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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 schoolboy 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 education, 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 understandings 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 captured the ambivalence of others when she noted that while greater informality 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 authority … 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 prescient 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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