has been delivered) The number of teachers implementing new teaching methodologies and skills as a result of training received. • *Data to be collected from a teacher survey to be conducted at the end of each intensive phase of in-service training.* The change in pupil learning outcomes following the introduction of revised curricula. • *Data collated by State Examinations Commission.* The change in student learning and development arising from teacher professional development. • *This indicator to be developed by the TES in conjunction with the DES Inspectorate.* The number/proportion of teachers participating in in-service training and development. • *The attendance levels at each phase of in-service training by each national programme or local/ summer course.* • *The total number of teachers working in that area (e.g., the number of primary level teachers in the case of PCSP and summer courses, the number of History teachers in the case of the HIST)*

Source: Department of Education and Science, *A Value for Money Assessment of Programmes managed by the Teacher Education Section* (2007, p. 228)

Indicators measuring changes in student learning and development that were seen to arise from teacher engagement with professional development were however ambivalent stating "This indicator to be developed by the TES in conjunction with the DES Inspectorate" (2007, p. 228). Repeated references throughout the document to "effectiveness" and "outcomes" suggested a more one-dimensional evaluative model focused on measurable variables such as student achievements in learning. Malone and Hogan (2019, p. 3) state:

> where quality in education becomes mainly associated with the measurement of one-dimensional 'outcomes', the question of quality itself tends to become recast as a matter of indexed quantity—of test scores, examination results, merit points and so on. In such circumstances, core questions of quality itself get side-lined, or even drop out of the picture.

The paradigmatic shift in emphasis since that time towards "the use of value-added measures in making appraisals of teachers' work" (Amrein-Beardsley & Holloway, 2019) has progressively contributed to the "remaking of the professional teacher in the image of data" (Lewis and Holloway 2019). Robertson (2012, p. 589) has traced the significance of these developments.

> Since early 2000, a growing number of global actors [she mentions the World Bank and the OECD especially] have gained greater control over the rules for classifying and framing the good teacher, legitimated by arguments such as the need to create more efficient education systems and competitive knowledge economies.

Such values are however less than impartial and more comfortably reside in performance-management and competitiveness orientations which all too readily have been normalised within public education discourses. Such discourses are not ideologically novel and indeed share some ancestry with the nineteenth-century top-down evidence-based codes such as the payment by results system which was discussed earlier. Rooted in the doctrines of Adam Smith it was driven by a less than trusting view of teachers and schooling (Coolahan, 1977).

Although evident in Brennan's Green Paper (1992) this top-down accountability driven agenda perhaps emerged more fully within the Irish education system following the Troika Bailout and a negative PISA country review in December 2010. The coincidence of both indicated significant deteriorations in state institutions and ushered in an alignment of teacher professional development with top-led, vertical accountability channelled through financial emergency power legislation. Following the introduction of emergency power legislation under the *Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Amendment) Act* (FEMPI, 2011, 2013) continuous professional development was brought within an industrial relations space. Section 3.2 of the Croke Park Agreement made "provision, with effect from the start of the 2010/11 school year, of an additional hour per week to be available to facilitate, at the discretion of management, school planning, continuous professional development, induction …" These conditions were further extended in the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013–2016 (*Haddington Road Agreement*) and continue to this day.

Emergence of Ground-Up Professional Development Models

The OECD report, *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Teachers* (2005), identified three broad perspectives in relation to in-career teacher education. The first of these stipulated a view of professional entitlement to certain amounts of release time and/or financial support (for example in the form of expenses) to undertake recognised professional development activities. The second was more incentive-based where professional development was linked as a *sine quo non* for career progression and/or salary increments. The third broad strategy presented a more holistic school-based perspective which directly links individual in-career development with school improvement needs. The report notes that while the three perspectives are not mutually exclusive the first two tend in the main to focus attention on the individual rather than the whole school.

An evaluation report on the Second Level Support Service in Ireland, *Cultivating Professional Growth: An Emergent Approach to Teacher Development* (Granville, 2005, p. 52) observed that:

> While the rhetoric of policy has adopted CPD as a core concept in the understanding of the teacher as professional, neither the term, or more importantly its meaning have yet achieved purchase in the working lives of teachers. The SLSS is almost invariably seen as in-service support for the implementation of mandated change.

Further highlighting "the heavy leaning towards the technical adjustment of practice rather than a deeper change in professional mindset" Granville called for greater acknowledgement and support for the fundamental relationship between the needs of national policy and individual, professional in-career, development needs (2005, p. 52).

Participant-led professional development initiatives as well as stakeholder partnership programmes have been a prevalent and defining feature of the Irish educational landscape for the past number of decades. Post-primary subject associations progressively emerged over the course of the 1950s and 1960s providing opportunities for teachers to independently lead and take ownership of their professional development needs. The Association of Geography Teachers and Irish Science Teachers Association were both formed in 1961 followed quickly by others such the Irish Mathematics Teachers Association in 1964. Established by and for subject teachers they have progressively promoted interest in particular subjects and the teaching of that subject. Their establishment was particularly fortuitous and facilitated major curriculum reforms across the second level system in the mid to late 1960s. In 1965 fourteen syllabus Committees were established "with the task of planning the introduction of the new three-year, common Intermediate Certificate courses, which were to be initiated in 1966" (Coolahan & O'Donovan, 2009, p. 202). Even though ultimate responsibility and power of decision making remained with the inspectorate these committees afforded teachers a noted level of professional agency and involvement in the curriculum design process with notable benefits for their own professional development.

Despite early gains, progress regarding provision and engagement with professional development opportunities remained slow. In a Dáil Debate on the *Programme for Action in Education* in March 1984 the Minister for Education at the time Gemma Hussey noted:

I am aware that for a number of years in-service training of teachers has been neglected. Conscious as I am of the fundamental importance of the teacher within the classroom, I intend to develop significantly the in-service training of teachers.

The Report on The National Education Convention voiced unanimous agreement for the "urgent need to make extensive and carefully organised provision for the in-service education of the teaching force" (p. 135). It called for the establishment of a co-ordinating agency to plan in-service provision and emphasised a need for broad based forms of provision including regional as well school-based forms (p. 87). Yet, despite increased investment over subsequent decades the *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (OECD, 2005, p. 48) reported:

Participation in continuing professional development activities is on a voluntary basis, but, increasingly, the majority of teachers regard it as a normal professional requirement. Nevertheless, there is an absence of authoritative data on the extent of teacher participation in continuing professional development courses. There may well be some clusters of teachers who have very limited, or no experience of participation in continuing professional development.

Despite concerns a number of support agencies were undertaking important work especially in the areas of key national priorities such as school planning (SDPI), school leadership (LDS), behavioural support (NBSS) and Special Education Needs (NCSE). Together these offered a form of professional development rooted in principles of progressive collaborative engagement and operated on community of practice principles. Many of these supports emerged following the passing of important legislation governing schools such as the Education Act, 1998; Education (Welfare) Act, 2000; Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004. Though weighted in favour of centrally identified priorities and focused on policy adherence and conformance these support services were also focused on addressing local teacher and school needs. However, the emphasis was still primarily centrally mandated, and *A*

Value for Money Assessment of Programmes managed by the Teacher Education Section (2007, p. 236) found: further progress may be required before teachers and schools are willing to take responsibility for identifying and addressing their own continuous professional development needs.

Documents such as these reflected the shift towards a view of professional development which acknowledged a broad range of provision including those which prioritised teacher agency, professional latitude and directional support. In effect, creating tightly bound, system-wide professional development structures which were at the same time flexible enough to support teacher and school self-identified needs. The reality was that this approach had been a stated policy ambition for some time. Some years previously Emer Egan, Deputy Chief Inspector called for "A system where greater emphasis is placed on professional development activities in the context of needs identified by schools and teachers is not only desirable but essential for the future" (2004, p. 17).

Recent decades have witnessed an exponential growth in ground-up professional development models which were not centrally mandated but which prioritised local teacher agency. A number of these were designed and run by universities, patrons, managerial bodies, and others who were responding to locally identified professional development needs. The intention in what follows is not to provide an exhaustive account of these programmes but rather to treat one such programme, *Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century* (TL21) which has been operating since 2003. It offers a vignette of a programme that responds to needs identified above and which operates as a loosely coupled professional development system within the rigours of a tightly coupled national system (Firestone 2014; Weick 1976)**.**

Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century (TL21) is a multi-pronged research and development project which incorporates elements of international best practice in a constructive partnership between schools, Education Centres and Maynooth University working in close collaboration with key policy and support agencies. TL21 is an innovative professional development programme for post-primary teachers which invites them to play a key part in shaping and pursuing their own professional development. Originally funded by Atlantic Philanthropies (2003–2007) the TL21 programme has continued to take on new features and cultivate

highly prized enhancements in the learning environments of post-primary schools. Hogan et al. (2007, p. 32) note how:

> Prior to their involvement in the TL21 project, most of the participant teachers reported that their conversations in school on pedagogical issues were infrequent, unstructured and rarely informed by ideas of active professional collaboration on teaching and learning issues.

Though part-funded and supported by the Department of Education and Skills this does not alter its character: it remains an exercise in sustained voluntary co-operation between the participating schools, the Education Centres and the university. In its lifetime to date the two main aims of the TL21 programme have remained deliberately the same and deliberately simple: (1) to strengthen teachers' capacities as the authors of their own work; (2) to enable students to take a more active and responsible role in their own education. These aims continually guide the practice of the TL21 professional development workshops, and it is here that the far-reaching character of the aims really come to be experienced. They bring together almost all aspects of the teacher's work in a way which keeps the focus continually on the heart of the matter: the quality of teaching and of learning.

Although established (2003) before the launch of the OECD study, *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (2005) the TL21 initiative very much aligned with its emphasis on schools of the future as "learning communities". Such communities, it states,

> Seek to maximise opportunities for staff to interact and learn from one another, as well as with external sources of research and information, and try to develop ways for learning to be cumulative and more readily accessible to all members of the organisation…. A key strategy is to encourage teachers to become more inquiring, reflective practitioners, and to do so in collaboration with colleagues. It also emphasises the importance of "school leaders who are able to build a climate of collegiality and quality improvement within schools". (OECD, 2005, p. 110)

TL21 was established on the principle that "simply inserting experiential activities into teaching without providing a consistent experiential pedagogical framework diminishes success for learners" (Blair, 2016, p. 5). A recently commissioned evaluation of the TL21 programme noted significant benefits including how, functioning in loosely coupled ways, (Firestone, 2014; Weick, 1976) it creates opportunities for teachers to exercise agency with greater levels of positivity and capacity for self-critique and reflection. In doing so, they build their capacity as resourceful, articulate practitioners, with the confidence to publicly share illuminating and convincing accounts of their professional work that is rooted in their professional needs. The External Evaluation report found:

> While participants make frequent reference to the capacity fostered by TL21 to engage with mandated processes of change, it is valued highly for not being itself part of such a mandate. Indeed, it may be that TL21 should consciously foster more autonomous or 'subversive' initiatives by schools, without reference to national prescriptions. (2019, p. 42)

However, many teachers, principals, and local co-ordinators also repeatedly highlighted the richness in undertaking this professional development work within national frameworks such as Framework for the Junior Cycle (2015), *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016–2020* (2016) and *Looking at our School* (2016). The external report stated, "If the school owns the SSE process and has an agentic rather than a compliance approach, then the linkage is good—it develops the school's capacity to 'speak for itself' within the frame of national policy" (2019, p. 30).

Other such programmes like the *Instructional Leadership Programme* run by ETB Ireland and the Magenta Programme run by NAPD are other such professional development programmes that are grounded in principles of teacher agency and locally identified professional development needs.

Cosán: The Teaching Council's National Framework for Teachers' Professional Learning

The Teaching Council (Ireland) have specific statutory functions in relation to teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). Section 39 of the Teaching Council Act stipulates "the Council shall promote the continuing education and training and professional development of teachers" and "conduct research into the continuing education and training and professional development of teachers and shall publish the findings arising out of such research in such form and manner as the Council thinks fit."

In 2011, as part of its *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* the Council set out its intentions with regard to teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). It stated its intention "to work towards a position, following the adoption of a coherent national framework for CPD … where renewal of registration with the Teaching Council will be subject to the receipt of satisfactory evidence in relation to engagement in CPD" (p. 19). Adopting a broad-based approach, the 2011 policy statement defined teachers' professional learning: "Continuing professional development (CPD) refers to life-long teacher learning and comprises the full range of educational experiences designed to enrich teachers' professional knowledge, understanding and capabilities throughout their careers" (2011, p. 19).

The Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*, published in 2012 and revised in 2016 set out high-level standards in relation to teachers' professional learning. Viewing it as both a right and responsibility the Code invited teachers take personal ownership for their professional practice by:

- Actively maintaining their professional knowledge and understanding to ensure that it is current
- Reflecting on and critically evaluating their professional practice, in light of their professional knowledge base
- Availing of opportunities for career-long professional development. (2016, p. 8)

Building from these statements the Council developed Cosán, the National framework for teachers' learning in 2014. This was developed following a period of consultation with members of the teaching profession and outlined a range of values including: flexibility of provision, professional ownership of teaching by teachers themselves, high-quality professional engagement linked to teachers' daily work, accessibility that is matched to the timescales of teaching, public recognition through accreditation of teachers' participation in professional development.

The attempt to link engagement in CPD and registration was especially contentious particularly with those who resisted any such stipulation highlighting significant procedural, resource and logistical issues. The standing of this condition in legal terms was less clear with the Act clearly setting out a view of Council functions to promote rather than to regulate. Objects 6(c) and 6(b) of the Teaching Council Act outlines the function of Council as promoting "the continuing education and training and professional development and "to establish and promote." Nowhere in the Act does it set out how policies are to be established. Section 33(2) of the 2015 Teaching Council (Amendment) Act provides that the Council may make regulations for the purpose of renewal of registration. In an amendment to the 2001 Act (which was much less specific in this regard) Section 33(2) (d) specifically lists "satisfactory completion of programmes of continuing education and training accredited under Section 39" as a requirement for renewal of registration. In a Dáil debate on the amended legislation in 2015 Minster for Education at the time, Jan O'Sullivan noted how she saw this as:

An enabling provision and it would be by way of a regulation that would have to be approved by the Minister. It is not something that is coming in tomorrow, but it is under discussion and consultation through the Teaching Council. In my experience, teachers do engage in continuous professional development, CPD, and seek it. … Having said that, there are occasional teachers who do not particularly want to do that, but we want them all to do so. We want to ensure that teachers are upskilling themselves and are taking the opportunity to engage in CPD. As the Deputy knows, extensive

CPD is organised for teachers. This provision, however, is to enable the Teaching Council to make it a requirement, if and when it believes it is necessary.

To date these parts of the Act have yet to be commenced.

Given the tensions and complexities of linking renewal of registration with engagement in professional development, a more consultative approach in relation to Cosán was adopted by the Council from late 2014 onwards. The process was premised on a view that firmly rooted practitioner professional development needs in the hands of the practitioners themselves. Other identified guiding principles which shaped the process prioritised an emphasis on teacher agency and autonomy and iterated the need for forms of professional development that are professionally relevant, collaborative, continuous, differentiated and sustained.

Rather than consulting on the basis of a pre-prepared draft the approach was to invite teachers to present their views as a precursor to the drafting process. In terms of policy development this was a novel approach taken by the Teaching Council. Hogan (2004, p. 18) notes: "teaching as an occupation has rarely enough enjoyed the freedom to conduct its affairs in accordance with its practitioners' views on how the best interests of learning are to be understood and advanced." The consultation process continues with a series of three online workshops now running across twelve Education Support Centres.

Conclusion

The history of post-primary teacher professional development since independence saw three kinds of provision; the needs of the system; the needs of the school and the needs of the teacher. That is not to suggest these as mutually exclusive, and this chapter has highlighted the moments of overlap between these.

Certainly, the emphasis on committed engagement to in-service education (INSET) progressively gained traction throughout the 1960s and early 1970s while momentum was substantively lost as a result of a series of economic crises in 1973–1974 and again in the early to mid-eighties. These resulted in constrained budgets and a loss of momentum.

A sense of urgency re-emerged following the OECD review of 1991 with a pressing need for responsive, flexible curricula along with a fresh focus on Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The Green Paper noted the importance of in-career development of teachers "in improving the quality of teaching, by helping teachers to develop their professional competence and to update their knowledge and skills to keep abreast of changing educational requirements" (1992, pp. 165–166). Identifying the significance of national and local forms of provision the Green Paper retained an emphasis on in-career development as desired suggesting it be "available periodically throughout a teacher's career" (p. 165). Models of provision remained grounded in what might be deemed to be INSET approaches but with a new energy and pedagogic emphasis.

The OECD report (1991) catalysed a swathe of curricular imperatives and initiatives guided through the lens of international developments and reforms. Though influential from the 1960s it was really from the early 1990s that the OECD had increased its epistemic agency as a policy actor in Irish education. Progressive shifts in policy rhetoric and practices emerged with a gradual and progressive shift in policy rhetoric from in-service (INSET) provision to Continuing Professional Development discourses which envisage and prioritise those forms which are professionally relevant, collaborative, continuous, differentiated and sustained.

The period since independence has witnessed a shift in policy emphasis in teachers in-career learning from an era where it was optional but encouraged to an era where it was linked to productivity and regulatory frameworks such as the Croke Park and Haddington Road agreements. Like many Western countries the first two decades of the twenty-first century saw the emergence of "evidence-based" approaches which have become widely embraced among Irish educational policymakers. Focus in the main was towards policy compliance and results-driven accountability with an emphasis on normalising discourses of target-setting, key performance indicators, programmatic outcomes and programme effectiveness.

The emergence of the Teaching Council is significant and their ongoing work in relation to Cosán signals a not so insignificant policy shift in teachers' professional development. Given the earlier tensions

associated with linking renewal of registration with engagement in professional development, a more consultative and values-based approach in relation to Cosán has been adopted by the Council. The process was premised on a view that firmly rooted practitioner professional development needs in the hands of the practitioners themselves. From a policy perspective this builds, in important ways, on recent decades which saw the growth in ground-up, teacher initiated and led professional development models. Together these initiatives bring together the three kinds of provision identified earlier in the chapter; the needs of the system; the needs of the school and the needs of the teacher.

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7

Old Ribbons, New Bows: The Historical Development of Internal Improvement Processes in Irish Schools

Shivaun O'Brien

Introduction

The quality of the Irish mainstream education system has been influenced by many factors over the past century. For the main part, such factors operated at a systems level, external to the management of primary and post-primary schools, yet had a significant impact on the quality and improvement of the schooling system. Fundamentally, the quality improvement of mainstream school from the foundation of the State up to the 1980s, was chiefly influenced by the financial resources invested in education, national education policy and a range of national supports. Concerns for quality assurance were addressed through external evaluations conducted by the inspectorate. Internal school improvement processes were introduced to Ireland as part of an international and growing focus on school effectiveness and school improvement which simultaneously brought about the introduction of similar processes in many

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jurisdictions during the 1990s (Davies & Ellison, 1999) and which have evolved over the decades to become a staple of education policies throughout the industrialised and developing world. Centrally devised structures and processes for internal quality assurance in schools is now a common feature of education systems internationally (OECD, 2013; UNESCO, 2005).

This chapter traces key external factors that influenced school improvement over the past century and the climate that led to an increased focus on internal improvement processes from the 1980s. The discussion then focuses, predominantly, on the introduction and establishment of various iterations of internal improvement processes such as school development planning and school self-evaluation in primary and post-primary schools. In order to provide a context for such developments, the school effectiveness and school improvement movements are outlined leading to the Education Reform Act (1988) in the United Kingdom and the Education Act (1998) in Ireland, both determining the requirement for schools to engage with a nationally prescribed internal planning and improvement process. The gradual shift from school development planning (SDP) to a focus on school self-evaluation (SSE) is discussed as well as the various phases involved in the implementation of this legal and policy directive, up to the current day.

External Drivers of School Improvement

Following the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922 and the Civil War that ensued, the growth and improvement of the Irish education system was not an immediate priority for the new government. Educational policy focused on curricular reform which promoted the Irish language and culture within an overarching Catholic ethos. The Minister for Irish appointed in 1919 was appointed as the Minister for Education in 1921 (Ó Buachalla, 1988). The Civil War caused significant economic damage to the state as it incurred costs for an army of 60,000 men, prisons and the repair of infrastructure such as roads and railways which were deliberately damaged by anti-treaty forces during the war. The cost of the Civil War to the state was estimated to amount to

£47 million. Government expenditure was reduced from £42 million in 1923, to £28 million in 1926 including the reduction in the salary of civil servants. Despite an improved financial situation by the early 1930s, restricted public expenditure continued up to the 1970s with little investment in education, health or social services (Hopkinson, 1988).

The dominant role of the churches due to their relationship to the state, remained a major influence on education policy for most of the nineteenth century although stakeholder participation in the power structure widened as the century progressed. Ó Buachalla (1988, p. 50) summarised the policy changes of this period in terms of changes to '*access, process, and structure*'. These resulted in increasing access to the education system, improvements to the quality of instruction and the physical environment of the school, and improvements to the national and local organisation of the education system. In the first three decades since the establishment of the state the key policy developments included changes to primary curriculum, the introduction of the primary certificate, changes to the secondary curriculum and examination system, the introduction of new types of schools, the establishment of new teacher preparation colleges, the establishment of the Council of Education and a raft of legislation including those that impacted positively on school attendance and the school leaving age (Walsh, 2016a; Ó Buachalla, 1988; Coolahan, 1981).

The period from the late fifties demonstrated an increased status for education within the Irish government. Of significance during this period was the 1965 OECD report *Investment in Education*, as it marked an important turning point for the Irish government, with a growing appreciation of the link between investment in education and economic development. According to Ó Buachalla '*Investment in Education, offered a systematic examination of the performance of the education system, of the demands which would emerge within the immediate future and of the structural and organisational weaknesses within the system*' (1988, p. 72). Unsurprisingly, the findings of the report recommended that a range of system level improvements were required including the need for forward planning and more efficient use of resources. Up to this point, engagement in primary and post-primary education was very limited particularly among the semi-skilled and unskilled sectors of society. In 1967 the

Irish government introduced free secondary education level. School completion rates rose steadily through the 1970s, and reached 60% by the start of the 1980s, and just over 80% by the early 1990s (Department of Education and Science, 2003a; Ó Buachalla, 1988; O'Connor, 2014; Walsh, 2016a). The improvement in access to the education system can clearly be seen in the figures presented by Ó Buachalla (1988) when he compares total enrolments in the twenties and the eighties, an increase from 572,000 in 1925 to 911,000 in 1981. More recent figures indicate that full time enrolments in education have grown to 1,171,283 (Department of Education and Skills, 2019). During this period, further improvements to the system included the introduction of a new curriculum for primary schools, and common syllabuses and new subjects were introduced at post-primary level. While it could be argued that such legislative and policy enactment by the Irish government certainly improved the quality of mainstream education provision, it was the primary and post-primary school inspectorate, who were tasked with the responsibility of ensuring quality in the system.

The inspectorate was established in 1832 following the introduction of primary school provision in the previous year. In the early years of the State, the inspectorate promoted curricular reform and in particular the teaching of Irish, and the reinforcement of cultural and national aims (Coolahan & O'Donovan, 2009). However, the main focus of the inspectorate remained on accountability, and specifically reporting on the degree to which schools complied with nationally defined rules and regulations and the performance of teachers. The salary of the latter, at primary level, was linked to the rating system applied during inspection visits. Teachers were categorised as efficient, highly efficient or nonefficient (Coolahan, 2009). Further accountability measures included the introduction, in 1943, of the Primary Certificate Examination in Irish, English and Maths in response to an assertion that educational standards had fallen since the foundation of the State (Department of Education, 1950). State examinations were established at post-primary level and the publication of these examination results at a national and county level provided a useful evaluative tool for the inspectorate up to the time it was discontinued in 1967. Following the introduction of a new Primary School curriculum in 1971, school inspections focused on the work of

the whole school. During the same period, post-primary schools were not inspected and this continued up to the implementation of the 1998 Education Act (Brown et al., 2016). External evaluation of schools through the process of school inspection has evolved over the last century and its implementation across primary and post-primary schools continues up to the current day. Hofman et al. (2008) claims that external pressures from inspection can impel schools to improve but so can internal improvement processes. Further, they claim that external evaluation and internal improvement processes are compatible and complementary and that external accountability systems strengthen internal quality systems.

According to UNESCO (2005) resources are a more important determinant of pupil achievement in resource poor environments than in the richer ones, as reflected by Verstegen and King when they stated; "*schools cannot be effective with resources they do not have*" (1998, p. 262). However, greater levels of funding and support structures alone do not necessarily improve the quality of an education system. As additional resources are provided and education systems become more established the main impetus for improving the quality of the education system results from a specific focus on quality improvement and effectiveness (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). The 1990s was a period of significant change in Irish Education with the Government Green Paper in 1992, a comprehensive consultative process in 1993–1994, leading to the 1995 White Paper: *Charting our Education Future*. The Green Paper identified the key challenges facing the Irish Education system including: the need for greater equity in the system; to make the best use of education resources; to ensure greater accountability and to create a system of effective quality assurance (Government of Ireland, 1992a). Halton claimed that the thrust of the Green Paper was heavily influenced by the publication of *Schools and Quality* (OECD, 1989), '*which examined schooling in terms of input/output models with quality as the new priority. The emphasis shifted from the individual learner to the process of education in schools*' (Halton, 2003, p. 335). Despite the obvious improvements to the education system over the previous half century, major concerns remained in relation to educational disadvantage, school attendance, early school leaving, as well as literacy and numeracy levels (Hyland, 2007; Fleming & Harford, 2014). The White Paper specifically identified the target of '*greater*

collegiality and accountability within schools, particularly in the context of whole-school planning processes' (Government of Ireland, 1995, p. 143). In all, there were 15 references to school planning in the White Paper, including a full chapter on the 'school plan'. The White Paper claimed that the school plan '*can greatly assist schools to implement and manage change and improve the quality of education being offered to students*' (p. 167).

School Effectiveness and School Improvement Movements

Internal school improvement processes introduced as policy within mainstream education in Ireland has undergone a number of iterations, all of which are versions of the well-established Plan, Do, Check, Act quality assurance improvement cycle developed by Deming in the 1970s as part of Total Quality Management (Deming, 1986). The application of business quality models to education systems began in the early 1980s. Governments internationally were concerned about the performance of education systems and increasingly looked for greater efficiencies and improved outcomes for students. There was also a growing recognition of the link between the quality of the education systems and the ability of a country to compete in a global economy. In Britain, the government in the 1980s and 1990s decentralised management of schools to local level and applied an open market policy to schools where parents could select their school of choice. At the same time, in Canada and the USA, the government introduced standards, value-for-money audits and performance indicators for schools (Murgatroyd & Morgan, 1993). Quality had emerged as a key issue in education within a relatively short period of time and with it "*a quality industry has grown up creating an ever increasing bureaucratic load on those responsible for the actual delivery of education and training*" (Mark, 2005, p. 1).

Central to the school effectiveness movement is the concept that schools differ in performance even when they are similar in terms of pupils' innate abilities and socio-economic background (Scheerens,

2000). The movement emerged in response to studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s by Coleman (1966) and Jenks (1972) which found that there is a strong correlation between family wealth and student achievement and that it is non-school factors, particularly family background, that cause the difference in academic achievement. In attempting to refute this claim, school effectiveness writers since the 1970s claim that schools can make a difference to educational outcomes (Brookover et al., 1979; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Mortimore et al., 1988; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Scheerens, 1992; Cotton, 1995; Sammons et al., 1995; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000).

The school effectiveness literature attempted to identify the factors that contribute to school effectiveness such as; achievement oriented policy, shared vision, frequent evaluation, purposeful teaching, professional development and strong leadership (Scheerens, 2000). Generally, the proponents of school effectiveness claim that when these characteristics are present in a school, they make a difference to the life chances of pupils in that school. MacGilchrist et al. (1997) suggest that if schools develop these characteristics they would become a more effective "intelligent school" having the ability to "*bring these core and related characteristics together to provide a coherent experience for pupils in each classroom, department and school as a whole*" (MacGilchrist et al., 1997, p. 28).

Reynolds and Teddlie (2001), claim that "inventing" the discipline of school effectiveness has resulted in considerable advances in knowledge and has improved the chances of further educational advances. School effectiveness research is:

> destroying assumptions of the impotence of education, and maybe also helping to reduce the prevalence of family background being given as an excuse for educational failure by teachers. (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2001, p. 103)

A key claim is that school improvement models based on school effectiveness research can positively impact on the achievement of students, especially those from lower socio economic status environments (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2001; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2001). School effectiveness research claims that schools can account for 12–15% of the variance in

student achievement (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2001). Numerous studies support the claim that schools can have an impact beyond social class (Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Scheerens, 1992; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993). The school effect on determining success for students is challenged by writers who claim that the child's social background is the biggest single factor in determining educational success (Merrett, 2006; Nash, 1999; Thrupp, 1999). Although school effectiveness writers are not unified in their recommendations, a number of common themes appear in the literature including: the promotion of national goal setting in terms of student outcomes; central control; cycles of implementation, evaluation, feedback and reinforcement, external evaluation; school accountability; supportive school culture and strong community support (Sun et al., 2007).

School improvement has been described as a specific branch of the study of educational change (Sun et al., 2007). The school effectiveness movement identifies what factors are important to improving quality whereas school improvement research tries to identify how schools are to become effective (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001) and place its emphasis on promoting change in schools (Stoll & Fink, 1996). As defined by Hopkins:

> school improvement is a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change. (Hopkins, 2005, pp. 2–3)

While the characteristics of improving schools have been widely documented (Stoll & Fink, 1996; Harris, 1999, 2002) there was less research about how improvement could be achieved (Harris, 2000). Much of the school improvement literature focused on School Development Planning as a key mechanism for improvement. Development planning according to Hopkins (2005, p. 10) "*provides a generic and paradigmatic illustration of a school improvement strategy, combining as it does selected curriculum change with modifications to the school's management arrangements or organisation*" (Hopkins, 2005, p. 10). The work of Fullan (1998, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) with his focus on change

management has also had a significant influence within the school improvement movement.

School Development Planning

School Development Planning (SDP) was a collaborative process that involved school management, principals, teachers and support staff and as such, the process was deemed as important as the plan that was produced. Stakeholders were asked to examine the changes required of the school considering national and local initiatives and to organise how they would plan to implement such changes in an organised and purposeful manner. The planning process aimed to realise a shared vision, aims, values and sense of direction among those who have responsibility for implementing the plan. Tuohy (1997) described SDP as "*a series of steps that help a school achieve its preferred future*".

The guidelines provided by Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) outline four main processes in development planning:

- audit: a school reviews its own strengths and weaknesses;
- construction: priorities for development are selected and then turned into specific targets;
- implementation: the planned priorities and targets are implemented;
- evaluation: the success of implementation is checked (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991, p. 4).

Among the arguments in favour of development planning Hargreaves and Hopkins claim that it provided a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to planning all aspects of school activity and establishes the long term vision of the school. It was promoted as an approach for schools to control the pace of change, strengthen the relationship between management and teachers, provide an opportunity to recognise the work of staff and increase professional self-confidence.

School Development Planning in Ireland 1999–2010

In Ireland, planning was evident as a practice in many schools since the 1970s. According to Nic Craith (2003) the Department of Education and Science (DES) had established the need to provide guidelines on school planning since the early 1990s but this was delayed due to concerns about the role of parents and the Board of Management in the planning process as well as the capacity of schools to undertake a self-review.

The influence of the school effectiveness and school improvement movements were evident in the publication of a document entitled *The School Plan: a process not a product* (1993) by the Education Centre in Drumcondra as well as a policy document on school planning published by Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) in 1990. Fennell (2011) outlines the evolution of SDP in Ireland in the early to mid-1990s, prior to its official adoption, citing work by Aenghus Kavanagh F.S.P. (1993) on the application of school improvement and effectiveness literature to the Irish context, as well as work by other facilitators in the Voluntary Secondary sector. The importance of school planning was strongly promoted in the Green Paper on Education, *Education for a Changing World* (Government of Ireland, 1992a), the Report of the National Convention (Government of Ireland, 1994) and the White Paper on Education, *Charting Our Education Future* (DES, 1995).

These developments culminated in the highly significant Education Act in 1998, which to this day underpins the legal requirement for schools to engage in internal improvement processes such as planning and evaluation.

The Education Act, 1998, introduced the requirement that all schools prepare a School Plan which must be regularly reviewed and updated using a collaborative process. The Education Act (1998) requires the following:

(1) A board shall, as soon as may be after its appointment, make arrangements for the preparation of a plan (in this section referred to as 'the

school plan') and shall ensure that the plan is regularly reviewed and updated.

(2) The school plan shall state the objectives of the school relating to equality of access to and participation in the school by students with disabilities or who have other special educational needs.

(3) The school plan shall be prepared in accordance with such directions, including directions relating to consultation with the parents, the patron, staff and students of the school, as may be given from time to time by the Minister in relation to school plans.

(4) A board shall make arrangements for the circulation of copies of the school plan to the patron, parents, teachers and other staff of the school.

The SDP initiative was launched by the then Minister for Education and Science, Mícheál Martin in 1999 and remained the principal internal improvement process for schools over the following eleven years. The purpose of the initiative was "*to stimulate and strengthen a culture of collaborative development planning in schools, with a view to promoting school improvement and effectiveness*" (Department of Education and Science, 2003b, p. 7). SDP served as a vehicle for the implementation of centralised policy in a local context while also devolving responsibility and decision making to the school level. It was introduced in Irish primary and post primary schools as a mechanism for enhancing the quality of schools but also as a means of furthering a number of national agendas such as promoting social inclusion, tackling educational disadvantage, improving literacy and numeracy levels and addressing gender equality (Department of Education and Science, 2003b). It was also seen as a vehicle through which primary schools would implement the Revised Primary Curriculum which was introduced in 1999.

The School Development Planning Support (SDPS) team based in the Drumcondra Education Centre provided support for primary schools while the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) team based in Marino Institute of Education supported post-primary schools.

The teams, generally made up of practicing teachers seconded to the role, provided information and guidance on SDP for schools. In addition, they organised workshops and seminars on a regional, network or cluster basis. A key aspect of the support was the direct facilitation of

planning sessions with individual groups or clusters as well as the provision of training in facilitation skills to teachers who may facilitate within their own or other schools. The emphasis in all the circulars relating to the role of the SDPI team is on facilitation. In all circulars SDP support staff are called "facilitators" further highlighting the expectation that they would work directly with staff in individual schools not simply providing information on how to carry out the process of SDP but also guiding staff through the process in their respective schools.

Detailed guidelines on planning were also developed and made available in both print and online and the post-primary website can still be accessed at www.sdpi.ie. A grant for schools was provided to offset some of the costs associated with the planning process. In addition, a postgraduate diploma in planning was delivered in conjunction with the National University of Ireland, Galway.

Circulars relating to SDP issued to both primary "*national*" (Department of Education and Science, 1999a) and post-primary "*second level*" (Department of Education and Science, 1999b) schools were broadly similar introducing the initiative, defining a school plan, outlining the benefits, basic principles of the process and supports that were to be provided to schools. Interestingly, the circular for primary schools referred to the existing culture of school planning in primary schools and the circular was accompanied by a 64-page booklet entitled *Developing a School Plan: Guidelines for Primary Schools* (DES, 1999d). A slightly different approach was evident in the circular for post-primary schools which outlined a plan to provide guidelines to schools on a phased basis, firstly an introductory document followed by guidelines on SDP (Department of Education and Science, 1999e). While both the primary and post-primary support services promoted and supported SDP, further differences were evident in the approach of each entity. The grant payable to primary schools depended on the size of the school and ranged from £215 to £415 as outlined in Circular 34/00 (Department of Education and Science, 2000) while the payment for post primary schools ranged from £1000 to £2000 as outlined in Circular M40/99 (Department of Education and Science, 1999c). Despite this, it was clear from DES circulars that there was an expectation that all primary and post-primary schools would have engaged with the SDP initiative by the end of 2002

following a phased introduction of the initiative over a four-year period starting with schools categorised as disadvantaged. While the SDP support services recruited and trained the facilitators, the fees and travel expenses were paid directly by the school to part-time facilitators selected by the school from a panel.

The SDP guidelines in Ireland proposed a similar basic framework to that which was outlined by Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) and Davies and Ellison (1992) involving a cycle of four phases including review, design, implement and evaluate and which is built around the school's mission, vision and aims as outlined in Fig. 7.1 (Department of Education and Science, 1999e).

The SDPI proposed three adaptations of the basic framework as follows:

The Foundational Model: In this approach the fundamental purpose and values of the school are clarified as a starting point to further development. The planning process initially involves setting out the relatively permanent features of the school. This work is seen as setting the foundations for further development.

The Early Action Planning Model: This model involves a focus on the immediate priorities of the school and the development of plans to
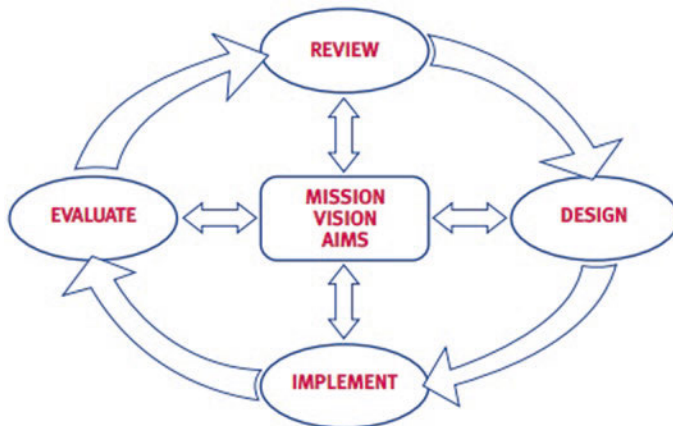
Fig. 7.1 Basic Framework of School Development Planning Process. (Source: Department of Education and Science, 1999e, p. 16)

address such issues in the short term. This model is seen as a good way of promoting acceptance of development planning among a staff team as the impact of the planning is evident before large amounts of documentation are produced.

The Three Strand Concurrent Model: This model recognises the long-term, medium-term and short term dimension of planning for schools. It suggests that three time dimensions are dealt with concurrently including Futures Thinking (long-term planning, 5–15 years), Strategic Intent and Strategic Planning (medium-term planning, 3–5 years) and operational Planning (short-term planning, 1–3 years).

Despite the presentation of these three approaches, it was the early action planning model that was mainly implemented in Irish schools with a focus on achieving early outcomes, building capacity and embedding an acceptance of SDP as a core improvement process in schools (Fennell, 2011).

Dr. David Tuohy (2008) who was the academic consultant to SDPI's Postgraduate Diploma in School Planning, suggested that the planning cycle is often treated as a single loop where stages follow in a linear fashion. He suggests that where a culture of planning exists in a school a recurring pattern of planning is evident and is better represented as a helix rather than a loop. Tuohy promoted the *Three Strand Concurrent Model* based on Davies and Ellison's (1999) approach but recognised that schools often focus initially on specific projects, such as developing policies, rather than developing a more holistic approach to planning. Tuohy recommended that planning should not only be seen as a way of getting things done but rather an opportunity to re-culture the school.

The SDP guidelines highlighted the maintenance and development aspects of planning as outlined by Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991), and advised that school plans would contain a section relating to the permanent features of the school such as mission statement and policies as well as a development section containing an action plan for improvement.

A progress report on SDP in primary and post-primary schools was published by the DES in 2003 which indicated significant differences in the level of engagement by primary and post-primary schools. Since the start of the initiative in 1999, out of a total of 3294 primary schools 1309 schools had engaged in some aspect of SDP, and in relation to

post-primary schools the report indicates that 276 schools out of a total of 749 schools were involved in phase one, and of these only 209 schools were profiled for the purpose of the progress report. Table 7.1 outlines the key planning activities in which schools had engaged up to that point.

It is clear from the progress report that more schools had engaged in the initial steps of the SDP cycle as outlined in Fig. 7.1 focusing on conducting a school review, developing priorities, policy development and the development of vision/ mission statements. According to the progress report, industrial relations problems presented a major stumbling block for the implementation of SDP in post-primary schools during 2000 and 2001 and considerably limited the impact of the initiative in schools during this period. Many schools that started the initiative in 1999 lost momentum during the period of industrial unrest. Despite this, it is clear that even in primary schools there was little focus on the implementation of improvements or any measurement of the impact of the initiative on teaching, learning and outcomes for students. While there was evidence of action planning there was no mention in the report of any monitoring or evaluation of action plans among primary schools while only 3% of post-primary schools profiled had engaged in evaluation of the

Table 7.1 Aspects of SDP engaged in by schools up to 2002

	Primary schools		Post-primary schools
Aspects of SDP engaged in by schools	Stage 1 2001–2002 (840 schools)	Stage 2 2001–2002 (1309 schools)	Overall 1999–2002 (209 out of 276 schools)
School review	84%	82%	78%
Development of priorities	83%	78%	76%
Action planning	82%	83%	44–49%
Development of organisational policies	66%	81%	87%
Development of curricular plans	46%	78%	
Development of vision/ mission	10%	32%	75%
Development of strategic plans	3%	16%	5%

implementation of action plans (Department of Education and Science, 2003b).

The implementation difficulties appear to relate to lack of clarification at national level in terms of expected or required outputs from schools. The wide variation in outputs represents the schools' entitlement to work at its own pace rather than meet any prescribed level of productivity each year. SDP had become a vehicle for the embedding of a raft of national policy directives in schools in the 1990s, which Walsh (2016) claimed had "*represented the most intense period of reform since the establishment of the national system in 1831*". Policy development, according to the progress report, appeared to be extremely time consuming with each school individually developing policies on the same topic rather than the central development of required policies. Such external pressures appeared to draw time away from a focus on teaching and learning.

The absence of clear guidelines for how and when schools should engage in SDP caused "*logistical concerns*" (Department of Education and Science, 2003) and the challenge in identifying time for such work may have resulted in the acceptance of considerable variance in the progress made by each school. McNamara et al. state that "*SDP is clearly seen as an internal process, which although a requirement does not demand particular goals, targets or outcomes*" (2002, p. 204). The lack of Department of Education and Science prescription in terms of output and outcomes was clearly part of the problem. According to Fennell (2011, p. 12) the demand for more "*tangible outcomes*" rather than "*a more patient and culturally sensitive advocacy of capacity*" led to "*a fraught and discordant relationship with the fellow agency of the DES, the national inspectorate, especially as increasingly exigent instrumentalist demands for tangible outcomes came to displace a more patient and culturally sensitive advocacy of capacity building.*" O'Hara and McNamara (2001) also identified this tension between the expectation that SDP would produce products versus the notion that it was the process of SDP that was of most value.

In 2008 the SDPS (primary) merged with the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) to form the Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS). Similarly, in 2009, the SDPI (post-primary) became subsumed into the Second Level Support Service (SLSS) which until then, was primarily a teacher and curriculum support

organisation which assisted schools in the implementation of a range of curricular programmes and subjects and which also provided professional development to teachers in approaches to teaching and learning (McDermott et al., 2007). The economic recession in the late 2000s led to a major restructuring and diminution of the support services provided by the DES to all sectors. In 2010, the PPDS and the SLSS were amalgamated to establish the Professional Development Support Service (PDST), whose wide range of responsibilities also included provision of support for SDP.

In Ireland, unlike in the UK, the school plan continued to be an important document in the inspection of schools at this time. In terms of what is actually inspected, the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) process in Ireland assigned great importance to the school plan and planning process.

The Decline of School Development Planning and a Growing Emphasis on School Self-evaluation

Davies and Ellison (1999) were concerned that school planning, as it existed in Britain in the 1990s, did not serve the needs of schools. The planning work in schools at that time was described as linear and incremental in nature. This reflects the same point made some ten years later by Tuohy (2008) in relation to planning in Ireland. While the model proposed by Davies and Ellison in 1999 was outlined in the 1999 SDP guidelines, it is apparent that in Ireland the basic and more linear approach was more frequently employed (Tuohy, 2008). The growing dissatisfaction with SDP in Ireland reflected an international trend and a change of focus in the school improvement literature. Hopkins and MacGilchrist (1998) argued that school planning should focus more on pupil progress and achievement measured through School Self-Evaluation (SSE) and also plan for improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and the role of management in supporting such work in the classroom. They were keen to emphasise that their concerns regarding

SDP was more to do with failure in its implementation rather than criticism of the approach itself. In the UK, since its introduction 10 years earlier, SDP had become more about managing change and policy development at a whole school level, rather than a focus on improving teaching and learning in the classroom. Similar concerns were highlighted in the evaluation reports on SDP in Ireland as outlined previously (Department of Education and Science, 2003). Fennell (2011) observed that after a decade during which SDP was the main vehicle for school improvement in Ireland, "*SDPI's star was falling … particularly in the eyes of the inspectorate. From a position of central significance at the turn of the century in the national drive for school improvement, it had lost status and importance as a support service*" (p. 16).

The changing emphasis on SSE may have been expected within the Irish education system given that Circular M20/99 issued to post-primary schools in 1999 referred to an EU project on SSE running from 1997 to 1998, involving over 18 countries. An update on which was also provided in Circular M40/99 which outlined that the report on the project would be circulated to schools. Both circulars specifically referred to the introduction of SDP in Irish schools while also flagging what would be its eventual replacement. The progress report on SDP (Department of Education and Science, 2003) referred to the publication by the Department of Education and Science of *Looking at our School: an aid to self-evaluation in schools, suggesting that it* could provide a useful springboard for development planning and to identify priority planning areas.

The Chief Inspector's Report 2001–2004 (Department of Education and Science, 2005) also indicated a shift in thinking as it referred to both SDP and SSE under two different headings. It appeared as though the report was referring to two separate processes and indicated a growing emphasis on SSE and the work of the Evaluation Support and Research Unit of the Inspectorate in the publication of the *Looking at Our School* documents for primary and post-primary schools. Despite this, the report suggests that the publications would support the internal review of the SDP process in five broad areas: management, planning, curriculum provision, quality of learning and teaching, and support for pupils. The framework was also used by the Inspectorate in conducting whole-school evaluations (WSE).

While there may have been ambiguity in the Chief Inspector's (Eamon Stack) Report of 2005, the thinking at national level had clearly evolved by the time the subsequent Chief Inspector's Report for the 2010–2012 period was published in 2013. Here the Chief Inspector, Harold Hislop claimed that in carrying out Whole School Evaluations (WSE) during the 2010–2012 period, inspectors:

> referenced their evaluations largely to the school development planning framework familiar to schools and within which the majority of schools worked. Recognising that the more impact-focused, school improvement-focused approach of school self-evaluation was one with which many schools were not yet familiar, inspectors did not generally apply school self-evaluation expectations to the planning processes of schools during the WSEs they undertook. They took account of the fact that while school development planning has been a feature of schools for some time, more rigorous school self-evaluation practices are only being introduced to primary schools. (Department of Education and Skills, 2013, p. 40)

It was evident that a move to a greater focus on evidence as a basis for decision making was already beginning to emerge from SDPI and SDPS as was noticeable in the guidelines developed by SDPI for planning in DEIS (disadvantaged) schools (SDPI, 2009). These guidelines promoted the establishment of baseline data target setting for eight key areas and measurement of impact on student outcomes. These features became the cornerstone of the next iteration of the internal quality assurance process in schools, SSE.

But what is the difference between review and evaluation? Hopkins (1994) makes the distinction between evaluation of school improvement and evaluation for school improvement (review) with the former focusing on the outcomes of a school improvement process with the latter focusing on the formative use of evaluation/review findings to identify areas for improvement. This would appear to be at the crux of the difference between SDP and SSE. However, it could be argued that what is called the "review" stage of SDPI is in reality a form of evaluation, and that if SDP was implemented as intended its demise as an improvement process may not have transpired as it did. However, it is evident that the

number of academic publications internationally referring to SDP, declined from the start of the 2000s, just after it had been introduced to Irish schools a year earlier. It could be argued that Irish educational policy for school improvement was developed, on the tail end of this international movement and that even as it was being introduced in Ireland, its replacement was already being signposted in both research and practice internationally.

School Self Evaluation as an Improvement Process

As with many educational practices, it is difficult to pinpoint when exactly school self-evaluation became the dominant discourse in the school improvement movement, as it appears that the use of the term SSE was the name given to a number of school improvement initiatives throughout the 1980s and 1990s in the UK (Saunders, 1999) even during the period when SDP was the official government policy. The work and writing of John MacBeath was particularly influential, first in the UK and subsequently on the development of SSE as a practice in schools internationally (MacBeath, 1999, 2006; MacBeath et al., 1996a, b, 1999).

SSE is described as an internal process to ensure quality and improve the teaching–learning process and school performance (Hofman et al., 2009). The purpose of self-evaluation in an education context is described by McNamara and O'Hara (2008) in terms of a spectrum with accountability at one end and teacher professional development at the other. In most countries it exists alongside school inspection as internal and external aspects of the overall quality assurance process in schools. MacBeath (1999) encourages schools to speak for themselves through engagement in self-evaluation. His philosophy is similar to that of total quality management (TQM) in that he believes that "*development and change come from within*" (MacBeath, 1999, p. 105), that people are natural learners and that feedback is critical to individual learning. On a similar note to Patton (1997), he believes that participation engenders commitment. Janssens and van Amelsvoort (2008) state that accountability demands

imposed on SSE generate accountability-oriented self-evaluations, while improvement demands generate improvement-oriented self-evaluations. In Ireland, the DES clearly emphasised the school improvement role of self-evaluation over its accountability function (Hislop, 2013). This approach is also reflected in the DES inspection process which supports school improvement and avoids the reporting of examination results and as a consequence the development of league tables. Meuret and Morlaix (2003) claim that there is some evidence that self-evaluation in schools may enhance school effectiveness and improvement but state that it is "*more praised by policymakers than it is liked and really used by the schools*" (Meuret & Morlaix, 2003, p. 54).

Since the 2000s, government reform in many jurisdictions has promoted SSE as a key improvement mechanism. However, there appears to be some difference in the way in which such practices are designed, introduced, implemented, supported, monitored and reported on at national level. A report from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) *Synergies for better learning: an international perspective on evaluation and assessment* (2013) outlined differences in self-evaluation practices in different countries. These include differences in the legal requirements in place for schools to conduct self-evaluation, how self-evaluation is conceptualised, how it links with external evaluation, the frequency of the process, its uses, outputs, outcomes and the consequences for engagement and non-engagement by schools. There are however a number of trends emerging. Educational evaluation is expanding in school systems. Countries are developing expertise and building capacity, and as a result, there is a greater variety of evaluation activities. There is a greater focus on measuring educational outcomes for students through the use of standardised testing, and evaluation results are increasingly used for a variety of purposes including formative or improvement purposes as well as for accountability (OECD, 2013).

Changing Iterations of Self-Evaluation in Irish Schools

School Self-Evaluation 2003–2011

Whole-school evaluation (WSE), a new model of inspection for primary and post-primary schools was introduced in 2003/2004. An extensive outline of evaluation criteria for WSE was developed by the Evaluation Support and Research Unit of the Inspectorate, and was outlined in *Looking at Our School* (LAOS): *an aid to self-evaluation* in primary and second-level schools (Department of Education and Science, 2003a, b). While the LAOS criteria were intended to be used for WSE it was also intended that schools would use this framework to inform internal improvement processes. The WSE process continued to evaluate school "planning" as opposed to "school self-evaluation" while at the same time the Chief Inspector's Report (DES, 2005) stated in some places that the LAOS guidelines should be used for "*school self-review*" (pp. 5, 12) alluding to SDP whereas elsewhere in the report it claims that within the guidelines, "*themes for self-evaluation are presented in order to assist school communities in fulfilling their quality assurance obligations under the Education Act (1998)*" (p. 44). It appears as though this approach may have served to incrementally introduce the idea of SSE to Irish schools without any clear intentionality that schools would implement it in practice. Importantly, the LAOS documents also promoted clear expectations for best practice and "*excellence in all aspects of the functioning of schools*" (Department of Education and Science, 2003b, p. v). The detailed guidance on best practice in the LAOS documents were extremely significant within the mainstream Irish education sectors and served to establish for

Table 7.2 LAOS areas for school self-evaluation

Areas for primary schools	Areas for post-primary schools
Quality of school management	Quality of school management
Quality of school planning	Quality of school planning
Quality of learning and teaching	Quality of curriculum provision
Quality of supports for pupils	Quality of learning and teaching in subjects
	Quality of supports for students

the first time, a shared and agreed understanding of internal and external concepts of quality and excellence in schools.

LAOS set out self-evaluation areas as outlined in Table 7.2 which indicates sight differences in the evaluation areas for primary and post-primary schools.

Each area is further subdivided into aspects, components and an extensive list of themes. The self-evaluation process outlined in LAOS (2003b) involved the following: deciding on a focus; the use of evaluation themes to measure performance; the gathering and analysis of information and evidence; and the development of a statement/s indicating performance. The framework recommended that schools record their position on a four level continuum: (1) significant strengths (uniformly strong), (2) strengths outweigh weaknesses (more strengths than weaknesses), (3) weaknesses outweigh strengths (more weaknesses than strengths) and (4) significant/major weaknesses (uniformly weak).

While the development of the LAOS framework was significant in terms of introducing the concept of self-evaluation and setting out expectations for best practice in schools, it did not provide sufficient support or tools to enable real engagement by schools in self-evaluation (McNamara & O'Hara, 2005). The basic practicalities of implementation had also not been established in terms of the process, its frequency and focus. McNamara and O'Hara also identified a number of other problems with the LAOS framework including, " *the unrealistic extent of the framework itself; the lack of required data collection and evidence generation to support schools' statements about their strengths and weaknesses; lack of clarity about the status of the final reports and the responsibility for following up issues identified; and finally the role of the key stakeholders, particularly parents and students, in the process* (McNamara & O'Hara, 2005, p. 276).

It is therefore not surprising that during this period, self-evaluation uptake was almost non-existent and had "*failed to take hold*" (McNamara & O'Hara, 2006, p. 577). Staff in schools used the LAOS framework to gather evidence and prepare for inspection (Brown, 2011). However, the concept of engaging in ongoing self-evaluation did not appear to be an expectation among principals (McNamara & O'Hara, 2006).

Despite the introduction of LAOS in 2003, the implementation of the SSE process by schools in Ireland was not inspected or reported on by the DES inspectorate. This would suggest that in Ireland, SDP was still rated as a more important and more widely accepted school improvement process than self-evaluation. Interestingly, from the inspection process at that time, the DES outlined five key areas that are inspected and reported on. For each of the five areas subheadings are also provided and these subheadings are reflected in the evaluation report, with one exception. The key area of planning was not subdivided into various headings and in school inspection reports, was reported on in a general fashion rather than dealing with each sub-heading as set out in the self-evaluation framework. This practice further points to the question of DES expectations of outputs and outcomes of the planning process. Would detailed reporting on planning highlight a poor implementation of SDP? This further reflects the "*softly, softly approach*" to self-evaluation highlighted earlier (McNamara & O'Hara, 2006). In an overall statement, McNamara and O'Hara concluded that, "*it is arguable that the DES has the right theory, but whether the process suggested for implementing it in practice is either coherent or workable is a different matter entirely*" (McNamara & O'Hara, 2005, p. 276). The implementation challenges of the first iteration of SSE in Ireland suggested the need for the DES to set out the answers to the most basic questions of who, what, where, when and how in terms of self-evaluation in schools. A new self-evaluation process introduced in 2012, in the main, answered these questions.

School Self-Evaluation 2012–2016

In 2012, the DES introduced a new school SSE improvement process for all primary and post-primary schools in Ireland as outlined in Circular 0039/2012 and Circular 0040/2012 respectively (DES, 2012a, b). Up to this point, schools had engaged in the SDP process which arose from the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) and which required schools to establish and maintain systems whereby the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations could be assessed. According to Circular 0040/2012, "*school self-evaluation is a way in which this process of*

reflection, improvement and development can take place in a more systematic way" compared to SDP (DES, 2012b, p. 1). From the 2012/2013 school year onwards, all schools were required to engage in systematic SSE following the steps outlined in SSE guidelines for primary and post-primary schools respectively (DES, 2012c, d) as well as guidelines for the evaluation of teaching and learning.

SSE guidelines outlined a series of steps for schools to follow including: identify focus; gather evidence; analyse and make judgements; write and share SSE reports and school improvement plans; implement action plans; monitor actions and evaluate impact. SIPs were to include SMART targets using baseline data collected at the start of the SSE cycle and gathering data again at a later stage to check the impact of actions that were implemented as part of the SIP.

An analysis of the SSE Guidelines for Post-Primary School (2012d) would indicate that compared to LAOS, the new process was more streamlined, easier to implement and is supported by the provision of a range of tools. Training for schools was also provided by the PDST. A new level of prescription was also introduced. For the first time, the DES outlined in the circulars, clear expectations in terms of the frequency and focus of self-evaluation in schools. The SSE guidelines (2012c, d) outlined the new self-evaluation process, the self-evaluation quality framework, evaluation criteria and quality statements, self-evaluation methods and guidelines for completion of the report and improvement plan. These documents alone provided significant support for schools. The overall self-evaluation process was very similar to what was outlined in LAOS. It is described as a collaborative, reflective process involving the whole school community. The process involves gathering evidence about teaching and learning, analysing evidence and making judgements about strengths and weaknesses. In terms of documentation, schools were required to prepare a concise SSE report in addition to a school improvement plan (SIP). Summaries of both were to be made available to the whole school community.

Strategically, it was a useful introductory approach to focus on teaching and learning as this focus was likely to engage teachers more readily than the previous LAOS guidelines which were broadly focused and may

Table 7.3 The teaching and learning quality framework for post-primary schools

Themes	Sub-themes
Learner outcomes	• Attainment of subject and programme objectives
Learning experiences	• Learning environment
	• Engagement in learning
	• Learning to learn
Teachers' practice	• Preparation for teaching
	• Teaching approaches
	• Management of students
	• Assessment

Source: DES (2012f, p. 24)

have appeared initially overwhelming to teachers with its 5 areas, 17 aspects, 50 components and 255 self-evaluation themes.

Within the teaching and learning quality frameworks set out by the Department of Education and Skills (2012e, f) a new structure was presented as exemplified by the post-primary guidelines, including three themes and eight sub-themes as set out in Table 7.3.

In Ireland, primary schools are required to operate for 183 days per year and 167 days for post-primary schools (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). Within this, there are no specific days allocated for teachers to engage in a self-evaluation process. It is therefore up to schools to find time for such activity, and this has proven a considerable difficulty for schools over the years as they attempted to engage in SDP and now self-evaluation. The problem of time has been somewhat alleviated by the Public Service Agreement 2010–2014 (Croke Park Agreement) which requires teachers to work an additional 33 h over the course of a school year during which they may engage in activities such as school planning and policy development, staff meetings, parent–teacher meetings, induction, nationally mandated in-service and approved school arranged continuing professional development (Department of Education and Skills, 2011a). Considering competing requirements, it would appear that the additional hours provided are not sufficient on their own to allow time for staff to engage fully in the self-evaluation process.

Interestingly, during this period, the DES had introduced a level of prescription never before seen within a school improvement process in an Irish context. Prior to this, schools engaged in SDP at their own pace and

explored a focus of their choice. Despite the fact that engagement in planning was part of a pay agreement for teachers, there were no annual requirements for productivity or specific outputs in terms of the planning process. In addition, school inspections reported on planning in general terms rather than in relation to specific standards of implementation (McNamara et al., 2002). It could be anticipated therefore, that the new self-evaluation process would be more consistently implemented across the country given the annual mandatory requirement for engagement by schools as well as the prescribed outputs arising from the process. Further consistency may result from the fact that the DES has set clear expectations in relation to the focus of self-evaluations during the first 3 years of engagement. Primary and post-primary schools starting to engage in the new self-evaluation process in 2012/2013 were instructed to select an evaluation focus from the following options: literacy, numeracy, or an aspect of teaching and learning. In subsequent years, schools should select again from the above options so that, within the 4-year period, an SSE report and a 3-year SIP would be completed for literacy, for numeracy and for one aspect of teaching and learning (Department of Education and Skills, 2012a, b). The focus on literacy and numeracy during this period is a clear indication of the influence of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) on Irish education policy (Finn, 2012; Kirwan, 2015). Together with a National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, SSE was intended to address the decline in the performance of post-primary students in the 2009 PISA assessment. The ambition to improve PISA scores is clearly articulated in the following national improvement targets:

- Increase the percentage of 15-year old students performing at or above Level 4 (i.e. at the highest levels) in PISA reading literacy and numeracy tests by at least 5 percentage points by 2020.
- Halve the percentage of 15-year old students performing at or below Level 1 (the lowest level) in PISA reading literacy and numeracy tests by 2020 (Department of Education and Skills, 2011c, p. 8).

The PISA findings of 2015, which include results from the science, reading and mathematics assessments, indicated that Ireland's results in

reading were among the best in the OECD and that the targets outlined above had been achieved ahead of time (Department of Education and Skills, 2016e).

Implementation of SSE was also supported by an external whole school evaluation process introduced in 2010 entitled Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL) (Department of Education and Skills, 2011a, b). It is one of a range of evaluation models employed by the inspectorate. As the name suggests, the focus is on the quality of management and leadership and the quality of learning and teaching. One of the key differences between the WSE-MLL and the standard whole school evaluation model of the time, which has been in place since 2003, is the inclusion of the "*school's self-evaluation process and capacity for school improvement*" (Department of Education and Skills, 2011b, p. 24) as one of the four key areas evaluated and reported on by the inspectorate. The WSE-MLL team assesses the self-evaluation processes currently taking place in the school, the level of engagement in these processes by the school's stakeholders and how the processes have impacted on the work of the school and the quality of learning. The WSE-MLL team evaluates how targets for improvement are set and monitored within the school and the overall effectiveness of the school's strategies for the assessment and monitoring of student achievement.

Overall, there appeared to be real intentionality on the part of the Department of Education and Skills to introduce the practice of self-evaluation as an improvement process in schools. This move was supported by the establishment of clear and prescribed expectations in terms of the focus and frequency of self-evaluation, the establishment of a simple streamlined self-evaluation process, improved guidelines and tools, the provision of supports by the inspectorate and members of the PDST and the WSE-MLL process which encourages schools to engage in self-evaluation. Despite the significant improvements outlined above, there were causes for concern in relation to the consistent engagement of post-primary schools in the self-evaluation process nationally which will be discussed in a later section.

School Self-Evaluation 2016–2020

Following the completion of the 2012–2016 phase of SSE, new Department of Education and Skills Circulars, 0039/2016 (primary) and 0039/2016 (post-primary) were disseminated to schools (Department of Education and Skills, 2016a, b). In the second phase, which extended from 2016 to 2020 schools were once again asked to focus on the self-evaluation of teaching and learning. Post-primary schools were encouraged to use the SSE process to assist them in introducing and embedding relevant aspects of the new Framework for Junior Cycle while primary schools were encouraged to use the SSE process to embed the Primary Language Curriculum.

The circulars clarify the link between SDP and SSE, and establish the ongoing requirement for schools to maintain a school plan in compliance with the Education Act, 1998. Interestingly, the circulars referred to the SDP concept of the permanent and developmental sections of the school plan. SSE was described as a further development of SDP. Updated versions of *Looking At Our Schools: A Quality Framework* was developed for primary and post-primary schools and were included in further refined SSE guidelines (Department of Education and Skills, 2016c, d). Although the Quality Framework included new standards for school leadership and management, schools were not required to evaluate these aspects. Schools were instructed to select a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 aspects of teaching and learning to self-evaluate during the four years of this implementation phase. The language of the framework had also changed since the 2012 version. Gone were the use of terminology such as "evaluation criteria" and "quality statements", which had been replaced by "domains", "standards" and "statements of practice". There also appeared to be a softening of expectations in relation to the use of primarily quantitative data for SSE, instead the circulars stated that targets do not always have to be expressed in numbers.

Continued support was provided through advisory visits to schools and between 2012 and 2016 the Inspectorate had conducted over 5000 visits to schools to provide support and advice on SSE (DES, 2016e). Training was also provided by the PDST and school were also provided

with further resources on the DES SSE website http://schoolself-evaluation.ie/post-primary/sse-2016-2020/. The levels of support provided to Irish schools appear to be relatively generous. The European Commission report (2015) indicated that Ireland was one of eleven countries that have five or more different types of supporting measures at their disposal, suggesting that Ireland has access to more types of support than is the case in many other European countries. Despite this there were many implementation challenges as will be discussed below.

Ongoing Challenges

Historically, levels of implementation of improvement processes such as SDP have not been implemented fully or consistently by schools in Ireland despite significant levels of support such as guidelines, tools, a SDP support service and the reporting on school planning in inspection reports (McNamara et al., 2002). In relation to self-evaluation practice in schools, McNamara and O'Hara claim that the Irish education system does not have the capacity to generate the type of data necessary to create the robust model of self-evaluation clearly envisaged in the official documentation. Questioning the rhetoric reality gap between self-evaluation policy and implementation, their research suggests that inspectors see the emergence of capacity for self-evaluation in schools as "aspirational".

The concerns in relation to capacity, expressed by McNamara and O'Hara, are somewhat addressed in the new self-evaluation model introduced in 2012. Despite this, the challenges of leading an SSE process in schools are considerable. The coordination of self-evaluation in schools is generally the responsibility of school principals and middle management. In order to organise such a process, coordinating staff would have to become familiar with the guidelines and requirements of the process, devise an inclusive and collaborative process to gather and analyse qualitative and quantitative evidence, develop data collection tools, make judgements and develop SSE reports and the target-focused improvement plans. Most importantly, the action plans are to be implemented usually over a 1–3 year period and progress monitored and measured. Finally, school leaders would have to decide on the usefulness of any

tested strategy or intervention and incorporate what was deemed effective in the policy and practice of the school.

Scepticism on the part of principals in relation to the ability of the system to deliver on self-evaluation is highlighted by McNamara and O'Hara (2012). Acknowledging the "*decimation*" of school middle management as a result of cutbacks, they claim that: "*schools will prioritise the essential tasks rather than those considered to be optional. In this context any movement towards the development of a robust culture of self-evaluation is likely to be faced by a range of significant structural obstacles*" (McNamara & O'Hara, 2012, p. 95). Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector at the DES, acknowledges that "*our biggest challenges lie in the area of capacity*" (2013, p. 16). He claims that the lack of investment in a data capture system is due to insufficient investment by the government in the context of ongoing decreases in public expenditure.

The concerns expressed in relation to engagement in SSE in Ireland reflect those highlighted internationally. The OECD (2013) highlights a common concern among countries in relation to variation in the capacity of schools to engage in self-evaluation. Blok et al. (2008) conclude that SSE is a "*very difficult task*" for most schools. The challenges relate to the conceptual or technical evaluation aspects such as: evaluator role, instrument design, and the dissemination and utilisation of results (Ryan et al., 2007). Also reported are difficulties with data-use terminology (Kelly & Downey, 2011) as well as instrumental and conceptual use of SSE results (Schildkamp & Visscher, 2009). Similar implementation issues in relation to both SSE and data-use more generally, are also highlighted in a number of other studies (Blok et al., 2008; Huffman et al., 2006; Mandinach & Gummer, 2013; Marsh, 2012; Vanhoof et al., 2009). Other issues highlighted in the literature relate to teachers' attitudes to SSE, as not only do they perceive it as difficult to implement, but also associate it more with accountability than improvement in the classroom. Therefore, it is often seen as a role and responsibility for school management rather than teachers (Bowers et al., 2014; Vanhoof et al., 2014). In many studies teachers show resistance to data driven improvement processes which may appear incongruous with their identity as classroom teachers (Wrigley & Wormwell, 2016; Hall & Noyes, 2009). Referring to changes in the role of teachers in the United States, Valli and Buese

(2007) claim teachers work "has increased, intensified and expanded in response to federal, state and local policies aimed at raising student achievement" which has resulted in "teacher discouragement, role ambiguity, and superficial responses to administrative goals" (p. 520). Systematic SSE also appears to be an improvement process that is difficult to imbed in the culture of schools and often viewed by teachers as something to be done as a requirement of the school inspection process (Hopkins et al., 2016).

Studies exploring Irish teacher's experience of implementing SSE (O'Brien et al., 2019) indicated that frequently, teachers are asked to lead the SSE process without having received training and those that had claimed it was too theoretical and had not addressed the practicalities of SSE. Teachers claimed that they did not have the time to review the online resources prior to leading the process in their schools and that as a result they were not confident they had been leading it correctly. Many were confused about concepts such as baseline data, target setting and how to measure progress on targets. Using data to set targets was a challenge for most participants. This included both a lack of belief in the target setting process as well as confusion regarding the use of data to set and measure targets. While the attitude of teachers to the usefulness of data gathered was generally positive, they were tentative about the value of the SSE process claiming that it depended on whether schools implemented the actions outlined in the SIP and if it eventually resulted in improvements at classroom level rather than simply completing the SSE documentation for the purpose of compliance and accountability. Teachers were also concerned about the perceived lack of awareness of and commitment to the implementation of actions among the teachers who were not members of the SSE team. It was very evident that participants were not convinced that data-use and engagement in SSE should be part of their role on an ongoing basis. While they had agreed to be involved in SSE for the duration of one school year, they believed that this work would be passed on to another group of teachers in the coming year and there was a sense that they had 'done their bit' for the school. This reflects findings from McNamara et al. (2011) who reported that school principals in Ireland believed that SSE is not popular with the majority of staff in the post-primary schools surveyed. It also reflects a

level of 'role ambiguity' (Valli & Buese, 2007) and a resistance to the suggestion that data use is a key aspect of teaching, reflecting the findings of Wrigley and Wormwell (2016) and Biesta (2009). There was also some apprehension in relation to the notion of all teachers being trained to use data and suggestions that data use skills may be more relevant for school management as some felt that school improvement, monitoring and measuring improvement was the job of school leaders rather than the role of teachers.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the requirement for schools to engage in an internal school improvement process is a relatively recent phenomenon in Irish education, following the introduction of the Education Act (1998), it is clear that there have been ongoing modifications to the related policy and practice over the past 20 years. During this period, Irish policy in this regard has followed international trends established by the school effectiveness and school improvement movements of the 1980s. The influence of UK policy is particularly evident in the introduction of SDP while the introduction of SSE reflects a more international flavour. Of significance is the agreement and documentation of standards and statements of effective practice in relation to teaching and learning and also leadership in schools. These provide cohesion across the sectors and clarify expectations for all stakeholder groups.

The improvement processes of SDP and SSE are various versions of a well established improvement cycle used widely in public and private bodies internationally. Refinements to the model are evident over the decades, with significant improvements in the consistency and clarity of the message. It is clear that there were significant inconsistencies between the primary and post-primary sectors in terms of the operation of the support services during the implementation of SDP. The rationalisation of the support services and the greater involvement of the DES inspectorate in ensuring the consistency of messaging has resulted in greater coherence. Clearly evident is a very explicit alignment of the centralised policy agenda and the expected priorities for improvement at the school level.

SSE is a vehicle for the introduction of national reforms within the primary and post-primary sectors.

While the concept of schools planning improvements to their practice has remained a constant theme throughout this period, some practices appear to have gone by the wayside such as the focus on schools developing vision and mission statements which were pursued with great intensity in the early 2000s. Also absent is the focus on facilitation by the support services and the concept and practice of facilitators leading schools through an improvement process, the emphasis is moved to the provision of information and advice. Given the ongoing challenges related to the implementation of SSE it may be useful to consider the positive outcomes of the various studies conducted by the Dublin City University Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection into models of professional development and support for teachers leading SSE in Irish primary and post-primary schools (O'Brien et al., 2019, 2020). Such models acknowledge the realities of schools and advocate a model of "*just in time support*" that improves the likelihood that schools implement the SSE process as intended and that training is provided by SSE experts who have themselves successfully led staff teams through numerous SSE processes.

Other concepts have entered the improvement debate such as data driven decision making, evidence informed practice and data literacy. However, the use of data by schools in Ireland is minimal compared to other jurisdictions where more advanced data use systems exist. Although there is a lack of standardised testing at post-primary level in Ireland and a lack of data that would allow schools to compare performance with similar schools, it may be important to caution against the problematic data-use practices that are evident elsewhere. Ireland should avoid the situation that Bowers et al. (2014, p. 2) report from the United States, where schools are faced with "*an avalanche of data, creating situations where leaders have trouble processing the amount of data generated in schools*" (p. 2).

It will be interesting to see if the emphasis on school-self evaluation will shift at some point in the future or will it continue to be a case of "old ribbons new bows", as in the same process slightly changed, rebranded and introduced as a new educational reform. For now, it appears that

policies supporting schools to reflect on their practice and to plan for improvements may remain a staple of the education system for some time to come.

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8

Vocational Education, Rural Ireland and the Nation State 1930-1960f

Marie Clarke

Vocational education is seldom considered as an internally complex field and as an outcome of wider educational, political and social programmes. Throughout the history of educational policy-making, debates on the nature, length and universality of primary education and on the challenges of reintegrating people into employment and education, have provided platforms for discussions about the distinctiveness of different forms of education (Heikkinen, 2004). The ways in which education systems develop reflect the structural contexts of the wider historical landscape. This is particularly true of vocational education where as a system it has developed alongside political and economic movements which give expression to different conceptions of the nation state. Vocational education is rarely considered within this type of framework in historical studies in the Irish context. A priority task of the new Irish Free State government in 1922 was to reform the educational system in its

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nationalistic, cultural and utilitarian aspects (Ryan, 1993). In the literature covering the history of Irish education during the first thirty years of the state, analysis has primarily focused on the primary and secondary school systems, particularly with reference to the promotion of Gaelic culture and the Irish language. Few historians have considered the development of vocational education in rural Ireland, and the ways it was utilized to promote the identity of the nation state in the context of the local community and family life. Drawing on a range of official and local sources (Department of Education Annual Reports, Department of Finance Reports, Dáil Debates, Dublin Diocesan Archives, Census Reports and the archives of four local VECs: Co Dublin, North Tipperary, Co Leitrim and Co Monaghan), combined with previous literature, this chapter argues that vocational education was used by government to reinforce the preferred image of the nation state in rural contexts in its early years of development, but as changing conceptions of nation identity began to emerge at the start of the 1950s, vocational education was not accorded the same role in the rural context but reflected a changing nation state identity through its own direct involvement in community development and adult education.

Introduction

Heikkinen (2004) argues that vocational education should be analysed within the political and organisational regulation frameworks for vocational training processes; the didactic-curricular orientation of these processes; and the place of vocational training processes in the context of socialisation. This framework can be applied to the development of Irish vocational education in the period 1930-1960. In seeking to understand political and organisational regulation frame works Lowi (1972) suggests that any analysis of public policy should focus on the choices made in relation to the way state power is applied and not on the goals of those policies. With reference to the curricular orientation and place of vocational training in socialisation, Heikkinen (2004) contends that a historicising and contextualising approach is required to question the emergence and transformation of educational meanings and functions of vocational education–especially during periods when it confronted other forms of

education. This chapter argues that vocational education in rural areas was used by government to reinforce the preferred image of the nation state in its early years of development, but as changing conceptions of national identity began to emerge at the start of the 1950s, vocational education was not accorded the same role. It achieved some progress in this area independently through local involvement in community development and adult education.

Vocational Education and the Structural Context of the Irish State

The Irish Free State faced many challenges in 1922. The country was very divided about its future; much structural damage had been done as a result of both the War of Independence and the Civil War. The Sinn Féin 'Democratic Programme' published in 1919, reflected a policy of economic independence through the protection of native industry and declared 'the right of every citizen to an adequate share of the produce of the Nation's labour' (Ryan, 1993). This committed the first Free State government to the creation of employment opportunities and reduce the levels of emigration, this required the establishment of native manufacturing industries as a priority (Ryan, 1993). In *Economic Development*, the challenges that faced the new state were summarised as follows:

> The lack of an industrial tradition, managerial skill, risk capital and native raw materials, with a heavily industrialised country as a close neighbour, made the new State's task of establishing industries particularly difficult (Whitaker, 1958).

Agriculture was regarded as the prime driving force in the economy. Agriculture employed 670,000 people in a total labour force of 1.3 million (Daly, 1992). Initiatives were taken to improve the agricultural sector, including better technical education and stricter marketing regulations. The new government was of the view that if agriculture prospered then the home industries would expand. In 1926 a Tariff Commission was established to examine the case for extending duties to

cover additional industries. It recommended protection for the following industries; boots and shoes, glass bottles, soap and candles, clothing and confectionery and some limited expansion took place in these industries. By 1930, these industries combined employed just over 13,000 people (Daly, 1992). A Census of Industrial Production collected in 1926, demonstrated that the value of net output in industry was £23 million. In 1931 it had reached only £25.6 million and these figures included many service industries. The main factory-based industries witnessed an increase in the labour-force of just under 5000 during the five years 1926-31 (Lyons, 1985). The initial decade of the Irish state highlighted the poor performance of industrial development. Some progressive initiatives were commenced-the construction of the Shannon Scheme to provide hydro-electricity began at Ardnacrusha in 1925; the development of the sugar-beet industry was planned and there were investigations into the use of peat resources (Ryan, 1993).

The onset of the world depression in the late 1920s took its toll, and money incomes suffered a sharp decline between 1929-31. Unemployment rose rapidly in the 1920s, it had risen to six per cent of the total working population in 1926 and the number of people receiving home assistance under the Poor Law increased steadily (Lyons, 1985). The decline in population was one of the biggest problems faced by the Free State government which had fallen to 2.97 million. The period during which the Free State was founded saw heavy outward movement; net emigration between 1911 and 1926 was 405, 029 (Lyons, 1985). A distinctive social structure existed in Ireland during the first thirty years of the Irish State, which was dominated by small farm holdings and characterized by late ages of marriage, high proportions not getting married, high marital fertility and high levels of emigration. The state and the Roman Catholic Church promoted the traditional structures of rural life in Ireland.

The coming to power of Fianna Fáil in 1932 and their retention of power for most of the period under review, brought about a reversal of Cumann na nGaedheal's economic policy of laissez-faire. Fianna Fáil was ideologically committed to the Sinn Féin policy of self-sufficiency which they wanted to achieve through the protection of industry and a shift from livestock to tillage in agriculture. This agricultural policy was not a success as the perceived relationship between tillage and increased

employment proved mistaken, and the cattle trade was seriously disrupted by the Economic War which began in 1932, when De Valera withheld the land annuities due to the British Government under the terms of the Land Acts. The Economic War continued until 1938, when it was ended by the Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement. This removed restrictions on Irish agricultural imports to Britain in return for some preferential treatment for British industrial exports to Ireland (Ryan, 1993). Fianna Fáil's industrial policy, on the other hand, resulted in an increase in employment between 1931 and 1938. This was achieved in spite of a very unfavourable climate for industrial development (Lee, 1989). The Control of Manufactures Acts, 1932-34, sought to ensure that industries established behind soaring tariff barriers remained under Irish control. The Industrial Credit Corporation was set up in 1933, to provide financial support for industry. A number of other state bodies including the Irish Sugar Company (1933), Aer Lingus (1936) and Bord na Móna (1946) were also founded.

After World War II a number of developments took place which witnessed a more modern approach to industrial development. In 1949, the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) was established and became a very important body in the area of industrial development (Lee, 1989). However, by the 1950s, the Irish economy had suffered stagnation, continual balance of payments crises, and high unemployment. The volume of exports in this period was slow and agricultural prices were poor. Between 1951 and 1958 the decline in population was a serious cause for concern (Rothman & O'Connell, 1987). Throughout the 1950s a number of initiatives were taken to establish a wider export base. In 1951, Corás Trachtala was established to assist exporters in marketing their products abroad and the IDA was given the additional role of attracting foreign industry as well as encouraging indigenous industry. An Foras Tionscail (the Underdeveloped Areas Board) was given powers to give grants towards the capital and training costs of new industries in the west and south west of the country. The export profits tax relief scheme initiated in 1956 and expanded in the Finance Acts of 1957 and 1958 was an incentive used to attract foreign enterprise (Kennedy et al., 1988). In

agriculture a large number of initiatives were undertaken. In tourism two state-sponsored bodies were set up in 1952, one with responsibility for developing facilities and the other for promotional activities. Subsequently they were amalgamated into one body Bord Fáilte Éireann in 1955.

The publication of the first ever-economic plan in the history of the state, *The First Programme for Economic Expansion,* in 1958 was a direct response to the economic situation. As Lee has pointed out, 'the programme for economic development pointed in the direction of efficiency, competitiveness and quality of administration, quality of management, quality of labour' (Lee, 1989). Agriculture was regarded as a major component in economic development. This policy, when translated into action, meant more mechanisation of farm equipment and the amalgamation of small farms into larger ones. The scope for employment in the agricultural sphere was therefore greatly reduced. State support and intervention expanded industry (Lee, 1989). Ultimately industrial expansion and economic growth would contribute to changed conceptions of the nation state. The local community sector also witnessed a number of developments during this period.

One agency involved in this kind of work was Foras Éireann, which was established in 1949. This was a permanent conference of voluntary organisations set up for the purpose of consultation, co-ordination and joint action.[1] Macra na Feirme[2] the Irish Countrywomen's Association[3] and Muintir na Tíre[4] were the most active members of this organisation. Other organisations that participated were the Association of CEOs, the Irish National Teachers Organisation, (INTO), the Association of Secondary School Teachers of Ireland, (ASTI), the Vocational Education Officers Organisation, the Irish Agricultural Officers Association, the Civic Institute and Conradh na Gaeilge. Foras Éireann encouraged a well-integrated social life and a strong sense of community. It was very active in cultural matters, encouraging music and drama, the establishment of local museums and general adult education. The Carnegie Trust extended their Village Hall Scheme to this country at the request of Foras Éireann. Under this scheme grants and interest free loans were made available to provide halls in different localities, which were owned and managed by a committee that represented a number of organisations (Department of Finance, 1961). Tourism underwent rapid expansion

during this period with 150 Local Tourist and Industrial Development Associations spread across the country. These organisations represented local business interests, who provided finance for public relations and support services. While successive governments were interested in the activities of these organisations, community development did not figure prominently in official policies during the 1950s.

The main focus of government in the initial years of the Irish state was on developing basic structures of the economy and governance. In a country with very little industry and a mostly self-sustaining, poor, rural population with consistently high levels of emigration, efforts at developing a vocational system of education was very much linked to to these circumstances. Vocational education in Ireland was introduced in a context where the Department of Education and the Minister as the sole agency of state managed the state's interest in the national system of education and its subsets (O'Reilly, 2012). The Minister acted as a member of the cabinet and the government and was subject to the interactions, pressures, power-plays and ideological positions that accompany the operation of a national political system (O'Reilly, 2012). The resulting tensions arising from this contestation was a primary influence in the shaping of vocational education policy in the period 1930-60.

Vocational Education and Other Forms of Education

A priority task of the new Free State government was reform of the educational system to reflect national, cultural and economic independence (Ryan, 1993). The alignment of the curriculum of the primary and post primary schools was constructed to promote Gaelic culture and the Irish language in particular. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction prior to 1922, controlled technical instruction until the Department of Education was established under the Ministers and Secretaries Act in 1924. Matters relating to agriculture were separated from technical instruction and assigned to the Department of Lands and Agriculture. The Department of Education administered technical

instruction until 1930 when the Vocational Education Act was introduced (Farry, 1997). In the new Free State, Primary, Intermediate and Technical Education had little in common when they were taken over by the Department of Education. The Department had limited power over the management of national or secondary schools. These schools remained vested in the clergy of various denominations, with the state paying the salaries of national school teachers and offering building grants for secondary schools. The Department of Education exerted influence through the control of curriculum, and by operating an inspection system to ensure that minimum teaching standards were maintained (O'Buachalla, 1988).

There was a general consensus that technical and industrial education needed an overhaul to bring it into line with the needs of the time. The plans for self-sufficiency and industrialisation necessitated a skilled workforce and, there was pressure from the local technical instruction committees, through the Irish Technical Instruction Association, to reorganise the existing apprenticeship system. It was also less problematic to review the non-denominational technical sector than risk the possibility of controversies with the Churches in attempting to reform the denominational primary and secondary systems (Ryan, 1993). The Department of Education set up a *Commission to Enquire into Technical Education* to examine the need for enhanced technical training. The published report entitled *Report of the Commission on Technical Education* (1928) made a number of recommendations. Its most dramatic proposal concerned the establishment of practical and continuation education schools for young people between the ages of 14 and 16 years. The absence of such a system was seen as one of the key weaknesses of the existing situation, the low standard of general education of many young persons in employment who enrolled for technical classes was a concern as was the difficulty of retaining pupils in primary education after they had reached the age of 12 years (Department of Education 1928). In some cases, children left as early as 10 years of age and many could barely read and write. The Commission observed that the existing official school week of twenty hours was the lowest of eight countries examined and that pupils of 14 years of age were not sufficiently mature to go directly into employment, but did not think that the economic conditions of the country could allow such a postponement (Department of Education 1928). It

recommended that the programme of these schools be distinct from those of technical schools which, in turn, should cater for the 16 years plus age group. It also suggested that the teaching in these schools should be conducted in ways best suited to adults rather than school children and that attendance at whole-time continuation courses should be compulsory for those between the ages of 14 and 16 years, who were not attending either primary or secondary school and who were not at work (Department of Education 1928). By introducing continuation schools it was felt that the demand for commercial and domestic economy courses could be catered for in a non-technical environment and all young persons, whether at work or unemployed, would receive education up to the age of 16 years. The technical school, on the other hand would then only accept pupils over 16 years and, could undertake its real role in scientific, technical and industrial development. This was summed up in the Report as follows:

> The success of a technical course or class depends on the extent to which it deals with young people in employment between sixteen and twenty years and not those of continuation school years (Department of Education 1928).

The main recommendations of the *Commission on Technical Education* formed the basis of the Vocational Education Act, which was passed in the Dáil in 1930. Vocational education was not defined under the Act but two specific elements of the concept were designated: continuation education and technical education. Continuation education was defined as:

> education to continue and supplement education provided in elementary schools and includes general and practical training in preparation for employment in trades, manufactures, agriculture, commerce, and other industrial pursuits, and also general and practical training for improvement of young persons in the early stages of employment (Vocational Education Act, 1930).

The formation of whole-time day courses in continuation education was one of the major changes introduced by the 1930 Act, however, it was clearly stated that this type of education was not an extension of primary school (O'Sullivan, 1930). Technical education was defined as:

education pertaining to trades, manufactures, commerce, and other industrial pursuits (including the occupations of girls and women connected with the household) and in subjects bearing thereon or relating thereto and includes education in science and art (including, in the county borough of Dublin and Cork, music) and also includes physical training (Vocational Education Act, 1930).

There was only one mention of the word training in this definition, but as Farry points out, 'the words "pertaining" and "pursuits" in the definition and the general drafting of the section cover a multitude' (Farry, 1997). The separation out of continuation and technical education was designed to bring greater clarity as both had been included under Technical education in the previous structures.

Under the Act provision was made for the establishment of 38 Vocational Education Committees which were local authority structures within the local government system, that could build, acquire and manage schools. To provide for continuation education in its area, a VEC was required to do one or all of the following: establish and maintain continuation schools, establish and maintain courses of instruction in the nature of continuation education, and assist in maintaining schools in which continuation education was provided. In relation to technical education, a VEC was required to establish and maintain, or assist in maintaining technical schools within its area, establish and maintain, or assist in establishing and maintaining in its area courses of instruction in the nature of technical education, and contribute to the expenses incurred by persons resident in its area in obtaining technical education at schools or courses within or outside such area. The VECs were encouraged to decide on timetables and subjects of instruction in accordance with the needs of students and local conditions (Clarke, 1999).

Farry (1997) makes the point that when the Bill was introduced into the Dáil, the Minister for Education stated that it was only envisaged as a stop gap measure, "to deal with the problems that will face us at least in the course of the next five to 10 years". Correspondence between the Minister and the Department of Finance indicates that the Minister was of the view that the provisions of the Act could not be achieved in a time

span of 20 years (Farry, 1997). The Department of Finance was concerned about the cost of this new scheme and the strain on public funds. Methods employed by the Department of Finance for slowing the development of the system included, not providing a sufficient number of trained instructors, and limiting the rates that VECs could levy at local level to finance the system (Farry, 1997). The Act suffered from two serious drawbacks. It did not deal with the issue of apprenticeship because the Department of Industry and Commerce was in the process of preparing a Bill to deal with this. The second drawback of the 1930 Vocational Education Act was the fact that it did not deal with agricultural training or education. This remained firmly under the remit of the Department of Agriculture which firmly guarded this area throughout the period under review.

From an education policy perspective, the introduction of vocational education represented the first state intervention in the system, which caused the Catholic Church considerable concern (Clarke, 2012). In frequent correspondence with the Minister, the Catholic Church sought and succeeded in getting a statutory instrument introduced in 1931 to make the teaching of religion compulsory in vocational schools and did everything possible to ensure that continuation education would not be regarded as an extension of primary education which was offered in the schools that they controlled (Diocesan Archives, 1922-39). The Catholic Church did not have control over the teaching profession within the vocational system which was also a matter of concern (Clarke, 2012). At local level the Catholic Church came to terms with the VECs by making sure that their own clergy held powerful positions on the committees so that they could have a very direct input into the type of courses and programmes that were offered.

A number of observations can be made about the political and organisational regulation frameworks (Deissinger 1995) surrounding the introduction of vocational education. This type of education was regarded as an important need from an economic policy perspective yet the government did not want it to expand rapidly or allow it to consume existing resources. The Vocational Education Act did not cover apprenticeship education or agricultural education, areas which were left to other government departments to develop. The direct involvement of the state in the education system was met with opposition from the Catholic Church and they received numerous assurances from government, both legal and

in personal correspondence that their control of primary and post primary education would not be impinged upon. The policy intent was that the system would remain local in focus and concentrate provision on the needs of localities, through the establishment of VECs, yet as a system it was centrally controlled through which, the preferred identity of the emergent nation state was actively promoted.

Vocational Education—Socialising the Nation State

In the emergent Irish state, both rhetoric and policy focused on the promotion and the idealisation of a rural way of life, and this was mediated in different ways within the vocational education curriculum that was offered. The *Irish Times* described the introduction of continuation education as:

> the curriculum will cover a general education course, in which of course, the Gaelic language will have a predominant place. It is expected that the new schools will provide occupations for the many Gaelic teachers now unemployed. The cost of the system it is stated will be considerable, but it is felt that all right-thinking taxpayers will regard it as money well spent since the aim of the scheme is the creation of an educated Gaelic speaking artisan class (*Irish Times*, 1929).

One amendment to the Bill which was rejected by the Minister sought to extend the definition of continuation education to include 'instruction in the Irish language and literature, national history, music, topography and folklore'. The Minister stated that he did not want a Vocational Cultural Bill (Dáil Debates, 1930).

While the Department of Education did not prescribe curricular programmes in the initial years, it highlighted the different expectations of urban and rural vocational school. The Department defined the rural continuation school as:

… rural continuation education should be directed towards securing a contented life in rural areas with employment in agriculture or rural industries and should check as far as possible the constant drift of youth from the country to the town (Department of Education, 1931).

The urban continuation school had the following focus:

In the larger urban centres, there were general courses in which the primary education of the pupil was continued and extended and some forms of handwork taught, as well as courses in which a bias was given towards employment in trade or commercial or domestic occupations (Department of Education, 1931).

By the early 1940s, the government had decided to adopt a more interventionist approach with reference to curriculum. In 1942, the Department of Education issued Memorandum V40, which set out the rationale of continuation education with more precise guidelines. It specifically included religious studies as part of the courses offered and a greater emphasis was placed on the Irish language. This marked the completion of the primary and experimental stage of the continuation education schemes started under the Vocational Education Act of 1930. As Hyland has pointed out, having committed the schools to faith and fatherland, the memorandum went on to clarify that the main purpose of the continuation courses was to:

… prepare boys and girls, who have to start early in life, for the occupations which are open to them. These occupations, in general require some sort of manual skill and continuation courses have therefore a corresponding practical bias (Hyland & Milne, 1992).

It was further stated that:

… the nature of the continuation courses in any centre must be closely related to economic conditions in the neighbourhood (Hyland & Milne, 1992).

The sample of occupations referred to in Memorandum V40 was taken from the 1936 Census of Population. The census classified occupied males and females aged 14 years and over in each occupational group. The occupational groups were Agriculture, Makers of Food, Makers of Apparel, Workers in Wood, Metal Workers, and Builders. In the other occupations listed as Transport Workers, Commerce, Finance and Insurance, Public Administration and Defence, Professional Occupations, Personal Service: Domestic and Others, Clerks and Typists and other gainfully employed, males dominated in every area with the exception of professional occupations, domestic service, and clerks and typists where there were higher numbers of females (Government of Ireland 1936). This provided clear evidence of the gendered nature of the workforce that existed in 1936 which was used in Memorandum V40 (Hyland, 1999). The final section of the memorandum dealt with 'women in the home' (Department of Education, 1942). Hyland concludes that here, too, 'in both language and emphasis, the memorandum chimed with the clauses dealing with women in Bunreacht na hÉireann' (Hyland, 1999). Memorandum V40 presented continuation education in a mode that sharply distinguished it in its aims, content and clientele from the general education provided in other schools. The Junior Day Technical Course (two years) for boys was orientated to skilled manual work (Hyland, 1999). The Day Junior Commercial Course (two years) for boys was focused on Mathematics and Book-keeping. It was run in city schools and scheduled for 28 hours per week. The Junior Rural Science Course was directed at boys who intended to take up farming and was scheduled for 25 hours per week. In the city schools, the Day Junior Technical course (2 years) for girls was primarily focused on Domestic Economy and Household Management. The Day Junior Commercial Course (2 years) for girls focussed on shorthand, typing and commercial arithmetic. Both courses were timetabled for 28 hours per week. The Junior Domestic Science Course offered in rural schools was primarily practical in orientation. Individual practical training was given to each girl in the principles and practices underlying various household duties and processes. The intention was that girls would receive training in the skills

necessary to manage and run a home successfully or be prepared to work in areas such as textiles, laundry work and hotel work (Mulcahy, 1942). Girls were taught Mathematics as it related to buying and selling household commodities and other activities related to housekeeping, particularly farm housekeeping. Farm Accounts were taught to students to determine profit and loss regarding any commercial transaction arising out of, or pertaining to, work on the farm. English was taught with a bias towards everyday life. It included the study of newspaper articles and periodicals. Elementary Civics and General Knowledge were also taught. Irish classes focused on conversation, literature, poetry and local customs. It was clear that the emphasis was on tasks that made it possible to live independently in an agrarian household. The focus of subjects on the immediate locality further underlined this approach. Irish vocational education was delivered in a way, which was in keeping with a wider ideology of the nation state as represented in the policy discourse, gender segregated training and the promotion of traditional domestic roles within the rural family.

While the idealisation of the rural way of life was represented in the curriculum of the continuation schools in particular, the practicalities of rural life impacted negatively on its provision. Under Part V of the 1930 Act the concept of compulsory education was introduced. This, in theory, gave power to the Minister for Education to raise the school leaving age to 16 years in any area under the control of the VEC. This measure was intended to make students participate in some form of education other than that which they had received in primary school. In the areas where this scheme had come into effect, students were compelled to attend a continuation course consisting of manual instruction for boys and domestic economy for girls (Dáil Debates, 1950). The school leaving age was increased in this way in the county boroughs of Cork, Limerick and Waterford but it was not put into operation in any of the areas under study. There were economic and social reasons why compulsory attendance was not enforced throughout the country.

Children from an early age were regarded as being vital components in the operation of the family farm. Essentially, they were regarded as mini

adults who had to pay their way within the family structure (Murphy, 1952). Governments of the period were well aware of this. It is difficult to define clearly what the employment of a young person on a farm actually meant in the 1930s and 1940s. The work done by the child could have consisted of a few hours daily, or, it could have been seasonal, or indeed it might have been continuous throughout the year. It was difficult from a policy point of view to insist that children between 14 and 16 years be made go to school if this had a detrimental effect on the economic survival of the family farm, in an economy which depended primarily on agriculture. Much depended on the size of the farm. A farmer with less than 30 acres depended far more on the work done by his children than a farmer who owned 100 acres. The only grounds on which the government could publicly justify the raising of the school leaving age were educational ones. In a Report presented to the Minister for Education by the Inter- Departmental Committee on the Raising of the School Leaving Age (1935) the following quotation underlines this view:

> the withdrawal of juveniles would produce no beneficial result as far as adult employment is concerned and any advantage to be gained would be the advantage to the juvenile in the way of continued education (Department of Education 1935).

In counties along the western seaboard where holdings were small, outside labour was rarely paid for, and in general, parents looked forward to the time when the eldest boy reached 14 years. In Co. Donegal for example it was felt that if the school leaving age was raised then:

> it would have a serious effect on the outlook of young boys towards farming, familiarity with farm work at an early age is conducive to an interest in farming (Department of Education 1935).

Similar views were expressed in counties Galway and Kerry where there was a genuine fear that if boys were kept away from the rigours of farming life, they would not return. In Co. Leitrim the question of providing clothes and boots for children going to school caused concern:

in the case of a poor family, when the youngsters stay at home they wear old clothes and boots which would not be good enough for school (Department of Education 1935).

In Co. Mayo it was suggested that the maximum reform that could take place was to make provision for the introduction of winter terms from December to March for boys in rural areas and the raising of the school-leaving age for girls in rural and urban areas. In Co. Monaghan similar views were expressed. Boys and girls were considered useful during spring sowing, beet thinning, potato picking and bringing milk to the creamery. In counties Carlow, Cork, Dublin, Tipperary, Roscommon and Wicklow the raising of the school leaving age was considered to be very beneficial and very necessary. It is obvious that the reactions to this proposal were regional and depended greatly on the economic wealth of a particular area. The initial years of the Irish free state were focussed on the promotion of an idealised rural way of life and in many ways the vocational education system was another instrument in ensuring this state policy was implemented. By the 1950s, the Irish state was coming to the end of a thirty-year state formation process (O'Reilly, 2012). It was also plagued by the realities of stagnation, very high levels of emigration and economic failure. Whitaker (1958) writing about the early rural vocational schools in *Economic Development* stated the following:

> Education of whatever type, is regarded by all parents as a means of advancing their children, both socially and economically. A school which merely prepared girls for household work and boys for farming (one of the lowest income groups as the Farm Surveys have shown) would never succeed.

Vocational Education and the Changing Nation State

By the start of the 1940s vocational education had come to be viewed as state provision for poor children (O'Reilly, 2012) in preparation for local work and in some cases further technical studies and training. The introduction of the Group Certificate Examination in 1947, provided the

system with some standing in terms of capturing student achievement but it continued to be viewed as less prestigious than the church run secondary school system. VECs faced many challenges in seeking to promote technical education in rural Ireland. When the Apprenticeship Act of 1931 was introduced, the designation of trades depended on voluntary cooperation where no trade could be designated except at the request of, or with the consent of, both the trade unions and the employers. The introduction of day release from work was met with a great deal of resistance, especially in the smaller trades where any disruption of work could not be afforded (Jordan, 1984).

The schemes for apprentices concentrated on two main categories those registered by statutory committees under the 1931 Apprenticeship Act and schemes regulated by the VECs in conjunction with particular trades (Jordan, 1984). Students in the smaller towns, after two or three years of education in the continuation schools, could go on for further training in a variety of trades. However, those who wanted to pursue their education further found it difficult to do so. The allowances paid to apprentices were inadequate and poorer children were unable to avail of apprenticeship opportunities because their parents could not pay the maintenance costs involved (North Tipperary VEC, 1950).

Rural areas did not have access to apprenticeship courses until after World War II Individual VECs had tried to address this issue. As early as 1932, Co. Monaghan VEC awarded graded diplomas to students who had achieved good results in the school examinations and they also awarded prizes of books and tools to students who had secured first, second and third places in the examinations (Co Monaghan VEC, 1932). In 1934 a special advisory body consisting of CEOs, Headmasters, Inspectors from the Department of Education and other experts investigated the possibility of introducing Technical School examinations. This system was introduced for evening technical courses. Many good schemes of training were introduced by the VECs in conjunction with different industries, which included areas like aluminium, artificial silk, boot making, cotton, electrical fittings, fishing, flax, spinning and sugar beet (Dáil Debates, 1950). Most of the courses that were available usually catered for the needs of local industry (Corcoran, 1972). The Apprenticeship Act of 1931 did not meet the needs of modern Irish industry and as Breen

(1984) has argued the concept of fitting pupils for very specific niches in local labour markets while viable in the 1930s was outdated by the late 1950s.

A second Apprenticeship Act was passed in 1959, which set up a statutory apprenticeship body, called An Cheard Comhairle (Jordan, 1984). This body was given wide powers to oversee the development of trades to reflect the economic aims of the government. Initially An Cheard Comhairle worked closely with the VECs and made arrangements for courses to be provided by the local vocational schools for apprentices. A system of scholarships was also introduced for the apprentices who were particularly talented in their area of specialisation (O'Leary, 1962).

Local VECs were keen to be involved in agricultural education though were restricted from doing so as the responsibility for agricultural training rested with the Department of Agriculture. In 1943 a memorandum was sent to all VECs entitled *Vocational Education and Instruction in Agriculture*. This memorandum urged co-operation between Rural Science teachers and Agricultural Instructors. Agriculture was not taught in rural continuation schools and Rural Science teachers were not allowed to give lessons which dealt with livestock or tillage (Clarke, 1999). The minutes of local VECs suggest that the provision of courses for farmers was an important part of their agenda even though they were restricted in the contribution that they could make. Co. Leitrim and North Tipperary VECs instigated interesting initiatives in this area. In 1955, Co. Leitrim VEC organised a training course in Agricultural Science, Woodwork and Building Construction. This took place on one evening per week from 6.30-10 pm for students who were past pupils of Carrick-on-Shannon Vocational School. Each member of the class undertook one farming project and one building project at his home (Co Leitrim VEC, 1955). Co. Leitrim VEC also set up a Building Trade Apprenticeship course in Mohill Vocational School. Students completed a number of projects, which included the erection and completion of a six-stall cow byre under the regulations of the Bovine TB Eradication Scheme, for the farmer adjacent to the school. They also connected a water supply to a farmer's home near the school and constructed a rural science demonstration bench (Co Leitrim VEC, 1957). Co. Leitrim VEC confined this course to students as they did not want to be in competition with people already

trained in this kind of construction. North Tipperary VEC ran a very successful Home Improvements course in Newport. The main emphasis of this course focused on farm buildings. Eighty per cent of the buildings in this area were in need of repair. Due to bad housing conditions there was a high incidence of cattle deaths (North Tipperary VEC, 1955). These examples underscore the flexibility of the VECs in the provision of such courses.

During the 1950s, VECs were aware of the need to become actively involved in community development. In 1956 Leitrim VEC ran classes in Carrick-on-Shannon Technical School for guesthouse owners. This course concentrated on catering for the cross-channel anglers who were frequent visitors to the area. A special training course for guesthouse personnel was also provided. Rural Science teachers gave instruction on growing vegetables. There were also classes in home decoration, water supply and sanitary provision. Arrangements were made with the ESB, Hoover, Servis and Kosangas to give demonstrations of appliances that were of value to the housewife (Co Leitrim VEC, 1956). This reflected a high level of co-operation and partnership between the VEC and reputable companies. Co. Dublin VEC organised boat building classes in Skerries and Rush. The Minister for Education launched the boats when they were completed in 1952 (Co Dublin VEC, 1952). This was a successful local link, which contributed in a real way to the development of seaside areas in Co. Dublin.

Vocational education played an important role in rural contexts through its promotion of adult education classes and activities. At the start of the 1950s occasional courses, mainly adult education, were provided in 49 vocational schools and 416 centers, in temporary accommodation served from the nearest school. Adult education took the form of evening classes which was provided in nearly all schools. Part-time classes during this period focussed on aspects of the whole-time programmes such as woodwork, metalwork and domestic science. This also applied to sessional classes in rural centres and short courses at rural centres. Sessional classes in practical subjects were usually conducted on two evenings per week and were of two hours duration. These classes ran from mid-September to the end of March. Most of the projects undertaken in these classes were home based. The classes often operated in conjunction

with rural discussion groups. Instruction in subjects such as Irish, Bookkeeping, Maths, Drama, Choral singing, lectures, debates and meetings were offered as evening classes. The training received in these classes was very useful to people in their everyday working lives. Securing accommodation for these classes in areas was always a problem especially in areas where no school already existed. Plays in Irish and English were produced in each center during the school year and many evening groups produced plays throughout the country and competed at Drama Festivals, which were held nation-wide (Clarke, 1999).

Twenty years after its inception vocational education found itself battling against a very negative image due to its primary role in providing education for poor children. While the system was constrained by low levels of investment, the lack of a central role in industry and agricultural education, portfolios held by two other government departments, nevertheless the available evidence suggests that at both national and local levels, VECs, by the start of the 1950s, were active in working with local industries, supported community initiatives and played an important role in furthering adult education. Continuation schools had become a focal point for intergenerational involvement in the different types of education that were offered.

Vocational Education and Participation in Rural Ireland

At the end of the 1950s, there were 308 vocational schools providing various forms of education, including 4 colleges and 4 other centers devoted exclusively to technical and commercial education, 3 schools of art and 3 schools of music. Forty-nine schools were used exclusively for evening courses. Whole-time day continuation courses were provided in the remaining 245 schools. In addition, these centers provided evening classes for adults and a number provided part-time day technical education for apprentices. The distribution of vocational schools in rural areas was quite poor. Table 8.1 presents the data.

Table 8.1 Day Vocational Schools by enrolment-size and centrality

Centrality						
Size of school/ students	Cities	Towns 5000 and over	Towns 1500-5000	Towns 500-1500	Villages 200-500	Rural[*]	Total
0-99	3	2	15	46	25	28	119
100-149	1	3	31	16	6	3	60
150-199	6	4	11	5	–	–	26
200-299	11	14	4	3	–	–	32
300 and over	5	3	–	–	–	–	8

Source *Investment in Education: Report of the Survey Team appointed by the Minister for Education in October, 1962.* (1966) Dublin: Stationary Office. Pr 8311. Table 10.18

[*]The rural classification represents the former Rural Districts which were abolished as administrative areas in 1925 but were retained for Census purposes as convenient units of area, intermediate in size between District Electoral Division and the County

Table 8.2 Percentage distribution of whole-time day continuation students by distance travelled to school (single journey) and mode of transport used, 1963/64

Distanced travelled Miles	On foot	Bicycle	Private Car	Public bus/ train	Private bus	Other means	Total %
Under 5	25.5	25.4	0.5	9	0.8	0.1	61.3
5 to 10	–	20.7	1.2	8.6	1.8	0.2	32.5
Over 10	–	1.0	0.6	3.9	0.6	0.1	6.2
Total	25.5	47.1	2.3	21.5	3.2	0.4	100

Source *Investment in Education: Report of the Survey Team appointed by the Minister for Education in October, 1962.* (1966). Dublin: Stationary Office.Pr 8311.Appendix X.B Table B.1

The sparse distribution of whole-time vocational schools was due in large part to the lack of investment (Clarke, 1999) and in rural areas this meant that young people had to travel long distances in order to access the type of education on offer. During World War 2, rural students could not attend classes due to reduced bus services and the difficulties encountered securing bicycle tyres (Department of Education 1954). Table 8.2 illustrates the distance travelled by students to vocational schools at the start of the 1960s.

The majority of young people travelled less than five miles per single journey to vocational schools. This meant a round trip of up to 10 miles per day. Over a quarter of students travelled by foot and bicycle. A third of young people had to travel between five and 10 miles as a single journey to access vocational education, which could result in a round trip of up to 20 miles per day. The distances indicate the disadvantages that rural young people faced in accessing vocational education. Yet enrolment figures continued to remain steady and witnessed a major increase by the mid-1950s (Table 8.3).

By the mid 1950s the Department of Education recorded attendance at the various classes in county vocational schools differently (Table 8.4).

Table 8.3 Session 1933-34 and 1943-44 the number of students enrolled in various types of schools and classes in County VEC schemes

County VECs	Total 1933-4	Total 1943-4
Day classes at permanent centres –whole time schools.	5440	7810
Day classes at permanent centres part-time schools and classes.	532	930
Evening classes at permanent centres.	8954	14,942
Sessional classes at rural centres.	18,789	11,354
Short courses at rural centres.	7700	5832
Total	41,415	40,868

Source: Report of the Department of Education, 1933-34, P. No. 1693 and Report of the Department of Education, 1943-44, P No. 7070

Table 8.4 Session 1953-54 the number of students enrolled in various types of schools and classes in County VEC schemes

County VECs	Males Under 16	Females Under 16	Males Over 16	Females Over 16
Day classes at permanent centres— Whole time schools.	5579	5001	1252	1563
Day classes at permanent centres part-time schools and classes.	804	1738	456	1386
Evening classes at permanent centres.	2902	3446	17,637	20,570
Totals	9285	10,185	19,345	23,519

Source: Report of the Department of Education, 1953-54. Pr. 3153. Appendix 4 Table 1 a-e. This table reflects the data pertaining to the county schemes not the entire system as published in the Vocational Education Statistics Appendix. The data was presented differently than in previous tables with males and females classified under 16 and over 16 years. The returns did not include data for sessional classes at rural centres or short courses at rural centres

By 1954 the total attending various forms of vocational education in rural areas was 62,334 an increase of 21,466 on the previous ten years. The data also reveals that by the mid-1950s attendance at evening classes had almost doubled on the numbers attending 10 years previously indicating that citizens in rural Ireland availed of what the vocational system had to offer.

Conclusion

The ways in which education systems develop reflect the structural contexts of the wider historical landscape. The initial years of the Irish Free State promoted a form of rural idyll and in the early years the vocational education system was one instrument in pursuing that policy. The curriculum in rural continuation schools promoted a traditional, Catholic, and gendered ideology where such schools were expected to remain focussed on the provision of training for local employment. The provisions of both the 1931 *Memorandum for the Information of Committees*, and in the 1942 *Memorandum V40* reinforced the idealised nation state that was family and rural orientated. The system was negatively impacted by a conscious decision on the part of successive governments to restrict investment in its expansion and by the fact that apprenticeship and agricultural education was controlled by two other government departments. VECs faced many challenges in seeking to promote technical education in rural Ireland. Rural areas did not have access to apprenticeship courses until after World War II. Boys from rural continuation schools did not get the same opportunities as those who were fortunate enough to have attended a technical or secondary school.

Tensions were present when the vocational system of education was introduced. The Catholic Church was very concerned about state involvement in education and especially by the lack of emphasis on religious education when it was first introduced. Throughout its history vocational education was confronted by a powerful system of second level education that had recognised state examinations which ensured success for those lucky enough to avail of the opportunities presented. Vocational schools were viewed as places for the children of the poor who were going to

remain in their localities. The Catholic Church at local level imposed its own control on the system through representation on the VECs ensuring for the most part that its particular ethos was sustained.

As Ireland embraced the policies of economic planning, vocational education was not viewed as playing a key role in the development of the modern nation state where industry was actively promoted. Despite this, VECs on a local level through community development initiatives and adult education classes contributed to increasing awareness on the part of rural citizens about the changing nation state and those citizens in turn responded by availing of the opportunities that this form of education had to offer.

Notes

1. *Community Development Federation of Local Development Associations Feb-Dec 1961,* in Economic Development Branch, Department of Finance Aug. 1961, S.17138 A/61 Loc. NA.
2. Macra na Feirme is a rural organisation founded by a group of 12 agricultural advisers, rural science teachers and farmers in 1944. 'Macra' means stalwarts or the elite and 'na Feirme' means of the land.
3. Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA)was founded in May 1910 by Anita Lett in Bree, Co Wexford. It was originally called the Society of the United Irishwomen (UI), its aim was "to improve the standard of life in rural Ireland through Education and Co-operative effort" In 1935, due to political issues the then called UI changed its name to the now known Irish Countrywomen's association (ICA). Around this time the ICA also let go of just improving rural lives and began focusing on all areas of Ireland. Contrary to popular belief the "country" within the ICAs name stands for the country of Ireland as a whole, as opposed to "country" as in rural areas.
4. Muintir na Tíre (People of the Country) a national organisation promoting community development in Ireland, was established in 1937 to develop and expand into a comprehensive movement designed to raise the standard of living of people in all aspects of Irish rural life. The emphasis was on local improvement—social, economic, cultural and recreational—based on the participation of people themselves in the promotion of the welfare of their community.

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9

Key Milestones in the Evolution of Skills Policy in Ireland

Rory O'Sullivan and Justin Rami

Introduction

Since the beginning of industrialisation, the availability of sufficiently skilled workers has been a key concern in all political economies. State involvement in skills policy began to emerge in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century in the context of international competitiveness. Developments in the United Kingdom (UK) had a significant influence on developments in Ireland until the 1970s and 1980s. At this time the locus of influence began to shift toward Europe, following Ireland's membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973. The increasing influence of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) can also be identified from the 1960s.

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This chapter will identify the key milestones in the evolution of skills policy in Ireland with particular emphasis on further education and training and intermediate skill formation. Its primary focus will be on the period from 1973, when Ireland joined the EEC, until 2020, and the publication of the second National FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2020a). The chapter will begin by identifying the key events and influences in the period from the mid-nineteenth century until 1973, which laid the foundations for the trajectory of policy evolution, and set in train the key themes to emerge. Following the discussion of the 1973 to 2020 period, the chapter will conclude with a discussion on the current state of skills policy in Ireland. The potential impact of key developments in recent times will also be discussed, such as the Irish government's stated aim of creating an integrated tertiary education sector (Department of Education and Skills, 2018), and the establishment of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) in 2020, with particular focus on the place of FET.

Before discussing the developments in Ireland, the first section of the chapter will outline the key features of skill formation systems, and how such systems vary between countries. This will place the subsequent discussion on developments in Ireland in a broader international context.

Skills Formation Systems

The skill formation system (SFS) in every industrialised county is the interface between the education system and the labour market. The SFS consists of the vocational education and training (VET) system and higher education. The VET (or FET in Ireland) system provides the intermediate-level skills for the economy, while the high-level skills are provided by higher education. However, a SFS does not exist in isolation. It is part of the overall education and training system within a country, which includes pre-school, primary and post-primary education. Progression from one level of the system to the next is a common feature in all countries. The inter-connected nature of the education and training system means that what happens at one level often affects another.

The transition from school-to-work, 'through the SFS', is a key pathway through the system. The structure of the post-primary system, the starting point of this pathway, affects how the pathway progresses. Whether a post-primary system is stratified, such as that in Germany, or standardised, as in Ireland, is important to the context within which the SFS, and in particular, the school-to-work pathway, evolves in each country.

Indeed, the duality of the relationship between the structure of the SFS and the structure of labour market entry has been highlighted by a number of commentators. Gangl (2001) highlighted the importance of the linkages between the SFS and employment systems while Allmendinger (1989, p. 232) states that:

> Education *systems* define occupational opportunities for individuals at entry into the labour market … these systems have long-term implications for how people are matched to jobs.

Finegold and Soskice (1988, p. 21) are critical of policy makers in the UK for failing the see the importance of the "two-way nature of the relationship between education and training and the economy". In other words, while the SFS in a given country responds to the skills needs of the economy, the structure of labour market entry is largely dependent on the 'output' of the SFS. The symbiotic nature of this relationship, and, in particular, employer involvement in the SFS, have been identified by a number of writers as a variable in the comparability of SFS. This is discussed in more detail below.

Comparing Skills Formation Systems

As a small open economy within the European Union, Ireland's economy and, by extension, its SFS, must be placed within an international context. Indeed, the first National FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014, p. 3) states that the vision for the new FET Sector is "a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland". In this section, the discussion will focus on the comparability of SFS between countries and

identify the key features of SFS across advanced political economies. Firstly, the discussion will focus on the key determinants in the evolution of SFS from pre-industrial times, including the emergence of different models of economic activity. Given that SFS respond to the needs of the economy, different modes of economic activity result in differences in SFS. In such cases what are the implications for the comparability of SFS? This will be followed by a brief consideration of the differences between small and large economies and their implications for comparability of SFS. This section will conclude with an overview of the key features of SFS in advanced political economies.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, skill formation across the world has been the preserve of the apprenticeship tradition dating back to ancient times (Ryan, 2000b). Indeed, while the VET systems in many countries prior to industrialisation were very similar (Wollschläger, 2004), the growth of industrialisation produced different institutional configurations. Deissinger (2004, p. 39) states that "education and vocational training should not and cannot be separated from the history of a country, its social development, and its institutions". Iversen and Soskice (2009) highlight how the mode of economic activity in pre-industrial times was largely continued into the post-industrial economy. They describe how the transition to industrialisation was mediated by the local context in each country. Features, such as the degree to which economic activity was locally rooted, the strength of a craft guild tradition, whether agriculture was dominated by large land owners employing landless peasants or small land-owning farmers, all contributed to how economic activity took place. They identified two broad categories of economic activity—coordinated market economies (CME's), and non-coordinated or liberal market economies (LMEs). The CME group was further sub-divided into social democratic, located mainly in Scandinavia, and the Christian democratic, centred primarily in Germany.

It is worth noting that, in the nineteenth century, the bulk of the workforce in most countries lived in rural areas. Indeed, Esping-Andersen (1990) observed that, until the post-World War II period, political dominance was based primarily on rural class politics. Hall and Soskice (2001) identified a continuum from LMEs to CMEs along which advanced

industrial economies could be placed called the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC). As a Member State of the European Union, placing the Irish SFS in a European context is an important element of the discussion. However, the distribution of the political economies of the 27 Member States along the VoC continuum (Menz, 2005) reveals the difficulties in comparing SFS from different types of economies. This also has implications at EU level regarding the development of an EU-wide approach to skill formation. Comparing the Copenhagen and Bologna processes, Powell et al. (2012) describe the emergent European skill formation model as a bricolage of the elements of various existing models and international influences. Within the complexity of the VoC continuum, comparing SFS based on type of economic activity, namely CME or LME, has some validity. Using the VoC model, Hall and Soskice identified the six Anglophone countries as LMEs—United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand. Therefore, it would seem most appropriate to compare the SFS in countries with similar approaches to economic activity.

Small and Large States

However, type of economic activity is not the only variable relevant to the comparability of SFS. In addition to levels of education and training within a labour market (which will be discussed later in this chapter), demographic characteristics are also relevant to this discussion. As Bielenberg and Ryan (2013) state: "A crucial factor influencing the development of any economy is the size and capability of the labour force" (165).

Table 9.1 shows the population of the six LME countries. Not only are Ireland and New Zealand the smallest countries, in population size, it is noteworthy that the four largest countries are also members of the G7 group of nations, which consists of the seven largest economies in the world.

Therefore, is a comparison of the SFS in LME's appropriate without considering the relative size of the economies? Smaller states, because of their increased dependence on imports to meet domestic demand, are

Table 9.1 Population of six LME countries

Country	Population (000's)
United States of America	329,484
United Kingdom	67,215
Canada	38,005
Australia	25,687
New Zealand	5084
Ireland	4994

Source: www.data.worldbank.org—data for 2020

correspondingly more vulnerable to international circumstances such as financial crises. Consequently, Buckley (2016) states that "small states can be regarded as *structurally different* to other larger states" (emphasis in the original). He goes on to observe that this can lead to a corresponding increase in the priority of skill formation: "The appeal that human capital development can have for a smaller state becomes evident when it is unable to generate significant investment in physical capital due to market size constraints" (Ibid).

Differentiating between smaller and larger states has implications for comparing the skill formation systems within the LME group. Equally, a comparison between smaller LME states leaves one option, namely, to compare Ireland and New Zealand. This would involve comparing an EU Member State with a non-EU country, which raises further questions in terms of validity.

Given the heterogeneity of SFS internationally, the comparability of such systems is, as the previous discussion has highlighted, complex. The next section will provide an overview of the key elements in SFS and will draw attention to the blend of these elements as being the main determinant in the differentiation of SFS.

Key Elements of Skill Formation Systems

Becker (1964), in taking a human capital theory approach, categorised skills broadly as being either general or specific. General skills are those that are largely transferable between firms and industries, while specific skills are seen as transferrable only within firms or industries. Specific skills have been further refined into industry specific skills, which are

transferrable between firms within the same industry, and firm-specific skills which are restricted to the requirements of a specific employer. Busemeyer (2009) describes the differences between the countries in this regard as "the variation in the 'portability' of skills" (377).

While all three categories of skills—general skills, industry-specific skills, and firm-specific skills—can be found in every economy, each country will have a dominant skill type that relates to the particular skill-bias of its form of economic activity. For example, Ireland, as an LME, would be regarded as having a general skills bias in the labour market, while in Germany, a CME, the labour market would be seen to have a bias towards industry-specific skills. The bias in any country may change over time in response to changes in the industrial profile of the economy.

Unlike education systems, SFS and VET are more heterogeneous. A key feature across all VET systems is the involvement of the primary actors in the governance, provision and regulation of VET, namely, the state, education and training providers, employers, and trade unions. It is the blend of the degree of involvement of these stakeholders that translates into the variation between the SFS systems in different countries. Busemeyer (2009) is of the view that a key variable in the skill formation system is the degree of employer involvement. Vossiek (2018, p. 17) echoes this view when he states that "it is a central question for policy-makers how to get employers involved in skill formation". Cappelli (2012, p. 53), in reference to employers in hi-tech industries, states:

> They should be involved in co-op programs and support students pursuing the needed courses, and they should train and develop current employees for skills that are emerging… To expect schools and students to guess what skills your company will need in the future is plain and simply bad business, especially in such a rapidly transforming and innovative industry. In effect, doing so amounts to outsourcing the supply of talent without bothering to let the outsource vendors know.

Busemeyer (2009) further argues that, within the various typologies of skill formation systems, insufficient attention is paid to the importance of an authoritative certification of skills. If such a system has the confidence of the employers, then certified skills will have 'value' in the labour

market. The issue of certification, and in particular, the absence of it for VET is a recurring theme in the evolution of skills policy in Ireland. For a more in-depth discussion on the typologies of skill formation systems see Greinert (2004), Busemeyer and Trampusch (2012), and Busemeyer and Schlicht-Schmälzle (2014).

Having outlined some of the key issues in the development and comparability of SFS in general, the remainder of the chapter will focus on developments in Ireland, with particular emphasis on the provision of intermediate skills within the Irish labour market. Through this chapter the themes of state involvement in skills policy, the degree of employer involvement, and the issue of certification for VET/FET in Ireland, will be evident throughout. The theme of system divergence and convergence will also recur throughout the discussion. In particular, it will be evident that the evolution of skills policy, as it applies to FET in Ireland, has been strongly influenced by international drivers, while its development has been subject to national barriers (O'Sullivan, 2018).

Before proceeding to the primary focus of this chapter, the 1973 to 2020 period, there follows an overview of the key events and influences in the skill formation policy arena prior to 1973. This period laid the foundations and the policy trajectory for the emergence of the modern FET sector in Ireland from modest beginnings in the mid-1970s.

From the Great Famine to the Formation of the Irish Free State in 1922

The history of policies relating to education, training and skills formation in Ireland is very different from the experience in the majority of industrialised countries. While many countries, particularly in Europe, were experiencing the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, Ireland lagged behind in terms of industrial development. Ireland's economy became increasingly dependent on agriculture. While the Industrial Revolution began in Britain in the latter half of the eighteenth century, there was little evidence of it in Ireland. Ó Gráda (1994, p. 208), in referring to the situation at the time of the Great Famine in Ireland in the 1840s, states

…the Great Famine is a grim reminder of how narrowly the benefits of the first Industrial Revolution had been spread by the 1840s. Nearly a half-century of political and economic union had made little or no impression on the huge gap between Irish and British incomes.

In demographic terms, the Great Famine initiated a "population decline unmatched in any other European country in the nineteenth century" (Ó Gráda, 1994, p. 213). According to the census data, the population of Ireland fell from 6,528,799 in 1841 to 3,389,111 in 1911, the last census before the formation of the Irish Free State. This represents a decline of almost 52% in 70 years. In addition, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Ireland had also experienced considerable political and social upheaval having seen "considerable turmoil and trauma…which resulted in widespread death and emigration" (Ferriter, 2004, p. 28). From the perspective of skill formation, the consequence of this economic situation leads Garvin (2009) to suggest that it led to the effective deindustrialisation of Ireland, with a corresponding deskilling of the population.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, government interest in skills policy in the UK was ignited by British industry being outperformed by German industry as evidenced at the International Exhibition in 1867. While the approach to skill formation prior to this point was primarily voluntarist in nature, this international competition was the catalyst for the UK to become more interventionist in its approach. The first attempt to legislate for technical instruction in the UK was the 1889 Technical Instruction Act, which applied to England, Wales, and Ireland (which was still under British governance). This was based on the local authority funding technical education through local taxation. The absence of a national local authority structure in Ireland meant that the implementation of this legislation in Ireland was unsuccessful. However, the 1889 Act was the first recognition of the State's role in giving direct support to technical education (Coolahan, 1981).

During the 1890s the demand for a system of technical instruction designed for the Irish context remained. As Byrne (1999, p. 27) argues, "the urgent requirement was to displace adopted British policy with an adapted Irish one". In 1895, an unofficial committee of Irishmen, both

parliamentarians and other interested parties (Byrne, 1999), known as the Recess Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr Horace Plunkett, made a systematic study of the approaches taken in other countries to industrial development (Department of Education, 1927). The Committee's report was published in 1896 and its recommendations resulted in, what Coolahan (1981, p. 87) described as the "great breakthrough for technical education", the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act of 1899. The funding of technical education through local taxation was facilitated by the passing, in the previous year, of the Local Government (Ireland) Act in 1898, establishing a national system of local authorities in Ireland. Byrne observes that, with the passing of the 1899 Act, "the bonds which kept Irish technical institutions subservient to a lofty and remote South Kensington [in London] were finally severed" (1999, p. 28).

From Independence to EEC Membership

The establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 involved the partitioning of the island of Ireland, which resulted in the six counties of Northern Ireland remaining within the UK. This created a significant economic dilemma with the loss to the newly formed Free State of the only region of substantial industrial development on the island of Ireland at that time. Ireland was a predominantly agricultural economy and was, compared to Britain, industrially underdeveloped. As a result, the demand for skills was different to the UK. Ó'Buachalla (1988, p. 33) observes that this was primarily due to the "absence of the catalytic effect of heavy industry and the dominance of agriculture in the economy". However, the profile of the Irish economy changed significantly over the next fifty years. Figure 9.1 illustrated how in 1926 almost 52% of employment was in agriculture compared to 14.5% in industry and 33.7% in services. As the chart below highlights, over the period until 1971, the broad profile in employment in Ireland changes significantly, with 25.8% in agriculture, 29.9% in industry, and 33.3% in services, in 1971.

The economic context of the period between 1931–1957 was also significant since the country spent the major portion of the period in the

Percentage Share of Employment 1926-1971
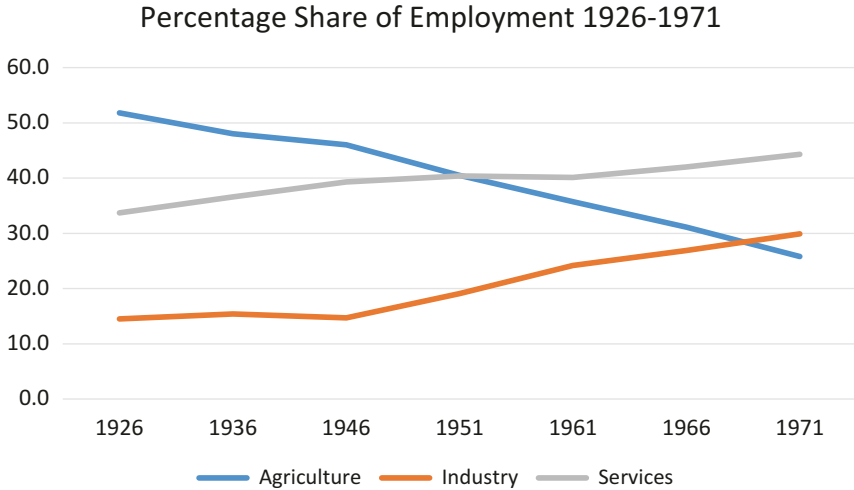
Fig. 9.1 Percentage share of total employment by sector 1926–1971. (Source: Derived from census data in Bielenberg and Ryan (2013, Table 9.1, p. 191))

grip of three economic crises. When the fledgling state was trying to establish itself, progress in terms of economic development was significantly retarded by these crises (Ferriter, 2004; Garvin, 2004; Ó Gráda, 2011; Bielenberg & Ryan, 2013; Haughton, 2014). The three economic crises of this period were identified by Ó Gráda (2011, p. 23) as the Economic War (1934–1938), the 'Emergency' (1939–1945), and, what Ó Gráda refers to as the "lost decade" the 1950s. He uses the net emigration rate as an indicator of the three economic crises experienced in Ireland during this period (see Fig. 9.2). Emigration has traditionally been a kind of 'safety valve' in Ireland during times of crisis particularly against unemployment. After the Second World War, while post-war Europe was experiencing a decade of growth, Ireland was underachieving with the worst growth record in Europe for the 1950–1958 period. The Irish government's protectionist economic policies over the course of this period had been shown to be increasingly ineffective. In the early 1950's representatives of the Irish government began exploring the option of foreign investment and a more outward looking approach to economic policy.
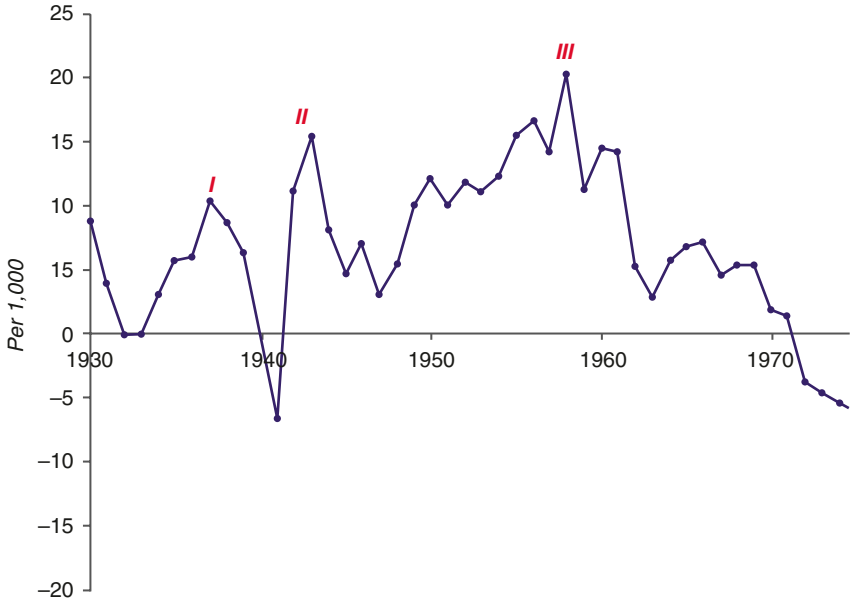
Fig. 9.2   Net emigration rate—1930–1973. (Source: Ó Gráda ([2011](#), p. 5))

Over the fifty-year period after independence, the evolution of skills policy in Ireland can be divided into three periods:

1. 1922–1931—from Convergence to Divergence
2. 1931–1957—Economic Stagnation and Catholic Church Opposition
3. 1957–1973—End of Protectionism and the Beginnings of Convergence

1. 1922–1931—From Convergence to Divergence

In the 1920's all modern industrial countries tended to make the technical school responsible for industrial training (Department of Education, [1927](#)). A significant event that helped progress policy thinking during this period was the building of the Ardnacrusha hydroelectric scheme on the River Shannon. This was seen as an important development in the

direction of industrialisation (Ferriter, 2004). Shortly after the formation of the Irish Free State, in 1924, control of technical education, in addition to primary and secondary education, was brought under the auspices of the Department of Education. The fragmented position prior to independence had been ameliorated.

The Minister for Education at the time argued that the anticipated industrial development from this project would only succeed "if a national scheme of technical training was in place" (Logan, 2000, p. 239). Consequently, the government was of the view that there was a need to overhaul technical and industrial training. The Report of the Commission on Technical Education (Department of Education, 1927), established to review the requirements of industry, recommended the development of a new system which would target three categories of provision—continuation education, technical education and higher technical education (Clarke, 2016). The report resulted in two pieces of legislation, the Vocational Education Act of 1930, and the Apprenticeship Act of 1931.

The 1930 Act established the system of Vocational Education Committees (VEC) in each of the local authority areas in the country. This new system was based on the existing system established under the 1899 Act. Byrne (1999, p. 34) describes the 1930 Act as creating "an institutional framework that facilitated the comprehensive development of vocational and technical education at both second and third level over the half-century that followed". O'Reilly (1989, p. 153) says that "vocational education can be seen as the main element of the manpower policy of the new state". Indeed, O'Reilly (1998, p. 186) argues that the VEC system was established as "a major human resource development agency of the state". He further argues that "the VECs were the exclusive locus of explicit educational initiatives by the Irish state in respect of economic development until the 1960s" (Ibid, p. 108). However, as Clarke (2016, p. 297) observes, "vocational and technical education was undervalued both in terms of its contribution to education and to the economy".

The second piece of legislation resulting from the 1927 Report was the 1931 Apprenticeship Act. This Act assigned policy responsibility for apprenticeships to the Department of Industry and Commerce. In the area of apprentice education Part VI of the 1930 Act provided for cooperation between the Vocational Education Committees (VEC) and

Apprenticeship Committees, and gave the VECs the authority to provide courses for apprenticeships. The convergence of policy responsibility for technical education achieved in 1924 with the establishment of the Department of Education ended with the passing of the 1931 Act. The two pieces of legislation (the 1930 Vocational Education Act and the 1931 Apprenticeship Act) also resulted in the further segmenting of different aspects of technical education. Responsibility for agricultural education remained with the Department of Agriculture. This proved to be the beginning of the development of sectoral training, to be later joined by similar initiatives in tourism, fisheries and forestry. Technical education, as envisaged prior to 1922, was now the responsibility of three government Departments. With the 1930 and 1931 Acts, responsibility for vocational/technical education was formerly separated from vocational/technical training and assigned to two different government departments. These two separate strands of development continued in parallel under two separate government departments—the Department of Education, and the Department of Industry and Commerce—until the government decision in 2010 to bring both areas under a renamed Department of Education and Skills.

2. 1931–1957—Economic Stagnation and Catholic Church Opposition

In 1930, the new VEC system inherited 77 technical schools from its predecessor and began the process of increasing this number. By the end of the 1930s, this number had reached 200 (Logan, 1999). With the significant decline in agriculture, the number of jobs available to family members on the family farm similarly declined (Ibid). This led to a corresponding increase in enrolments on continuation courses in vocational schools. "Families who once believed that their children's future was on the land now sought opportunities for them in occupations that would require higher levels of education" (Ibid, p. 286). Indeed, as Logan (1999, p. 281) observes:

…the relatively low demand for advanced technical education, at a time when there was a growing demand for second-level schooling, ensured that between 1930 and 1965 the continuation of second-level education of adolescents became the principal activity of most vocational schools.

For the newly established VEC system, as well as the new apprenticeship system, circumstances would prove difficult. However, it was the opposition of the Catholic Church to the vocational education system, and the state's complicity, that would be a defining feature of this period. While the purpose of the VEC system as outlined in the 1927 report was in response to the anticipated skills needs in the economy, the Catholic Church viewed this as state intervention in education that had been, in effect, delegated to the Church by the state. Their lack of control of this sector of the education system was a significant issue for the Church. Clarke (2012, p. 483) states that in Ireland "denominational control of vocational education became a priority for the Roman Catholic Church". Clarke (2012, p. 485) goes on to point out that, in addition to influencing the Department of Education, the Catholic Church set about spreading its influence at VEC level.

Membership of the local VECs was secured for the Catholic clergy by the early 1940s. By this time the Roman Catholic Church had achieved much success in representational terms with clergy holding positions on every VEC committee in the country with the exception of Dublin.

Logan (2000, p. 241) concurs with Clarke and observes:

From 1930 to the mid-1960s, the majority of non-councillor [VEC] committee places were allocated to clergymen, and three out of every four committees formed would elect a priest as its chair.

Certification and qualifications for vocational and technical education, and in particular, their absence was a recurring theme during this period. Following the establishment of the VEC system in 1930, the first state examinations in technical education provided by the Department of Education were held in 1936. These Trade Examinations were taken at

Junior and Senior levels, while the Technological Examinations were held at Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced levels. Students in vocational schools were prevented from sitting the state exams, the Intermediate and Leaving Certificates. In effect, the state colluded with a private institution to prevent students in the public system from gaining access to state certification. Logan (2000) identifies criticism of the absence of certification of continuation education programmes, particularly in relation to there being no mechanism to reassure employers and parents of a national uniformity of standards. This criticism viewed the vocational school as "localist, prone to idiosyncratic variation and unsystematic in contrast to the secondary school" (Ibid, p. 243). National certification for continuation education was not available until after the Second World War in 1947 when the Day Vocational Certificate, more commonly known as the Group Certificate, was established. Significantly, the Group Certificate was not accepted for entry into university. Consequently, the continuation education programme was an educational *cul-de-sac* as it had little or no transfer value to further education or training. In effect, the State and the Catholic Church colluded to prevent students attending vocational schools from sitting the examinations which gave access to university. From a social mobility perspective, this resulted in vocational education being regarded as second rate.

However, despite the opposition of the Catholic Church, the VEC system was successful over this period. By 1957, there were 260 vocational schools providing full-time continuation education programmes to more than 22,000 students (O'Connor, 1986). However, as Girvin (2002, p. 69) observes, the opposition of the Catholic Church prevented the vocational education system from "achieving its full potential". Barry (2007, p. 1) adds that, "by the end of the 1950s it was clear that economic policy needed to be completely overhauled. The First Programme for Economic Expansion, introduced in 1958, heralded the demise of protectionism".

By contrast to vocational education, the Catholic Church took practically no interest in developments pertaining to apprenticeships although the education dimension of apprenticeships, which was delivered by the VECs, was inevitably impacted upon to some degree by the developments described above. While the 1931 Act established a

regulated apprenticeship system in Ireland, it turned out to be largely ineffective (Garavan et al., 1995). The education element of apprenticeships was a relatively small element (6%) of technical education by the end of this period, a small increase of just 5% on mid-1930s levels (J.G. Ryan, 2000a). This was particularly due to the fact that the apprenticeship committees were enabled but not obliged to make rules requiring employers to train apprentice employees in a specific manner (Coolahan, 1981). The VECs, which under the 1930 Act had a responsibility to provide the education dimension of apprenticeships, experienced great difficulties in planning for this provision. As J.G. Ryan (2000a) put it:

> …in relation to the overall demands of the apprenticeship system, the educational sector was, to a large extent, working in the dark. It was not in a position to organise apprenticeships in the workplace, it did not know the numbers of apprentices to be provided for the particular trades, their location, nor their specific requirements as regards education and training. (p. 289)

The ineffectiveness of the 1931 Apprenticeship Act was the target of criticism in the Report of the Commission on Youth Unemployment (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1951, p. 21). This report called for the establishment of a National Apprenticeship Committee which would co-ordinate the different apprenticeship committees. The absence of certification was also noted when the report drew attention to the omission of any provision in the 1931 Act for a "test of competency on the completion of apprenticeship". The standards-based approach to apprenticeship would not be implemented until some forty years later in the 1990s. Work began on new apprenticeship legislation by the Department but it did not become law until 1959.

3. 1957–1973—End of Protectionism and the Beginnings of Convergence

The period between the 1950s and Ireland's joining the EEC in 1973 has been described as the birth of modern Ireland (Girvin, 2002). It also

signalled a change in the political guard with the baton of Taoiseach [Prime Minister] being passed from Eamonn de Valera, who was seen as representing the inward looking, traditionalist view, to his successor, Sean Lemass, representing the outward looking, progressive view of the country's future. The significance of the period is also characterised by the appointment of a number of younger, ambitious politicians to key government ministries such as Jack Lynch to Industry and Commerce, and Patrick Hillery to Education. Their ambition, policy entrepreneurship, and political skills combined to set the country on a new and ultimately prosperous path. Some initial work was done during the 1950s by government officials in terms of seeking overseas investment. The Industrial Development Authority had been established in 1949, which O'Reilly (1998) suggests was the starting point of this transition from protectionism to free-trade.

Furthermore, there was also significant attitudinal change in Ireland in the late 1950s and 1960s which was influenced by Ireland's increasing involvement with international organisations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the OECD (Coolahan, 1981). It should also be noted that, while Ó Gráda (2011) refers to the recession of the 1950s in Ireland as the 'lost decade', this decade was "commonly referred to as the 'golden age' of European economic growth" (Bielenberg & Ryan, 2013, p. 185). In the context of international developments, including the increasing international popularity of human capital theory, economists began to emphasise education as an economic investment (Ibid). Logan (1999, p. 290) argues that availability of the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate exams in vocational schools "paved the way for a high degree of convergence in the second-level curriculum". While the rationale for this policy is clear from an equality perspective, the failure to develop the technical senior cycle within the existing vocational schools signalled the beginning of the end of vocational education in post-primary schools. The introduction of vocational subjects to the Leaving Certificate curriculum was in keeping with the Minister's policy of a comprehensive curriculum. However, "the consequence of this policy was the effective curricular colonisation of the second-level curriculum by the academic intermediate and leaving certificate syllabus, as vocational

subjects were displaced overtime by the stronger academic disciplines" (O'Sullivan, 2018, p. 116).

The most significant development, in terms of educational policy, in Ireland was the publication of the report of the OECD funded survey of Irish education *Investment in Education* (OECD, 1966). This report, described by Coolahan (1981, p. 165) as one of the "foundation documents of modern Irish education", was the first time that the link between education and economic development was officially acknowledged in Irish government policy. O'Connor (2014, p. 199) states that the "very conceptualisation of expenditure on education as an investment was revolutionary in the 1960s". T.K. Whitaker, architect of the First Programme for Economic Expansion (1958), said *Investment in Education* did for education what *Economic Development* did for the economy (Chambers, 2014).

Although it was not a specific recommendation of the *Investment in Education* report, the establishment of free post-primary education in 1967 was a turning point in Irish society. Post-primary enrolment expanded rapidly in subsequent years, with the Church-run secondary schools getting the lion's share of the increase. The social mobility opportunities, and the careerist interpretation of general education (O'Sullivan, 2005), provided by the Church-run schools were seen as a far more powerful motivator than the supposedly rational human capital theory view being proposed by government.

While human capital theory was gaining increasing acceptance within the education policy arena internationally, the emergence of active manpower policies was also a feature of this period. A number of reports within government departments in the early 1960s, as well as recommendations from the OECD (OECD, 1964), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (ILO, 1964), combined with a visit to the British Ministry of Labour to study the implementation of their Industrial Training Act of 1964, contributed to the country's first White Paper on Manpower Policy (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1965). In line with international developments, the White Paper embraced an active approach to manpower (Weishaupt, 2011) with the main elements of the policy consisting of:

- Manpower forecasting;
- Training for workers as well as the retraining of those who lost their jobs or who are in need of upskilling;
- A redundancy payments scheme;
- An unemployment financial assistance scheme;
- Development of the Employment Service (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1965, p. 4).

Overall responsibility for manpower policy was assigned to the Minister for Labour, a cabinet position established in 1966.

This period also saw a new Apprenticeship Act in 1959. This Act established a National Apprenticeship Board, An Chéard Chomhairle (Council of Trades). This body had the authority to set minimum age and educational entry levels for apprentices. It also had the authority to require employers to send their apprentices on training courses. Unlike the 1931 Act, which was seen as an imposition by employers and trade unions, this new legislation was the result of the recommendations of a joint committee of employers and trade unions, and was thus strongly supported by both groups. In 1961, the Board set new entry requirements for apprentices resulting in both the Day Vocational (Group) Certificate and the Intermediate Certificate being acceptable. This initiative was regarded as ground breaking (Walsh, 2009). For vocational school students, the *cul de sac* nature of the Group Cert had been removed with the establishment of this progression pathway. However, despite these reforms the apprenticeships continued to be time-served with no evaluation of competency upon completion (McCarthy, 1977).

In addition to the establishment of the Department of Labour, the White Paper on Manpower Policy also led to the Industrial Training Act of 1967 and the establishment of a new Industrial Training Agency, An Chomhairle Oiliúna (AnCO). This new agency assumed responsibility for all industrial training including apprenticeships. It also witnessed the transfer of the manpower function of the VECs to the new agency and from the Department of Education to the Department of Labour. In keeping with the government's increasing interventionist approach in education policy, the 1967 Act signalled a similar change in the area of industrial training.

This period also saw developments in the sectoral training arena with the establishment of the Farm Apprenticeship Board under the Department of Agriculture in 1963 to operate the farm apprenticeship scheme. In addition, a training and development agency for the tourism sector, the Council for Education, Recruitment and Training (CERT), was developed under the Department of Industry and Commerce in 1963.

In a decade of significant developments, the 1960s also saw developments in higher technical education. The OECD review of technicians training in Ireland (OECD, 1964) highlighted the deficiencies in the current provision. In 1963, the Minister for Education, Patrick Hillery announced the establishment of Regional Technical Colleges (RTC) to provide advanced technical education. O'Connor (1986, p. 200) described this initiative as "one of the outstanding successes of the period". A Steering Committee was established to make recommendations relating to the proposed RTCs (Steering Committee for Technical Education, 1969). One of its recommendations related to the establishment of the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) similar to the British Council for National Academic Awards. It was subsequently established in 1972.

The skill formation policy of the nascent Irish state in its first fifty years after independence faced numerous challenges. In some ways, the period since independence could be characterised as the struggle between those wishing to preserve the past and those seeking to prepare for the future. While external forces, such as the economic relationship with the United Kingdom, and the three economic recessions until the late 1950s, would suggest a more progressive policy response, the internal forces, particularly the Catholic Churches opposition to the vocational school system and the state's complicity, resulted in a skill formation system that was significantly under-resourced and under-developed when it came to responding to the challenges of the new outward looking approach and dynamism of the 1960s and increased inward investment. Ireland's increasing involvement in the international community, through such bodies as the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in particular, provided increasing influence in various national policy arenas in Ireland. As the birth of

modern Ireland (Girvin, 2002) emerged in the 1960s, the membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 was to have a significant impact on Ireland, both economically and socially. The next section will discuss the developments from 1973 until 2020.

1973 to 2014—The Emergence of the Modern FET Sector

The Economic and Social Context

Since the end of the Second World War, Ireland has not only changed from an agrarian to industrial economy, but also from a predominantly rural country to become more urbanised (Punch & Finneran, 2000). The shift from protectionism to free trade, which commenced in the late 1950s, began a process of economic development which led to membership of the EEC in 1973. Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC) along with Britain and Denmark to bring the number of EEC Member States to nine. Bielenberg and Ryan (2013, p. 26) describe Ireland's entry into the EEC as "one of the most decisive breaks in Irish economic history". O'Hagan et al. (2000, p. 85) describe Ireland's membership of the EEC as the "single most dominant influence" on the economic development of the country since the end of the Second World War.

In 1973, Ireland's economy was still below European norms, with a GDP per capita 58% of the European average. However, EEC membership, married with the government's outward-looking approach to economic development, led to a significant increase in foreign direct investment (FDI). FDI contributed significantly to changes in the profile of economic activity and the labour market. Barry (2007, p. 262) describes Ireland as the "most FDI-intensive economy in Europe" and identifies four phases of FDI in Ireland. The first phase was from the late 1950s to Ireland's membership of the EEC in 1973 discussed above. The second phase began in 1973 and featured a "shift into higher-technology sectors" (Ibid, p. 263). This phase continued until the late 1980s with the

pending Single European Market in 1992. The third phase is that of the 1990s and the "global high-tech boom" (Ibid, p. 264). The fourth phase, beginning in the 2000s, he identifies as being "characterised by the substantial offshoring of R&D [Research and Development] functions by multinational corporations" (Ibid, p. 264). These last two phases can be seen as coinciding with the emergence of the knowledge economy. Barry observes that, over this period, the post-secondary education and training system has been "driven by the country's FDI focussed strategy" (Ibid, p. 283).

Figure 9.3 illustrates the continuing change in the labour market over this period. Employment in agriculture fell from 26% in 1971 to less than 6% in 2014. The percentage employed in industry fell from 31% in 1971 to 18% in 2014. Conversely, employment in the services sector rose from 43% to 76% over the same period.

This period also coincided with the removal of the marriage ban from women in the public service and participation by women in the labour force increased (Treacy & O'Connell, 2000). Women represented 26% of those employment in 1971 and 47% by 2011.

EEC membership coincided with the "oil crises" in 1973 and 1979 and the resultant economic recessions. This period witnessed significant industrial unrest, high unemployment and high inflation in Ireland. The persistent levels of unemployment during this period were regarded by
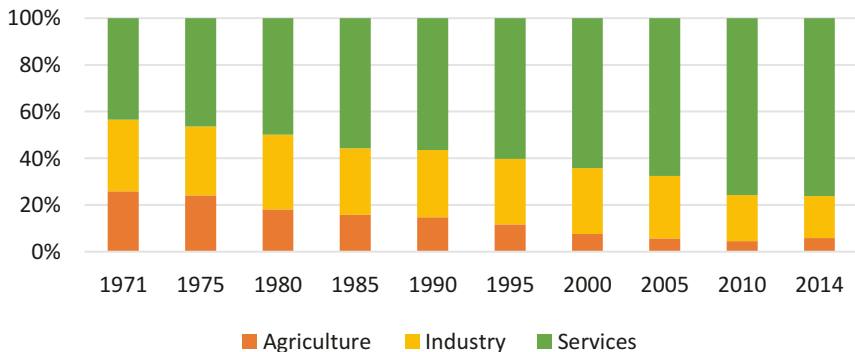
Fig. 9.3   Percentage employment by broad industry sector 1971–2014. (Source: O'Sullivan (2018, p. 157))

the Irish government as the "most urgent Irish economic problem" (Government of Ireland, 1976, p. 8), with the unemployment level reaching 17.1% by 1986, its highest level in since independence (Ó Gráda, 2011). The government approach to dealing with unemployment during this period was to aim for full employment. It also maintained a reliance on public sector employment to address persistent unemployment (Government of Ireland, 1976). The traditional Irish 'safety valve' for high unemployment, namely emigration, increased significantly (see Fig. 9.4).

The predominantly Keynesian approach to the state finances in Ireland was replaced during the mid-1980s when neo-liberalism, in the form of a monetarism approach to economic policy associated with the Thatcher government in the UK, begins to emerge. Added to the economic difficulties, and in keeping with the Keynesian approach, the deficit spending approach of the six successive governments during this period resulted in an enormous national debt by the 1980s. The fiscal crisis of the mid-1980s created the context for discussions between the government, the trade unions and the employers which led to the first social partnership agreement (Government of Ireland, 1987), based on the European approach.
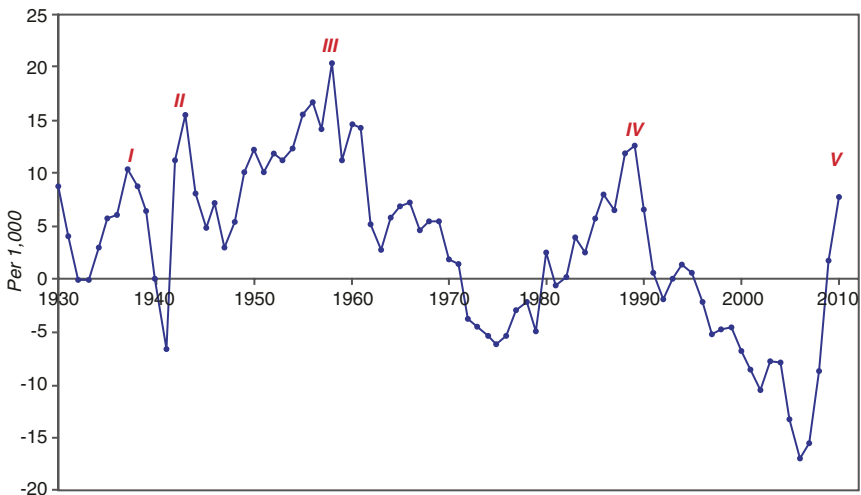
Fig. 9.4   Net emigration rate—1930–2010. (Source: Ó Gráda (2011, p. 5))

The experience for the trade unions in Ireland, in particular, in the 1980s has to be placed within the context of the experience of the trade union movement in the near neighbour, Britain, which conditioned their thinking at the time (Hardiman, 2002, p. 35).

> The trade unions … were also acutely aware of their own vulnerability at this time, given the battering which the unions in Britain had been taking since the election of the Thatcher Government in 1979.

The timing of the first social partnership agreement *Programme for National Recovery* (Government of Ireland, 1987) proved fortunate as the international economy began to experience an upturn and inflation began to fall. The social partnership process was extended over time into an increasing number of public policy areas.

The government strategy of aiming for full employment, which characterised the 1970s and 1980s, begins to change during the social partnership period to one of employability. In other words, responsibility for employment shifts from the government to the individual. Unemployment began to fall, and Ireland's economy began to move in the direction of innovative industries of the knowledge economy, the so-called Celtic Tiger of the mid-1990s and early 2000s.

Having experienced the boom of the Celtic Tiger, Ireland felt the impact of the global financial crisis that resulted in what commentators have called the 'Great Recession' (Barrett & McGuinness, 2012). As a result, in late 2010, the Irish government had to seek financial support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Commission, and the European Central Bank (ECB)—a triumvirate of organisations that became known as 'The Troika'. The outcome was a three-year financial support programme lasting from 2011 until 2013—the 'Troika Years'. While these years witnessed many difficulties across many areas of the Irish economy and society, these three years also saw a significant increase in the pace and volume of change within the public service, and within further education and training in particular. Three developments were of particular significance. In 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established following the amalgamation of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Higher

Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB). In 2013, the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETB) were established, following the amalgamation of the VECs and the training establishments of the former National Training Authority, FÁS. By October 2013, the final months of the Troika Years, the first ever national further education and training authority in Ireland, SOLAS, was established. Thus, the Irish FET Institutional Triangle was established—SOLAS, as the policy coordinator and funder, the ETBs as the providers, and QQI as the quality standards and certification body. This was followed in May 2014 with the launch of the first ever national strategy for further education and training (SOLAS, 2014). These developments are discussed in more detail below.

European Influence in Skills Formation Policy in Ireland

The evolution of skill formation policy and the associated development of education and training in Ireland since joining the EEC can be mapped to significant events at a European level. So as to place the developments in Ireland in the proper context, this section will give an overview the key European developments. The involvement of the EU in education and training can be seen as consisting of three main phases separated by the Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties (Ertl, 2006; Pépin, 2007; Walkenhorst, 2008): 1957–1992: Pre-Maastricht, 1992–2000: From Maastricht to Lisbon and 2000—present: Lisbon Strategy.

The 1957 Treaty of Rome, establishing the EEC, gave the EEC competence in vocational training but not education. Before the 1970s, a great deal of the proposals put forward under Article 128, including the adoption of general principles for the implementation of a common vocational training policy (European Council, 1963), were contested by Member States "as a reaction against the attempts to harmonise the area" (Cort, 2009, p. 92). The emerging relationship between education and training at the European level found its first expression in the Janne

Report of 1973 (European Commission, 1973) which highlighted the traditional separation of general and vocational education as a barrier to progress. The issue of unemployment, and in particular youth unemployment, was a catalyst for an increase in the profile of education and training on the European Agenda (European Council, 1976a, 1976b, 1983; European Commission, 1977, 1980). The focus was on the vocational preparation of young people transitioning from education to working life (Ertl, 2003). Cort (2009) argues that, while education was not included in the competences of the EU until the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, it was the fact that Article 128 of the Treaty of Rome gave the EEC competence in vocational training that acted as a "lever for the gradual expansion of the policy field of both general and higher education and the establishment of the European discourse on Lifelong Learning" (Ibid, p. 87).

The second phase of the development of EU involvement in education and training began with the Maastricht Treaty by the then 12 Member States in 1992, and the establishment of the Single Market. For the first time the EU was formally given competence in education and training in Article 126 referring to education and Article 127 referring to training thus addressing any ambiguities of the competence of the EU in this regard. Pépin (2007, p. 125) describes the Maastricht Treaty as a "major turning point for education cooperation at Community level". Cort (2009) observes that the discourse in European policy documents shifted towards European competitiveness on a global stage. Education and training were no longer viewed as being part of just the school-to-work transition but also the increasing need to maintain and update skills in response to changing economic needs. Both initial and continuing education and training were required. Education and training were increasingly seen as an integrated single entity under the banner of life-long learning which served the overall objective of economic competitiveness. The emphasis was placed on the recognition and accreditation of competences acquired outside formal education systems. Notably, the focus had shifted from input or process, as in formal education, to learning outcomes. The catalyst for the EU, and its Member States, regarding lifelong learning as a common policy area, was the 1993 White Paper *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* (European Commission, 1993). The EU White Paper on Education and Training (European Commission,

1995a) saw the re-emergence of the concepts of informal and non-formal learning, recognition of which would manifest itself in the validation of the knowledge, skills and competences through the assessment of the learning outcomes demonstrated within the national certification system.

Jones (2005) argues that this 1993 White Paper sowed the seeds of reform that are still evident in the Lisbon strategy. The Luxembourg Summit in 1997 (European Council, 1997) was the next important step in the reform process which launched the so-called 'Luxembourg process'. This was established to coordinate the development of an employment strategy for the EU (Jones, 2005). The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 formally linked employment strategy with skill formation for the first time. In the second half of the 1990s the impact of globalisation and European competitiveness were increasingly to the forefront of policy discussion. The use of the terms 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge economy' begins to increase. Lifelong learning is identified as a key element of the European Employment Strategy (European Council, 1997).

The 1990s also saw, as a part of the influence of global competitive pressures, an increase in the internationalisation of higher education provision (Pépin, 2007). The OECD (2005) commented that such pressures have resulted in increasing attention being paid at national levels to issues of quality assurance and system monitoring. The absence of quality assurance standards was seen to reduce confidence, both nationally and internationally, in the higher education system within a particular country. Within the EU the response to such concerns (Pépin, 2007) found expression in the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999—a joint declaration by the Education Ministers of 31 European countries to establish the European higher education area (www.eur-lex.europa.eu). While further discussion of the Bologna process is outside the scope of this chapter it does constitute an important element of skill formation in the EU. The Copenhagen process in VET, which emerged from the Lisbon Strategy, was based on the underpinning concept of the Bologna process.

In 2000 the European Council of the 15 Member States adopted what is known as the Lisbon Strategy (European Council, 2000)—a 10-year strategy aimed at strengthening the EU in terms of employment, economic competitiveness and social cohesion. From an education and training policy perspective, some commentators have described the Lisbon Strategy as a 'turning point' (Ertl, 2006; Pépin, 2011) by placing education and training at the centre of the new strategy. However, Walkenhorst (2008, p. 567) observes that the "there is a paradigmatic shift in policy aims, away from pro-integrationist towards pro-market orientation" Powell et al. (2012) argue that the focus of EU policy in skill formation has shifted from the citizen to the worker of the future. Education and training have been commodified as a mechanism to improve the economic competition of the EU. Nevertheless, the Lisbon strategy gave education and training a place on the agenda for the first time in the history of the EU.

In their November 2002 meeting, the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training and the European Commission adopted a resolution, known as the Copenhagen Declaration, on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training (European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, 2002). The Declaration identified four priority areas: the European dimension of VET; transparency, information and guidance; recognition of qualifications and competences; and quality assurance. The Copenhagen process had significantly raised the profile of VET at both a European and national level (European Commission, 2011). By 2010, the following had been achieved:

- the Europass single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences was adopted (European Parliament and Council, 2004)
- Work had progressed on the European credit transfer system for VET (ECVET) as well as on the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF)
- the EQF had been established and a recommendation had been adopted (European Parliament and Council, 2008: para 2) that Member States "relate their national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework by 2010".

This outline of the key European developments in the skill formation arena will provide a backdrop to the discussion in the next section on the key developments in the skills formation arena in Ireland since 1973.

Skill Formation Policy in Ireland since 1973

1970s–1980s

Within the context of education and training in Ireland, the early 1970s brought about significant structural change. Following the introduction of free post-primary education in 1967, enrolments increased markedly. This had a consequential demand for post-secondary education and training. The increase in the number of post-primary schools was accompanied by an increase in the network of RTCs around the country. In the area of skill formation, it was EEC membership that made a significant contribution. In particular, EEC membership permitted access to funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) which assists Member States with responses to unemployment including vocational training.

The high levels of unemployment, particularly among young people, was an increasing issue among EEC Member States. In 1978 a new programme, funded through the European Social Fund (ESF), known as the Pre-Employment Course (PEC) was introduced in vocational and Community and Comprehensive schools only. These courses were primarily aimed at young people who were at risk of leaving school after the junior cycle with little or no qualifications, and low educational attainment. In echoes of the absence of certification for vocational school students in the 1930s and 1940s, the VPT courses were introduced without any national certification. Certification was sought primarily from the UK. AnCo, and later FÁS, also used UK based certification for their programmes. It was not until 1993, when the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA), established in 1991 on an ad hoc basis, began offering national certification, some 13 years after the introduction of the PEC courses. As O'Sullivan (2005, p. 227) observes:

It was lower-stream pupils, typically outside of the secondary school sector, who were first perceived to be in need of intervention in their transition from school to working life. Substantially, they appear to have been the 1970s manifestation of the 1960s' primary school terminal leavers, repositioned within the educational system by policy changes….

Crucially, O'Sullivan goes on to observe:

It was around these 'distant others' that employability was initially constructed as a paradigm. The problematising of these newly-identified 'distant others' in terms of their integration into the non-school world of labour market and adult relationships, as distinct from their potential for class and school disruptiveness, was a significant step in the construction of the employability paradigm. (277)

He identifies the discourse relating to the European Social Fund, which provided significant funding for these curriculum development experiments, as being influential in the identification of specific groups of school leavers as being vulnerable. He observes:

The European Community involvement was never that of a neutral provider of financial support. It was rather a dynamic force in the shaping of Irish understandings of the link between young people, schooling and the world of work. (278)

The PEC had proven popular with the vocational and C&C schools with over 45% of eligible schools offering such programmes. Given this level of support for PECs, as well as the "relative haste with which the new programme was drawn up" (McNamara, 1991, p. 349), the PEC evolved into the Vocational Preparation and Training (VPT) programme in 1984, with little modification (Department of Education, 1984) and was extended to secondary schools. Funding for a second year became available in 1985. The first year was referred to as VPT1 and the second as VPT2. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, in combination with the continuing increase in students remaining in school to complete the Leaving Certificate, VPT courses were no longer only post-junior cycle, but also post-senior cycle, and have been popularly known ever since as

the Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. In 1991, the OECD identi-fied the PLC course as the principal transition course in Irish education (OECD, 1991). The White Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1995, p. 73) describes the PLC courses as the "principal" VET courses in the education sector. On the training side of FET pro-vided by FÁS, data in annual reports showed corresponding increases in the provision of training programmes. However, due to different approaches to data collection between the DES, AnCo and FÁS no direct comparisons are possible. For a more in depth discussion, see O'Sullivan (2018).

In the area of apprenticeships the 1970s and early 1980s witnessed the emergence of an increasingly negative public perception. Despite the introduction of off-the-job training for the first year of the apprentice-ship in 1975 (AnCO, 1975), it was seen as out of date and inflexible (Field & Ó Dubhchair, 2001). A report on manpower policy in Ireland (NESC, 1985) questioned whether the apprenticeship system in Ireland had a future. This report also described the responses to labour market difficulties as "tending to be of an *ad hoc* piecemeal nature … [consisting] of individual and largely unrelated programmes grafted onto a system which has not undergone any basic change" (NESC, 1985, p. 35). This report also proposed a rationalisation of all post-compulsory vocational education and training programmes including the first year of apprenticeship.

Developments in the United Kingdom in the mid-1980s saw propos-als emerging for a qualifications-based approach to apprenticeship that would be based on competency upon completion rather than on time-served (Field & Ó Dubhchair, 2001). In Ireland, a White Paper on Manpower Policy (Department of Labour, 1986) called for a broader approach to the concept of training (Garavan et al., 1995). It proposed that the three bodies currently operating in the manpower arena—AnCo, the National Manpower Service, the Youth Employment Agency—should be amalgamated into one. The Labour Service Act, 1987 that followed, established an Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) in 1988 from the amalgamation of these three bodies. FÁS initiated a review of the appren-ticeship system based on recommendations in the White Paper and pub-lished a discussion paper (FÁS, 1989). While the proposal to move

towards a standard-based system of apprenticeship was on the agenda, it was unclear as to how this could be achieved given the position taken by the key interest groups, namely, the employers and the trade unions. As Vossiek (2015, p. 120) observes:

> … this entailed the question of how to break the traditional impasses between craft unions and employers reluctant to release their apprentices under the old system.

Boyle (2005) highlights difficulties in relation to the implementation of the new standards-based apprenticeship. He identifies two crucial actors, namely the employers and the Department of Education, as the sources of the main difficulties. His criticism of employers is based on employers' track record of underinvestment in training and a preference for poaching skilled workers. The second target of his criticism is the RTCs led by the Department of Education. He describes the system as being "perceived as inert and unresponsive to the changing needs of both employers and apprentices" (2005, p. 47). However, these two actors were crucial for the implementation of the new apprenticeship model and had an effective veto over developments. Ultimately, as Boyle states, "social partnership provided the answer" (Ibid, p. 50). Vossiek (2015) and Ryan (2000b) concur with this view and see the inclusion of the reform of the apprenticeship system within the social partnership framework as crucial to the new system being introduced in 1993/1994. A broad outline for the new standards-based system was agreed by the social partners as part of the second social partnership agreement, *Programme for Economic and Social Progress* (Government of Ireland, 1991). This new system was in effect a hybrid of the time-served and standards-based system in that it consisted of seven phases, each with a specific time duration.

In higher education, the story from 1973 to 2020 is one of continuous expansion with third level enrolments increasing considerably. A second interesting feature of higher education has been the growth of the technological sector, namely the RTCs, which would later become the Institutes of Technology. More recently, the Technological University sector has emerged, with the established of Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) in January 2019. TU Dublin resulted from the

amalgamation of the Dublin Institute of Technology, the Institute of Technology (Blanchardstown), and the Institute of Technology (Tallaght). As the focus of this study is primarily on further education and training and intermediate skill formation, an in-depth discussion of higher education policy in Ireland is outside the parameters of this chapter. For a more thorough discussion in this area, see Loxley et al., (2014), Clancy (2015) and Walsh (2018).

The 1990s—Towards a National Qualifications System

By the mid-1980s, the issue of the mutual recognition and comparability of vocational training qualifications between EEC Member States, in order to facilitate the free movement of workers, was gaining prominence (European Council, 1985). This was part of the establishment of the single market in Europe defined as comprising "an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty" (Article 8a of the Single European Act 1987, p. 7). The adoption by the European Council of two separate directives on the mutual recognition of qualifications proved to be one of the catalysts for the developments at a national level in Ireland. While the 1970s and 1980s were characterised by an absence of a national qualifications system, the 1990s witnessed increasingly intense discussions on the design of such a system. Criticism of the absence of a national certification system was also coming from employers (Culliton, 1992, p. 54) who stated that "the British approach has not served us well in this area". While referring specifically to the certification of FÁS training programmes predominantly by City and Guilds of London, Roche and Tansey (1992, p.vi) state:

> The use of British certification/qualification standards is inappropriate. These are no longer an index of best European practice. German standards should provide the model against which Irish training is measured.

In the context of the social partnership process, employers, and particularly their representative bodies, became more engaged in the public policy field, especially that which pertained to skill formation. While some consideration had been given to extending the remit of the existing NCEA, it was subsequently decided, given the level of development required, to proceed with a separate body (Trant, 2002). The National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) was established by the Minister for Education on an *ad hoc* basis in 1991. Shortly after the publication of the Culliton Report, the Department of Education published a Green Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1992). In the certification arena, the Green Paper proposed the establishment of a new national body with responsibility for certification in the vocational and technical education space. The proposed Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (CEVA) would incorporate the two existing bodies, NCEA and NCVA. In many ways, this proposal, while not implemented in this form, has similarities with the state agency now in place in this area, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

While the NCVA set about its work and commenced certifying programmes in 1993, it made initial proposals for a national framework of vocational qualifications (NCVA, 1992). This framework consisted of five levels, the first three of which were to be awarded by the NCVA while the upper two were to be awarded by NCEA. This framework was developed in line with the European Framework proposed by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the practice in other Member States (NCVA, 1992). In 1995, when the White Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1995) was published, the national debate in relation to certification and qualifications had progressed apace. This period also coincided with significant developments in Europe since the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, as discussed above. The White Paper contained a proposal for the establishment of a national certification authority, TEASTAS (certificate). TEASTAS was established on an *ad hoc* basis and operated from 1995 until 1998. It was the first attempt to establish some form of overall coordination for all the certifying bodies. Attempting to coordinate the activities of existing bodies proved very difficult and, indeed, some of the proposals made by TEASTAS were regarded as controversial (Trant, 2002). The level of

opposition from the stakeholder bodies was such that the then Minister for Education, Micheál Martin, suspended TEASTAS' operations and decided to pursue the legislative route (Trant, 2002). The Qualifications Act was passed in 1999 and was a seminal event in Irish education (O'Sullivan, 2018). Mulvey (2019, p. 115) concurs describing the Act as "the most important policy shift and milestone during this phase". For the first time, Ireland had a national qualifications system. Under the Act, the organisational structure mirrored that of TEASTAS, namely, a coordinating body, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), and two certifying bodies, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).

The late 1990's, leading into the new millennium, was a very busy period in Ireland in terms of economic change and EU influence in many areas of Irish life and society. There were many State and European influences that triggered this wave of policy development. Through social partnership agreements, moderate, sustainable pay increases were agreed. This move was clearly a signal to potential Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) that Ireland has a stable workforce, and increasing its attractiveness as an FDI proposition. The term 'competitiveness' grew in usage throughout this period. The areas that witnessed the most significant developments were those of employment generation, responses to the problem of social exclusion, agriculture and education. Coupled with the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning (which also intersected the development of the 1995 White Paper on Education), this plan increased a focus on policy planning in the work and skills related policy development and economic and education and training interventions. The 1997 White Paper on Human Resource Development (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997) coincided with increasing concerns over skill shortages in the hi-tech industries, many being multi-national corporations. In response, the White Paper proposed the establishment of an Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) in 1997. This group began work on bolstering the labour market intelligence of the state. However, as O'Sullivan (2018) observed, had an almost exclusively higher education focus.

During the latter period of the 90's up until 2007 Ireland experienced a significant period of economic growth, often referred to as the *Celtic Tiger*. By 2003, Ireland was at the top of the OECD's list for economic growth, "with GDP growth upwards of 10% in 1999" (Curley, 1999, p. 214). "This is compared with 2.1 percent in the United Kingdom, 3.6 percent in the United States, growth rates around 2 percent in other European countries such as Spain and Germany, and 3 percent for Finland and Spain" (Battel, 2003, p. 94).

2000–2008 The National Qualifications System

On foot of the 1999 Act, activity in the 2000s concerned the implementation of the new national qualifications system. While the NQAI and HETAC, were, in effect, renamed versions of their legacy bodies—TEASTAS and NCEA respectively—FETAC had a mammoth task. It was the first time in the history of the state that a single agency would certify all FET programmes. This proved to be a highly significant convergence event within FET. It brought a new identity to a hitherto fragmented sector. It formalised the certification processes, ultimately amalgamating the legacy processes into a single national process. While the establishment of FETAC provided a horizontal convergence process within FET, it was the launch of the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ) in 2003, which introduced a vertical convergence process between FET and higher education. For the first time, all qualifications, both FET and higher education were presented in the same format, namely, based on learning outcomes. This facilitated new access, transfer and progression opportunities for learners. Since its launch, the NFQ was recognised as, "the most fundamental and central development in education for the FET sector during this era and set in motion a policy trajectory that underpinned all aspects of the FET policy discourse" (Mulvey, 2019, p. 116).

A further significant development at this time was the White Paper on Adult Learning—*Learning for Life* (Department of Education and Science, 2000). The Paper committed the government to a national adult-literacy programme, the Back to Education Initiative, the

expansion of Youthreach, Post-Leaving Certificate Courses and the VTOS, the development of an adult guidance service, the implementation of a National Qualification Framework and the establishment of a National Adult Learning Council and Local Adult Education Boards (Louise Holden—*Irish Times*, 2007). The publication of this White Paper coincided with the participation of the 'Community Pillar' in the social partnership process. This led to an increasing prominence of adult and community education issues in public policy, including skill formation.

In the next section the focus turns to third-level education. This presents an overview of the pattern of increasing participation within the broader context of skill formation.

Following the publication of the White Paper on Adult Education (2000), the Department of Education established a steering group to "…examine and make recommendations as necessary regarding the organisational, support, development, technical and administrative structures required in schools and colleges with large scale PLC provision" (DES 2000 in McGuinness et al., 2014).

Published in 2003 the McIver Report (Department of Education and Science, 2003) proposed a range of recommendations in relation to the FET (PLC) sector. While continuing to operate within a post-primary governance model, the recommendations recognised the distinctiveness of the sector and the need for a new approach to staffing and resourcing. However aspirational it was at the time, O'Sullivan (2018) points out that subsequently the report was not acted upon to any great degree.

2008–2020

The period of prosperity, change and economic 'boom' in Ireland came to a crashing halt in 2008. In 2008, Ireland officially declared that it was in a recession, and facing the worst austerity since the foundation of the state. The "Troika Years" witnessed many difficulties across many areas of the Irish economy and society, these three years also saw a significant increase in both the pace and volume of change within the public service,

and within further education and training in particular. Significant structural changes occurred during this period including the ending of the social partnership process.

In 2010 the national training agency FÁS was disbanded and the Department of Education and Science renamed the Department of Education and Skills (S.I. 184/2010). Responsibility for FÁS training was transferred to Department of Education and Skills (S.I. 187/2010), and responsibility for employment services were transferred to the Department of Social Protection (from which the INTREO service emerged). However, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Innovation retained its responsibility for labour market policy. These moves saw policy responsibility for all levels of education and training move fully to the Department of Education and Skills. This ended the divergence set in motion by the 1931 Apprenticeship Act discussed above.

The Department of Social Protection was given responsibility for unemployment issues and the newly prioritised labour market activation. A review of activation policies in Ireland (Grubb et al., 2009) recommended the introduction of a mutual obligation strategy in which the benefit recipient would be deemed to have an obligation to engage with the activation activities and that penalties could apply in the absence of such engagement. Also referred to as workfare, a policy of the Thatcher government in the UK in the 1980s, had been resisted by the Community Pillar in the social partnership process (Larragy, 2006) and was not implemented at the time. However, following a government decision of 2010 to realign departmental functions, the workfare-type approach was subsequently implemented (Section 7, Social Welfare Act, 2010). Prior to 2010, responsibility for activation measures including training was a matter for the Department of Enterprise and Employment and FÁS, with school-to-work transition being that of the Department of Education of the FE Schools and Colleges, mostly within the VECs. With the

transfer of responsibility for training to the Department of Education and Skills, activation also became an objective of the PLC courses, a role for which they were neither designed nor resourced.

During the period from 2010 to 2014 the priority in terms of balancing training and education was to focus on putting in place a solid foundation for the development of a new sector which would be part of a reimagined Irish education system. Furthermore, "having assumed policy responsibility for training, a single Skills Division was created for the first time in the renamed Department of Education and Skills" (FETCI, 2021, p. 9). The creation of Skills Division in the Department of Education and Skills laid the foundation for rolling out a public policy infrastructure on which the FET institutional triangle of SOLAS, QQI and the ETBs would be based.

While the amalgamation process to create QQI had begun prior to the 2008 'financial crash', it was not completed until 2012. The ETBs and SOLAS were established in 2013. In July of that year the then Minister for Education and Skills (Ruairí Quinn) announced that 16 new Education and Training Boards would be established to replace the 33 Vocational Education Committees (VECs). He stated.

> Today marks a new era for education and training in Ireland. The new ETBs will strengthen locally managed education and enhance the scale of local education and training. This represents a major component of the public service transformation agenda. At a time when the need for training and reskilling has never been more important, it is crucial to provide appropriate programmes and courses that offer students and learners the best opportunities to progress. We must do all of this while providing value for money to the taxpayer. (Public Affairs Ireland, 2013)

The establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in 2012 further advanced the convergence process of the certification and qualifications system in Ireland (O'Sullivan, 2018). QQI would act as the single national agency for qualifications and quality assurance.

In 2014, the government published its first ever National FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) thereby setting the strategic direction and structure for

FET, building on the FET Triangle of SOLAS, QQI and the ETBs. The FET strategy provided five strategic goals for FET:

- Skills for the Economy
- Active Inclusion
- Quality Provision
- Integrated Planning and Funding
- Standing of FET

However, of particular significance to the 'Standing of FET' strategic goal was how the strategy reconnected with the economic imperative in national public policy. In his analysis of the purpose of FET, as stated in government policy documents, O'Sullivan (2018) finds that from the mid-1980s, FET was primarily associated with social inclusion and labour market activation, while the economic imperative became the almost exclusive preserve of higher education. The 2014 FET Strategy recalibrated the economic imperative to include FET.

However, "what matters most to macro policy outcomes is local capacity" (Clarke, 2014, p. 200). Prior to the establishment of SOLAS, QQI and the ETBs, the Minister for Education of the day described the FET sector as having been treated as the "black sheep of the education system" (Quinn, 2012), the "backwater" (Quinn, 2013), and the "Cinderella of the broader education system" (Quinn, 2014). Given the legacy of neglect of the vocational sector in general (Walsh, 2011), and the FET sector in particular, this has resulted in a situation where 'FET in Ireland has suffered from a persistent capacity deficit' (O'Sullivan, 2018, p. 332). Consequently, in order to move from such a level of under resourcing to become a world-class FET system (SOLAS, 2014), the government must commit the necessary investments both financial and structural.

This period also witnessed a major review of apprenticeships in Ireland. In the midst of the Great Recession, the OECD *Review of Vocational Education and Training in Ireland* (Kis, 2010) recommended a further review of the apprenticeship system in Ireland. This was echoed in the Sweeney Report (Sweeney, 2013). In May 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, announced the review of apprenticeship training in Ireland. The background issues paper (Department of

Education and Skills, 2013a) published with this announcement states that the objective of the review was:

> To determine whether the current model of apprenticeship should be retained, adapted or replaced by an alternative model of vocational education and training for apprentices—taking into account the needs of learners, the needs of employers, the needs of the economy and the need for cost effectiveness into the future. (2013a, p. 7)

The final report of the Review Group was published in December 2013 (Department of Education and Skills, 2013b). Its recommendations included some significant breaks from the existing system. The review proposed the extension of the apprenticeship model into both FET and higher education leading to a qualification "at any level from Level 5 upwards" (Ibid, p. 94). It also recommended that, to be regarded as an apprenticeship, the duration of the programme should be "no less than two years" (Ibid, pp. 94–95). The apprenticeship system would be administered by the new further education and training authority, SOLAS, and a new Apprenticeship Council would be established with a range of functions including advising on "the introduction of apprenticeships in additional occupations" (Ibid, p. 99). In this regard, the Review states that during the consultation process of the review:

> The submissions received referred to the potential for apprenticeships in ICT, retail, hospitality, business administration, medical devices, sports and leisure programmes, childcare and social care, financial services, accounting, hairdressing, and beauty care sectors. (Department of Education and Skills, 2013b, p. 110)

However, the report goes on to highlight the importance of the commitment required from employers:

> Such programmes will not be successful unless there is a strong commitment from employers to identifying occupational needs, recruitment and payment of apprentices, and joint collaboration with education and training providers in programme delivery. (Ibid)

2016 also witnessed the launch of a new national skills strategy (Department of Education and Skills, 2016). A key focus of the strategy is to increase employer involvement in the skills forecasting and development processes. Central to this objective was the proposal to establish a network of nine Regional Skills Fora throughout the country, reporting to the National Skills Council.

> The Regional Skills Fora…provide an ideal forum for forecasts and other datasets to be used to inform discussions between employers and education and training providers on skills needs in each region. Where education and training is the appropriate response, plans can be developed for how best this can be delivered by providers across a region, while also considering the needs of learners and the cost to the State. (Ibid, p. 37)

In keeping with the government's policy of promoting the roll out of more apprenticeships through engagement with employer consortia, the Regional Skills Fora and the National Skills Council infrastructure is a significant initiative. It is also a further step towards achieving the government policy of increasing "… the alignment of higher education and further education and training to achieve a more integrated tertiary education system" (DES, 2018, p. 14).

The mid-point of the 2014 FET strategy saw the introduction of two strategic processes, by SOLAS and QQI, that accelerated the vertical system convergence between FET and higher education. In 2017, SOLAS agreed its Corporate Plan for 2017–2019 with the Department of Education and Skills. This plan specified a number of national targets to be met by the FET sector over the three-year period of the Plan (SOLAS, 2017):

Target 1—Skills for the Economy: 10% more learners securing employment after undertaking a relevant FET course;

Target 2—Progression: 10% more learners progressing to other FET courses or higher education from relevant courses;

Target 3—Transversal Skills: 10% increase in the rate of certification on courses primarily focused on social-mobility skills development that is transversal in nature;

Target 4—Lifelong Learning: 10% increase of adult learners taking part in lifelong learning delivered through FET;

Target 5—Certification and Qualifications: From 2018, for three years, an average of 10,000 more learners each year are to achieve qualifications related to business sectors where employment growth and skills needs have been identified;

Target 6—Apprenticeships and Traineeships: 30,500 new apprentice and trainee registrations from 2017–2019.

Commencing in 2018, SOLAS held a series of strategic engagements with each ETB. Each ETB had to formally agree how the above targets could be addressed within their area. The resultant Strategic Performance Agreement signed between SOLAS and each ETB stipulates the contribution of the ETB to the achievement of the overall national targets by the end of the three-year period.

The relationship between the ETBs and QQI also evolved during the 2015–2016 period. The governance of the Quality Assurance System (QAS) within each ETB underwent a process of migration from the legacy situation under FETAC, which, in many cases, consisted of central QA policies with local procedures in each centre, to a consolidated ETB-wide QAS. The final phase of this initial process began 2017. QQI met with ETBs in a series of Initial Quality Dialogue Meetings (IQDM). These IQDMs were focused on a dialogue regarding the work achieved to date and the plan for improvements. This places a greater emphasis on the corporate responsibility at ETB level for the governance of Quality Assurance.

It is interesting to note that the Strategic Performance Agreement Model implemented by SOLAS was based on a similar strategic agreement model used between the Higher Education Authority and the third-level institutions. Similarly, the Quality Assurance Review Model rolled out by QQI in relation to the ETBs is based on the model used for Institutes of Technology (QQI, 2018). With the creation of a single division in the Department of Education and Skills for Higher and Further Education and Training Policy in 2017, the trajectory of convergence between FET and Higher Education is gathering pace.

The most recent convergence event occurred in the summer of 2020 with the establishment, for the first time, of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and the launch of the second FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2020a). While 2010 to 2014 was characterised by developments at the national level, the 2014–2019 period on the regional level, namely ETBs, the second FET strategy was primarily focused on the local with the centrality of the 'FET College of the Future' concept. The strategy focuses on the development of a single unified governance model for all FET provision in all of its diversity by simplifying its structure. The strategy is based on three pillars—skills, pathways and inclusion. It states that key to the success will be the "evolution of FET facilities and provision into a distinct integrated college of FET that can serve as a beacon of community-based learning excellence" (SOLAS, 2020a, p. 38).

Skills Policy in Ireland

As referenced earlier, the post-secondary education and training system in Ireland has been "driven by the country's FDI focussed strategy" (Barry, 2007, p. 283). Indeed, Sweeney (2013, p. 12) describes Ireland as a "third level society". While undoubtedly FDI has been, and continues to be, a vital component of Ireland's economic policy, employment in FDI companies only accounts for roughly 10% of the Irish labour force. Consequently, this raises the question of possible over-influence of FDI on skills policy. The Irish labour market has been monitored and analysed by a number of different agencies in recent years, especially the ESRI, the NESC, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (established in 1997 during the Celtic Tiger following skills shortages in FDI IT Companies), and the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) (formerly in FÁS) in SOLAS. With the establishment of the National Skills Council and the Regional Skills Fora, the labour market intelligence infrastructure of the state has developed considerably in recent years. However, policy responsibility for these agencies is spread across a number of government departments. However, as the various convergence processes

have shown, after many years of policy fragmentation, joined-up thinking in skills policy is becoming apparent.

However, in 2019, the Future Jobs Ireland Strategy emerged from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation that was heavily biased towards higher education. O'Sullivan (2018) identified a pattern of a higher education bias in the skills policy statements and commentary, particularly from the Department of Enterprise and Employment.

So what of this emphasis on higher education? In the age of evidence-based policy, does the evidence support such an emphasis? Labour markets world-wide are described and categorised using various criteria, such as employed/unemployed, age cohorts, industry sector, and gender. However, when it comes to the skill profile of labour markets, the most commonly used criteria is higher educational attainment, which is taken as a proxy for skill level. So, is this helpful for skills policy? The OECD in its Employment Outlook 2017 examined the change in high, middle and low skills level jobs over a 20-year period from 1995 to 2015. It found that, for Ireland, while the level of low skill jobs remained roughly the same, high skill jobs increased by 15% over this period, and middle skilled jobs decreased by the roughly the same amount. As this is based on "employment rates of people according to their education levels" (www.oecd.org), is this a description of the change in the education profile of the Irish population, rather than an actual change in the skills required if the labour market change was examined by occupational category? Using labour market data from the CSO based on Standard Occupational Classification, the profile of the Irish Labour Market has changed very little from 2007 to 2019. The breakdown is as follows: high skill 28–30%, intermediate skill 59–61%, and low skill 10–12%. How can this be so different? The principle reason is that by using highest educational attainment as a proxy for the skills profile of the labour market, the level of over-education is hidden.

Recent reports from the SLMRU have taken an increasingly sophisticated approach to analysing the skills profile in the Irish labour market, including the interplay between education and occupation (SOLAS, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2021). While these reports have contributed to improving the labour market intelligence available, the level of over-education in the Irish labour market remains one of the highest in Europe.

This issue was also addressed in the national skills strategy (DES, 2016, p. 37) which states that

> forecasting models tend to categorise skills as 'low', 'medium' and 'high'. High skilled jobs are typically thought of as those requiring a third level qualification. However, many vocational skills acquired through Further Education and Training (FET) are also high skilled, e.g. tool making or aircraft mechanics.

It will take time for policy changes to have an impact on the skills profile of the labour market.

Conclusion

This discussion set out to identify the key milestones in the evolution of skills policy in Ireland, with an emphasis on intermediate skills and FET. The developments of the nineteenth century laid the tentative foundations for the modern FET sector, and were built upon in the early years after independence with the establishment of the VEC system. Developments were significantly hampered by the opposition of the Catholic Church, enabled by state collusion. Over the course of the discussion, it is clear that the drivers and facilitators of the developments in the FET sector in Ireland were international. In particular, the European Union and the OECD, as well as the Troika in more recent times. The barriers to development were clearly located within the state. Catholic Church opposition in the early years of the VEC system thwarted its development, and prevented it from "achieving its full potential" (Girvin, 2002, p. 69). The neglect by the Department of Education until recent times was a further barrier and was in many ways a product of the low standing of FET within Irish society. O'Sullivan (2018, p. 308) states that "this legacy of neglect has resulted in a persistent capacity deficit in the FET system in Ireland". Unlike many European countries, for example, and with the exception of the Further Education and Training Research Centre in Dublin City University, there is little evidence of FET research infrastructure within the Irish university system.

The development of the modern FET sector in Ireland commenced in 2010. Its first ten years have seen significant developments. The FET institutional triangle is in place, system convergence has continued apace, and the second FET strategy has set an ambitious target for the sector. However, as mentioned earlier, the success of national policy is significantly dependent on local capacity to implement. The onus is on the government to commit the medium and long-term resources to match this ambition.

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10

Whose Right(s) Is It Anyway? A Review of Policy and Practice(s) in Inclusive Education in Ireland

Geraldine Scanlon and Alison Doyle

Introduction

Since its inception, inclusive education has not been without its challenges. For example, the term 'Special Educational Needs' encompasses a wide range of pupils with varying disabilities who require specialised teaching and specific knowledge on the behalf of educators as to how to best optimise their learning experience and educational outcomes. In addition, the landscape which has informed the development of policy changes in Special Education in the twenty-first century has changed dramatically. Specifically, these changes have been informed by a Human Rights agenda in the areas of disability, education and health and are supported by the United Nations and World Health Organisation charters. As a result, they have become intrinsically linked to a "rights-based

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education system" where the individual needs of pupils must be recognised and supported in order to enable them to reach their potential. Consequently, schools are undergoing constant changes in an effort to develop inclusive policies and practices for all pupils. The purpose of this chapter is to review the national and international policies which have contributed to these changes and examine how schools have addressed the rights of pupils with special and additional needs to access and participate in education in Ireland.

Social and Cultural Context of Exclusion

Historically, two central psychological concepts have contributed to the development of how disability is viewed within a social and cultural context (Hagenaars et al., 2020): the role of genetics in determining ability (Galton, 1892) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The application of psychology to human development prompted a universal scientific approach which provided a starting point for identifying individual differences and was later used to justify the extermination of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in Nazi Germany (Hagennars et al., 2020). This approach promoted the notion of "ableism" to the detriment of including people with disabilities in future societies. This ideology stemmed from Galton's seminal work in eugenics based on his publication 'Heredity Genius' (1892) which claimed that being clever ran in families, as did being less intellectually able. In short, Intelligence Quotients (I.Q.) and other talents were inherited. Galton's belief that his theory could influence policy to improve people's lives impacted on the development of the eugenics movement with proponents believing that "improving the human condition by eradicating its negative aspects" (Reinders et al., 2019: 1), was not specifically about improving the human condition but rather to ameliorate human suffering. These ideas lead to the development of multiple human rights abuses in the twentieth century, particularly for people with IDD (Hansen & King, 2013). For example, coercive sterilization policies were enforced in Western Europe and North America in 1907, reinforcing the belief that people who had certain traits i.e. mental disability, should be prevented from reproducing (Donnelly, 1997). Within the Irish context,

how and when sterilization could take place was constrained largely by article 40.3.1 of the Irish constitution (1945) which 'guarantees to protect… and vindicate the personal rights of the citizen' regardless of mental capacity and prioritises individual rights for all. However, the ideology of the eugenics movement lead societies to believe that some people had more rights than others, the philosophy of which proliferated across the world, including Ireland.

This second concept encompasses social identity theory which purports that individuals tend to define and identify themselves according to the characteristics of a specific group and undermine and exclude other individuals who do not possess these characteristics (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Being a member of these groups generates self-esteem and pride and serves to enable individuals to develop a sense of social identity, while also boosting their self-image by placing higher value on their group while demeaning others. This has become known as the Social Identity approach which provides a framework of how psychological processes can be applied to understand how, for example, disability is viewed within a cultural context. The process begins when social categorisation occurs which sees people organising social information by categorising individuals into groups. This is followed by social comparison where individuals assign a specific meaning to the category of the group which facilitates the process of self-identification by the individual to one of these categories. This results in the development of stereotyping, for example for people with disabilities and which, depending on their status in society, are usually perceived as the "outgroup" as opposed to the "ingroup". Taken together, these two psychological concepts are particularly important in the context of special education as they have been seen to inform societal attitudes which have lead to the development of stereotypical views of ability which have impacted on the development of policies that affect the access and participation of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) not only in education but in wider society. In tandem with comprehensive legislation including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), the universal drive to promote inclusive education has progressed as a result of a rights-based perspective on education and a change in the perception of disability.

A Rights-based Approach to Inclusive Education

Like many of their European counterparts, the Inclusive Education agenda in Ireland has been shaped and influenced by a number of global policies that have proliferated and impacted on the development of educational reform which seeks to address the inequalities that have arisen as the result of stereotypical views of disability. In Ireland, the right to education is enshrined in the Irish Constitution (Article 42), and further protected by the State's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which places the responsibility on the State to ensure educational provision, protection and participation for all children irrespective of their religious, cultural or social background. This obligation extends far beyond the provision of compulsory primary education that is available and free to all (Article 28 (a)) and details the State's responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil opportunities for the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (Article 29). The UNCRC makes clear the State's obligation to safeguard the rights of all children. This includes the right to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (Article 27), the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24) and provisions to ensure that children with additional and special needs can enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community (Article 23).

The founding principles upon which the UNCRC was established are evident in the Universal Declaration of Human rights (UDHR, 1946) and were developed after World War II amid the revelation of the violation of human rights for specific groups in Europe. This charter created a universal focus on the notion that violating human rights should be subjected to the law (Hagenaars et al., 2020) and is reflective of a shared value system to ensure societal well-being. The main remit of the UDHR was to strengthen and protect the promotion of human rights at a global level in tandem with responding to violations and making

recommendations. The UDHR is underpinned by three key principles: dignity, freedom and inclusion.

Dignity is opposed to individual and collective dehumanising practices ranging from bullying and scapegoating to systemic inequality, poverty and torture, as well as excluding persons and maintaining relationships that disempower, denigrate and demean, and lead to worthlessness. It recognises the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of all members of the community and is built on the notions of freedom, justice and peace (Preamble of the UDHR, 1948). Staub (2012) summarises the underlying principle as follows:

> Only if others are understood as fully human do we feel bound to consider and care about their interests prevent or alleviate their suffering and experience moral emotions that we have wronged them

The notion of freedom is reflected in Article 1 of the UDHR which states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" and assumes that freedom includes autonomy. Autonomy, according to Sen (2005), is critical in order to live a good life and become fully human, physically, intellectually, psychologically and spiritually. Critically, all individuals must have the capabilities for development and where achieving a dignified life can only emerge if the context in which an individual exists enables *their* development. Systematic, historical and contemporary inequality which contributes to excluding people with disabilities, for example, is understood as deprivation of the capability to live a good life and is considered to be a violation of human rights.

Inclusion is affirmed in Article 2 where everyone is entitled to all of the rights and freedoms set forth in the declaration without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Fulfilling human rights requires attention to structural and institutional forms of social exclusion of person(s) in disadvantaged positions who are often silenced or even invisible. Attributing equal access to quality health care, including mental health care and education, are global priorities because generally exclusion means that fundamental rights are violated. What is important within the context of this chapter is that discrimination and

exclusion also negatively affect personal and group identity which interact with other factors thereby increasing the challenges for children with SEND. The vision of the UDHR assumes that all human rights are indivisible, interrelated and interdependent, and includes civic and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights including the right to work and access to education.

The declaration of the Salamanca Statement (UNCESCO, 1994) set out a number of principles to guide governments to develop and support inclusive education practices to include *all* children irrespective of their individual differences. The guiding principle informing and supporting the framework proposed that:

> … schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.

The declaration also provided a definition of the term special educational needs which was defined as:

> all those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties

The framework for action on Special Needs Education provided for the interpretation on how to create the inclusive school which would include developing child-centred pedagogies for those experiencing extreme disadvantage as well as working towards challenging discriminatory attitudes and changing behaviour in order to develop an inclusive society (UNESCO, 1994). Consequently, inclusion, in this wider sense, can be seen as similar to "equality as a social value in relating to all aspects of social disadvantage, oppression and discrimination" (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002: 1). The principles of social integration and facilitating the transition from school or higher education to employment in tandem with the development of lifelong opportunities were particularly evident

in what followed (Council of Europe, 2003). For example, the Council of Europe Action Plan (2006) placed the onus on states to ensure that citizens including children receive the supports that they require to participate in mainstream education. Of particular note was the aspiration to move from special education settings, that is from segregation to mainstream provision.

The right to participate in, and access to, education is further enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) which was ratified in Ireland in 2018 and clearly articulates the function of a rights-based approach. That is, to create a gateway for people with disabilities to access additional human rights such as the right to work and live a full dignified life which is not possible without an education (Heyer, 2021). The articles of the UNCRPD have established a radical new ground on which to build inclusive policies for all people to access appropriate education and training regardless of ability. The Convention has sought to dismantle the structural exclusion of people on the grounds of physical or mental ability, and to progress towards the *full inclusion* of all, without regard to the level of physical or mental impairment. In keeping with the human-rights perspective on disability, the UNCRPD completely shifts the locus of responsibility to respond to disability from the individual on to wider society, social institutions and, critically, the State (Lewis, 2010). Indeed, the Convention recognises the concept of disability as being historically constructed and borne of individualistic construals of ability rather than in "the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (Article 1).

The critical importance of the CRPD for the development of inclusive educational policy is in the fact that it bestows a legally binding status to 'inclusive education' as a practical reality for states to progress towards. Previous documents issued by the U.N. around inclusion and special education, such as the Salamanca Statement, did not have the legal mandate that the CRPD enjoys. While the Salamanca Statement contained the original articulation of inclusive education as a right within the framework of human rights, only within the CRPD was this articulation given binding legal power. That is, Nation states can now be held

accountable via the Convention because of the legalistic power afforded to it. Consequently, the CRPD goes further than the CRC and Salamanca Statement in creating a mandate for inclusion to be fully realised in schools. The shift in focus of the CRPD from the 'individual' to the 'institution' in upholding and championing the values and practices of inclusive education places an onus upon schools, educational systems and state bodies to bring about inclusion in the classroom via the necessary structural changes that are required to make inclusive education a reality. This inevitably means reforms to the way curricula are designed and disseminated, how classrooms and all physical environments are laid out and organised, and how daily routines are performed. For inclusion to be realised, the CRPD calls for a transformation within the class wherein the full participation of the child with SEND is made possible. This may necessitate broad reforms in the way classes and classrooms are organised, how assessment is conducted and the level of assistance offered to students with SEND so that they can be fully included (Powell et al., 2021).

In their discussion around the Education for All movement (UNESCO, 2000—2015), Peters et al. (2005) identify four variables that speak to the achievement of inclusive education: i) attitudes and commitment to educating children and young people with disabilities; ii) teacher training in child-centred curriculum delivery; iii) parental support and engagement; and iv) structuring schools as inclusive entities. They propose a Disability Rights in Education Model (DREM) for evaluating national approaches to inclusive education by drawing attention to the interdependency of policy, legislation, enforcement, community involvement, and collaborative partnerships, and the impact these have on the activation of resources, contexts and inputs that are necessary to achieve enabling outcomes—ultimately, the right to participate in society on an equal basis.

Special Education in Ireland—A Historical Context

At the backdrop of international developments and in line with political obligations and societal demands for the realisation of a rights-based approach to education, a number of policies and reforms have been enacted which have contributed to the current model of provision for special education in Ireland. An important factor in considering the rights of pupils with SEND to access and participate in education in Ireland is an understanding of how special education has evolved through a continuum of segregation, integration and inclusion (Shevlin, 2016; Swan, 2000). In their review of special education reform, Dorn et al. (1996) suggest that this focus on where special education should take place is historically informed by social reform and the creation of segregated institutions to provide specialist services for 'discrete problems' (p. 13) such as mental illness, disability, delinquency / criminality and homelessness. The ancient Brehon Laws (A.D. 432) made provision for the regulation of the behaviour of the mentally ill and incompetent by specifically distinguishing one from the other. The madman was categorised as the "lunatic" and the imbecile as the "fool" who was considered to be capable of participating in the community as opposed to the lunatic who was either cast out or imprisoned. Fools were referred to as being "God's own" and included those who were mentally retarded, simple and withdrawn, and were considered harmless (Scheper-Hughes, 2001). Behaviour was used to distinguish the difference between those who were perceived as being dangerous and those who were considered to be harmless. This influence continued into the early nineteenth century where segregation offered a solution to containing and managing individuals who were perceived to be incapable of participating usefully in either the community or society at large. As a consequence, whilst residential care represented a convenient and economical method for managing such discrete populations, poor standards of care essentially resulted in poor life outcomes.

In the early nineteenth century, children and adults with sensory, intellectual and physical disabilities were admitted to workhouses and later

within training institutions and trained in practical tasks which contributed to the maintenance of the institution. However, the perspective of the State in terms of providing education for children with disabilities was reflected in the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into the Reformatory and Industrial School System 1934–1936:

> It is in every way undesirable that mentally deficient children, even of the higher grade, should be placed with normal children. Such children are a burden to their teachers, a handicap to other children, and, being unable to keep up with their class, their condition tends to become worse.

Thus, the ethos that informed attitudes and approaches to disability was reflected in the language used to reference a marginalised and vulnerable group in society: defective, deficient and handicapped. Between 1938 and 1942, Dr Louis Clifford sought to establish the incidence and educability of mentally handicapped children, something that had hitherto been difficult to determine, connected as it was to stigma and shame. His paper presented to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland (Clifford, 1939) describes a survey of Dublin medical premises and charitable/philanthropic institutions, and discusses approaches to educating the 'Feeble-minded Child', the 'Defective' and 'Dull Child at School', and the 'Imbecile' and 'Mongol' Children in the Schools. His examination of 1,966 children from national schools in Dublin provided one of the first insights into attitudes towards educating children with disabilities and, importantly, describes early efforts to introduce special classes (p. 38) and a vision for special education (p. 40):

> The special school should provide an education for the feeble minded from ages of 7 to 16. Such education should be confined on the intellectual side of the elements of reading, writing and arithmetic, with the developments from this curriculum for those who can benefit. Simple religious instruction must also be given. Arts and crafts and manual training and domestic subjects should predominate. Eurhythmies is a subject of particular importance for the development of muscular co-ordination and correct posture. Musical games, folk dancing, singing, will be found extremely useful, especially as an aid in the development of the power of attention. A trained

occupational therapist with a special training will be required, and it will be realised that only the best can be taken for this specialised work.

The endeavours of individual philanthropists from the early nineteenth century onwards focused principally on the educability of those with sensory and learning disabilities, resulting in the establishment of community institutions through public fundraising. This charitable model persisted into the twentieth century through the works of religious institutions principally under the Catholic ethos of 'subsidiarity', whereby the State may hand off responsibility for social care where these can be provided for within the community, and specifically by religious orders (Barrington, 1987, cited in Linehan et al., 2014: 1). In this, the State was only too happy to oblige. This model is still in operation in the Ireland of the twenty first century but is currently in a state of flux as the result of the ratification of the Irish state of the UNCRPD (2006) which requires states to enact educational reforms that fundamentally rethink the nature and provision of disability reduction rights (Heyer, 2021).

O'Murchu (n.d.) points out that 'concepts of mental handicap have been intimately linked with the kind of language we use' (p. 5) and are a reflection of societal attitudes which influence the nature of services provided. Such negative labelling was a strong feature of health and education terminology used persistently in policy and reporting e.g. the White Paper: The Problem of the Mentally Handicapped (Department of Health, 1960). This 'problem' evolved from a Commission established to review industrial schools and which expressed the view that mentally handicapped children were wrongly placed in such settings and should be separated from other children in a 'mental colony' (O'Murchu, n.d.: 12), and that residential institutions should be provided in order to accommodate them.

In Ireland, the notion of a 'special education' emerged with the creation of special schools for children with specific disabilities managed and financed by religious orders. As early as 1892, St Vincent's Home for Mentally Defective Children was established by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, and in 1926 those children who were considered to be 'educable' were moved to new premises in 1955. This was formally recognised by the Department of Education a year later as St Michael's

Glenmaroon, Dublin, a special school for mildly handicapped children. A second school for moderately handicapped children in Blackrock was established in 1959 which was also officially recognised. This model was mirrored by other religious organisations such as the Brothers Hospitallers of St. John of God who opened schools in 1936 and 1959, becoming formally recognised in the 1960s, and the Brothers of Charity who provided similar services in the Cork area in 1938/1939 and were also formally recognised by the State in 1956. The first residential special school for intellectually disabled children was formally recognised and renamed as St. Vincent's Special School in 1964. Interestingly, post-World War II, many European countries considered children with intellectual disabilities as being incapable of attending school but this practice began to change in the 1960s and is considered to be a milestone in the history of the evolving concept and provision of special education (Buchner et al., 2020). The school for blind boys opened by the Carmelite Brothers in 1870 was formally recognised by the State as an educational establishment in the early 1900s, and in 1955 came under the auspices of the Rosminian Order, later becoming St. Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired, and renamed again in 2012 as ChildVision, National Education Centre for Blind Children. Whilst the change in name illustrates a shift towards emphasizing education as a central tenet, charity and religion still play a central role where "faith in a better future for Ireland's blind children" is supported by "donations from caring people across Ireland."

In the UK the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People was commissioned in 1976 to review the:

> … educational provision in England, Scotland and Wales for children and young people handicapped by disabilities of body or mind, taking account of the medical aspects of their needs, together with arrangements to prepare them for entry into employment; to consider the most effective use of resources for these purposes; and to make recommendations (p. 1).

Their findings, published as the Warnock Report (1978), set out more than 200 recommendations including changes to the language of 'handicap' in reference to education, whereby:

Statutory categorisation of handicapped pupils should be abolished (paragraph 3.25). The term 'children with learning difficulties" should be used in future to describe both those children who are currently categorised as educationally sub-normal and those with educational difficulties who are often at present the concern of remedial services (para. 3.26)

The report set out a national framework that placed the child at the centre of special education reform and introduced a paradigm shift that was to influence thinking and policy in Ireland.

Developing Policy and Practice

The philosophy of child-centred education in Ireland has waxed and waned across the last 100 years or so, largely in response to political, economic, and social changes and their influence on educational reform (Walsh, 2016a, 2016b). The *Revised Programme 1900—1922* of primary education which evolved from the report produced by the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland (1902) introduced a broader and more varied curriculum outside of academic subjects including the proposed education of young children in Kindergarten and, importantly, permitted an individualised approach to curriculum and teaching at a local level. Despite this vision, the economic constraints of creating suitable school buildings, training teachers, and resourcing the curriculum resulted in a general failure in fidelity to the programme (Walsh, 2016). Revisions to the *National Programme* in 1922 and 1926 re-focused attention on a knowledge-based curriculum and modelled a tiered framework of learning that underpinned primary education until the 1970s. By rejecting the need to place the child at the centre of the education process, the State effectively maintained parallel systems of special and mainstream education, segregating children with disabilities from their peers.

Formulating Policy

Until the late twentieth century, little progress was made in relation to the construction of formal policies that impacted on the practice of providing services to people with disabilities, including education. The 1971 *Primary Curriculum* (Curaclam na Bunscoile 1971) represented a significant departure from earlier curriculum design, revisiting the tenet of child-centred learning through a wide range of academic and pastoral subjects, and flexible methods of curriculum delivery including individual and group work, and discovery-learning. However, from the 1980s onwards, changes in thinking and by extension to policy were prompted by a number of important documents. The W*hite Paper on Educational Development* (Government of Ireland, 1980) included discussion of primary and secondary school curricula, in-service training for teachers, school transport, adult and community education, third level education, and youth activities. A short chapter on 'special provision' made a strong case for the integration of children and young people with disabilities in mainstream schools but surmised that the: "issue of integration was a very complex one which could not be fully addressed in a White Paper" (MacGiolla Phadraig, 2007: 289). *The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland* (1983) called for their inclusion in educational provision. *Towards a full life: Green paper on services for Disabled People* (Department of Health, 1984) noted that care for more than 5,000 individuals was provided mainly by families and community organisations. It was not until the *Needs and Abilities: Report of the Review Group on Mental Handicap Services* (Government of Ireland, 1990) that attempts were made to separate care from education, noting that: "Children and adolescents with general learning difficulties should not be referred for residential services if the only reason for doing so is to facilitate attendance for special education" (p. 4) and that opportunities should be provided for further education, training and employment. This emphasis was written into law as Part 1, section 6 (a) of the *Education Act* 1998: "to give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children, including children who have a disability or other special educational needs."

In 1992 the Minister of Education appointed a Special Education Review Committee (SERC) to examine educational provision for learners with special educational needs. *The SERC Report* (Government of Ireland, 1993) created a foundation for special education in Ireland, defining pupils with special educational needs as: "all those whose disabilities and/or circumstances prevent or hinder them from benefiting adequately from the education which is normally provided for pupils of the same age" (p. 18) and advocating for "as much integration as is appropriate and feasible with as little segregation as is necessary" (p. 22) and remains the bedrock of special education in Ireland. The *White Paper on Education: Charting Our Education Future* (1995) set out plans for curriculum reform, leadership development for school principals, and upskilling teachers in special education needs, premised on the entitlement of all children in Ireland to high quality education. However, a year later, the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities published *A Strategy for Equality* (National Disability Authority, 1996) noting that "public attitudes towards people with disabilities are still based on charity rather than on rights" (p. 5), and significantly "a failure to provide comprehensive education for people with disabilities results in their being denied access to employment and training opportunities comparable to those available to people without disabilities" (p. 6). Their recommendations to government proposed: i) legal provision to allow students with disabilities to be part of the mainstream education system; ii) the requirement for school authorities to provide supporting evidence for refusing an application for admission from a student with a disability; iii) entitlement to an individual education plan; iv) recognition that parents should be included in decision making and provided with supports and information to enable them to participle fully in their child's education; v) freedom of movement between special schools and mainstream schools facilitated through enrolment and services; vi) a flexible curriculum and support for teachers in mainstream schools to learn new teaching methods.

The Education Act 1998 (Government of Ireland, 1998), gave statutory rights to parents, obligating schools to cater for diverse needs, specifically: "to give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children, including children who have a disability or other special educational

needs." (Part 1, section 6). Schools are directed to resource accommodation of individual need, to publish formal policy on admission and participation of pupils with special needs and disabilities, and to regularly review school plans for equity of access. Additionally, the Minister for Education and Skills must ensure support services that include: i) assessment, psychological, guidance and counselling services; ii) technical aid and equipment; iii) adaptations to buildings to facilitate access; iv) early childhood and continuing education; v) Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support; and vi) transport. However, it was not until the Education (Admission to Schools) Act in 2018 that mainstream schools were compelled to make additional provision for the education of children with special educational needs.

Developing an Inclusive Agenda

The early years of the twenty first century saw a flurry of policy documents that were to influence the evolution of special education. *The Education (Welfare) Act (2000)* and the *Equal Status Act 2000,* The *Report of the Task Force on Autism* (2001) and the *Report of the Task Force on Dyslexia* (2002) were instrumental in redirecting attention towards inclusion of children with special educational needs and disabilities. The *Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN)* (2004) remains the only piece of legislation concerned with the education of children and young people with disabilities and set out a road map for the development of the Inclusion agenda in Ireland. The intention of the Act is:

> … to make further provision, having regard to the common good and in a manner that is informed by best international practice, for the education of people with special educational needs, to provide that the education of people with such needs shall, wherever possible, take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs, to provide that people with special educational needs shall have the same right to avail of, and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers who do not have such needs.

Importantly the vison of the act was to realise the rights of children with SEND to develop according to their capacity and be included in social and economic activities in order for them to live "independent and fulfilled lives" (Meaney et al., 2005: 36). Mandatory provision of inclusive education and systems was provided for as follows:

> A child with Special Educational Needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with: (a) the best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act, or (b) the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated. (p.7).

The Act also made provision for: an assessment of need to facilitate individual supports; review of Individual Education Plans (IEPs); parental involvement; and the designation of a school for a child and the duties of schools in this regard. In a historical and important move, the act provides for the involvement of health boards in the assignment of supports and services for children in an effort to provide coordinated support and streamline health and education services (Meaney et al., 2005).

Unfortunately to date this section of the act has yet to be implemented along with the individual right to assessment, IEPs, designating a school to a child and the appeals process (inclusionireland.ie). The creation of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) under EPSEN provided for the establishment of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), with the specific remit to ensure the full participation of people with SEND in the education system and to develop a framework for inclusion.

Developing an Inclusive Curriculum

Up to this point, revisions to the curriculum in Ireland had paid scant attention to the education of children with special needs and disabilities. Beginning with *Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process* (2006) and followed by *Special Educational Needs, A Continuum of Support* (DES,

2007) established frameworks for supporting children with special needs and disabilities in mainstream schools including transition of supports from primary to post-primary education. The *Inclusive Education Framework* (NCSE, 2011) set out guidance to schools on good practice for including pupils with special educational needs in terms of reflecting on inclusive practices, collaborative approaches to implementing inclusion and "a co-ordinated response to the educational challenges that inclusion may bring" (p. 11). Policy advice has also encompassed a number of key areas for specific cohorts: the *Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in Ireland (2011),* which highlighted the need for early identification, increased input from the Visiting Teacher Service, a preference for mainstream provision with articulated supports and an accessible environment, focused teacher training and a bilingual education; T*he Future Role of Special Schools and Classes in Ireland (2011),* whose recommendation included flexibility in educational placements, access to special classes for pupils with complex needs, a review of curriculum provision, links between mainstream and special schools including dual placement*; The Education of Children with Challenging Behaviour arising from Severe Emotional Disturbance/Behavioural Disorders (2012),* which recognised this as an increasing challenge in schools, recommending early intervention, teacher training in behaviour management, and the adoption of whole school approach to positive behaviour support.

Policy Advice Paper number 4: *Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools (2013)* was a significant milestone in that it summarized issues in context that were to inform the *Delivery for Students with Special Educational Need*s (NCSE, 2014), and the School Inclusion Model arising from the Policy Advice on Special Needs Assistants in 2018. Key recommendations focused on accessing extensive supports in educational placements and ensuring equal access; in acknowledgment of the restricted access to a diagnosis of disability required for additional teaching supports, development of a new model for allocation of additional teaching resources to mainstream schools based on the profiled need of each school, without the need for a diagnosis of disability; and a new statutory framework to address unequitable access to school places.

In essence, it seems that uncertainty, indecision and lack of consensus has resulted in a continual back and forth between the philosophies of

segregation, integration and inclusion, a stance that has still not been resolved since Clifford's early observation that: "If, by our efforts, we can in the future help he who 'received the one talent' to unearth his talent and turn it to his profit, then we shall indeed be rewarded" (Clifford, 1939: 43). Despite a plethora of policy and practice guidance, teacher viewpoints from the INTO Consultative Conference in 2015 indicate a belief that the curriculum is still not designed to fully include children with special educational needs (INTO, 2016). In its most recent iteration, the NCSE Strategy 2017—2021 offers a vision where "children and adults with special educational needs are supported to achieve better outcomes in their education to enable them reach their potential" (Foreword).

Organising and Resourcing Special Education

Clifford's survey report of 1939 drew attention to the need for differentiated teaching methods and acknowledged the awareness and practice of doing so from teachers at that time, and yet, O'Murchu (n.d.) suggests that: "Teachers must have been intimately connected with the problem of slow learning children in the classroom and yet they made no public utterances about the issue until the 1950s" (p. 56). The Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) published their *Plan for Education* in 1947, arguing that the academic focus of primary and post-primary education should be evolved into a more child-centred programme and, importantly, they were critical of the lack of equality of educational opportunity (INTO, 2016: 13).

Revisions to the primary curriculum from 1966 informed the *New Primary Curriculum* in 1971 with a returned focus on child-centred, activity-based learning that acknowledged individual differences in learning. Teacher training and professional development was accelerated with the introduction of degrees through Colleges of Education from 1974 and the founding of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland in 1976. There was also significant growth in educational placements for children with special needs in this period in the form of special schools and special classes, principally in response to the series of disability-specific government reports between 1965 and 1982. The Education Act

(1998) set out the roles and responsibilities of schools and Boards of Management in providing appropriate education for students with disabilities or special educational needs, supported by policy requirement for the implementation of resource teachers and special needs assistants in mainstream primary settings.

A subsequent *White Paper on Early Childhood Education* (Government of Ireland, 1999) broadened this focus to the need for early diagnosis of disability with parental access to an early education expert, specialist advisors, and pre-service and in-service development for teachers (NCCA, 1999a). However, despite this emphasis on liaison, the NCCA noted that "At present there is little regular and sustained contact between mainstream and special schools in the sharing of resources and expertise" (p. 11) and expressed concern at the dearth of resources available to teachers in special schools, who were dependent upon locally developed materials and adaptation of published programmes. *The Primary Curriculum* published in the same year (NCCA, 1999b) did not prescribe curriculum content specific to special educational needs, leaning more towards adaptation of academic material, recognition of individual difference, teaching methods, and reinforcement of learning.

In a systematic review of research literature from 1994 to 2016, Moljord (2018) points out that whilst special needs education is framed in terms of inclusion, less attention is given to the content of the curriculum (p. 647). This is of particular importance if students with disabilities are to develop functional skills that include self-awareness, self-determination and self-advocacy, allowing them to make choices about participating equally in the community and wider society, as: "'the equality of what' is essential to questions about justice" (Sen, 1992, cited in Moljord, 2018, p. 647). In Ireland, a person-centred education is one which considers the ambitions, commitment and abilities of an individual throughout their lifetime, and educational opportunities to support these elements are provided for through the National Framework for Qualifications (NFQ), a hierarchical system that specifies levels of achievement required to progress through education and training. Whilst access to the JCSP is a crucial element of the transition from special school settings, it is important to understand its relevance to participation in further qualification and training under the NFQ. Although

delivered in the senior cycle of education in special schools, as part of the Junior Cycle, it sits at NFQ Level 2, so young people leaving special education settings must identify a physically accessible and appropriate course at QQI level 3 or 4. However, the range and availability of such courses is disparate, geographically contested and, in real terms, the gap in providing a bridge from Level 3 to Level 5 at a local level means that there is no facility for young people with disabilities to progress upwards through the ladder of qualifications.

With this in mind, it is important to tease out the fundamental differences in curriculum offering between mainstream and special schools and how these inform the inclusion agenda. In September 1996, the Department of Education and Science (as it was then known) introduced the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an adapted curriculum designed to address the needs of potential early school leavers by providing an individualised, student-centred curriculum. However, monitoring of the JCSP was painfully slow, with data collated in 2002 / 2003, a final report written in 2005, but not launched publicly by the DES until February 2006. *Building on Success, An Evaluation of the Junior Certificate School Programme* (DES, 2005) conducted research in 30 of the 174 settings offering the JCSP (139 post-primary schools, 15 special schools, eight Senior Traveller Training Centres, five Youth Encounter Projects, four remand centres and three schools for students with physical and hearing disabilities). Two of these were special schools in which the JCSP was offered to "students in the senior section that were considered capable of benefiting from the JCSP were following the programme" (2005, 59). Its main finding in relation to special schools, where the organisation and structure of the school day is based on the primary school structure, was the limited time allocated to teaching the programme within a shorter school day. The recommendation that: "personnel from mainstream schools that provide the JCSP as well as personnel from those schools that have students with special educational needs, and personnel from special schools that provide the JCSP, should come together to share insights, ideas, and methods" (p. 87) echoes the point made by the NCCA (1999a), and was also noted by Ware et al. (2009), suggesting that such collaboration has not progressed.

From the mid-1990s, pupils who might otherwise have attended special schools were increasingly admitted to special classes in mainstream schools catering to specific learning or behavioural difficulties. However, access to the curriculum is underpinned by the provision of support to make this possible. In 2005, the DES issued Circular SP Ed 02/2005 detailing the allocation of additional teaching resources to schools as a General Allocation Model (GAM) with the intention of developing inclusive primary schools that meet the needs of children with SEN. Its remit was to dispense with the need to apply for resources against individual children with 'high incidence disabilities' (e.g. Specific Learning Difficulties). The allocation of additional teaching time included intervention under learning support and resource teaching targeted towards specific disability categories meeting specific academic criteria, where priority was given to pupils whose attainment in literacy and numeracy was measured at or below the 10th percentile. It was anticipated that these teaching resources would be facilitated in the classroom or small group withdrawal, or in one-to-one lessons. Fundamentally, this placed an emphasis on the requirement to provide diagnostic evidence of disability and academic achievement, principally through psychoeducational assessment via the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS), or Assessment of Need process under the Disability Act (2005). In 2008, there were 127 NEPS psychologists, allocated regionally, serving approximately 3,000 schools across the country; only four of these were assigned to the National Behavioural Support Service. NEPS referrals were made by the school where each school, if they had a linked NEPS psychologist, was allocated a small number of assessments (usually between four and six) each year. Consequently, many parents were forced to seek assessment via private psychologists, psychiatrists or therapists at a prohibitive cost, further establishing inequalities within the system.

However, the new resourcing model also impacted on special classes. In 2009, the Department of Education notified 119 schools that it intended to close 128 special classes for pupils with a Mild General Learning Disability, on the premise that they did not meet minimum class sizes of nine pupils. Rather, these pupils were to be integrated into mainstream classes and supported through resource and learning support teaching in accordance with the Continuum of Support model (DES,

2007)—individualised support for a few, group intervention for some, whole school and classroom support for all—essentially individualised support based on need. This move was strongly criticised by the Irish Primary Principals Network, making the point that pupils were not able to manage mainstream classes for the whole school day, but benefitted from learning at their own pace in smaller classes. However, by 2016, the need for a return to special classes prompted the NCSE to issue policy guidance on setting up special classes for pupils on the Autism Spectrum, with a pupil-teacher ratio of 6:1, and for students with mild general learning disabilities an upper limit ratio of 11:1. Furthermore, resourcing requirements stipulated a formal diagnosis of disability.

To frontload the pilot of a new School Inclusion Model proposed by the NCSE, DES Circular 0013/2017 set out a revised allocation of resources process combining previous special teaching allocation posts into a new model of Special Education Teachers and SNAs to mainstream primary schools, and additional resourcing of supports for pupils with Low Incidence disabilities. The SIM pilot commenced in September 2019 with a remit to deliver a range of targeted supports:

- An expansion to NEPS to extend in-school supports for students with complex educational needs.
- A national training programme for SNAs to evolve skills and knowledge to support students with complex medical, physical, emotional/behavioural, sensory, communication and other needs that pose a barrier to facilitate participation in school life.
- A school nurse service for children with complex medical needs in schools provided through community-based services.
- Regional Support Teams to include speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and behaviour support practitioners, and an additional allocation of 31 therapists to provide support in individual schools.

A major change to the process of allocation of resources was the removal of the necessity for formal diagnostic evidence to determine levels of need and support. This was a welcome revision for parents who were financially under-resourced to meet the costs of private assessments,

and whose children were part of the 5,000 waiting list for Assessment of Need. However, evidence of disability becomes an issue towards the end of formal education. In order to meet the criteria for eligibility for the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) (a higher education access route that recognises the disadvantages imposed by disability in education settings), to meet regulations for registering with Disability Services in higher education and to qualify for Disability Allowance, formal diagnostic paperwork is required.

Essentially, the allocation of resources is connected to the needs of individual children—rather than diagnostic profile—with decisions on the best way of framing support and resources defaulted to the school. This situates responsibility with the school principal (headteacher) to oversee "complex systems for allocation, accountability and staff fidelity" (Kenny et al., 2020: 11), and with teachers to focus teaching on an increasingly diverse pupil population. Today, there are just 238 NEPS psychologists serving almost one million students in full time primary and post-primary education (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2020).

Preparing Teachers for the 21ˢᵗ Century: Report of the Working Group on Primary Preservice Teacher Education (Kellaghan, 2004) states that "recent experience in the mainstreaming of pupils with special needs indicates that this is a formidable task and is probably beyond the competence of teachers who do not have specialised training" (p. 20). The report on *Special Classes in Primary and Post-Primary School*s (Ware et al., 2009) noted that efforts to integrate pupils with special needs was hampered by a lack of continuity in provision of special classes between primary and secondary levels. Furthermore, there was no real reciprocal relationship flow between special and mainstream schools which might encourage the resourcing of shared knowledge. In its review of the *Future Role of Special Schools and Classes in Ireland*, the NCSE (2011) set out a vision that:

> … in the spirit of the EPSEN Act, 2004, future educational provision for children with complex special educational needs that cannot be met within mainstream classes should, in so far as is possible, be available locally, either as an integral part of a mainstream school (special classes) or be situated on the same campus as mainstream schools (special schools or units) so that the opportunity for inclusion can be maximised (p. 15).

However, in the same year, O'Gorman and Drudy (2011) expressed concern that "12.4 per cent overall of LS/R teachers with substantial responsibilities for SEN in their schools had not engaged in any relevant in-career training" (p. 111), 37% had no formal qualification in special educational needs while "this lack was statistically significantly greater at primary level" (p. 138).

Arguably, special school settings reflect the continued practice of segregation for some, whilst assigning students to special classes within mainstream schools may essentially represent integration rather than inclusion, depending upon the way in which they are perceived and managed in individual schools. Banks and McCoy (2017) usefully summarize the evidence which expresses competing viewpoints on integration as inclusion, for example, the negative effects of stigmatization, ability streaming and its effects on expectations and attainment, versus access to smaller classes with an adapted curriculum to suit individual needs, and the opportunity to participate in mainstream education. Their study examined day-to-day "integration exposure" and "permanence effect" for students attending special classes, providing important data which illustrates the existence of non-inclusive practice on the ground. Principally, they find that the level and quality of interaction with the mainstream curriculum and associated activities is tempered by the complexity of individual need, and the ethos and culture of the school, where the purpose of the special class can range from acceleration of basic academic skills to respite from the stresses of mainstream classrooms. They conclude that the re-packaging of special education as an inclusive education model diverts attention from what "appears to mask a 'deep structure' of special education traditionally based on practices of segregation and discrimination" (Thomas, 2013: 458).

Eight years later, in October 2019, the NCSE published findings from its progress report *Policy Advice on Special Schools and Classes: An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society?* concluding that, whilst all students "could, and perhaps should, be educated together with their peers in mainstream classes", the current structure and organisation of educational settings indicates that they are "not ready for this" (p. 35), while there remained a lack of consensus on the desirability of full inclusion in mainstream classes. Additionally, a formal procedure for determining the

suitability of placement in special classes or special schools needed to be evolved, with student progress regularly reviewed. The report also noted the increase in challenging behaviour in schools, a lack of specialist supports such as therapy, and a critical need for continuing professional development of teachers to support the educational needs of an increasingly diverse pupil population.

In 2020, the NCSE invited submissions to inform a Progress Report on the Future of Special Schools. The Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) submission in March of that year reiterated historical arguments for greater resourcing and focused teacher training in special educational needs, with recommendations including a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach to curriculum delivery, smaller classes to meet the needs of a more diverse student population, and access to multi-disciplinary support teams. Whilst they acknowledged that "… a continuum of provision to include special schools, special classes and mainstream schools, to meet a continuum of need, is in line with providing an inclusive education system, as outlined in Section 24 of the UNCRPD" (p. 4), they also expressed concerns for the "potential effect on the child and on the class teacher of having a child who is either misplaced in a mainstream or special setting or for whom the back-up support services are not being provided by the State" (p. 5).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating effect on access to education for every child in Ireland, not helped by placing the population in and out of 'lockdown' with no clear timelines for re-opening of schools. Teachers had to adapt quickly to remote teaching and learning using digital platforms with little or no knowledge or training as to how this might be delivered, in particular to a diverse population of school students, not all of whom had access to the requisite technology. In response, the Teaching Council has advised all teacher training providers to provide a module in digital learning for all trainee teachers.

Parents, Pressure Groups, and Activism

The colossus that is social media is a natural vehicle for social change movements, giving parents of children and young people with disabilities a platform to advocate for rights, lobby for change and to provide illustrative examples of systemic failures in meeting the inclusion agenda. Many important organisations and landmark legal cases connected to special education have their origins in pro-active parent and community groups, action and activism that has been growing since the mid-twentieth century.

In parallel with the work of religious orders, parent and community groups became actively involved in the 1950s. The Association for Parents of Mentally Backward Children was formed in 1955 in response to the lack of educational provision for children with an intellectual disability, which at that time was institutionalised residential care. Over the following five years, parent-led fundraising activities resulted in the purchase of premises and engagement of teaching staff, culminating in recognition by the Department of Education as St. Michael's National School in 1960, today known as St Michael's House. The objectives of the Association were to "provide residential services for handicapped persons, provide advice and assessment services to parents, and to promote positive public attitudes in order to improve and increase State provision" (p. 16). The Cork Polio and After Care Association was established in 1957 and in 1958 extended services to children with brain damage or mental handicap in the Cork area, opening its first school the same year while in 1959 the Department recognised a second residential school. Other associations were formed by parents and community groups during this period in Galway, Limerick. Waterford and Wexford, together with the appointment of the first State agency to address disability services: the National Rehabilitation Association.

From the early 1990s, several landmark cases were taken by parents as proxies for their children against the (then) Ministers of Education and of Health. Paul O'Donoghue v. Minister for Health and Others (1993) rested on Article 42.4 of the Constitution which establishes State provision of free primary education and 'when the public good requires it,

other educational facilities or institutions.' In its decision, the Court obliged the State to modify the primary school curriculum to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities. This was to have a lasting impact by establishing their constitutional right to education establishing a foundation for later cases over the following 20 years which addressed State provision for children with special educational needs. T.D. and Others v. Minister for Education and Others (2001) addressed the Childcare Act (1991) and Article 40.1and 42.2. in the matter of constitutional obligation to children with significant needs for special care and appropriate educational provision. Although the State conceded in principle, planning suffered such significant delays that a mandatory injunction was issued by the High Court, but contested by the State. Following lengthy judicial debate surrounding the limitation and separation of powers, the Supreme Court overturned the injunction.

A similar dismissal of inherent rights was reflected in Sinnott v. Minister for Education (2000) which centred on the right to primary education on the basis of need and the State's failure to provide same. Although Jamie Sinnott was aged 23 years at the time of the case, he had in his lifetime received only two years of education, despite more than 20 years of campaigning by his mother. Indeed, the trial judge noted "official indifference and persistent procrastination which continued up to and through this trial." The ruling awarded significant damages to the Sinnott family and established the right of persons with disabilities to primary education appropriate to their needs which may necessarily be continued into adulthood. However, although accepting the award of damages, the State appealed the right to continuing primary education beyond the age of 18 years, and this was upheld by the Supreme Court.

These landmark legal cases in the 1990s pushed the inclusion agenda further into the public domain, spotlighting parents as the driving force behind furthering the agenda, a necessity that has continued into the twenty first century. However, Perry and Clarke (2015) point to the financial and emotional cost to parents who are forced into legal action. Although some may be fortunate to qualify as pro bono cases, more often, parents who do not have the financial wherewithal to pursue the State through the courts accept out of court settlements, in the hope that the act of bringing a case will result in a good outcome for their child.

Parents continue the legal fight for assessment of need, admission to mainstream education, access to special classes and SNAs, activation of IEPs, reduced timetables and school exclusion. At a local level, parents drive inclusion, as exemplified by social media campaigns calling for the creation of special classes for autistic children in specific residential areas of Dublin. The naming and shaming of individual schools resulted in a directive to school principals by the Department of Education, irrespective of whether the physical infrastructure and staffing of the school were capable of meeting this requirement.

Voluntary organisations and parent groups are still plugging holes in the education of children with disabilities, as can be seen from even a cursory review of entities such as Activelink, a community exchange forum set up in 1999. Funding for projects that bridge the transition from school to further education, training and employment for young people with disabilities is precarious, depending as it does on the economic stability of the nation, and policy and legal frameworks for specific disability issues that depend on political will (e.g. the *Autism Bill,* 2017). A plethora of local charities, some operating as social enterprise entities, have emerged across all corners of the country, fulfilling more complex roles than ever seen before encompassing education and training, awareness raising, advice and guidance for parents, and unique projects such as the Autism-friendly Communities initiative driven by ASIAM, aimed at fostering autism inclusion and empowerment within local communities. Public funding schemes and donations allow groups such as ASIAM to go beyond the educational context. By building a national profile they are well positioned to advocate for inclusive practices within the community and can bring focused pressure on government through reporting such as their 2019 report *Invisible Children: Survey on School Absence and Withdrawal in the Autism Community.* In the introduction to the report they draw attention to the inaccuracy of figures provided by the NCSE on the school attendance of autistic children, in that:

> … there was and is still a significant body of children within our community who do not go to school at all. In some instances, these students have simply been failed by the State in terms of inadequate levels of autism or special class provision despite the obligations on the State under the

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 to provide an appropriate school place for every child.

Challenges to Inclusion in the Twenty First Century

Notwithstanding the progress that has been made in the provision of education for children with SEND and the progression of a rights-based approach to lifelong learning, there currently remains a number of challenges to the ongoing realisation of the rights of *all* people with disabilities to access and participate in education. For example, the inclusion of diverse needs in schools requires restructuring in the light of emerging research and awareness, acknowledgement and acceptance of complex neurodevelopmental conditions such as 22q11 and extreme, anxiety-based school avoidance observed in profiles within the Autism Spectrum, such as Intolerance of Uncertainty and Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA). Investigating experiences of health and education settings for families supporting individuals with PDA in Ireland, Doyle and Kenny (2020) found that children who had a greater need for control were significantly more likely to have school avoidance issues. Furthermore, parents reporting longitudinal school absence described the school environment as presenting a hostile and impenetrable barrier for those with extreme demand avoidance. Thus "within the wider discussion of inclusion for people with disabilities, there remains work to be done on reframing difference and deficit in terms of diversity" (p. 26). As a result of a rights-based approach the rhetoric around what really is the essence of inclusion has begun to emerge and also focuses on those individuals who are marginalised or at risk of exclusion (Davis et al., 2014). This has resulted in the term 'inclusion' taking on a wider significance and having broader social and political value (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). It is worth noting that while the Salamanca conference was primarily concerned with special needs education, it was acknowledged that this could not proceed in isolation but form part of an overall strategy which would primarily involve reforming schools as they are seen to be the most

effective way of promoting equality (UNESCO, 1994). The Education 2030 Framework for Action placed an emphasis on the need for states to address all forms of marginalisation and exclusion, thus creating an inclusive agenda that includes everybody and not just those with SEND (Ainscow, 2020). The ratification of the UNCRPD places specific responsibilities on states to instigate political reform to progress and uphold human rights and end segregation (Heyer, 2021). This is best achieved through the development and provision of inclusive teaching cultures providing accessible learning opportunities with targeted and appropriate supports (Ainscow, 2020).

The Children Rights Alliance (CRA) in Ireland is tasked with ensuring that the rights of children are respected and upheld within a legal and political framework. Each year they develop the Report Card which is an established accountability tool to enable them to identify serious issues for children and where grades are awarded to the government based on their performance on specific issues in the previous year (childrensrights. ie). In 2021, under the Constitutional Right to Education for Children with Special Educational Needs, the government received a "D" grade due to the insufficient number of appropriate school places available for children with SEND and the incompletion of assessments of need within the statutory timeframes. In addition they noted that EPSEN (2004) has still not been fully enacted and, as a result, IEPs have not been operationalised nor has an appeals board been established, which is the mechanism for review and redress (CRA, 2021). Given that EPSEN (2004) predates the UNCRPD (2018), the CRA has called for a review of the act to ensure that it is compliant with the UNCRPD and the requirement for human rights standards, which should be followed by a timeline for the commencement of the remaining sections. As a number of parents have taken legal action against the state for their failure to assess the needs of their child, they have also called for this process to be adequately resourced in order to meet the statutory requirements. While the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018 is fully mandated to source a school place for a child, the government is asked to provide clear and transparent timelines for each stage of the process, to mitigate the risk that protracted delays occur, further jeopardising children's education. In short, the failure to fully enact EPSEN is having a profound effect on the ability of

children in Ireland with SEND to enjoy their constitutional right to access and participate in education. This access has been further compounded by Covid-19 where evidence indicates that children with SEND have been disproportionately and adversely impacted by the closure of schools. The CRA have stated that

> To ensure that no child is discriminated against in accessing their right to education, in compliance with Article 2 of the UNCRC 61 it is vital that particular assistance and support for children with special educational needs is provided to counter regressions experienced during the pandemic (CRA, 2021).

In conclusion, the UNCRPD, in keeping with the broader view of the human rights framework, recognises that progress in this area is something that is realised gradually. Therefore, it is recommended that (1) state finance departments budget accordingly and allocate appropriate funds to schools to develop the structural changes necessary to deliver inclusion (2) develop the infrastructure needed to facilitate inclusion of students with SEND and (3) provide continuous personal development in the area of inclusion for teachers (CRPD Committee General Comment No. 4 (2016) para 40) as this has proved critical for the development of more positive attitudes towards inclusion (Sharma & Sokal, 2015). Developing an inclusive setting is fundamentally a fluid process which facilitates change and the evolving needs of all stakeholders. As a concept it is an ideal or an aspiration that may never be fully realised or reached because we are all human, and humans by their very nature are diverse.

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11

"A normal and useful method of class control?" Policy on Corporal Punishment in Irish Schools: c1974–1985

David Limond

Introduction

Even if we consider only the culture or civilisation we habitually call western European—that which emerged from the collision of Athens and Jerusalem symbolically taking place in first century CE Rome—it is obvious that corporal punishment has deep historical roots. It has had domestic, scholastic, judicial and military expressions (Scott, 1968; Gibson, 1979; Parker-Jenkins, 1999; Geltner, 2014). It is often referred to as spanking at home, caning or belting in schools, birching in judicial contexts and flogging if associated with the armed forces. It was decreasingly commonly permitted in families/homes in Europe by 2020 and its use in civilian or military law was unknown there by then (though it remained extant elsewhere; Human Rights Watch, 2020a, 2020b). In its scholastic form it was also anathema in western Europe by 2020 but it had been practised in European schools for centuries. Although it was practised in

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pre-Christian, pagan or classical western European life, including the Greco-Roman and Celtic milieus, it clearly has a longstanding and close association with the Judeo-Christian culture that has influenced western Europe since late antiquity (Scott, 1968; Gibson, 1979; Ristuccia, 2010; Geltner, 2014; Parsons, 2015).

Scriptural warrant for the use of corporal punishment, to the satisfaction of some Christians at least (discussed in: Webb, 2011), has been underpinned by the doctrine of the fall (Genesis, 3) and the supposed ineluctable human tendency towards sin, a result of the "carnal mind" (Romans, 5, xii; 8, xvi). Earlier Jewish texts mentioning it, incorporated into Christian thought/practice, include Rehoboam's rather impractical threat to "chastise with scorpions" (1 Kings 12, xi), and more literal suggestions as to its utility/value (for example: Leviticus, 19, xx; Proverbs, 13, xxiv; for secular arguments in its favour, see: Fuller, 2009).

Experiencing corporal punishment has been said to have enduring psycho-social and even psycho-sexual effects (Gibson, 1979; King et al., 2003) and it has never been entirely uncontroversial, but the practice was ubiquitous in Ireland by 1922 and had widespread parental, and more general, acceptance (Maguire & Ó'Cinnéide, 2005). An abundance of sources, including autobiographies, memoirs and works of autobiographical fiction by former pupils (for example: Doyle, 1989; Tyrrell, 2006 [posthumously from an unpublished manuscript]; Toucher, 2010) and teachers (such as Bryan MacMahon [1909–1998], a long-serving teacher in rural schools: MacMahon, 1999) attest to this. Oral histories/interviews (Holland, 2018), including some conducted for the purposes of official inquiries into abuse in residential establishments (Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse, 2009, though such institutions are not within strictly my scope which concerns "normal" schooling), court proceedings and press reports of trials serve to show that corporal punishment was widespread in Irish schools in the 1920–1970s and into the 1980s. The point here is not so much to chronicle and record instances, types and consequences of corporal punishment in Ireland's schools as to show how and why—relatively abruptly—its demise came. To do that it is necessary to explore some early abolitionist campaigns. This chapter thus has chronological sections largely concerning various campaigners' efforts in

the 1920s-1950s, the 1960s and 1970s, events immediately preceding abolition and its aftermath. It then essays some tentative conclusions.

A Most Wicked Thing: 1920s-1950s

In the Ireland of the 1920s-1950s there could be recourse to law against religious or secular teachers or managers in cases of excessive corporal punishment, but heaven was high and Dublin (or the county court) was far. That is: court cases were difficult to bring and could very well fail, while, more frequently than not, ranks were closed and administrative complaints batted away, the parents/guardians who brought them being elegantly fobbed off by a civil service which had been elegantly fobbing off since there was a Lord Lieutenant in the land (Maguire & Ó'Cinnéide, 2005).

One complaint, while not necessarily remarkable in itself, does provide a useful starting point for several reasons. In November 1931 James Craig [1861–1933], an eminent medical doctor, academic and Independent Unionist TD for Trinity College in the Free State Dáil, asked the then Cumann na nGaedheal Minister for Education, John O'Sullivan [1881–1948]:

> if his attention had been drawn to the recent reports in the Press of the remarks of the Circuit Court Judge at Skibbereen… in an action against a national school teacher for cruelty in punishing a girl of 10 years of age… the judge… [having] stated that the punishment in question was a most wicked thing. (Oral Answer, Dáil Éireann Debates, Vol 40 No 17, 26 November 1931, available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1931-11-26/7/).

The girl in question had apparently sought £100 in damages (worth roughly €75,000 by 2020; see: https://www.cso.ie/en/interactivezone/visualisationtools/cpiinflationcalculator/#) from her school's principal following an incident in July 1931, claiming that he had "struck her across the leg with a cane" causing her to bleed (*Irish Press* 17 November, 1931, p. 2). The judge had dismissed the case, referring to unspecified

decisions in the higher courts that bound his hands, but not before he deplored what had happened, saying that in his view "there should be no corporal punishment in any school" and that he "regard[ed] an assault on a child the same as any other ordinary citizen".

O' Sullivan replied that he was aware of the reports and repeated the regulations regarding corporal punishment as they then stood, regulations provided for in what was known as Rule 96. Inter alia, it mandated that: "[c]orporal punishment should be administered only for grave transgression… [and o]nly a light cane or rod may be used" (Dáil Éireann Debates, Vol 40 No 17, 26 November 1931, available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1931-11-26/7/). Subject to various amendments, Rule 96 (later Rule 130) was the basic doctrine on corporal punishment in Irish schools for the 60 years from c 1922 to 1982. No specific rules or legislation covered its use in voluntary/religious schools and it was not supposed to be employed in the vocational schools established in 1930, though apparently sometimes was.[1]

To repeat, the Skibbereen case matters little intrinsically. Specialist publications such as the *Irish Law Times and Solicitors' Journal* (25 July, 1931) contain examples of comparable complaints/trials in 1931. But it shows opposition to corporal punishment fully 50 years before it was abolished and the connection between Craig and Trinity College foreshadows the source of much later abolitionist agitation.

On Behalf of the Under-dogs: 1950s

Like Craig, Owen Sheehy Skeffington [1909–1970] was a Trinity man. He was also something of an anomaly. He might be described as Irish republic royalty, his father, Francis Sheehy Skeffington [1878–1916], being an accidental martyr of Easter 1916. His mother, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington [1877–1946], had even better republican credentials, but despite being Catholic she had ensured he had a non-religious education (Sheehy Skeffington, 1991; Sheehy Skeffington, 2018). Taking a post teaching French at Trinity he came, like Craig before him, to represent it in the legislature, first serving as one of the senators its graduates elected to the upper house established by the 1937 constitution in 1954.[2] His

biographer, also his wife, Andreé Sheey Skeffington [1910–1998], records that he wrote in his diary after his election: "I [hope to] use it to some purpose on behalf of the under-dogs" (Sheehy Skeffington, 1991: 167). He included limiting or abolishing school corporal punishment in a list of topics to champion. On 30 June 1955 he took the opportunity of an adjournment debate to raise the issue, saying: "beating children never does any good…. [but] frequently does harm" (Adjournment Debate, Seanad Éireann Debates, 30 June 1955, Vol 45 No 1, available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/seanad/1955-06-30/6/). Taking his evidence from a volume entitled *Punishment in Our Schools* produced by the School-Children's Protection Organisation [SCPO],[3] a collection of letters it had obtained from parents and others about school corporal punishment in Ireland (SCPO, 1955), he proceeded to list and describe cases.

It would take overly long to repeat all these here, but they were often harrowing. One (Letter 10) suffices for now. A parent wrote:

[m]y daughter, aged 13, attends a mixed national school and one day, being unable to do a certain sum, she copied it from another pupil. When the teacher discovered this he gave her a spanking. Another time, for a similar reason, he put her across a desk and gave her six strokes of the cane.

Responses were limited, with only two senators allowed to reply. Tomas O'Connell [1882–1969] a former teacher, General Secretary of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation [INTO], ex-TD and Labour Party leader condemned what he referred to as a "campaign of vilification" supposedly being directed at teachers nationally, presumably alluding to the SCPO, but was not allowed to speak further. The substantive reply came from Richard Mulcahy [1886–1971] then serving his second term as Minister for Education. A veteran of the Easter Rising, War of Independence and Civil War, lionised by some for his involvement in the events of 1916 and 1919–1921 and loathed by others for his subsequent harsh suppression of anti-treaty forces, Mulcahy was then TD for Tipperary South and leader of Fine Gael, one of the constituents of the Second Inter-Party Government, 1954–1957.

The combative former guerrilla went on the attack. There was not, he trenchantly claimed, "the slightest foundation" for the claims being made as to rampant disregard of the regulations and excessive corporal punishment. Later that year he took another opportunity to criticise the SCPO's motives and origins, claiming of campaigners: "[t]here is an element behind this… that derives from our next door neighbour… [it is a] deliberate attack on the very spirit and foundation of the Irish educational institution" (Committee on Finance, Dáil Éireann Debates, Vol 152 No 4, 8 July 1955, available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1955-07-08/4/).

The 1955 debate was the first of its kind introduced by Sheehy Skeffington, but not the last, as corporal punishment became a topic at which he worried away for years to come. Many of the same themes were to be invoked in later debates, setting a predictable pattern. Corporal punishment was, its defenders said, reasonable and necessary, claiming otherwise insulted Ireland's teachers; the existing rules, even when they changed, were proportionate and generally adhered to. Above all, there was something suspect and effete about objecting to corporal punishment in schools and an attack on the status quo was contrary to the national interests.

Modern Darlings Who Are the Equivalent of Juvenile Delinquents: 1960s

In May 1961 Patrick Lindsay [1914–1993], then only months away from losing his seat as the Fine Gael TD for Mayo North in the election of October 1961, used a debate on educational finance to defend school corporal punishment vehemently and to offer a more general analysis of the modern world's supposed problems. He insisted that Irish schools enjoyed a special place in history, a place "chequered but still… brilliant" (Committee on Finance: Dáil Éireann Debates, 25 May 1961, Vol 189 No 7, available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1961-05-25) but became harsher when he turned to speaking about corporal punishment.

Reflecting on his former schooldays, he proudly insisted that there was a stoical acceptance of corporal punishment then and that former taciturn and spartan ethic was something he contrasted with more recent times when "modern darlings who are the equivalents of juvenile delinquents" complained against even condign punishments.

It was against a background characterised by thinking such as this that Sheehy Skeffington made a further attempt to have corporal punishment limited in Irish schools in 1965. Other participants in the proceedings included seconder of Sheehy Skeffington's motion and fellow senator for Trinity, where he was professor of Greek, William Bedell Stanford [1910–1984], another academic, Bryan Alton [1919–1991], a medical doctor and clinical lecturer with strong Fianna Fáil connections and Seán Brosnahan [1911–1987], former General Secretary of the INTO. The co-founder of the left-wing National Progressive Democrats John McQuillan [1920–1998], a close associate of Noël Browne [1915–1997], Sheehy Skeffington's successor as the country's most prominent critic of corporal punishment also spoke and, perhaps most significantly, given that he was to be Fine Gael leader and Taoiseach when corporal punishment was abolished in schools, so too did Garret FitzGerald [1926–2011]. (For details, see: Seanad Éireann Debates, Vol 60, No 6, 24 November 1965, available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/seanad/1965-11-24/6/). Achieving anything concrete in the short-term was too much to hope for and the debate was no more productive than its predecessors had been. It mattered simply that it had happened. That brought publicity. Perhaps more significant than immediate reports of the debate, the influential *Irish Times* ran a series of three long opinion pieces by a rising young journalist in early December 1965 (Viney, 1965a, 1965b, 1965c). Not long thereafter, beyond the Leinster House Pale a new group emerged to take up the mantle of the SCPO, the unambiguously named Reform.

Reform shot to prominence in the late 1960s through its willingness to use a combination of new tactics and old. The former included marching on the Department of Education [DoE], the purchase of a stock of straps from a saddler that would otherwise have been sold to teachers for use in schools and their public immolation and the display of a range of implements used for punishment in schools in the window of a Dublin shop

temporarily rented for this situationist combination of protest and installation art (Blake, 1967; *Irish Independent* 31 July, 1967).

A more conventional tactic on Reform's part was willingness to resort to the courts. There was a chequered history of private prosecutions of teachers for injuries caused in schools but early in its existence Reform won a significant case, though it was a Pyrrhic victory. Acting with some support from the abolitionist group the parents of a boy who had been attending a Christian Brothers' national school in Dublin's Inchicore brought a suit in 1968, demanding a substantial sum in damages by alleging assault (*Irish Independent* 27 June, 1968). Unusually for such a case damages were awarded, though only the nominal sum of one shilling; the family concerned was reported to have emigrated (*Irish Times* 13 July, 1968). However little had been granted financially, the publicity for Reform's cause was priceless and the *Irish Times* worried about Ireland's international reputation (*Irish Times* 13 July, 1968, p. 6).

Reform had some overlap in membership with the Language Freedom Movement [LFM], founded in 1966 to oppose what its members considered the then excessive stress on the teaching of Irish in schools (Kelly, 2002, pp. 140–141; Watson, 2014). Despite being supported by fluent Irish speakers and respected figures including the writer John B Keane [1928–2002], the LFM was highly controversial, its inaugural meeting almost ending in violence (Kelly, 2002, pp. 140–141). Being linked to as controversial a cause as this earned corporal punishment abolitionists a special degree and kind of criticism: it was alien, a threat to Irishness.

The further connection between at least one prominent Reform member and the campaign to allow Irish women access to medical contraceptives added to the sense in some quarters that this was a dangerous and subversive group, working to undermine Catholic Ireland on various fronts (Kelly, 2020). There was a clear thread of specifically Catholic, conservative nationalist objection to Reform's efforts, a leading member of which complained in 1969 that he and his organisation had been consistently "dismissed as freaks and cranks—anti-clerical cranks too" (quoted in: O'Brien, 1969, p. 10).

But as far as those in support of corporal punishment's retention, Catholic or not, were concerned, the position continued to deteriorate. In 1968 the Moore case had caused the *Irish Times* to worry for the

country's standing abroad if it continued to be seen as a site of especially frequent and violent corporal punishment. Concerns about reputation were to come to the fore again in 1969–1970 when a sensational US television documentary depicted Ireland's schools and their punitive regimes in an unflattering light (*Irish Press* 4 December, 1969; *Irish Times* 7 March, 1970).

In addition to Reform's efforts another campaign was underway against corporal punishment in the Ireland of the 1960s-1970s, conducted by Cyril Daly [1933–2015], a Dublin GP. He began a campaign in 1969 which dovetailed with that of Reform, although he was stubbornly unaffiliated. In January 1969 he began a petition and collection of letters from parents whose children had themselves experienced corporal punishment. A month later, his enthusiasm for the cause was bearing fruits with prominent signatories coming forward (Hickey, 1969; see also: Daly, C, 2009). The then minister, Fianna Fáil's Brian Lenihan Snr [1930–1995; in office only March 1968 to July 1969] duly received the petition.

But when Michael O'Leary [1936–2006], then TD for a Dublin constituency, later leader of the Labour Party and Tánaiste in the 1980s, referred to the 5000-strong petition and asked if the Minister proposed to take any action as a result of it, Lenihan replied the matter was under review and punishment might be ended in infant classes, before insisting there was a case for retention of "an ultimate sanction" (Dáil Éireann Debates, Vol. 239 No. 6, 25 March 1969, Oral Answers: Corporal Punishment in Schools, available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1969-03-25/27/).

Daly was unimpressed by this somewhat equivocal answer and claimed that "Mr Lenihan [was] on personal trial", demanding to know if he would "have the guts" to accede to the several thousand petitioners' demands (Daly, 1969a, p. 11).

In June of the same year he took the novel step of presenting his concerns to the Papal Nuncio to Ireland, Gaetano Alibrandi [1914–2003] (*Irish Independent* 5 June , 1969, p. 5). To go counter to the main thrust of my argument below, I must here acknowledge that Daly was a conservative Catholic in some respects, opposing working mothers in the 1970s (Maher 1978) and later abortion law reform (Hickey, 2013), and he

appears to have been sincerely disappointed by his church's failure. Disillusioned, he reported having received a reply of "almost telegraphic brevity" which had provided "no evidence that my letter disturbed… [the Nuncio's] tranquillity" (Daly 2009: 1) and defiantly charged the Catholic church with hypocrisy, asking: "where do Irish people receive some of their first lessons in practical violence?… [in] Catholic schools" (Daly, 1969b, p. 9). But his campaign was now gathering strength, as was Reform's.

Certain Antiquated Victorian Practices: 1970s

For much of the 1970s the public face of opposition to corporal punishment in Ireland belonged to Noël Browne. A TD for various Dublin constituencies on four occasions between 1948 and 1981 and, like Sheehy Skeffington, a Trinity senator (1973–1977), Browne had a troubled childhood. Both his parents died when he was young (Browne, 1986; Horgan, 2000). In addition to his early years being marred by his parents' deaths he saw evidence of an unholy trinity of extreme punishment, sexual abuse and ultra-nationalism in his Christian Brothers' school and described certain episodes graphically in his autobiography (Browne, 1986, pp. 29–34).

A change of fortune, and a family relocation to England, allowed him to attend a fee-paying preparatory school and the Jesuit-run Beaumont College on a scholarship. A generous benefactor later financed his medical studies at Trinity College and after working in medicine for a time he entered politics.

First elected as a TD in 1948, when a member of the republican socialist Clann na Poblachta party, he served in the First Inter-Party Government, being appointed Minister for Health in 1948. He acted in that capacity until 1951 when he resigned, angry that the government of which he had been a part had capitulated in the face of hostile clerical reaction to his revolutionary proposal for state-funded healthcare, the putative Mother and Child Scheme (Browne, 1986, pp. 139–188; McCullogh, 1988, pp. 198–253; Horgan, 2000, pp. 120–158). Often controversial (see: Horgan, 2000, p. 293) Browne diagnosed a

relationship between Ireland's collective psyche and corporal punishment, blaming the latter for: "[t]he sterility of… [Ireland's] artistic and emotional life… [and its] overwhelming conformism and moral cowardice". These, he said, were "demonstrable bi-products of an Irish educational culture" that was "notorious" abroad, a culture in which corporal punishment was "quite literally the short cut to enforce conformity" employed by "over-tired" or "insecure" teachers and parents (Browne, 1970, p. 9).

Browne had first raised the issue of corporal punishment as early as 1957 (Committee on Finance, Vote 63 [Health], Dáil Éireann Debates, Vol 163, No 1, 26 June 1957, available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1957-06-26/7/), calling for a more therapeutic approach to pupils' disciplinary and behavioural problems. But the ground of the 1950s was stony. His biographer noted: "[t]he silence from other deputies on this issue, [was] redolent of the social culture of the day" (Horgan, 2000, p. 201). It was largely in the 1970s that he pressed this cause in the legislature. A great deal of what follows in this section concerns him, but I need first to treat of certain other actors in the 1970s.

The campaign against corporal punishment was originally a matter of adult politics. For example, in 1972 Daly circulated a questionnaire to all TDs, asking whether they supported corporal punishment's abolition (*Irish Press* 22 February , 1972a; *Irish Times* 22 February, 1972) and he later pronounced its results to be "most encouraging" (*Sunday Independent* 5 March, 1972: 9), as many replied in the affirmative. But during the course of the 1970s it took a dramatic turn, when pupils themselves began to speak out against school beatings. This had always been possible to some extent and lone voices, such as the pupil who wrote to the *Irish Press* decrying "certain antiquated Victorian practices" (Lombard, 1971, p. 8) were an occasional feature of the debate before organised pupils' groups emerged, but pupils' campaigning now accelerated. Both Reform and the SCPO before it were bodies working *for* pupils, not campaigns organised *by* them. This changed in a significant way from about 1971/1972. The origins of the Irish Union of School Students [IUSS], source of the report that gives this piece its title, lie in other groups and have a connection with Dublin's Belvedere College, founded in 1832 by the Jesuits.

Instances of pupils organising to protest against corporal punishment, in England at least, can date back to the early modern period and include the satirical work *The flagellant*, produced by boys from Westminster School, founded in 1541, led by Robert Southey [1774–1843]. A poet and later an MP, Southey suffered under Westminster's notoriously intemperate headmaster William Vincent [1739–1815] in the 1780s-1790s (Southey et al., 1792, see especially: 79–89; on Vincent, see: Saunders, 2018: 45–46). But it seems there was nothing comparable in Ireland until the IUSS. Mergers and reorganisations of earlier groups brought the IUSS into being, representing pupils in all forms of post-primary schools (*Irish Press* 16 May, 1972b; O'Toole, 2001). By January 1973 the IUSS was campaigning on a platform including opposition to corporal punishment (*Irish Times* 15 January, 1973).

Membership may never have been great, but its rate of growth was marked and by June 1973 the union was being favourably profiled (Anderson, 1973). Its pioneering survey on corporal punishment was conducted between December 1973 and January 1974 in second-level schools (vocational and secondary) in seven counties in the Republic of Ireland (IUSS, 1974, p. 9). The headline results included the claims that 84% of schools used corporal punishment to some extent, 92% of those being boys' schools. Overall, the report claimed: "[I]t would seem that many teachers regard corporal punishment as a normal and useful method of class control" (IUSS, 1974, p. 10). A supportive editorial in the liberal *Irish Times* called for the Minister to "take note" of this (*Irish Times* 27 August, 1974b, p. 11; see also: Rudd, 1974 for more sympathetic reaction). Thus, cliché though it surely is, the tide seems to have turned against corporal punishment between 1973 and 1976, closely corresponding to the time in office of Fine Gael's Richard Burke [1932–2016], Minister for Education in those years as part of the 1973–1977 government of Liam Cosgrave [1920–2017]. It is for that reason I have dated the beginning of the demise of Irish school corporal punishment to 1974, treating it more as process than event. But resistance to abolition remained strong in the mid-1970s.

In 1974 Burke gave an interview to the journal of the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland [ASTI] in which he insisted that the position regarding corporal punishment was "exactly the same" in Ireland as in

"the English-speaking world in general", going on to reaffirm the in loco parentis principle (Secondary Teacher, 1974, p. 12). He also claimed that abolishing corporal punishment might have unintended consequences; these could include the obvious reduction in certain disciplinary standards but also the "absurd and ridiculous" result of its becoming necessary to ban domestic/parental corporal punishment "an indefensible invasion of individual and family privacy", an allusion to the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, a doctrine that favours the smaller unit over the larger, enshrined in the 1937 constitution (see: Article 42 [https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d5bd8c-constitution-of-ireland/], though this is a commitment that is sometimes nominal; for discussion, see: Daly, M E, 2009).

A speech of his to students at a teaching college along the same lines also provoked considerable controversy (for example: *Irish Times* 26 June, 1974a). By the decade's midpoint, 1974–1975, a slew of groups began to make moves towards supporting abolition. These included the Labour Party, with multiple resolutions calling for the national leadership to support abolition at its conference that year (Glennon, 1974), the ASTI and, perhaps most importantly, the largest teaching union (founded 1868), the INTO (see: Walshe, 1975a, 1975b). The motion proposed by the Sligo branch of the INTO only required the union to "investigate" corporal punishment in schools but was a significant development in a usually anti-abolitionist body. Opinion in the ASTI was evidently neither monolithically for nor against corporal punishment and it had its defenders, just as it had activists supporting abolition. One contributor to its journal in 1974 insisted the issue was a matter of "great indifference" to most parents, teachers and even pupils, who presumably tacitly endorsed its retention; reformers, he suggested, were concentrating on the wrong solution to the wrong problem and should pursue "better working conditions" for pupils (Morgan, 1974, p. 21).

Nonetheless, the ASTI's Cork branch pushed through a 1978 conference resolution that condemned "the use of any form of corporal punishment" in schools and that became union policy from then (Cunningham, 2009, p. 261; see also: Holmes, 1978). From July 1975 the Labour Party was moving apparently inexorably towards abolitionism (Walshe, 1975c). But the Fine Gael and Labour incumbents, standing as the National

Coalition (National Coalition, 1977), lost the 1977 election and Fianna Fáil returned to power. The defeated coalition had made no commitment regarding corporal punishment in its manifesto though it had several pledges regarding education (National Coalition, 1977, pp. 7–8) and it is moot whether or not it's being returned to power would have accelerated abolition. However, even if major political parties remained reluctant to make the final commitment to abolition in the mid/late 1970s, conditions in schools remained an issue of importance for some, especially the mercurial Noël Browne, as a series of vitriolic exchanges in the Dáil in early December 1978 revealed. The incoming Minister, John Wilson [1923–2007], initiated a review of corporal punishment policy and although nothing changed as a result (*Irish Independent* 8 December, 1978a), Browne was impatient to know the result. He and Edward Collins [1941–2019], Fine Gael TD for Waterford and then his party's education spokesman, asked about it. Wilson gave a protracted and evasive answer that largely involved his reading into the record replies he had had to his consultative exercise from various teachers' unions and other concerned bodies (Dáil Debates, Vol 310, No 5, 6 December 1978, Oral Answers: Corporal Punishment in Schools, available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1978-12-06/20/). Eventually, Browne snapped that the minister should "be ashamed of himself" and accused him of spouting "pretentious humbug" in corporal punishment's defence, calling it "barbarous"; '[h]ow can the Minister defend it?" he demanded to know. Browne pressed his point, insisting Wilson shared in the: "shameful record of his predecessors… … He is afraid of a belt of a crozier". Browne was perhaps somewhat unkind to Wilson in accusing him of defending corporal punishment but the reference to the belt of the crozier (an evocative metaphor for clerical, specifically *Catholic* clerical, sanction) was perhaps not entirely unjustified. And coming as it did from Browne, who had been clerically belted himself over the Mother and Child Scheme, it carried a special charge.

Meanwhile, beyond the Oireachtas, debate continued in sometimes fervid terms. As previously noted, the views on corporal punishment of the Irish teaching unions were important in influencing debate on abolition in the 1970s-1980s. The largest and oldest of them, the INTO, had a long history of opposition to abolition and little tolerance for those

whom its leaders considered to be interfering busybodies. Seán Brosnahan had said as much in the Oireachtas and campaigners such as Sheehy Skeffington had been the subject of vituperative INTO-organised counter-protests (for example: *Irish Press*, 4 December , 1969).

INTO's official position mattered, not simply because it was a large union but because it was an influential one with powerful credentials. National school-teachers (whom it represented) had been disproportionately represented in the ranks of active nationalists in the War of Independence period. Under the undoubtedly retrogressive guidance of the nationalistic Jesuit scholar Timothy Corcoran [1871–1943] it had gone a long way towards influencing education policy (Titley, 1983), especially on the teaching of Irish (Kelly, 2002: 8–13) in the Free State years, and it was a nationally significant body, for good or ill, closely linked to the nation-building project. The early attempt to sway it against corporal punishment (Walshe, 1975b) may have been unsuccessful but even as its leaders sought to continue to defend the use of corporal punishment (while at the same time insisting, some might say implausibly, the extent of its use was exaggerated [Holmes, 1976]) there was a move against it amongst some INTO members, all of who were now warned to be careful in its exercise in a *Teacher's Handbook* issued by the union annually as a supplement to its journal, *An Múinteoir Náisiúnta*

In December 1978 its elected President took the step of saying that she "strongly condemned" corporal punishment at its conference (*Irish Times* 6 December , 1978b: 14) and although this was a personal view it was a significant intervention. At the same time, as noted above, the ASTI, founded in 1909 to represent teachers in religious secondary schools (Cunningham, 2009), started to move in the direction of abolition.

In March 1978 the ASTI's annual delegate conference in Sligo voted 99 to 68 to call for a ban (Armstrong, 1978; O'Regan, 1978) though contrariwise, "a large majority" of members of the South Dublin INTO branch voted later that year to defeat an abolitionist motion, suggesting that opinion in that union remained very much anti-abolitionist (*Irish Times* 4 October , 1978a: 8). Stepping a little over the line into the next section, we can note here that for much of the early 1980s the INTO was riven with increasingly acrimonious debate on the subject.

The familiar charge that teachers were being unfairly depicted as cruel and criticised in the media and popular opinion without good reason surfaced again in February when a television programme, much as the US documentary had in the 1960s, included a claim of frequent and excessive use of canes and straps in Ireland's national schools (*Irish Times* 12 February , 1980).

And later that month an internal INTO debate resulted in a restatement of the union's view that corporal punishment was justified but should be used sparingly and only for "disruptive behaviour" (Murphy, 1980: 6). But by June a special committee convened to explore policy options was controversially proposing that the union support a ban (Walshe, 1980). Not all INTO members had ever necessarily supported or used corporal punishment and there may have been the gradual generational shift comparable to that observed in the UK—roughly, younger teachers tending to be less likely to resort to its use (Gardner, 1996)—but for a union that had been resolutely opposed to abolition it had moved a great distance to get to this point.

Kindness Combined with Firmness: 1980–1985

The "absolute abolition of corporal punishment" in Irish schools was a Labour manifesto pledge in the general election of June 1981 (Labour Party, 1981: para 202), however it was Fine Gael, which had fought a campaign sometimes considered its first to be truly professional in the modern sense, winning slightly over 36% of the popular vote, and slightly under 40% of the seats (Farrell, 1986), that was to lead the next government, albeit in a coalition. Such a coalition was possible because, Garrett FitzGerald later claimed: "the Fine Gael [election] programme… contained nothing with which the Labour Party disagreed" (FitzGerald, 1991, p. 360). FitzGerald assumed office in June 1981, during the first presidency of former Minister for Education Patrick Hillery [1923–2008].

His government served during a period of low economic fortunes in Ireland, a time also characterised by turmoil in Northern Ireland. The more terrible violence being acted out publicly on the streets of Belfast and secretively in the lanes and backroads of Armagh and the other

border counties overshadowed "mere" violence in classrooms. That said, the now major partner in government had used its manifesto to draw attention to what it claimed was a tendency for education to be "low on the list of… priorities" in Irish politics and to make vague pledges to rectify this (Fine Gael, 1981, p. 23).

A voluminous and sometimes self-important autobiographer (FitzGerald, 1991, 2010) FitzGerald was more concerned to write about other things than what may have seemed to him a relatively minor educational and social reform. It can thus be difficult to discern his views on corporal punishment by the 1980s, but he had not been known to be especially fervid regarding it hitherto, with his professed dislike of "cranky" parents who objected to *any* use of caning. In 1965 he had hoped for it be "restrict[ed] still further" (Seanad Éireann Debates, Vol 60, No 6, 24 November 1965, available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/seanad/1965-11-24/6/). His was a gradualist approach to abolition, at best.

The product of a conservative socio-political and religious background (FitzGerald, 1991, pp. 13–33) FitzGerald's Catholic faith was strong, but despite this (or precisely because his understanding of the requirements of that faith differed to those of the more traditionalist) he "became a boogie man for conservative Catholics" (Murphy, 2008, p. 159). Inspired by the liberal Catholicism into which he drifted as a student he associated himself with various social reforms, both when he was leader of Fine Gael (including two periods as Taoiseach) and subsequently (FitzGerald, 1986, 1991, 2003, 2010; Murphy, 2008; FitzGerald, 1986, a lecture in a Jesuit college, is perhaps the most complete expression of his specifically *Catholic* thought).

The abolition of corporal punishment was in a minor key compared to other reforms he brought about, contributed to or promoted but it can be considered apiece with what has been described as his concern to develop a "Christian Society". In this he has been likened to Canada's Pierre Trudeau [1919–2000], three-time prime minister between 1968 and 1979 and originator of that country's "Just Society" social democratic doctrine, a moderated Christian socialism: "Trudeau and FitzGerald did not see themselves as departing from their Catholicism. Rather, the old dream of creating in some sense a 'vitally' Christian society

underpinned the new project of creating a 'Just Society'" (Dunlop, 2009, p. 47). However, I am not so much concerned with the abolition as a matter of personal fiat or even a political decision, as of *cultural* change.

Labour had a number of ministries in the new administration that was disproportionately favourable to its size (FitzGerald, 1991, p. 360) but education was to be a Fine Gael brief. Of John Boland [1944–2000], only in his early thirties when appointed to the education role but already "as battle-hardened a fighter as you could wish to meet" (Smith, 1985, p. 403), FitzGerald said: "[his] intuition and ability to see around corners outweighed in my view his abrasiveness of manner" (FitzGerald, 1991, p. 362) and he appears to have been content to trust Boland's political intuitions. The policy was more Boland's than FitzGerald's though the latter is often credited with the reform.[4] Boland's move was not entirely unexpected. It was in line with Labour policy and, as noted above, his Fianna Fáil predecessor, John Wilson, who served as Minister for Education between 1977 and 1981, had initiated a review of the use of corporal punishment in his first year in office (*Irish Independent* 4 December, 1977). But, perhaps in keeping with his party's usually more social conservative approach, Wilson was generally not disposed to act to curb or eliminate it (*Irish Independent* 8 December, 1978a) and his review produced nothing radical.

One newspaper concluded in an editorial that he was: "reflecting the general view of parents"; it went on to lament: "[lack of] discipline in many present-day homes" (*Irish Independent* 9 December, 1978b, p. 8). Public opinion is hard to gauge, all the more so in retrospect, and correspondingly easy to invent, but it bears repeating that there was probably no great *general* demand for corporal punishment's abolition.

Ultimately, it was Boland who took the initiative. The ban started in primary/national and second-level schools, under the terms of Circular 9/82 and Circular M5/82, from 1 February 1982 (DoE, Primary Branch, 1982; DoE, Post-Primary Branch, 1982). Although there was no legislation to effect the change (that only coming later [Glendenning, 2012: paras 8.43–8.49 and 10.05–10.06]), the Minister made it very clear that any school that continued to allow corporal punishment would be cut off from state aid; this de facto ended the practice in all schools in Ireland. This was literally front-page news (Murray, 1982: 1). There was a dearth

of clear direction as to what was to be done in lieu of former practices but national schools teachers were idealistically enjoined, using a language found in editions of the *Rules* document for decades, to treat pupils "with kindness combined with firmness" (DoE, Primary Branch, 1982 [Circular 9/82]). And that, so to speak, might have been that. This work could end there. But it would be naïve to imagine that all was immediately for the best in the best of all possible schools. After lobbying by teachers and others, incoming Fianna Fáil Minister, Martin O' Donoghue [1933–2018], established the Committee on Discipline in Schools to review the policy. It met for the first time in 1982 and reported in 1985 (Committee on Discipline in Schools, 1985).

Meanwhile, the INTO's District XV (representing national schools teachers in north Dublin) had already reported on problems in the aftermath of the ban, concluding that: "February 1st, 1982, appears to have been a watershed in regard to disciplinary procedures in operation in schools" and, without being unduly alarmist, hinting that there may have been "increase[s] of violence and disruptive behaviour in [some] schools" (INTO District XV, 1983: 27 and 7, respectively), pointing towards much residual disquiet at the abrupt change amongst teachers. When the 20 members of the official committee reported, they recognised that schools operated: "[a]gainst a background of uncertainty and rapid change… [in which it had] become normal for people to question and indeed challenge the decisions of those in authority" (para 2.1.4).

They went on to admit: "[a] feature of the [Irish] educational system is that a greater proportion of the more disruptive pupils may be found in one school rather than another" (Committee on Discipline, 1985: 3.2.4). The committee also called for teachers to: "present their lessons in such a stimulating manner as to minimize disruptive behaviour" (Committee on Discipline, 1985: 8.1.4). Sage advice, but something easier said than done. There were already claims being made that standards of behaviour had fallen precipitously in the years immediate after 1982 (Walshe, 1984). Some of the Committee on Discipline's grimmer finding were seized on in certain quarters as evidence of decline (Walshe, 1985a, 1985b; Shaw, 1985; *Irish Press* 1 November , 1985a). An *Irish Press* editorial in the wake of the committee's report provocatively claimed: "[i]n many schools, the discipline has broken down to such a level that a sort

of anarchy reigns" (*Irish Press* 2 November , 1985b: 7). While there may have been a degree of hyperbole in this it was certainly true that, as it added, "the education of non-disruptive pupils suffers" in discipline's absence.

Conclusion

Fifteen years after abolition a second report on school discipline appeared (DoE, 1997). Ultimately, any discussion of such a contentious issue as standards of behaviour in schools, and society more widely, is beset by the fact that there is no simple and agreed set of indicators. Indeed, there is not a common language. What to some is natural childish boisterousness is to others wanton misbehaviour. What to some is legitimate questioning of authority is to others cheek, backchat and disruption. But if we are to conclude this work we need to try, at least tentatively, to explain corporal punishment's existence and demise in the schools of Ireland.

It may not be helpful always to seek explanations of Ireland's problems, current and past, in the legacy of British involvement in its affairs (discussed in: Moane, 2014). It might be wiser to look inward. Thus, given that for the first decades of its existence (and almost a century before) the majority of schools in Ireland were, in one way or another, provided or operated by one religious group and that for the first 60 years after Irish independence corporal punishment was frequently used in those schools, it becomes reasonable to ask if there was something essentially *Catholic* about the approach to corporal punishment in Ireland. Of course, there was corporal punishment in non-Catholic schools in Ireland; even in the late 1970s Irish Anglican authorities formally supported corporal punishment's retention in the schools they controlled (*Irish Press* 15 November, 1978). And many countries that no longer have, or have never had, a dominant Catholic culture have practised it in the past and may still do so in 2020. There are *human* considerations at work in explaining corporal punishment's existence—a general desire for power over others that needs to be conquered if we are to become more fully *humane*. But, to repeat, it becomes reasonable to ask if there was something specifically Catholic about the operation of corporal punishment in Ireland, a

culturally Catholic country, in the period concerned. Various explanations are available here. These are not mutually exclusive and the truth, to the extent it can be known, may (perhaps must) involve a complicated interaction of these causes.

It is possible to point to a certain: "perfectionism and… narrowness", an inheritance of the scholastic tradition perhaps, "[that] was characteristic of Irish Catholicism" (Hogan, 2011, p. 177). This may have made for an intolerance of error in schools and thus go a considerable way towards explaining the widespread tendency (regardless of the actual regulations) to punish for academic failure. It may also have contributed to an almost obsessive focus on the *performance* of discipline. Another analysis very much stresses the circumstances of the Irish Catholic teaching force, many of whom were members of the religious orders specially associated with schools. These had their internal hierarchies and there was an overall hierarchy of sorts, a gradient that ran from prestigious Jesuit to lowly Christian Brother (with equivalents in female orders). One author has advanced what could be considered a version of the circle of abuse thesis. Roughly, this amounts to saying that because members of certain orders (especially the Christian Brothers) were themselves treated very poorly, so they, as the saying goes, took it out on others. Thus, separated from their families at an early age, confined in special establishments in which they were trained, sometimes quite harshly, as future teachers and brothers: "bitterness was generated within some [religious] teachers in response to [their] various [personal] experiences" (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 155); though anything that too closely resembles exculpation of perpetrators is problematic.

We have surely also to take into account the sense of "entitlement and authority" on the part of Irish Catholic nationalism after 1922; a spirit that Browne characterised as "hectoring", "arrogant" and "triumphalist" (Browne, 1986, p. 59). Ireland had been won back from Britain/Protestantism and it was going to be held against that and all future enemies, including abolitionists (Hogan, 2011; McLoone-Richard, 2012).

Mulcahy and other nationalists imagined a continuing threat that was foreign and very human. They wanted schools "characterised by the complementary features of authoritarianism and submissive mediocrity", with a "doctrinaire, custodial mentality" (Hogan, 1983, pp. 47–48),

mistaking these qualities for national virtues. Catholic religious leaders and their most enthusiastic adherents, such as the reactionary "Group of Catholic parents" who constituted themselves as Vera Verba, imagined a threat which, while it had human agents, was spiritual and incorporeal. Theirs was a struggle against the diabolical serpent in a specifically Irish tradition (Vera Verba, 1975; Walsh, 2008). Manifestly, Ireland is not unique in the world in having had ingrained traditions of corporal punishment. Countries predominantly Protestant since the sixteenth century have had infamous histories in this regard (Limond, 2007), but it would be remarkable if its retention for the first 60 years of Irish independence did not reflect the dominant, Catholic, values of the country in some way (Inglis, 1998; Schmitt, 2000; Fuller, 2005; Fanning, 2014). Attitudes towards corporal punishment changed over time in Ireland. But they did not change uniformly: some teachers, parents, politicians and social activists, especially traditionalist Catholics, were more stubbornly resistant to reform/abolition than others were. Why? Admittedly, it was "on the watch" of the avowedly liberal Catholic Garret FitzGerald that abolition came and the more conservatively-minded Catholic Daly (who concurred with my analysis [Daly, 1969b, Daly, C, 2009], though he wished it otherwise)[5] contributed, as did others, but figures associated with an historic Protestant bastion (though ecumenical by the 1970s/1980s) prepared the way. The erosion of corporal punishment's socio-cultural acceptability was a process, not an event, but it was significantly influenced by Sheehy Skeffington and Browne. This change was both caused by and contributed to a more general social transformation: the emergence (for good? for ill? both?) of what might be called a culture of empathetic compassion. Not all approved (Brennan, 2002), but there seemed no prospect of corporal punishment's return to Ireland's schools (far less its courts/prisons [Hamilton, 2015]) in the early twenty-first century and there was shock when somebody who might, even if somewhat tangentially, be described as a teacher resorted to it (McCárthaigh, 2020).

Notes

1. This was noted in 1974 (IUSS 1974: 9-10) and implicitly conceded by the then president of the Teachers' Union of Ireland [TUI], representing vocational teachers, who referred to "overreact[ion]" by TUI members to "aggressive and disruptive pupils" (Webb, 1977: 2).
2. Despite his father's martyrdom he was unpopular with conservative politicians, who treated him boorishly (Stanford, 2001: 140), including during the 1965 Seanad debate (FitzGerald, 1991: 74).
3. The SCPO did not necessarily propose abolition, primarily objecting to *excessive* punishments. Other reforms it proposed included an "Advisory Bureau" to which parents could take questions/complaints (SCPO, 1955: 8).
4. Boland is not exactly forgotten by capricious history, but when his achievements in the DoE are listed, abolition of corporal punishment is sometimes omitted (McManus, 2016: 289). When it *is* mentioned it is not always dwelt on (White, 2009: 635-636; McManus, 2014: 244) and sometimes abolition is referred to without his being named (Coolahan, 2017: 170).
5. Peter Tyrrell, after a lifetime marred by violent abuse in a Christian Brothers' industrial school, giving him more cause than most to complain against Irish schools' punitive culture, committed suicide. Prior to this he sent his memoirs to Sheehy Skeffington; he concluded these by saying: 'We must have a new religion founded on love, friendship and understanding. Ireland ought to be for the people. The [Catholic] priest has made life intolerable for us… We want home rule, NOT ROME RULE [sic]' (Tyrrell, 2006: 170).

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12

The Evolution of Academic Selection in Northern Ireland

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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

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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[2]
	Catholic Maintained	57	36,837	
	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.

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13

Irish School Science Curricula 1831–2020

Paul van Kampen

This chapter sketches the current and historical evolution of the Irish school science curricula, from introduction in the first half of the nineteenth century to recent changes in the twenty-first century. It explores the many changes that have been made to the curriculum over the years, with varying aims and justifications ranging from educational to utilitarian. In this period the prominence of school science has waxed and waned, as have the time and resources allocated to it. Science teacher education has changed accordingly. Differences in the content and uptake of science curricula offered to males and females have varied and generally diminished over the years. Throughout these 190 years it has been acknowledged, and in many cases lamented, that students acquire primarily book knowledge and little living experience of the sciences.

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Introduction

A central theme of this chapter, possibly as old as education itself, was phrased as follows by Edmund Burke: "It must be acknowledged, that the methods of disquisition and teaching may be sometimes different, and on very good reason undoubtedly; but, for my part, I am convinced that the method of teaching which approaches most nearly to the method of investigation is incomparably the best; since, not content with serving up a few barren and lifeless truths, it leads to the stock on which they grew" (Burke, 1759). This chapter is written from the perspective of a scientist, science educator, and science teacher educator who to a large extent shares the views expressed by Burke. First, I will introduce science as a subject and list various arguments people have made over the years for its inclusion in the curriculum. I will then describe the current state of science and science teacher education, and educational policies from their inception in the nineteenth century to the present day. Each of these topics could fill a book, so I have had to make choices and exclude a lot of material. I have chosen to focus on the prominence of science education in the curriculum (e.g., the time and resources allocated, whether it is compulsory or optional); how science teaching and science teacher education are devised, executed, and examined; and gender differences in offering and uptake of science.

Science

Dictionaries define *science* as both what it studies and the knowledge gained from these studies, and *a science* as a subject studied in this way. For example, the online Cambridge dictionary (2020) states that science is:

> (knowledge from) the careful study of the structure and behaviour of the physical world, especially by watching, measuring, and doing experiments the development of theories to describe the results of these activities

and

> a particular subject that is studied using scientific methods.

Two very different readings of the first definition mark the extremes of a spectrum of interpretations and implementations in policy documents and classroom practice. At one extreme, in Ireland in the first two decades of the twentieth century, policy documents paid little attention to the words in parentheses, and (on paper at least) the process of acquiring knowledge using methods of science was paramount; at the other extreme, the parentheses and the qualifier were ignored and learning about the knowledge acquired by scientists took centre stage.

I will use these definitions and the various ways of interpreting them as starting points for examining why studying science at school may be a worthwhile activity, and what it is that we may want people to learn when they do.

Arguments for Science Education in Schools

DeBoer (2000) has compiled a list of nine arguments that have historically been used in favour of including science as part of the curriculum. I have amalgamated those under four headings that indicate possible values of science education:

1. **Intrinsic value**. The inductive process of observing the natural world, designing and executing experiments, and drawing conclusions from them provides a way of generating knowledge that is qualitatively different from deductive reasoning. By carrying out their own investigations students can master this way of thinking, and learn about the validity of data, the nature of evidence, objectivity and bias, tentativeness and uncertainty, and assumptions of regularity and unity in the natural world, while fostering an attitude of independent thought and inquiry.
2. **Democratic value**. If citizens have knowledge of and about science they are better placed to influence and vote on policies pertaining to scientific and socioscientific issues. Science education should enable citizens to be informed about and take part in discussions about science in their everyday lives, including those in the media.

3. **Sociocultural value**. Science is part of our intellectual heritage and cultural experience. Understanding science allows us to experience many everyday occurrences in a more informed and intelligent way. The natural world has a strong aesthetic appeal and knowledge of it can offer a great deal of personal satisfaction to people. Science education can foster sympathetic attitudes toward science and willingness to use scientific knowledge and expertise.

4. **Economic value**. Technology is closely linked to science and has great practical and economic importance. Science education can help people develop an understanding of the nature of technology and the skills needed to plan, carry out, and evaluate technological designs, and open up long term employment prospects.

Thus arguments in favour of inclusion of science education are many and various, yet the history of science education in Ireland is a tale of an often marginalised existence at primary level in line with government policy, and of dominance of fact-based teaching-by-telling at primary and secondary level regardless of government policy. There are many plausible explanations for why things evolved this way. Firstly, introducing a new curricular subject or a different way of teaching it involves change in many guises: it must come at the expense of some of what has traditionally made up the curriculum and was probably included for good reasons. It means teachers must master, be motivated to master, and be given the opportunity to master, new subject material and different approaches to teaching. Secondly, these arguments align with different conceptualisations and implementations of science education. However difficult it may be to create space in the curriculum for one conceptualisation, to accommodate all of them is far more challenging still. Thirdly, there are equally valid arguments for prioritising other topics or goals (as historical examples, take religious and moral education, the Irish language, or numeracy and literacy). Fourthly, one could take issue with some of the arguments advanced. One could downplay the cultural role of science (e.g. promoting a view of Ireland as a land of saints and scholars), have an aversion or hesitancy towards science and technology in general (e.g. in the aftermath of World War II) or its fostering of questioning attitudes and valuing human reason without any reference

whatsoever to God (e.g., as being at odds with item 3 of Pope Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors), or claim that time and money are resources too scarce to allow for learning from investigations. Invariably, the outcome of policy change appears to be that individual teachers or schools will teach science as both knowledge and its acquisition, but the overall effect is small and often limited to accommodating new labels, but not new practices, into teacher-led and fact-based teaching of science.

Scientific Literacy

Since the turn of the twenty-first century the concept of scientific literacy and the desirability of a scientifically literate citizenry has taken root as a prime objective of science education. The term was coined as an analogy with literacy (Holbrook & Rannikmäe, 2009). According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), scientific literacy is "the ability to engage with science-related issues, and with the ideas of science, as a reflective citizen. A scientifically literate person, therefore, is willing to engage in reasoned discourse about science and technology" (OECD, 2013). The term has been around since the late 1950s (Hurd, 1958), and was initially used to emphasise the role of science in society and to express the desire that science education should prepare individuals to effectively participate in human and civic affairs (DeBoer, 2000). While it feels anachronistic to apply the term scientific literacy to nineteenth century policy making, it is clear that similar considerations were at play back then.

Not unlike the different interpretations of "science" described above, there can be serious disagreement about what scientific literacy means and how one should go about achieving it. Some emphasise the importance of knowledge of the content and procedures of science, others stress the need for knowledge of socioscientific issues, others still argue for active participation in socioscientific issues. Liu (2013) has used this distinction to develop a convincing conceptualisation of scientific literacy. Vision I, emphasising scientific content, aligns with an inward orientation and seeing learners as pursuing science; Vision II, knowledge of socioscientific issues, relates science to society and sees the learner as a

future science advocate; and Vision III, science engagement, firmly places science within society and views the learner as becoming an honest broker, aware of social, cultural, political, and environmental issues. Liu points out that, traditionally, scientific literacy, in whatever form, has been seen as deficient in most citizens; that it is left to knowledgeable people such as teachers and scientists to fill the gaps; and that once the gaps are filled, the problem is assumed to be solved.

If this all sounds very familiar—it has indeed been argued that if scientific literacy encompasses the broadest interpretations of Visions I, II and III, it practically becomes synonymous with "science education" (Bybee, 1997), thereby losing its metaphorical power (Holbrook & Rannikmäe, 2009). In this chapter I will use the term scientific literacy as closely analogous to literacy, as it was originally conceptualised, and not as a backdoor entrance for focusing on students acquiring knowledge of scientific facts.

Possible Educational Policies

Imagine a country where the governmental educational policy is simply that schools are free to teach whatever way they want, and that all schools adopt reasonable policies that they believe are best. If you want your imagined country to be a bit like Ireland today, assume that it has somehow come to the immutable conclusion that it is best to gather all people aged 4 to 16 in dedicated buildings, for twenty to thirty hours per week, for roughly half the year, in the company of teachers; that students of similar age should be together, and that each group typically has one teacher assigned to it.

These stipulations are severely limiting. They should in no way be seen as disparaging alternatives such as non-compulsory schooling, home schooling, or master-apprentice models, to name but a few; alternatives are excluded simply because I want this chapter to be about what most schools in Ireland offer, and what is implicitly and explicitly underpinning current Irish educational policy. At the same time, I want to minimise visceral responses that blame policy makers, teachers, teacher unions, boards of management, parents, students, or any group of people; and I

want to avoid turning to excuses for social, cultural, and political factors that make *change* difficult. For this reason, I am starting this discussion with a quasi-blank slate, and then sketching the situation in Ireland today.

These constraints still allow for a lot of variation of what happens within schools—and indeed, different countries have adopted different educational policies that influence how science is taught. In principle, there is nothing to stop schools from taking a holistic approach to education, or to compel them to have all students in the classroom engage in the same activity at the same time.

Educational Policies in Ireland Today

In practice, almost all Irish schools compartmentalise subjects, and typically all students in a given class are doing the same thing at any given time. To explore the prevalence of two of the best-known alternative systems: while in Ireland the word Montessori has become synonymous with preschool or kindergarten, there are fewer than 15 Montessori primary schools, and no Montessori secondary schools. Likewise, there are 13 Steiner kindergartens, five Steiner primary schools, and there is one Steiner lower secondary school[1] that prepares students for upper secondary school, but not for Junior Certificate examinations. The compartmentalisation of subjects does little to encourage adoption of Vision II or III science literacy.

Primary School Science

At primary school science is nominally taught as a single subject by a generalist teacher. The present primary curriculum, adopted in 1999, is built on child-centred principles. A holistic approach is advocated: "it is important to emphasise that all aspects of the child's development are interrelated and that the developmental process is interactive and complex" (Department of Education and Science, 1999a; 40). Science is part of social, environmental and scientific education (SESE), and *prima facie* could accommodate many visions of science education and scientific literacy, as stated in the aims:

A distinctive feature of the science curriculum is the emphasis it places on helping children to develop scientific skills. Practical investigation is central to scientific activity and to the development of a broad range of enquiry skills. Scientific activity involves children in observing, hypothesising, predicting, experimenting, planning fair tests, and analysing results. Skills and methods that are developed through scientific investigations, such as decision-making, data collection, the interpretation of evidence and the communication of results and ideas, are relevant […] Through direct experience of objects and events children develop a framework of scientific ideas and concepts about Living things, Energy and forces, Materials and Environmental awareness and care. (Department of Education and Science, 1999a; p. 51)

While the aims of the Primary Science Curriculum align with Vision II scientific literacy (e.g. "science education equips children to live in a world that is increasingly scientifically and technologically oriented" (Department of Education and Science, 1999a; 6), the objectives align mostly with a traditional knowledge-based understanding of science. In practice, "child-led, autonomous investigations appear to be used relatively rarely as a hands-on strategy" (Varley et al., 2008). Ireland is by no means alone in this (Siarova et al., 2019).

Science is one of 12 compulsory subjects at primary level, but far less than one-twelfth of class time is allocated to it. At 1 hour a week, 34 hours a year, or 4% of the total time students spend at school, the time spent teaching science is the lowest of all 55 countries that participated in the 2019 TIMSS study. Nevertheless, Ireland's score of 528 was significantly above the centre point of 500. In the content domain, physical science was a relative weakness, and earth science a relative strength; in the cognitive area, "knowing" was a relative strength, but just 19% of teachers indicated that half or more of the lessons comprised instructional activities related to science, where the international average was 31% (Clerkin & Perkins, 2020). If the percentage of time dedicated to teaching and learning of science seems low, it is disproportionality large compared to the time most primary teachers spend learning to teach science in their teacher education courses. The Institute of Education at Dublin City University and Mary Immaculate College are the main

providers of primary teacher education in Ireland. Each offer over 400 students a place in their Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programmes. Out of 240 ECTS credits, the compulsory elements of the programmes award approximately 5 credits (i.e., 2%) to science, with the emphasis on pedagogical content knowledge and holistic approaches respectively. Murphy and Smith (2012) found that two-thirds of a cohort of B.Ed. students had studied Biology at Senior Cycle, one-sixth Chemistry, and one-twelfth Physics. While they identified many prevalent misconceptions and gaps in declarative knowledge across all three subjects in areas the students were going to teach, they also found that the majority of students held positive views towards science and thought it was important to teach it.

Secondary School Science

Junior Cycle Science, taken by some 93% of students (with negligible gender difference; State Examinations Commission, 2019) and compulsory in some schools, is nominally taught as a single subject, typically by a qualified Biology, Chemistry, or Physics teacher. It is not uncommon for a school science department to comprise three or four Biology teachers, one Chemistry teacher, and zero or one Physics teacher. As a result, Biology is often taught better and given more time than the other two subjects; it could be argued that in many schools much of Junior Science is *de facto* delivered as out-of-field teaching.

Junior Cycle Science is allocated 200 hours over three years. The 9% of the total teaching hours spent at science is third lowest among the 38 countries participating in the TIMSS 2019 study. Again, Ireland's performance is significantly above the centre point. Physics and chemistry were relative weaknesses, biology was similar to overall performance, and earth science was a relative strength. In the cognitive domain, performance in knowledge was relatively weak but reasoning was relatively strong (Clerkin & Perkins, 2020). The present Junior Cycle specification introduced in 2016 (Department of Education and Skills, 2015) retains a traditional division of science into Physics, Chemistry, and Biology in three of the four contextual strands. The fourth contextual strand, Earth

& Space, comprises elements that would traditionally be found under Physics, Chemistry or Biology, and there is an underlying Nature of Science strand comprising four elements: Understanding about Science, Communicating in Science, Investigating in Science and Science in Society. This underlying strand, and the introduction of the cross-curricular elements Energy and Sustainability, encouraged both integration of science content and development of Vision II (and possibly Vision III) scientific literacy. The specification is written in terms of learning outcomes rather than objectives, indicating a focus on what students will be able to do rather than what teachers should be teaching.

Many learning outcomes of the Junior Cycle Science specification state that students should be able to investigate named scientific concepts. An experimental and a socioscientific investigation that teachers and students are free to choose, as long as they align with the learning outcomes, constitute two classroom-based assessments. These assessments are graded by a rubric that details features of quality. They do not feed into the final grade for Science (apart from a 10% contribution from an assessment task related to a socioscientific issue) but are included in a Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement. Notwithstanding the clear requirements stated in the aims and learning objectives, in the TIMSS 2019 study merely 14% of teachers indicated that half the lessons or more comprised instructional activities related to science investigations, where the international average was 27% (Clerkin & Perkins, 2020).

At upper secondary level students typically take 7 subjects. Physics, Chemistry, and Biology are optional subjects taught separately;[2] there is also a combined Physics/Chemistry option. The uptake of the three subjects is very different, and varies between males and females (State Examinations Office, 2019) (Table 13.1).

Table 13.1 Percentage of students presenting for Leaving Certificate Science 2019

2019	Higher level			Ordinary level		
Subject	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Physics	17%	7%	12%	4%	1%	2%
Chemistry	12%	17%	15%	2%	2%	2%
Biology	36%	60%	48%	12%	13%	13%

The gender imbalance in both Physics and Biology is a complex issue. A recent report concluded that "there is no single barrier or level of influence that can be identified as the overriding factor in achieving gender equity in STEM education and "no single type of intervention that can be identified as the preferred approach to achieving gender equity in STEM education" (Goos et al., 2020, 6–9).

The senior cycle syllabi date from 1999 and are currently under revision. They date from an era when the Science Technology and Society (STS) movement was gaining traction; large parts of STS were adopted by the scientific literacy movement as we know it today. Each of the senior cycle Physics, Chemistry and Biology syllabi are designed to incorporate the following components:

- science for the enquiring mind, or pure science, to include the principles, procedures and concepts of the subject as well as its cultural and historical aspects
- science for action, or the applications of science and its interface with technology
- science, which is concerned with issues—political, social and economic—of concern to citizens.

The three components should be integrated within each science syllabus, with the first component having a 70% weighting. The remaining 30% should be allocated to the other two components in the ratio 3 to 1. The syllabuses, which are offered at two levels, Higher and Ordinary, will have approximately 180 hours of class contact time over a two-year period. They should be practically and experimentally based in their teaching (Department of Education and Science, 1999b; 4).

The aims clearly align with all visions of scientific literacy, and even explicitly allocate 54 hours of time to science in society. However, specifying learning in terms of content-related objectives undermined the aims that were not content-related. In the Physics syllabus for example, under the heading STS there are mostly references to content instead of integration with societal issues or actions, such as "everyday examples" (repeatedly), "importance of friction in everyday experience, e.g., walking, use of lubricants, etc."; "presence of atmosphere" (!); "U-values: use

in domestic situations" (Department of Education and Science, 1999b; 11–26). Some twenty mandatory experiments are specified, which means that most students see some experiments (demonstrated by the teacher, carried out by the students, or both), but rarely are other topics accompanied by, let alone introduced by, experimentation. The large number of detailed, content-related, objectives means that not much time remains for more in-depth or investigative approaches.

To become a qualified teacher at second level in a senior cycle science (or any other subject), a student teacher must accumulate 60 ECTS credits in the subject, corresponding to the equivalent of one full year at university level. There is no qualification for Junior Cycle Science teacher. However, once a teacher is qualified to teach any subject, it is left to the discretion of the school's board of management to decide what they are going to teach. Given the typical make up of a school science department, out-of-field teaching is not as rare as it should be. In many instances Biology teachers end up teaching Chemistry, and Chemistry teachers often teach Physics. At present, the majority of newly qualified science teachers have graduated from concurrent B.Sc. in Science Education programmes from Dublin City University, the University of Limerick, and NUI Maynooth, which all offer a number of modules that combine learning science and learning various ways to teach science.

Assessment

There is no exit exam in the Primary school system while secondary school suffers under the tyranny of the Leaving Certificate examination. Recent attempts to abandon Junior Certificate examinations were rejected, in large part because parents, students and teachers felt it a necessary preparation for the Leaving Certificate exam.

The nature of assessment plays a major role in how any subject is taught, but the effects are perhaps felt most keenly in the sciences. At present, Ireland has terminal examinations at both lower secondary and upper secondary level run externally by the State Examinations Commission; they make up 90% and 100% of the final grade, respectively. Across all subjects the exams have been criticised for being too

narrow in focus. A recent review of senior cycle carried out by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment identified:

> the current perceived purpose of senior cycle in general but the Leaving Certificate in particular, as an entrance examination for third level. This limited purpose was often juxtaposed with the desire to develop the broader skills required to be successful in third level and life beyond school, such as critical thinking, independent learning, communication/presentation and teamwork skills. (NCCA, 2019)

Alternative examination systems are in operation not too far from home: in Flanders (Belgium) for example there are no external examinations, and each school sets its own. In the Netherlands school examinations and state examinations each contribute 50% to the final grade. Students appear to learn science in those countries, too. In Ireland, no practical work is examined: the terminal examination is a pen-and-paper assessment. A system where some assessment is set and graded at teacher or school level lends itself more easily to practical examinations than if they are centrally organised, since the assessment can then be adapted to local circumstances. After a recent trial of practical examinations in senior cycle Physics, Chemistry, and Biology, the State Examinations Commission concluded:

> While the feedback from those involved was generally very positive towards the assessment of practical skills in principle, participants expressed concern about aspects of implementing it as a component of the Leaving Certificate examination. […] students strongly agreed that they would pay more attention to practical work if such an assessment were introduced […] in an ideal world, an assessment of practical work in a modern science curriculum should, if it were possible, seek to evaluate the students' capacity to apply their knowledge and skills to unrehearsed and less familiar problems. The context of the Leaving Certificate examination as an entirely externally assessed and high-stakes examination prevents that from being achieved. (State Examinations Commission, 2018; 6)

In practice, most science classes are "mixed ability", in the sense that students are not streamed according to, for example, prior assessment

results, even though the upper secondary terminal examinations may be taken at two levels, called Higher and Ordinary. Students rarely if ever repeat a year.

The results from TIMSS 2019 may suggest that Ireland has discovered a holy grail: better than average attainment with less than average time spent on learning and doing science. However, while activities related to experiments and laboratory work show the strongest negative relationship with science performance, more frequent inquiry-based teaching is positively related to students holding stronger epistemic beliefs and being more likely to expect to work in science-related occupations when they are 30 (OECD, 2016). As stated by Sjøberg (2017), "if the final test of quality is score on a test (written or digital), it is no surprise that teaching will be more cost-effective if students do not spend time on excursions, experimental work or discussion of socioscientific issues". The history of science education in Ireland shows that many features and issues highlighted here are far from new, and that common classroom practice has changed relatively little despite different priorities prevailing at different times.

History of Science Education at Primary Level in Ireland

The Period 1831–1872

The first national government policy for education dates from 1831, when Ireland was part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In his review of the origins of the Irish National School system, Walsh states:

> The decision to establish a national system of education in Ireland in 1831 arose in response to a number of political, social, economic and religious factors unique to the Irish context. It was primarily a political response to the difficulties of the British Empire in controlling its closest colony and was envisaged as a means to socialise the Irish populace and strengthen Ireland's link with the Empire. It was also a social and economic response to the widespread poverty and the quest for education evident in Ireland,

with the intention that basic literacy and numeracy would improve the position of Ireland's citizens in future generations. It was also a product of the endeavours of the various religious denominations within Ireland to use schools to imbue the upcoming generations with their particular religious beliefs and ensure the survival of their faith. (T. Walsh, 2016b; 8)

The ensuing system of National Education was enacted by the National Board of Education in Ireland (Coolahan, 1983). The Chief Secretary for Ireland, Edward Stanley, had urged strong central control over all books used in schools, and as a result much of the teachers' material and equipment was produced by the Board. The Board placed strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy in English. The Lesson Books the Board produced were designed to be not just school readers but also textbooks of literary and scientific knowledge and intended to become the standard curriculum of national schools (Parkes, 2016). The Fifth (and final) Book for senior classes contained advanced scientific knowledge of the natural world (Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, 1836). Though their use was not compulsory, they were made available at half price and later for free, renewable every four years, which provided a significant incentive for their use.

Thus, while science was included from the outset, it appears not to have been a priority for policy makers. Of course, here as elsewhere in Europe and the US, famous scientists such as Thomas Huxley, Charles Lyell, Michael Faraday, and John Tyndall advocated for inclusion of science primarily for its intrinsic merit (DeBoer, 1991), but for a variety of reasons, religion, literacy, and numeracy were prioritised. Few students would have stayed in school long enough to get to the Fifth Book. At first glance, the general climate cannot be said to have inspired a spirit of inquiry. Teachers were to be "identified in interest with the State, and therefore anxious to promote a spirit of obedience to lawful authority" (Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, 1835; 5) and "to classify the Children according to the National Schools Books; to study those Books themselves; and to teach according to the improved method, as pointed out in their several prefaces; to observe themselves, and to impress upon the minds of their Pupils, the great rule of regularity and order" (Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, 1847; 143). Not too

many of the historical arguments for inclusion of science in the curriculum would seem to have been applied. Still, Parkes states that

> For the first twenty years, the Board's scheme of teacher education had much success. It aimed at the 'education' of teachers rather than mere 'training'. It pioneered innovative teaching methods and published a series of popular graded lesson books, which became the core curriculum. (Parkes, 2016; 48)

To the modern eye, the science contained in the Fifth Book comprises a sequence of definitions followed by examples. Whatever the merits and methods, science content formed part of the curriculum in the final years of primary schooling from the outset.

Teacher education likewise comprised a science component. As in other subjects, it was more or less limited to what teachers were required to teach. In 1844 the so-called monitoring system was adopted, which encouraged the ablest older students to stay on as monitors at national schools to train under an experienced teacher. Model schools were used to demonstrate best practice and the apprentice trainee teachers attended short courses there (T. Walsh, 2016b; Parkes, 2016). Marlborough Street Training College, set up from 1838 as a model school, had one department dedicated to science instruction, the other to elementary education. A network of district model schools was established, only to be abandoned within a quarter of a century for financial and religious reasons. Additionally, students attended the National Board's agricultural centre in Glasnevin, Dublin, (from 1838 onwards called Albert College, now part of the grounds of Dublin City University) for practical instruction in agriculture. For the first four years Marlborough Street Training College admitted males only, but it opened its doors to female student teachers from 1842. The duration of the courses was five months, with two intakes per annum (Parkes, 2016).

The Rev. James William McGauley, an ordained priest and scientist, was the first to be appointed science professor at Marlborough Street. Opinions on his abilities and intentions appear to diverge somewhat. While Parkes (2016) describes McGauley's mechanics and chemistry courses aimed to introduce the students to the pure and applied science

for a total of four hours a week as ambitious, and tells us that he covered most of the material in the Fifth Book of the National Board Lesson Books, Herries Davies (2009) observes, in less than flattering tones:

> He was allowed to operate a laboratory in the board's Marlborough Street headquarters, and between 1840 and 1854 he wrote several mediocre textbooks in algebra, architecture, arithmetic, and physics, all intended for use in Irish national schools.

It is clear that at the outset science education and science teacher education was largely textbook-based and knowledge-focused.

The Period 1872–1922

The report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education Ireland (commonly known as the Powis commission) of 1870 brought about changes that had a major impact on teaching in general, and on teaching science in particular. From 1872 onwards there was a narrowing of subjects to English reading, writing, and arithmetic, plus, optionally, any two subjects from a list of more than twenty that included a host of science courses. While there were clearly laid out syllabi and well-defined examination requirements for all optional subjects, these would have to be taught outside regular school hours. Moreover, teachers were getting paid by results (i.e., the number of students passing exams; pass rates in science were low) and were paid more for results in the three compulsory subjects (T. Walsh, 2016b). By 1899, out of 8670 primary schools in Ireland, 247 taught Physical Geography, 7 taught Magnetism and Electricity, 1 taught Light and Sound, 2 taught Physiology, 2 taught Inorganic Chemistry, and 2 taught Botany. Just under 2500 students took a Physical Geography exam and under 400 took an exam in any of the sciences; the total number of students taking sixth class exams was over 62,000 (Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, 1900). In summary, the era of payment by results practically extirpated primary science in Ireland.

An educational revolution was brewing. In 1898 the Commission on Manual and Practical Instruction in Primary Schools under the Board of National Education in Ireland (better known as the Belmore Commission) concluded, on foot of a study of European and American education systems, that there should be a place for manual and practical subjects at primary school and that the interests and needs of the child should be paramount (Coolahan, 1983). Implementation of its recommendations was swift:

> In connection with Object Lessons and Elementary Science Lessons, as in connection with Manual and Practical Instruction, the Heuristic method should be continuously employed. The pupils should cultivate the habit of obtaining knowledge directly and at first hand, *finding out for themselves*, and thus developing the faculty of observation. (Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, 1902; 75—italics in original)

No doubt the strong support for "heuristic" teaching methods from as famous a scientist as George Fitzgerald, who travelled to London in 1897 as a member of the Belmore Commission (Quane, 2003), favoured the cause. From being pushed to the brink of extinction as collateral damage in a system driven by content coverage and results, for the first and arguably only time in Irish history, teaching of (primary) science was deemed to be an essential element of a child's education for its intrinsic educational value. Science became a core subject at primary level, as the Belmore Commission argued that

> children should be taught not merely to take in knowledge from books, but to observe with intelligence the material world around them; that they should be trained in habits of correct reasoning on the facts observed; and that they should, even at school, acquire some skill in the use of hand and eye to execute the conceptions of the brain. Such a training we regard as valuable to all, but especially valuable to those whose lives are to be mainly devoted to industrial arts and occupations. (Commission on Manual and Practical Instruction in Primary Schools under the Board of National Education in Ireland, 1898; 4)

The Belmore Commission proposed a revised curriculum that came into force in 1900, which advised that out of a total of 30 hours, boys' schools should devote two 45-minute sessions per week to science, and girls' schools two 30-minute sessions—the remaining 30 minutes were to be used for learning about cooking and needlework. If that distinction is somewhat offensive to the modern reader, in 1904, policy makers went further and decided that science meant different things to different genders. With perhaps unrealistic generosity, one could argue that something like Vision I was applied to boys' education and something like Vision II to girls' education: boys were to engage in elementary experimental science, while science for girls was strictly in relation to the materials and operations of the household.

The growth in science uptake was impressive. From practically zero in 1899, in 1900 just over one-third of primary schools already included object lessons in the curriculum, and from 1905 onwards the percentage grew to practically 100% (Durcan, 1972; 117). In the intervening 5 years, all teachers were to be trained in elementary science. Unfortunately, it appears that too little was done to make these grand plans a success. Admittedly, detailed teachers' notes were made available that impressed upon them the importance of adopting a "heuristic" or "natural" method, and a suggested list of experiments was supplied (Office of National Education, 1908). However, the programme was developed without consultation with teachers, and its wide scope gave them an unfamiliar freedom to teach a subject they were not at ease with, using new methods. The evening and weekend courses on offer were not enough to make the programme a success (Department of Education, 1954). In teacher education colleges much time was spent on learning the subject matter itself, which left insufficient time for pedagogical aspects. Some inspectors singled out the time allocation within elementary science teacher education:

> The time, therefore, required for mere study and preparation for the annual examinations which are held at the end of every session remains undiminished, and no relief can be afforded unless the programmes are materially curtailed. The time required for manual training and elementary science seems altogether out of proportion to the value of these subjects as

estimated by the position they hold in the curriculum of the great majority of the schools. (Commission of National Education Ireland, 1904, 6)

Whether cause or effect, in the classroom change in methodology was rare:

In many of the equipped schools, and in the majority of the unequipped schools, these books are still in misuse. I have not found a single instance of an intelligent grasp of subject matter, where these methods of phrase-teaching are pursued. Unless this kind of teaching is to increase, it will be necessary to insist on a closer observance of the schemes and methods suggested in the "Notes for Teachers." (Commission of National Education Ireland, 1910, 171)

Insufficient funding did not help: while in 1901 three hundred awards were made for free equipment grants in 1901, by 1910 teachers had to pay for maintenance out of their own pockets. As a result, the system did not achieve its aims, and elementary science never really took off the way it was intended to. In addition to, or perhaps as an alternative to, elementary science, nature study was introduced in rural schools in 1907, and rural science and school gardening followed in 1912 (Gallagher, 2007).

The Period 1922–1999

After Irish independence in 1922, the primary curriculum changed significantly. A general narrowing of the curriculum and an emphasis on Irish language and culture relegated a number of subjects, including elementary science, rural science and nature study, to the status of optional subjects. However, as early as 1926 rural science made a comeback as a compulsory subject, in the face of opposition to inclusion of a non-cultural subject, in part because it

would be of great indirect utility in making our children favourably disposed towards, and prepared for agriculture, the natural vocation of a large proportion of them. (Bennett, 2000; 13)

Provided there was a teacher in the school qualified to teach the subject, schools with a plot in which students could do rural science would offer it, and those without would offer nature study in alternate years. Rural science and nature study both encompassed topics like states of matter and plant biology; the former included observation of animal life, the latter health and the biology of the human body. Thus, some topics commonly found in primary science curricula were retained. Lessons were not to be taught theoretically, but through demonstration (Department of Education, 1926). Schools that taught rural science were provided with some gardening equipment. The examinations however examined declarative knowledge mainly, with only a few questions asking for explanations. By 1927–1928, 2200 schools (about one quarter of the total number) were teaching rural science or nature study, growing to over 3200 (out of 5000) in 1933–1934. Rural science could be taken as a subject for intermediate and leaving certificate courses in secondary schools from 1928 (Gallagher, 2007).

At that juncture, government policy changed once again. In 1934 rural science and nature study ceased to be compulsory, to allow greater emphasis to be placed on the teaching of the Irish language. A primary certification examination came into being from 1929, at first optional, and in all subjects taken. The Primary Cert became compulsory in 1943 (until it was abolished in 1967); from then on, it was limited to Irish, English and arithmetic. In this regard government policy for primary schools closely resembled that of the late nineteenth century. Formal science was thought to be beyond the capabilities of students of primary school age, while at the same time the study of nature was considered "the highest form of aestatic training for the child […] It gives him [sic] an appreciation and understanding of those surroundings in which he moves and acts, trains him to value and admire his immediate neighbourhood, teaches him to observe and to use that power of observation for his further education" (Report of the Council of Education, 1954).

Perhaps predictably, given the developments in the late 1800s, the narrowness of the curriculum and irrelevance of the curriculum to students' futures, by the 1960s the system was once again seen to be in crisis. The Investment in Education report also identified the dominant position of the Irish language as problematic (Department of Education, 1965).

Moreover, in the western world science was seen as the path to economic growth, and the Sputnik effect was felt: widespread panic that the Soviet Union was ahead in science and technology and presumably on an inexorable path to world domination, which could only be remedied by providing more advanced education in science and technology. Interestingly, almost everywhere this translated into policies advocating students *doing*, not just learning about, science. In the 1971 Curaclam na Bunscoile, Nature Studies along with History, Geography and Civics became part of a new subject called Social and Environmental Studies, one of 7 compulsory subjects in a new, child-centred curriculum (Department of Education, 1971). History repeated itself once again: in practice, in most classrooms didactic approaches continued to reign supreme, and a narrow range of subjects was taught.

History of Science Education at Second Level in Ireland

The Period 1878–1922

Government did not become involved in second level teaching until the late 1870s. O'Raifeartaigh (1958; 46) remarked that

> […] our system of independent Secondary schools was in very large part a purely native growth in response to native needs and that it was only in 1878 that the State, by way of the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act, first made any attempt to assist secondary education generally.

Intermediate Schools were established during the payment by results era. They were open to both boys and girls, almost always segregated by gender. Up to that point, some schools had offered science and science examinations under the auspices of the Department of Science and Art at South Kensington (Wallace, 1972). Butterworth offers a fascinating insight into the ongoing competition between science for science's sake and science for trade, as well as the expected concern that "cramming" for examinations could easily replace and even masquerade as learning. In

1882, a practical examination was added to Physics, and no classes would be examined in Physics unless the school provided apparatus for some of the more important experiments; the teacher might also be called upon to show his ability to perform some of them (Butterworth, 1968; 208–209), with similar developments in Practical Chemistry. For some twenty years, schools could take either that examination or the one provided by the Intermediate Board, and use associated textbooks and methods. It is not surprising that most schools adopted the Intermediate Board's examinations.

The report of the Intermediate Education Board for Ireland for the first year the system was in operation provides some interesting data. Each of the three years of Intermediate schooling was to be concluded by an exam (called Junior, Intermediate, and Senior). The curriculum was split into 7 divisions, four of which comprised the language, literature, and history of Greece; Rome; Great Britain and Ireland; France, Germany, and Italy, together with the Celtic language and literature. Division 5 comprised Mathematics, including arithmetic and book-keeping; division 6 natural sciences, and division 7 "such other subject of secular education as the Board may from time to time prescribe" (Report of the Intermediate Education Board for Ireland, 1879). Overall, 3218 boys and 736 girls were examined, of whom 57% and 65% passed in at least two divisions, respectively. The report noted:

> As the educational condition of a country depends on that of all sections of its population, and this Act was passed to promote education without distinction of religion, it is satisfactory to note that the first examination has shown that good schools and successful students are not the peculiar possession of any religious denomination.

The Junior examination was taken by 2163 boys and 521 girls. The following Table 13.2, adapted from the Report of the Intermediate Education Board for Ireland for 1879 (Intermediate Education Board, 1880), gives an indication of the uptake and pass rate including natural philosophy (physics), chemistry, and botany.

In 1879, girls made up 19% of the nearly 2700 examinees. The uptake of science was modest among boys (for example, 25% of all male

Table 13.2 Intermediate Examination, Science: comparative data 1879

1879				
Division	Boys attempted	Pass rate	Girls attempted	Pass rate
All	*2163*		*521*	
English	2111 (98%)	39%	511 (98%)	50%
Arithmetic	2144 (99%)	93%	494 (95%)	91%
French	1034 (48%)	68%	315 (60%)	32%
Natural philosophy	540 (25%)	88%	6 (1%)	33%
Chemistry	323 (15%)	38%	4 (1%)	50%
Physical geography	596 (28%)	70%	70 (13%)	76%
Botany	154 (7%)	27%	28 (5%)	72%

examinees took a natural philosophy exam, of whom 88% passed), and deplorable among girls. Just as at primary level, schools that had, prior to 1878, offered a science programme that used investigative approaches found themselves under pressure to adopt a much narrower content and didactic approach to get paid for students passing the exams (B. Walsh, 2016c). Practically every report of the era mentions that students acquired book knowledge and very little practical or experimental knowledge of the science subjects. It cannot have helped that the Board used named textbooks to illustrate the matter the examinations would cover, despite its protestations that "it is to be distinctly understood that the Text-Books mentioned within brackets in the Programme are not prescribed or even recommended" (Intermediate Education Board for Ireland, 1880).

By 1892, physical geography had vanished at second level, and botany was only taught to girls. Practically all students took French, and more boys and proportionally more girls took examinations. Science exams were taken by three quarters of boys and one-fifth of girls. However, pass rates were low (Intermediate Education Board for Ireland, 1893) (Table 13.3).

A mere seven years later, presumably due in large part to the high failure rates and income thereby lost, science uptake was down by an astonishing 80% (Intermediate Education Board for Ireland, 1900) (Table 13.4).

The Commission of Inquiry into Intermediate Education (1898–1899), like the Belmore Commission, addressed the difficulties that arose in the payment by results era, and singled out some that applied to science explicitly:

Table 13.3 Intermediate Examination, Science: comparative data 1892

1892				
Division	Boys attempted	Pass rate	Girls attempted	Pass rate
All	*2177*		*765*	
English	2148 (99%)	71%	764 (100%)	82%
Arithmetic	2154 (99%)	70%	736 (96%)	58%
French	2040 (94%)	60%	756 (99%)	79%
Natural philosophy	954 (44%)	48%	25 (3%)	24%
Chemistry	716 (33%)	41%	18 (2%)	17%
Botany	–	–	128 (17%)	49%

Table 13.4 Intermediate Examination, Science: comparative data 1899

1899				
Division	Boys attempted	Pass rate	Girls attempted	Pass rate
All	*3158*		*1119*	
English	3141 (99%)	90%	1118 (100%)	94%
Arithmetic	3133 (99%)	72%	1067 (95%)	69%
French	3021 (96%)	74%	1111 (99%)	84%
Natural philosophy	311 (10%)	56%	4 (0%)	50%
Chemistry	167 (5%)	78%	7 (1%)	71%
Botany	–	–	66 (6%)	71%

One of the undoubted advantages of inspection is that it renders it possible to apply *viva voce* examinations in testing school-work. We have already pointed out that a public general examination held for the whole of Ireland in several hundred centres must, for practical reasons, be conducted by written papers only. But there are certain branches, the efficient teaching of which cannot be adequately tested in that way. Amongst these are the Natural and Experimental Sciences and Modern Languages. In these subjects written papers without the addition of *viva voce* or of practical examination are not an adequate test. *Viva voce* examination is also of importance in testing the proper teaching of English and proficiency in Shorthand. On this point there was but little difference of opinion among the witnesses whom we have examined. (Intermediate Education (Ireland) Commission, 1899; 12)

The Commission generally came out in favour of written general examinations as they made possible cheap and objective testing that allowed for comparing the efficiency of schools, though they

acknowledged that "this system has a tendency to hamper a good teacher in his choice of educational methods and instruments, to lead teachers to concentrate their attention on the pupils sent in for examination, to the comparative neglect of others, and to interrupt the regular school work by preparation for the periodical examinations" (Intermediate Education (Ireland) Commission, 1899; 13). They were neither the first nor the last to attempt to square the circle by concluding that it should be possible to devise a general examination that would "test true educational work, as distinct from the mere overloading of the memory, and to be within the capacity of a well-taught pupil of average ability" (Intermediate Education (Ireland) Commission, 1899; 14).

Moreover, they advocated a kind of streaming as early as the junior course, but not at the preparatory course (which had been added to the Intermediate school curriculum in 1892). One course, the "liberal" or "grammar school" course, would carry on as usual, while a second course, the "modern" course, would be characterised by teaching distinct subjects, as this was seen to align better with students' future careers particularly those who would, in all probability, leave school before completion of the Intermediate cycle (Intermediate Education (Ireland) Commission, 1899; 17):

> […] we propose to divide the Intermediate curriculum into at least two separate courses, each having a separate programme, viz;
>
> (1) The Grammar School course, specially adapted for students who intend to enter a University or compete for the higher branches of the Civil Service.
> (2) The Modern course, in which Natural and Experimental Sciences and Modern Languages will have special weight attached to them.

While the Commission thought the same grammar school course should be open to boys and girls, they did not rule out modifying standards for girls in the modern course, apparently to avoid over-pressure and over-work. While on the one hand, over-pressure merited its own subsection, it appears to have been dismissed somewhat casually:

The particular matter towards which Dr FitzGerald, as an oculist, directed his attention was the injurious effect of over-study on eyesight, but the evidence of the other medical men extended further. We do not believe that this danger can be altogether avoided, under any system, in an age when competition in the race of life is so keen, and when success depends so largely on the results of competitive examinations. (Intermediate Education (Ireland) Commission, 1899; 21)

They recommended special grants be awarded to promote the teaching of science:

[…] we recommend that the Board should be empowered to advance money to managers of schools, upon approved security, to enable them to purchase equipment and appliances for the teaching of practical science, and for similar purposes to be approved by the Board. (Intermediate Education (Ireland) Commission, 1899; 21)

The result of adopting some but not all recommendations gave rise to somewhat bizarre outcomes. On the one hand, grants were available for the provision of laboratories and equipment, and schools took advantage of these (Dale & Stephens, 1905). A new subject that subsumed natural philosophy and chemistry called Experimental Science could be taught over four years. The first two years comprised general physics and chemistry, "designed primarily to familiarise the pupil with the methods and principles common to all branches of scientific inquiry". In the final two years students could take specialised subjects such as chemistry, mechanical science, and botany (Dale & Stephens, 1905). Schools were still paid by result in general examinations, but received additional funds for the inclusion of Science. This led to "a disproportionate amount of time given to Science in many schools", students attending two or three different science courses at different times, and the Board arguing for restoring the traditional role of the Ancient Classics (Intermediate Education Board for Ireland, 1911; xi).

Despite many trials and tribulations at policy level, by 1920, roughly 40% of intermediate students were girls; and some 70% of boys took physical science, and 50% of girls (Intermediate Education Board for Ireland, 1921) (Table 13.5).

Table 13.5 Intermediate Examination, Science: comparative data 1920

1920				
Subject	Boys attempted	Pass rate	Girls attempted	Pass rate
All	*4346*		*3402*	
English	4334 (100%)	75%	3392 (100%)	81%
Arithmetic	4337 (100%)	80%	3399 (100%)	76%
French	2300 (53%)	65%	3099 (91%)	59%
Physical science	3092 (71%)	80%	1714 (50%)	68%

The Period 1922–1968

After the Irish Free State was established, the Department of Education replaced the Intermediate Education Board. On the administrative side, a capitation grant replaced payment by results. In 1924 Intermediate and Leaving Certificate courses were established, each with a terminal examination set by the state. For the Intermediate course:

> […] the Department require grant-earning pupils up to the Intermediate Certificate stage to follow a minimum course of five subjects which must include Mathematics, History and Geography, and two languages, one of which must be either Irish or English. Instead of Mathematics girls may take a composite subject consisting of Arithmetic and either Science or Domestic Science or Drawing or Music. For the Intermediate Certificate Examination, the pupils have to include in future Irish, English, and Mathematics (with alternative for girls as above) among the five subjects. In laying down this course for the pupils up to the Intermediate Certificate stage, the Department of Education is endeavouring to ensure that the pupils in the Secondary Schools shall receive, before specialisation begins, a sound general education in the four main subjects with which Irish boys and girls should be acquainted. (Department of Education, 1927; 51)

So, it was back to square one for science: unlike a quarter of a century before, it was not considered one of the four main subjects that constitute a sound general education. Science for boys was still seen as different from science for girls. Nevertheless, the Department was quite happy with how science was taught to those who chose it:

The revised programmes prepared for the session 1924–25 have proved successful and have been adopted without modification by the great majority of schools. The main principle in these programmes was the division of the four years' preparation for the Intermediate Certificate examination into two periods. The earlier period, for pupils from 12 to 14 years of age, gave great freedom to the teacher as to scope and methods of instruction, and left him free from the constraining influence of preparation for examination. It has enabled teachers to broaden their instruction and to make the pupils' introduction. to science a study of common experience.

The greater demand that such instruction makes upon the knowledge and enthusiasm of the teacher and his preparation of lessons has met with adequate response, and greater experience will enhance the value of this preparatory course. In the later period the broadening of subject matter and the improvement in laboratory teaching have led to satisfactory progress.

The preparatory course includes the study of living things and common phenomena not previously dealt with in the school programmes. Many teachers had little experience of such instruction, but the want has been met by special summer and sessional courses. Little serious criticism of the programmes has been forthcoming; any difficulties that have arisen have been solved by conferences between representative teachers and the inspectors. The general course of Science has been selected in most schools and on the whole well taught. Better results are achieved when it is preceded by one or more years of the preparatory course. A common weakness is the failure to emphasize the bearing of the subject matter upon common experience. (Department of Education, 1927; 67)

Not much detail is given about Leaving Certificate science courses, but regarding science teacher education there was a clear message:

The "school science" teacher should not be a one subject man but should be educated broadly, and should be in a position to break down the distinctions, often artificial, between the divisions in which elementary Science is sometimes arranged. The general 'Science examination' embracing physical and biological studies, has been devised to ensure a supply of teachers capable of giving the broad type of instruction demanded in the preparatory course. (Department of Education, 1927; 68)

Table 13.6 Leaving and Intermediate Certificate Science, comparative data 1928

1928	Boys attempted	pass rate	Girls attempted	pass rate
Inter Cert				
All	*1945*		*1262*	
English	1941 (100%)	87%	1262 (100%)	90%
Mathematics	1941 (73%)	78%	1013 (80%)	52%
French	305 (16%)	70%	1027 (81%)	76%
Science	1133 (58%)	83%	301 (24%)	88%
Leaving Cert				
All	*529*		*306*	
English	527 (100%)	87%	306 (100%)	91%
Mathematics	491 (93%)	62%	232 (76%)	48%
French	69 (13%)	65%	213 (70%)	94%
Physics	48 (9%)	75%	1 (0%)	100%
Chemistry	187 (35%)	81%	11 (4%)	91%
Botany	–	–	39 (13%)	100%
Rural Science	9 (2%)	89%	21 (7%)	91%

In the narrowed curriculum, fewer boys and far fewer girls took science (Department of Education, 1929; 127–139): in fact, the numbers were comparable to 1879. Rural Science, a continuation of the primary subject, was introduced at second level. In 1928, the first year the new curricula were examined, participation and pass numbers were as follows (Table 13.6).

As ever, provision of laboratory facilities appears to have been a problem. A 1928 proposal from the Department of Education to make Science compulsory at intermediate level was quietly shelved (Wallace, 1972). In 1933–1934, a Lower course in science at Intermediate level in which "the instruction will be provided mainly by lectures, demonstrations, and text-books, and individual experiments by the pupils will not be insisted on" was examined for the first time (Department of Education, 1934; 53), in line with Irish, English, French, German and Elementary Mathematics for girls at Intermediate level. Rural Science disappeared from the curriculum. Leaving Certificate Physics, Chemistry and Botany courses were divided into Full and Lower courses, as was a new subject General Science (again devoid of experimentation). They were also examined for the first time in the year 1933–1934, and the combined

Physics/Chemistry subject was first examined at Leaving Certificate level in 1939–1940 (Department of Education, 1940; 19–21).

By 1948, Lower courses had been abolished again. More girls were taking the Intermediate Certification than boys, and generally participation in secondary education had increased significantly. Physiology and Hygiene, a course that included some aspects of biology as well as what we would now call Home Economics, was introduced. However, apart from a small increase in uptake of Intermediate Certificate Science among boys, participation in science had not changed significantly (Department of Education, 1948; 103–106). It is striking that girls outnumbered boys in the non-experimental General Science subject.

At Intermediate Certificate level, there were relatively minor revisions to the Intermediate science syllabus in 1949, and to physics, chemistry and botany at Leaving Certificate level in 1954 (Wallace, 1972). Significant changes in outlook and content did not happen until a study of the Irish educational system was undertaken between 1962 and 1965, initiated by the OECD.

The Period 1968–Present

The report of the survey team that carried out the study, *Investment in Education*, had far-reaching consequences for the education system in its entirety. It proved to be a first step toward the abolition of the Primary Certificate in 1968, more child-centred curricula, and the introduction of free secondary education (J. Walsh, 2016a; 250–253). Of special significance for science education was its finding that the classic grammar school type curriculum in force in many secondary schools neglected science, mathematics and modern continental languages (J. Walsh, 2016a; 245).

In 1968, the Leaving Certificate Physics and Chemistry syllabi were changed significantly, and a new Biology syllabus was introduced, which comprised much of the former Botany and Physiology & Hygiene syllabi, plus the characteristics and interdependence of living things, microbiology, and genetics (Kellaghan & Hegarty, 1984). As the Table 13.7 shows, the impact on science uptake was significant (Department of Education, 1948; 103–106: 1958; 83–86: 1968; 48–51: 1978; 57–58).

Table 13.7 Leaving and Intermediate Certificate Science 1948–1978

	1948	1958	1968	1978
Inter Cert	Boys			
All	*4575*	*6661*	*10580*	*23575*
Science	2705 (59%)	4188 (63%)	9002 (85%)	21257 (90%)
Leaving Cert				
All	*2152*	*3700*	*7254*	*16381*
Physics	296 (14%)	818 (22%)	2225 (31%)	2286 (14%)
Chemistry	382 (18%)	854 (23%)	2227 (31%)	2778 (17%)
Physics/Chemistry	94 (4%)	166 (4%)	800 (11%)	338 (2%)
Biology	–	–	–	3327 (20%)
Botany	3 (0%)	107 (3%)	284 (4%)	–
Physiology &Hygiene	–	55 (1%)	240 (3%)	–
General Science	110 (5%)	265 (7%)	145 (2%)	–
Inter Cert	Girls			
All	*4637*	*7637*	*12731*	*25848*
Science	987 (21%)	1451 (19%)	3335 (26%)	13031 (50%)
Leaving Cert				
All	*1723*	*3241*	*7503*	*19423*
Physics	8 (0%)	9 (0%)	130 (2%)	430 (2%)
Chemistry	20 (1%)	31 (1%)	398 (5%)	1588 (8%)
Physics/Chemistry	17 (1%)	36 (1%)	397 (5%)	161 (1%)
Biology	–	–	–	5771 (30%)
Botany	122 (7%)	260 (8%)	1129 (15%)	–
Physiology &Hygiene	307 (18%)	1522 (47%)	3918 (52%)	–
General Science	164 (10%)	120 (4%)	107 (1%)	–

Before the introduction of the new syllabi (first examined in 1971), there had been a steady increase in uptake of each of the sciences. By 1968, at Intermediate Certification level, boys' participation was up to five-sixths, while that of girls had grown to one-quarter. At Leaving Certification level, general science never really prospered. The subjects most popular with girls—Botany and Physiology & Hygiene—were least popular with boys, and vice versa. With the introduction of the new syllabi, boys' participation in Leaving Certificate Physics and Chemistry halved, and Biology became the most popular science for boys. Girls' participation in Junior Certification Science doubled in ten years, but their participation in Biology was half of what the combined uptake of Botany and Physiology & Hygiene had been.

The lower secondary Science syllabus was revised in 1989 (now under the name Junior Certificate) and again in 2003. It appears that policy makers were dissatisfied with the actual change taking place in the classroom:

> While most of the content of the syllabus will be familiar to science teachers, this syllabus differs from that introduced in 1989 in a number of respects.
> - The most significant change is an increased emphasis on scientific investigation and on the application of science process skills in student activities.
> - The overall length of the syllabus has been significantly reduced to allow for student engagement in learning activities that will enable them to gain a better understanding of the science concepts involved and to develop their science process skills. (Department of Education and Science, 2003a; 2)

The revised Junior Certificate Science syllabus of 2003 allocated 10% of marks to the completion of mandatory experiments, that were designed so that a "student follows a prescribed procedure in order to test a theory, to confirm a hypothesis or to discover something that is unknown … to make scientific phenomena more real to students and provide them with opportunities to develop manipulative skills and safe work" and 25% to an investigation, "in which the student seeks information about a particular object, process or event in a manner that is not pre-determined in either procedure or outcome. … Investigations can be used to develop skills of logical thinking and problem solving, and can give the student an insight into the scientific process" (Department of Education and Science, 2003b; 7).

Upon the introduction of these investigations as part of the exam process, many teachers complained about the "lack of sample completed investigations" (Eivers et al., 2006).Professional development "roadshows" were run in which teachers were presented with "the" way of running the investigations efficiently and obtaining high grades for their students (McDonald et al., 2019). The content-heavy syllabus left little time to engage in inquiry-based learning (Cheevers et al., 2006). A survey of 1500 university science students revealed that about 30% of them had never carried out physics experiments at lower secondary level, and 55% had only carried out physics experiments after teacher demonstration

(McDonald et al., 2019). Once again, content-based teacher-led education proved hard to supplement, let alone dislodge.

In 1999, revised senior cycle syllabi were introduced for all the sciences. They are still in force today, and have been described at the start of this chapter. While the overall aims of education have not changed drastically since the late 1960s, each aimed to increase the amount of experimentation and investigation that would take place in the classroom. New specifications framed in terms of learning outcomes are under development, and are scheduled to come into effect in 2022.

Conclusion

In the last 200 years the prominence of science in the curriculum has waxed and waned with the political, social, and economic tides. With the exception of a short period at the start of the twentieth century, the intrinsic value of learning science nearly always appears to have played a secondary role, and for this reason, at any moment the science curriculum must be viewed in the context of its time and as a product of its past. Science education suffered a late start and has at times practically vanished from the classroom when greater value was placed on other subjects. Its stock rose whenever economic considerations required more scientists and more scientific literacy. How policymakers state science should be taught has fluctuated strongly from the purely didactic to the mainly exploratory. What happens in the classroom from early childhood on has changed with the policies, albeit in much diminished form, because it never strayed far from teacher-led education, even in the last 50 years when policy has consistently tried to move the teaching of science to inductive and more holistic approaches that promote improved scientific literacy.

Notes

1. I use the terms "primary", "lower secondary" and "upper secondary" school throughout for the sake of generality and consistency. In Ireland, primary schools are or have been known as "national" or "elementary" schools. Lower secondary school was once known as "Intermediate" education; the education it offers to students typically aged 12-15 today goes by the name of Junior Cycle. Upper secondary or Senior Cycle education is provided for students typically aged 15-18. Education is compulsory up to 16, but almost all students complete senior cycle. At present lower and upper secondary education each have a terminal exam, the Junior Certificate Examination ("Junior Cert") and Leaving Certificate Examination ("Leaving Cert"). It is perhaps revealing that these two terms are used to refer both to the exam and the three years of teaching that went before.
2. I am omitting Agricultural Science from this discussion.

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14

Dr. T.J. O'Connell's Contribution to Irish Education Policy 1922–1957

Antonia McManus

T.J. O'Connell (1882–1969) was uniquely placed to influence Irish education policy when the Irish Free State was founded in 1922, and he was eminently qualified to do so, He had already acquired an extensive knowledge of the policy and practice of Irish education under the British regime, having served as a 13-year-old school monitor (1895);[1] a trainee teacher (1900–1902); and an assistant teacher (1902), before being appointed principal of Streamstown Boys' National School, in Co. Westmeath (1905–1916). But it was in his role as General Secretary of the country's largest teaching union, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) (1916–1948), as the Labour Party's education spokesman in the Dáil (1922–1932), and later as an independent Senator in the 1940s and 1950s that he was to exercise his greatest influence. It should be noted that O'Connell's role as General Secretary and his role as the Labour Party's education spokesman overlapped during the decade he served in the Dáil. His role as General Secretary also overlapped with his

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role as a Senator from 1941 to 1944. He went on to serve two further terms in the Seanad from 1948 to 1951 and from 1954 to 1957.

O'Connell was a strong advocate of children's rights in education, as he highlighted the dangers children were exposed to while sweeping classrooms in sub-standard schools. He called for the medical inspection and treatment of children in national schools, and for an end to the practice of employing children to work on farms. He championed teachers' rights, insisting that their educational experience and research were worthy of respect; that they had a right to a professional course of training; to a just inspection system; and to a salary in-keeping with the dignity of their profession. O'Connell was a progressive educator who gained an international reputation when he was appointed as one of the Vice-Presidents of the World Federation of Education Associations in 1927. He was familiar with educational developments abroad and promoted educational reforms, many of which were introduced decades later. In this chapter it is proposed to set out O'Connell's key educational objectives, and the obstacles he had to overcome in their pursuit. It will also examine his contribution to the development of Irish education policy and will offer an assessment of the importance of his legacy to Irish education.

The Constitution and Education

O'Connell and the INTO had rejoiced at the demise of the old National Board of education, as they looked forward to a native government, which would advance educational reforms. The first indication that this might not be the case came in September 1922, when the constitution of the new state and its education provisions came under discussion in the Dáil. O'Connell made a significant contribution to the debate having studied the constitutions of seven different countries with regard to education (ISW 1922: 916).

It was unacceptable to O'Connell that the constitution, as submitted to the Dáil, included a mere sentence on education. *Article 10* entitled all school-going children to free elementary education, but this was just a continuation of a provision the Government had inherited from the

British regime. He considered the proposal 'altogether too meagre' (DD, 1922a: 697).

O'Connell moved an amendment which was much more ambitious in scope. It sought 'The right of the children to food, clothing, shelter and education' and for the State to provide 'free education of the young up to an age to be prescribed by law'. Furthermore, his amendment included the radical suggestion that 'secondary and higher education institutions shall be readily accessible in the case of persons of small means' (DD, 1922a: 696–698).

Kevin O'Higgins, the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs rejected O'Connell's proposals, which he considered excessive. Then O'Connell submitted a modified amendment on 18 October, but the Minister bluntly explained why he would not accept it. He said 'it might mean if you fix the age at 14 or 15 you will have some desperately precocious youngster 'sticking' the State … for nor merely his elementary education but for secondary education and possibly for a certain amount of university education '(DD, 1922b: 1697–1702). O'Higgins remained adamant that his short draft Article would suffice.

The most controversial aspect of O'Connell's amendment was that which suggested that public and private educational establishments should be controlled by the state. O'Connell, who was himself a devout Catholic, was at pains to emphasise during the debate, that advocacy of interference by the state, did not amount to 'godless education' (DD, 1922c: 1709), as he fully accepted the religious basis of education. His reassuring words were hardly likely to find acceptance from the Catholic Church, which found the idea of a state education system abhorrent, as it 'had gone through centuries of unpleasant relations with the Irish Government before Independence. Not only that, but the Catholic Church was well aware of the pressures which the modern state had brought to bear on the church in certain continental countries (Akenson, 1975: 102).

Educational Apathy

O'Connell had to contend with educational apathy not only among the electorate, but also among Dáil deputies. Speaking in the Dáil in June 1925, he asked 'how many Deputies have ever been heckled on educational matters?' (DD, 1925a: 823–826). He recorded in his *History of the INTO 100 years of progress* how the Minister for Education 'spoke to practically empty Benches' (O'Connell, 1969: 450), during the most important education debate of the year on the Education Estimates. But on this occasion when the Dáil Estimates were up for discussion the Minister for Education, Eoin MacNeill (1922–1925) was conspicuous by his absence, as he fulfilled his role as Southern Ireland's representative on the Boundary Commission.[2]

O'Connell knew how the Minister's absence would be interpreted by the general public as indifference observing that 'the one service about which it does not matter much whether or not a Minister is in charge was education'. It galled O'Connell that MacNeill was not doing his job, which was to stimulate an interest in education by taking 'advantage of every possible occasion that arises by meetings, conferences of teachers and educational bodies' in order to 'bring before the people the necessity for education' (DD, 1925a: 823–825).

MacNeill returned to the Dáil on 11 November 1925 and O'Connell questioned him on a range of issues, which included his educational policy, and the long awaited compulsory school attendance bill. MacNeill's answers were vague. He expressed a dislike of compulsion, especially as it related to the school attendance bill, but a Dáil resolution had been passed for the bill back in November 1922. Finally, he offered reassurance that a school attendance bill 'will very shortly be presented to you' (DD, 1925b: 190).

O'Connell became frustrated with MacNeill's pronouncement of his education policy, in which he claimed that the chief function of Irish education was to conserve and develop Irish nationality (DD, 1925c: 187). O'Connell asked 'how many in the House know what the policy of the Minister for Education is?' (DD, 1925d: 193–194). O'Connell laid claim to being 'thoroughly acquainted not only with the policy, but with

the practice and administration of the Ministry', but even he was 'not in a position to say what the policy of the Minister for Education' was. The debate took place over three days and an account of it filled seventeen columns of the Parliamentary Debates. The root cause of O'Connell's shaming of the Minister, was his deep sense of disappointment that a native government could treat education as indifferently as it had been treated under the British regime. He informed MacNeill that 'We looked forward to the home Government fostering Irish education' but 'now we find that the Ministry responsible for the Government of the country takes the subject so lightly that it can detach the Minister for Education' (DD, 1925d: 193–194).

The absence of the Minister for Education for the most important Dáil debate on the Education Estimates, and the three-year delay for a school attendance bill in a country with one of the worst school attendance records in the British Isles, was a reflection of the extent of educational apathy in the country and in the Dáil.

School Conditions for Pupils and Teachers

To O'Connell the main blot on the educational landscape was the woeful neglect of 'the proper maintenance and equipment of the school-rooms and school buildings,' which was more common in rural parts of the country (DD, 1922d: 2564). In recent memory he had led an INTO campaign supporting the MacPherson Education Bill (1919–1920), which the Catholic hierarchy vigorously and successfully opposed. The bill recommended, among other things, the establishment of new bodies to take control of certain managerial duties in national schools, such as school maintenance, but this was anathema to the Catholic hierarchy.

But by December 1922 the deteriorating condition of school buildings became a matter of grave concern, as O'Connell pointed out in the Dáil, that it was 'generally admitted that the system had broken down, (DD, 1922e: 2551). He was referring to the voluntary contribution system, which required school managers to provide 'the school site and one-third of the building costs, (Coolahan, 2017: 11) when applying for a new school building. Throughout his twenty-year quest for a resolution

to this question, O'Connell never blamed the school managers who were burdened with raising the local contribution, and who were expected to maintain schools on a derisory state grant.

In the absence of proper school maintenance facilities, children were expected to play their part, but O'Connell repeatedly raised objections to 'the practice of having the schoolrooms and classrooms swept out in the evenings by the children' who were 'hungry and tired after school' (DD, 1922e: 2552), and therefore vulnerable to infection (DD, 1925e: 477; 1926: 401–402). He referred the Minister for Education, Eoin MacNeill (1922–1925) to the departmental reports which confirmed that 'children are attending school cold and hungry and there is … no adequate provision for their relief from cold or hunger' (DD, 1925f: 198–199).

He took the opportunity to alert MacNeill to the existence of an act of parliament dating back to 1919, which had never been activated, but which provided for the medical inspection and treatment of children. It was understood that he would pass on this information to the Minister for Local Government and Public Health, under whose purview it came. This was the Public Health (Medical Treatment of Children) (Ireland) Act 1919. Two years later, County Medical Officers of Health were appointed and they provided medical inspection of children, as well as detailed reports on the appalling condition of school buildings.

More than a decade later, the Fianna Fáil Minister for Education, Thomas Derrig (1932–1939; 1940–1948), made the startling announcement in the Seanad that 600 new national schools were required, of which 300 were 'in the very urgent category' (SD 1942–1851). The Minister was content to wait until the emergency[3] was over, before dealing with this crisis, and in the meantime he promised that urgent repairs to schools would be carried out. O'Connell was prompted to take action, and he moved a motion in the Seanad on the building and upkeep of schools, which led to a fiery two-day debate. O'Connell presented senators with samples of reports of the Medical Officers' of Health, which revealed the shameful condition of very many national schools. He then urged that the managerial obligation in this regard should be transferred by legislation to the public health authorities.

Derrig challenged O'Connell to produce evidence that his plan would find acceptance in ecclesiastical quarters, and with the managers. He

informed the Seanad that it would be a mistake to regard the isolated cases that O'Connell mentioned, as being typical of the general conditions prevailing. But Senator Dr. Rowlette, who was accustomed to reading MOHs' reports, confirmed that conditions generally were 'quite as bad as those described in reports which Senator O'Connell has given us' (SD, 1942a: 374–389). Senator Helena Concannon suggested that a conference should be held as a matter of urgency, between all the parties concerned. Derrig replied, 'I am satisfied from the consultations I have had with responsible ecclesiastical authorities that the matter will be attended to' (SD, 1942b: 432).

Shortly afterwards he was to discover that his confidence was misplaced. He made the discovery when he attempted to get the support of Bishop James Staunton of Ferns, Co. Wexford, the secretary of the Catholic Clerical Managers' Association (CCMA), to change the method of raising the local contributions, but this support was not forthcoming (NAI 1943: S12891). Two years later the CCMA alleged that the INTO's position on school maintenance would lead 'directly to the abolition of the Managerial system' (ISW, 1944a: 247). Neither the Department of Education or the ecclesiastical authorities put forward a solution of their own, yet they persisted in their rejection of O'Connell's proposals.

Undeterred, O'Connell wrote a critical article on the topic for the Journal of the Medical Association of Éire, which the INTO published in 1945 under the title *National schools in relation to the public health*. This was his parting shot, as his successor, Dave Kelleher continued with the campaign. It soon became apparent that Kelleher lacked O'Connell's diplomatic skills, but in time, differences were resolved and representatives of the INTO and of the CCMA formed joint deputations to Ministers for Education from the late 1950s, seeking additional funding for school maintenance and repair. While some progress was made over a decade, it was insufficient to ward off an INTO-sanctioned work-stoppage at five national schools in Ardfert, Co. Kerry on 16 January 1968. This had the desired effect. Three weeks later teachers returned to their fully repaired schools, and many schemes of improvement were put in hand in sub-standard schools throughout the country (O'Connell, 1969: 443–448).

Next to their physical working conditions, teachers' greatest source of anxiety was their lack of security of tenure, as declining school attendances often resulted in teachers losing their jobs. O'Connell wrote, 'During the greater part of the lifetime of the INTO "averages" (average pupil attendance) has been the bane of the teacher's life. Frequently a teacher's position and salary depended on the weather' (O'Connell, 1948: 13). The idea of a redeployment panel for surplus teachers, was first mooted by O'Connell in the Dáil in December 1922 (DD, 1922f: 2552) and fifteen years later, he convinced the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the INTO that this was an avenue worth exploring, as a declining school population posed an immediate threat to teachers' employment. O'Connell acknowledged that redeployment would never have happened 'without the cordial co-operation of the Bishops and Managers of the various denominations '(ISW, 1948a: 420), but the Provincial of the Christian Brothers' schools also agreed to the scheme, as did the Department of Education.

O'Connell was a staunch defender of children's rights, as he demonstrated during the Dáil debate on the 1925 School Attendance Bill. Under the terms of the Bill, a child of 10 years and upwards was allowed to absent himself legitimately from school for up to 10 days in the springtime and for 10 days in the autumn, to do light agricultural work for his parents. O'Connell claimed that there was no need for special exemptions for these children, and that they were contrary to the spirit and letter of the Geneva Convention. Furthermore, he pointed out that 12 was the lowest age at which exemptions were given in the vast majority of countries (DD, 1925g: 1218–1238). He received little support from educationists in the Dáil, or from members of the Farmers' Party, when he moved his amendment seeking to have exemptions removed allowing children who had reached 10 years to absent themselves from school, to do light agricultural work, from 1 April to 15 May in the spring and from 1 August to 15 October in the autumn (DD, 1926a: 635).

Surprisingly, a national school teacher, Deputy Collins O'Driscoll, sister of Michael Collins, wanted the exemption period extended to suit the agricultural conditions prevailing in Co. Cork. She informed the Dáil, that in Cork 'May and June are the months for the thinning of mangolds and turnips', and to O'Connell's dismay she added, 'if the children miss

a few days at the end of April and a few more days towards the end of June I do not think there would be so much damage done at all' (DD, 1926b: 718–722). During the course of the debate Deputy Baxter of the Farmers' Party accused O'Connell of having a vested interest, as he spoke on behalf of the teachers, a charge the latter categorically denied (DD, 1926c: 737–754).

However, O'Connell had good reason to feel pleased when he won enough support for his important amendment precluding farmers from hiring out their children to work on neighbours' farms. He was satisfied too, when John Marcus O'Sullivan ensured that under the compulsory School Attendance Act, the Minister was given power to extend the provisions of the Act to children over 14 but who had not reached 16, compelling their attendance at suitable courses of instruction (DD, 1926d: 1090–1091).

Educational Policy and the Curriculum

Irish education policy in relation to the national school curriculum was affected by the surge in nationalism which was a marked feature of the War of Independence. It also came under the influence of the powerful cultural revival movement, known as the Gaelic League. But the policy owed its genesis to a resolution adopted at the 1920 INTO Congress, which called for a representative committee to be formed 'in order to frame a programme, or a series of programmes in accordance with Irish ideals and conditions'. The INTO resolution was acted on when the First National Programme Conference took place on 6 January 1921, chaired by Máire Ní Chinnéide of the Gaelic League, and with T.J. O'Connell as secretary to the conference.

There was no Minister for Education in the First Dáil, only a Minister for Irish with responsibility for education. This was J.J. O'Kelly who was also the President of the Gaelic League, and he was fully supportive of the conference. He was later appointed Minister for Education in August 1921. The report of the conference led to major changes in the primary curriculum, which saw a considerable reduction in the number of subjects to be taught. Obligatory subjects were reduced to Irish, English,

mathematics, history and geography, needlework for girls (from third standard upwards) singing, and drill.

The status of Irish both as a school subject and as a medium of instruction was to be raised. The proposals that Irish should be used as a medium of instruction, and that 'the work of the infant school is to be entirely in Irish', with no teaching of English, caused concern to INTO representatives. In the senior standards, Irish was to be the teaching medium for history, geography, drill and singing, and all songs in the singing class were to be Irish language songs. History was to consist of the study of Irish history only, and its stated objective was 'to develop the best traits of the national character, and to inculcate national pride and self-respect' (National Programme, 1922: 3–5).

O'Connell and the INTO representatives had grave reservations about the programme which they expressed at the time, but the influential adviser to the conference, Rev. Timothy Corcoran SJ, Professor of Education at University College, Dublin, convinced the majority of members of its merits, although Gaelic League members needed little convincing. It was clear that the education policy was indistinguishable from the government's language revival policy, and that the burden of responsibility for it would rest squarely on the shoulders of national teachers.

These teachers were ill-equipped for the challenge, as most of them lacked qualifications to teach Irish. Of the 12,000 lay teachers in national schools, only about 1100 had bilingual certificates (Department of Education, 1926: 21). They were faced with an impossible task as the vast majority of children came from English speaking homes, textbooks were in short supply, and there was no standardised spelling, grammar or vocabulary for the Irish language at this time. In addition, school attendance stood at 69% compared to 90% in Scotland and 85% in England (*Freeman's Journal* 1922).

It was hardly surprising then that within two years a Second National Programme Conference was required, due to difficulties encountered by teachers with the programme requirements. Eoin MacNeill agreed to the conference in June 1925, provided that it was under Departmental control. The report of the Second Conference was published expeditiously in 1926. It re-affirmed the principle of teaching infants through the medium

of Irish, but it allowed one modest change, namely that English could be used before 10.30 am each morning and after 2 pm.

It recommended a higher and lower course in Irish for senior classes. Those who adopted the alternative lower course in Irish and the higher course in English, were expected to advance gradually towards the higher course in Irish. Requirements in other subjects were reduced, to allow for the demands of teaching through Irish (Department of Education, 1926: 2). The report was accepted as the official departmental policy in May 1926 by John Marcus O'Sullivan. Despite teachers' best efforts, progress was disappointing as they did not receive parental support. Within the space of five years' inspectors' reports confirmed that 'the English-speaking life of the home does much to nullify the work of the schools in creating Irish speakers' (Department of Education, 1932–1933: 22–25).

When Thomas Derrig took over the ministry he intensified efforts to revive the language through the schools, by introducing his Revised Programme of Primary Instruction in 1934. It was a very demanding programme which saw the reversion to an all-Irish day for infants, English became an optional subject for children in first class, and the higher course in Irish was prescribed for senior classes, who would now take the lower course in English. There was a lightening of requirements in mathematics also to allow for the extra demands of the Irish programme. This ill-judged policy decision led inexorably to a lowering of educational standards in the various subjects, and in the case of English were was 'a drop in standard of approximately one year' (Coolahan, 2017: 34).

O'Connell and the INTO made repeated calls to Derrig to set up an inquiry into the language policy, but their pleas fell on deaf ears. In 1937 the INTO initiated its own inquiry, which eventually led to the preparation of, and publication in 1941 of the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the use of Irish as a Teaching Medium to children whose Home Language is English, generally referred to as the 1941 report. It was a damning report that reflected badly on the Department, as it confirmed that subjects such as mathematics, history and geography were detrimentally affected by teaching through Irish, and in addition it placed a mental strain on children. The report called for a return to the use of English as a teaching medium and for greater emphasis to be placed on oral Irish (INTO, 1941: 186).

The government dismissed the teachers' report as the work of amateurs, with de Valera remarking that 'the reports from the inspectors are very much more to be relied upon' (ISW, 1944b: 186). Derrig went one step further when he maintained that the report gave 'an entirely unjustifiable and wrong account … of actual conditions in infant schools' (DD, 1943a: 258–259). As far as he was concerned, it amounted to little more than propaganda.

In reality the 1941 report was a professional document that took four years to complete, and it gave an honest appraisal of the language policy, based on factual evidence. This report was vindicated with the passage of time, as doctoral research conducted by Rev. John Macnamara in the mid-1960s confirmed that Irish primary schools devoted 42% of the time available over the first six years of primary education to Irish and a mere 22% to English. Consequently, Irish children were on average 17 months behind their English counterparts in written English and 11 months behind in problem arithmetic (Macnamara, 1966: 136).

In 1929 John Marcus O'Sullivan introduced the primary certificate as an optional examination for sixth class pupils. The examination included Irish, English, mathematics, history and geography and needlework for girls, as well as oral and practical elements. It received a lukewarm reception as only about 25% of eligible pupils ever sat for it, and these came mainly from large city national schools. In 1938 the INTO held a referendum on the primary certificate and teachers generally agreed 'that it was actually injurious to the interests of children' (SD, 1943a: 2179) O'Connell then encouraged teachers to conduct their own research on studies carried out in other countries on the effects of examinations on children, and this research also confirmed that examinations were educationally and psychologically damaging to children. Teachers were despondent when in 1941 Derrig announced his intention to make the examination a compulsory one, and in 1943 he did just that (DD, 1943b: 230).

O'Connell deplored the fact that the curriculum for sixth class pupils was to be dictated by a compulsory examination, limited to three written papers in Irish, English and mathematics, even though it was government policy to revive Irish as a vernacular language. His idea of the true meaning of education bore no relationship to this examination. He believed

that the 'main object of education is not to pack the child's mind with facts' but rather 'to turn out a boy from the national school with the power to think for himself and reason for himself' (DD, 1931: 1798). But de Valera, who supported Derrig, was much more interested in examination results. He stated unashamedly 'I am less interested in the teacher's method of teaching than I am in the results he achieves and the test I would apply would be the test of an examination' (DD, 1941: 1097).

O'Connell reminded Derrig of the ill-effects of an examination which 'encouraged the evil practice of cramming' and 'fostered on the minds of children a false idea of the aim and purpose of education' (SD, 1943a: 2181). O'Connell then put forward an alternative scheme of school-based assessment, one whereby children could be examined in all subjects, and then given certificates, which would later act as record cards when they advanced to a secondary or vocational school. Derrig considered O'Connell's alternative to the primary certificate examination 'impossible' to implement at that time (SD, 1943b: 2202–2205), but in 1968 Donogh O'Malley, the Minister for Education (1966–1968) implemented school based assessment along the lines suggested by O'Connell, as he happily abolished the long-running primary certificate examination (DD, 1968: 463).

Professional Standards

T.J. O'Connell wished to see professional standards raised in the areas of inspection, teacher training, and with regard to a professional level of remuneration for teachers. In 1922 there was a level of optimism among teachers that their relationship with inspectors would improve under a native government, but this was to be a vain hope. By 1926 the INTO was insisting on a radical overhaul of the inspection system. John Marcus O'Sullivan responded almost immediately by setting up the Committee on Inspection of Primary Schools.

O'Connell was one of the three INTO representatives on this committee, but its brief was very narrow. It was asked to investigate inspection and the award of merit marks, and to consider whether a primary leaving certificate was called for. The contentious rating system of inspection,

whereby a teacher's salary increment and promotion depended on an inspector's rating of each subject taught, was outside the committee's terms of reference, as it could not be altered without changing the framework of the 1920 salary agreement (O'Connell, 1969: 414). Consequently, the committee's 1927 report contained minor recommendations in relation to inspection, but it did call for the setting up of an appeals board against inspectors' ratings, and this was implemented soon afterwards. The report confirmed what teachers knew only too well, that the chief defect in the inspection system was that 'too little importance was attached to the directive and specifically educational aspect of inspection in comparison with its aspect as a controlling agency' (Inspection Report, 1927: 7).

Three years later tensions arose between teachers and inspectors, when undue pressure was exerted by the Department, to force teachers to gain qualifications in Irish. It did so by giving a specific time frame within which teachers in English speaking districts were, firstly, to obtain a certificate of competence to teach Irish, and secondly, to acquire a bilingual certificate certifying competency to teach through the medium of Irish, failing which they would lose their salary increments. The INTO took the Department to court and O'Connell was very pleased when the regulation was adjudged unlawful in the Supreme Court in 1940, and when the Department was forced to refund all illegally withheld increments (O'Connell, 1969: 382–385).

Pressure was brought to bear on teachers yet again in 1931, when the Department issued a controversial circular setting out conditions on which a 'highly efficient', 'efficient', or 'non-efficient' rating would be decided in future, and these included proficiency in Irish and in the use of Irish as a teaching medium. The conditions ran contrary to assurances given to O'Connell by O'Sullivan's predecessors, that no teacher would be penalised 'by reason of not having sufficient time to acquire the necessary knowledge of the Irish language' (O'Connell, 1969: 415).

As far back as 1918, when O'Connell gave evidence before the Killanin Committee set up to inquire into national teachers' salaries, he described what he considered to be a professional system of inspection. It was one in which an inspector would offer 'general encouragement, co-operation and help', and one 'where conferences would take place in a district

between teachers and inspectors', at which 'suggestions would be made by the inspector, the teachers being equally free to make suggestions and discuss them and uphold them if necessary' (Killanin Report, 1918: 13). But as we have seen the relationship between inspectors and teachers bore little resemblance to O'Connell's liberal vision. However, he was fortunate that in 1948, on the eve of his retirement as General Secretary, the new Minister for Education in the Inter Party government, Richard Mulcahy (1948–1951; 1954–1957) granted a number of concessions to the INTO, one of which was to end the rating system of inspection. This did much to improve relations between teachers and inspectors, as in future, teachers' salaries would no longer be affected by the inspector's rating.

In July 1924 O'Connell raised concerns with W.T. Cosgrave, President of the Executive Council about the calibre of students 'coming forward for entrance to the teaching profession' who were, he claimed, 'not all of the type one would wish to see' (DD, 1924: 415). The methods of recruitment to the profession, employed in the 1920s were outmoded, as it was accepted 'that teachers could be recruited from primary school pupils with an aptitude for teaching' (Jones, 2006: 26). This too was a far cry from the high standards O'Connell expected, when giving evidence before the Killanin Committee, when he said 'that you should make entrance to the profession of teaching as difficult as possible and spend a good deal of time in selecting the right candidate' (Killanin Report, 1918: 741).

The abolition of the practice of employing children as monitors or apprentice teachers, was recommended by the 1924 Departmental committee on recruitment. However, their main recommendation was clearly influenced by the government's principal objective, which was to revive the Irish language through the schools, as it proposed the introduction of preparatory colleges. These preparatory colleges or 'feeder' secondary schools for the training colleges, were to provide 'a thoroughly sound secondary education' in an 'atmosphere of Gaelic speech and tradition' to native Irish speakers and fluent Irish speakers, who wished to become teachers (Department of Education 1926: 41).

John Marcus O'Sullivan implemented this recommendation when he opened seven preparatory colleges, five of which were located in the

Gaeltacht, and two in Dublin. They were funded by the state and under the control of religious orders, except in the case of Coláiste Moibhí, which was administered by the Church of Ireland authorities. A discriminatory system operated whereby Gaeltacht children and fluent Irish speakers gained preferential access to these colleges, and in addition they were guaranteed automatic entry to the training colleges on passing the Leaving Certificate examination.

O'Connell's strong opposition to the preparatory colleges was based mainly on educational and social grounds. He remarked 'I do not think they should be segregated at such an early age, and their whole attention directed to teaching. I believe that will tend to narrow the outlook of those people later on, and it is not a good thing that the outlook of a teacher should be narrow' (DD, 1926e: 409). In the years ahead he continued to oppose the preparatory colleges and the INTO made repeated calls for recruitment to the training colleges to be done solely through open competitive examinations. But the sturdy preparatory colleges lasted for 35 years. It was Dr. Patrick Hillery, as Minister for Education (1959–1965), who finally brought the curtain down on them in 1961, but he allowed Coláiste Moibhí to continue, and it closed its doors in 1995. The preparatory colleges were rendered redundant once Hillery's predecessor, Jack Lynch (1957–1959) introduced an oral Irish test for the leaving certificate examination, for all students, and a suitability interview for candidates seeking entry to the training colleges.

O'Connell called for university education for national teachers from his first day in the Dáil (DD, 1922e: 2552), and Eoin MacNeill approved of plans for this reform, but he never brought them to fruition. INTO requests for university education to form part of teacher training courses dated back to the early twentieth century, and O'Connell's Organization Jottings column in the teachers' journal the *Irish School Weekly*, never failed to keep the issue alive. However, it took until 1973 for Richard Burke, the Minister for Education (1973–1976) to make the historic announcement that the course of training for national teachers was to be extended to one of three years' duration, and that university education was to form part of it. The first cohort of students graduated from the training colleges with a B.Ed. degree in 1974.

Native governments treated national teachers very unsympathetically, and nowhere is this more evident than in their negotiations with teachers regarding their salaries. O'Connell had reached a landmark pay settlement for his members in November 1920, and the arrangement was that the increase in teachers' salaries was to be granted in three annual instalments. The second instalment fell due on 1 April 1921, and payment at the full rate of the new agreement operated 'only as from April 1, 1922'. But the poor performance of the Irish economy at this time meant that Ernest Blythe, the Minister for Finance, was more interested in cutting salaries than in honouring agreements. He argued that national teachers' salaries, which were fixed in 1920, were 'anything from three to three and a half times the salaries obtained before 1914' and consequently he would cut their salaries by 10% as from 1 November 1923 (O'Connell, 1969: 198–199).

This seeming injustice was intolerable to teachers, especially in light of the fact that no significant reductions were made to the salaries of other public servants, although higher paid civil servants were identified in the press as far more deserving of Blythe's axe. Teachers decided to take action. A special INTO Congress was held in Dublin at which two resolutions were passed, one condemning the cut, and the other authorising the CEC 'to take legal action against the government to reverse the cut' (ISW, 1923: 1231). On this occasion the INTO lost its court action but the union had even greater financial challenges ahead, this time relating to the teachers' pension fund. John Marcus O'Sullivan raised concerns with O'Connell in 1926 when he confirmed that 'the Teachers' Pension Fund must be examined by an actuary, so as to determine whether or not it is in an insolvent position' (DD, 1926f: 502–503).

It transpired that the fund was in deficit by more than £4.2 million (Moroney, 2007: 103). The large deficit was due to the government's failure to keep the endowment account solvent. Reluctantly the CEC accepted an 8.5% cut to take home pay for teachers, on condition that teachers should be released from the obligation to contribute to the pension fund. Disgruntled INTO members blamed O'Connell for this unsatisfactory arrangement and placed an objection in the *Irish Press* newspaper, which read 'Mr. O'Connell and the Labour Party had a right to force this matter on the government but they did not, they had not the

courage' (*Irish Press*, 1932). This was one of the main reasons why O'Connell lost his Dáil seat in the 1932 general election.

The new Fianna Fáil government and the Minister for Finance Seán MacEntee, introduced the Economies Bill in 1933, and once again teachers' salaries were cut to an even greater extent than those of other public servants. O'Connell had previously led teachers on a one-day anti-conscription strike in April 1918, now he would lead teachers again on a one-day strike, only this time it was over the cut to their salaries. All national schools, bar those run by religious orders closed for one day in protest at the cuts. Nonetheless, Junior Assistant Mistresses[4] saw their salaries cut by 6% and all other teachers had their salaries cut by 9%, but payment of pensions were discontinued as from 1 April 1934 (O'Connell, 1969: 270) For the next five years O'Connell fought for the restoration of the 1920 salary scales, but by 1939 the cost of living had more than doubled, and teachers remained the only body of public servants not to have received an increase in their salaries, so a different line of attack was now urgently required.

In June 1942 O'Connell submitted a very comprehensive memorandum to Thomas Derrig entitled *National Teachers Claim for Increased Remuneration*, detailing how teachers' salaries had been cut by 19% over 11 years, and drawing attention to the favourable conditions enjoyed by their counterparts in Northern Ireland. The Northern government settled the teachers' pension fund deficit equitably by taking responsibility for the shortfall in the fund. On 4 August he wrote a stern letter to Derrig complaining bitterly about the blatant display of discrimination against national teachers, as civil servants received an increased bonus, which marked 'the second increase awarded to Civil Servants during the emergency'. He drew attention also to the lavish salaries paid to teachers in Northern Ireland, and added 'The Northern teachers expect that these figures will be substantially increased in the near future' (NAI, 1942: S12891A).

Derrig made representations for teachers to the new Minister for Finance Seán T. O'Kelly (1939–1945) on 8 August 1942, pointing out that the INTO had been consistently refused pay increases to match the increased cost of living, due to the Standstill Order of May 1941, which froze wages (NAI, 1942: S12891A). The bishops too pleaded the

teachers' case for increased remuneration in October 1944 (NAI, 1944a: S10236B) but all to no avail, and a month later O'Kelly caused outrage among teachers when he granted them a 'miserable emergency bonus' of 'a shilling a week '(ISW, 1944c: 487).

On 25 November 1944 Derrig made a second attempt to intervene with O'Kelly on behalf of teachers, but this too ended in failure (NAI, 1944b: S10236B). Teachers grew restive, especially the youthful teachers in the Dublin city branch, (usually called the Dublin branch). It was they who applied pressure to the CEC to draw up their own salary scales, which they did in December 1944. O'Connell then forwarded them to Derrig, to the Bishops' Secretary, Dr. Staunton, and to every INTO branch in the Free State. In his letter to the Minister, O'Connell insisted that the salary scales would only be acceptable to the INTO, if all interested bodies were involved in negotiations with the Government (O'Connell, 1969: 210).

His request was ignored. The Government also ignored growing public support for the teachers' pay claim, which came from parents, the churches, public bodies, and the press, with the exception of the Fianna Fáil sponsored *Irish Press*. When T.J. O'Connell put it to the Taoiseach, Éamon de Valera, that teachers had suffered discriminatory treatment compared to other public servants, de Valera replied that a promise had been made to civil servants regarding their pay prior to the enactment of the Standstill Order (NAI, 1945: S10236B). His words rang hollow when on 20 April 1945, an even larger increase in salary was granted to higher civil servants (McCormick, 1996: 16). The arrival of Frank Aiken as Minister for Finance (1945–1948) in June 1945, did not lead to a softening of the government's attitude.

Degrading treatment of teachers by the government, led the INTO in to a protracted Dublin teachers' strike from 20 March 1946 to 31 October 1946. In November 1945, O'Connell accused Derrig of ignoring teachers' rights to 'a professional salary, one in-keeping with the dignity of their work' (NAI, 1945: S10236B). A month later, he complained to the Minister that teachers were not being treated like members of a professional body, who were entitled to be consulted on the terms of their remuneration. Furthermore, he called on Derrig to end the offensive grading system of inspection, which was demoralising teachers.

Kathleen Clarke, President of the INTO in 1945, encapsulated how teachers felt at this time, when she said 'teachers are minded to go no more on their knees … It is going to be a fight to a finish. They hope to win. They don't care if they lose … they are slaves no more' (ISW, 1946: 113). But the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. McQuaid, who was a strong ally of O'Connell's, understood exactly what was at stake. On the morning of the strike he had a letter published in the press which read 'Your Organization must have no doubt that the clerical managers of the city and the religious superiors have full sympathy with the ideal of a salary in keeping with the dignity and responsibility of your profession as teachers' (Irish Independent, 1946).[5] McQuaid offered to mediate in the strike, an offer which was 'brusquely turned down by the Government' (O'Connell, 1969: 219).

T.J. O'Connell blamed de Valera for a strike that could easily have been avoided, and which he made no effort to resolve. When it became obvious that stalemate had been reached in the dispute, O'Connell was assisted by Dr. McQuaid to end the strike, without the INTO losing face. Teachers were left humiliated, but worse was yet to come. In 1947 teachers suffered great hardship due to the rising cost of living, and the Executive called for an immediate review of their salaries. Derrig used the excuse of a pending general election to avoid taking action, while at the same time he announced that a special payment was to be made to those teachers, who taught in schools, during the strike period (DD, 1947: 679).

Richard Mulcahy stretched out the hand of friendship to the INTO in the wake of a bitter seven-month strike, and in a magnanimous gesture, he overturned Derrig's decision to deprive Dublin teachers of their pension entitlements for the duration of the strike (ISW, 1948: 196). He also agreed to set up a representative committee on salaries, and to give teachers access to a conciliation and arbitration board. In 1949 he set up the Roe committee on salaries, which was chaired by Judge P.J. Roe but INTO representatives were very disappointed with the outcome.

The committee's majority report, which was signed by the INTO representatives, recommended, among other things, a common pay scale for men and women teachers, with an annual marriage allowance for married men, and additional bonuses for those with honours university

qualifications. Months elapsed before Mulcahy announced that he would be prepared to accept the general recommendations of the Roe committee, such as the common scale, but not at the levels recommended, as the country could not afford it. He rejected the majority report in favour of a minority report drawn up by the Departments of Education and Finance (Moroney, 2007: 154).

However, teachers could take some comfort from the fact that for the first time, they would be placed on an equal footing with other public servants regarding superannuation. Few senators in the Seanad were as happy as T.J. O'Connell when Mulcahy introduced the National Teachers' Superannuation (Amendment) Scheme 1950, which gave national teachers, both male and female, equal pensions, as well as a lump sum on retirement. This was something O'Connell had fought for over thirty years, and he said 'I am pleased now to have the privilege of assisting in its implementation here to-night' (SD, 1950: 664–667). No doubt he was gratified to learn, during his retirement, that Mulcahy honoured his promise to set up a conciliation and arbitration board for teachers. The terms for the operation of the scheme were agreed by the Minister on 24 February 1951 (McCormick, 1996: 54).

A Council of Education and an Education Inquiry

T.J. O'Connell and the INTO were still basking in the success of the Fifth Biennial Conference of the World Federation of Education Associations, which was held in Dublin in the summer of 1933, and which had been attended by prominent educationists from all parts of the world. O'Connell was the organising secretary and director of the event. Dr. McQuaid who was chairman of the Catholic Headmasters' Association (CHA) believed that O'Connell was emboldened to set about establishing an advisory council of education for Ireland, due to the success of the conference. The INTO had been calling on Ministers for Education to set up such a council for over a decade, but in October 1933 T.J. O'Connell took the first steps towards establishing one.

In a letter dated 3 October 1933, O'Connell issued an invitation to Catholic and Protestant teaching associations and managerial bodies, to the universities and training colleges, to send representatives to a meeting, to discuss the formation of a council or federation, to advise the Minister for Education (DDA, 1933–1934). On 11 November 1933 40 delegates met at the Teachers' Hall, 36 Parnell Square, Dublin. Dr. McQuaid was invited to speak first, and when he did O'Connell was greatly surprised by the negative tone of his statement.

McQuaid rejected the proposed council on the basis that the Minister for Education was not agreeable to it, and it would therefore be a council set up in opposition to the Minister. Contrary to O'Connell's own experience of dealing with Thomas Derrig, McQuaid claimed that 'The Ministry has always shown itself willing to receive the suggestions of the various associations' (DDA AB8/A/VI). He expressed fears that his association might be drawn into 'controversial questions that could not rightly be considered within the scope of the CHA'. He wished to retain the status quo as he believed that 'Problems of Secondary Education could be more equitably treated by the present machinery than by the majority of such an advisory Council'. Representatives of both the Christian Brothers and the de la Salle Training College supported McQuaid, and Protestant delegates supported O'Connell's proposal. This scheme was doomed from the start as it had no support from the most influential bodies involved in Catholic education.

A second meeting was arranged for 24 March 1934 but no sooner had the first meeting ended than McQuaid visited Thomas Derrig to give a full account of what happened at the meeting. Derrig was understandably very pleased, and he 'expressed complete satisfaction with the statement of the CHA and much dissatisfaction with what he called the "big-stick" methods of the INTO' (DDA AB8/A/VI/63). McQuaid then interviewed representatives of the Catholic managers, the Convent conference, the training colleges, the Christian Brothers and the de la Salle Brothers, in order to achieve unity of purpose. He also kept in constant contact with the Archbishop of Dublin, Archbishop Byrne to keep him fully informed of developments regarding the proposed council. On 15 November 1933, the Archbishop's secretary, Fr. Tom O'Donnell wrote to

McQuaid stating 'He (Archbishop Byrne) hopes that your efforts to frustrate the movement will be successful'.

At the second meeting on 24 March 1934, O'Connell proposed the formation of either a 'loose Federation' or a 'Dáil of Education' as an alternative to the unacceptable council of education. McQuaid sought clarification as to what was being planned, and tabled a motion, which was seconded by a representative of the de la Salle College, Waterford, calling for the INTO to draw up a memorandum for the next meeting, setting out the objectives, function and constitution of the proposed federation (DDA AB8/A/VI/63/44).

In the meantime, correspondence between McQuaid and Byrne continued, in which McQuaid pointed out that neither the INTO or the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI) 'consider it in any way opposed to Catholic principles to constitute a Federation of any and every religious body'. He warned the Archbishop that as the Catholic educational groups did not have a joint body to express their views on questions such as the proposed federation, there was a danger of 'the commanding position being seized by the lay Organisations'.

On 12 May 1934 O'Connell forwarded his *Memorandum on the Proposed Establishment of an Education Federation* to representatives of 11 bodies who attended the preliminary meeting of 11 November 1933. In his covering letter he stated that the INTO intended to issue this *Memorandum* 'entirely on their own responsibility' and he announced the date for their third meeting as 26 May 1934 (DDA AB8/A/VI/63/38). The *Memorandum* was replete with educational plans, the most interesting one being a plan to affiliate parents' bodies such as The Federation of Home and School and The Parents' Educational Union to the proposed federation. They were to be admitted 'on the same basis as any purely Education Organizations'.

The *Memorandum* was a document based on progressive educational principles, which covered such wide-ranging topics for discussion as 'The selection, preparation and training of candidates for the Teaching Profession', 'Curricula for the various types of schools', 'The problem of the sub-normal or mentally backward or deficient child', 'Suitable school buildings, equipment and playgrounds', 'Education in other countries and Systems of Education (e.g. the Montessori System, The Dalton Plan)

etc.' It contained ambitious plans to stimulate an interest in education by holding education conferences, introducing 'a national or local "Education Week"', and publishing an educational periodical, in order to give expression to views on educational topics.

On receipt of O'Connell's *Memorandum*, McQuaid wrote to Byrne informing him of the date for the next meeting, and drawing his attention to the fact that 'the INTO will eventually issue this Memo entirely on their own responsibility' (DDA B8/A/VI/63/38). The third meeting took place on 26 May 1934 with just 16 delegates in attendance. Much to O'Connell's discomfort, McQuaid raised an objection on principle to the inclusion of paragraph 6 of the *Memorandum*, which gave nomination rights to the proposed federation to the Catholic Hierarchy, the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. O'Connell was offended by McQuaid's objection and 'earnestly defended his attitude of complete respect for the Catholic Hierarchy' (DDA AB8/A/VI). A further meeting was arranged for November 1934.

O'Connell and the CEC met on 15 June 1934 to put the finishing touches to draft proposals for a federation of educational associations, to comprise the INTO, the ASTI and the Protestant associations. McQuaid prepared his own plans, which he discussed with Cardinal MacRory, the Archbishop of Armagh, who approved of his suggestion that the Catholic Truth Society (CTS)[6] should organise an Annual Education Day during the CTS week, as a congress of all educational bodies, in order to place Catholic education under the closer guardianship of the hierarchy. He also got the approval of Archbishop Byrne and Archbishop Harty of Cashel for his alternative plan. He then sought Byrne's permission to approach O'Connell and the General Secretary of the ASTI, T.J. Burke to offer them his alternative scheme (DDA AB8/A/VI/63/3). McQuaid interviewed Burke and O'Connell separately and succeeded in convincing them to abandon their plans for a federation.

It would appear that O'Connell and the CEC were riding on the crest of a wave following the success of the WFEA conference, and believed they could surmount all obstacles to achieve an advisory council of education. They underrated the political skill of their adversaries, and

overrated their own abilities to defeat both church and state, neither of whom was prepared to cede power to the formidable INTO.

Derrig avoided scrutiny of his Department by a council of education, just as Ministers for Education had done since 1922, by refusing O'Connell's requests for an education inquiry. Scrutiny could no longer be avoided when in the late 1930s, the INTO commenced its own inquiry, and conducted research on the Irish education system. This resulted in the publication of *A Plan for Education* in 1947, a report Derrig was quick to dismiss. It was a progressive document, and while critical of the Department of Education, it promoted liberal education views, that might well have been written by T.J. O'Connell himself.

It encouraged greater emphasis to be placed on oral Irish, and it warned of the dangers of introducing children to written Irish prematurely (A Plan, 1947: 41). It contained the most up-to-date research, and recommended a child-centred curriculum with a comprehensive subject range. In fact, the recommendations in *A Plan for Education* pre-dated reforms in primary education by two decades in the case of Irish language teaching, and by three decades with regard to a child-centred curriculum. In January 1960, Dr. Patrick Hillery issued *Circular 11/60* announcing a change of policy regarding the teaching of Irish. Infant teachers were now at liberty to change 'the emphasis from teaching through Irish to the teaching of Irish conversation' (C/11/60 1960).

The new primary school curriculum of 1971, adopted many of the child-centred approaches recommended in *A Plan for Education*. Coincidentally, the new curriculum was launched by former primary school teacher Pádraig Faulkner, Minister for Education (1969–1973).

Conclusion

T.J. O'Connell made a very significant contribution to Irish education policy, not least with regard to the medical welfare of school children, when he ensured that County Medical Officers of Health were appointed to national schools. He can be credited also with protecting children from exploitation, when he introduced an amendment to the School Attendance Bill precluding farmers from hiring out their children to

work on neighbours' farms. He waged a twenty-year campaign to have responsibility for school buildings and upkeep removed from clerical hands and transferred, by legislation, to local health authorities because it distressed O'Connell to see children being forced to spend what he called 'the most critical years of their young lives' (O'Connell, 1948: 2–4) in schools which were 'often centres of disease and even death' (DD, 1926g: 881). O'Connell failed to have this issue resolved, as the clerical managers accused him of threatening the very existence of the managerial system with his plans, and Ministers for Education supported the managers.

T.J. O'Connell rejoiced at the demise of the authoritarian National Board of education and so did national teachers, but little did they know that the Irish Free State governments would be equally authoritarian. O'Connell and the INTO played a leading role in drawing up the National Programme of Primary Instruction, in which the Irish language predominated, but once teachers experienced difficulties with the demands of the programme, Ministers applied coercive tactics to force them to qualify to meet its linguistic demands. It took a Supreme Court judgment in 1941, in a court case brought by O'Connell and the INTO in 1940, to protect teachers from the financial penalties imposed on them for failing to meet these demands.

T.J. O'Connell was left with no choice but to lead his members into a seven-month strike as the professional status of teachers was at stake, and nowhere was this more evident than in the retention of the degrading rating system of inspection, and in the lack of respect shown towards teachers' professional reports. The government's unyielding attitude on teachers' pay meant that the failure of the strike was inevitable, but O'Connell and the INTO struck a blow for the professionalism of teaching, and Derrig's successor acknowledged as much by granting O'Connell and the INTO some vitally important concessions.

O'Connell earned distinction as an educator at home as well as on the international stage. In Ireland, the National University of Ireland conferred an honorary doctorate of laws on him in 1933, for his outstanding service to education, following the success of the Fifth Biennial Conference of the World Federation of Education Associations, which was hosted in Dublin that year. Six years later Scottish educationists awarded him an

honorary Fellowship of the Educational Institute of Scotland, a privilege rarely granted.

His progressive educational ideas set him apart from conservative Ministers and government leaders, who wanted a utilitarian, examination orientated education for children. In stark contrast O'Connell was an educationist who understood the true meaning of education, which was something he expounded on in the Seanad in 1942, when he said that 'Education is of the mind, it has to do with … the cultivation of the mind, the gradual drawing out and development of the child's God-given faculties' (SD, 1942c: 332). O'Connell had proposed a school-based assessment scheme for children in 1943, but he had to wait another 25 years to witness its introduction.

In 1929 O'Connell suggested to John Marcus O'Sullivan that the Department should set up a special branch for educational research, in line with practice in other countries. He also recommended that the Department should produce a journal, which would be issued to each school, containing articles on modern teaching methods 'as well as pointing to developments in the teaching of various subjects in other countries' (DD, 1929: 431–438). All of these reforms were introduced decades after he had retired from public life. Dr. Patrick Hillery was the first Minister to engage in large-scale educational research when he invited an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development team to examine the Irish education system in the early 1960s. In 1968 *Oideas*, the Department's first educational journal was published and in 1977, the Department opened its Curriculum and Development Unit.

Before his retirement T.J. O'Connell revealed that the introduction of the redeployment panel for unemployed teachers in 1937, and the abolition of the rating system of inspection in 1948, were the two reforms which meant most to him, as they relieved teachers of great worry and anxiety. His legacy, as he himself saw it, may be summarised in his own words 'I am indeed more than glad that the final decision to abolish the (Rating) system was made during my period in office' (ISW, 1948b: 419–420).

O'Connell died on 22 June 1969, six years before the 144-year-old managerial system was brought to a quiet end, with the introduction of boards of management to national schools. He would have welcomed

this reform, which he himself had eagerly sought in the early twentieth century. This was strongly opposed by the ecclesiastical authorities in 1919–1920 and in subsequent years. But it was possible in 1975, due to the Second Vatican Council (1962) which saw a role for lay participation in education. O'Connell's foresight is striking and he sowed the seeds for a diverse range of educational reforms, which would come to fruition decades later, and this is surely his great legacy to Irish education.

Notes

1. Monitors were apprentice teachers, selected from primary pupils aged 12–13 years. They were appointed following an examination by the district inspector. A five-year apprenticeship ensued. The monitor then sat for the National Board examination in order to continue for another two years. The next examination was in effect an entrance examination to the training college. In 1900 O'Connell won a scholarship to St. Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra, Dublin, having taken the National Board examination.
2. The Boundary Commission was set up in the spring of 1925, in accordance with a provision made under *Article 12* of the Treaty of 6 December 1921, to make changes to the border between the north and south of Ireland.
3. The Emergency is the name given to the period covering the Second World War and its aftermath.
4. The Junior Assistant Mistresses were a new class of teacher introduced in 1906, to act as second teachers in boys' and girls' national schools with an average attendance between 35 to 50 pupils.
5. A rift occurred between de Valera and McQuaid because of this letter.
6. The CTS was founded in Ireland in 1899 under the patronage of the archbishops and bishops of Ireland, to publish a range of religious materials which originally came from England, where the society originated in 1868.

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15

'Universities and Colleges': Higher Education and the Independent Irish State, 1922–1945

John Walsh

Higher education under the early Irish state was not a coherent sector, still less a well-defined system, but a disparate collection of higher-level institutions operating in the post compulsory educational space. This chapter explores how the ideological preoccupations of the new state, revolving around state formation, Gaelicisation, traditional Catholicism, economic nationalism and fiscal conservatism, effectively marginalised both university and higher technological education.[1] The interaction of universities and nascent higher technical institutions with the political and official elite, suggests that the activity of academic institutions was defined by a conservative societal and cultural consensus (Walsh, 2018). The leadership of the Department of Finance embraced an explicitly laissez faire orientation in its relations with the universities, which was informed by a profound cultural as well as fiscal conservatism. The dominant popular movements of the era, integralist Catholicism and cultural nationalism

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seeking a societal renaissance of Irish language and culture, informed a traditionalist paradigm which undervalued technical education and positioned universities as channels for the realisation of narrowly defined religious and cultural objectives. Universities occupied only a peripheral role in the world view of a conservative nationalist elite, while technical education was systematically undervalued and neglected (Walsh, 2018).

Influential debates on the idea of the university had been disseminated in Ireland during the 1800s. John Henry Newman expressed his famous ideal of a liberal university education in Dublin, through a series of lectures entitled *Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University education*: if Newman attracted support in 1852 from ultramontane Catholic bishops as a staunch defender of the place of religion in higher education, his *Discourses* offered a broad vision of the university as a place for intellectual formation and the cultivation of knowledge (Newman, 1852). Newman commanded respect as the founding rector of the Catholic University, but his ideas never secured universal support in Ireland, where university education had been an ideological battleground delineated by religious and political divisions since the early 1800s.

Irish universities in the early twentieth century enjoyed a high level of autonomy, particularly in terms of Wilhelm Von Humboldt's conceptualisation of university autonomy as freedom for the complementary academic functions of teaching and research (Von Humboldt, 1810). The political and administrative elite of the newly independent Irish state largely did not intervene in the governance or academic policies of the universities (Coolahan, 2017). Irish ministers sometimes promoted piecemeal initiatives to promote favoured policies, particularly revolving around cultural nationalism, but the vast majority of politicians and officials were content to leave regulation of disciplines to academics and professional bodies. Yet this had more to do with a traditionalist understanding of higher education as professional training for a privileged elite than any philosophical commitment to academic freedom on the Humboldtian model (Walsh, 2018).

A less elevated but influential understanding of university education among the political elite of the new state was offered by Eamon de Valera, when he told the Seanad in May 1940 that training for a professional

career was the essential role of the university (Seanad Éireann 24 15 May 1940: 1395):

> …originally the universities were professional schools just as the modern universities have very largely to be professional schools, but the fact is that in our universities at present, excepting those particularly fortunate in having brains as well as means, the students have to think when they come to the universities of a career, and that they cannot live in them for a prolonged period.

The Taoiseach embraced a traditionalist concept of the university as a centre for professional training and explicitly acknowledged that entry to university had more to do with means than merit (Walsh, 2018). Few politicians would have dissented from his conviction that Newman's ideal of university education belonged to a bygone age, although his commentary was a caricature of Newman's conceptualisation of universities as centres of 'universal knowledge' (Seanad Éireann 24 15 May 1940: 1394):

> …the great majority of the students who go to the university are not like those whom Cardinal Newman had in mind who are able to go to Oxford and Cambridge, and who are leisurely and wealthy people in a position to approach their studies from mere love of the things in them, without any idea of using them, except in so far as they add to their own particular culture.

De Valera's limited, pragmatic vision of the academy as a professional school for privileged individuals reflected deeply embedded perceptions within early to mid-twentieth century Irish society. Other leading political figures expressed an elitist perspective more bluntly. Finance Minister Frank Aiken told the Dáil on 26 February 1947 that 'they could not afford to make every boy a graduate and he thought it was only fair that those who got the advantage in life of a University degree should contribute a fair share of the cost of their education' (*Irish Press* 27 February 1947). Aiken's restrictive view of university education as a training ground for a privileged male minority caused no dissent from TDs as it accurately reflected most politicians' attitudes towards the universities, firmly

associated with the traditional academy and the aspirations of the upper middle class.

While there is a lack of comprehensive data on higher education enrolments outside universities and teacher training colleges up to the early 1960s, universities dominated the tertiary educational sphere (Clancy, 1989).[2] Over 85% of students attending higher education institutions up to the mid-1960s pursued their studies in the universities (Department of Education, Statistical Report,1965–1966). Admission to the universities occurred through different matriculation examinations in the National University of Ireland (NUI), Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI). While the Department of Education argued in 1933 that the range and variable standards of matriculation examinations 'affects injuriously both the work of the school and the work of the universities', no attempt was made to link university entrance to public examinations such as the terminal Leaving Certificate in the first generation after independence (Department of Education 1933, NAI TSCH S6403: 1–3). The socially exclusive and elitist nature of university institutions was underlined by the *Investment in Education* report in 1965, which noted that 'the strong association between university entrance and social group is unmistakable' (Government of Ireland, 1965: 172). Entry to universities was almost exclusively determined by social and family background and university education remained the preserve of the professional upper middle class well into the mid-twentieth century.

University education was not included in the remit of the Department of Education, which was established in 1924 to assume responsibility for national, intermediate and technical education. The new department's remit embraced teacher training for national schools, but crucially did not extend to 'universities and colleges' until 1957–1958. Responsibility for the annual Vote for universities and colleges rested with the Department of Finance. The marginalisation of university education within the governmental structure and the attachment of senior officials of the Department of Finance to a laissez-faire ideology reinforced the peripheral status of higher education.

Higher education rarely featured among the priorities of the new governing elite, not least because it was on the periphery of the dominant

ideological narratives which shaped the early Irish state. The predominant ideology of the Catholic church and a variety of lay Catholic organisations in the early to mid-twentieth century was integralist Catholicism, which sought to make Ireland a more completely Catholic state and reached its peak in the early post war period (Whyte, 1980). The Catholic bishops maintained an ecclesiastical 'ban' on the entry of Catholic students to Trinity College Dublin since 1875, which was implemented with renewed zeal and organisational rigour by Dr John Charles McQuaid, the long serving archbishop of Dublin (1940–1972), a leading exponent of integralist Catholicism (Walsh, 2014b). The National University of Ireland, established in 1909 following the dissolution of the all-Ireland Royal University, marked a historic accommodation between British parliamentary elites and the Catholic bishops, allied to the nationalist leaders of the Irish parliamentary party. The NUI was constituted as a non-denominational university which was designed to function within a denominational Catholic setting (Walsh, 2018). Yet the prestige enjoyed by the bishops in an overwhelmingly Catholic society, the strength of clericalism in Irish political culture since the mid-nineteenth century and the circumstances in which the NUI was founded ensured that the bishops commanded a great deal of influence within the university (Ibid.). The denominational divisions within university education persisted up to the 1970s and the complex interaction between political elites, ecclesiastical leaders and academics discouraged significant state intervention in the university sector.

Another ideological narrative underpinning a range of policies advanced by the new state, the cherished objective of Gaelicisation and revival of the Irish language, had undoubted resonance for the universities, particularly the NUI, where the senate had adopted Irish as a compulsory subject for matriculation in 1910 following the mobilisation of a popular campaign by the Gaelic League (NUI Senate 1910). But official initiatives serving the national project of Gaelicisation focused heavily on the national schools and primary teacher education, which fell under the direct influence of the Department of Education (O'Donoghue et al., 2017; Walsh, 2018).[3] While representatives of the Gaelic League, TDs and ministers often expressed dissatisfaction with the uneven progress of Gaelicisation in the universities, governments were rarely willing to

intervene directly or consistently in universities where progress had to be negotiated with academic elites and more rapid policy and institutional change could be achieved elsewhere. Government activism in primary teacher training conformed to a wider pattern of development in Western European states, where state intervention was more significant, at least initially, in non-university institutions with a vocational or professional training mission (Neave, 1982).

The composition of the student body in the universities underlined popular attachment to professional status and occupations. The NUI saw a steady increase in the level of students undertaking professional qualifications, particularly in medicine, dentistry and engineering, between 1929–1930 and 1947–1948 (Coolahan, 2003). Arts humanities disciplines continued to attract a significant cohort of students, while science and commerce languished, attracting a relatively small and in some cases a declining segment of students. Coolahan (2003) suggests that the underdeveloped state of the Irish economy up to the 1950s helps to explain the neglect of science, commerce and agriculture. Yet this hardly explains the limited appeal of agriculture, a vitally important sector of the state's economy and one of the few disciplines within the university to attract increased state support (Walsh, 2014b). Certainly, the lack of economic opportunity within Ireland encouraged a focus on stable, high-status occupations including the professions and the public service. Yet the entry patterns favouring the humanities and the professions reflected social and cultural conservatism, which privileged professional status and academic subjects over scientific, 'practical' or technical disciplines (Walsh, 2014b).

'a beggarly provision…'

W.T. Cosgrave, the first leader of the Irish Free State, aptly summed up his government's position towards the universities in a letter to the Duke of Devonshire in July 1923 (NAI TSCH/3/S1766 Cosgrave, 14 July 1923):

…The Government were…faced with the difficulty that the amount which they are in a position to devote out of public funds towards the assistance of University education in Ireland has necessarily to be kept within narrow limits, at least so long as the financial exigencies of the present time continue.

The parsimonious financing of higher education extended well beyond the unstable period of the early 1920s and became an integral feature of budgetary policy. Eoin MacNéill, the first Minister for Education in the Cumann na nGaedheal administration, informed the Dáil in July 1924 that the statutory grants for the NUI established by the Irish Universities Act, 1908, amounted to no more than a 'beggarly provision', but with commendable honesty confessed that he could do nothing about it: '…I was not able to recommend or to devise any proposal which would make the National University even approximately the organ of national progress that it ought to be' (Dáil debates 8(10) 11 July 1924: 1051).

MacNéill was not overstating the minimalist scale of public expenditure on higher education. The annual appropriations recorded by the Public Accounts Committee revealed a consistently meagre level of recurrent public expenditure on higher education up to the late 1940s. The net expenditure by the Exchequer on 'Universities and Colleges' in 1924–1925 was £107,800, barely 0.44% of total net expenditure reported to the Public Accounts Committee (Public Accounts Committee 1928). While expenditure on teacher training colleges was accounted for under a separate Vote, the minimalist resourcing for higher education was unmistakable. Following a range of incremental government initiatives in the 1920s, mainly focusing on promoting agricultural education within the colleges of the NUI, the net Exchequer spending for Universities and Colleges reached a modest total of £155,500 by 1932–1933 (0.64% of net expenditure) (Public Accounts Committee 1936). But government expenditure on higher education was effectively frozen between 1930 and 1947, with no increases in recurrent expenditure and virtually no capital commitment at all. The only exceptions were supplementary estimates to clear the debts of UCC in 1934 and UCD a decade later (NAI TSCH/3/S12544 McElligott, 13 May 1943). The net Exchequer spend under the corresponding Vote in 1945–1946 was strikingly low at £161,664, barely

0.34% of net spending by the national government, among the lowest totals recorded since the foundation of the state (Public Accounts Committee 1950).

Recurrent funding for universities and colleges stagnated over a fifteen-year period, failing to keep pace with overall expenditure even in an era of financial retrenchment during the world economic depression and second world war. The underlying pattern of minimalist public financing of higher education, firmly established in the 1920s, was maintained until the late 1940s. This pattern was consistent enough that it could not be attributed simply to the poverty of the newly independent state. It had a great deal to do with the conservative leadership of the Department of Finance, both under its first secretary, Joseph Brennan and his long serving successor, J.J. McElligott (Lee, 1988). The minimalist allocation for higher level institutions testified to the commitment of senior officials to laissez-faire ideology and fiscal conservatism.

'…professors and students moved about like chattels'

The colleges of the NUI enjoyed close connections with the political elite of the new state (Walsh, 2014b). The first two ministers for education were university lecturers: Eoin MacNéill (1922–1925) and his successor John Marcus O'Sullivan (1926–1932) were both professors of history in UCD. Both ministers worked within a context of rigid fiscal conservatism, but their influence was brought to bear to facilitate the creation of the faculties of agriculture in UCD and dairy science in UCC during the 1920s. Subsequently, de Valera's position as Chancellor of the NUI (1921–1975), which outlasted even his extraordinary public career, represented a significant stabilising factor in relations between Fianna Fáil governments and the National University. De Valera, unlike his predecessor, William Walsh, treated the position of Chancellor as a formal and ceremonial office and rarely intervened to influence its decisions or to shape academic policies (Walsh, 2008). De Valera often gave college officials a sympathetic hearing and was willing to mitigate the Department

of Finance's consistent agenda to limit student enrolments and enforce higher private contributions through fees. Yet the leading role of NUI graduates and professors in government did not translate into consistent financial support for its colleges (Walsh, 2014b), still less alter the generally laissez-faire orientation of government policy in higher education.

The innate conservatism of the Free State government, allied to the close connections of ministers with the NUI, ensured that government decisions reinforced the dominant position of the universities. The newly created Department of Education assumed responsibility for the technical education functions previously held by the pre-independence Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI) in 1924. The only significant institutional reconfiguration under the Free State was the closure of the Royal College of Science and incorporation of its scientific and agricultural disciplines within UCD and UCC. The Free State government reversed the policy of DATI, which had sought to develop higher level studies in science and agriculture separately from the universities. Influential ministers, including Patrick McGilligan and Patrick Hogan as well as their counterparts in Education, definitively rejected this emergent binary approach, in favour of integrating higher-level agricultural and scientific studies within the NUI (Walsh, 2018).

The government abruptly closed the College of Science in October 1922 at the height of the civil war, following reports of a plot by anti-Treaty forces to blow up the college buildings (*Irish Times* 21 October 1922). The displaced students refused to transfer to UCD and held a protest meeting on 17 October calling for the restoration of the college, where the dean, Prof. F.E. Hackett, declared that 'in the Irish Free State they must claim academic freedom. Professors and students must not be moved about like chattels' (*Irish Times* 18 October 1922). A student speaker claimed that the bomb reported to have been found in the building was 'simply an aeroplane dynamo for demonstration purposes' (Ibid.). But the college's days as an independent entity were numbered. Although the work of the college continued temporarily in a number of different sites across Dublin, the buildings in Merrion St were taken over as government offices. Minister for Agriculture Patrick Hogan told the Dáil in October 1922 that it was an anomaly to have two separate establishments in UCD and the College of Science 'both teaching to a great extent the

same subjects'—perhaps the earliest example of governmental incomprehension at duplication of academic programmes (Dáil debates 1(23) 18 October 1922: 1654). Patrick McGilligan, Minister for Industry and Commerce, similarly asserted that the College of Science was 'a perfectly and completely redundant institution', which duplicated courses undertaken in UCD (Dáil debates 8(17) 17 July 1924: 1613). The government regarded a separate College of Science as an outmoded relic of the British administration, whose academic work in agricultural and science disciplines should be integrated within a university. Fiscal conservatism, dissatisfaction with duplication of academic activity and political support for extending the agriculture faculties in the NUI combined to ensure the closure of the College of Science.

MacNéill recommended to the Executive Council on 8 May 1924 that the College of Science should be discontinued as a separate institution, with its staff and resources being transferred to UCD and UCC (NAI TSCH/3/S3780 Ó Dubain, 8 May 1924). MacNéill confirmed to the Dáil on 11 July 1924 that higher education programmes in agriculture and applied science would in future be based in new faculties of agriculture in UCD and UCC: 'The National University is more properly the university of the agricultural community, which is the main part of this nation, and the development of the agricultural community and the development of that rural civilisation, which I have spoken of before, ought to be one of its principal functions' (Dáil debates 8(10) 11 July 1924: 1052).When the government did not immediately act on his recommendations, the minister returned to the fray on 23 August, indicating that a government decision was 'urgently necessary' to allow the transfer to take place for the new academic year. MacNéill's memorandum to Cosgrave's office pointedly warned that the college's space and facilities should generally be returned to academic use, addressing official reluctance to agree to an early transfer because the buildings were being used as government offices: 'The Minister is strongly of the opinion that all the laboratories, lecture-halls and classrooms, formerly used for the purposes of the College should revert to their original use and be placed at the disposal of University College' (NAI TSCH/3/S3780 Ó Dubain, 23 August 1924). This required the relocation of government offices currently based in the college buildings, retaining accommodation only for

the state services for agricultural and chemical testing. MacNéill's lobbying enjoyed strong support within the government, not least from McGilligan, who was also a lecturer in UCD. The Cabinet agreed on 26 August 1924 that the buildings and equipment of the College of Science would '…be placed at the disposal of the Governor of University College, Dublin' (MacDunphy, 27 August 1924).

Yet despite pressure from powerful voices within the Cabinet, the Department of Finance showed no urgency in bringing forward a Bill to finalise the transfer of the college's functions to the NUI. An impatient McGilligan appealed to Cosgrave on 17 September 1925 to prod Finance into action; noting that the Bill had been 'promised again and again', he commented that 'seeing that Executive Council decision on this was announced eighteen months ago I do not feel that I am asking too much in pressing for the Bill required to carry out that decision' (NAI TSCH/3/S3780 McGilligan, 17 September 1925). This official inertia may have been influenced by a political crisis over the Boundary Commission, which engulfed the government in 1925, but is more likely to have reflected the department's preoccupation with balancing the books and disinterest in university education. Michael MacDunphy, assistant secretary to the government, applied gentle pressure to his counterpart in Finance, in November 1925, seeking a report on the legislation (NAI TSCH/3/S3780 MacDunphy, 9 November 1925). But Leon McAuley, assistant secretary of the Department of Finance, told MacDunphy on 11 November that while the 'whole question of the College of Science—a very complicated matter—has been under consideration for some time past in this Department…', it was 'too soon, however, to say when a Bill can be introduced' (NAI TSCH/3/S3780 McAuley, 11 November 1925).

MacNéill was forced to resign as Minister for Education in November 1925, following his ill-fated participation in the Boundary Commission between North and South. This setback did not halt the momentum for the transfer of the College of Science. The initiative was supported by John Marcus O'Sullivan, MacNéill's successor and fellow UCD historian, McGilligan and Cosgrave himself. The president's office was influential in securing a draft bill from the Department of Finance and the University Education (Agricultural and Dairy Science) Bill was approved by the Executive Council in June 1926 (NAI TSCH/3/S3780 Government

of Ireland 9 June 1926). The legislation provided for the transfer of the land and buildings of the College of Science and the Albert Agricultural College to UCD, incorporation of most functions of the College of Science within UCD and creation of a new faculty of dairy science for UCC (Ibid.). Although several TDs, including the Labour representative for Mayo , T.J. O'Connell, complained that UCG was being excluded, the legislation was quickly approved by the Oireachtas in the summer of 1926.

The closure of the Royal College of Science and transfer of technical training in science and agricultural disciplines to the NUI in the late 1920s went some way towards remedying the 'beggarly' grants for UCD and UCC. The University Education (Agricultural and Dairy Science) Act, 1926 allocated increased resources to both colleges for 'general purposes', usually related to the employment of new staff and earmarked annual grants from the Department of Agriculture for new faculties of agriculture in UCD and dairy science in UCC. Both colleges benefited extensively from the transfer of resources from the defunct College of Science. UCD received an increase of 63% in its statutory grant between 1925 and 1927, allied to a once-off capital allocation, while the annual grant for UCC was doubled (Ibid.). This was accomplished at very modest cost to the government, as the increased subventions were largely accounted for by the transfer of the state grant for the defunct College of Science and the state even realised a saving of £2000 on the subvention to UCD, although not UCC (Dáil debates 9 June 1926).

The legislation led to the creation of a new faculty of general agriculture in UCD, operating mainly on the farms and buildings at Glasnevin (Williams, 1954). The exchequer also underwrote the cost of building and equipping a new institute of dairy science in UCC, which was established in 1926, consisting of a laboratory block for teaching and research, a lecture theatre and an experimental dairy. Cosgrave laid the foundation stone of the new institute in July 1928, extolling the benefits to be realised for agriculture in terms of increased production through improving the education of farmers: 'We believe that its professors and workers will regard it as their highest function to have the opportunity of dealing with, and solving, the problems which confront the farmers of this country…' (*Irish Times* 21 July 1928). A national newspaper, perhaps with a

mild touch of satire, referenced Cosgrave's speech under the headline 'Free State fights for Supremacy in the Butter Industry' (*Irish Times* 21 July 1928). Cosgrave's address positioned the dairy science institute as a key collaborator in the government's agenda to develop agriculture. This was a rare example of a confluence of interests between government and university colleges in pursuit of a national economic agenda during the Irish Free State. The drive to develop agriculture, particularly the livestock and dairy sector, by the Cumann na nGaedhael government was a consistent thread which influenced initiatives in university education throughout the 1920s (Walsh, 2018). This agenda also marked a firm commitment to university education even in areas such as agriculture, where pre-independence initiatives had promoted an embryonic non-university framework with a scientific and technical orientation. Yet while the grants for agriculture and dairy science were maintained by successive governments, this did not signal a general relaxation of financial constraints or any wider repositioning of the NUI to take on a more prominent role in supporting economic development.

'the failure to develop that systematic technical training which is recognised…as an essential factor of industrial success'

The closure of the College of Science removed one of the few significant public institutions offering higher technical education in pre-independence Ireland. The technical instruction branch of the Department of Education mourned the loss of a valuable public resource, not least because it could no longer rely upon the assistance of the college's professional staff in developing science syllabuses at post-primary level or training for science teachers. Moreover, barely a year later, the report of the Commission on Technical Education made thinly veiled criticisms of the decision to close the College of Science, raising similar concerns about lack of specialised expertise in scientific education and researching the interface between schools and the labour market: 'The Department can no longer command this valuable assistance,… and it

has no facilities whatsoever for the scientific investigation of any industrial problem' (Commission of Technical Education, 1927: 33). But these concerns fell on deaf ears, in a revealing indication of the prevailing political and official priorities in the 1920s, which did not extend to evidence gathering about the flow of school leavers into work or labour market demands for particular qualifications. The transfer of the college's functions to the NUI commanded overwhelming political support. The initiative reflected national policies, particularly upgrading the status of agricultural studies within the university and was justified by predictable appeals to Ireland's agrarian destiny as a 'rural civilisation'. More significantly, the closure of the College of Science was consistent with the predominant ideological paradigm among policymakers, dictating a limited role for the government in providing education and delegation of educational functions to autonomous institutions aided by the state. The initiative also reflected a potent bias in favour of higher status academic education in a university setting over specialised vocational or technical training.[4]

Yet innovative approaches to technical and vocational education were advanced by the Commission on Technical Education, established by the government in September 1926 to 'enquire into and advise upon the system of Technical Education in Saorstat Eireann in relation to the requirements in trade and industry'(NAI TSCH 3/S5001 O'Neill, 18 September 1926). The commission came into being because Joseph O'Neill, secretary of the Department of Education, informed the government that 'the information available to the Department as to the existing and probably future requirements of trade and industry in this country is wholly inadequate…to come to any satisfactory conclusion as to the needs of the country in the matter of Technical Education' (NAI TSCH 3/S5001 O'Neill, 29 May 1926). Frustration within the technical instruction branch at the lack of data on the relationship between demand for technical education and labour market requirements led to the establishment of the commission. O'Neill informed the Executive Council that neither his department nor Industry and Commerce had been able to discover how far trade and industry was held back through the lack of technical training:

'Technical Education' much more than any other form of Education must fit the prospective worker for a specialised occupation and without the governing information indicated above, it is impossible to know how far the existing system or any probably (sic) improvement in it can achieve this purpose (Ibid.: 1).

O'Neill recommended the establishment of a commission to investigate the 'whole problem of technical education in Ireland' with a particular focus on the present or future needs of industry and commerce. The Free State Cabinet approved the establishment of a commission, containing departmental nominees from Education, Finance, Industry and Commerce and Agriculture, as well as two TDs, John Good and Hugh Colahan, representing employers and trade unions respectively. Significantly, the commission included strong external representation with the appointment of two academic experts, Professor Arthur Rohn, president of the federal polytechnicum, Zurich and Nils Fredriksson of the Swedish Board of Education (NAI TSCH 3/S5001 MacGiolla Fhaoláin, 29 July 1926). The two academics were chosen because Sweden and Switzerland were smaller European countries which had pioneered the introduction of higher technical institutions of a comparable status and standard to universities. The senior inspector of the technical instruction branch, John Ingram, became chairman of the commission and the branch was deeply engaged in formulating the recommendations.

The commission is perhaps best known for its key role in recommending the most significant structural innovation by the new state in education, the establishment of a new public system of vocational schools offering 'continuation' courses in practical skills for young people aged fourteen to sixteen (Commission on Technical Education, 1927). Yet its report, speedily completed in October 1927, also included a highly critical analysis of higher technical education. The Commission pulled no punches in highlighting the limitations of the existing post-compulsory educational space, indicating that higher technical education 'has not in our opinion been sufficiently realised in the Saorstát…' (Commission on Technical Education, 106). They identified a lack of appreciation among business and commercial occupations of the value of technical education and not coincidentally, emphasised 'the failure to develop that systematic

technical training which is recognised, in other countries, as an essential factor of industrial success' (Ibid.). The Irish state was compared unfavourably to Switzerland, where the Federal Institute of Technology offered third level education in a wide range of technical disciplines and 'may be regarded as a technical University…' (Ibid.: 106–107). Sweden too had two technical institutes 'of university standard'—the Royal Technical School in Stockholm and the Chalmers Institute of Technology in Gothenburg (Ibid.: 107). The commission made an explicit connection between the relative value placed on technical education and successful industrial development: 'Although others may contribute materially to this development, the motive force in the economic advance of a country will be supplied by those who possess the highest scientific and technological qualifications' (Ibid.: 106). This was an unwelcome message in the early Irish Free State, whose elites were preoccupied with fiscal conservatism, cultural and religious objectives in education and to the limited extent that economic advances were considered relevant to higher education, gave primacy to agriculture on both pragmatic and ideological grounds.

The commission offered only three recommendations in higher technical education, but each envisaged a fundamental recasting of existing policies, institutions and educational structures. They did not explicitly challenge the government's decision to close the College of Science but made no secret of their belief that its abolition left an important gap in higher scientific education. They advocated 'the continuance and wide development of the work which has hitherto been the function of the Royal College of Science…' with the aim of ensuring that courses of university standard were available in scientific disciplines 'to produce leaders in technical education, more especially on the scientific side' (Ibid.: 108). Such programmes encompassed third level courses in engineering and applied chemistry and more systematic professional training for teachers of science and technology. If the universities were unable or unwilling to offer science and engineering courses of this type in future, 'the re-establishment of a separate institute for this purpose will have to be seriously considered'(Ibid.: 108). This recommendation both challenged traditionalist understandings of the university and at least floated

the idea that professional/vocational courses in science and technology could more sensibly be offered in a specialised non-university institution.

The report offered a coherent, broadly based understanding of the fragmented and vaguely defined area of higher technical education, which traditionally encompassed recognisably third level disciplines within the College of Science, professional teacher training and post-compulsory, senior cycle courses (Walsh, 2018). The commission advised that existing post-compulsory courses of technical education in Dublin, Cork and Limerick should be expanded and upgraded. They envisaged full-time day courses of 'secondary technical character' for three years after the Intermediate Certificate, which would serve a dual purpose in producing managers with scientific expertise and training teachers for the vocational schools. The report also recommended an expansion of commercial courses at upper second level in the technical institutes in Cork and Rathmines, Dublin, which had been established in the late 1800s (Commission on Technical Education, 1927).

The commission's recommendations on higher technical education were radical and proved far ahead of their time. The relatively brief recommendations were much less influential than their rationale for junior second level vocational courses. The perspective of the commissioners diverged not only from the ideological preoccupations of the Free State government, but from the predominant understandings of higher education among political, religious and even educational elites. It would be another forty years before an Irish government accepted a report from the Steering Committee on Technical Education in 1967 for the creation of regional technical colleges, incorporating elements of the commission's recommendations, albeit on a dramatically increased scale. There was no appetite among politicians or senior civil servants (with the important exception of the technical instruction branch itself) in the first three decades of the independent state for the revival of a dedicated third-level institution offering technological courses which might compete for scarce public funding with the universities. The commission's appeal for a radical expansion and upgrading of senior cycle technical education also fell on deaf ears.

Technical education at higher level, involving higher-level certificate and diploma courses or professionally recognised qualifications in

technical subjects, remained underdeveloped, poorly supported and often not well defined during this period. The large majority of students pursuing higher level technical courses were concentrated in the colleges offered by the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) up to the 1960s (Government of Ireland, 1965). The sole institutions offering courses in higher level technical education outside Dublin were the Crawford Municipal Technical Institute in Cork and a centre specialising in hotel management in Shannon: there were none at all serving rural areas. The development of higher technical studies was limited even in Dublin, which had the strongest tradition of technical education.

Yet if ministers and the Department of Finance showed no interest in higher education in science and technology outside the universities, the commission influenced the plans and to some extent the practice of the newly created City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee, which took over responsibility for the technical institutes in Dublin from 1930. The VEC, with Louis Ely O'Carroll, the former principal of Kevin St. technical institute, as its first chief executive, developed an ambitious (and to a large extent unrealisable) vision for the future of technical education in the city of Dublin (Walsh, 2018). A board of studies established by the VEC, led by O'Carroll and including the principals of the five technical schools in the city, proposed a major upgrading of technical education at second and higher level. A report by a committee of the board to the VEC in 1936 sketched out this detailed vision for transformation of the existing technical schools, informed by a reorientation towards third level science and technological courses. The board envisaged the reconstitution of existing technical institutes in Kevin St. and Rathmines, along with the creation of two new schools, to form 'five central schools of specialisation' in the metropolitan area, located 'on principal thoroughfares, convenient of access from all the main residential districts in the Borough Area' (Report of the Department of Education, 1935–1936: 69–70). The two new regional technical schools would be established in the north west and south west of the city. Meanwhile, the Kevin St. school would become a College of Technology and the Rathmines institute would be relocated to the city centre as a 'High

School of Commerce', while an upgraded School of Domestic Science would be established in a new building at Cathal Brugha St. (Ibid.). The five colleges would offer higher level courses accredited by the relevant professional bodies in various disciplines and professional courses for the training of teachers in science and technology (Duff et al., 2000). The vision of the board of studies drew inspiration from the report of the commission whose motivation and rationale it shared and proved almost as difficult to implement.

The Department of Education gave at best qualified support to the board's plans, noting the proposals in its annual report for 1935–1936 and referencing 'a valuable report dealing with present and future accommodation requirements…' (Report of the Department of Education, 1935–1936: 69). The CDVEC plan faced insurmountable obstacles in an era of financial austerity during the interwar period and the second world war. Duff et al. in their official history of Dublin Institute of Technology, the ultimate inheritor of the mid-century vision of the board, commented that 'circumstances changed and World War II intervened' (Duff et al., 2000: 14–15). Yet the challenge for the ambitious CDVEC blueprint was more the opposite: the Irish Free State changed hardly at all, at least in its narrow conceptualisation of and limited support for higher education. The abrupt closure of the College of Science underlined that the post-independence political and administrative elite with few exceptions regarded higher level courses as the preserve of the university and technical institutes as venues for vocational training of a basic and practical variety.

Most of the significant proposals in the board's plan were not implemented over the following two decades. One of the few recommendations to be implemented in the short-term was the establishment of St. Mary's College of Domestic Science in June 1941 as the first recognised third level college under CDVEC auspices (*Irish Times* 17 June 1941). The college in Cathal Brugha St. offered a three year diploma for domestic science teachers, taking over the functions performed previously by the Department of Education's training school in Kilmacud, in south county Dublin, which closed in 1941 (Duff et al., 2000). This early expansion of higher level courses proved exceptional in the 1940s. CDVEC was more

successful in developing apprenticeship training and creating linkages with craft trades, despite the shortcomings of the Apprenticeship Act 1931, which was ultimately acknowledged as 'defective' by the Department of Industry and Commerce (NAI TSCH 3/S2402B Minister for Industry and Commerce, 7 June 1958: 4; Dáil Debates 177 21 October 1959: 77). The Kevin St. institute offered training for electrical apprentices for the newly created Electricity Supply Board (ESB) and established a new apprenticeship scheme for the bakery trade in the late 1930s (Duff et al., 2000). This expanded portfolio of apprenticeship courses coexisted with higher level courses leading to the external examinations of the City and Guilds of London Institute and the BSc in the University of London (Ibid.). The institute in Bolton St. also expanded its footprint in apprenticeship, through day release schemes in engineering and construction, alongside a junior cycle technical school.

The vision of the board of studies largely proved unattainable in the decade following its report. The VEC colleges were engaged mainly in a range of second level technical courses, part-time adult education courses leading to external professional or university examinations and expanded apprenticeship training in this period, rather than embarking on new ventures in higher level scientific or technological education, where demand was uncertain and official support extremely limited (Ibid.). Moreover, avenues for entry to the technical institutes remained limited and largely restricted to Dublin, while systems for accreditation and recognition of their programmes were fragmented and often linked to external bodies outside Ireland (Walsh, 2018). The underdevelopment of higher technical education was the logical consequence of a traditionalist consensus shared by political leaders, public officials and many educators, which placed a minimal value on technical and vocational studies and assigned only a limited and subordinate role to public authorities in developing new forms of education. Government policies towards education were permeated by both fiscal and social conservatism which augured poorly for significant investment in higher technical education. Moreover, the inferior status of vocational education in a society which valued professional status, academic learning and religious formation imposed sharp constraints on the ambitions of the VEC (Walsh, 2018).

'a fair attempt to meet the claims of the college'

Trinity College, Dublin, the oldest university on the island of Ireland, operated in an inhospitable cultural and political context for very different reasons, due to its traditional association with a displaced unionist elite and particularly the firm opposition of the Catholic Church to 'neutral' educational institutions (Walsh, 2014a). The senior fellows who formed Trinity's collective leadership expressed an uncompromising unionism up to the early 1900s: as late as 1912, the provost, Anthony Traill, appealed to his Scottish counterparts at St Andrews to support Irish unionists against the threat of Home Rule (*Irish Times* 23 September 1911):

> We call upon all of you…to come to our help, and to defend the loyal, industrious inhabitants of our country, numbering well over a million—half of them at least fellow countrymen of your own—from the disloyal majority, half of whom—the Sinn Féiners[5]– are rank Republicans, and the other half under the domination of the Church of Rome.

The tumultuous legacy of the first world war and revolution in Ireland destroyed the political architecture in which Trinity had enjoyed a privileged place and initiated a painful re-appraisal of traditional allegiances among the Trinity community. The Board offered support to the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921, not without some dissent in its own ranks. Yet the senior fellows who continued to direct the college's fortunes, including ex-unionist dignitaries such as J.H. Bernard, the former Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, had almost all come to prominence under the pre-independence regime and were cautious in their accommodation with the new state.

TCD faced a financial crisis at the outset of the new dispensation, struggling with wartime inflation, a decline in student fees due to military service and loss of rents during the military conflicts of 1919–1923 (MUN V/6/6/15 Board Minutes 11 April 1923). No financial guarantees were given to the college in the Anglo-Irish Treaty, although the Irish delegation led by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins had no

objection to the retention of a clause from the defunct Government of Ireland Act guaranteeing an annual grant of £30,000 for Trinity (McDowell & Webb, 1982). The omission of this clause was due to the indifference of the British coalition government led by David Lloyd George, who gave a low value to Trinity's claims at a time when he was negotiating Ireland's exit from the union. The Prime Minister told a delegation of southern unionists, including the provost, J.H. Bernard, on 5 December 1921, that the college would have to come to terms with the new Irish government. Lloyd George elegantly evaded the provost's complaint at the omission of a statutory grant for the college from the Treaty: 'The Prime Minister acknowledged that it had escaped his memory but stated that he thought that there need not be any apprehension about it, as he felt sure that the majority in Southern Ireland would deal impartially with the minority' (MUN V 5/22 Board Minutes 10 December 1921).

Financial negotiations between Trinity College and the Free State government proved acrimonious and had a lasting impact on Trinity's relations with the new Irish state. Tomás Irish suggests that Cosgrave's response to Trinity's representations in 1922–1923 was 'firm and unsympathetic' (Irish, 2015). While Cosgrave was unwilling to concede support to the college on the scale envisaged by the pre-independence Geikie Commission in 1920 or the Government of Ireland Act, it was the Department of Finance under Joseph Brennan which took the lead in resisting Trinity's claims.

The Board made a submission to the Free State government in March 1923 seeking a state grant of at least £10,000 per annum and the transfer to the college of the securities (amounting to over £100,000) held by the Public Trustee on TCD's behalf to cover any loss of income that the college might suffer due to compulsory land purchase under the 1903 Land Act (MUN V 5/22 Board Minutes 24 March 1923). The Department of Finance was not only opposed to an annual subsidy but sought to assert greater official control over the college. Brennan sought detailed information in a questionnaire on the college's finances, management and support for students before any grant was awarded. When the Board rejected this as a transparent delaying tactic, the secretary gave a chilly response to

their case. Brennan proposed only a non-recurrent grant of €5000 in 1923–1924, subject to a range of conditions and seeking agreement that '…no such grant will be paid to the university in any future year' (MUN V 5/23 Board Minutes 23 June 1923). While Finance was willing to consider an amendment to the Land Act to allow the transfer of the securities held by the Public Trustee to the college, Brennan insisted on the government's right to conduct 'a comprehensive enquiry' into the college's affairs and demanded the Board's co-operation '…in putting into effect such recommendations resulting from the inquiry as the Government may approve' (Ibid.). This sweeping condition would have dramatically curtailed the autonomy of the college and made the Department of Finance the arbiter of its internal affairs. The department's jaundiced view of the college's application was underlined by Brennan's comment that the Board should have done more to put its own house in order, through 'internal re-arrangement for the purpose of securing the most economical and efficient application of its existing resources' (Ibid.).

The college authorities flatly rejected Brennan's terms and appealed directly to Cosgrave on 23 June 1923, even warning '…that the matter should be further considered by the Government, before publicity is given to the correspondence' (MUN V 5/23 Board Minutes 23 June 1923). This explicit threat of a public confrontation had some effect on ministers, if not on officials of the Department of Finance. The government's response on 29 June offered a compromise financial settlement which tacitly dropped Finance's more extreme demands. The Cabinet agreed to allocate a special, non-recurrent grant of £5000 for 1923–1924, on the basis that no further claim for a similar grant would be made for three years (MUN V 5/23 Board Minutes 30 June 1923). More significantly, the college secured a favourable settlement relating to the securities for land purchase: ministers agreed to transfer to TCD the balance of the capital funds accumulated by the Public Trustee, allowing the college to draw down up to £10,000 of the capital within the first three years, subject to the approval of the Minister for Finance and allocating a modest annual grant of €3000 'in the present and future years', in full settlement of the college's claims under the legislation (*Irish Times* 7 July 1923). The final government offer dropped the more onerous conditions

sought by the Department of Finance, removing any requirement for the Board to implement recommendations from a possible official enquiry. The Board quickly accepted the settlement on 30 June and W.E. Thrift, a Trinity professor and university member of the Dáil, welcomed the agreement as '…a fair attempt to meet the claims of the college' (Dáil debates 4(17) 25 July 1923: 1413).

The agreement was a far cry from the statutory grant enshrined in the Government of Ireland Act and certainly did not meet the aspirations of the provost and Board but was sufficient to stabilise the college's financial position. The agreement also maintained Trinity's traditional constitution and institutional autonomy and no enquiry into the college's affairs materialised. The sensitivity of Trinity's position within a complex nexus of relationships between the new state, the British government and the southern unionist elite ensured that the college's claims were resolved at a political rather than official level (Walsh, 2018). Cosgrave received representations on the college's behalf from the Duke of Devonshire, the Colonial Secretary in Andrew Bonar Law's Conservative government and replied to the Duke in July 1923 to brief him on the settlement with Trinity (NAI TSCH/3/S1766 Cosgrave, 14 July 1923). The Free State leader placed a high value on winning over the southern unionist minority to the new state and was receptive to lobbying by the university TDs representing the TCD graduate constituency in the Dáil, who were formally independent but almost invariably supported his government.

Yet if an open confrontation was avoided in 1923, the tense exchanges between the Board of Trinity and the Department of Finance had an enduring impact on the college's interaction with the new Irish state. While the agreement did not preclude the Board from lobbying the government once a three-year period had elapsed, no submission to the government would be made by the college authorities over the next 23 years. This reflected a deliberate policy of avoiding interactions with the government which might draw intrusive political or official intervention, memorably encapsulated by McDowell and Webb as a 'policy of inconspicuousness' (McDowell & Webb, 1982: 429). This low-profile approach remained the defining feature of Trinity's engagement with the Irish state for the following generation.

Gaelicisation

The most persistent thread in government policy towards the universities up to the 1940s was pressure to play their part in the Gaelicisation of society. Political and official pressure for Gaelicisation remained a significant factor in the relations between the new state and the universities for a generation after 1922. But the practical impact of government support for Gaelicisation on institutional practice was intermittent and piecemeal. Official backing for cultural nationalism never translated into a systematic policy for Gaelicisation within the universities, which would have demanded a coherent policy agenda backed by sufficient resources - —neither of which materialised in this period (Walsh, 2018).

The fundamental policy imperative to revive the Irish language particularly influenced the fortunes of University College, Galway. UCG's relations with the new government in the early to mid-1920s were characterised by mutual incomprehension and acrimony, as politicians and senior officials openly expressed uncertainty about its *raison d'etre*. MacNéill speculated publicly about the college's future in July 1924, telling the Dáil that 'University College, Galway, is for me a very difficult problem… I leave Galway outside my proposals either one way or the other. I do not propose to destroy. I do not propose to construct' (Dáil debates 8(10) 11 July 1924: 1053–1054). He even floated the idea that UCG might become an educational centre for the fishing industry: 'Galway, I think, is an ideal situation from every point of view, from the point of view of sea fisheries, and from the point of view of inland fisheries, of being a centre for the purpose of education in and for that industry' (Ibid.). Not surprisingly, the flying of this kite triggered a strong protest from three leading members of the governing body, the college president, Alexander Anderson, registrar Fr. John Hynes and the bishop of Galway, Thomas O'Doherty, expressing 'grave anxiety' at the minister's statement (*Irish Times* 14 July 1924). MacNéill retreated to safer ground, proposing that a college-departmental conference should be held to consider how UCG could be transformed to undertake 'special work of national importance' in reviving the Irish language (Mac Mathúna, 2008). The idea that UCG would play a crucial part in the crusade for

Gaelicisation was zealously promoted by Ernest Blythe, the influential Minister for Finance. Blythe refused to sanction any improvement in UCG's financial position without a commitment to rapid and unequivocal transformation into an Irish speaking college. Blythe was contemptuous of the college's plans for a measured expansion of teaching through Irish and even raised the spectre of closure in a speech to the Dáil on 9 June 1926:

> If Galway is not going to do special work, then frankly as far as I am concerned I do not think it would be a wise course—it might be politically the only possible course to maintain it—to maintain it as a sort of toy college unless it does special work. On the other hand, if it does special work, and if the people concerned will give their minds to devising a scheme and the best method for doing this special work that the college can do, I do not think they will find the Government so difficult to deal with (Dáil Debates 16(7) 9 June 1926: 718).

While Blythe had no plan to close UCG, his inflammatory speech and pejorative reference to a 'toy college' provoked the first open conflict between university authorities and the Free State government. The governing body on 26 June adopted a resolution of protest against 'the derisive and insulting language used by the Minister for Finance about Galway College,' while Anderson in a public statement objected to sweeping Gaelicisation, asserting that Blythe was 'the victim of educational hallucinations' (NAI TSCH/3/S2409 Hynes, 16 June 1926; Anderson, 11 June 1926). The college authorities effectively mobilised political, business and ecclesiastical support in the west of Ireland to protect the college. A public meeting convened by the Chamber of Commerce in Galway Town Hall on 25 June 1926 saw an impressive show of strength in favour of UCG, including three bishops, representatives of all county councils throughout Connacht and local TDs, as well as trade unionists, employers and college representatives. The *Irish Times* (26 June 1926) helpfully reported that virtually all the shops and business in the city closed at noon for two hours to protest 'the aspersions of the Minister for Finance on University College Galway.'

The confrontation was quickly resolved, not least due to the influential intervention of regional political, commercial and ecclesiastical elites. Patrick Hogan, the Agriculture Minister who was a Galway TD, addressed the public meeting on 25 June to a 'stormy reception', assuring attendees that the government had no intention of closing the college. Similar assurances were given by O'Sullivan in the Seanad (*Irish Times* 26 June 1926). Representatives of the governing body concluded a 'memorandum of agreements' with the Ministers for Finance and Education on 15 October 1926, confirming that 'Galway College could render most useful service to the country by undertaking special work in connection with the Irish language…and that the Governing Body should henceforth endeavour to have an increasing proportion of the work of the College done through Irish' (NAI TSCH/3/S2409 Department of Education, 15 October 1926: 1). The agreement provided that UCG would appoint three new lecturers in history, mathematics and commerce, who would teach through Irish, with the nominees requiring approval by the Department of Education and would make 'every effort' to fill future academic vacancies with candidates who would be 'able to impart instruction through the medium of Irish' (Ibid.: 1–2). The government in turn conceded an increase of 35% in the college's annual grant, allocated £1500 to pay its debt and allowed class fees previously paid to professors to be allocated for the general purposes of the college (Ibid.). The agreement was implemented at first on a non-statutory basis, but given legislative sanction by the University College Galway, Bill, approved by the government and Oireachtas in 1929. Ironically, Blythe defended the Bill against criticism from Fianna Fáil TDs, including de Valera, who argued that it did not go far enough, by arguing that the Dáil should rely on the good judgement of the governing body, which would be informed by both patriotic and practical considerations: '…there is a definitely new spirit in University College, Galway, and I believe that that condition will continue to improve there…' (Dáil debates 32(2) 24 October 1929: 298).

The settlement between government ministers and the college authorities exerted a long-term influence on the cultural and academic orientation of UCG, as the college's mission became more firmly associated with the national objective of Gaelicisation than any of its counterparts. The college authorities achieved a compromise, which incorporated a genuine

commitment to Gaelicisation while maintaining UCG's character as an institution teaching 'universal' knowledge and control of the pace of change by the governing body. The government made no attempt to enforce a wider rationalisation of faculties or dictate academic decisions once ministers were assured that UCG had adopted teaching through Irish as an integral part of its institutional mission.

The election of Eamon de Valera as Taoiseach in 1932 did not signal any new departure in higher education. De Valera's government was generally notable for its continuity with earlier Free State policies in university education, particularly in the new government's devotion to fiscal conservatism. Fianna Fáil's rise to power initially gave a sharper rhetorical edge to demands for more intensive Gaelicisation, but this had only an intermittent impact on policy. Tomás Derrig, the Minister for Education, was outspoken in criticising the failure of the universities to embrace Gaelicisation, telling the Dáil on 9 March 1934 that 'If the universities do not solve the problem of progressively Gaelicising themselves, we shall have to seriously reconsider our whole attitude to them' (*Irish Times* 17 March 1934). Derrig acknowledged that UCG was beginning to play its part in the revival of Irish but claimed that the NUI still lagged far behind the secondary schools. Derrig was particularly hostile to Trinity College, declaring that 'its record, as far as Gaelicisation is concerned, has been such that it is no less than a scandal' (*Irish Times* 10 March 1934).

The only additional statutory grant approved by de Valera's government for the universities during the 1930s involved a modest investment in Gaelicisation in UCD, which occurred despite resistance from Derrig. Denis Coffey, the long serving president of UCD, secured Blythe's agreement in November 1931 to support the expansion of the department of modern Irish up to a maximum grant of £3000. Following the change of government in March 1932, de Valera informed the UCD president of his support for the plan, but Derrig strongly opposed it, writing to de Valera that 'I do not think it right, considering the condition of Irish in this College presently, for the state to provide the new grant until the whole matter is examined carefully' (NAI TSCH/3/S6240 Derrig, 12 May 1932). Derrig's opposition delayed but did not stop the proposal, which received a green light from the Department of Finance, mainly due to its moderate cost. The Cabinet agreed on 17 January 1934 to draft

a special bill implementing the increased grant, which was approved by the Oireachtas in July 1934 (NAI TSCH/3/S6240 Cabinet Minutes 17 January 1934). But the government decision attached conditions to the grant which required the adoption of a tightly prescribed staffing structure for the Irish department: the college was unable or unwilling to implement this scheme fully and as a result the full grant was never allocated (Public Accounts Committee 1955). The ambivalent outcome, in which the government effectively gave additional money for Gaelicisation in principle while withholding part of it in practice, testified to the double think surrounding the crusade for Gaelicisation and still more the minimal importance accorded to universities as a focus of public policy.

'the whole position, secured by generations of effort and struggle for Irish Catholic University Education, is destroyed in one blow…'

De Valera's government was preoccupied during the 1930s with political and constitutional reform, along with the imposition of traditional Sinn Féin policies of economic self-sufficiency and development of indigenous industry behind high tariff barriers. Higher education was invisible in the rhetoric of protectionist economic development, which prioritised protection of domestic industries over exports (Walsh, 2014b). Despite Derrig's ominous warnings, Fianna Fáil ministers were no more inclined to intervene directly in the internal workings of the universities than their Cumann na nGaedhael predecessors, with the usual exception of intermittent efforts to promote Gaelicisation.

De Valera was, however, willing to intervene to ensure that the new constitutional settlement between the Irish state and the British empire which he engineered between 1932 and 1939, was reflected in the statutes of the NUI. The original charter and statutes of the NUI enshrined the King as Visitor, with the power to appoint a board to conduct a visitation of the university. This embarrassing legal anomaly emerged in 1934 following a request for appointment of a Board of Visitors to

investigate the 'dairy science row' in UCC, a bitter internal dispute between the faculty dean, Professor Connell Boyle and the lecturers over control and administration of the new faculty (Murphy, 1995). Fianna Fáil, which was about to remove the monarch from the constitution, could not contemplate the King appointing a Board of Visitors. The Executive Council avoided this appalling vista by making an order on 15 February 1935, amending the charter to enable the Council itself to appoint the Board of Visitors (NAI TSCH/3/S6915 Executive Council Minutes, 15 February 1935; Walsh, 2018).While the government subsequently appointed two High Court judges, Murnaghan and O'Byrne as Visitors for UCC in June 1935, they never had to adjudicate the dispute, which was resolved in January 1936by the governing body in favour of the lecturers (Murphy, 1995). The 'dairy science row' was significant mainly in leading de Valera's government to clarify the obscure but potentially contentious status of the Visitor (Walsh, 2018).

The adoption of de Valera's constitution in 1937, which abolished the authority of the monarch except for the purpose of external association, also provoked a definitive intervention by the Taoiseach (Walsh, 2008). Alex McCarthy, the registrar of the NUI, sought clarification from de Valera in 1938 on the place of the King in the university statutes. Maurice Moynihan, the secretary to the government, issued a detailed reply on 28 July, evidently dictated by de Valera, which clarified that the King had no place in the university statutes (NUI 419 Moynihan, 28 July 1938: 1): 'It is therefore regarded as being quite incompatible with Article 49 of the Constitution that any function of a Visitor should continue to be exercised by the King.' This clarification of an apparently arcane point testified to de Valera's concern to confirm the 'national' status of the NUI by removing the last symbolic legacies of empire.

The government's fiscally conservative policy of 'economy', pursued aggressively by Seán MacEntee, the long serving Minister for Finance, provoked the most striking public conflict between ministers and university authorities under de Valera's administration. MacEntee, whose fiscally conservative outlook was not markedly different to his Cumann na nGaedheal predecessor, Ernest Blythe, implemented austerity policies more stringently due to the impact of the Economic War with Britain and the world economic depression (Murphy, 1995). MacEntee included

the universities in legislation providing for a reduction of 10% in the salary of civil and public servants, although the Department of Finance acknowledged that implementation of the public service cut presented unusual problems due to the autonomy of the universities and difficulty in ascertaining the proportion of the statutory grants devoted to salaries. The Cabinet decided on 24 March 1933 to include a general clause based on similar legislation in New Zealand, empowering the government to reduce university grants on a temporary basis, while passing to the university authorities the poisoned chalice of actually making the reductions: 'They would have to be invited to say how much, in total, the salaries of their officials would be reduced if the scale decided for Civil Servants of equivalent remuneration was applied to them' (NAI TSCH/3/S6341/8 Secretary of the Department of Finance, 16 March 1933). The Public Services (Temporary Economies) Bill enabled the college authorities to make deductions in salary, following 'consultation' between the Minister for Finance and colleges regarding the scale of cuts in grants and salaries.

The authorities of the NUI adopted a common front in resisting the pay reductions, which caused outrage due to the authority given to the Minister for Finance to decide the cuts and the application of the legislation solely to the NUI. Trinity College was exempt from the pay cuts as the college did not receive a statutory exchequer grant. A meeting of academic staff drawn from all three university colleges was convened on 21 April: Alfred O'Rahilly, the influential registrar of UCC and Michael Tierney, UCD professor in classics and future college president, took the lead in rallying the opposition.[6] O'Rahilly and Tierney appealed to de Valera, noting that they were 'most anxious to have a friendly discussion with you before the Bill reaches the Committee stage in the Dáil and hope to arrive at an agreed course of action' (NAI TSCH/3/S6341/8 O'Rahilly and Tierney, 21 April 1933). This was an early example of a strategy repeatedly pursued by university leaders over the following generation, making a direct appeal to the leader of the government to bypass the intransigence of the Department of Finance. This frequently took the form of an NUI institutional back channel to the Chancellor, which had variable efficacy over the decades, but often secured a hearing from de Valera. If their approach to the Chancellor was conciliatory, the academic statement presented by O'Rahilly and Tierney was an uncompromising indictment of

the legislation, arguing that the Bill gave arbitrary power over the colleges to the Minister for Finance, undermined university education for Catholics and represented a fundamental threat to university autonomy:

> The most serious aspect of the Bill is the almost unconscious and innocent way in which it insinuates and initiates State control over our University Colleges. The principle has been strenuously opposed by the Catholic Church in every country. The absence (hitherto) of State control over the working of our Colleges was an indispensable precondition for their recognition by the Hierarchy as suitable for Irish Catholics. The withdrawal of this guarantee raises issues of far-reaching importance (NAI TSCH/3/ S6341/8 NUI College Authorities, 1933).

This fierce denunciation of the legislation not only posited that it would destabilise the university settlement reached two decades earlier, but deliberately raised the dreaded spectre of Communism:

> If the Bill is passed as it stands at present, the whole position, secured by generations of effort and struggle for Irish Catholic University Education, is destroyed in one blow. There is embodied in the Bill the principle of State control over University administration and personnel, with all its possible political, cultural and religious reactions. So far, no country outside of Russia has adopted this principle (Ibid.).

The dogmatic tone of the academic statement and appeal to the Catholic church reflected the political outlook of both O'Rahilly, a fierce defender of clericalism and integralist Catholicism and Tierney, a leading advocate of applying the Catholic social teaching of interwar papal encyclicals to the political realm (Murphy, 1995; Walsh, 2018). The unashamedly Catholic nature of the appeal underlined both a genuine suspicion of state power and pragmatic willingness to appeal to the church in defence of institutional interests. Catholic social teaching was invoked to protect the professional interests of an academic elite. The academic statement appealed to the government not to include universities in the legislation, but instead to reach agreement on economies through 'prior consultation' with the university authorities and if necessary, a special Bill dealing only with the universities.

MacEntee gave no ground in response to the academic critique of the Bill, warning de Valera on 24 April that if universities were exempted from the legislation other bodies would demand the same treatment. While the Finance Minister conceded that the deductions for civil servants might not be appropriate for university teachers, he took exception to the 'unhelpfully critical' attitude of the academics (NAI TSCH/3/S6341/8 MacEntee, April 1933). The Department of Finance dismissed the academic argument that the Bill would extend state control over the university as 'to say the least, far-fetched' and rejected a special universities bill as impractical (NAI TSCH/3/S6341/8 Department of Finance, 25 April 1933).

MacEntee was equally intransigent in a further response to de Valera on 5 May 1933, arguing that the unhelpful attitude of the university authorities made agreement without legislation impossible and 'it would probably be a fatal mistake to leave them out of the Bill' (NAI TSCH/3/S6341/8 MacEntee, 5 May 1933). He dismissed as absurd their contention, '…developed at great length and enveloped with the dust of verbiage' that the Bill threatened the autonomy of the universities. MacEntee commented that increases in the grant by legislation did not inspire claims of state control: 'A minor reduction in grant is no more an attack on autonomy than a large increase in grants was an attempt to corrupt University education at its source' (Ibid.).

The NUI representatives returned to the fray in May 1933, issuing a detailed critique of the legislation in a memorandum to the Executive Council. They reiterated their objections that the legislation represented an unacceptable encroachment on university autonomy and undermined the legislative settlement which made the NUI acceptable to Catholics in 1908–1909: 'This autonomy and this complete freedom, guaranteed to the Catholics and their staffs as well as to the Catholic community of Ireland by specific provisions set forth in their Charters, is now being swept away almost at random by one or two sections in an Economies Bill' (NAI TSCH/3/S6341/8 NUI College authorities, 13 May 1933). They criticised MacEntee's demand that they identify appropriate deductions in the grant as 'a total injustice', but under protest reluctantly proposed deductions for each college of about 2% of the general purpose grants (Ibid.).

De Valera adopted a more measured line than MacEntee. The president of the Executive Council received a deputation of the three university presidents and other representatives of the NUI staff on 26 April, promising to have their representations examined by the Minister of Finance, but this did little to bridge the gap between MacEntee and the NUI representatives (NAI TSCH/3/S6341/8 Coffey 22 April 1933). The president also consulted privately with Coffey, asking his view confidentially on the original O'Rahilly-Tierney memorandum and the departmental response. When de Valera sent the Department of Finance's unfavourable response to Coffey on 5 May, he did not commit himself to any course of action, noting only that he would inform Colley of the decision 'in some days' (NAI TSCH/3/S6341/8, Private secretary to President of Executive Council, 5 May 1933). While de Valera was careful not to undermine MacEntee, his intervention in the dispute served as a restraining influence on the acerbic Finance Minister.

The government's decision later that month mitigated the impact of the cut on university salaries. MacEntee amended the original Bill on 26 May, excluding the universities from the general clause permitting unspecified deductions in the statutory grant and instead allowing the minister to reduce the grant to university colleges by a maximum of 5% in the current financial year (Dáil debates 47(15) 26 May 1933: 1836–1841). This concession defused the row with the NUI authorities, without exempting the universities from the legislation. The final outcome was even less onerous, as the Department of Finance informed the NUI registrar in April 1934 that the minister had decided to make a deduction of only 3% in the grant of £10,000 payable to the universities from the Irish Church Temporalities Fund (NUI Senate Minutes 14 12 April 1934: 138).The academic opposition did not stop the application of the legislation to the NUI, but proved effective in limiting the impact of the budgetary reductions on lecturers' salaries and their appeal to de Valera was influential in paving the way for a compromise.

The Dáil debate on the legislation in May-June 1933 highlighted the limited political support for academic critiques of the Bill. Patrick McGilligan, professor of law in UCD and TD for the NUI, was the only deputy in the debate to question the impact of the legislation on the teaching staff in the universities. McGilligan sought unsuccessfully to

reduce the cut to a nominal 1%. He mocked Fianna Fáil's claim that the university authorities freely accepted the new arrangement, commenting that it was 'easy to make an arrangement when you have a pistol at your head' (Dáil debates 47(19) 2 June 1933: 2529–2530). McGilligan made an impassioned appeal on behalf of university professors threatened with 'The watercresses of starvation-land—that is the fare that we are going to mete out to a body of exceptionally qualified men…' (Ibid.: 2526). But most TDs were unsympathetic to the plight of university professors, who were perceived as a relatively affluent elite group. Thomas Kelly, a Fianna Fáil TD, responded bluntly that '£800 a year is not bad now' and the government comfortably defeated McGilligan's amendment (Ibid.: 2527–2530).

The compromise testified to the effective lobbying by the NUI representatives and their ability to leverage their political connections. De Valera's pivotal position as Chancellor mitigated the harsher elements of the government's austerity policy. The initiative was inspired by a wider policy diktat to achieve 'economy' in the public service, which affected higher education in the name of official consistency. Despite militant language on both sides, the dispute did not foreshadow an official assault on university autonomy and had more to do with indifference to the university in political and official circles and an overarching commitment to fiscal austerity in which lobbying by academics was quickly characterised as special pleading. While MacEntee was frequently acerbic in his response to the university authorities, he disclaimed any desire to influence college staffing structures or review the salaries of university staff. Yet if the Bill's academic critics resorted to frequent hyperbole, drawing on their favoured ideological tropes of anti-Communism and Catholic social teaching, they had genuine grounds for complaint in the parsimonious financing of university education by the Irish state since 1922 and the intolerance of dissent displayed by some ministers. The arguments on both sides reflected a profoundly conservative political and cultural world view and were framed almost exclusively in terms of political, religious and financial imperatives, with disagreement focusing on the relative weight given to university autonomy, religious interests in higher education and fiscal economy (Walsh, 2018).

'…a certain flow of emigrants from this country is inevitable…'

All the universities operated within a regime of rigorous austerity during the two decades from the late 1920s until the mid-1940s and the Department of Finance intensified pressure on university authorities to curtail expenditure during the second world war. The universities saw an incremental but steady increase in student numbers during the first two decades of the Irish state: this was particularly marked in UCD, where the number of students doubled over a fifteen-year period between 1926–1927 and 1940–1941 (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A Conway, 1942). Both UCC and UCD sought assistance from the Exchequer in the early 1940s to clear debts accumulated since the previous increase in the statutory grant and finance new building projects. The Department of Finance vehemently opposed any proposals for greater state expenditure on the universities throughout the war, pressuring university leaders to increase fees and curtail student enrolments. MacEntee, who served as Minister for Finance in successive Fianna Fáil governments spanning a quarter of a century, voiced concerns about over-production of university graduates who were lost to emigration, taking up a consistent refrain by senior officials of the Department of Finance throughout this period (NAI TSCH/S.16803A MacEntee, 26 August 1960).

A proposal by the governing body of UCC in 1940 to build a new auditorium for the Cultural and Recreative Association of Students and Graduates and extend the Biological Building to relieve overcrowding in the natural sciences was blocked by the Department of Finance. Joseph Downey, the college secretary, presented this proposal to de Valera in May 1940, proposing that the cost of £22,000 would be financed on a matching basis between the college's existing budget and the Exchequer (NAI TSCH/3/S13258A Downey, 1940). Downey hoped that the Taoiseach would intercede with the Department of Finance, following a familiar strategy which in this instance proved unsuccessful. Finance reminded the Taoiseach on 8 July 1940 that UCC was bound by the conditions attached to a previous grant to reduce its debts in 1934, when the governing body had agreed to assume full responsibility for all

current and capital expenditure, except where 'the latter is of such exceptional amount and character as to justify a State contribution and is expenditure for which the Minister's prior approval has been obtained' (NAI TSCH/3/S13258A Department of Finance, 8 July 1940). Downey was advised by the Taoiseach's office on 20 July that if the college authorities believed they could comply with this condition 'having regard to those times of emergency and extraordinary expenditure by the State', then UCC's application should be submitted in the normal way to the Department of Finance (NAI TSCH/3/S13258A O'Mahony, 20 July 1940). This polite rebuff ensured that the initiative disappeared without trace.

UCD also confronted strong opposition to an application in 1941 to extinguish its debt, provoking a lengthy struggle which testified not only to the Department of Finance's jaundiced view of public expenditure in higher education but also to the equivocal place of universities in Irish society. Arthur Conway, who had recently succeeded Coffey as president of UCD, informed de Valera in January 1941 that the college was obliged to finance urgent repairs to 86 St. Stephen's Green, where 'the roofs of the Concert Hall and also of the Convocation Hall are very bad and as well the ceilings are so dangerous that no one is to be allowed in these Halls, a situation which will render our term examinations, now coming on, impossible' (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A Conway, 10 January 1941). As the college already had an overdraft of £50,000 and faced additional expenditure for the repairs, Conway appealed for Exchequer support to cover UCD's burgeoning debt of £82,000. This appeal provoked a prolonged bureaucratic struggle between the college authorities, the Department of Finance and Department of Education lasting for almost three years. J.J. McElligott not only rebutted UCD's claim but demanded a reduction of Exchequer 'liabilities' in university education. McElligott enjoyed the support of his own minister, Tánaiste Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh, but was firmly opposed by Joseph O'Neill, secretary of the Department of Education, whose political superior, Derrig, did not intervene in the dispute. De Valera, the ultimate arbiter, expressed sympathy with O'Neill's position but did not impose a decision, allowing the protagonists to fight it out until an interim solution was agreed in 1943 which gave UCD most of what it sought. The first shot was fired by Ó Ceallaigh,

who expressed his department's anger to de Valera at UCD's temerity in undertaking capital spending without prior approval (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A Ó Ceallaigh, 31 January 1941)

> I must confess to receiving something of a shock when I read Prof. Conway's letter of the 10th instant addressed to you re: financial position of UCD. Apparently, the College has run into debt to the extent of £50,000 without asking anybody's permission and it is now expecting us to foot the bill….

Ó Ceallaigh questioned the need for expanded university buildings at all, especially in an era of global crisis: 'It seems a luxury to provide buildings of this kind, particularly in war time and more particularly when, according to Prof. Conway's letter, ordinary accommodation for students is very limited.' Instead, he wanted to reduce the already modest allocations for university expenditure, explicitly characterised as financial liabilities: 'We have always paid the piper so far without any control over the tune and it is time, I think, that we displayed a little more interest in College finances, with a view to limiting, if not reducing, our liabilities' (Ibid.).

The Department of Finance did not merely object to UCD's application but sought to change the balance between public and private financing of the universities. Finance's preferred solution was to reduce student enrolments and transfer the burden of university financing to individual students (and their families) rather than the state. The subsequent exchange of correspondence between McElligott and Joseph O'Neill was unusually revealing about a dominant official paradigm regarded university studies as a private good conferring purely individual benefits, which were potentially counter-productive or at least irrelevant to the Irish state. McElligott warned O'Neill on 8 February 1941 that the financial position of the universities was 'very unsatisfactory' and would get worse unless remedial measures were taken (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A McElligott, 8 February 1941). But O'Neill challenged his influential counterpart on 21 February, warning that tinkering with admission to higher education would not solve the wider 'social-economic problem'. He attributed higher social demand for university education in Ireland, relative to England, to Ireland's economic underdevelopment:

> We are a poor country with comparatively few openings for our young people. If we keep the best brains of the poorer classes out of the University by raising fees, what are we to offer them as an alternative? There is not at the moment enough land to go around. All the commercial jobs are so crowded that the business firms can get people at a very low wage (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A O'Neill, 21 February 1941).

O'Neill conceded that emigration among university graduates was high (although neither department provided any statistics for emigration among graduates) but warned that imposing financial restrictions on entry to college would reduce the standard of university education and favour 'the better off classes' (Ibid.). The Department of Education believed that any restriction in student enrolments could occur only on the basis of more stringent matriculation requirements—arguably a position which they advocated knowing that it was probably unattainable or at least unacceptable to the universities.

McElligott returned to the fray later in 1941, proposing to control the number of university students on ostensibly meritocratic grounds, mainly through an upgrading of the standard of the entrance examinations 'so as to ensure that only the best brains get through' (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A McElligott, 30 December 1941). More stringent matriculation requirements would be coupled with higher fees, which were presented as a valuable incentive: 'The payment of fees helps people to take their work more seriously and a slight rise would offset any decline in numbers following from a raising of the admissions standard…' (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A McElligott, 9 September 1941).This apparent conversion to meritocracy did little to conceal the secretary's thinly veiled elitism, as he sought to engineer a decline in student enrolments through higher fees. McElligott's determination to reduce spending on the universities was grounded in a culturally conservative world view, which perceived universities as an albatross around the neck of the Exchequer (Walsh, 2018). The NUI was criticised as wasteful, inefficient, engaged in over-production of graduates and facilitating emigration. He complained to O'Neill in the first of two letters on 9 September that the Exchequer was subsidising emigration:

…a certain flow of emigrants from this country is inevitable. What I do not like is treating these emigrants to a University education largely at public expense and then seeing them go. At any stage their departure is a loss to us, but why should we serve them out to other countries, complete with degrees, etc., I cannot understand (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A McElligott, 9 September 1941).

McElligott again insisted on 30 December 1941 that restriction of student numbers was essential. Significantly, this was portrayed both as a prudent exercise in financial management and a necessary measure to maintain the value of professional qualifications and preserve social stability:

A limitation in the size of the student body is in my view justified by the crowded state of the professions, the number of graduates that are to be found competing against each other for jobs for which no university qualifications are required as well as by the steady emigration of trained people of this sort. Moreover, the existence of unlimited opportunities for higher education has a disturbing effect on young people who might otherwise settle into a trade or business of some sort instead of sending them off in the fruitless pursuit of "something better" (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A McElligott, 30 December 1941).

The secretary ranged well beyond straightforward fiscal conservatism, voicing a staunch defence of an elitist order in higher education, where access would be restricted so as not to upset established societal structures or give rise to excessive expectations, implicitly among less socially advantaged young people. McElligott's economic fatalism and acceptance of emigrationas a societal reality were flavoured with elitism: restriction of student numbers was desirable to control access to the professions and cap unwelcome aspirations among young people who might subvert the established order (Walsh, 2018). The correspondence underlined a genuine hostility and suspicion of the societal impact of university education by the most powerful official in the public service. Universities were criticised both for facilitating emigration and raising unrealistic expectations among graduates who remained at home.

The secretary's unequivocal hostility to public financing of university education was not universally shared among senior civil servants. O'Neill's response on 8 January 1942 did not address the more sweeping ideological arguments by his powerful counterpart but focused on the damaging practical and political implications of McElligott's nostrums. O'Neill defended the standard of the entrance examination for the NUI, on the basis that it was pitched at a higher level than Trinity College or the Royal College of Surgeons (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A O'Neill, 8 January 1942). He also identified the political Achilles' heel of McElligott's proposal, namely the wider political and institutional implications of any attempt to enforce more stringent entrance standards:

> …If it were to be applied in any drastic way to the National University only, one of its results would almost certainly be to drive students to Trinity College and the Surgeons, a result which would raise such a wave of indignation that the proposal could not be enforced…. (Ibid.)

The implication of O'Neill's argument was that Finance's demands for restrictive admissions standards could well trigger far-reaching conflict, not only with the NUI but with the Catholic bishops who would hardly approve of an influx of Catholic students to Trinity College. Similarly, the government simply could not enforce new entrance requirements on TCD or RCSI, which were widely regarded within the public service as private institutions. He concluded that the only effective way 'to reduce the number of our university students is to make alternative employment available for our young people' (Ibid.). O'Neill did not overtly dispute the traditionalist cultural world view expressed by McElligott, but skilfully employed Finance's own tactics against the department by raising daunting practical obstacles. He accepted the inevitability of emigration but argued for humane treatment of the poorer classes and rebutted McElligott's more extreme claims about the weaknesses of the NUI.

This private but highly acrimonious official debate continued for another eighteen months, but the Department of Finance ultimately failed to impose a limitation of student numbers. De Valera's private secretary, Kathleen O'Connell, told O'Neill in February 1941 that the Taoiseach was 'very pleased' at his initial response to McElligott (NAI

TSCH/3/S12544A O'Connell, 24 February 1941). Although de Valera told Conway that he would not overrule the Minister for Finance, he kept a watchful eye on the dispute and quietly encouraged O'Neill's more accommodating approach to circumvent Finance's staunch opposition. Conway submitted a *General Statement of Finances* at the Taoiseach's request in March 1942, making a robust case for an increased Exchequer grant for UCD and de Valera referred the application jointly to the departments of Finance and Education. Moynihan also proposed that responsibility for the Vote for Universities and Colleges should be transferred to the Department of Education (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A Moynihan, 16 March 1942). This offered the prospect of a more sympathetic hearing for UCD's application, even if it did not remove the need to secure approval from Finance. But McElligott moved quickly to block any change, which he characterised as 'a break with tradition' without any practical impact, as almost all allocations in the Vote were fixed by statute. Moreover, he complained that the Department of Education… 'appears to over-emphasise the autonomy of the universities and colleges leaving the initiative all the time with them…', suggesting that inaction by his counterparts in Education had contributed to irresponsible financial management in the universities, somewhat unfairly since the department had no formal responsibility for the universities: 'One result of this laisser-faire attitude has been that the Colleges tend to pile up debts, which after a time, they have little or no compunction in asking the State to discharge' (Minister for Finance, 8 August 1942). De Valera did not pursue the idea in the face of Finance's categorical opposition. The transfer of 'universities and colleges' to the Department of Education did not take place until the late 1950s, when it was approved by T.K Whitaker, the newly appointed secretary of the Department of Finance.

But the Taoiseach was willing to exert pressure on the Department of Finance to address UCD's claim for emergency funding, with Moynihan issuing reminders to Finance throughout 1942. McElligott proposed in March 1942 that an interdepartmental committee be established to consider university expenditure, including such issues 'as whether an unduly large number of students were receiving university education and how this number might be controlled or restricted' (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A Department of Education, 26 September 1942). The Department of

Education declined to co-operate with this plan, arguing that any necessary information was easily available from the universities. Instead McElligott and O'Neill, along with senior officials of the two departments, met on 9 November 1942 to address UCD's application. The meeting proceeded in the same acrimonious vein as their earlier correspondence.

McElligott reiterated his criticism of the Department of Education for 'adopting an attitude of fatalistic acquiescence in the present situation', asserting once more that cheap university education simply facilitated graduate emigration. O'Neill shrewdly invoked de Valera, noting that he had discussed the matter with the Taoiseach, 'who had expressed the opinion, with which he himself was in agreement, that if we must export people, it was better for us that they should be educated people who would enhance the national prestige abroad' (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A Note of Conference, 9 November 1942: 1). This tactic underlined that O'Neill was confident of the Taoiseach's support, even if de Valera preferred to let the contending officials fight it out rather than intervening directly. The meeting highlighted a sharp divergence between the two departments on reducing the level of enrolments and the alleged societal and economic pitfalls of cheap university education. A minute was produced, which did not express any common position on university education but agreed only that officials of both departments would meet with Conway and Prof. J.J. Nolan, registrar of UCD, to discuss terms for assistance in clearing their debt (Ibid.).

Despite McElligott's relentless struggle to reduce student numbers, the Department of Finance ultimately had to settle for imposing stringent financial conditions on UCD. McElligott wrote to Conway on 13 May 1943 setting out terms for emergency financial assistance. The secretary sought 'categorical assurances' from the governing body that they would control expenditure to avoid bank overdrafts and 'take entire responsibility in the future for all expenditure of a capital nature, save where this is of such exceptional amount and character as to justify a State contribution and is expenditure for which the Minister's prior approval has been obtained' (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A McElligott, 13 May 1943). The conditions were onerous, particularly the exclusion of any state subvention towards capital expenditure other than in exceptional circumstances,

which was the standard formula used by the Department of Finance since the 1920s. Yet McElligott's letter did not seek to dictate admission standards or raising of fees, marking a notable setback for his efforts over the previous two years. Conway, on 27 May, issued a carefully worded response on behalf of the governing body, offering the required assurances, but rejecting 'any inference…that the College finances have not been economically managed' (NAI TSCH/3/S12544A Conway, 27 May 1943). The governing body also issued a prescient warning to the Department of Finance:

> …In doing so, the Governing Body is bound to point out:
>
> 1. That the College is still growing.
> 2. That the public demands upon its services are still increasing.
> 3. That adequate provision of a capital nature has never been made for its proper housing and accommodation.
> 4. That it has before it a prospect of rising prices for every kind of material and service (Ibid.)

This commentary could have applied to any of the university colleges in the early post war era, struggling to cope with persistent deficits in physical facilities and accommodation coupled with the first indications of a long-term upsurge in student enrolments.

UCD was successful in securing funding to clear its debt without committing to reduced student numbers or more restrictive admission standards. The Dáil approved a supplementary estimate of £70,000 to UCD, proposed by Ó Ceallaigh in February 1944: the amount cleared most of the college's total debt, although the Exchequer contribution was supplemented by savings achieved by the college and a moderate increase in the number of students throughout the second world war, ironically in view of McElligott's demands to reduce student enrolments (Public Accounts Committee 1945). The secretary told the Public Accounts Committee in May 1945 that when it became apparent that the college could not liquidate its overdraft of £82,000 through increased fees or other fund-raising, the minister 'accordingly decided to come to their assistance…' (Ibid.: 9). Not surprisingly, McElligott did not inform the committee of his own persistent but unsuccessful efforts to block such assistance.

The lobbying by UCD's academic leadership, allied to the more flexible approach of the Department of Education in the early to mid-1940s, mitigated Finance's agenda to limit enrolments and reduce the already minimalist recurrent public financing of university education. The Taoiseach made his influence felt by gradually wearing down opposition to a settlement of UCD's debts from the most powerful official in the public administration. But the tortuous progress of the college's funding application and acrimonious internal debate between the departments of Finance and Education underlined the absence of any coherent policy towards university education other than consistent parsimony and delineated the negligible importance of the university in political and official discourse. The de facto exclusion of capital expenditure by the Department of Finance imposed severe pressure on universities even at a time of modest expansion. The traditionalist world view held by powerful figures within the public administration, characterised by fiscal conservatism, cultural suspicion of universities and commitment to protecting existing professional structures, revealed not so much indifference as hostility to the expansion of university education.

Benign neglect

The economic weakness of the independent state contributed to the stagnation in Exchequer support for 'universities and colleges', but it was not simply about poverty. The parsimonious funding regime reflected the peripheral status of university education in political and official discourse and the narrow conceptualisation of higher education prevalent among political and official elites. Higher technical education was particularly neglected in a society which valued professional status, academic learning and religious formation. It was no accident that higher education remained both underdeveloped and university dominated well into the mid-twentieth century (Walsh, 2018).

A crucial factor was the overt hostility of the Department of Finance to public financing of university education. The most influential department in the state regarded spending on higher education as a luxury benefiting only a small minority, many of whom were likely to be lost to

Ireland through emigration. Moreover, its officials were not simply devotees of fiscal conservatism, but were motivated by protection of traditional societal structures, institutions and values, regarding expansion of the universities as problematic at best and potentially subversive of established social hierarchies.

Coolahan (2003) suggests that universities, particularly their leaders, adopted a low profile during the first generation of the independent state and certainly institutional leaders rarely offered a public critique of the limited government support for their colleges in this period. Yet this portrayal does not capture the complexity of the interaction between university leaders, academics, ministers and civil servants. Their relationship with government has to be understood in the context of the peripheral position of all academic institutions in public discourse. Neither politicians nor university leaders linked the fortunes of higher education to wider societal or economic advances at a time when such advances were not perceived as attainable or even desirable. University leaders and for that matter most academics accepted the premises of a fundamentally conservative society.

Yet academic elites were vocal and frequently effective in challenging or modifying political initiatives which they perceived as threatening the status of their institutions, whether this was Blythe's pressure for wholesale Gaelicisation of UCG or MacEntee's economy Bill (Walsh, 2018). Prominent academics such as O'Rahilly and Tierney had no hesitation in promoting their views or challenging ministerial decisions, although their assertive tone and willingness to engage in conflict with politicians was atypical. More conventional was the quiet diplomacy practiced by senior NUI figures such as Coffey and Conway, which often proved effective in shaping government policies or securing exchequer support on an ad hoc basis. University leaders were usually low profile in public discourse up to the late 1940s, but this did not equate with being ineffectual. Their influence was exercised predominantly in a defensive vein, mitigating the impact of laissez-faire official policies or intermittent attempts to enforce Gaelicisation.

The policy of successive governments towards higher education in the quarter of a century between the early 1920s and the late 1940s can reasonably be summarised as benign neglect (Walsh, 2018). Universities had

a very limited profile in national political discourse, focused on state-building, fiscal conservatism, economic nationalism and Gaelicisation. The dominant religious and cultural ideologies of the early Irish state shaped a traditionalist consensus, which was particularly unfavourable to the nascent development of higher technical education under the auspices of the VECs, but also assigned a peripheral place to university education. Higher education was subordinated to a dominant national paradigm defined by integralist Catholicism, cultural nationalism and a profound social conservatism.

Notes

1. A comprehensive discussion of policy and institutional developments across the full range of higher education, including teacher training, is outside the scope of this chapter. A detailed analysis of the evolution of higher education, including universities, teacher training colleges and the nascent higher technical institutions is given by John Walsh, *Higher Education in Ireland, 1922–2016—Politics, Policy and Power, a history of higher education in the Irish state* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018): this chapter draws on the research and analysis of this study.

2. Information on student enrolments in the first three decades of the Irish state was not published by the Department of Education, as it was not responsible for the sector and information is not available on enrolments in professional and technological courses. This makes comparisons between universities and non-university institutions more difficult, but it is apparent that the vast majority of enrolments occurred in the universities up to the 1960s.

3. Teacher education at primary level under the new Irish state falls outside the scope of this chapter but has received extensive treatment in its own right by Walsh, *Higher Education in Ireland, 155–78* and Tom O'Donoghue, Judith Harford and Teresa O'Doherty, *Teacher Preparation in Ireland: History, Policy and Future Directions*.

4. A detailed analysis of the evolution of the nascent higher technical institutions is given by John Walsh, *Higher Education in Ireland*: this section draws on the research and analysis of this study.

5. Sinn Féin was founded by Arthur Griffith in 1905 as a political movement seeking self-government for Ireland on the model of a 'Dual Monarchy'

similar to Austria-Hungary. While Sinn Féin did not embrace republican-
ism before the 1916 Rising, with which it was wrongly associated by the
British ruling elite, the party was firmly associated with a more radical
nationalist and separatist agenda than the dominant Home Rule
movement.

6. Tierney was later a university member of the Seanad and was elected as
president of UCD (1947–1964). O'Rahilly, who was the dominant figure
in UCC for over a generation, served as registrar (1921–1943) and presi-
dent of the college (1943–1954).

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Aspects of Education Policy and the Work of Secondary Teachers in Ireland 1965-2010

Brendan Walsh

Introduction

Writing in 1984 Phil Gardner cautioned against 'versions of history which simply catalogue the intentions of legislative activity and institutional innovation and then smuggle in the idea that these magically translated themselves…into the real world of the classroom' (Gardner, 1984). This chapter attempts to describe the experience of secondary school teachers (SSTs) in Ireland as they responded to changes in policy between the mid-1960s and 2010 and to show that, largely, they were either unaware of, or resistant to, change, their responses, even after the passing of decades, remaining nuanced and often ambiguous. From the mid-1960s to the late 1990s, in particular, schooling in Ireland underwent significant 'innovation' (Gardner, ibid.) but, as we detail below, the extent to which the profession was cognizant of, let alone engaged with, what might be described as, education policy is unclear. The chapter is based,

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primarily, upon one-to-one interviews with twenty-seven retired teachers conducted between 2010 and 2014.[1] The purpose of the interviews was the collection of qualitative data so that a bank of memoir might be developed providing first-hand accounts of the lives of teachers from the 1940s onwards. Interviewees were not asked, specifically, to comment upon policy changes. Indeed, it is noteworthy that, generally, they had but a passing familiarity with policy but were articulate and knowledgeable regarding its impact on their practice, schools and pupils. The interview cohort spoke at length on a wide range of subjects including their experiences as pupils, initial teacher education (ITE) and the trials of beginning teaching (Walsh, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). However, their recollections of teaching from the late 1960s onward revealed the repeated impact of changes both in terms of national policy and social change. This was particularly, but not exclusively, so for those who were members of religious teaching orders. As with their lay colleagues, they experienced first-hand the new demands placed upon schools, particularly following the introduction of free secondary schooling in the mid-1960s. But religious also had to wrestle with evolving understandings of their role in society and sweeping re-conceptualisations of religious life following the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). This chapter, then, does not propose to offer an analysis of policy change over the last five decades but to consider how policy initiatives impacted on the work of secondary schools as related by retired teachers. It is an attempt to capture the ways in which policy initiatives were responded to, and the extent to which they were embraced, tolerated or rejected, based upon the oral testimony of former teachers.

The interview group included five retirees who had acted as school principals; one as a deputy principal, two as former presidents of the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland and two were former Ministers of Education. The interviewees were self-selecting having been sought *via* media broadcast, public press and professional journals. The oldest respondent [Sister Boniface] began teaching in 1943 while Mike began in 1981. The participants taught in one or more of the following types of secondary schools: Catholic Convent [girls]; Catholic Religious [boys]; Catholic Religious [girls]; Lay Catholic [boys]; Lay Protestant [girls]; Protestant [single-sex & co-educational]; Community School;

Table 16.1 Participant data

Name	Year began teaching	Type of School[s]
Sr. Boniface	1943	Catholic Convent [girls]
Karl	1944	Lay Catholic [boys]
Sr. Fionnuala	1954	Catholic Convent [girls]
Sr. R	1955	Catholic Convent [girls]
Beatrice	1955	Catholic Convent [girls]
Sr. Evelyn	1958	Catholic Convent [girls]
Megan	1960	Protestant [single-sex & co-educational]
Margo	1961	Catholic Convent [girls]
Denise	1961	Community School
Grainne	1962	Catholic Convent [girls]
Fiona	1965	Vocational [co-educational] / Catholic Convent [girls]
Margery	1966	Catholic Convent [girls]
Sara	1969	Catholic Religious[girls] /Community School
Mary	1971	Community School
Leslie	1974	Religious [boys, later mixed]
Gerry	1976	Religious [boys]
Noreen	1977	Community School
Mary Hanafin	1980	Catholic Covent [girls]

Diocesan [boys]; Vocational [co-educational]. The gender percentage of respondents was 31% men and 69% female. All interviewees, excepting two former ministers (Niamh Bhreathnach and Mary Hanafin) chose to remain anonymous and have been allocated pseudonyms (Table 16.1).

Investment in Education Report, Social Change and Teaching

Education in Ireland was radically altered in 1965 with the publication of the *Investment in Education Report* [hereafter *IER*] although educational historians have been slow to identify its impact upon SSTs concentrating instead upon structural changes within the system generally (Coolahan, 1984; Coolahan, 1981; O'Buachalla, 1988). Undertaken by the Irish survey team under the auspices of the OECD, the study marked a transition in thinking about education at all levels, in particular, the

relationship between provision and economic welfare. The recommendations of the Report are extensively dealt with by historians and so are not detailed here (J. Coolahan b 165-168; O'Buachalla 72-73; O'Sullivan 128-31, 136-7, 141-2; J Walsh 114-161; Cunningham 118-19).Rather, we will attempt to ascertain how the daily life of teachers in that period changed. The *IER* remit concerned the relationship between education and the Irish economy, hence its impact on secondary school teachers was indirect. However, it highlighted a range of systemic deficiencies including the need for greater investment (*IER*16.1), replacing or upgrading of school buildings (ibid) the need to expand full-time technical education (*IER*16.12), the need to 'increase the flow of educated people', 'significant disparities … in participation' in education, (*IER* 16.14, [i] [ii]) the possible reduction in the number of small schools (*IER*16.17) and the upgrading of the curriculum (*IER*16.18).

Garvin's description of the Report as 'devastating' is not undeserved (Garvin, 2005). It highlighted inequalities in access and revealed an education system that reflected 'the concerns of local, clerical, revivalist and middle-class forces'(Garvin 153). The *IER* 'legitimised a revolution in Irish education which … was decades overdue' (Garvin 153) and has 'come to be regarded as a major modernising force in Irish society' (O'Sullivan 128). In particular, it facilitated the introduction of free post-primary education in 1967; an event which altered the professional lives of those who were teaching at the time.

The introduction of free post-primary schooling resulted in a surge in enrolments followed by a steady increase over the next decade. By 1967, 485 out of 551 secondary schools [88%] had entered the scheme. Between 1966 and 1967 enrolment rose from 103,558 to 118,807, representing a 300% increase on the 5,000 increase in enrolment *per annum* prior to 1966 (An Roinn Oideachais 1966-1967: 36). This resulted in a doubling of the number of secondary school teachers between 1967 and 1974. By 1979 there were 10,830 teachers receiving incremental salaries, while a further 2,418 did not receive incremental pay, or were employed part-time (Tussing 1987, 67; Coolahan b 238). Public expenditure increased accordingly, reaching 6.29% of GNP in 1973-74 (O'Sullivan 146). Between 1968 and 1974 membership of the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland [ASTI] rose from 55% of full-time lay- registered

secondary school teachers to 96% making them a formidable body in terms of representation and negotiation but also reflecting a growing awareness of the often uncertain nature of their teaching contracts, as we see below in the cases of Margo and Sara. The social and economic factors that informed these changes are not the subject of this chapter, rather the testimony of those who were working in this period in terms of classroom change. However, as O'Sullivan notes, it was a 'period of considerable public interest in education' (O'Sullivan 148) Parents became 'less confident about excluding their children from the possibility of further education after primary schooling' and 'secondary schooling' became 'recognisably careerist' (O'Sullivan 148).

These changes were not, however, pedagogically informed, but were the result of the Human Capital Paradigm that informed the *IER* report and the widening of social aspiration in Ireland in the 1960s (O'Sullivan 128-150). The sparse first-hand evidence relating to the era suggests that change was incremental and daily classroom practice remained almost unchanged although the school-going cohort did not. Karl, who began teaching in 1944, 'wasn't sure' if teaching 'had changed [much] at all' over the course of his career. This is not to say that teachers did not begin to experience changes after 1966. The decline in the involvement of the Religious in schooling, increase in enrolments and consequent change in the socio-economic composition of the school-going cohort and their aspirations, wedded to a less compliant teaching workforce, all contributed to significant change, but this was experienced in different ways by teachers. For example, those working in schools that entered the free education scheme usually experienced change unknown to those who did not.

Later President of the ASTI, Susan recalled the 'intellectual energy' of the mid-1960s. Her fellow students at University College Dublin (UCD) were 'enormously radical' but 'the institutions we were in hadn't moved a centimetre and this was very frustrating for young people'. She cites being reprimanded for wearing trousers by the college librarian who was also 'in charge of women' as an example of institutional conservatism in the period—although not one particular to Ireland (see Edwards 2000, 42). The contrary forces of the time are well captured in Susan's experience on leaving university when, upon securing a teaching post in Dublin with the Loreto Sisters, she was informed, upon becoming engaged, that she

would not be 'taken back' when married. But again the evidence of oral testimony lends nuance to understandings of the past as Susan also recalled: 'they were extremely nice to me and gave me gifts when I was leaving … they gave me a *superb* reference … it was just the way it was!' Again, the seeming contradiction is not particular to Ireland (see Llewellyn, 2003: 104). Later, having contacted another convent school in North Dublin, she was offered a teaching post, as was another young teacher who had also been 'sacked for getting married'. The background to this is the Marriage Bar, a scheme adopted by Ireland and other countries including the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. Again, the history of teaching nuns is lent nuance by such recollections. The Sisters who ran this school were 'completely different nuns … very progressive' and 'terribly socially conscious', although the school was extremely challenging and operated in a 'horrendous' building. The dynamic of change and seeming contradictions are captured by a past pupil of Dublin's Mount Sackville School for girls, who recalled returning to school in September in the mid-1960s to 'discover' that 'nuns had ankles! They'd shortened their skirts to mid-calf, cast off their headgear … it was a big change at the time' Delaney (2005, 72).

The frustration felt by Susan and others when confronted with institutional or systemic chauvinism was experienced by Leslie whose appointment, in an all-male [staff and pupils] school in 1974, was audibly regretted by a male colleague in the staffroom (who afterwards apologised). Unperturbed she won acceptance almost immediately and, recalling that period, felt that the pupils 'took an awful lot for granted; they came from quite well-to-do backgrounds… there was no pressure for points … but there were huge expectations from parents… because they paid fees'. Three years later, in 1977, when Noreen began teaching in a Dublin Christian Brothers' school she found it 'difficult because there were only five women teachers in the school and … you were judged on how good your discipline was'. Like Leslie, she had not wanted to work in a boys' school but there were 'not many jobs' and a female colleague told her, "I survive but I never smile in the classroom". Noreen 'felt disadvantaged because [she] was young and female'. On her first day, nervousness induced nausea and she 'went outside and vomited on the

corridor'. Brothers would 'float' 'outside the [classroom] door' in order to ascertain the quietness of classes. Noreen left the school after one year.

Beginning teaching in the 1960s differed depending upon the type, culture and cohort of the school; its location and, perhaps, on one's disposition, but the advent of free education impacted on all teachers although to different degrees. Margery was joined by increasing numbers of young staff and pupil enrolment increased 'almost immediately' forcing the school to expand. The school was operated by the Dominican Order who entered the free system in 1966 and were described by Margo, who taught with them, as 'very enlightened women'. Before 1966 there was no need of a school office, secretary or Form Tutors, whereas the following year all three existed and there was a 'much greater mix' of pupils. But the influx of 'non-academic' pupils into a traditionally 'academic school' meant that even those who were relatively new to teaching faced a changing dynamic: 'we got them through the exams … we pushed and pushed and pushed them'. Increased numbers placed great strain on schools. Even ten years after the introduction of free education Sister Evelyn's school was struggling; 350 girls were housed in 'prefabs all over the place … without a single toilet' while teachers quickly had to 'learn to cope with mixed ability' groups (interviewee Mary).

The consensualist era was coming to an end. The relatively acquiescent pupil body, mostly from supportive and often fee-paying families, that populated schools in the pre-free-education period, became increasingly mixed. But change was incremental. Margo, teaching in a Dominican convent school in 1966, found that while student numbers increased 'dramatically' and students from 'different backgrounds' started to enroll, this early cohort of parents were 'really keen' on education—a characteristic that only began to wane in the early 1980s. Grainne's observation that the disposition of pupils coming to secondary school changed with the introduction of the restructured primary school curriculum in 1971 rather than free education is singular. The new, more child-centred, curriculum was introduced to counteract the over-emphasis upon traditional learning methods and Grainne perceived in it the beginnings of the informality in pupil-teacher relationships that influenced secondary schooling in the late 1970s. Free education resulted in 'much more of a [social] mix'

and 'the kids became bolder'. Like Margo, she noticed a more definite shift in attitudes in the early 1980s, a theme dealt with below.

All agreed that, occasionally, the post-free-education cohort was strikingly different to their more acquiescent predecessors. Like others, Sister Fionnuala linked this to 'difficult homes' and wider social changes and an incident she recalled, where all the girls in a First Year class placed pieces of card on their desk inscribed with "Ms. X [the incoming Mathematics teacher] is a sexy f..ker", is not atypical. The difficulty, however, of discovering a singular historical narrative for this is demonstrated by a Sister from the same congregation, but teaching in a different school, who remembered that the new pupils 'were quite compliant, they were no trouble at all …'. (Sister Evelyn). Generally, the changes introduced by free education were welcomed. Beatrice embraced the opportunity to 'specialise', as increasing staff numbers resulted in a greater correlation between teacher and subject specialism. Again, like Margo and Grainne, the type and disposition of the pupils she taught after 1966 did not 'change immediately' but 'by degrees'.

Perhaps Fiona's experience is most representative of secondary school teachers at the period. In 1970 she began teaching in an all-girls' school where there was one permanent teacher. In 1971 the school became co-educational and staff numbers increased; 'we nearly got a new [teacher] every year'. The campus expanded too; 'we seemed to have builders in all the time', all under the supervision of the Principal and 'four other nuns' who 'did everything'. Free education meant that, in this period, the pupils 'became more ambitious; before that they didn't see beyond the end of a counter', but now 'it all became about college'. The changing dynamic witnessed by these teachers is in contrast to the experience of Karl who, teaching in a small fee-paying school, remembers little about the advent of free education; 'life just went on', he mused, reflecting, perhaps, the privileged position of such schools which operated with small numbers of compliant pupils.

IER and the introduction of free education influenced all aspects of education in Ireland after 1966. Teachers stood to gain from increased employment opportunities and investment in school building and resources. The changing conceptualisation of the profession as closely linked to economic progress strengthened their collective bargaining

power with the State while simultaneously introducing troubling new understandings of the nature and purpose of teaching (Coolahan a 228-235). Initial responses in the ASTI's journal *The Secondary Teacher* reflect poorly on the union at this distance as commentators argued that the scheme offended 'against the principle of responsibility … when parents pay for their children's education [they] make sacrifices … it helps them to have a keener interest…'.(Buckley, 1966: 9). It was also argued, disingenuously, that the scheme would lower the amount of money available for 'necessitous children' (ibid.). The journal complained that the media was bringing pressure on schools to join the scheme by engaging in an 'egalitarian spree' after 'a campaign of the most insidious moral blackmail' (*The Secondary Teacher* 2. 5., 1967a: 5), that the scheme had 'benefited the privileged classes' rather than those it had intended to assist and that the government had 'walked away with the secondary schools … with the swiftness and ruthlessness of a totalitarian regime' (O'Riordain, 1972: 7). In 1977 an article in the same journal criticised the influence of economics on the understandings of schooling promoted by *IER* by identifying 'educational planning' in the 1960s as 'mercenary … [i]ts Bible was the *Investment in Education Report* … the official mind was dominated by the idea that education was the key to … industrial and commercial progress … [t]he educational economist was king' (Walshe, 1977: 24). The legacy of the scheme, according to the writer, was that schools were permanently forced to meet borrowings incurred by the building work occasioned by increased enrolment. This article foreshadows O'Sullivan's more recent observation that, while the 'human capital theorisation of education' did not penetrate the consciousness of all parties 'at that time', there were some who, by the late 1970s, were voicing concerns regarding a changing understanding of the teaching task, an understanding that became stridently apparent in the early 1980s as we will see below (O'Sullivan 2005, 149).

The Evolution of Professional Status: Pay and Qualifications

After independence, the sympathetic relationship between government and the Catholic Church reflected the wider social acceptance of the place of Catholicism in daily life. This meant that a community of schools evolved that were privately owned, managed by the Religious and operated under the auspices of the local Bishop or the Superior of a Religious Order (Duffy 1965, 44). These schools drew almost exclusively upon the Religious as teaching staff and in the early 1930s all lay teachers were designated "assistant teachers" [approximately half of the total teaching body] (Coolahan a 95). Irish society embraced the notion that schooling remained the prerogative of the Religious; a belief reflected by government of all shades. Indeed, in 1936, former Minister for Education, John Marcus O'Sullivan pronounced that '[w]e have reached … the very happy solution by which the interests of the State … of the private individual … of the Church … of the private schools have been reconciled (O'Sullivan, 1936).

The teaching body, therefore, faced the difficulty of negotiating with a number of bodies when it sought improvements in pay and conditions. The Catholic Headmasters Association [CHA] represented private Catholic schools, but did not, for example represent the Christian Brothers (*Congregatio Fratrum Christianorum*, Catholic teaching order founded in Ireland by Edmund Rice in 1802) who in 1939 catered for 11 800 boys; over half of the national male enrolment in that year. The majority of Protestant schools were represented by the Schoolmasters Association. Generally, Religious Orders operated schools independently of government and one another. Traditionally these schools were at liberty to employ and dismiss teachers. The establishment of the Registration Council in 1918 meant that teachers were to receive a contract upon becoming employed. However, no appeals procedure existed and there was little evidence that contracts were awarded in the first instance (see McElligott 1986, 109; Andrews 1982, 54).

Secondary school teachers, through the auspices of the ASTI, attempted to persuade government and relevant parties to agree to a formal contract

of employment and appeal, yet in 1933, the Minister Thomas Derrig refused to accept that the request fell within the remit of government; employment arrangements were the concern of the individual schools and the government had no involvement other than paying the salary increment established in 1925.

However, in 1934, the CHA approached the ASTI with a view to discussing the issue. Union members met with Dr. John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin and Chairman of the CHA, in March. McQuaid was sympathetic but the CHA was suspicious of any attempt by the ASTI to involve government in, what they considered, internal employment arrangements. Rather, they insisted that disputes should be resolved by recourse to Canon Law as, they argued, the institutions in question fell within its jurisdiction (ASTI Executive Council 103). McQuaid was a formidable personality and a combination of his innate sympathy with the teachers' claims and deft negotiations with the CHA meant that he and the ASTI agreed in January 1936 that, while the Superior had, in the spirit of Canon Law, authority over religious-run schools, agreements made by one Superior would be upheld by his successors and that teachers had the right to be represented by the ASTI at appeal hearings (ASTI Executive Council 24th Jan 1936: 130). By September 1936, the ASTI and CHA had agreed a formula which was finally accepted by all parties in 1940. Henceforth, a school run by religious must inform the Major Superior of its intention to dismiss a lay teacher before serving notice. The school was also obliged to inform the teacher, at the same time, of its intention to dismiss him/her, its reasons for doing so and of his/her right to appeal to the Superior against the proposed dismissal. Where appeals were unsuccessful dismissal would take effect three months before the end of the school term.

While teachers sought to secure contracts of employment they were also endeavouring to improve their remuneration. The incremental salary scheme, introduced in 1924-25, was based on pupil-teacher ratio. This meant that a fall in pupil numbers normally resulted in a teacher being made redundant. In 1927 approximately 20% of teachers did not receive an incremental salary (Coolahan a 104). The government rejected ASTI proposals for change arguing that public funds would not allow for extra expenditure. Yet by 1934-35 only 7% of male and 21% of female

teachers were not in receipt of incremental salary. While these figures were still high, they revealed a steady improvement. The ASTI attributed this to the movement of teachers from over to under quota schools. The situation, in other words, was improving without official action—although for teachers who could not move, remaining in over-quota schools meant working for private remuneration. In 1938 the ASTI approached the Department, without success, with a view to increasing the incremental salary which had remained static since 1925. In March 1939 it pointed out that teacher's salaries in Ireland had fallen behind those of Northern Ireland and England but the outbreak of war in September necessitated a reconsideration of its claims (ASTI, 1939: 24-29). The Association decided instead to seek a "cost of living bonus" and met with de Eamon de Valera (Mister of Education, September 1939—June 1940) in January 1940 to discuss the proposal. de Valera was sympathetic but suggested that the times were not propitious. A refusal by Minister Derrig in April 1941 to consider any increase in remuneration was followed in May by the introduction of the Wages Standstill Order.

After the meeting with de Valera, the ASTI wrote to the various representative associations of school managers requesting an increase in the basic salary of the teachers employed by them. When the Association met with McQuaid in September 1940 he had undertaken to make representation on their behalf to the CHA and the Council of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools [the CCSS represented the Catholic Headmasters Association; Conference of Convent Secondary Schools; Teaching Brothers' Association; Federation of Catholic Lay Secondary Schools]. These bodies argued that the matter should be at the discretion of individual schools, which differed greatly in their ability to meet calls for increased remuneration. Again, in December 1942, the Association argued for an increase of £30 per annum for those whose incomes did not exceed £398 but Derrig insisted that school managers were responsible for deciding salaries (ASTI, 1944: 20-24). However, in January 1944 the government agreed to raise the war bonus to a salary maximum not in excess of £500 (ASTI, 1944: 20). In the same month deputies of the ASTI met with Derrig and a number of representative associations (CHA; CCSS; Christian Brothers; Schoolmasters Association and the Central Association of Schoolmistresses) in an attempt to secure an immediate

improvement in remuneration and a salary review once the War ended. These discussions shed light upon the perception of the teaching profession at the time as the Chairman of the CHA noted that in his experience 'he never met a boy who would willingly choose Secondary Teaching [sic] as a profession'(ASTI, 1944 16)– an echo of Dale and Stephens' 1905 observation that 'no Irish graduate, save in exceptional cases, will enter the teaching profession if any other career presents itself to him (Intermediate Education (Ireland) Report, 1905). Derrig insisted that no amelioration was possible during the Emergency but invited all parties to submit recommendations for change once hostilities ended.

In December 1944 the ASTI submitted proposals for a whole-scale review of remuneration and discussions were held with the Minister in October 1945. Finally, in June 1946, the Government published proposals for teachers' salaries. The Minister noted that, while it had 'not been possible' to meet the teachers' suggestions 'in full', the 'margin of difference [was] not great' (ASTI, 1947). Indeed, the shortfall was £60 per annum for females and £30 for males; the increases became effective in September 1946.

While the teaching body could not secure increases during the Emergency, it nonetheless engaged in a campaign that convinced Government, school managers and the wider public of the legitimacy of its claims. These developments were important in terms of remuneration but also because they gradually positioned teachers more independently of Church or State. Secondary school teachers worked alongside the Religious who were somewhat removed from the burdens of civic life and had more limited knowledge of the challenges of running households (although familiar with the operation of school and institutional premises with their attendant challenges and costs) or meeting the costs of child-rearing, and the gains outlined so far reflect a gradual secularising of the profession in terms of its ability to articulate its needs and position in contrast to those of its employers. An issue upon which secondary school teachers were particularly vocal in the coming decades was, what they perceived as, attempts by government and fellow teachers to undermine the remunerative and professional value of their qualifications. Hence, remuneration and qualifications became intertwined in the ongoing effort to secure improved salary and status.

Teaching Qualifications

The issue of incremental salary was closely related to that of teaching qualifications. In the nineteenth-century the issue was contentious as government was anxious to maintain a non-denominational system of training colleges for National school teachers. The 1878 Intermediate Education Act did not establish training requirements for secondary school teachers and in the early decades of independence a teaching qualification was not regarded as necessary by employers, although an incremental salary could only be claimed by a qualified teacher. Almost half the teaching body was made up of religious who were usually unqualified and therefore did not receive an incremental salary representing a significant saving to the public purse. Writing in *The Secondary Teacher* in 1987 Jack McCarthy recalled that '[u]p to the early 1920s most teachers in secondary schools had no academic qualifications but on the whole … were very conscientious and competent' (McCarthy 1987, 24). The Department remained ambivalent, recording its concerns but not taking action (see Report of the Department of Education, 1929-30: 59). Coolahan notes that the availability of unqualified and unregistered Religious 'probably' accounts for the Department's indifference (Coolahan a 109). Given the considerable saving to the public purse and the ideological relationship between Church and State, governments of all shades were content to maintain this situation. But registered teachers were angered by the injustice. In 1933 the *Irish School Weekly*—the official organ of the ASTI—claimed that 'it would seem that registered teachers are being ousted by unregistered teachers in some instances and that vacancies are being filled by [them] without regard to the supply of registered teachers' (*Irish School Weekly*, 1933: 1034). Certainly, many of the Religious were unregistered but so too were significant numbers of laypersons. In 1930-31, for example, only 60% of male lay teachers were registered; the figure for male Religious was 57%. Of 1,237 male teachers, 636 [51.4%] were Religious. Of lay female teachers only 44% were registered while 60% of their Religious colleagues were registered. Of 1,406 female teachers, 62.9% were Religious (*Irish School Weekly*, 1934: 1076). While the number of registered female Religious is significantly

higher than their lay counterparts, the figures for male teachers supports Coolahan's view that the presence of large numbers of Religious was only one element of the problem. Two contributing factors were the existence of "secondary tops", National schools that offered the secondary school curriculum to senior pupils and the tendency of schools to employ National school teachers rather than graduates (see Report of the Department of Education, 1936-7: 177). The percentage of unregistered teachers fell to 44.6% in 1939-40 representing 1,402 out of 3,114 teachers. Of the unregistered, 870 had no academic qualification, while 256 held a degree but no Higher Diploma (ASTI, Minutes of Annual Convention, 1928: 200). That the government had allowed this situation to 'go unchecked' was, according to the President of the ASTI, 'an absolute scandal' (cited in Coolahan, a, 161).

The Government, however, believed that if they insisted upon full qualifications, schools would seek additional funding to meet the costs of employing graduates. The situation improved somewhat in the post-war period and by 1950, 60.7% of teachers were registered, although this represented an increase of only 5.3% on the figure for 1939-40 (teachers in vocational schools were not required to undertake initial teacher education diplomas). The presence of large numbers of unqualified Religious was the key factor in this culture of dedicated amateurism. At the end of the 1940s 60.8% of secondary teachers were Religious; of the teaching body the numbers in full-time employment were: Religious 57.3%; lay 42.6%. Between 1951 and 1961 13%-15% of teachers were unregistered due to many being probationers and the tradition of Religious Orders allowing members to teach prior to securing qualification. In another reflection of the changing nature of Irish society in the early 1960s, the proportion of Religious to lay teachers fell from 60% to 54% by 1961 (Coolahan a, 185). Persistent pressure from the ASTI had resulted in gains but teachers were still, understandably, dissatisfied and the decade was characterised by a protracted wages campaign culminating in the strike of 1969.

Labour unrest dominated the late 1960s in Ireland and the period 1968-71 witnessed 527 strikes and lock-outs including the closure of banks for more than six months in 1970 (Coolahan a, 267-268). The teachers' strike of 1969 was the culmination of a campaign by secondary

school teachers to protect what they considered the special status they enjoyed as university graduates in contrast to their colleagues working in the national and vocational sectors and their rejection of arbitration rulings concerning salaries (Coolahan a 243-246). The campaign included the rejection of an arbitration ruling in January 1964 and the subsequent withdrawal of superintending and examining from the Leaving Certificate Examinations that summer. The ban did not prevent the Department from operating the examinations and much bitterness was caused as members of the INTO offered to mark scripts. The strike brought 'a new sense of solidarity to ASTI ranks' reflecting 'a new radicalism among its members' (Coolahan a, 246. See also Cunningham, 129-133).

In November 1966 the union lodged a claim in the light of awards being made to primary and vocational teachers. Throughout this decade the government was anxious to agree a basic wage scale with teachers from all sectors while the secondary school teachers campaigned to protect their graduate status. In 1967 Minister O'Malley fresh from his triumph of introducing "free" education announced the establishment of a Tribunal on Teachers' Salaries [Ryan Tribunal], which would include proposals for the appropriation of a common basic salary (Coolahan a 249). Reluctantly, the ASTI agreed to participate but when the Ryan Tribunal published its recommended common scale [£750—£1,350 for women and single men / £900—£1,170 for married men] the union condemned it as 'a downgrading of the salary position already pertaining' and in June proposed an alternative scale of £1,296—£2,396 for all secondary teachers, single and married. In October, cognisant of the Ryan proposals, the Minister Brian Lenihan proposed a common salary for all teachers which was accepted by the INTO and Vocational Teachers' Association's [VTA], but rejected by 92% of ASTI members (for contemporaneous views on the strike see White a, 179-180; White b 137. See also Cunningham 153). The offer was referred to conciliation but the ASTI rejected the INTO and VTA's demand to be represented at talks. When conciliation recommendations were rejected by an ASTI ballot the first secondary school teachers strike since 1920 took place starting on 1st February 1969.

While new salary proposals were agreed and teachers returned to work on 24th February, the strike reflects both the changing nature of labour

relations in late-1960s Ireland and a growing tendency of secondary school teachers, not toward militancy—as industrial action by secondary school teachers' in Ireland remained rare in the following decades—but toward a more strident articulation of the value they placed upon their work. It is noteworthy, in the light of evolving youth and protest culture during this period that, on 1st February, 600 secondary school pupils marched in support of their teachers in Dublin; the *Irish Times* noting that 'there were schoolgirls there too' (3.2.1969). Indeed, the level of pupil support was considerable and represents a rich vein for further research (see Cunningham 147-151). On a lighter note Joan Monahan, a pupil at Muckross College, Dublin, wrote in the school magazine that for her and her siblings the strike became a 'working holiday' as they were given work to do at home. 'I didn't know enough about the teachers to decide whether they were right or wrong but hearing my parents and people, I think they were right but still the strike to me was a great unexpected working holiday' (Monahan, 1970: 2). Another pupil recorded that 'according to [her] granny … the strikes are caused by communists; they are all around us and causing all the trouble in the world today; from her sore toe to the miniskirts' (Bastable, 1970: 7). Remarkably, *The Secondary Teacher* is silent on the strike while media coverage reflected the efficiency with which schools returned to operation (see *Irish Times* 25.2.1969).

Policy Recollected

There is no record of how these events impacted upon individual teachers. Oral testimony suggests that the strike was not disruptive and that the Religious managers of schools were largely supportive of lay colleagues. Those who were working, or seeking work, in this period recall remaining busy with the contingencies of making a living. Margery recalled that in 1966 late evening parent-teacher meetings were coupled with a 'heavy' timetable; Saturday teaching and 'very big classes' in 'small and stuffy' classrooms. The ASTI 'wasn't that active at that stage' but

1969 was a very important year for teaching … we were very unionised, the young people were all unionised … in every school and that was the first step towards good salaries [before that] teaching was poorly regarded … the salary was terrible and 1969 was the breakthrough … of course, there were tensions between the Religious and the lay people… [teaching] was supposed to be a vocation … like nursing … but a vocation won't pay a mortgage. [The atmosphere in the school was] edgy… teachers weren't even sure if they were supposed to come to school or not.

A second element of the ASTI's campaign between 1962 and 1969 had been the demand for the creating of posts of responsibility [PoR] in secondary schools. These would allow teachers a greater role in the running of schools by awarding them added responsibilities. The Ryan Tribunal had recommended the creation of eight grades of PoR, but protracted discussions between the CHAand the ASTI meant that posts were not introduced until June 1972 (Cunningham 133-141). PoR had the effect of democratising some elements of the operation of schools and, as the 1970s progressed and the tasks traditionally undertaken by teaching Religious, now in decline, began to fall to their lay colleagues, their establishment was both timely and mutually beneficial.

However, Sister R., then Principal of a Loreto school, recalled that at the time PoR meant payment for 'special functions for which there was no work' and that they only became meaningful later, as school numbers increased and post-holders were given defined duties. When Fiona became Principal of a convent school in 1989 she found that the Religious 'had let people off with things, they were soft on them' and as they had not 'push[ed] it … it was very difficult to get teachers to do the extra work' required by their PoR because 'they weren't used to it'. Recalling the introduction of PoR and the increase in numbers of lay teachers Sister R mused: 'We had no caretaker, no secretary or anything else'; when the lay people 'took over, they all got paid, they got caretakers … they got everything … we did it for free, but … it was meant to be our vocation … but we had fees all the time … we weren't costing the state anything', other than 'a wage'. She supported her staff during the 1969 strike and remembers them 'coming in to me and they didn't know what to do because they didn't want to let me down and I'd say "it's alright, you're on

strike, don't you worry." Indeed, she would 'send some whiskey down to the [staff on picket at the school] gate to keep out the cold'.

Posts, according to Margery, gave lay people 'power' and started to alter the dynamic within the school hierarchy. Mary remembered that the establishment of PoR in the early 1970s initiated 'formal discussion … about involving lay teachers in more than just teaching, it was [a period of] transition', although she had never felt that lay teachers were 'excluded'- a thought that occurred to her only upon reading John Coolahan's history of the ASTI. She began teaching in 1970 and the school paid her £400, which represented 'a large portion' of her full salary. Grainne was Secretary of her local ASTI branch in 1969 but could not recall any difficulties in the school. The Principal was inclined to complain about having to replace staff that 'went out pregnant' and Grainne was away from school for only three weeks after the birth of her first child in 1966, as she had to source and pay the substitute teacher.

Margo recalls that, prior to the late 1960s, decisions in the Dominican school where she taught were made 'by the Order … there was no discussion at all'. A decision in 1978 to close the school revealed the tenuous position of the staff: 'we … discovered … there was no security of tenure, so we had no jobs'. Like other teachers in similar circumstances, the event radicalised the staff 'with a small r'. Margo had never considered herself radical until the strike of 1969 but as Chair of the local branch of the ASTI she 'had a responsibility' to the staff and members and fought the school closure publicly. The Sisters had been 'sympathetic' in 1969 and the strike had made some lay staff 'very uneasy', but it was largely this group that fought the school closure in 1978 (the school did close but staff and pupils relocated to a new campus). Drawn to the ASTI by her experience of the marriage ban, Susan suspected that the support of the Religious in 1969 was pragmatic as 'the lay teachers were out fighting the battle but everybody got the salary increase'. She was told there would not be a position for her after marriage. She 'didn't have a contract', indeed 'in forty-one years of teaching [she] never had a written contract'.

When Fiona began teaching in a rural VEC in 1965 she needed the support of the county councillors, whom her mother approached, regarding securing a post for her daughter; 'they didn't know [if] I two heads … it didn't matter', she remembered. Boys and girls were separated in the

small, co-educational school; 'it was ridiculous'. There was no morning break but the staff initiated it while the Headmaster was on sick leave; 'when he came back he couldn't fight it'. When Terence began looking for work as a French teacher in rural Ireland, he recalled that at the time 'you couldn't have a woman French teacher in a boys' school' whilst a man 'wouldn't even bother applying to a girls' school'. Reflecting Ireland's gradual turning outward toward Europe and the evolution of the EEC, he commented that 'languages were the IT of the time' and that schools actively sought newly qualified teachers with European languages. During the 1960s Terence taught in a number of schools as he sought better pay and conditions. Moving to Dublin in 1963 he worked in a 'grind school … a dump', catering for the 'rich' of 'South Dublin'. In 1964 he secured a post in a private rural school operated by a married couple and a small lay staff. Reflecting the changing social dynamic of the period he remembers that the pupils 'wanted to get on and not spend their lives labouring here and there'. Moving again, in 1966, to a rural convent school run by the Irish Sisters of Charity he recalled that Sister M., the Principal, 'was a good woman' who wanted the pupils to 'do well'. Leaving that school in 1967 to be near his ageing parents he returned home and taught in a 'great school' run by the Society of African Missions [SMA]. He was there in 1969 and remembers the Religious being 'with us all the way'. In 1970 Terence finally moved to Galway where he remained until his retirement in 2003.

Teaching posts became more difficult to find in the 1970s. When Leslie secured one in 1974 'it was … beginning to get difficult because there were huge numbers of applicants for jobs'. At interview, in the all-male Dominican school, she was asked would she 'become a member of the ASTI?' reflecting the importance of the union at the time, especially in the light of the gains it had won in 1969. It also reflects the importance of the union in the lives of secondary school teachers, a position best summarised by Margery who commented: 'young people now are not interested in the Union … there's a lot of apathy, the last few years I was in school the young people wouldn't even come to meetings, they wouldn't know what was going on, if there was a vote they'd ask "what are we voting on?"' Margery and her colleagues would tell them 'these are your working conditions! These are your issues … in ten years' time you'll be

sorry!' 'Things were too easy [for them]' Margery concluded '… they came in when the good salaries were established and the battles had been fought … without the ASTI we would have been thrown on the rubbish'.

Narrating How Teaching Has Changed 1965-2010

We noted above that most of the respondents had very little familiarity with policy initiatives beyond those directly related to pay and conditions and the testimonies employed here support that view. The 1990s, in particular, were a period of significant change resulting in the *Education Act* (1998). The policy document, *Programme for Action 1984-87* had provided a template for the changes in the 1990s by pursuing the relationship between education and the workplace and emphasising newer concerns such as gender, reform of the curriculum, support for disadvantaged schools and the role of new classroom technologies (Walsh, 2011, 58-59). The Green and White papers of 1992 and 1995 respectively reflected the growing consensus among all parties that education in Ireland required reform and a statement of principles upon which the endeavour should be founded. *The White Paper: Charting our Education Future* (1995) proposed pluralism, equality, partnership, quality and accountability as informing principles and introduced vocational options into the post-primary curriculum, made recommendations for the support of disadvantaged schools and children with special educational needs and sought to define management roles and responsibilities (see Walsh, 2016c, 62-65; Walshe, 1999, *passim*).

Perhaps it is not surprising that the changes teachers were cognisant of were those that impacted upon their everyday classroom work. Respondents, other than those who were in management positions in the mid-1990s, were only vaguely familiar with policy initiatives but conscious of their implications when articulated by change within schools. Again, the rate and nature of change between the mid-1960s and 2010 depends largely upon the type of school in which teachers were working. For example, Gerry taught in, and was later Principal of, a large school in

a disadvantaged area of West Dublin where the introduction of vocational options was embraced in a manner that was not evident, for example, in girls' and fee-paying schools. Again, teachers working in fee-paying schools experienced a marked change in pupil and parental aspirations regarding university/college opportunities in the 1980s. We attempt here, therefore, to describe the sense of change as experienced by all teachers in this period, whilst simultaneously striving to retain individual experiences as both instructive and inherently valuable as oral testimony, capturing the significant changes which occurred within a relatively narrow time frame.

Margery's experience is revealing because between 1975 and 1981 she taught in Zambia and, on returning to Ireland noticed a 'big change'; parents were 'much more engaged … points were in and results were much more important, the whole culture had changed'. The school cohort became more 'mixed' due to the entry of children from less supportive backgrounds. This brought new challenges, including 'family problems' and issues that 'before the 1980s' had not arisen in her school. Generally, these pupils were 'wonderful', but some articulated their difficulties in challenging behaviour; 'before then' Margery noted, these children did not continue in secondary school but 'got jobs'. Her experience in this respect is similar to many others, but even before the 1980s, change affected how teachers operated. Unsurprisingly she recalls the introduction of PoR as having the unforeseen effect of teachers 'becoming involved with the pupils … before that it was very much on a professional, subject, basis, you had very little contact with them'.

This reflects developments that the teaching body had witnessed over the previous five years. Writing in 1976 the editor of *The Secondary Teacher* had encouraged secondary school teachers to respond to the new cohort of pupils whose background gave them 'little preparation for valuing long-term academic goals and the deferred satisfaction of academic results' while the President of the ASTI wrote that the teacher had ceased to be the 'transmitter of a cultural heritage' and had become instead 'the innovating guide' and 'friendly counsellor in the acquisition of wisdom' (Sheehy, 1976: 21). Mary also cited the advent of free education as initiating considerable change. Teachers had to 'learn how to cope with mixed ability' whereas 'in the past, people didn't waste their money sending

children to secondary school unless they were reasonably able'. It was 'much more difficult', she continued, 'to teach all ability levels and non-motivated kids' whereas the pupils she taught early in her career 'were motivated already'.

Enrolment in post-primary education increased dramatically in the years following 1966. In 1966/7 total enrolment was 148,883; a figure that had increased to 239,000 by 1974 (Keogh, 2005: 284). Grainne taught in the same convent school from 1967 to 2008. Starting with about eighty girls and 'about' six teachers in 1967 the school had grown to 800 pupils by 1992 when she became Vice Principal. The first 'big increase' was in the early 1970s after the introduction of free education but Grainne remembers the increase being gradual. Nor, she maintained, was the increase simply a result of free education, but rather, of wider social changes at the time. Ireland, not unlike other countries, was experiencing significant socio-economic change. The founding of RTE television (1961) brought national and international news into Irish homes; the increasing influence of the women's movement; the impact of the Second Vatican Council on religious practice and discourse; the growth of a radicalised youth cohort coupled with the development of conflict in Northern Ireland all served to facilitate a more fluid social dynamic than had been witnessed since the founding of the State (Keogh 205, 250-302).

These changes were reflected in classrooms, as noted above. Documents from the period also attest to the change and *The Secondary Teacher* (1966) exemplifies the wider social tenor, recording that 'restlessness and chaffing against discipline and authority [was] fairly universal', while 'permissiveness' reflected the 'spirit of the age' (Buckley, 1966: 5). In lighter mood, the following year saw two poems about the miniskirt reflecting pupils' interest in changing fashions; frivolous perhaps, but far removed from the patriotic or more earnest endeavours of schoolchildren in previous decades: Miniskirts are made for flirts / They look shocking / On a Blue Stocking / They should not be worn / By the forlorn. / When the west wind blows the leaves / It's rather cold about the knees (*The Secondary Teacher* 2, 5. , 1967b: 8). Similar material starts to appear in school magazines around this time. In the 1962 edition of *School Echoes*, a magazine written by the girls of Muckross College, Dublin, an article on Brian Poole informs readers that the singer has released a 'fab new disc

"I Can Dance" and the 'heart-stopper Bobby Vee is back with his latest "Stanger In Your Arms". The article ends 'More news from Popsville in our next issue. Keep swinging 'till you hear again from THE TWIN KOOL KATS' (*School Echoes* 10, , 1963). The testimony of teachers from the period reveals that their relationship with a widening cohort of pupils did not change significantly or immediately. The initial rise in enrolment subsided to a significant but gradual annual increase allowing them to adapt to an increasingly diverse cohort that they had neither experienced as pupils in the 1940s/50s or at the beginning of their careers. Hence, oral testimonies of this period do not reflect the view that the *IER* was 'one of the foundation documents of modern Irish education' (Coolahan b, 165). This is not to say it was not, rather, for teachers, the changes it occasioned revealed themselves gradually. Nonetheless, when these teachers compare their schooling to the post-1966 period they are able to discern differences. Yet, for both cohorts of teachers, it was the late 1970s and 1980s that witnessed more radical change.

While the 1970s and 1980s are not comparable to the seismic shift of the 1960s they are closely related. Increasing post-primary enrolment in the afterglow of free education meant that throughout the 1970s teachers had to adapt to new cohorts radically altering the teacher-pupil dynamic in schools, allowing for a more open and informal school culture to emerge. Sister R. remembered a 'very conservative' profession beginning to change in the 1970s. The period witnessed a 'widening' of education, the beginnings of school tours abroad and the introduction of technology to classrooms but change, she mused interestingly, 'had to do more with society maybe than the teachers … or even the education system'. Other factors also prompted significant change. Karl, and others, for example, pointed to the introduction of the points system in 1968 as the most influential agent of change in schooling since the beginning of his career in 1944.

As numbers increased and society became more open to the advantages of completing schooling, pupils began to compete for places in Third Level education. Mike cited the change as a legacy of free education, pupils became 'more studious' and began to develop a sense that they 'might get something out of school'. But he also noted that, in the 1980s, teachers who had benefited from free education were, in turn, anxious to

see pupils benefit from completing school. These younger teachers were 'more sympathetic, more tuned in…' whereas his had been 'aloof'. Mike returned to teach in the school he had attended as a boy in 1983, having left in 1965, to find that 'it wasn't as rough and tumble as it had been … the boys were aspirational … hoping that something might happen for them', while teaching had become more 'democratic'.

Parents, too, had become more involved in the process and as the 1970s progressed their expectations changed. When Mike was a school-boy parents were content to have their sons secure the Intermediate Certificate, now pupils were encouraged to continue until Leaving Certificate; parents feared their children being 'left behind'. Grainne also noted that parents began to become more strident in their demands. A 'sense of empowerment' in the late 1970s was articulated in their being increasingly prepared to visit the school to 'complain about the teaching' or to query subject choices. Former Minister for Education Niamh Bhreathnach was a keen advocate of empowering parents and believed that, historically, they had 'handed away' their rights regarding educa-tion, which had 'suited … the teaching profession'. A previous minister, Mary O'Rourke, had argued in 1991 that "parent power" had not received due consideration, especially in comparison to "Teacher Power" and "Church Power" (O'Rourke, 1991: 9). Coolahan correctly notes that a'long tradition' of parental exclusion (Coolahan, b, 6) existed, but this was replicated in other countries and had its origins in earlier under-standings of the role of the teacher and school.

The 1970s and 1980s also witnessed a change in pupil behaviour, although respondents experienced this in different ways. Grainne cap-tured the ambivalence of others when she noted that while greater infor-mality was 'for the better' it was not 'necessarily' so 'for the teachers' as pupils began to 'challenge your right' to teach. Pupils became 'aware of their rights' and Grainne recalls instances where they taunted teachers with the threat of legal action. She is quite specific that teaching became more difficult 'from the eighties on … you just didn't have the author-ity … it was challenged'. But, reflecting the views of other respondents, she adds that teachers had to change too; 'they were bullies … we're not without blame … we have to learn to look at ourselves'. In another pre-scient observation Grainne noted that school children became 'busier'

from the mid-1980s; many pupils had part-time employment and began to look outside school for social networks. Megan too recalled this as a period of change:

> … back in the '60s the teacher was always right and, "you do what you're told", mother would say; parents wouldn't take the child's part [but then they]became more aware … whether it was the media made [them] feel "oh yea, we have a say in this, we'll go in and we'll let them know in there what's what" so, you see, you mightn't get this complete co-operation that you would have got say twenty years before or even less

A Dublin teacher comparing the 1950s with the mid-1990s noted that teachers were 'no longer' the 'sole authority in the classroom'; rather, they faced 'competition from slick television presenters … films and glossy magazines' (Kelly 1995, 38). Mike agreed that the more informal character of the 1980s marked the end of the 'ogre', although others noted that older teachers, in particular, found it difficult to adapt. Both Grainne and Leslie cited colleagues who retired in this period because they 'just couldn't cope' with a more relaxed school atmosphere, increased informality and what they considered the diluting of teachers' authority. Beatrice too remembered the period as one of fundamental change. In her 'early years of teaching' in the mid-1950s 'there were no discipline problems at all'; they didn't appear until the 'eighties'.

Mary Hanafin noted that the period saw parents, in particular, become 'more questioning' of teachers, while the ever widening social cohort of pupils altered the consensualist dynamic of schools. Where schools had once been the preserve of 'motivated … children of professionals', the 1980s saw them increasingly cater for the recalcitrant and disengaged. Writing in 1985, Hugh Colgan, who retired in 1978, recalled that, when he began teaching in the late 1930s, the 'demands and pressures placed on the shoulders of teenagers in the eighties were non-existent' (Colgan 30). These changes were reflected in the ASTI's journal. Throughout the late 1970s and 1980s articles appear concerning drug use in schools; youth culture, dating and the influence of pop music (*The Secondary Teacher*, 1973, 3, 1). In 1978 two articles dealt with the issue of indiscipline in schools (*The Secondary Teacher*, 1978, 7, 3 & 4), two with the

issues of contraception and truancy respectively and one with making schools more democratic for pupils (Summer 1978, 7, 4). Articles concerning the same or similar themes appeared in the journal throughout the early 1980s (ibid, 1983, Vol. 12, No. 2; 1984, Vol. 13, No. 1; 1985 Vol. 14, No. 1; 1985, Vol. 14, Nos. 3 & 4). The increasingly disruptive attitude of school pupils during the late 1970s and early 1980s does not appear in the literature while respondents pointed to "the times" but this remained vague. Very possibly the advent of Punk and its hostility to authority, the climate of violence pertaining in Northern Ireland, the H-Block hunger-strikes, economic recession and high youth unemployment combined with any number of unidentified social factors to influence youth discontent in this period.

Apart from the changing nature of Irish society and the school-going cohort in this period, the factor that most impacted upon teaching was the rapid escalation in the requirements needed to enter university, colloquially known as "points" (Coolahan, b 199). The relationship between teaching, access to tertiary education and examination success is highly complex. O'Sullivan's summary of this critical interdependence highlights its significance. Writing in 2005 he remarked, 'the association between increasing educational attainment and greater labour market success [had become] more pronounced' noting that 'since 1980 … unqualified school leavers were two to three times more likely to be unemployed than those with a Leaving Certificate in the early 1990s. By 2002 this had grown to over seven times' (O'Sullivan, 2005, 118). While O'Sullivan points to an increased understanding of schooling as having, primarily a 'careerist function' in this period and that parents' 'careerist interpretation of general education' had become much more finely honed after *IER*, in fact, Irish schools and had always understood how closely their endeavours were tied to labour opportunities for school leavers. However, free education resulted in greater enrolment at a time of widening social opportunity, hence schooling became competitive in a manner not previously necessary. The rise in "points" needed for university places in the early 1980s certainly mirrored the nineteenth-century prizes, exhibitions and payments so fiercely sought by competing schools and in a similar way influenced the manner in which pupils were taught.

Certainly the relaxed but industrious atmosphere of the period between the 1920s and late 1960s gave way to an ever narrowing preoccupation with securing "points" and all respondents referred to the effects upon teaching from the 1980s onward. Mike believed the advent of "points" represented a 'massive change' and prefigured a multitude of 'outside' influences that have been brought to bear on schools since the 1980s. Former Minister Bhreathnach believed there was a correlation between pressure for "points" and rising criticism of poor teaching in the early 1990s; a phenomenon, she believed, that originated in the public media, that had 'lifted the lid on [underperforming teachers] and began to talk to parents [about] school results'. This is supported by Megan who recalled that until late in her career 'there never seemed to be that desperate emphasis about points, even in more recent years … [pupils] weren't points possessed', adding, 'it's the media that have the mad frenzy about the points and the league tables and all this nonsense'. Fiona recalled that before the advent of "points", teaching was 'less pressurised' and teachers had 'a better relationship with their pupils'. Leslie complained that in the early 1980s "points" 'meant even more pressure', as fee-paying parents would explain how many "points" their child required at the Leaving Certificate, whereas 'there was no pressure for points' in the 1970s. In this respect it is interesting to note that pupils at Gerry's disadvantaged school did not become concerned with "points" until the 'early-nineties'—a full decade after Leslie first noticed it in her fee-paying school.

Hinting at other possible differences, Fiona recalled that it was the lay teachers, not the Religious, in her convent school, who became preoccupied with "points", although the Sisters were 'always very ambitious' for the pupils. "Points", she explained, meant that 'exam papers became important', the number of subjects increased, 'less time was allocated to [them]', but pupils became more astute and began to identify the opportunities "points" offered. An anecdote from the mid-1980s serves to illustrate the changing times: coming from a disadvantaged and difficult home, a pupil in Fiona's school was the first of her family to go to secondary school. She 'knew exactly what she wanted at Third Level and used to slip into the church to study … where it was quiet …'. When Margery returned from Zambia in 1981 it was the advent of "points" that had largely changed the tenor of her school. It is not the case that the advent

of "points" marks a definite shift in the nature of teachers' work. For some, the accompanying pressure came gradually and, like the creeping diversity of the school cohort in the late 1960s, its pace was almost unnoticeable. For others, "points" represented little more than another means of accrediting the hard work they and their pupils had always been doing and that they too had done as pupils in the 1940s, '50s and '60s.

Reflecting on changes over the course of careers that spanned the years from 1944 to 2010 teachers evidently regard the 1960s and 1980s as periods of change and concur that, largely, teaching and teachers have benefited greatly from a more open system and the advent of greater informality in schools. They accept that teaching has become more accountable (a policy development ultimately articulated in the advent of Whole School Evaluation in 2004) and see this as a positive development. Megan summarised the thoughts of many when she mused: 'the changes had to take place, we'd be in cuckoo land if there wasn't change, it would be abnormal with all the changes in society … with all the changes in homes…'. Of course there are caveats. Margo articulated the unease of others regarding "dumbing down" of the curriculum but, reflecting on developments since the 1960s, held that 'in many ways children get a better education, it's much more structured, more monitored, but in a different way, a lot of thought has gone into the curriculum'. She added, 'whether the [pupils] *actually* benefit from it, I'm not so sure'. Grainne held that the change in teacher-pupil relationship had made it harder for teachers to 'maintain order' and that many teachers were not sufficiently prepared for it. Like Leslie, she believed that teachers 'weren't prepared' for the altered dynamic of the 1980s; it was 'too dramatic … not enough account was taken of the change in style that was [now deemed] necessary to be fair … there was not enough support from the Department … or from the unions'. Terence was similarly critical lamenting that 'from the eighties on' there was 'impertinence, answering back … unless you had a good class you had to spend your time controlling' whereas before then 'you were teaching 95% of the time'. Yet, he qualifies this by adding that, as the 1980s ended, the 'rapport' became better, suggesting that, perhaps, those teachers who were prepared to adjust during this period were rewarded with a more enriching teaching experience.

But the ambivalence about change is well captured by Leslie. While teaching became 'less formal' in the 'mid to late-eighties' it 'was something that older teachers found … very hard to adjust to' and while adamant that 'it's a change for the better', allowing 'great interaction with the students … it's gone to the other extreme now with the younger teachers, they're being addressed by their Christian names and so on … it's hard to get a balance'. Terence similarly felt that informality caused difficulties for teachers, including 'the propaganda' about 'them being off at four o'clock and all that', and that the 'prestige' of the position had dwindled due in large part to teachers 'coming in in tee-shirts and jeans and unshaved…'. A more relaxed style has led, according to Leslie, to confusion between entertainment and learning, not helped by the over-use of technology in classrooms.

It would be disingenuous to expect these changes not to bring challenges but even those respondents who believed that developments since the 1980s had made aspects of teaching more onerous, largely embraced them as good for the profession and for pupils. Margo, who started teaching in 1961 believed that 'there is more openness and a better sense of equality within the system', while students 'interact with staff in a more open way' and are 'less inhibited' about approaching teachers for help, which is 'definitely a positive development'. Mike also welcomed the changes. Informality and greater opportunity encouraged 'confidence' in pupils and, unlike his generation, they see school as 'part of a continuum'; a prelude to further education; greater access and opportunity producing greater industry and self-belief in pupils. Parents are now 'more questioning and rightly so … they should be more assertive … they need to be heard'; while teaching is 'more democratic' and teachers no longer 'part of an elite'.

Gerry's overview of the changes since the early 1970s reflect the impact of policy on school practices. In particular, he welcomed the introduction of new programmes such as Civic, Social and Political Education [CSPE, 1999], Social Personal and Health Education [SPHE, 2000] and new subject avenues such as the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme [LCVP] and Leaving Certificate Applied course, introduced on foot of the 1995 White Paper *Charting our Education Future*, as 'a great development'. Like Mike, he believed that in the last two decades 'the school

system [had] given [pupils] confidence; they are beholden to no one'. But again, perhaps demonstrating the difference in how change occurs in different types of school settings, Gerry attributed his pupils' new confidence in learning to the 'availability of IT across social class…'. whereas Leslie's pupils attended a prestigious, fee-paying school where access to IT was *de rigueur*.

Recent years have also witnessed changes in ITE. The Bachelor of Education for primary school teaching has become a four, rather than three, year course, while the former one-year Higher Diploma in Education—the post-graduate qualification required for registration as a secondary school teacher in Ireland—has become a two-year Professional Masters in Education. It is, therefore, noteworthy that some of the respondents, in making reference to newly qualified teachers or Diploma students, spoke highly of their training. Margo, along with others, held that 'nowadays' the student-teachers 'are much better prepared'. Reflecting on her training, Denise commented that teachers were now 'infinitely better prepared … the difference is … absolutely amazing'; ITE had 'changed dramatically'. Gerry, who, as Principal, had closer dealings with newly qualified teachers, noted that the present student teachers are 'brilliant', open to being challenged about their practice and have an 'extraordinary' capacity for forgiveness. The history of ITE in Ireland remains to be written but the testimony of those interviewed and the literature suggests it is rich vein of possibility for historians (Walsh, b 1-18).

Conclusion

The intermediate system of 1878 and its attendant payment by results mechanism placed pressure upon pupils to perform well to secure prizes in public examinations and after 1922 this culture of competition remained and middle-class schools, in particular, sought to secure university places or professional careers for their pupils (Walsh, 2016a) However, while oral testimony points to this as the prevailing culture from the 1950sto the late 1970s, respondents did not remember 'pressure'; rather they spoke of a general consensus that children were expected to work hard at school. Both they and their teachers had the support of fee-paying

families; more widely, schooling was understood as concerned almost solely with learning in a time when school represented pupils' 'whole life'—there were few other distractions (Colgan, 1985: 30). These coupled with the absence of indiscipline, meant that teaching was 'easy' and remained relatively so until the 1980s (ibid.). This is not to claim that teaching in the pre-free education or pre-"points" era was relaxed. As we have seen, with few exceptions, those who were taught and those who taught prior to the mid-1960s recall school as industrious, academic and often insular. Their teachers, as a rule, were committed and anxious for pupils to do well in life. The significant amount of preparation demanded of lay staff in Roscrea School is testimony to the culture in such schools. In the 1950s the 'secular staff' were required to submit the following by Saturdays at 6 p.m.: 'Weekly report, Corrected tests, Weekly plans, Test questions for the following week'. Dates by which they were to hand in corrected 'exercise books' and 'weekly plans' were also given (Mount Anville, RSA/129 5). The distinction revealed by respondents is between teaching as an intensive but inherently worthwhile occupation and teaching as increasingly regarded as a means by which pupils might secure better career opportunities and the State might increasingly vocationalise the curriculum—the latter a distinct outcome of policies dating, in particular, from the early 1980s. Again, the evidence here suggests that teachers are aware of this tension but feel bound by pupil, parent, public and managerial expectation and suggests that teachers commit to a personal compromise and that, ultimately, they perceive the "points" regime as counter-educational.

Perhaps the consensualist triumvirate of parent, pupil and school mentioned above partly explains why prospective teachers were so dismissive of ITE. Certainly before the late 1960s, they were returning to schools very much like those they had recently left; social values and expectations were static and education studies as a discipline was conservative, uncertain of its position within the academy and perceived as a necessary nuisance by student teachers. Before the opening up of secondary schooling in the mid-1960s, teachers, especially in fee-paying schools, were rarely confronted with antagonistic parents or pupils who were not eager to succeed which meant that an array of instructional methodologies must have seemed superfluous as must professors 'spoofing about the ancient

Greeks' (Terence). The oral testimony concerning ITE collected here is damning with interviewees' opinions ranging from amused indifference to hostility (see B. Walsh, 2016c). The tension between what they considered the over-theoretical nature of ITE and the reality of classroom teaching is well rehearsed in educational studies and education academics did strive to meet the challenges of the times but, particularly in the 1960s, these were moving too swiftly for the required adjustment. Those who underwent ITE in this period were, in the words of former Minister Bhreathnach, children 'of the sixties' and their mentors at university suddenly seemed disconnected and irrelevant. As Terence recalled, he and his young peers were 'the new guys'; aware of social inequality in schools and of the need for their working-class pupils to secure meaningful work. Importantly, however, those who were so dismissive of their ITE believed contemporary training to be hugely improved and student teachers highly committed and well prepared. It is worth recalling also that many of these respondents bemoaned the increasing emphasis upon utilitarianism in schooling, a view expressed in 1958 by Father Seán O'Catháin, then Professor of Education at UCD, damned by Terence for 'spoofing about the Greeks'. There is, however, a troubling aspect of these findings. As all respondents rejected the Diploma as, essentially useless, how and where did they learn to master teaching? Unanimously they relied upon what Cunningham and Gardner term the 'long history of accumulated professional practice', which undermines ITE policy whether shaped at national or designed at intuitional level (Cunningham and P. Gardner, 231). If this is so then we may reasonably assume their teachers did likewise as respondents were quick to praise the more practical and classroom based ITE that now pertains. But if their teachers were ill prepared then how is it they are, as a rule, highly praised by the respondents who, while denigrating *their* ITE, also enjoyed long and successful teaching careers. Given their unanimous praise of contemporary ITE provision we must assume that they, and their teachers, borrowed from accumulated practice while their younger counterparts benefited from a comprehensive programme involving sustained teaching practice placements.

If education academics were caught in the seismic social shifts of the 1960s, so were their erstwhile students. *IER* and the subsequent introduction of free education radically altered the landscape and discourse

and while elements of the profession resisted the way in which schools were opening up to a new cohort, the spirit of the change was welcomed. The 1969 strike was, in many ways, the birth of the modern profession coming as it did amidst social flux, the decline of the Religious in schools leading to an increasing lay profession and against the background of the vernacular of civil rights in local and global contexts. However, teachers were not leaders of change in schooling, rather they appear to have discovered themselves in a radically changing social setting, caught in the evolution of a new type of democratic discourse that, on the one hand could be employed when speaking about remuneration and tenure but, on the other, forced them to confront a new, less consensualist, pupil cohort who also were imbibing the new vocabulary of justice, rights and re-ordered hierarchy. Perhaps the most striking fusing of these two bodies, joined by a shared ideology, were the pupil marches in support of their teachers' pay claims in 1969; a phenomenon that would have been unimaginable a decade previously. During this period, pupils became more ambitious, opportunities for further education widened, placing teachers under greater pressure, the school-going cohort became ever more diverse, corporal punishment began to disappear, while at the same time teachers were faced with increasing numbers of challenging pupils. The '69 strike reflected growing militancy among teachers while at the same time they, too, were part of a generation whose views concerning the hierarchy of schooling were beginning to change. Finally, many of those who left school in this period of change, themselves the beneficiaries of free education, would become teachers in the 1970s and would be faced with the next significant change in the 1980s; the advent of "points".

Instituted two years after the introduction of free education, they offered a new armature upon which schooling and teaching might be constructed. A statement of grade requirements for entry to university, coupled with free-secondary education and a more articulate and wealthy middle-class meant that pupils' expectations began to change rapidly. Sociologists and economists pointed to the remuneration associated with professional and non-professional work and the discourse of justice emboldened those who would not have previously considered university education to embrace the opportunity. A new currency of success became associated with examinations and an increasingly interested and

articulate body of parents looked to the schools to open avenues of new possibilities, thus bringing them much more closely into contact with teachers. It was inevitable that the historic role associated with the "master" as described by McMahon would give way to calls for accountability in the modern era. Unquestionably the introduction of the "points" system transformed teaching in a number of ways. It altered the relationship between pupil and teacher, between school and the public and between teacher and management. But it also gradually undermined what many teachers believed was a previously "purer" profession, reducing it to a 'shop floor' in Sister Boniface's words and, perhaps most significantly, replacing a more generous, pupil-centred and liberal model with a utilitarian and competitive one.

It is, nonetheless, striking that, despite some regret, schooling has become increasingly informal and, despite accusations that the curriculum has succumbed to "dumbing down", all respondents welcomed most of the changes that have occurred during their working lifetimes. They spoke of the 'death of the ogre'; of teachers needing to change and how, despite difficulties in the 1980s, the working relationship between pupils and teachers had improved and evolved beyond recognition when compared to their schooldays, regardless of the era. They noted that younger teachers, especially those born in and after the late 1960s, tended to possess a more relaxed and informal style of teaching, while those who had graduated in the new millennium or shortly afterwards brought a degree of confidence and technical mastery unknown to previous generations. When considering these observations, it is tempting to assume that these retired teachers perceive an improvement in pupil-teacher relations because, having taught for four decades or more, they had themselves mastered the relationship but this was not so. Approximately one-third had been school Principals or Vice-Principals and understood the challenges facing contemporary schools. Nonetheless they believed that nothing had been lost in the evolution of teaching in Ireland and much had been gained. They too had evolved as the decades passed; their expectations, practice and *modus operandi* having altered to accommodate wider changes in society and the pupil cohort reflected throughout the last three decades in policy documents such as the Green and White Papers of 1993 and 1995.

Note

1. This chapter employs the data collected from eighteen of the twenty-seven interviewees.

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.