Á. Ryan

The Road to Democracy in Irish Primary School Education

Doctorate of Education

2014

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Áine Ryan

Doctorate of Education (EdD)

School of Education, University of Sheffield

August 2014

Abstract

This thesis explores the extent to which democratic values and ideals have informed Irish primary school education since independence in 1922. The examination reveals how undemocratic structures, principles and practices have been maintained in primary education by denying equality and freedom of conscience to those not of the majority Catholic faith. It describes how the unique predicament of religious hegemony has persisted because of legislative machinery which, by guaranteeing protection of religious ethos, allows discrimination in enrolment policies, employment practices of primary school teachers, indoctrination across the curriculum and religious control of all teacher training colleges. The social, cultural and political factors which have produced this anomaly of a democratic State having an undemocratic education system are examined, as well as why this situation persists. The possibility for evolution of the democratic discourse within education as well as the forces currently obstructing change is also considered.

The arguments presented emerge from a critical policy analysis which draws on democratic theories. In particular, a historical account of Irish primary education is outlined which is informed by Dewey's philosophy of education, theories referencing participatory democracy and those contemporary sociological concepts which emphasise the role of education in the process of social reproduction and transformation. Gramsci's ideas on hegemony are applied to analyse the power structures controlling education and theories of selective knowledge, as propounded by Williams and Apple, are applied to the Irish context to highlight the political nature of the curriculum and how it is manipulated to exercise power. Contemporary schooling as a site of conflict and contest is analysed in the light of the potential of counter-hegemonic groups to challenge existing patterns and tradition.

The main findings are that the grip which hegemonic forces have had on Irish society has produced a conservative culture contributing to a democratic deficit in terms of social reform and civic participation. Although the Irish social order has changed significantly there is still a mismatch between society's expectations and the ideology and practice which defines primary schooling today. Education is not keeping pace with the requirements of contemporary Irish culture.

Acknowledgments

Sincere gratitude is extended to my thesis supervisor, Professor Wilfred Carr, for his support and his belief. In particular I am grateful for the advice on letting ones' voice be audible in the academic writing process. This has been a source of sustenance.

This work is dedicated to my beautiful girls in the hope that religious inequality in education may, in their life time, be consigned to the realms of history. And to David: for singing from the same hymn-sheet!

Abbreviations and explanations

CRS	Certificate in Religious Studies
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EEC	European Economic Community
ERB	Education about Religious Beliefs
ET	Educate Together schools
EU	European Union
IES	Intercultural Education Strategy
IIE	Investment in Education
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RSE	Relationship and Sexual Education
SESE	Social, Environmental and Scientific Education
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture
The Dáil	Irish Parliament
TD	Member of Parliament
An Taoiseach	Irish Prime Minister
Bunreacht na hÉireann	The Irish Constitution
Fianna Fáil	Centre-right political party
Fine Gael	Centre-right political party
"Ireland"	the entire island in the historical context of pre-1922; refers to the Republic of Ireland if the context is post-1922.

Primary schooling is structured as follows:

Junior Infants	4-6 year olds
Senior Infants	6-7 year olds
1st Class	7-8 year olds
2nd Class	8-9 year olds
3rd Class	9-10 year olds
4th Class	10-11 year olds
5th Class	11-12 year olds
6th Class	12-13 year olds

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Setting the scene

In the Republic of Ireland 98% of all State primary schools are controlled by religious bodies. The 92% majority are managed by the Catholic Church; 5% are Church of Ireland schools; 1% is run by other groups such as Jewish and Muslim faith organisations; 2% are multi-denominational, not under religious patronage and are known as Educate Together (Darmody et al., 2012, p.2). There are no non-denominational State primary schools. Traditionally Irish education was characterised by a very solid marriage between the State and the Catholic Church which resulted in the present system, which is largely privately-managed but State-funded. A non-democratically elected vested interest group has control of the majority of public schools and transmits their particular religious ethos through them. This predicament gives rise to marginalisation and discrimination for those who do not subscribe to this belief system as their perspective is not respected. In the majority of cases parents have no choice but to send their children to one of the 3,000 schools (from a total of 3,200) controlled by the Catholic Church. An anomalous situation exists whereby the policies of a western democratic State support an undemocratic cultural institution. Basic human rights such as freedom of conscience, respect for diversity of belief systems, the rights of the child and equality are not upheld in primary school education. Both children and teachers can be affected by such discrimination. Democratic principles such as accountability and transparency can also play a subsidiary role. This thesis is an exploration of this abstruse situation and an excavation of the circumstances which have created and continue to support a clearly unjust system. In this work I try to find an explanation for a particular cultural phenomenon; to unlock aspects of social behaviour in an attempt to reach a level of understanding for what has been historically created and culturally maintained. This study also endeavours to predict what the future course of schooling may look like. This is undertaken by conducting a critical analysis of primary school education policy in Ireland from 1800-2014, using a theoretical framework which espouses the value of a democratic approach to education.

Many elements of Irish life are changing: the country is no longer mono-cultural, according to the latest census figures (2011, This Is Ireland, Part 1) 17% of the population were born outside Ireland and one in seven children is from migrant families (MRCI, 2013). Society is becoming more secular: 6% of the population designate themselves as having “no religion” (CSO, 2011), that is a 45% increase since the 2006 census. Furthermore a recent Irish Times poll (2012) showed an increasing number of Catholics do not believe in central tenets of Catholic teaching. Yet there is no choice but to accept a one-size-fits-all world view as embodied by the particular religious ethos of the school

due to the monopoly that denominational schools have on education. What is also unique is the State's continued legislative guarantee for schools to protect religious ethos in both enrolment policies and employment practice and to continue providing funding for denominational education as sanctioned under the 1937 Constitution. The Education Act, 1998 enshrined the legislative status of religious ethos which, in practice, means that the patron the local Bishop can set enrolment policies which refuse non-Catholics admittance in case they threaten the religious ethos of the school. The Employment Equality Act, 1998 allows for religious discrimination in employment and thus a school is legally entitled to discriminate against those whose religious beliefs do not correspond to that of the patron. The Education Act, 1998 states that students should experience an education that "respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership" (p. 5). But this aim is merely rhetorical: at the level of praxis there is disregard for children and parents whose belief systems contravene the majority religious dogma (c.f. Wyman, 2011; Mawhinney, 2009). Religious indoctrination is legitimate because of the "Integrated Curriculum", introduced by the Catholic clergy in 1926 and on a statutory footing since 1971. This unique curriculum instrument allows for religion to infuse all aspects of the formal and informal curriculum, meaning that religious instruction does not only take place in designated religious classes and thus also renders the possibility to opt-out of specific faith formation void. The underlying message is ethnocentricity which advocates conformity to one prescribed set of values. The school system in the Republic of Ireland positions Irish identity or "normality" as Catholic, defined by the WHISC classification: white, heterosexual, Irish-born, sedentary and Catholic. There is little recognition of difference, accommodation of diversity or acknowledgement that identity today does not have to be defined exclusively along religious lines.

Primary school education in the Republic of Ireland, however, is in a state of flux. A transformation of a system which has existed in the same format for one-hundred-and-fifty years is being proposed. In 2011 the new Minister for Education and Skills established "The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector" which seeks to divest religious patronage of some primary schools, thus creating more choice. The proposal to dilute religious patronage signifies an erosion of traditional power and shows that the present government is prepared to grasp the nettle of Irish education. Thorny issues such as pluralism, diversity and religious freedom in Irish schools have become open to scrutiny and public debate. Questions relating to identity, tradition and established norms and values are also being posed. The sphere of education is now a contested one as various stakeholders attempt to have their voice heard, influence the discourse and strive to leave their stamp on the future direction of education. On one side, the powerful representatives of the

Catholic Church are intent on defending and maintaining their position. On the other side the State is now attempting to dislodge historical hegemonic traditions. Fissures in the old binary relationship are also in evidence in that a number of other agents are playing an important role in the educational arena. New alliances are emerging between the State and bodies like the teacher unions, the multi-denominational lobby groups, human-rights organisations and other community-based groups. The diverse opinions and activities of parents are an additional voice. These new configurations are intriguing, not least because they signal new departures in policy and ideology on education. They are also an indication that the era of consensus between the State and the Catholic Church is changing.

Research questions, aims and underlying philosophy

The central concern of the work is to explore how democracy has historically and is currently being expressed in first level schooling and to debate how democratic practices and principles could be reflected in the future. This broad aim is guided by a view which sees that there is a direct and reciprocal relationship between education and the political and social canvas of a State or as Williams puts it: "There are clear and obvious connexions between the quality of a culture and the quality of its system of education" (1961, p. 145). Education plays a major part in how the colours emerge on this canvas and how the end picture is created. The State's political system and culture will also affect the school environment, its pupils and the general view of the role of education in society. The parameters for the analysis draw on a deliberative understanding of democracy, having its roots in classical participatory thinking, referencing Dewey's correlation between education and the community and acknowledging the social reproduction function of education as well as its potential to transform. The analysis is based on a view which sees that education, as one of the chief cultural intuitions for the reproduction of social norms and standards, should embody and strive to practice the ideals of modern democracy. Therefore my position is that education can play a vital role in fostering a democratic consciousness if it is committed to respecting basic democratic freedoms and principles. The school, in diverse societies, has the potential to prepare students for their future participation in pluralistic communities where tolerance and open-mindedness are invaluable qualities. Such civic virtues contribute to establishing and promoting equality and, in the long-run, lay the groundwork for the creation of the "good society" – one defined by respect regardless of creed, ethnicity or socio-economic factors. The philosophical standpoint which guides the work is based on the value of the citizen participating rationally in the formulation of decisions which will affect their lives. In such a deliberative process the positions of minorities, on issues which are important in the maintaining of democratic standards, can also be voiced and will be

heard and heeded. As Gutmann (1998, pp. 44-45) points out the essential features of democracy in education and in the wider society are non-repression and non-discrimination.

Given the long history of conservatism in Irish primary school education it is remarkable that there is now the possibility of change. Contemporary education policy is more complex, colourful and less based on consensus, but is this an indication of an evolution of democracy? Is a more comprehensive and mature expression of democracy emerging in educational policy and practice? Is it possible to analyse this new departure as a manifestation of the Irish State beginning to work towards a different definition of the common good? Is there recognition at political level that contemporary Irish society must take account of diversity? And are these changes indicative of a societal-wide expectation that a multi-layered culture must transmit values of tolerance and openness? Can it be concluded that the concept of democracy is being re-defined, and its parameters extended vis-à-vis a proposed reform of primary education and is transformation finally triumphing over tradition? It is interesting to debate why change is happening at this point in history: why is the Irish government now purporting to cease outsourcing education and why has it taken so long to begin the process of establishing a form of public education? But the bid to re-structure is facing obstruction and so my analysis will also debate if it will succeed in dismantling the bastions of power. There is palpable tension between those driving reform and those intent on maintaining traditional structures. Inglis' (1985) observation of education as a "battleground" is being played out in a twenty-first century Irish context and one of the goals will be to elucidate this struggle, identifying the various players, highlighting their role and strategies whilst also bearing in mind the very important consequences the outcome will have on parents, children and society at large. These are the questions which this work will contextualise and probe. But the answers to such questions may not emerge as a blueprint for solutions to a societal problem: the road to democracy in Irish primary schooling has been long and winding, and in some respects, is still trying to establish, not only its end destination but also its course.

Structure of thesis

The structure of this work is based around theoretical analysis in Chapter 2, 3 and 4 and historical examination of policy in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Chapter 8 examines contemporary educational developments and Chapter 9 provides a synopsis of the findings and debates what the future directions may be.

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical starting point. The concept of democracy in its historical context will be explored in order to establish the criteria for examining the nature of democracy expressed

via society and in Irish primary education. This is undertaken by outlining models of democracy such as the classical concept, Rousseau and Dewey's theories, contemporary democracy or the liberal tradition and democracy for the twenty-first century. The second part of Chapter 2 looks at the development of democracy in Ireland since formal democracy was established in 1922 up to the present day, seeing how the afore-mentioned general theories can be applied to this particular cultural context. In Chapter 3 social reproduction theory will be applied in an attempt to explain the nature of power and control in Irish education. The theories of Gramsci (1971), Williams (1961, 1973, & 1981) Apple (1993, 2004 & 2008) and Carr (1996 & 1998) are highlighted to show how the curriculum is a political instrument fulfilling the role of transmitting a particular ideology but that education also has the potential to fulfil a transformative role. Given the explicit ideological role of the Integrated Curriculum in Irish primary schools this is a pertinent application of theory to reality. These two chapters are devoted to an exploration of theory and each lays the groundwork for providing an overall understanding on which to base an application of democratic principles. The main function of the theoretical analysis is to illuminate social behaviour, to contextualise how and why policy is created and implemented, as well as providing a basis on which to gain understanding and insights and make predictions.

It is paramount to consider the influence the past has had on the present; how historical circumstance and events have shaped a nation's perception of education and how the education system has, over time, fashioned an identity and formed a collective consciousness. Knowledge of history can also provide explanations for contemporary predicaments. The historical analysis begins at the start of the nineteenth century and looks at the establishing of the Irish primary school system by the British government in 1831. The explicit intention of its creator, Lord Stanley, was that the National School system (as it was known) was to be multi-denominational. This aspiration did not translate into a long-term reality and the present analysis will consider why primary school education quickly became the preserve of religious organisations even in colonial times. Why the State willingly handed over control of education to religious bodies after independence from Britain in 1922 and why the outsourcing of education to private organisations continues to the present day are also questions deserving attention. This has led to a situation where, as some commentators (e.g. Mawhinney, 2009; Hyland, 1996 and Lynch, 1989) have concluded, there really is no State system of primary school education in the Republic because the publicly funded education system is privately managed and owned. An exploration of the historical context and its pivotal and far-reaching influence will be dealt with in Chapter 4 (1800-1919), Chapter 5 (1920-1961) and Chapter 6 (1962-1999).

Chapter 7 will provide a critical analysis of education policy in its modern setting over the period 2000-2014, a period characterised by much change after decades of consensus and a preservation of the status quo. The principle catalyst for change is the increasing diversity of Irish society. Over the past fifteen years Ireland became more ethnically diverse as favourable economic conditions during the Celtic Tiger era attracted people from all over the world. By the start of the twenty-first century there was a more outward weltanschauung among the populace. MacGréil (1996, p. 96), analysing Irish society in the 1990s, concluded that a certain "defensive ethnocentrism" characterised Irish life but twenty years later Darmody et al. (2011, p. xiii) point out that this "resistance to imposition from 'the outside', has been challenged by increased immigration." It was in response to the increasingly diverse nature of modern Ireland that Ruairi Quinn, the Labour Minister for Education and Skills, established the Forum for Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector (2011-2014) to create an education system which might better reflect the societal realities of a multi-cultural Ireland and in particular the diversity characterising most classrooms. However there are other factors, in addition to demographic spin-offs, which have also caused a questioning of religious control of schooling. One cannot ignore the shock-waves which numerous reports on child-sex abuse perpetrated by religious personnel have sent through Irish society. This dark episode in recent history has in no small way led to a re-thinking of the role this powerful elite has been allowed to play in Irish society - in particular in schooling. All of the domestic societal factors driving change will be presented, namely: demographic upheavals; shifts in cultural values; a change in political will; the input of the teacher unions and the influence of citizens and community groups.

Although radical change on the domestic front is a major contributory factor influencing developments in primary school education, there are also international dynamics playing a part. Events which happen on the global political stage can filter down to the domestic level of states which are part of a pan-European or transnational project: indeed as some commentators maintain all education policy today is influenced by globalisation (Rivzi & Linguard, 2010). The issue of policy interconnectivity or policy relationship is interesting to explore in the case of contemporary Ireland. Thus, for example, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) policy on education, integration and economics may eventually find expression in everyday Irish life as policy makers implement change based on recommendations from powerful external organisations. Access to the courts of the European Union is also open to those who may seek to challenge national laws in an attempt to establish human rights, as is recourse and reference to UN declarations and charters. Chapter 7 will also debate the influence outside bodies have on changing the educational landscape of a nation state by exploring the nature of the connection between the local and the

global. So education policy today operates on a complex and multi-layered level. Whilst initially the examination of a topic like democracy in Irish primary school education may seem culturally specific the analysis must also consider the broader context within which countries operate and examine how this may be reflected in domestic policy.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 8, will look at what lies ahead for Irish primary school education. The work of the Forum is, at the time of writing, incomplete and there has been some frustration with the slow rate of progress. Uncertainty defines the current climate. But change has been initiated and one can only hope that although the wheels of progress grind slowly they will continue to stay in motion. Finally, I shall return to the question posed about democracy and its expression in education, debating if it can be concluded that an analysis of primary school education policy is a mirror for the evolution of democracy.

Methodology and methods

The methodology guiding this study is based on an approach which sees that qualitative researchers "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). The method used is that of documentary and historical analysis. Documents, in a variety of forms, are really the data for this project; they form the backbone of the analysis and are employed as a tool for interpretation of social facts, activities and experiences. The choice of method is based on an appreciation of documents as social records and commentaries which are produced, shared and used by social groups and organisations. Social reality can be constructed through documents and it can be interpreted by the researcher via documentary analysis. Documents are important devices in the process of aiding understanding of particular social and historical phenomena and can be seen as windows into the past but can also help illuminate the present and be analysed as an indicator of what may happen in the future.

The philosophical position underlying the methodology sees that documents, in line with Prior's analysis (2011), are important in terms of content but also in terms of function: in other words in the influence of words on action or how documents do things (ibid, Editor's Introduction). Documents have an unpredictable quality – it is impossible to ascertain with a degree of certainty what their effect will be for as Prior notes: "the manner in which such material is actually called upon and manipulated, and the way in which it functions, cannot be determined (though it may be constrained) by an analysis of content" (ibid). However documents may be viewed as a link in a process to change societal conditions. Implementation of policy - how and to what extent it is

translated into action and by whom - is the final action influencing the construction of a new type of knowledge. The potential to create meaning, structure reality or effect change is an interesting aspect to policy and documentary analysis. Documentary analysis is also an exercise in detecting voices behind words and the subtext, and even omissions, can reveal the intentions of the writer. It is also interesting to examine how documents may be used to maintain or even enhance the status quo. Initially they may have been created to establish a new type of social reality but the final document may reflect political or vested interests to do the opposite. The Education Act, 1998, which is the only Act pertaining to contemporary education in Ireland, is one such example. Whereas the original intention of its creators was for it to pave the way for change, the final document bears the hallmarks of certain interest groups whose intention was to maintain the status quo and protect their status. It is a document which has been instrumental in sectorial groups' justification of resistance to reform. Indeed the current bid to implement policy change at primary school level can, in some ways, be interpreted as an activity to rectify unjust elements of this Act. This work will show that documents have played an important role in influencing social activity in Irish society and documents currently in the making have the potential to shape new realities, depending on how they are constructed and their recommendations implemented.

This choice of method is also based on practical considerations: a confidence, comfort and preference for working with textual material rather than oral or face-to-face testimony. There is also a natural "fit" between the research topic and the documentary method of analysis given that a substantial part of the work examines educational history and the overall framework is that of critical policy analysis in a historic and contemporary setting. As Bowen notes, documentary analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies (2009, p. 29) and in some respects this piece of work can be viewed as a case study of the problems inherent in a national primary school education system due to historical legacies and contemporary conservatism. As one of the main aims of this thesis is to understand the political, historical and sociocultural circumstances which have contributed to the anomaly that is primary school education in Ireland, documentary analysis and theoretical review was seen as a fitting method to try and accomplish this goal. The broad nature of the work - undertaking an exploration of a national issue over one-hundred-and fifty years and its reference to global factors - necessitated being able to access a variety of material from a variety of sources.

There is no designated Literature Review chapter as the entire work references literature in many different forms. For the historical section I refer to secondary analysis or previous studies as well as

primary documents. The journey into educational history has unearthed some literary gems: ground-breaking and perceptive observations written some fifty years ago and often discredited then because they were so critical of the education system, such as the analyses by Akenson (1970 & 1975). Often these critical historical works resonate with current ideas and hence have well stood the test of time. Primary documents, such as statutes and letters outlining how and why the British government would establish a national primary school system in Ireland of the 1830s, have been analysed as have clerical letters and records, parliamentary reports and laws from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Acts, rulings, green and white papers and other government material have been examined throughout the analysis. Early OECD reports on education in Ireland (1960s) as well as subsequent OECD reports in addition to UN papers, EU legal rulings and national and international human rights reports are also an important source of documentary data.

Less traditional documentary analysis is applied in examining the most recent phase of education policy. New media sources have been indispensable in this part of the study. Since 2011 there has been heightened activity in the field of primary school education and one sometimes has the impression that it is difficult to keep abreast of the various developments. Given the rapid rate of change, the internet has been an invaluable tool providing ready and easy access to government press releases; Department of Education information; critical analysis in Irish press; radio and television broadcasts, information provided by lobby group websites and personal opinions expressed in blogs and boards and other media. Indeed much of the often heated debate regarding changes to the structure of primary school education can be gleaned from websites such as those of the Humanist Association of Ireland, the Atheist Association of Ireland, the conservative Catholic organisation, the Iona Institute, and declarations from the Irish Bishops. Although the analysis relies significantly on organisational and institutional documents, personal accounts are also referenced. The Forum for Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector uses electronic communication to disseminate information and to involve parents and the public in its consultation process. It invited submissions from the general public as well as educational stakeholders to aid it in producing its initial report on how to divest patronage. The Forum has also specifically invited parents to express their views on widening choice using on-line questionnaires and in November 2013 invited further written submissions from parents on the topic of how to make schools more inclusive. Thus the voices of ordinary people are being expressed in written format and playing a part in the production of policy. This public consultation process is a new development in Irish education policy and one has the sense of being a part of it via the written process or at least being able to observe

developments online. Analysis of Central Statistics Office (CSO) data has been used to understand and help explain certain social phenomenon. The statistical analysis is often used to aid interpretations, validate arguments and point towards explanations of social phenomena, as well as being employed to deliberate on what the future may hold for educational policy and direction.

Positionality

The initial motivation for this work arose from a personal concern generated by experiences of being part of a minority group. I was driven by a quest to try to gain deeper knowledge of the cultural and political context which tolerated the violation of freedom of conscience at both institutional and community level and by a feeling that, as the religious affairs correspondent of the Irish Times articulated, "For too long minorities on this island have been forced into compliance with the beliefs of others. It is violence and no more acceptable than agreement achieved at the point of a gun" (McGarry, 2014).

It is frustrating to be a parent of young children and have no choice but to expose them to indoctrination because the State does not provide an alternative to denominational primary school education. It is hurtful when your five-year old comes home from the local Catholic school reciting religious dogma which contravenes your philosophical perspectives and begins to robustly espouse the religious beliefs of her teacher. Such indoctrination flies in the face of fostering critical and creative thinking and undermines what this author sees as the essential goal of education: to encourage children to question and to think for themselves, and to create an environment in which children can comfortably express their natural curiosity and passion. It is demoralising when you are catapulted into revealing your private belief system in a public capacity because the education system is neither neutral nor respectful of difference. It is depressing when you fear your child is being targeted at school because of her "otherness" – not only in terms of belief system difference but because of willingness to question and to expression. The reality is that our children can legitimately be turned away from State-funded primary and second level schools because they can be regarded as undermining the religious ethos of the school; they can also be exposed to indoctrination. Should they wish to become primary school teachers, they must train in religious controlled training colleges and are in reality only eligible to apply for teaching posts in 2% of the State-funded primary sector. Exclusion and marginalisation based on religion therefore exist in practice. Certain children are not free and they are not equal. Such undemocratic standards do not dovetail with the stated aim of the Education Act, 1998, where respect for diversity is assigned priority status, or with the 1916 Proclamation of Independence where it is outlined that all the children of the nation are to be cherished equally.

There is a political as well as a personal dimension to this work. Our family were very fortunate that an Educate Together primary school was established by a group of parents eight miles away. Educate Together schools are multi-denominational, non-private, democratically managed with a significant parental input, State-funded and operate on the basis of a human rights and equality based charter. There are just sixty-eight such schools in the Republic of Ireland and the first UK Educate Together school is to open in Bristol in September 2014. I am now directly involved, via membership of a lobby group, in the campaign to obtain the first second level Educate Together school for the west of Ireland. Thus personal experiences as a parent have directly led to a political awareness of issues of discrimination and inequality visited upon minority belief children via the denominational education system. The insights gained through undertaking this work are valuable in the on-going political work of striving for a fairer and more democratic way of educating the youngest members of our society.

It was only toward the end of this study that I began to reflect on the part my own experience of primary schooling had played in this research. My first year was at a public school in Southall, west London in the 1970s. The abiding memories are that it was big but friendly. The remainder of primary schooling was in a small Catholic school in rural Ireland. It was the antithesis of child-friendly. Rote-learning and an authoritarian regime were part of the course; the pedagogical approach was based entirely on punishment. All children were seriously physically and emotionally abused by the school principal. The wider society accepted this cruelty. Parents turned a blind eye to a child's black eye, other teachers kept schtum and management harboured individuals it knew were not fit to practice. The culture of the day was characterised by deference to authority and a climate of secrecy and fear.

This work engages in critique. It is an informed critique but is underscored by my personal perspective, which, broadly speaking, takes its impetus from a violation of human rights. This perspective is shaped by not only what I see happening in Irish society but also what I personally feel. As such there is certainly a degree of subjectivity to the study but at the same time the historical inquiry and theoretical analysis as well as the examination of contemporary policy establish the validity of my interpretation of this particular reality. The narrative of this thesis is, however, underscored by one person's particular story.

Chapter 2: Theories of Democracy and Democracy in Ireland

Introduction

Democracy is a concept which means different things to different people; its meaning is often contested and complex. In its broadest sense it refers to political systems across a wide spectrum, ranging from, for example, the People's Republic of China or the German Democratic Republic to the constitutional monarchs of Britain or the US federal political system. In the twenty-first century there is general agreement that the term has come to embody that which is good or desirable in how a political entity functions, indeed as Beetham states (2008, p. 2) since 1945 the term "democracy" has become one of the most positive words in political lexicon. It is a yardstick which may be applied to measure political and economic stability and also the level of civic engagement in a society - the freedom people have to express themselves and participate in shaping their common good. It is this latter element, referencing participation in the democratic process, with which the current analysis is chiefly concerned. The aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical foundation for considering how democracy finds expression in a particular culture. Theory can be used to gauge the nature of democracy which has characterised Irish society and to understand how democracy is manifested today. This general framework forms the basis for advancing the more specific issue in the following chapters, namely what is the nature of the democratic discourse expressed via the cultural institution of Irish primary level schooling. The classical model, Rousseau's works, the contemporary democratic model, John Dewey's theories and democracy for the twenty-first century will be presented to set this debate in motion and provide reference points for understanding what democracy entails. The second part of this chapter will focus on democracy specifically in the Irish context. The history of democracy in Ireland only really starts in 1922 when formal democratic institutions were established post-independence. Since then there has been great respect for institutional and electoral democracy. However a more varied and complex understanding of the concept, rather than a purely political one, is the litmus paper by which the practice of democracy in today's society may be judged. When one scrutinizes cultural institutions and civic behaviour to what extent do they reflect the principles of democracy?

The classical model

The origins of the term come from ancient Greece: demokratia meaning "rule" (kratos) "of the people" (demos) and some of the ideas pertaining to the classical understanding of democracy, for example, the principles of liberty and equality can be found in Aristotle's *The Politics* written between 335 and 332 BC. Democracy referred to a form of popular power or rule by the people and stood in opposition to the concept of tyranny - rule by one person - and to oligarchy or rule by a certain elite or small group (Aristotle, *The Politics*, p. 60-61). The underlying thinking behind the

classical concept of democracy is the view that human beings are social and political animals who function best in relation to each other via active political participation. Connected to this precept is the idea of liberty or freedom; freedom to participate directly in expressing and debating an interpretation of the common good. Held outlines (2006, p. 14) that in Athenian democracy dedication to public affairs, the city State or the common good took precedence over the individual per se for there was a merging of the public and private, termed civic virtue. This idea was also expressed in the notion of citizens having rights and duties, but rather than being concepts which related to the individual sphere these obligations were defined in terms of the public good, or as Crick explains, they were earned only by active citizenship (2002, p. 24). Hence an interest in affairs of the state or politics was to be cultivated and citizens would participate directly in the formulation of policies, rather than elites. Laws were not to emanate from custom or tradition but should have their basis in the personal and lived experience of the citizens. All citizens had equal voting power to elect representatives and decisions were to be based on majority rule, although as Held points out the ideal was to reach a consensus (2006, p. 17). Equality, as an expression of all men having equal rights to voice opinions, vote in the Assembly and be actively involved in the political decision making process, was a valued concept in Athenian democracy. This open and discursive model did not have huge bureaucratic machinery at its disposal but as Held (p. 14) notes, respect for laws and a certain tolerance in private affairs was essential. Attached to the idea of classical democracy is, as Carr and Hartnett point out, the overriding moral ideal it encompasses and as such it is never fully achieved but is always evolving: "it requires continuously expanding opportunities for the direct participation of all citizens in public decision-making by bringing social, political and economic instructions under more genuine democratic control" (1996, p. 41).

The classical model of democracy is, however, often seen as an ideal or as being aspirational rather than a blueprint which has been implemented according to a particular set of guidelines. Indeed, even in Athens its practice was not comprehensive as it did not extend to slaves, women or non-Athenian citizens, despite the dictum of Pericles that "everyone is equal before the law" and that "what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses" (Pericles' Funeral Oration in Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, pp. 145, 147). Plato and indeed Aristotle were to point to its limitations. Aristotle believed in a blended form of democracy where elites or the educated aristocracy could make a worthwhile contribution to the democratic process in conjunction with the participation of the populace (Crick, 2002, p.22). The idea of freedom was unacceptable to Plato. In *The Republic* he criticized democracy on the basis that rule by the majority leads to political instability for it means that even those without a real philosophical knowledge can express mere opinions which are taken as a basis for political decisions.

Additionally the principle of equality means that every person is free to do as one likes, causing chaos, with a lack of respect for political and moral authority, thus endangering social cohesion (pp. 375, 376). For many centuries democracy did not represent the status it has today, instead it symbolised disorderly rule by the mob rather than stability which elites could bring to politics. It was not until the eighteenth century that the concept was re-visited and re-interpreted as republicanism and came to represent a more positive form of political life which would later form the backbone of the French Revolution.

Rousseau's ideas on democracy

Like the Athenian form of government, republicanism embodied the idea of citizens participating actively in the public sphere, the polis or republic; coming together to decide laws and make political decisions which would benefit the whole community – what today we call civic republicanism. The Latin root of the word "republic" means "concern of the people" or "public concern" and central to the idea is that participation in the public sphere is where the person gains moral legitimation or virtue. So, as Garvin outlines, the citizen is seen as a "moral political actor" and the act of political participation is "in itself ennobling" (1996, p.15). Central to Rousseau's theory is that citizens are not only defined by possessing private property or having an education. Rousseau advocated an alternative to the corrupt system of rule by elites which had developed in the intervening centuries – absolutist monarchs or "princes" who ruled as a divine right, as well as the considerable influence of religious elites. The idea now was of "self-government" or government by the consent of the people underscored by a philosophy where the interests of the individual are secondary to those of the collective or the society, and where citizens have duties as well as rights. This is akin to Gonçalves (2004) description of a citizen as one "who works against injustice not for individual recognition or personal advantage but for the benefit of all people" (p.197). Such activity would lead to the formation of not just a state, but a society where all individuals could live on equal terms and have the opportunity to develop their individual capacities (Held, 2006, p.45). Rousseau's main arguments as outlined in *The Social Contract* are the lack of separation between the public and the private, the state and civil society. Enlightenment thinking drew on Roman paganism and later the Protestant view of the individual as an active agent who could shape his own destiny via the powers of reason and logic rather than being subject to the ties of tradition or superstition. But as Crick (2002, p. 12) outlines, it was still the idea of a strong state trusted by its citizens that was of overriding importance. This would give rise to a state which was transparent in its public decision making rather than operating in a culture of secrecy which was the code by which elites had ruled.

Economic and political equality and in particular the freedom to be educated are defining principles; education should no longer be the preserve of certain groups, as Plato had advocated, but available to all. It was via education that citizens would have the power to shape the institutions which would govern their lives and bring about change to the corrupt system of rule by elites. It was through education that citizens would be empowered to act to replace the system of oppression and injustice which rule by the aristocracy had generated. In *Emilie* Rousseau describes the type of education which would bring about a re-definition of the common good – "intended as a scheme of universal public education" (Carr & Hartnett, 1996, p. 35). It was an education which would be based on the experience of the individual, its philosophy drawn from the importance of learning by doing. Thus it would be relevant to the citizen's direct cultural environment involving solving of every-day problems and the formulation of appropriate solutions. The end goal was for informed free and rational citizens to participate in the creation of a common good which would benefit all the members of the society, thus leading to equality where all citizens are fulfilled via the realisation of their natural talents and abilities. In this way education had a moral function, and in Rousseau's thinking, there is a direct link between education and democracy, a principle which John Dewey was to expand on some centuries later.

Contemporary democracy

The concept of contemporary democracy or the liberal tradition refers to the functioning of democracy across certain western nation states in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The underlying principle attaching to this concept of democracy is the elevation of the individual rather than society. Individual liberty is the driving force. Integral to this thinking is the importance of cultivating a private sphere which would be free of state or church interference. The rationale underlying democracy then is the protection of individual rights and freedoms but the rights of other citizens must also be respected and this protection is afforded legal status; as Held outlines "gradually liberalism became associated with the doctrine that individuals should be free to pursue their own preference in religious, economic and political affairs" (2006, p. 59).

The common view was of human beings as individuals motivated by self-interest and defined by the struggle for power. Thus competition is a natural state of self-expression and it is competition - rather than a sense of moulding a common good via active group participation - which defines democracy. This idea of democracy stands in opposition to the Athenian view of man as a political or group animal, whose sense of fulfilment came from collective-decision making. In the contemporary model individuals are not expected to participate directly in the formulation of the common good because their primary interest lies not with the communal but with the self. Thus the

general populace is seen as having only a passive interest in politics with participation meaning the freedom to vote in elections where certain specialists will be chosen to represent certain interests. This idea of representative democracy was seen as fitting for the large industrial nations which emerged during the nineteenth century. In this model politics is seen as separate from social or civic goals for society – the emphasis is on government and the institutions of government. This results in a clear separation between the state and the private world of the individual, and with little cross-over between both.

The economy is also seen as functioning as a separate entity. The idea of competition drove the market economy and was fundamental in the development of the industrial revolution and capitalism. The contemporary model of democracy resounds with many of the principles of the laissez-faire market economy and is characteristic of the New Right (and Third Way) thinking underlying much of contemporary Western European politics: voters choose rival political representatives in much the same vein as they choose consumer goods and services and with a minimum of state interference which might act to limit such choice (Carr & Hartnett, 1996, pp. 42-43). The idea of individual choice is thus a fundamental tenet of the liberal democratic tradition – freedom to choose in both the political and the personal realm. As O'Toole (2014c) notes: contemporary political conservatism has adapted the notion of freedom, selling the idea that "being free means having as few constraints on our behaviour as possible", although the reality under the New Right is somewhat different. It is from this principle, though, that the idea of privatisation and out-sourcing arose - dominant features of Western politics today. Held concludes that democracy then becomes a means of enhancing individual goals, "not an end in itself, for perhaps, the cultivation and development of all people" (2006, p. 77). It is on such a premise of individual freedom and non-interference that the market economy is based.

Dewey's thinking on democracy

Broadly speaking Dewey's ideas can be seen to have their basis in the classical understanding of participatory democracy. In Dewey's (1916) terms, democracy is more than a form of government; it is the act of living together, "associated living, a conjoint communicated experience" (p. 87). His understanding of democracy is, as Cambi (2009), notes an "ethical cognitive" (p. 65) model rather than one which analyses only the institutions of democracy or the exercise of the franchise. Central to Dewey's philosophy is the importance of diversity to the community, its creative potential and of the validity of attempting a shared understanding of perspectives. In today's global world we live in diverse, pluralistic communities, yet share many common goals and are faced with finding solutions to a number of similar problems. Dewey was writing in the early twentieth century and his writings are infused by the changes he saw happening via industrialisation and modernisation of American

society but his perspectives are still applicable to our contemporary world. In Dewey's view a modern democratic society may be understood as one which strives for tolerance of the positions of different groups rather than enforcing a linear view which propagates only the perspectives of certain sections of society - those transmitting the dominant ideology. As he wrote: it is "a society permeated by mutual regard of all citizens for all other citizens" (1916, p. 311). Thus social control should not be imposed by an outside authority, but in a democratic society a way of living developed through mutual consent of its various groups. Diversity, according to Dewey (ibid), is part of modern democratic societies and is productive for "only diversity makes change and progress" (p. 90) and change and flexibility are integral to modern living. He understood that difference is positive for "a progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth" (ibid, p. 99). For Dewey it was communication which was essential in creating the conditions where democracy could flourish. Dewey (ibid) understood that a "society that makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic" (p. 99). The measure of a democratic society was how the "specific and variable qualities of individuals" (ibid, p. 91) could best be incorporated into its framework so that a common good life could be created.

Dewey's thinking was informed by a theory of knowledge, known as Pragmatism. Knowledge is a social construct which is formed though the individual's experience when solving problems or as Hickman (2009) notes "the meaning of the truth of an idea lies in its possible consequences" (p.14). It is by testing, examining and applying, in the process of solving relevant problems, that knowledge is formed and that we discover, learn and evolve. This creative learning process never ceases and this is why Dewey (1916) concluded that, "The educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own end" (p. 50). Thus it is growth which is the aim of education and education helps the individual to achieve personal growth. The importance of developing social intelligence is integral to this idea. This intelligence is not biologically inherited nor is it the preserve of ruling elites or the dominant culture. Dewey was concerned with a collective intelligence or the group's ability to find solutions to common problems through communication. The central aim of education was "to prepare individuals to take part intelligently in the management of conditions under which they will live, to bring them to an understanding of the forces which are society" (Dewey & Childs, 1933, p. 71). In Dewey's thinking the school was fundamental in helping to create social intelligence for it would provide an environment where the perspectives of others could be heard and conflicts resolved if it fostered creativity and the capacity for free, critical and reflective thought (Hickman, 2009). Dewey

expressed this as “scientific thinking” (1910) or in Jenlink’s (2009) words: “the mental habit of free inquiry, tolerance of alternative viewpoints and free communication” (p. 4). This was the type of thinking which evolved through a creative process with participants actively constructing knowledge and not from an acceptance of an imposed doctrine: “Social intelligence is the form of reasoning… which has ceased to rely on the authoritative knowledge of a ruling elite and prefers instead to operate on the experience-based knowledge of ordinary men and women” (Carr & Hartnett, 1996, p. 65). It was through developing social intelligence and hence contributing to the common good or a better social world that the individual would experience freedom and fulfilment. As Carr and Hartnett (ibid) conclude for Dewey, “both social progress and individual freedom are best understood as the growth of the social intelligence that is developed when individuals participate intelligently and co-operatively in the search for solutions to the problems created by social change” (p. 59). In Ireland’s case rapid social change has occurred in the first part of the twenty-first century resulting in a different societal fabric to that of previous generations. A different set of communication tools are required to deal with the fluidity of a multicultural society, a world where traditions, previously unquestioned, are no longer fixed. The type of communication appropriate for a more culturally heterogeneous population and one where social intelligence has a different hue has to be underscored by respect for difference and individual freedoms. As Mouffe writes:

> The challenge that we are facing today is precisely that of developing a new form of citizenship which is adequate for multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies. We have to accept that national homogeneity can no longer be the basis of citizenship and that pluralism must allow for a range of different ethnic and cultural identities. (1992, p. 8)

For Dewey (1899) the school is “a form of community life” (My Pedagogic Creed, Article II), it is a vehicle for living and learning about each other, respecting the opinions and beliefs of others and engaging in dialogue. The school would play a fundamental role in the creation of a democratic society because it was in the school that various members of society come together, where there would be a free exchange of ideas, where children would learn about communication through interaction. In this way a democratic consciousness and the values pertaining to democracy would be fostered. Laclau (1988) many years later, commenting on the creation of democratic education expressed a similar view: “pedagogical practice embraces all social and cultural spheres engaged in the production of texts, images, knowledge, values and identities” (p. 23). Dewey emphasised the organic relationship between the school and society: what goes on in the school must be a reflection of what is happening in the community and what happens outside the school must have a relationship to education. In his 1933 essay “The Social-Economic Situation and Education” Dewey greatly emphasised the necessity of the school reflecting changes happening in the greater society. If the school, however, is not reflecting these developments, and also not fostering a common

discourse between all its members, then it is failing in its role of promoting tolerance, openness and common understanding. As Dewey wrote: "The task of democracy is forever the creation of a free and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute" (1939).

Influenced by Darwin's thinking on evolution Dewey saw that human beings are constantly undergoing change and applied this principle to his philosophy. Human beings, as active participants in their social world are continually re-shaping and re-forming their environment and thus the society they inhabit will not stand still neither should the school be a static institution, as he emphasised (1933). Challenges therefore are an essential part of the democratic process and happen as the result of critical creative thinking or as a response to our search for solutions to problems relevant to us. Dewey (1916) regarded the educational process in a democratic system as "one of continual reorganising, reconstructing, transforming" (p. 50) and recognised that healthy societies are those which are open to change and engage in communication about shared problems:

> An undesirable society, in other words, is one which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience. A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through the interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. (ibid, p. 99)

As Chambliss (1996) notes Dewey was convinced that "cultures and societies are in continual flux and that progress, when it occurs, is the result of a reconstructive synthesis of trends and ideas that are often fiercely opposed to one another" (p.147). Education, Dewey believed, "is the fundamental method of social progress and reform" (1899, Article V). It is through an education system that the values and purpose of a society are expressed and also its vision for the future. However, we need to define the type of society we want before we can set about transforming our education system: "The conception of education as a social process and function has no definite meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind" (Dewey, 1916, p. 97). A democratic society will be concerned to improve and change its way of educating young minds and will have a different ideology to a society concerned only to reproduce tradition: "A society which not only changes but which has the ideal of such change as will improve it will have different standards and methods of education from one which aims simply at the perpetuation of its own customs" (ibid, p. 81).

Thus in Dewey's view it was important for education systems to formulate a philosophy of education. Growth or development based on experience was essential for the individual but how that development was defined or conceived was important. Not all educative experiences are positive or conducive to the general good of the person or to society and some actually stifle growth.

In an autocratic school where conformity and uniformity is the aim, the natural inclinations of the child such as curiosity, imagination and openness of mind are suppressed. The individual can be rendered with an inability to think independently and make critical judgements in new situations. In such school environments:

> Conformity is made equivalent to uniformity. Consequently, there are induced lack of interest in the novel, aversion to progress, and dread of the uncertain and the unknown. Since the end of growth is outside of and beyond the process of growing, external agents have to be resorted to induce movement toward it. (Dewey, 1916, p.51)

As McDermott (1981) concludes: "Dewey holds that educative experiences are those that do not arrest or distort the growth of further experience – that is, they open the person to relationships and possibilities of enhanced human living" (p. 506). The function of the teacher in the school was not to implement a form of dictatorial or rote-based instruction whereby the aim was to "impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child" (1899, Article II). Instead of habit formation the teacher's function was to help the child to discover new ways of learning, to further creative potential so that they can be fulfilled as a member of their community and thus contribute to the general social life. Democratic methods would produce democratic citizens. Dewey was aware that if creative thinking is not fostered then young people can leave school without the power of critical thinking and are thus open to manipulation and propaganda. The school was not a place where the ends dominate the means, for as Chambliss (1996) states, "where ends dominate means, rigid ideologies and dogmas stifle creative thinking and learning" (p.151). Education should be driven by a philosophy open to the process of transformation, otherwise growth will not occur. Dewey was unambiguous in the importance of an ideological input in education. He wrote that "other problems, cosmological, moral, logical, come to a head" in the philosophy of education (LW, Vol. 5, 1929-30, p. 156). He believed that the traditional school had functioned without a philosophy of education because it was not concerned with growth but took its guidance from established norms, customs, and routines. But an innovative, progressive school, one concerned with developing a form of democratic consciousness needed "a kind of organisation based on ideas" (Dewey, 1938). Of course, as Dewey recognised, formulating such a philosophy befitting of a new way of learning and of living was not an easy undertaking; preserving the status quo was an easier path to follow.

Twenty-first century democracy

Catt (1999, p. 129) points out that one of the ways in which we may measure democracy today is to look at how the institutions of democracy function: for example, the legal machinery, how elections are conducted and how voting is carried out, the existence of a multi-party system and a vocal opposition, how the free press works and how political equality, accountability and transparency is

reflected in these institutions. But democracy is not only manifested in an institutional sense but, as Beetham shows, it also embodies the principles which institutions are designed to realize, in other words democratic institutions are only democratic in so far as they reflect democratic principles (2008, p. 3-4). Crick (2002, p.3) outlines a similar argument in highlighting that democracy is also about values or behaviour and that there is a "spirit of democracy", a way of life where the deed becomes more important than the word (ibid, p. 10). It may be concluded therefore that how principles or values of democracy are practiced through political and cultural institutions, and via citizens' participation at community level, are also standards for analysing democracy. Such principles take their reference point from the previously discussed ideas of freedom of expression; equality, including equal rights; participation in the formulation of the common good and civic virtues like tolerance and respect for diversity. Institutional democracy is only one element of the equation, the other is the nature of our participation in collectively making decisions which will benefit the whole group, or as Beetham, (2008, p. 91) puts it: "popular control over collective affairs on terms of equal citizenship." Thus democracy is also about how we behave and is not just about the political but also the social, the economic and the cultural. There is a sense that we can and should, as Rousseau and Dewey outlined, educate for democracy and thus recognise the moral imperative attaching to it, for as Carr and Hartnett (1996, p. 189) point out democracy can only flourish when citizens are afforded the opportunity to practice participating in the democratic process.

A number of commentators (Crick, 2002; Beetham, 2008; Held, 2006; Barber, 2003; Carr & Hartnet, 1996; Gills & Rocamora, 1992) point to the positive aspects of citizen involvement at community level. Barber (2003) classifies such participation as "strong democracy" where politics is more important than economics and where there is strong civic engagement with people participating directly in decision making on matters which affect their lives. Such a model stands in opposition to "thin" democracy where there is a tendency more to representative participation, to an "outsourcing" (ibid, xiii) of democratic responsibilities to elected representatives leading to an alienation process among the people. This way of operating, as Barber points out, can often be found in neoliberal, market-driven societies where there is an emphasis on privatisation but strong democracy is a model which can help "redress the inadequacies of old liberal democracies" (ibid, xvii). Catt describes democracy for the future as being based on a "feeling of belonging" (1999, p. 142) where the collective or the group is more important than individual self-interest and where if majority decisions are taken they must be based on trust integral to the feeling of belonging to the group. As Catt points out how people view the collective is of overriding importance because if

people are interested in the group then they will be interested in how decisions are made which affect the group (1999, p. 152).

Respect for human rights is also integral to the practice of democracy. The protection of human rights is not simply about guaranteeing individual freedoms but as Beetham points out it has an intrinsically collective element: "the philosophical justification for the human rights agenda is based on an identification of the needs and capacities common to all humans, whatever the differences between them" (2008, p. 93). Beetham (ibid) sees no distinction between "liberty" rights such as freedom of thought, conscience, movement and political rights like the right to vote because both sets of rights are premised on the human capacity for reasoned choice, reflectivity and agency. Also for people to be able to participate effectively in the participatory process of democracy they must be able to exercise their voice; if that voice is silenced or ignored then there is no forum for equal participation. Beetham (2008) also emphasises that a comprehensive understanding of democracy must encompass not just political and civil rights but also economic, social and cultural rights, for example, non-discriminatory access to education "which is essential to the equal citizenship that lies at the heart of democracy" (p. 108). The human rights element to democracy is also collective in that it must be recognised that in modern societies people belong to different communities, that not everyone is part of the majority in every aspect of their life. In a pluralistic society homogeneity is not the defining feature of cultural norms and values and modern democracy has to take account of this diversity so that all citizens can feel they are being treated equally and fairly. One needs to be mindful that, as de Tocqueville expressed, the "tyranny of the majority" (1838) does not subsume the rights of certain minority groups. This is why democratic societies strive to respect rights of minority groups as outlined, for example, in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950).

Any discussion of democracy for the new century cannot ignore the changes which globalisation will continue to effect. The traditional territory-defined nation state is being re-configured as international trade, migration, transnational agreements and electronic communication contribute to the dismantling of traditional boundaries based merely on geography. The traditional models discussed above referred to a particular space – the classical model was conceived for the city state or the local and the contemporary model fitted the requirements of the sovereign nation state or a large-scale independent entity. Common to both was that the people of that defined space decided who would govern. In a world which is increasingly a fusion between the national and the global democracy is being adapted to accommodate new economic, political, cultural and social

configurations. In a European context, in particular, individual countries now also have to refer to laws and politics outlined by supranational organisations such as the European Union, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations, and the International Monetary Fund. Thus not only are national governments responsible for how a state conducts its affairs but distant, anonymous elite groups, who may not have been democratically elected, are also playing a part. The reach and influence of global technological companies is one such example. In a recent article Zuboff (2014) draws attention to what she sees as the "absolutist" power of the secret "kingdom" of Google in how it controls our lives without us giving permission to access private data leading to surveillance and ultimately deprivation of freedom. It is usurping democratic rights which have been established over time without people even recognising this is happening or without any checks and balances and is thus re-defining the social order: "These new forms of power, poorly understood except by their own practitioners, threaten the sovereignty of the democratic social contract." Their rationale for doing so is to increase profits. Increasingly it is "the market" which dominates domestic and international affairs, including education.

However, this is not to say that the local becomes entirely subsumed by the global. In the case of Ireland the analysis of contemporary education policy (Chapter 7) will show that regional and national issues interface with global developments. Held (2006, p. 294) notes globalisation can "generate forces of both fragmentation and unification." Cosmopolitan democracy is a description of how we may begin to view democracy for a new order where there are varying degrees of interconnectivity between the national and global. It embodies thinking which sees the potential for furthering and deepening the process of democracy across nations, regions and global networks. As Held (2006, p. 305) outlines for such a model to work the accountability and transparency of organisations like the EU and the UN would be strengthened, and new institutions of democracy would be created which would co-exist with existing structures. In addition civic participation in the decision-making process at both the national and the global level would be increased. But as Archibugi (2012, p. 11) concludes "something more is needed to safeguard the basic democratic principles of equality and participation, namely the willingness of States to undertake agreements respectful of the rule of law and of the procedures of democracy among States." At the heart of this concept is the idea of the reach of democracy extending beyond national boundaries and into the transnational sphere. Also integral to the model is the extension of the human rights agenda because as Beetham outlines human rights are intrinsically "universalist" and supra-national organisations are already involved in the monitoring and support of human rights (2008, p. 144). In order for a more successful implementation process at the national level this would mean that civil,

political, social and cultural freedoms and obligations are enshrined in domestic legal instruments and political institutions. It would also mean an extension of the power of democratic trans-national political and legal institutions to uphold basic human rights and for these to supersede national law where it is not respecting such freedoms. This would be important in providing the checks and balances needed to regulate the behaviour of a range of "undemocratic" institutions including technological, market-driven corporations and indeed religious elites. As Zuboff (2014) outlines "It must provide a counterweight to a dangerous new absolutism that relies on pervasive, secret, unaccountable power."

Democracy in independent Ireland

The arguments above show that the yardstick by which one may measure democracy takes into account institutional and civic participatory elements. As Beetham notes, "The quality and vitality of a country's democracy will be revealed in the character of its civil society as well as its political institutions" (2008, p. 166). That is not to say that the historical context can be ignored in attempting to apply such criteria and that an underlying time-line may have to be considered in any analysis of democratic "standards." Given the bloody birth of Irish democracy some 95 years ago and the subsequent civil war then there is justification in Garvin's (1996) thesis that the creation of stable democratic institutions has been a success story. It must also be remembered that in the early twentieth century democracy was not the predominant form of government in the Western world. As Mayer (1981) points out, few European states were democratised on the eve of World War I but the adoption of a democratic ideology was to become the predominant one in its aftermath. Parker (1996) concludes that fledgling democratic states do not start off with the advantage of having citizens "who are naturally democratic, for the democratic mind is not natural" rather it requires cultivation and nurturing (p. 3). Thus people need to be educated for democracy: as Dewey noted the function of education was the creation of a democratic consciousness and the conditions necessary for democracy. Such an educative project may have been pertinent in the case of Ireland given that, as Garvin (1986, p. 67) concludes, the social thought of the leaders of the revolution (and the future politicians of the State) was derived from ethics rather than politics, their world-view formed by Catholic priests.

Prager (1986) attributes the achievement of institutional stability to the creation of a cultural consensus based on the moulding of a sense of identity from a basis which was not initially homogenous. The different forces were made up of, on the one side, those expressing more secular aspirations derived from an Anglo-Irish tradition, with roots in Enlightenment thinking. On the other were those with their feet firmly planted in a Gaelic-Romantic tradition with a focus on the past. It

was the "centrality of culture" which created political stability, in other words, "the degree of value consensus and normative agreement shared by all members of the nation" (ibid, p.18). This consensus was forged by a number of Irish politicians, most notably (though not exclusively) the Fianna Fáil party which from 1932 became the most powerful political force. In this bid to create cultural homogeneity certain cultural disparities, which had existed in the early years of independence, were subsumed into a more homogenous perspective based on a particular way of regarding Irish identity which was inextricably tied to Catholicism. Not all observers have seen the democratisation of Ireland as a clear-cut, exemplary transition. Akenson writing in 1975 contended that the political revolution which gave rise to the independent Irish State was not revolutionary at all, and posed the question if it led to a democratic or an authoritarian state (Akenson, 1975, preface). He also noted that education had not been assigned any transformative function: "in no area was the essential conservatism of the revolution more clearly exemplified that in the refusal of the new government to change fundamentally the school systems inherited from the imperial administration" (ibid, p. 25). At the heart of Dewey's pragmatism is the belief in the relentlessness of modern society, that change is a feature of a functioning democratic society. However, there was no significant move to modernisation after independence and social transformation was not a feature of Irish society in the ensuing decades, characterised as they were by economic and social conservatism. Even in the 1960s, as Gibbons (1988) argues, when industrial development was finally promoted it was not matched by a commitment to social, political or cultural modernisation. Therefore the school in post-independence Ireland was an apt reflection of the society in which it was located – both school and society represented tradition and the status quo. The case of Ireland would seem to corroborate Reay's (2011) point that "educational systems are only as good as the societies they emerge out of" (p. 2). Ferriter (2012b, p. 14) characterises the political and cultural arena of the twentieth century as being intellectually barren and its politicians lacking in vision: "There was not enough debate about policy, ideology or the consequences of a ruthless centralisation and authoritarianism." This lack of debate and the creation of a culture of consensus can be seen as contributing to a weak form of democracy, or as previously outlined "low intensity democracy." The cultural environment was lacking in the fundamental characteristic Dewey outlines is necessary for advancement of the practice of democracy – growth.

Dewey saw that for democratic change to happen a society had to conceptualise itself as being dedicated to democratic ideals, it had to have a vision of a democratic future and schools had to have a specific philosophy encompassing a democratic perspective. However there was no clear commitment to democracy as a form of conjoint living, rather the cultural conception of democracy

was one which fitted a Catholic, nationalist ideology. The vacuum created by the end of colonialism was allowed to be filled by Catholic social teaching and the school, in particular, was the instrument to ensure obedience and acquiescence to the doctrine. As Hogan notes philosophy in Irish education played but an "apologist" role and this was so because of the control tradition and routine exercised on society:

> Where established custom and routine hold an abiding sway, philosophy is rarely given any task in the public arena other than supplying a justification for existing practices. Such a task tends to give to philosophy the office of apologist, as distinct from that of a questioner of fundamentals, or a self-critical monitor of practice. (1995, p.1)

Peillion (2002) sees that the Catholic church was granted centre stage in education in a Church-State alliance: "the Catholic church had been allowed to occupy a central position in shaping the ideas and beliefs of Irish people, mainly because it exercised very tight control over schools" (p. 42). But as Michael D. Higgins, the current President, asked over 20 years ago: "Can one have an undemocratic educational system in a democratic society?" (1991, p. 5). He pointed out that Irish education "invokes a transcendental authority, above and beyond a democratic will" (ibid). Dewey believed that the function of a school was not the perpetuation of an ideology by certain elite groups but to further social intelligence by fostering creative and critical thinking. The growth of a society would be accomplished by the participation of diverse groups debating and solving common problems together rather than the school being used to perpetuate an out-dated ideology.

In a democracy the idea of the public school is to ensure the inclusion of all groups within society regardless of different economic or cultural circumstance, thus it embodies the principles of equality and freedom. In Ireland, though, there is a somewhat curious interpretation of the role of the public school. In effect Ireland has never had a public school system because schooling has not been the preserve of the State but of a private organisation. Leerssen provides an interesting analysis of the public sphere drawing on the connection between civic engagement and democracy. It is in the mental space between governmental authority and individual privacy that there can be a growth of civic engagement in public affairs, where via communication and feedback public opinion could exert a certain control over political conduct:

> Any point where the minds and opinions of citizens can enter into communication and weigh matters of a non-private nature forms part of this public sphere; and for Habermas, who sees the critical involvement of committed citizens as the most important safeguard for democracy, the growth of a public sphere in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is almost tantamount to the growth of the civic society. (2000, pp. 32-33)

However, as Leerssen points out historically Ireland was a society without a public sphere. The Penal Laws of the seventeenth and eighteenth century meant that whatever public space existed was defined by the Protestant ascendency and existed apart from the world of the ordinary man and woman. Catholic Ireland was fragmented and divided into numerous private spheres: "Gaelic Ireland was atomized into many separate small-scale communities without the wherewithal to form a society, without joint continuum of a public sphere" (ibid, p. 37). For a long time the idea of the public sphere was associated with the educated affluent Anglo-Irish; the Catholic peasant was excluded and took refuge in the private. The ambivalent relationship between the State and the individual can be seen to have continued into the present. There has not been a merging of the private and the public as advocated in Rousseau's ideas of republicanism, instead there is a continued lack of trust in the State and this has been manifested in an underdeveloped sense of civic responsibility and an elevation of the private sphere rather than a strong attachment to the public. This is also reflected in the continued acceptance by the majority for minimal state management of public education.

It was an overarching concern with ensuring certain safeguards, rather than a commitment to the ideology of democracy, which drove the democratic project forward – moral safeguards and material safeguards. According to Garvin (1996) a "great glue" of property and religion formed in Irish society after independence: "an alliance between the farmers and the Church resulted in a central bloc in Irish society that brooked no great political innovation" (p. 24). The farmers, many who had only recently secured the right to own land, were anxious for maintenance of stability so that there would be no threat to their property. At the same time the Catholic Church was anxious to ward off any possible interference from contemporaneous ideologies like Communism (which was popular in intellectual circles in other parts of Europe). The Catholic Church was to support Irish democracy, in part because the creation of a conservative democratic State secured its position against the perceived threat of Communism. But this support came at a price: democracy was to be defined by the strict and authoritarian morals attaching to Irish Catholicism. Thus the basis of Irish democracy did not start from a broad intellectual debate on the nature of the moral ideal which would underscore it. Neither was there much attention given to the principle of democracy as "a form of social life constituted by the core values of 'positive freedom'" (Reid, 2001, p. 572) or to Dewey's ideas of a reciprocal communication and creative dialogue. Rather what materialised was a top-down imposition of ideas which created a culture where the public good was one and the same as the Catholic good. Although Ireland was declared a Republic, as Garvin (1996, p. 16) notes an internalization of the principles of republicanism did not take place – the concept of the free citizen,

free from the dominance of elites did not entirely materialise. Instead republicanism was equated with freedom from British rule with the result that "the positive connotations of republicanism tended to be forgotten or weakened." Commentators like Limond (2010) see the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Irish State as being like that between an empire and its subject in the inherent power dynamics. Limond notes that empires can be military, economic, cultural or a combination of these. Perhaps then there is some legitimacy to the argument that Ireland merely substituted one form of domination with another after gaining independence – political with cultural. Indeed up until the 1960s the Irish State was theocratic in everything but name. Elites, not always democratically elected, played a significant role in the making and implementation of social policy. The Archbishop of Dublin (1940-1972), John Charles McQuaid, for example, had an inordinate amount of political power and as Cooney (1999) documents was the de facto "ruler of Catholic Ireland." Indeed the term "elite democracy" as used by Gills and Rocamora (1992, p. 501) is applicable to depict the system of democracy operating for a significant part of the independent State's history.

Democracy in Ireland in the new millennium

Today there is some debate as to whether a society characterised by cultural uniformity and acceptance of the status quo is necessarily a healthy breeding ground for democracy. The consensus culture which has persisted in Ireland from the early stages of the State to the social-partnership days of the Celtic Tiger era (1999-2008) is not noteworthy for any radical challenges to the establishment, innovations in schooling, or for the creation of a society based on social equality. Indeed a recent OECD report (2011) found that the gap between rich and poor in Ireland is now four times the OECD average. The era was also characterised by the elevated position which corporate capitalism was afforded and characteristics of the liberal tradition of individualism and competition were all too familiar. As Ó'Broin and Kirby (2009) conclude, one of the key roles of a mature democracy is "its ability to dissent from and contest the actions of the State in a robust and active way" (p. 3). Indeed the thesis put forward by Ó'Broin and Kirby (ibid) is that the current state of civil society in Ireland indicates "a gap in our democracy" (p.9) which has resulted from a society lacking in independence of thought and the readiness to criticise and challenge the organs of the State (ibid, p. 155). Fitzgerald's (2005) analysis critiqued the authoritarianism underlying Irish life and bearing in mind what Ferriter sees as the "moral bankruptcy" of the modern Irish State (2012b),"our dysfunctional governing culture" (ibid, 2014) and an environment which placed a premium on "self-protecting elites" (ibid) there is some justification for shining a critical light on modern Irish democracy. So although there has been a successful implementation of democratic practices at political level, today there is an increasing awareness of a cultural deficit in terms of how democracy

functions at the level of culture, making Blokker's (2008) analysis applicable: "A simple 'transfer of institutions' to emerging democracies is deemed insufficient to construct functioning and viable democracies, as democratic systems need a wider societal legitimation as well as habituation to democratic practice" (p. 161).

President Michael D. Higgins, a Labour government minister in 1991, acknowledged (1991, p. 5) that debates on democracy had focused on the successful creation of electoral democracy rather than looking at expressions of democracy in the context of how a modern society functions on a day-to-day basis. The idea that there are fissures in Irish democracy is also collaborated when Gills and Rocamora's (1992) thesis of "low intensity democracy" is considered. This paradoxical form of democracy applied when civilianised conservative political systems pursue a policy of legitimising the status quo rather than progressive reform or revolutionary change so that painful social and economic policies can be adopted "with more impunity and less popular resistance than can an openly authoritarian regime" (1992, p. 505). According to Gills and Rocamora from the inception of democracy there must be an engagement with the civic as well as the political embodying the long-term goal of achieving social transformation which will benefit all; otherwise the term democracy is meaningless:

> The first and most important task of democratic regimes is social reform. In the absence of progressive social reform the term "democracy" is largely devoid of meaningful content. Indeed, it is in danger of becoming a term of political mystification or obfuscation, serving as a euphemism for sophisticated modern forms of neo-authoritarianism. As such, the structures of democratic institutions and the social base of democratic regimes must, from the beginning, assure the pursuit of such reform. (1992, p. 502)

The current analysis has shown that it was conservatism which has been the bedrock of Irish democracy rather than social transformation or a deep commitment to human rights. And this cultural conservatism which created stability was driven by sectorial interests with an authoritarian premise. Indeed the current analysis raises the question – was a participatory-based progressive democracy sacrificed at the expense of maintaining the status quo in Irish society? Dewey's understanding of democracy was not realised in the education system because it practiced and fostered exclusivity and unquestioning obedience to one particular partisan authority. As Jelenik (2009) concludes we can apply Dewey's philosophy of education today if we see modern societies as being dedicated to the ideal of social justice and taking their moral obligations seriously (p. 70). Dewey wrote that, "Communication is the process of sharing experience till it becomes a social possession" (1916, p. 9), but the education system in Ireland has failed to foster real dialogue because by supporting the imposition one particular religious dogma other perspectives are silenced and devalued: as Kelly (1995) notes, "democracy and dogmatism cannot coexist" (p. 82). In

commenting on the "static" state of Irish democracy in 1991, Michael D. Higgins identified significant cracks in what should be "a model for society" - the State's education system (1991, p. 5). The Irish education system had been authoritarian, passive rather than active, conservative rather than critical, individualistic rather than social in emphasis, isolated rather than dialectical, wrote Higgins (ibid, p.5). Higgin's central point is that a democratic society and a democratic education are one and the same and mutually dependant. But today we are still some distance away from the conclusion that democratic principles are reflected in primary school education.

The current analysis also shows that Held's model for furthering the democratic process has not found robust expression in the Irish cultural context. Held (2003, p. 276) outlines the positive aspects of "double democratisation" where there is a necessity to strengthen both how state institutions function democratically as well as "upgrading" active and informed civic participation: "How and in what ways might State policy be made more accountable? How and in what ways might 'non-State' activities be democratically re-ordered?" (ibid). As Held (2003, p. 280) concludes a democratic State and civil society are incompatible with powerful private organisations and interest groups which can distort the democratic process by nature of the pursuit of their unchecked self-interests. In societies where such conditions prevail then there must be action to strengthen both how the State functions and how civil society is involved in the deliberative process so that citizens have greater control over their destiny. Such a comprehensive reform programme is long overdue in Ireland for an unchecked undemocratic organisation continues to control schooling.

The critique by former Irish Prime Minister, Garret Fitzgerald, (2005), is based on what he sees as an underdeveloped sense of civic duty and a dubious sense of civic morality and he locates this within the form of republicanism which developed after the 1916 revolution. Fitzgerald sees Irish republicanism as different from classical republicanism which encompasses:

> a pluralist State marked by the public engagement of its citizens in the interest of the common good. But because of the shape that Irish history took…it is not easy to get Irish people to relate to this concept of republicanism. The truth is that Irish unicultural nationalism, preoccupied as it has been with its post-Gaelic Catholic ethos – which has since the nineteenth century been the prevailing political ideology of the majority in our island – and dominated by local and sectional issues rather than by the common good of Irish society as a whole, is not only different from, but in these key respects fundamentally opposed to, civic republicanism. (2005, p. 215)

Fitzgerald (ibid) identifies representative democracy as the form of democracy in Ireland, rather than participatory democracy where citizens have a say in how society develops (p. 219). Representative democracy does not lend itself to the classical concept of republicanism which embodies a strong

sense of civic duty and debate about the common good. Fitzgerald observes that (2005) it is a sense of localism, even tribalism, which underscores how Irish society functions and this results in a rejection of a commitment to civic duties or the inability to see the wider picture. The reason he postulates for this is expressed as follows: "But that is something that never seemed to develop in Ireland amongst the majority Roman Catholic community partly because…the Catholic Church provided such an all-embracing moral code for its members, that there was no room, or perceived need, for any other" (p. 238). Ferriter (2012b, p. 14) makes a similar argument: "Taking the long view, perhaps the very impulses that created stability and consensus in the earlier decades of independence also facilitated a fundamental neglect of civic morality and citizenship."

Fitzgerald argues that the moral vacuum of today's society can be addressed by working towards a different type of democracy: one which would embody the principles of civic republicanism and would move forward from the authoritarianism which has influenced the psyche of the nation. The thesis Fitzgerald puts forward is that a reformed education system, with a value system which would reflect the realities of a multi-cultural Ireland, would have an important role to play in providing such an alternative: "First of all we urgently need to develop, and present to the young, through the school system, a civic morality based on the incontrovertible human need for a code of conduct that promotes the long-term good of the human race and the immediate good of the society in which they, and we, live" (p. 240). In many respects this thesis echoes Dewey's idea of the intrinsic link between school and society and the role the school can play in fostering a democratic consciousness. Held (2006) also makes a similar point in his discussion of developing civic education as a facet of deliberative democracy. Civic education is education which broadens the horizons, allows the child to see things not only from their perspective but to develop a sensitivity to the perspectives of others based on the use of critical reasoning: "the creation of an education system, which opens up people's understanding and horizons as a result of knowing about others, is a crucial element of the development of a democratic public culture" (p. 251). This resonates with Dewey's ideas on how education can further the democratic project by developing a type of social intelligence which explores and seeks to understand difference and the positive changes this can bring about for the community. In Dewey's terms a democratic society is concerned with the growth of all its members and their participation therein. As Reay (2011) writes, "schools that aspire to be 'incubators of democracy' have a moral duty to try" (p. 2). The structures of the Irish school system do not support such a project seeing as their foundation is not built on democratic management structures or philosophies. Indeed as research conducted by Cosgrove and Gilleece (2012, p. 392) found levels of participation of both students and parents in school life in Ireland is well below the

international average despite provision for such participation in the Education Act, 1998 and despite students placing considerable value on the desirability of participating in decision making. If a climate or spirit of democracy is not created then democratic practice will not be reflected in every-day practice or in empirical research.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that a two-tier system of democracy has operated in independent Ireland: societal consensus has resulted in the smooth functioning of electoral democracy and ensured the stability of political institutions. The cultural realm, however, has not been characterised by a pluralistic way of looking at the world or by an actively engaged citizenry debating their ideas on the common good and challenging traditional or established perspectives. The liberal democratic characteristic of a politically passive populace is applicable to the Irish context, contributing in some respects to a retreat into the private realm rather than an engagement with shaping the common good. Instead of a social order emanating from the participation of citizens, elites have dominated the political landscape resulting in a society which accepted the status quo. This contributed to an educational arena lacking in a clash of ideas necessary for systemic change. The basis of Dewey's philosophy is the importance of growth in the democratic process. When education is not based on critical inquiry born from openness to free thought and communication then growth and development are curtailed. As Dewey pointed out, if a school does not strive to further the democratic project then rather than promoting growth, it stunts it. What is notable in the Irish historical context is that after a revolution based on a quest for a better way of living, the education system, from its inception, reflected the conservative and reactionary ideologies of the ruling elites. Dewey's ideas were being debated in other jurisdictions from the early twentieth century, for example in Spain, Russia, China, Turkey and Latin America (Brunno-Jofé et al., 2010) and progressive education philosophies were finding expression in curricula throughout Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. However, Irish primary schooling did not engage with a Deweyian approach, either in ideology or practice, until decades later.

Whilst the Irish primary school curriculum today is based on the ideals of progressive education the assertion can be made that anti-democratic dimensions underlie mainstream primary schooling. Its organisational structures are not democratic; the organisational processes of the system are not democratic and the ethos of the system is decidedly exclusive. This has far-reaching implications for a society which claims to be democratic for as Kelly (1995) concludes "a society will not be truly democratic if the basic principles of democracy are not reflected in every one of its institutions" (p. 101). In many respects the Irish case resonates with Gills and Rocamora's description of "low

intensity democracy" where the focus is on formal political aspects which can lead to limited change in civil and human rights, rather than on a type of democracy deriving from the ground up, which would contribute to radical and progressive social reform. The Irish President Michael D. Higgins' conclusion that "we made an illusion of democracy" (1991, p. 5) sums up this thesis. The underlying reason for this may be found in Held's (2006, p. 29) general explanation for the demise of the politically active citizen across Europe throughout the ages. The *Homo politicus* was replaced by the *Homo credens* of the Christian faith where the source of authority shifted to an outside mystical being that represented a single truth rather than wisdom emanating from the life of the citizen. As Held notes: "The Christian world-view transformed the rationale of political action from that of the *polis* to a theological framework" (ibid). A colonial past, where the degree to which the ordinary citizen could participate in the public sphere was limited, can also be seen as contributing to a passive citizenry. This historical legacy can be seen as facilitating a retreat into the private sphere where religious dogma rather than political engagement provided a sense of "belonging." It is this framework which has provided the scaffolding for Irish life for some time.

Democracy, though, is not a static concept and should evolve over time reflecting changing societal conditions. The twenty-first century is heralding radical change in many areas of Irish society. These changes - economic, demographic, technological and values-based - are beginning to affect the conceptualization of democracy. I have highlighted that some observers are challenging old accepted definitions based solely around a political understanding of democracy and are proposing a way forward based on a more communitarian approach and emphasising the role education can play in the creation of a better future. Indeed it is possible to see recognition of the merits of double democratisation: President Higgins, in his 2014 address to the UK Houses of Parliament, noted that the way forward for societies today is "to embrace a concept of citizenship rooted in the principles of active participation, justice and freedom" and that a "discourse that regards politics, society and the economy as somehow separate…is a divisive perspective which undermines the essential relationship between the citizen and the State." In the chapters ahead the issues signposted here as having influenced the nature of democracy in Irish society, and in education in particular, will be debated in more detail as will the potential for a re-working of the concept of democracy via educational reform.

Chapter 3: Social and Cultural Analysis of Irish Primary School Education

Introduction

Who controls what children learn in school if the running of state schools in not entirely under the control of the State? Does the knowledge passed on to children reflect a type of objective common ground or is there a subjective selectivity determined by those who manage the system? Social reproduction theory queries the nature of knowledge transmitted in schools. It analyses how education reproduces the standards and practices of those in positions of power, even if a given cultural or economic pattern does not serve the best interests of all the members of the society. It views curriculum as a political text which is neither neutral nor objective because it transmits the ideology of a particular group and so reflects a particular agenda.

This chapter will provide a social and cultural analysis of Irish primary school education using a social reproduction framework. The curriculum and the ideology which surrounds it take centre stage. It is what the Irish primary school curriculum represents, or in other words the ideology it embodies, which is interesting to analyse. In twenty-first century Europe the promulgation of a specific religious ethos via the curriculum of state schools is unique. Curriculum analysis aptly highlights the distinctive reproductive role which the curriculum plays. But the function of education is not only to reproduce existing cultural parameters; education also acts as a site where conflicts and challenges about the nature of knowledge are enacted. Debates and discussion about different ideological positions occur because it is recognised that education is a public cultural institution which is highly effective in influencing social outcomes. The discourse represented by those seeking to preserve existing traditions and values may be opposed by those wishing to effect change so that the curriculum may keep pace with broader societal developments. Since it is a site of contestation, education also has the potential to be a locus of transformation but there is a correlation between the dynamics of transformation and the level of democracy in the society. The transformative aspect of education depends upon the degree of democracy at a particular time in history. A consensus culture, for example, can signify that the relationship between education and society is without contention. As such there will be little need to debate alternative positions on how to instigate ideological or societal change. In this chapter I shall examine how the primary school curriculum has been used for the particular purpose of passing on to children the tenets of one particular religious position thus aptly fulfilling a reproductive function. I shall also debate whether there is evidence of the curriculum as a site of struggle and contestation, in other words does it carry out a transformation role?

Social reproduction

Reproduction, in a biological sense, is a basic human function which ensures the propagation of the species. For a culture to endure there is also an underlying reproductive process at work. Social reproduction theory investigates who decides what is pertinent to pass on from generation to generation; why certain values, mores and social practices are transmitted as the desirable standards and how the cultural reproduction process is accomplished. Societal dictates are transmitted in a private capacity, for example, by the family but in the public arena the education system plays a major role. Certain social groups ensure the consolidation and continuity of their existence by influencing, and in some instances determining, what is taught in schools, how it is taught and what will characterise the general school experience (or the "ethos" of an educational establishment). Although schools may like to appear as neutral centres that transmit an objective knowledge, writers including Williams (1973, 1981), Bourdieu (1971 & 1977), Gramsci (1971) and Apple (1993 & 2004) contend that the education system acts to preserve existing power structures by passing on a particular way of thinking and acting. Knowledge and how it is conceived, as well as how it is transmitted, is neither neutral nor apolitical. Instead formalised education works to maintain existing economic, cultural, political and social patterns deemed necessary for the survival of the ruling class. One of the principal questions which social reproduction theorists pose is: in whose interest is the education system acting? It is the ruling elites who control the curriculum content and the thinking which informs it to ensure that the prevalent dynamics of power survive, as O'Sullivan notes:

> to have influence over the structuring principles of a culture is to have the capacity to advance one's social project and world view, to shape the self-definition of others and to legitimate or destabilise the nature of power relationships that exist. It can be said, to reverse the social adage, that those who succeed in making their view of reality stick enhance their power. (2005, p. 9)

Marxist social reproduction theorists, Bowles and Gintis (1976), outline the important economic function that education plays in the maintenance of the capitalist system. Their correspondence theory postulates that the education system prepares young people to fulfil a certain role within the capitalist system. This theory views education not as the great societal leveller and facilitator of meritocracy but instead as perpetuating a mind-set; a form of consciousness which fits the needs of the merchant class and which acts to maintain a system of profit. Education prepares a workforce which will match the requirements of capitalism in terms of skill-sets but also with a mentality which is obedient, accepting and does not challenge authority or engage in critical reasoning or reactions. The school reflects the interest of the economy and preserves the economic capitalist legacy by reproducing the social relations of capitalist production. In this model educational inequalities will

mirror economic and general societal inequalities. Other theorists see that culture as well as economics plays a determining role in social reproduction.

The selective tradition thesis of Williams (1973) contends that a certain type of knowledge is deliberately selected by the dominant cultural groups to be transmitted. This can be seen in, for example, the teaching of history. Whose history is passed on? Is it, for example, a history which focuses on white, patriarchal activity and perspectives because it is written by the dominant male cultural group? Women have effectively been air-brushed from Irish history school books, for example their role in the suffragette movement and how they were subjugated by the State and the Catholic Church as exemplified by the marriage ban on women working in the civil service (in existence up to 1973) and by the Mother and Babies scandal (2014). Indeed in light of the recent revelations of the virtual enslavement of unmarried mothers in Church/State run institutions from the 1920s-1980s there is grounds for an entire re-writing of Irish history books and school curricula so that the dehumanisation of women is revealed. The activities of certain left-wing supporters are also missing from the school curriculum – indeed as Ken Loach, the film maker, uncovered when making the film "Jimmy's Hall"[1], official records on certain Irish communist sympathisers have all but disappeared from the archives. Apple (2013) points out that schools and curricula "become sites of intense conflicts over collective memory and collective amnesia" (p. 21). As Williams articulates, it is "the way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded" (1973, p. 9). Williams contends that the ruling group selects certain values and patterns which best serves its interests and ensures its perpetration as the dominant cultural group. The institution of education is chiefly employed to transmit this selected tradition:

> It is then reasonable, at one level, to speak of the general educational process as a key form of cultural reproduction, which can be linked with that more general reproduction of existing social relations which is assured by existing and self-prolonging property and other economic relations, institutions of State and other political power, religious and family forms. (Williams 1981, p. 186)

Bourdieu also outlines the important socialisation function the school plays in the life of the individual, "it may be assumed that every individual owes to the type of schooling he has received a set of basic, deeply interiorised master patterns" (1971, pp. 192-193). Bourdieu further argues that the school does not act to advance social equality but that it works to maintain existing societal power relations and does so under the guise of neutrality. The education system is extremely

[1] Loach's 2014 film tells the story of the Irish left-wing activist Gralton, whose dance hall/education centre in Co. Leitrim was burnt down after he was denounced from the pulpit for being a communist. In 1933 he was expelled to the US without a trial. He is the only Irish person ever to have been deported by the Irish State.

successful in "dissimulating the fact that it fulfils this function under the appearance of neutrality" (ibid) whereas in reality it reproduces the "truths," tastes and values of elites. It does this by exercising what Bourdieu terms "symbolic violence." This term denotes how the system ensures the individual's complicity in their suppression, or what Bourdieu explains as the "legitimisation process." The existing power dynamics are accepted by the masses because they are seen as being legitimate, real and even aspirational.

Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony also deals with how domination by a particular group is achieved through voluntary consent of the majority. Collective control is achieved by control of ideas so that the values and beliefs of the ruling classes become accepted by society as the norm. Young (1971, p. 28) interprets the hegemony aspect of Gramsci's theory simply as acting to deprive the working class of the ability to think for themselves. Ideological domination functions because the subaltern class is socialized into accepting a bourgeois ideology as an unquestionable common-sense view of the world: the education system is particularly influential in ensuring a particular cultural and social lineage. The potency of hegemony is that the masses "buy into" the ideals of elites, their world-view or standardised norms. This ensures that the working class aligns itself with the status quo. Although this way of viewing the world is determined by the dominant group, it is assigned legitimacy by the masses so that social and economic arrangements that perpetuate their own exploitation go unchallenged. Gramsci sees the consensual basis underlying hegemony as that which ensures survival of the ruling classes: "…the State is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules" (1971, p. 244). This consent is established by the majority broadly accepting the rules of the bourgeois because the messages the elites transmit via the cultural institutions of the State have been internalised and form part of the subconscious; the chief message being that all citizens share similar norms and values and aspirations. The world is interpreted using a similar framework and a shared interpretation of meaning emerges between the dominant and the subaltern classes. But the reality experienced by different social groups is not similar or universal.

Social transformation

Gramsci's notion of hegemony can be seen as laying the groundwork for an analysis based more on culture than economics per se and inherent in this cultural analysis is the potential for change which can be instigated from within the institutions of civil society. Gramsci saw transformation as being gradual, based around moral and intellectual reform which would involve "a long march through the institutions of civil society" (Coutinho, 2012, p. 87). A new order could emerge through the

proletariat developing its own "organic" consciousness or counter hegemony which would embody real interests and values and come not from outside intellectuals but from the people and their experiences. As Morrow and Torres (1995) explain, "For Gramsci, the philosophy of praxis attempts to overcome the primitive philosophy of common sense, leading the masses to a higher conception of life, into a process of enlightenment undertaken by self-conscious participants" (p. 267). It was this "new intellectual" who would resist the dominant classes, effect change and help bring about a more just society. Thus Gramsci's theory of hegemony contained the potential for counter-hegemonic forces to challenge the existing order.

Contemporary social reproduction analysis maintains that whilst education does indeed play a significant part in transmitting established values and ideas and in preserving social conformism it can also be a site of contestation. Education is a location for contradictions, power struggles and ensuing conflict; an arena where transformation is instigated, where resistance to the dominant ideology is reflected and enacted. Inherent in this dynamic is the possibility for change. Giroux, for example, sees that power can be contested by the oppressed, dispelling the "myth of total domination" (1981, p. 99). Williams notes that hegemony can be "continually challenged and in certain aspects modified" (1973, p. 8). Inglis concludes that education and the curriculum can be seen as a "battleground" where different groups seek to assert different interpretations of reality:

> The curriculum is the battleground for an intellectual civil war and the battle for cultural authority…is a fervent one. Its different guerrillas include parents, pupils, teachers, bureaucrats, left, right, centre, nationalities and the compelling mercenaries of market forces. (1985, p. 233)

Apple is also concerned to examine the political function of the curriculum in its less formal context, "the hidden curriculum" and how ideologies are reproduced within the less structured more tacit aspects of school life. Thus the hidden curriculum as well as the formal curriculum work to ensure the domination which in Apple's words "can be ideological as well as material" (2004, p. 117). Apple maintains that contestation and conflict will result because of the imbalance of power relations which occur via the curriculum. Apple also recognises that because of these tensions the education process is a site of "contradictions, conflicts, mediations and especially resistances" (1982, p. 24).

Carr (1996 & 1998) sees that the education system in a democratic society will have both reproductive and transformative roles. He sees the curriculum as naturally being a site of contestation because there will always be different ways of looking at knowledge or different definitions of what constitute the "good society". So agency is a naturally occurring phenomenon as conflict about how curricula can best transmit different ideologies is part of the contestation process

inherent in social interactions. Curriculum change and social change are mutually dependent processes because society is not only reproducing itself but going through change and re-interpretation on a continuous basis: "Debates about education always reveal the ideological tensions occurring in a society as it struggles to come to terms with changing cultural circumstances and new economic conditions" (Carr & Hartnett, 1996, p. 25). It is worth bearing in mind that such an interpretation references a democratic society, one which accommodates a certain level of participation and critical questioning by various groups. Agency can be seen as being contingent upon the degree of democracy in a given society at a given time and a degree of political sophistication which allows for conflict to emerge and make its mark. In societies without a long history of democracy, for example post-colonial societies or consensus-based cultures, the level of contestation being expressed within the sphere of education may be quite limited. Dissenting voices expressing dissatisfaction with the predominant political interpretation of the "good life" may not be afforded adequate space to make a meaningful alternative contribution or the hegemonic process may be so ingrained that an unquestioning consent is firmly established. This predicament may persist for a protracted period of time. Indeed, as Carr (1998) outlines debates about curriculum cannot be divorced from their historical context. Democracy and the curriculum have a reciprocal relationship and the school will reflect the level of democracy prevailing in society: "we can neither understand the reality of our present condition nor clarify the terms for change unless we treat curriculum development and democratic progress as dialectically related and mutually constitutive domains" (p.324). Education cannot be seen as a neutral undertaking existing in a vacuum from a specific political context.

Ideology and the Irish primary school curriculum

The ideology which informs curriculum can act as a window into an entire culture and in the case of Ireland incorporates a "record of a culture's past" (Carr, 1998, p. 324). Apple's (2004) thesis that that the curriculum preserves the social order of a society is pertinent: because the curriculum sustains the existing "politics of domination" (Preface) injustices and inequalities will also be reproduced. Apple notes that ideology is a powerful force in the curriculum shaping both its content and form and it is the ideology of the dominant classes which inform the content of the curriculum and the environment of the school. In this sense the curriculum can act in an oppressing role. As Apple writes: "the language of learning tends to be apolitical and ahistorical, thus hiding the complex nexus of political and economic power and resources that lies behind a considerable amount of curriculum organisation and selection" (2004, p. 28). In Irish primary schools the Integrated Curriculum is the instrument which legitimises the infusion of religion into all aspects of school life, across the formal and informal curriculum. The Integrated Curriculum is not to be understood in the

classic pedagogical sense, as a type of interdisciplinary curriculum action with the aim of helping students to solve real problems. It could, though, be interpreted as a perversion of Pring's idea of the general integrated model which was envisaged to express "the idea of unity between forms of knowledge" (1973, p. 135). The unity which the Integrated Curriculum strives to achieve is the infusion of the religious and the secular. Its mission is to accomplish a synthesis of faith and culture.

The Rules for National Schools (Ireland, Department of Education, 1965), which form part of the regulatory framework for primary schools today, state that: "Of all parts of a school curriculum Religious Instruction is by far the most important…Religious Instruction is therefore, a fundamental part of the school course, and a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school" (Ireland, Department of Education, 1965, Rule 68, p. 38). This means that the religious ethos of the school is integrated into secular subjects, general school life as well as religious instruction. The Primary School Curriculum 1971 (Ireland, Department of Education, Curaclann na Bunscoile) built on this principle by outlining that the new curriculum should be seen more as "an integral whole rather than a logical structure containing conveniently differential parts" and that:

> The decision to construct an Integrated Curriculum...is based on the following theses...that the separation of religious and secular instruction into differentiated subject compartments serves only to throw the whole educational function out of focus...The integration of the curriculum may be seen in the religious and civic spirit which animates all its parts. (1971, Introduction)

In essence then the 1971 curriculum for primary schools signified formal State recognition of denominational education (Highland, 1998) and can therefore be viewed as a political text embodying an explicit aim of furthering a particular ideology. It is an apt example of how the State and the Catholic Church worked hand-in-hand to create a unique curriculum instrument to propagate a certain type of knowledge.

Ideologically the Catholic Church was able to maintain its powerful position in society by using education as a mediator to "prepare pupils to be God-fearing and responsible citizens" (Lynch, 1989, p.131). Irish education was, to apply William's term (1973, p. 8), "saturated" by its dogma. What is involved is the selection of one type of knowledge, which as William's concludes, becomes "the tradition" or "*the* significant past" (ibid, p. 9) and becomes ingrained in the individual psyche and collective consciousness representing the one "true" way of regarding the world. This pre-selected knowledge becomes "common sense" (Apple, 1993, p. 15) and accepted as universal and absolute. It defines how meaning is made and how meaning is lived. As Williams notes: "It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society" (ibid). If there is consensus that the sphere of

education is aptly reflecting the needs and aspirations of the populace, i.e. that the relationship between both parties is an unproblematic one, then there is no need to challenge the status quo. There were no radically different ways of looking at knowledge so there was little contestation about how to assert an alternative ideological positions via the curriculum and there was little or no debate about what constituted "the good society." The good society was defined according to Catholic social and moral teaching.

There is some agreement that the "ideology-free-politics" (Gleeson 2009, p. 57) of Irish society is reflected in education. O'Sullivan (1989) notes that it is difficult to "identify either ideologically left or right in educational thinking" and that this has contributed to education being merely a "breeding ground for slogans" (p.265). O'Sullivan's (2005) thesis is that a theocratic paradigm characterised Irish education until the 1970s and that this resulted in an absence of contestation. Education was held firmly in the grip of the majority Church, the Catholic Church, with little space for accommodating competing ideological debates around curriculum issues. As Waldron concludes ideological weakness in education was based around the view that the relationship between education and society was "unproblematic" (2004, p. 229). For a long period there was definitive reproduction of elite values taking place but very little evidence of transformation. The classical reproduction analysis of education being a site of struggle and contestation over different ideological positions is not entirely applicable in the context of the independent Irish State. But as Gutmann outlines, controversies over education are an important source of social progress and "we pay a very high price for their avoidance: we neglect educational alternatives that may be better than those to which we have become accustomed or that may aid us in understanding how to improve our schools before we reach the point of crisis…" (1999, p. 5).

Lynch (1989,) analysing Irish education in the light of reproduction theory, focused not only on the cultural but also the economic parameters influencing reproduction of ideology in education. It is, she maintains, a middle-class institution which works to preserve the interests of the bourgeoisie and promotes a capitalist culture: "the corporate location of religious in the middle-classes has meant that they have more often acted in line with the interests of that particular class than in promoting the interests of the unemployed or working-classes" (ibid, p. 131). O'Toole (2010) makes a similar point concluding that certain religious orders were not interested in providing an education for the poor but rather for the "sons of the better class of the Roman Catholic population" (p. 87). O'Toole shows that this was particularly striking in second level education which, unlike most modern democratic States, remained private and religious until the 1960s and was also utilised as a

recruitment ground for religious vocations among the young (ibid, p. 90). O'Toole's thesis is that the Catholic Church created a myth of providing charity: the myth being that it funded and ran education because the State shirked from its responsibilities. O'Toole maintains that the reality was it didn't allow the State to take control and successfully blocked central involvement because its raison d'être was to maintain power and control at all costs. The historical legacy of this was a system based on the values of "private ownership, the marketplace or of charity" (ibid, p. 97) because these were the forces or ideology which defined education rather than the values of collective citizenship. The religious orders are among "the largest and most powerful corporate entities in the country with assets worth at least 2.6 billion euro" (Ryan, 2011). Of the 3,200 schools in the Republic only 100 are owned by the State, the rest are owned by religious denominations or religious orders (Gilmore in O'Halloran, 2009). Taking O'Toole's thesis one step further it is possible to analyse Catholic Church control of education as an expression of angst regarding the potential of the State to create a true public system of schooling. As the historical analysis will show much of Catholic Church opposition to reform emanated from a paranoia of socialist ideology – social justice policies, where the State provided support for the population, were interpreted as being potentially communist or left-wing and vehemently opposed often using the justification that State "interference" threatened individual or parental control. This fear can still be seen to characterise the Catholic Church's response to contemporary educational reform proposals as expressed for example in CORI policy documents (Conference of Religious in Ireland, 2009), where it quotes Glendenning (2008, p. 300): 'One advantage of Ireland's singular system of education is that it "has avoided the excesses of the rigid imposition of a state ideology in education".

Ethos

Ethos has a particularly important status in Irish primary education - religious organisations have a legal entitlement to protect how their ethos functions through schools. The religious ethos of schools is sacrosanct and is above state control. Like canon law it is an entity unto itself, exempt from the usual parameters of democratic checks and balances. The Irish State endorsed the untouchable status of ethos in the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 1999, which allow discrimination on the basis of religious ethos, and the 1999 Education Act which reaffirmed the right of primary schools to uphold their commitment to ethos. Ethos can hold the key to the entire pedagogical landscape of the school for it is a highly effective vehicle for the transmission of a certain kind of knowledge. It is what bestows power and self-regulation on the patrons of the majority of primary schools in Ireland. Norman (2003) and Donnelly (2000) outline that the underlying aim of the Catholic ethos for schools is the integration of faith, culture and life, in other words there is no separation between the religious and the secular. This broad goal of infusing

religion into all elements of social life is to be achieved not merely through religious instruction but by control of the entire formal and informal curriculum and the Integrated Curriculum is the effective instrument for accomplishing this hegemonic project.

The word *ethos* comes from Greek and refers to character or morals and habit. As used by Aristotle it embodied the idea of "the development of goodness or character…an atmosphere where a person's moral values or habits are formed" (Norman, 2003, pp. 2-3). In relation to contemporary education it is a nebulous term, a code, meaning different things to different people and embodying affective characteristics. For parents ethos may work at a subconscious level: manifesting as a "feeling" for a school or of getting a sense of the school's atmosphere or character. Some parents may not be cognisant of it at all. In line with the Aristotelian implications of the word, however, it can be understood to encompass the idea of the importance of certain values to an organisation or institution, what are sometimes referred to as "core values" or the "characteristic spirit" (as in the Education Act, 1998) which reflects a certain type of expected behaviour of the members of the organisation. It is in the realm of expected behaviour where it can be most difficult to define yet where it can also operate most effectively. The norms which govern such expected behaviour are not available to parents as a set of written guidelines but do exist in the experienced world of social interactions between students and between students and teachers. The goals underlying ethos and the means of achieving them may not be documented but as Pinar notes the outcomes are quite real (2004, p. 248).

Williams addresses the connection between religion and ethos, commenting that religion and ethos are not necessarily conjoined but that in the case of a school with a Christian ethos "as a matter of policy it aims to foster in young people a commitment to the message of the gospel" (2000, p. 77). Colton (2009, p. 254) makes a clear connection between religion and ethos when he outlines that the Churches see that it is their duty to be involved in education: "The canonical impetus for the involvement of Christian churches in education stems directly from the command of Jesus to the disciples to go, to baptise and to teach…Preaching the Gospel is the inherent obligation and right of the Church and in a special way, the Church has the duty and the right of educating." Colton also addresses how this will impact on ethos: "These factors will inevitably mould a patron's and consequently, a denominational school's self-understanding and articulation of that characteristic spirit in its 'ethos' statement" (ibid). Ó'Lionnsaigh points out that Catholic school ethos is defined by the Deed of Variation under which schools are obliged to: manage the school in accordance with the doctrine and practices of the Catholic Church; to foster such an ethos in the school and to ensure

that nothing will be done which would have a detrimental effect on the Catholic ethos of the school (2000, p. 229). Thus there are clear parameters under which ethos will operate – they embody a clear commitment to the reproduction of certain values and practices.

In Irish schools (both primary and secondary) there is often a clearly stated commitment to the particular religious ethos in mission statements and policy documents, for example:

> The religious ethos of the school being Roman Catholic, it is important that the religious education of the individual should permeate everything else, promoting a personal relationship with Christ and the importance of prayer and the sacraments. Our religious education encourages the pupils to "see God at work in their life, in the lives of others, and in all of creation; then responding to this discovery through a commitment to service within the community. (CJE. Par. 63). Though Catholic in its philosophy and outlook, the school welcomes those of other faiths… (http://colaisteiognaid.ie/our-vision/)

However such guidelines rarely transparently outline what this encompasses in terms of the everyday experience of the child or that certain children not belonging to that faith may be "othered" and excluded. Norman concludes that: "School ethos is the atmosphere that emerges from the interaction of a number of aspects of school life including teaching and learning, management and leadership, the use of images and symbols, rituals and practices, as well as goals and expectations" (2003, p. 1). If you walk into any Irish Catholic school you will invariably be met with imposing religious statues and other specific iconography, the crest on your school uniform will often contain religious symbols, the name of the assembly hall refer to Catholic saints. But ethos can also assert itself in other more curriculum-related ways too and how this happens will be documented in the section below on the Formal Curriculum.

However, it is less difficult to confront ideology when it works through the informal or hidden curriculum for as Gutmann acknowledges when knowledge remains implicit "we cannot adequately judge its principles or the policy prescriptions which flow from them" (1999, p. 6). Kelly (1999) points out that in discussing the concept of curriculum we must acknowledge all the learning which goes on in schools: the unplanned as well as the planned, the implicit uncontrolled learning which takes place in the sphere of social interactions. McLaren described the hidden curriculum as follows:

> The hidden curriculum deals with the tacit ways in which knowledge and behaviour get constructed, outside the usual course materials and formally scheduled lessons. It is part of the bureaucratic and managerial "press" of the school – the combined forces by which students are induced to comply with the dominant ideologies and social practices related to authority, behaviour and morality. (1989, p. 191)

The hidden curriculum is about messages, often subliminal messages which are passed on to children about the desirability of conforming to certain norms, values, beliefs and behaviour. These messages help shape outlooks and attitudes. It is, as Apple notes, a highly effective means of ensuring consensus: "incidental learning contributes more to the political socialization of a student than do, say, civics classes or other forms of deliberate teaching of specific value orientations" (2004, p. 79). There are no written rules for the hidden curriculum, rather it is inferred learning gained through observation and experience of the values and morals transmitted by the school. But it is perhaps pertinent to provide some contemporary anecdotal examples (though all are based on real and known situations from rural Ireland): in Irish Catholic schools very often significant celebratory events are packaged in religious ceremony, for example, graduating students attend a "Graduation Mass", the fiftieth anniversary of a school is presided over by the Bishop and a Mass is scheduled; primary school pupils who sing in the Church choir at Sunday Mass receive a homework pass on Monday. Students who do not believe in such conventions are automatically marginalised and must either submit to such dogma or make a distinctive stance that they will not.

Mawhinney's (2009) empirical research shows how the Integrated Curriculum works via the hidden curriculum. She conducted research into minority belief parents' experience of denominational education for their children and showed how indoctrination of children takes place. There was an emphasis on colouring-in religious pictures, Christian drama, prayers at the beginning and end of the day, extensive class-time preparation for religious ceremonies, attendance at religious events, participation in choir for Church, visits from the local priest and messages that there is only one true God who is involved in everything from rainbows and bird migration to heaven and hell. Children who asked questions about natural or environmental phenomena were given one-sentence explanations that God was responsible and the notion of "sin" was part of the children's everyday vocabulary. Such an approach mirrors the thinking behind the Social and Environmental programme of the primary school curriculum. This subject incorporates History, Civics, Geography and Elementary Science and the current programme (based on the 1971 curriculum, Curclann na Bunscoile) formulates its aim as: "To cultivate in the child a humane attitude to living things and develop an appreciation of nature as the work of God" (INTO, 1992, p.1). Research was also undertaken by Mawhinney with teachers which showed that they are very aware that the Integrated Curriculum exists today and works in practice to indoctrinate. In the words of one teacher:

> This is what I think people have interpreted as ethos – that they have the freedom to indoctrinate. They have every right to indoctrinate. Its people's working definition of ethos. It's almost a licence to do so … Part of the religious programme is to teach them a prayer before lunch, after lunch and a prayer in the morning. It leaks into the school day.

> Definitely indoctrination. Definitely directed at a god. Nothing objective, critical or pluralist about that. (cited in Mawhinney, 2009, p. 110)

But as Barrow and Woods (1994) conclude indoctrination is not education and is morally unacceptable because "it necessarily involves lack of respect for an individual's rationality" (p. 80). It is based on the premise of "think as we think and don't dare to question" (ibid, p.81). In its exclusivity it embodies the ideology of "apart thinking" (Ryan, 1998, p. 396) rather than Dewey's idea of fostering a "shared understanding" and does not reflect his idea of education as breaking down "the barriers of distance" between individuals (1916, p. 316).

The current Primary School Curriculum (Ireland, Department of Education and Science, 1999) "celebrates the uniqueness of the child" (p. 6) and "has a particular responsibility in promoting tolerance and respect for diversity in both the school and the community" (ibid, p. 28) but Mawhinney's (ibid) research shows that in practice parents and children's rights are not recognised because in the majority of localities there is no choice other than denominational schooling. Theoretically there is provision for opting-out of religious instruction (Article 44.2.4 of the Irish Constitution) but in practice this is not a viable option because of limited school resources, limited willingness on the part of school management, fear of bullying arising from evidence of difference and the omnipresence of the Integrated Curriculum which operates at all levels of school life and beyond. The Integrated Curriculum is not an appropriate curriculum for a democratic State yet the organs of the State continue to accept it.

The formal curriculum

An examination of the formal curriculum reveals the type of knowledge it accentuates and that teachers are expected to fulfil the role of bringing religion into all curriculum strands. The Catholic teachers' training college, St. Patrick's, provides information as to how teachers can deliver the specific goal of integrating religion into every part of the curriculum. It states that "Teachers will recognise the potential for valuable links between spiritual, moral and religious education and all other areas of the curriculum" and goes on to provide specific examples as to how teachers can infuse religion into, for example, Maths teaching, Language and Literacy and SESE (Social, Environmental and Scientific Education). In Mathematics for first and second class religion can be integrated as follows: "significant dates in the liturgical year, e.g. identifying from the calendar the day of the week on which St. Patrick's Day occurs. Sequencing liturgical events using the vocabulary of time". The following guidelines are provided, for the strand *Local Studies* of SESE for the infant classes: "Exploring my baptism using evidence: clothes, photos, candles etc" and for first and second class as follows: "Discussing religious family events (using evidence: baptism, first communion etc.).

Feasts and festivals in the past (Christmas, November and remembering the dead, local Christian festivals: change and continuity)". For third and fourth class the following guidelines on integrating religion into *Local Studies* are provided: "Buildings, sites or ruins in my locality (local church, well, cemetery, monastery etc.). History of local Christian community. History of the local school: story of the school's founder. Local places of pilgrimage. Feasts and festivals in the past – religious festivals and customs celebrated by various members of the school and local community (Catholics, Muslims, Jews etc.)."[2] Whilst there are a few references to incorporating other religious traditions it is evident that the overriding emphasis is on the Catholic and Christian tradition and there is no accommodation for those who do not belong to a religious grouping.

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme of the primary school curriculum is being implemented since 1999 and as part of this programme sex education is to be taught to ten to thirteen year old pupils. The Department of Education and Skills recommends that all primary schools teach Relationship and Sexual Education (RSE) as part of this programme and has developed a curriculum for its delivery (see RSE Support Service). However, the final say on how or if this programme is to be delivered rests with the Board of Management of individual schools which comprises parents, the school principal and the Chairperson is the local bishop who controls it. This Board is responsible for developing an RSE policy and will have the final say in the delivery of the programme, as the Department of Education and Skills guidelines document: "It is the responsibility of the board of management to support and facilitate the school approach to SPHE as it is being developed and to approve and review this approach within the context of the overall school plan" (Ireland, Department of Education, 1999, p. 29). In practice there has been an ad hoc approach to implementing this aspect of the curriculum depending on the decision of individual Boards of Management. Most schools incorporate an opt-out clause, if parents do not wish their children to take part in RSE the children are not obliged to. Boards of Management, because of their understanding of ethos, may have different interpretations on what is appropriate to teach to pupils and this may differ to that of the Department of Education and Skills. As the RSE Support Service outlines:

> By its nature, RSE explores issues which give rise to differing views and sensitivities. Schools, depending on their characteristic spirit, may differ from each other in the way in which they wish to deal with issues such as describing sexual intercourse, teenage pregnancies, separation and divorce. It will fall to your RSE policy committee…with the fullest cooperation possible within the school community, to decide how you wish to deal with such issues in RSE. The ethical and moral guidelines provided by the process of consultation,

[2] For further details see: : http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Conferences/Patronage-and-Pluralism-in-the-Primary-Sector/Patronage-Forum-Submissions-November-2011-/Organisations-November-2011/Department-of-Religious-Studies-and-Religious-Education-St-Patrick%E2%80%99s-College-Drumcondra-.pdf

> and by the completed policy document, must inform and direct the work of the teacher in his or her classroom. (See http://www.ppds.ie/pcsparchive/sphe/RSEresources.pdf)

Thus in the final analysis this aspect of curriculum delivery is not in the hands of the State but the manager of the primary school, who controls the Board of Management and who is the local bishop.

In 98% of State-run schools the State has no input into the religious curriculum for the religious managers determine its content: "The development and implementation of the curriculum in religious education in primary schools remains the responsibility of the relevant patron bodies" (Ireland, Department of Education, 1999). As Donnelly (2014c) points out religious teaching in the 92% of Catholic primary schools is exclusively Catholic but is increasingly becoming a topic of debate in a more diverse Irish society. The Minister for Education and Skills recent controversial comment (see Donnelly 2014a) that too much time is spent on teaching religion in Catholic schools and that some of this time might be better directed into increasing literacy and mathematical skills caused much furore, not least from the Catholic Church but also from some Fianna Fáil politicians. Officially schools are to spend 30 minutes on designated religious instruction but in reality they spend more, in particular in 2nd (age 8-9 years) and 6th class (age 12-13 years), where teachers have to prepare pupils for the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation during school time. As Donnelly (ibid) reported some teachers spend up to nine hours of class time per week for sacramental preparation. Faith formation is thus carried out by teachers via the religious strand of the formal curriculum which is not under the control of the State. However what must be borne in mind is that the school is acting as the religious educator of children rather than complementing what is happening in society at large. In reality a lot of children are not receiving a Catholic upbringing along designated Catholic principles at home. The curriculum is thus not reflecting societal reality. As an educator being interviewed for an ESRI/UCD (2013) study on Religion and schooling stated:

> Nowadays when a child comes into junior infants…the vast majority of the children do not know how to bless themselves. They really don't know an awful lot about God, the vast majority of them have never been to a church since the day they were baptised. And … the school now seems to be doing something that is not part of life. (See http://www.esri.ie/research/research_areas/education/Remc/meetings/Overview_of_Key_Informants.pdf)

Curriculum deviation also takes place at Senior Cycle where according to the DES there are problems in many schools in the teaching of RSE due to school managers legitimately being able to "tweak" RSE because of their religious ethos: "Schools are free to bring in external, unaccountable groups to deliver relationship and sex education programmes that are not endorsed or audited by the DES, and 45 per cent of schools do so" (McGuire 2014a). The report also outlines that schools are under no

obligation to inform parents who is invited to deliver sex education programmes. It was also pointed out that a number of such groups had a specific Catholic agenda, indeed some are openly opposed to contraception and family planning. In addition a report carried out in 2010 found that in over 50% of schools 16-19 year olds were receiving no sex education in contravention to the DES RSE curriculum (McGuire 2014b). But ethos is protected in law and there is nothing the State can do about school management disregarding this element of the State curriculum.

Educate Together schools have a very different approach. Here in place of specific religious instruction there is an ethical programme entitled "Learn Together." The aim of this curriculum is to provide "an education which helps learners to develop a critical awareness and understanding of moral decision-making, and a heightened awareness of social, ethical and moral issues and standards" (http://www.educatetogether.ie/about/learn-together). To do this it has four strands to the curriculum: Moral and Spiritual; Equality and Justice; Belief Systems; Ethics and the Environment. The philosophy driving the programme is that no child feels an outsider and that all children learn to respect each other's beliefs and perspectives.

A Catholic or Christian message can also be unearthed in an examination of other subjects on the primary school curriculum, for example in the teaching of the Irish language which is a compulsory subject. Text books contain teaching units that focus on the Catholic tradition and do not present alternative views and teachers will, generally, teach this material to pupils as if it is the accepted, the correct and the only tradition. As Carr outlines, the notion of the curriculum is "unproblematic and self-evident" (1996, p. 1) for most teachers and educationalists. How many teachers will challenge the presentation of textual material which appears validated by its legitimate status appearing in a State-approved text book? As Apple notes text books play a key role as the "official arbiter of official knowledge" (2008, p. 26) and are also "arenas where cultural politics are worked out" (ibid). An examination of these elements of text books answers Apples question, "whose knowledge is of most worth"? The Irish language text book *Bun go Barr 4* for pupils aged eight to ten years contains religious poems with a distinct message[3]. The same text book also highlights only Christian or Catholic religious celebrations (see Appendix 2) and does not include any important calendar events from other religions. So, the history, the perspective, the focus of only one group is selected, accentuated and propagated as the one and only relevant knowledge, or what Apple terms "official knowledge" (1993). It seems that there is little separation between the language component of the curriculum and a particular moral or ideological message. The subtext is that the Irish language and

[3] See Appendix Number 1

culture is inextricably linked with a Christian view of the world. Those writing the curriculum at the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment have decided what knowledge is most worthy to transmit. This selectivity process has omitted other cultural influences, for example, spiritual and mystical traditions like Paganism and Druidism. This blanket cultural assumption also encompasses a marginalisation and lack of respect for the perspectives of the "non-religious" segment of Irish society, who according to the 2011 census, are the second largest group after "Catholic" in the State. As Westbury observes formal curricula do not have to only articulate one set of values rather progressive curricula can aim to strike a balance between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern:

> A formal curriculum can articulate through its selection and organization of school knowledge old, new, or revised narratives about the individual and the community and about both the individual's and the community's social and natural worlds. (2008, p. 59)

Identity

In the Irish context religious dogma has been incorporated into concepts of identity, or how the self is defined and expressed. The curriculum also works to transmit a type of knowledge which preserves the notion that there are certain specific parameters defining identity. The equating of Catholicism with Irishness, which for many is a quintessential correlation, is an effective means of establishing legitimisation of a doctrine. Symbolism corresponding to identity formation becomes deeply ingrained in the cultural consciousness and because it operates at the deep level of cognizance or at a sub-conscious level does not readily lend itself to questioning or scrutiny. In everyday affairs this can be seen in the unquestioning acceptance by many of the provision of Catholic-controlled education, at primary school level. For some this is natural and normal and embodies "part of who we are", in other words Catholic schooling is an expression of Irish identity. Bourdieu and Gramsci's theories of elite groups ensuring the complicity of the masses as an important part of their project of legitimisation is born out: the existing power dynamics controlling schooling are unquestioningly accepted and defended even in the face of numerous child abuse scandals conducted in Catholic schools by Catholic teachers and religious personnel. Equating religious affiliation with national identity via school ethos is an effective means of maintaining and reproducing a particular ideology. The legitimization process which involves the equation of religion and identity can contribute to an ethnocentric view of one's culture and one's identity. Identity today is not universally fixed or static and Ireland is culturally a more heterogeneous society, less insular and religiously more diverse. A broad common culture no longer exists in a simplified and rigid form; as Waldron notes, the new plurality characteristic of modern Irish society brings with it

"tensions and concerns about identity and belonging" (2004, p. 210) but the education system is allowing little accommodation of such diversity.

Conclusion

Social and cultural reproduction theory points to an explanation as to how and why education worked on a consensus basis. Hegemony, the control of a group by those in ruling positions, functioned effectively by using education. It was a vehicle for the specific political purpose of maintaining positions of economic, cultural, moral and political influence. The consent of the people was secured for this project by selling the idea that the ideology of the elite was the one true way of looking at the world. The perspective of those who controlled education became the "common sense" view and ingrained in the public consciousness, often intertwined with concepts of identity. This was how the status quo was maintained. In the everyday functioning of the school this goal of domination and indoctrination was accomplished through the official and the hidden curriculum and the culturally unique "Integrated Curriculum" which ensures the infusion of religious ethos into all aspects of school life. This analysis has shown that the knowledge transmitted via the curriculum is not objective or neutral for the curriculum is designed to ensure the reproduction of Catholic ideology. Less in evidence is the transformative aspect of education. The tensions essential for transformation to occur did not exist as ideological positions about the nature of knowledge to be transmitted were one-dimensional and, until very recently, remained uncontested. It can be concluded that an examination of the curriculum reveals that it records an uncontested past which promoted theocratic interests and thus cannot be seen as a curriculum for democracy. If then, as Carr outlines the curriculum in a democracy always reflects that definition of democracy which the society holds to be true (1998, p. 324), does this mean that here the accepted understanding of democracy is inadequate? Is there any evidence that the present day primary school curriculum contains a message for a better future? The reproduction of a specific ideology is no longer guaranteed as the Minister for Education attempts to re-structure primary schooling and tackle curriculum anomalies and whether this reform project will be achieved or not will be debated in further chapters. But firstly it is necessary to examine educational policy through the prism of history before one can answer this question.

Chapter 4: The History of Educational Policy in Ireland 1800-1919

Introduction

Knowledge of the past can be useful in attempting to understand the present and perhaps learning how to move forward. In postulating an explanation for the current situation in Irish primary schooling the legacy of history goes some way to providing a context for the enduring denominational structure of the primary school system. This section will outline the historical detail surrounding education in Ireland from the early nineteenth century up to 1919 when colonialism ended. In 1831 universal State primary school education was established on the island of Ireland by the British administration who ruled the country at that time. Lord Stanley's 1831 letter, instituting what was known as the National School system, is significant not only because it meant that Ireland was one of the first countries in Europe to have free elementary schooling, but also because one of its aims was to create an interdenominational system, rather than one based on sectarian divisions. An irony of history is that this did not happen and those involved in the multi-denominational school movement today are still striving to forge a path for education not delineated along religious lines or vested private interests. An examination of historical circumstance may provide some enlightenment as to why a relic from over one hundred and fifty years ago has survived into the twenty-first century.

Pre-1831

A tradition of Church involvement in education pre-dates the nineteenth century. The monastic schools led by the Irish monks during the medieval times were influential in providing a missionary and educational function in both Ireland and further afield, for example, in Britain and on mainland Europe. The secular Bardic or "native schools" based on a tradition of poetry, local history, philosophy, law and oratory had predated Christianity and, according to Walsh, they provided "a model upon which native monastic learning could be developed" (2011, p.34). These centres of learning and organs of cultural transmission were to disappear, however, by the seventeenth century due to the Tudor invasion of Ireland.

To achieve loyalty to the crown, Catholic influence in all forms of social activity was to be abrogated as it was perceived as a threat. Under the Penal Laws of the seventeenth and eighteenth century brutal conditions were imposed on the native Irish. The Irish language, political freedom, ownership of private property and the practice of Catholic religion were outlawed. The Penal Laws also included a ban on receiving Catholic education, training of teachers, practice by Catholic Irish headmasters and the use of the Irish language in schools. The first formal parish schools had appeared in Ireland in the sixteenth century under Henry VIII, their purpose being to introduce a

new system of education which would serve political and social purposes for the Tudors. The English administration saw the purpose of schools to anglicise the population through cultural subjugation. Instruction in schools was offered only through the medium of the English language, which was not spoken by the general population. The other aim of the schools was proselytising; this was to be carried out by Protestant societies who ran the official schools and received some State subsidies.

The unofficial "hedge" schools evolved as a direct response to the outlawing of indigenous education as the vast majority of the population refused to send their children to the State-supported schools. In secret locations (under a hedge, for example) a school master, paid by local parents, provided instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic as well as Latin and Greek. The hedge schools provided an ad hoc and uneven education, still as Dowling notes, it was not uncommon in remote parts of the Irish countryside for local people to be able to speak Latin or Greek but not a word of English (Dowling, 1968, p.39). Wealthy Catholic families, however, were sending their sons to Germany, Spain and France to be educated by Irish monks from the sixteenth up until the nineteenth century even though this was not allowed under the Penal Laws (Coolahan, 1981, p.9). The hedge school system was a private or unofficial "pay" system which had close associations with the Catholic Church for the Church often helped to set up such schools, appointed the master, supervised his work and communicated between the headmaster and parents (Raftery, 2009, p.15). As Inglis (1998, p.105) concludes the Penal Laws were indirectly responsible for the forging of an alliance between the school teacher and the Catholic Church. A vacuum existed due to enactment of the Penal Laws and the Catholic Church filled this by offering an educational alternative to the proselytising system. The groundwork was laid for disaffected parents of Catholic children to place their trust in a system which was separate from the State and beyond its control.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century voluntary religious organisations were active in educational provision. The State part-funded some of those organisations run by the Anglicans, Presbyterians or Church of Ireland who were fulfilling a proselytising role and this State involvement was the cause for much concern among Catholic leaders. However, voluntary Catholic religious teaching orders such as the Christian Brothers, the Sisters of Mercy, the Presentation Sisters and the Loretto Sisters had been founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and were offering an alternative education for Catholics. It was these teaching orders who provided the first structured network of schools and this system was to prove very popular and successful in Ireland and abroad for approximately the next two hundred years (Ó'Buachalla, 1988, p.20). Indeed the Catholic teaching orders still play a major role in education in the Republic with 60% of the current second

level school population (12-18 year olds) attending voluntary secondary schools which are managed and owned by the religious teaching orders (O'Higgins-Norman, 2011, p.118).

By the mid nineteenth century a solid system of Catholic education existed; by 1824 it is estimated that there were about 8,000 Catholic schools in Ireland, from a total of about 9,500 schools (Inglis, 1998, p.123). This historic legacy of Church involvement in education meant that it had an established network and structure as well as the loyal support of the general public well before the foundation of a State-funded education system in 1831. Akenson (1970) shows that the Catholic Church had begun to assert itself at the start of the nineteenth century, commenting on the various educational reports the British government was conducting in Ireland. The role the Catholic Church played in society was not fully legitimized; it worked more in an unofficial capacity given that there had been an attempted (though failed) eradication of the Catholic Church under the Penal Laws; the Established Church (catering for about 8% of the population) was afforded much more status and power at a political level. As Ó'Buachalla (1988) outlines, the cultural and political influence which the State-recognised Protestant churches enjoyed was envied and resented by the Catholic Church. But legislation such as the Catholic Emancipation Act 1829 meant the Catholic Church could become more involved officially in public life. A dramatic role reversal was to occur over the next fifty years or so and it was the control of education which was to prove pivotal in establishing the Catholic Church as a major power-house in Irish society (Ó'Buachalla, 1988, p.36).

Establishing the National School system, 1831

Although stringently opposed by many Catholics the 1801 Act of Union accomplished the political union of Ireland and Britain establishing direct rule from Britain. In 1831, two years after the Catholic Emancipation Act had been passed by the British parliament, the Chief Justice of Ireland, Lord Stanley, set up the National School system in Ireland on behalf of the Whig government. Stanley's name has gone down in history as the person who took this innovative step but as Akenson (1970) outlines the groundwork had been laid before Stanley wrote the 1831 letter to the Duke of Leinster setting out conditions for free universal primary school education. There was a tradition of legislative activity in education in Ireland in the early part of the nineteenth century and numerous commissions had reported on the state of education and made recommendations on the creation of a new system. Indeed the Catholic clergy had been vocal in their interpretations of these reports and were not averse to criticising elements of the findings. There were few State-funded universal systems of primary schooling in Europe prior to this: Prussia and France had similar systems and the Scandinavian countries also had a State-supported elementary schooling, but Britain, for example, did not legislate for State primary school education until 1870 and primary education was only free

from 1891 (Durcan, 1972, p.4). From the mid-nineteenth century, however, the State began to play an increasing role in education in Europe where State financing was coupled with the drive to increase literacy levels and thus meet the needs of industrialisation. Although Ireland was an agrarian rather than an industrial society, the move towards State-funded education can be seen as part of this general development in political thinking. But to attribute Stanley's policy wholly as an act of altruism on the part of the Whig government towards the people of Ireland would be somewhat naïve; nor was it driven entirely by political idealism or a by a belief in the inherent good of inter-denominational education. Instead a series of specific cultural circumstances underlie the motivation for bringing universal primary school education to the populace.

Hyland (1987, p.98) acknowledges the influence the Catholic Church had in effecting this change. The Catholic hierarchy was vehemently opposed to the State subsiding of schools with a mission to convert the Catholic populace to Protestantism, and prior to 1831 campaigned for a more equitable system of distributing parliamentary grants and for more Catholic influence in schooling. Coolahan (1981, pp.3-4) concludes that Ireland was a social laboratory for the British government, where new social initiatives were often tested before they were introduced in Britain and that the 1831 action can be seen in this light: such a reform measure, which might not have been tolerated in England where laissez-faire policies dominated the political landscape, had its test-run in Ireland. Additionally there was a level of apprehension that the Irish Catholics were educating themselves with no State supervision and a fear of the potential subversive nature of the hedge schools among the political elite. A desire to control and discipline what was regarded as an unruly and rebellious people also informed the drive for State support of a universal schooling system. As Inglis puts it: "Having a population of almost seven million uncouth peasants living nearby, who had traditionally exhibited a violent and passionate hatred of the British, became a major concern of a State which was supervising the development of Britain as the core area of world capitalism" (1998, p.159). The new schools were envisaged as instruments which would act to cultivate political loyalty and facilitate cultural assimilation (Coolahan, 1981, p.4). Lee concludes that their function was to perform "a massive brain-washing operation, obliterating subversive ancestral influence by inculcating in the pupils a proper reverence for the English connection, and proper deference for their social superiors, defined according to the exquisite English concept of class" (1987, p.28). Schooling was to foster a sense of social cohesion and supplant a culture of loyalty defined according to religious affiliations. The long-term goal was to make the country more governable by uniting divided factions and creating a discourse of commonality and a climate of stability.

Opposition to the National School system

The intention of the Westminster administration was that Irish elementary education would not be divided along denominational lines; one of its main objectives was "to unite in one system children of different creeds" (Stanley Letter, 1831, in Hyland & Milne, 1987, p.100) and "to preserve full and entire freedom of conscience" (Bishop J. Doyle, 1831, in ibid, p. 107). Delivery of secular subjects, enrolment criteria, management structures and teacher training were to be interdenominational. Applications to run schools were to be made jointly by both Catholic and Protestant applicants and school patrons were to be men of high standing from the community. Children of all faiths were to be educated together in all subjects except for religious instruction which would take place separately and outside of normal school hours and be provided by the respective clerics of the different denominations.

The Board of Commissioners was to be the decision making body and overseer of the system: "It is the intention of the Government that the Board should exercise a complete control over the various schools which may be erected under its auspices, or which…may hereafter place themselves under its management" (Stanley Letter, 1831, in Hyland & Milne, 1987, p. 100). But Stanley recognised the importance of enlisting the cooperation of the clergy to make the system operable: the Board was also to be comprised of unpaid, mixed denominational appointees: "men of high personal character, including individuals of exulted station in the Church" (Stanley Letter, 1831, in Hyland & Milne, 1987, p. 98). The Board had control over the curriculum and text books, rules and regulations for schools, staff appointments and dismissals and how the funds approved by parliament were to be distributed (Coolahan, 1981, p.13). Not only the schools but also the teacher training colleges were to be inter-denominational. The first central training or "model" schools were established as fully State-funded and inter-denominational schools for pupils and trainee teachers.

Initially there was support among the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland for Stanley's initiative as it was seen as a better alternative to the State-supported proselytising schools. However, the central tenet of the system – inter-denominational education – was to prove divisive and unworkable. The culture of mistrust between the various religious denominations made for a fraught climate. The Presbyterian Church was the first church to oppose Stanley's proposals on the basis that the mixed religious nature of the appointees to the Board was unacceptable, so too was the control over text books and teachers vested in the Board as well as the removal of the bible as a central focus in schooling (Hyland, 1987, p.103). Due to this opposition from the various Churches, an explanatory document issued in 1841 by the Board of Commissioners on behalf of Stanley established the

important role of the patron and acceded that the local clergyman was essentially in control of the local school:

> The National Schools are not so much the schools of the Government as of the local Patrons and Managers, who submit voluntarily to certain regulations in order to entitle them to receive aid from the Government. They are therefore at liberty to lay down their intended course of study; they are free to appoint certain hours during which certain studies are to be carried on, in some of which Roman Catholics and Protestants may, in others of which they cannot object to join. (Stanley Letter, 1831, in Hyland & Milne, 1987, p. 104)

In addition the status of the local religious authority was acknowledged in that it was the manager, predominantly the local bishop, who decided if a new school was to be established and if funding was to be sought. Instead of joint applications to run schools being made the religious denominations made separate applications and the Board of Commissioners accepted these by granting funding for schools where there was no joint patronage application. This meant that the denominational status of schools was funded and therefore accepted at central level.

By the mid-nineteenth century there were considerable amendments made to Stanley's original proposals. Many of the features of the present day primary school system were now established, some which today are proving to be a thorn in the side of the current Minister for Education and Skills, in particular the inalienable role of a religious patron. The legal titles regarding school property and ownership of school lands have their foundation here too: "The school-house, when finished, is to be vested in trustees, to be chosen by the applicants themselves, and their names reported to the Commissioners for their approbation. These trustees to hold the school-house for the purpose of national education, according to the regulations set forth in this paper" (1835 Second Report to the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, in Hyland & Milne, 1987, p. 110). In reality most of the schools remained non-vested and this worked to the advantage of the churches as it meant that the school did not operate under State regulations. So, today the majority of primary schools are not owned by the Irish State but by diocesan trustees. As the Citizens Information website for Ireland (2013) notes, the majority of primary schools today are owned by the religious denominations: "There are deeds of trust signed by the owners, which ensure that the school will continue to be used as such." The State owns less than 3% of all primary schools in the Republic, meaning that the Republic has one of the highest concentrations of privately owned elementary schools in the world (Walshe, 2009).

All the Churches were unwilling to accept a clear division between the secular and the religious envisaged in Stanley's original proposals. Opposition to the national primary schools system from

the Catholic Church was particularly vehement under Cardinal Paul Cullen from 1849, who, as Norman (1965, p.10,) notes, saw that "political and moral virtue can never be dissociated from each other." Coolahan (1981, p.18) outlines that the Catholic Church had become more suspicious of the State's involvement in education and Rome feared the increasing secularization of Europe. In 1850 Cardinal Cullen spoke out against mixed education for Catholics, declaring it to be "very dangerous when considered in general because its aim is to introduce a mingling of Protestants and Catholics" (cited in O'Toole, 2009). Cullen made education one of the major issues of Church business. His tenacity was to pay dividends and his influence apparent on subsequent practice and policy. As Coolahan (1981) notes from the 1860s "a more self-confident church now demanded separate, State-supported education for Catholics as a right" (ibid, p.18) and so by 1860, due to this pressure, there were ten Catholic members from a total of twenty on the Board of Commissioners and further concessions were to be won in the years ahead (ibid). The Churches had objected to the separation of religious and secular education and the Catholic Church now also won the right to provide religious education on the school premises and during the normal school day.

The Powis Commission (1868-1870) was set up to examine primary school education to see if it was delivering in terms of value for money. It was seen by the opposing Churches to have come about as a result of pressure to reform the system from the Catholic hierarchy. It made 129 recommendations, some on the general state of education; for example it found schools had low attendance rates, were not achieving the required standard of education and were underfunded. As a result it proposed that a payment by results scheme could generate extra income for schools and lead to an improvement in standards. Some of its findings bore the hallmarks of conceding to specific Catholic Church demands: in effect it endorsed the weakening of State involvement and strengthening of a denominational system of education in a number of areas. It recommended that the National Board should no longer publish school text books and most importantly conceded to the principle of segregated teacher training and the abolition of inter-denominational teacher training colleges. The model schools, where teachers did practical training, were unacceptable to the Catholic Church because they provided interdenominational education under public management, where the bishop or priest did not have a direct managerial role (Ó'Buachalla, 1988, p.23). In 1863 the Catholic Church banned its members from becoming trainee teachers at the model schools and also forbade Catholics to send their children to these schools. Henceforth, Catholic teachers were to be trained only in Catholic-managed schools. The Powis Commission essentially endorsed this ban and by 1883 the State was funding denominational training colleges. Interestingly it digressed from developments taking place in Scotland and England at the time where

similar commissions had recommended the setting up of local school boards as part of a new management structure. As Hyland (1987, p.133) notes the Powis Commission shied away from such a recommendation because of the entrenched denominational nature of the schools, seeking instead a formal recognition of the denominational status of schooling although this was clearly at variance with Gladstone's bid to standardise education structure across Ireland and Britain. Ó'Buachalla (1988, p.39) concludes that when Cullen died in 1878 he left an indelible stamp on education: in primary education his most remarkable achievement was that he greatly facilitated changing the National School system into a denominational parish-controlled one and paved the way for the Catholic Church to be the major player in education.

Primary school education transformed

The opposition of the various Churches to inter-denominational schooling ensured that after a few decades the primary school system was "un-denominational in theory but denominational in practice" (Mescal, 1957, p.107). Although the Catholic Church started from a marginalized official position at the start of the century, it established itself as a dominant and powerful force in Irish society by the end of the nineteenth century. As Ó'Buachalla notes:

> That church's position of weakness in the early decades, a residual legacy of the penal laws, was transformed by the seventies [1870s] into a position of considerable strength and influence in Irish life. The process of transformation was promoted and catalysed mainly by a prolonged campaign involving a series of resounding victories on education issues carried by the church against various governments. (1988, p.36).

The success of this campaign is evident from the assured presence of the Catholic Church in all the important areas of educational provision and management by the end of the nineteenth century. It owned the majority of schools in the State. The local bishop and priest acted as a management team with the patron, the bishop, having enormous power and able to delegate the day-to-day business of the school to the priest who essentially acted as the line-manager. The priest, under the auspices of the bishop, appointed and dismissed teachers, arranged the timetable, had an input into the curriculum and in the administering of State-funding, and so from the earliest stage clerics had a foothold in State schools. The Catholic Church also controlled teacher training and its majority presence on the Board for National Education meant it had significant influence in educational policy formation. Indeed by the end of the century the Catholic hierarchy were able to unequivocally acknowledge the success of their mission to control education pronouncing that in a great part of Ireland primary school education is "as denominational almost as we could desire" (Pastoral Letter, 1900, in Coolahan, 1981, p. 37).

By 1900 the British government provided funding for school buildings and paid the teachers' salaries even though almost all schools were denominational and run by the churches, and this is the model which exists today. In 1831 the intention of the Whig government had been for one hundred per cent of primary schools in Ireland to be inter-denominational, by 1850 fifty-five per cent were and in 1912 only twenty-eight per cent, meaning that even before independence in 1922 a system of segregated, denominational schooling was well established on the island of Ireland. As Akenson (1970, p.4) concludes by the end of the nineteenth century "the Roman Catholic hierarchy became a taskmaster the commissioners had to satisfy."

Catholic Church control of education

The reason why such an anomalous situation was allowed to prevail, when clearly it contravened initial government aims had, in some respects, to do with practicalities. The British government needed the Churches on a number of levels, firstly to help it run an effective education system. The Churches had a tradition of educational provision and expertise on which to draw as well as the support of the majority of the population. Both Lee (1987) and Akenson (1970) highlight the role that demographics played in the creation of a segregated system. Outside Ulster the country was overwhelmingly Catholic and thus it was not difficult to mould the system into a denominational one given that the general populace supported the Catholic clergy, who in effect acted like politicians even though they were not elected representatives.

Inglis (1988) attributes the Church-State partnership which evolved to a common goal of moral control and civilizing of the masses. His central thesis is that the British government deliberately formed an alliance, albeit initially a "tentative" one (ibid, p.113), with the Catholic Church because this alliance was the lesser of two evils – "as long as the Irish could be dissuaded from bloody rebellion and became civil and disciplined, it did not matter so much who produced the results" (ibid). The Catholic hierarchy acknowledged an overlap in intentions between Stanley's initiative and Church aims with Bishop Drake of Dromore concluding that Stanley's proposals provided "…a good moral education for the whole community…it takes care that the great principles of morality and religion, which are suggested by the law of nature and are admitted by all Christians of every denomination in Ireland, shall be diligently inculcated in its books and by its teachers" (cited in Akenson, 1970, p.1). In 1836 the Board outlined the aims of the Government, to foster cooperation and political harmony, and the role the Churches would play in this:

> First, to promote general intelligence and good conduct of the poorer classes of the country. Second, to allay animosities, and to cultivate good feeling between the parties that may have been at variance. Third, to introduce as much of religious instruction as can be done without jealousy and contention, and hostile feeling either towards Government or towards

> one another. (Appendix E to the Third Report of thee Commissioners of Education in Ireland, 1836, in Hyland & Milne, 1987, p. 116.)

Inglis' thesis is that this common goal of moralising and civilising the general population was paramount and, on the part of the British government, took precedence over specific cultural policies like proselytising. Social and moral control was being effectively implemented by the religious hierarchy, not least because, as Inglis concludes (1998, p.128), the Catholic Church was providing a means of modern civility often desired by the general populace at that time:

> What was important was that the Catholic Church operated and controlled the civil and moral education of Irish Catholics. It was priests, nuns and brothers, and the teachers under their supervision, who instilled into the uncouth, boorish Irish children of the nineteenth century all the manners and habits which we today regard as standard social practices. It was they who took over the task of making the Irish into a clean-living, orderly, well-managed, self-controlled, literate people. They were the forces which girded the bent and unruly bodies of the Irish and fashioned them into fine, upstanding, moral citizens. (ibid, p.151)

The steely determination of Church leaders like Cullen to dominate the arena and the astute political tactics employed by the Catholic hierarchy cannot be underestimated in both winning kudos for the Catholic Church and in diluting State control in education. Akenson (1970) goes so far as to conclude that Cullen was responsible for spearheading a "religious revolution" (1970, p. 4) in Ireland and that he had as much impact on everyday life as did Gladstone (ibid, p.5 and p.3). Such political manoeuvring was, as Miller notes, being exercised at a time when Catholic Ireland was very underrepresented in the House of Commons (1973, p. 436). However coupled with what Akenson labels as the "aggressiveness" (1970, p.5) of the Catholic hierarchy, the weakness of the Board of Commissioners to stand firm on the original concept of the National School initiative played a major part in corroding State control of education. The Board buckled under the persistent and relentless demands of the Catholic Church to have primary school education mirror their needs and ideologies. Indeed as Inglis notes under Cullen the Catholic hierarchy became "a body which was increasingly able to limit successfully the actions of the State…" (1998, p.116).

The educational landscape in Ireland during the nineteenth century was indeed a battlefield where various interest groups competed to maintain and propagate positions of influence via control of education. The Catholic Church did not only seek to ensure reproduction of their position but also there was a deliberate policy to use education to attain a distinct political advantage and victory against the established and State-supported churches, as well as against the British government. Education was a hotbed of controversy and struggle as the various churches sought to maintain positions of power to effect cultural transformation. The battle, though, was won by the Catholic

hierarchy. In the words of O'Toole (2009), it set about "destroying" the system for the purpose of gaining power and positions of influence at a political level but also at the "civil and intimate level of the lives of the majority of the population" (p.3). There were some pay-offs for the State, for where centuries of hard-line political coercion had failed to subjugate the local population the Church's programme of moral control, promoted via psychological manipulation and physical discipline, achieved a degree of obedience and subservience. The heightened profile and increased prestige attained through the battle for control of education meant that the Catholic Church was poised to influence not only future educational direction but other areas of social life too. The victories won against the established elite groups symbolised the first stage in achieving legitimization and paved the way for its acceptance by the general population as the supreme authority in Irish life. Its existence and hegemony for the next century was thus secured.

Another pertinent feature of the education system was to manifest itself through the control of schooling by local ecclesiastical authorities. Akenson (1970, p.154) draws our attention to the role of parents, pointing out that they had no rights or voice in respect to how their children were being educated at that time. This was due largely to the fact that the control of the school was not in the hands of elected representatives but of a self-appointed manager, who determined day-to-day school business as the Board of Commissioners had virtually ceded power. Thus from the beginning a precedent was set whereby parents, children and other community members were excluded form participation in decision making and were not encouraged to express opinions. This practice of deference to the educational authorities became accepted as normal and would persist for a protracted period.

Education in Ireland: 1900-1922

As many commentators conclude (e.g. Walsh, 2011; Coolahan, 1981; Ó'Buachalla, 1988) the National School system had by 1900 greatly contributed to increasing literacy (in the English language) and numeracy levels in Ireland. There had also been considerable infrastructural growth from 4,500 schools in 1848 with 500,000 pupils to 9,000 schools with about 1 million pupils in 1914 (Lee, 1987, p.27). Expenditure on education from 1831 had not been insignificant and as Coolahan (1981, p.19) outlines the increasing investment led to the British government's review of the system to see if it was delivering in terms of outcomes. The Powis Commission (1870) had not reported satisfactorily on the state of primary school education and further commissions were set up at the start of the twentieth century to investigate if there had been any progress on improving standards and attendance rates at primary school level.

A change in educational direction across Europe at the start of the twentieth century was having an influence on the thinking informing education: the move to create a more pupil-centred learning environment referencing the ideas of Montessori, Froebel and Dewey was being considered for Ireland. Prior to this curriculum content had been delivered in an authoritarian and unimaginative way, due in no small way to the payment-by-results system, which as Coolahan notes caused some of the underperformance "at a time when countries on the European mainland were aligning their curricula with evolving educational thought and societal needs, the Irish programme adopted a mechanistic system, divorced from the realities of life and work outside the school" (1981, p.30). The Belmore Commission (1897) was set up to examine comparative educational trends including the subject material available to students and how it was taught in schools. Its findings were informed by the progressive educational movement and it recommended a fundamental change to the regimental, rote-learning system. The curriculum was to be extended to include more practical subjects, nature-related topics, local history and skills such as problem solving encouraged; teaching methods were to be more pupil-centred and in addition it recommended that kindergartens should be set up and the payment by results system abolished (Walsh, 2011, p. 49). Coolahan notes that there were some changes in how and what schools taught as a result of these proposals and they did impact positively on some children's experiences, with school life becoming "more varied and interesting" (1981, p. 36). However, lack of funding impeded seriously on the implementation of many of the policies. In 1904 the government made further recommendations for improving primary school education. It was recognised that the under-funding of the system was preventing some of the Belmore Commission recommendations being put into practice. Thus the proposal was made that some finance come from local level. The Local Government Act of 1898 had created district councils and the plan was that a local taxation should be applied via the new councils. In addition the British government proposed the establishing of boards of management for schools, thus paving the way for an element of democratic involvement in the running of schools. Both these initiatives were opposed by the Catholic Church. It was argued instead that funding should continue to come from central government only and the status quo preserved in terms of management of schools. Walsh concludes that the ensuing stand-off between the government and the hierarchy meant that schools remained underfunded and education standards below par for a significant part of the twentieth century (2011, p.49).

Contributing to the funding problems, and recognised as a problem by the British government, was the proliferation of schools especially in rural areas. Often these schools were costly to maintain and very small: in 1904 more than three fifths of the schools had less than 50 pupils (Akenson, 1973,

p.8). This legacy exists to this day: Ireland has one of the highest numbers of small schools among developed countries with more than 45% of primary schools having fewer than 100 pupils (Coolahan et al., 2012, p. 30). This is a result of the industriousness of the Catholic hierarchy to ensure separate schools for Catholics were built and also for schools to be single-sex as having boys and girls educated together was frowned upon by the Catholic bishops: "Apart altogether from moral considerations, we believe that the mixing of boys and girls in the same school is injurious to the delicacy of feeling, reserve, and modesty of demeanour which should characterize young girls" (Irish Ecclesiastical Record, 1910, in Akenson, 1973 p. 9). The Board of Commissioners at this time did attempt to introduce an amalgamation policy to solve the small schools issue but the Bishops opposed it on moral grounds.

Church and State were also at loggerheads regarding school attendance. The government was concerned with low attendance rates which were at about 70% and attempted to make school attendance compulsory so it would be more in line with international standards. There were repeated attempts to enact legislation on compulsory attendance but each was opposed by the Catholic Church. Its arguments centred on the issue of infringing parental rights declaring that "education is not a function of the State but an inalienable office of the parents." This argument had been used to oppose the 1892 Act on compulsory attendance and again in 1918 when the Killanin report made similar recommendations. The Killannin report also contained other far-reaching proposals on the reform of primary schooling including provision of school transport, school meals, medical and dental services and a school-books scheme in addition to managerial reforms with the creation of local boards to manage schools. It also recommended the closure of some small schools (Coolahan, 1981, p. 38).

The new Church and State partnership

On the cusp of independence in 1922, there were a number of innovative proposals for the development of primary school education which emanated from central government but also from local thinkers like the educationalist and revolutionary, Padraig Pearse, who wrote extensively on progressive and child-centred education and had founded a school in Dublin to put these ideas into practice. There was, however, strong opposition from the Catholic Church to an increase in State intervention in education. Thus the Irish Education Bill 1919, also known as the MacPhearson Bill, which included many of the recommendations mentioned above and also contained further re-structuring measures, was defeated. The Catholic hierarchy vehemently opposed it on the grounds of infringing parental rights as well as the fact that it was tending "in the direction of extreme Socialism" (Cardinal Logue, 1920, cited in Ó'Buachalla, 1988, p. 54) and was "aiming a deadly blow at

Irish nationalism and perhaps later on to secularise the schools" (Bishop of Ossory, 1920, cited in ibid). The Irish Parliament (Dáil Eireann), sitting for the first time in 1919, chose to play-down the Bill and by ignoring its proposals essentially acceded to the Bishops, thus setting a precedent for allowing the Catholic Church to play an influential role in social policy. A new Church-State partnership had begun. It would be decades before many of the recommendations of the 1919 Education Bill were implemented in schools in the Republic and indeed some of them have not, to this day, been put into practice, for example, the democratic management of schools. The new Irish State in 1922 had a specific agenda for education: it was the politics of cultural nationalism which would define education for the decades ahead.

Conclusion

Successive colonial policies which aimed to use schools to supplant native culture acted only to solidify the position of the Catholic Church in society. The Irish population gave allegiance to the Catholic Church as a form of resistance to proselytising. Thus it began to operate from a position of legitimization, acting like the spokesperson for the people and using education as a political platform to establish dominance. The Catholic Church recognised the importance of education for achieving positions of influence and power and energetically contested its self-appointed right to dominate primary school education. It eventually won this battle against the political and religious elites of the day and by the start of the twentieth century had established its sphere of dominance.

The examination of history has shown that many of the anomalous and puzzling features of primary schooling in the Republic have their foundation in the cultural context of the nineteenth century. The power of the patron was established then as the Churches won the right to manage schools along denominational lines. Ownership of primary schools cannot be divorced from the control of the patron and this right was also established in the nineteenth century. Today the Catholic Church owns 90% of schools. Throughout the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century the National Education system had the potential to be a new departure on a number of levels: to provide an education not delineated along sectarian lines; to involve the larger community in the management of schools; to re-shape the curriculum incorporating progressive educational ideas and to increase participation rates. However, an examination of the literature on the history of education in Ireland has shown that this potential was not realised. In a relatively short time an undemocratic system of primary schooling functioned where a private religious organisation was in control of virtually all managerial issues, as well as the curriculum and teacher training, and by 1920 a segregated system of primary schooling existed rather than an interdenominational one. In addition the Catholic Church effectively blocked initiatives to increase participation in education by

opposing legislation to make school attendance compulsory and its opposition to extend state funding of education contributed to poor facilities and standards. It has, however, to be recognised that this was a remarkable political victory by the Catholic Church given that it was challenging a major colonial power not by physical force but by political manoeuvring. By the twentieth century there were only two stakeholders in education and the balance of power in the Church and British State relationship was tipped undoubtedly in favour of the Catholic Church. The dynamics of such a binary power system would persist merely with different politicians post-independence. There would be a continuation of private ownership and private control of "public" schooling for the next one hundred years.

Chapter 5: Irish Educational Policy 1920-1961

Introduction

The 1916 revolutionaries proclaimed an Irish Republic which was to be based on a number of social principles including equality, freedom and public ownership of institutions and resources. The Republic's first duty was to its children: all children of the nation were to be treated equally. A Democratic Programme embodying these aspirations was adopted by the first Dáil (parliament) in 1919. However, as O'Toole (2012, p. 13) points out, it was treated with little respect and promptly forgotten. The goals of education were defined in terms of the cultural and the moral realm; expressing a distinct identity was of overriding importance and this involved imparting a sense of cultural nationalism which was inextricably tied to an expression of Catholicism and adherence to its strict moral codes. As the Minister for Education in the 1950s announced, after training in religion the "inculcation of patriotism and an informed love of one's country's history and culture is the second great goal of education" (Mulcahy, 1950). There was thus a clearly articulated political role to be fulfilled by the school and the curriculum was to play a major part in the social reproductive process of establishing a sense of identity, nationhood and moral purity. However, in the drive to use the schools for this project other essential functions of education were not prioritised.

In this chapter I examine how the early years of the new State were shaped by certain political and moral agendas and how the cornerstones of primary education were set. A new independent government was in charge of domestic affairs but in education this did not signify any radical re-structuring or re-orientation. Rather Catholic Church influence, already established in the previous century, continued to be the driving force in education. What quickly emerged is a converging of Church and State positions leading to a solid partnership which went unchallenged throughout the period. In this chapter I trace the nature of this relationship in which the State essentially played a subsidiary role. The possible reasons for the absence of innovation in education and for an acceptance of consensus are explored positing the theory that the underlying factor was an underdeveloped culture of democracy due in, some measure, to rigid top-down control.

Curriculum changes and stalemate

When the new State came into being in 1922 a blueprint existed for the formation of a new type of education system. The Education Act (1919) contained a number of reform measures which could potentially have led to broad curriculum changes and to a re-shaping of the philosophy guiding teaching, educational provision and its structures. However, the Catholic Church was stringently opposed to the bill which it saw as symbolising a dilution of its power and as being socialist and this

opposition was taken seriously by the politicians of the day. Changes were made to the curriculum but they centred on instilling a sense of national pride in all that was Gaelic – history, folklore, music, dance, singing, games and language - rather than a re-structuring of the system. In Coolahan's words a "cultural revolution" was to take place via the schools (1981, p. 39). By the time the new State was formed Irish was infrequently used as a first language outside areas predominantly along the western seaboard, and less than 10% of primary school teachers were competent enough to teach it as a subject (see Coolahan, ibid, p.41). But now all teaching for infant classes was to be through the medium of Irish and as far as possible Irish the language of instruction for the entire school. The intense focus on the language and other elements of culture meant that there was less space for science and technical subjects in the curriculum. In the 1930s the new Fianna Fáil administration, under Eamon de Valera, further narrowed the subject range to raise the status of Irish language, culture and history at the expense of rural science, mathematics and English language. The language policy was a failure: the population became neither Irish speaking nor bilingual and today less that 2% of the population speak Irish as their first language. This is despite the continuation of the language policy which makes Irish a compulsory subject for thirteen years of schooling. As Coolahan notes, even when the programmes were laid down in 1922 for a new curriculum "very little attention was given to setting out the theoretical framework or curricular philosophy which was to guide the new programmes" (ibid, p. 40).

In the 1940s the primary school teachers' union, the Irish National Teachers Organisation, called for a more child-centred approach in teaching and for the curriculum to be extended to include subjects like physical education, more practical subjects and more literary and aesthetic subjects (Coolahan, ibid, p. 44). These recommendations were not heeded and the status quo continued with an emphasis on written examinations, strict discipline, rote learning and classical learning (e.g. Latin) with science and technical subjects virtually excluded. The focus of the curriculum was clearly on cultural transformation - on creating a new sense of nationhood which would reflect newly won independence. As the poet and senator William Butler Yeats noted in 1926 "there is a tendency to subordinate the child to the idea of the nation" (cited in Sinta, 2003) or as Akenson (1975, p. 41) puts it "schooling was directed not at developing the potentialities of the individual pupils for the pupils' sake, but at developing certain cultural traits for the nation's sake."

Establishing religious influence in education

From the foundation of the State the bishops were clear in their message that they had a distinct role to play in education. The Catholic Church stated in 1921 that it would be desirable if the new

State "would recognise and respect the principles which must regulate and govern Catholic education" (cited in Ó'Buachalla, 1988, p. 60). Catholic morals were to infuse education and parents were actually forbidden from sending their children to non-Catholic schools: "Accordingly, in the education of Catholics every branch of human training is subject to the guidance of the church, and those schools alone which the church approves are capable of providing a fully Catholic education. Therefore the Church forbids parents and guardians to send a child to any non-Catholic school…" (McQuaid, 1953). Indeed as Hyland notes the pulpit was often used to convey the message that to contravene this order constituted committing a mortal sin (1996, p. 3). The power to forbid ordinary citizens from attending certain educational intuitions extended into the 1970s when the bishops ban on attending Trinity College Dublin (seen as a being the Protestant university) was finally lifted. The stamp of the bishops on educational practice was soon established when in 1926 the State accepted the right of the Catholic Church to control all aspects of the school day by making religious instruction the most fundamental part of schooling:

> Of all parts of a school curriculum, religious instruction is by far the most important…We assume, therefore, that Religious instruction is a fundamental part of the school course. Though the time allotted to it as a specific subject is necessarily short, a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school. The teacher, while careful in presence of children of different religious beliefs not to touch on matters of controversy, should constantly inculcate, in connection with secular subjects, the practice of charity, justice, truth, purity, patience, temperance, obedience to lawful authority, and all the other moral virtues. (Report of the Second National Programme Conference, 1926)

Inglis (1998) outlines that controlling education was fundamental for the Catholic Church, because it was instrumental to its project for the "civilisation, moralisation, discipline, and supervision of Irish people" (p. 40). It is via education that the strict moral codes and doctrine could be transmitted and maintained. But as Inglis (ibid) also points out this system of indoctrination has been allowed to continue because the State has legitimatised the Catholic Church's role in laying down education policy. It has accepted and endorsed, informally and via legislative measures, the right of the Church to preserve its ethos across primary school education in its specification of enrolment policies, control of the curriculum and conducting of employment practices.

The long awaited government report from the Council of Education (1954) on curriculum at first and second level showed that the position of the Catholic Church in the mid twentieth century was still all-pervasive and endorsed by the State. It concluded that the first duty of parents is to "train their children in the fear and love of God" and that this duty "becomes the first duty of the school." Indeed as Williams notes the report "endorsed very emphatically the denominational and catechetical character of primary education" (1999, p. 323). It follows that such an ideology does

not provide a realistic forum for parents to participate. Neither does this dogma readily accommodate a worldview which sees the child as being good rather than a sinner, possessing a natural curiosity and as having individual needs which an education system can strive to meet:

> Similarly, the theological assumptions which led the clergy to reject the ideas of the "progressive educators," that the child is inherently good and that education should be concerned primarily with encouraging the child to express this natural goodness, paralleled the unspoken assumptions of the Irish social structure: socially the young occupied the lowest rung and the outgrowing of childhood was the first step towards acquiring social status. (Akenson, 1975, p. 108)

The school system functioned in a paternalistic and autocratic fashion with strict discipline. As O'Sullivan (2005, p. 118) points out the theocratic paradigm bestowed an unquestionable control and authority on teachers as "Church/State agents concerned with the ultimate salvation of the pupil and empowered to act as they will know best to further assist in that salvation."

Kelly (1995) outlines that because many religions have a view of a perfect kind of knowledge whose end goal is divine revelation that morality is therefore not vested in the opinion of the people but is governed by the law of God: "…ultimately values cannot be questioned because they are firmly based in reason, or on God's law. Morality is not a matter of opinion but of *knowledge"* (p.18). Garvin (1996) makes a similar point that the Catholic Church was organised in an undemocratic fashion seeing its authority as coming not from the people but from God. Thus from the start the primary school system of the new State was founded on undemocratic principles, that is, those who controlled and owned the schools and set the agenda for education did not see their authority as being vested in the people but in an outside presence – the Vatican State.

The Irish Constitution

A discussion of the 1937 Bunreacht na hÉireann (Irish Constitution) requires analysis in a work on education as it bears direct relevance to developments concerned with State responsibility and freedom of conscience. The 1937 Constitution, drawn up under Taoiseach (PM) de Valera, was informed by Catholic teaching on social issues due to the deeply held religious convictions of De Valera and the significant input of the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid. The final document, although it did not declare the State to be theocratic and De Valera resisted pressure to declare Catholicism the established Church, made clear the special place of religion in how the State was to function: the "State acknowledges that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honour religion" (Article 44.1).

Articles 42 and 44 deal with education and religion. Article 42 designates a secondary role for the State in educational matters outlining that the State has a duty to only provide a minimum education for children: "State shall … as guardian of the common good, require in view of actual conditions that the children receive a certain minimum education…"(Article 42.3.2). Instead of explicitly outlining State responsibility in educational provision and management it places the main emphasis for education within the family:

> The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children. (Article 42.1)

The emphasis on parental supremacy echoes Catholic doctrine and was frequently invoked during the nineteenth century by the bishops to dilute State involvement in education and in particular to hinder legislative reform. The pivotal role assigned to parents rather than the State was now, however, enshrined in law. Although the Catholic Church continuously highlighted the inalienable right of parents in decisions regarding education, Archbishop McQuaid regarded these parental powers to be subsumed by the Catholic Church:

> Only the church is competent to declare what is a fully Catholic upbringing for, to the church alone, which HE established, our divine Lord, Jesus Christ has given the mission to teach mankind to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded…Accordingly, in the education of Catholics every branch of human training is subject to the guidance of the church, and those schools alone which the church approves are capable of providing a fully Catholic education. (The Irish Catholic Directory, 1945, p. 674)

Grammar – in particular one certain preposition – has come to play a vital role in the interpretation of the extent of State responsibility in schooling:

> The State shall provide for free primary education and shall endeavour to supplement and give reasonable aid to private and corporate educational initiative, and, when the public good requires it, provide other educational facilities or institutions with due regard, however, for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation. (Article 42.4)

The phrase "provide *for*" [my italics] is highly significant in legitimising the subsidiary role of the State and establishing the importance of outside bodies in education. O'Mahony (2007) concludes that the Irish courts have repeatedly upheld the secondary role of the State in managerial and administrative school matters. Mawhinney (2007, p.387) shows that legal rulings subsequent to the constitution have established that the State is not obliged to educate only to provide funding, specify the curriculum and pay teachers. This was also the ruling in the high-profile 2009 case *O'Keeffe vs. Hickey and the Minister for Education and Science, Ireland and the Attorney General*.

Bishop Leo O'Reilly made direct reference to the significance of the "Principle of Subsidiarity" ensured by the preposition "for" in his address to the Department of Education and Skills on future patronage issues in schools:

> Our Constitution lays down that the State provides for free Primary education and also undertakes to support private education initiatives. It is noteworthy that the Constitution does not say that the State provides primary education but rather provides for it, and the State has done this so far through the system of patronage. The Constitution thus envisages subsidiarity in educational provision and the different patron bodies are involved in making this provision at local level. This has meant that different groups in society have been able to provide educational services with the assistance of the Department of Education and Science while maintaining a degree of independence. This is good for all concerned, because as far as possible, the wishes of parents, in terms of the education needs of their children, have been met. (O'Reilly, 2008)

The position of certain vested interest groups has also been furthered by the constitutional provision which legitimises State funding of denominational education. As Coolahan notes Articles 42.2.4 and 44.2.6 "relate to the State's acceptance and protection of denominational interests in education and makes explicit the State's role in providing State aid for denominational schooling" (1981, p. 158): "Legislation providing State aid for schools shall not discriminate between schools under the management of different religious denominations…" (Article 44.2.4). The constitution also makes provision for the funding of non-religious schools as well as the right for pupils to attend such schools and this is why the multi-denominational body Educate Together can work within the State-supported framework, although it receives less state funding than denominational schools.

The Irish Constitution (1937) is not a straightforward document and a certain vagueness informs some of its provisions. Article 42.3.1 appears to enshrine the right of parents not to send their children to a school where their children would be indoctrinated in beliefs contrary to theirs: "The State shall not oblige parents in violation of their conscience and lawful preference to send their children to schools established by the State, or to a particular type or school designated by the State." The document continues in this vein stating that the State must show "due regard…for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation" (Article 42.4). The implications of this clause are that if a parent is at variance with, say, the Catholic ethos of a school they do not have to send their child to this school. But apart from home schooling (permitted under Article 42.2 of the constitution) what are the realistic alternatives in a country where almost all schools are managed by the Catholic Church? Furthermore Article 44 makes provisions for minorities by stating that "Freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion are, subject to public order and morality, guaranteed to every citizen" (Article 44.2.1) and "The State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession,

belief or status (Article 44.2.3). However, as analysts like Mawhinney (2007) point out, in reality opt-out clauses are ineffectual in particular at primary level because the Integrated Curriculum ensures that a religious spirit infuses all parts of the school day and not just designated religious classes. Mawhinney (ibid, p. 388) also highlights the inherent contradictions in the constitutional provisions – on the one hand it pays homage to freedom of conscience but on the other guarantees funding for denominational education and gives assurance that religious organisations have a particular degree of independence in that they have a right to manage their own educational affairs: "Every religious denomination shall have the right to manage its own affairs, own, acquire and administer property…" (Article 44.2.5). Legislation since 1937 has acted to copper fasten the rights of denominational interest groups to protect their interests over and above respecting human rights despite various international bodies expressing concern to the Irish government on the contravening of basic democratic rights (c.f. Mawhinney, 2007, pp. 399-402 and Nugent, 2014a).

Lack of investment in education

There was little emphasis given to advancing industrialisation in Ireland prior to the 1960s, rather an anti-modernist paradigm defined economic and social policy. A shared ideology by leading politicians and the clergy venerated a mystical, innocent, rural past underscored by strict Catholic morals. Urbanisation that accompanies industrialisation would have heralded a more secular world-view which could have posed a threat to this common agenda. There was a deliberate policy to insulate the new nation from external influences. Protectionism and self-sufficiency drove economic policy prohibiting industrialisation and foreign trade. The country could not support its population who had to emigrate, in large numbers, to Britain and the USA. The strict censorship laws of the time can be seen in the context of a cultural policy which sought to minimise non-Catholic influences so that there could be no corruption, via books or films, of the strict moral codes so important in the ascribed definition of identity. Thus native authors like James Joyce, who was seen as being anti-Catholic, were banned and so too were films like *Casablanca* due to the portrayal of an adulterous relationship (The Journal, 2014). Similar insular ideologies also left their mark in education: there was little international influence on policy and no drive to increase access to education.

Successive governments did not prioritise education as a vehicle for social mobility or draw a strong correlation between economic development and educational progression. Investment in education during the period was lower than in Britain, and Northern Ireland spent four times more per head of population on education (Garvin, 2004, p. 189). Public spending on education actually decreased from 1936-1956 (Akenson, 1975, p. 85), which no doubt contributed to declining educational standards. Garvin (2010, p.160) outlines that the standard of written and spoken English was

actually worse than it had been around the time of independence in 1922, facilities were sub-standard and classroom size could be up to ninety pupils in some areas. Under-investment was due in some respects to the stagnant economic climate but also to the State not prioritising financing education: as Logan (1999, p. 287) puts it "the question of educational equality – the extension of schooling and an individual's access to it as a civil and social right – was for the time being conceptualised as a secondary concern." It is possible to rationalise this reluctance to invest in education also in terms of the power dynamics at play. The Catholic Church did not advocate State funding of the secondary system because it feared State "interference" would weaken the extensive control it have over curriculum and management (Garvin, 2010, p. 177). Therefore education remained class-based, particularly at secondary school which was a wholly private enterprise until 1967. Until the late 1960s very few children progressed from primary to second level: as McElliggot (1961) pointed out Ireland had the lowest percentage of children receiving post-primary education in western Europe. Compulsory attendance was introduced in 1927 but the school-leaving age remained at fourteen until 1972, despite repeated calls from the teacher's unions and other bodies to increase it. Widening access and increasing participation were not pressing issues for the Minister for Education, Richard Moylan, who declared that he did not agree with "this idea of equal opportunities for all" (1953). Thus as Ó'Buachalla notes: "the extension of opportunity was marginal, involving only a small percentage of the relevant age groups; there were areas and social groups for whom the national school constituted the entire educational experience" (1988, p.70). These were the groups who had to emigrate; they were often ill-equipped to deal with life in a modern urban world. As McElliggot (1961) pointed out because they had been denied an education they were unskilled and had an "equally inadequate moral training" often becoming the "slum-dwellers of England."

The lack of investment in education and the lack of political will to implement change is one of the major factors which contributed to poverty being a salient feature of everyday life in Ireland prior to the 1960s. It was not just the preoccupation with gaelicisation which accounts for the neglect of all other major educational policy initiatives: rather because schooling was largely "outsourced" to a private body central government was not fully responsible for overseeing and directing major change. The subsidiary role the State assumed in education meant that it was not fully accountable; neither did it have to concern itself with controversial or probing philosophical and theoretical debates. The educational stakeholders did not have to contend with possible challenges to their power base from a well-educated populace. A more informed society, with a different type of knowledge to that defined by the Catholic hierarchy, might have mounted a challenge to the

establishment resulting in the dismantling of hegemonic structures. An educated populace, as Garvin outlines, could cause trouble (2004, p.168): they could question and challenge the prevailing definition of what was good for them. This would upset the Church-State ideological agenda but also could have other implications. As Inglis (1998, p. 64) notes the binary relationship was not just about ideological and social control but embodied political and economic dimensions too. Inglis (ibid), applying a Bourdieuian analysis, outlines the connection between religious capital and social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital, as capital accumulated in one field can be used to attain capital in other areas. In the case of Ireland it was such that in the priest-controlled culture of the time respectability or a moral standing in the community could be gained via adherence and loyalty to Catholic moral dogma. This accumulated religious capital could be traded for other forms of capital (ibid, p. 65), for example, having religious capital might be equated with a certain social "wealth" or prestige. Unlike in many other European societies in the mid twentieth century, in Ireland religious capital was significant in defining one's overall social position in society (ibid). It was also valuable in networking, gaining entry to a variety of social clubs – including politics and education. Religious capital was also significant in acquiring symbolic capital in the Ireland of the day, for example the bishops gave their seal of approval to good Catholic public representatives and this legitimated the politicians' stance on economic and social policy. The implied message was – a politician accepted by the clergy can do no wrong and this is how power can be attained and maintained.

Church and State symbiosis

The unquestioning support of many of the leading political figures for Catholic control of society was undoubtedly a contributory factor in the maintenance of power relationships and this is evident in the utterances of successive politicians. The first Taoiseach, W.T. Cosgrove, announced that "the Dáil will not make laws contrary to the teachings of the Church" (in Ó'Buachalla, 1988, p.61). When De Valera came to power in 1932 he continued the tradition of deference to the clergy so that by the 1960s Catholic moral code was imprinted into virtually all social policy. John A. Costello, Fine Gael Taoiseach during the 1950s, declared: "I am an Irishman second; I am a Catholic first. If the hierarchy give me any direction with regard to Catholic social teaching of Catholic moral teaching, I accept without qualifications in all respects the teaching of the hierarchy and the Church to which I belong (cited in Cooney, p. 22). As was concluded in the broadsheet, The Irish Times, in 1951: "the Roman Catholic Church would seem to be the effective government of this country." There was no separation between the State and the Church in everyday Irish life. The theocratic influence in education continued unabated because there was a "hands-off" approach from elected representatives. In 1957 the Minister for Education, Richard Mulcahy, gave his opinion on a

politician's role in education as being that of a "plumber" rather than someone who steers a course by engaging with concepts or philosophy:

> I regard the position as Minister in the Department of Education as that of a kind of dungaree man, the plumber who will make the satisfactory communications and streamline the forces and potentialities of the educational workers and educational management of this country. He will knock out the pipes and will link up everything. I would be blind to my responsibility if I insisted on pontification or lapsed into an easy acceptance of an imagined duty to philosophise here on educational matters (cited in O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 123).

The reasons why this relationship was so solid are complex and have their roots in deep-rooted values. The goal of establishing a definite and unique sense of identity was strongly linked to religion. Williams (1999, p. 317-318) concludes that in the psyche of the Irish loyalty to the Catholic Church is connected with an association between the fight for independence and religion: "an identification of Catholicism with freedom from foreign interference" and that the process of seeing nationhood in terms of Catholic nationhood goes back to the sixteenth century when the initial attempts to proselytise the population were occurring. Over time Catholicism became synonymous with defence of political freedom and resistance to outside influence. Arising from this a deep connection between sense of self and Catholicism developed and became embedded in the national consciousness. Inglis (1998, pp. 243-245) also debates this deep psychological connection between Catholicism and identity outlining that via the early socialisation into moral teachings, in school as well as in the family, there is in the minds of many no distinction between Irishness and Catholicism. A powerful habitus has been created which, as Inglis (ibid) outlines, will not entirely disappear even in the face of rapid social change. It is a habitus which defines the national character, cultural group interaction and implies a sense of belonging; it is a type of cultural DNA whose code incorporates the rules for behaviour and the values for acceptance. If you do not adhere to the rules you are not part of the group.

The general population did not question the right of the Catholic Church to define all areas of social activity in accordance with its moral code. As Akenson (1975), Whyte (1980), Inglis (1998) and Garvin (2010) emphasise there was a striking loyalty, an almost unanimous acceptance of the intertwining of Catholic social teaching and State policy across all social groups and in both rural and urban areas. In education this meant, as McElligott pointed out in 1958, that the people of the Republic had for over 30 years "acquiesced in a system which has ignored both the needs of the child and the community." Akenson (1975) and Inglis (1998) provide an argument which references Gramsci's understanding of hegemony: "most Irishmen were the product of the church's educational system and therefore had been indoctrinated during childhood years with the very ideas and assumptions upon which the clergy's actions were based" (Akenson, 1975, p. 108). Such an

observation mirrors Gramsci's (1971) idea that domination of the masses is achieved via control of cultural institutions where a particular interpretation of reality by elite groups is imposed. Inglis (ibid, p. 81) puts forward the idea that it was the Catholic Church's institutional monopoly – through control of schools, churches, hospitals, legal mechanisms and the family - which had the effect of controlling individual consciousness and social life. It contributed to creating a "disposition in which people were not encouraged to think for themselves" (ibid, p. 253). The Catholic Church's control of the general consciousness also meant that it was able to fend off any challenges to conservative legislation or social policy which may have been contrary to its moral stance – for example, it orchestrated the defeat of Health Minister Noel Brown's Mother and Child healthcare proposal in 1951. Inglis concludes that it was this institutional monopoly "which inhibited a rational differentiation between religion and politics" (ibid). The juxtaposition of religion and politics had continued for hundreds of years and was a powerful force which would not be easily dismantled.

Garvin (2010) notes that the general population passively accepted a definition of the common good which did little to provide them with a fair and egalitarian society or one where there was any real sense of cultural or indeed psychological freedom. It was, according to Garvin, a "culture of fear" which the ruling elites instilled in the population:

> Independent Ireland was then less than totally free. Freedom of expression and of opinion was inhibited in many ways, and it took a generational change and the coming of films and television for this atmosphere of cultural fear to dissipate gradually over the following decades. Some would argue that it is still with us in 2010. (Garvin, 2010, p.213).

As Clancy outlines, in the Irish context it was the reproduction of consciousness which the education system achieved: "issues of moral socialisation took precedence over issues of technical socialisation" (1986, p. 120). Inculcating particular values and ensuring their continuation was the fundamental goal of the major educational stakeholders for this ensured the prevalence of a particular type of ideology which fitted the needs of the dominant power groups. Prior to the 1960s there was no visible rupture of the control of consciousness which Gramsci outlines is how the people can liberate themselves from the shackles of hegemonic domination. The educationalist and writer, T.J. McElligott, who unequivocally critiqued education in the 1960s, refers to the fear parents had of questioning the system: "Such is the range of clerical control and such the fear, or at best apathy of the people that they show little concern where their children are taught, and less concern for what they are taught" (1961). McElligott also (1958) notes that it was an "anachronistic system administered with monumental indifference to the opinions of teachers and parents alike." Lynch makes the point that the high esteem with which the Catholic Church was held brought "an aura of moral legitimacy to bear on the educational process thereby immunizing it from attack" (1989, p.

132). This legitimatized status hindered any questioning of its dogma or challenging of its rational for controlling education. O'Toole refers to the secrecy surrounding much of political life which led to a curtailment of freedom and a less than robust type of participatory democracy: "For most of its history, the State failed miserably in the basic task of ensuring that citizens were free from subjection to the arbitrary will of others. It allowed the institutional Catholic Church (as opposed to Catholics themselves) to exercise unaccountable and secretive power in key areas of public and private lives of citizens…" (2012, p.25). According to O'Toole (ibid) engaged citizenship, one of the characteristics of modern democracy, is weak in Ireland as a result of the authoritarian top-down control which ensured a lack of transparency and openness. Free discussion was not encouraged by such a regime: censorship and the Catholic Church's "moral monopoly" made for a covert and secretive cultural climate. One of the by-products of this system of control is what O'Toole terms "fatalism and a sense of powerlessness" (ibid, p.28), characteristics which inhibit engaged citizenry and the belief that active participation in the democratic system can effect change.

Lynch (1989) makes reference to the class bias underlying influences in education, noting that after independence politics was dominated by a middle class who could then exert influence on policy (p. 121). She concludes that the absence of a polarized proletariat and bourgeoisie prior to this was due to colonial policies which had hampered the development of an indigenous industrialised sector. It was the middle class rather than a working class, who had led the independence movement and came to be in leadership positions in its aftermath. Lynch (1989, p. 123) maintains that this had an important bearing on subsequent educational policies and in particular the concentration on cultural nationalism: the concept of the nation is attractive for the intermediate classes because when collective energy is channelled into a concern with nationhood the class issue can be side-lined. The middle class was in a position to oversee the reproduction of a type of knowledge which fitted its ends and did not threaten its power base. Lynch also makes the point that religious personnel were drawn largely from the middle classes leading to a situation whereby, "The corporate location of religious in the middle classes has meant that they have more often acted in line with the interests of that particular class than in promoting the interests of the unemployed or the working class in education. The Church has in fact been an agent of counter-resistance in a number of ways" (ibid, p. 131). In addition as both Akenson (1975, p. 107) and Lynch (1989) point out the school had another economic function: it was a fertile recruitment ground for future nuns and priests needed to continue spreading a certain religious message and to conduct the (largely unpaid) business of the organisation.

Conclusion

Education did not exist in a vacuum from the socio-political context which defined the era. Conservatism, isolationism and ideals based around cultural nationalism were the principles defining political, economic and social life. One of the foremost concerns of the new State was to promote a unique identity embodying traditions of Catholicism and a rural Celtic past which would give expression to a separate and independent sense of nationhood. Education was the main forum whereby the desired ideology could be transmitted and propagated. It was an effective hegemonic instrument over which the Catholic Church was granted free reign by the State in a symbiotic relationship. Thus the function of education was to reproduce a particular set of moral and political values based on a conservative tradition. The 1937 constitution gave legal standing to the privileged position of these values, establishing the status of denominational education in law, the subsidiary role of the State in education and ensuring that challenging the denominational primary school system would be impossible for the ordinary citizen.

In the drive to achieve transmission of traditional values all other significant functions of education were ignored including the potential to increase opportunity and facilitate social mobility and equality. The goal of the ruling elites was not egalitarianism but that of maintaining a consensus and a power base. As McElligott critiquing the system in the 1960s put it – dead wood needed to be pruned from the Tree of Knowledge (1961). But this did not happen in the first 40 years of the new State because of a collective fear on the part of the Church and the State of any ideas which may have had undertones of a Socialist ideology. A conservative and somewhat right-wing agenda united the forces and led to the creation of a shared perspective. In education there was a “hands-off” approach from central government: a dearth of investment in education; the failure to improve standards in primary school education or increase the school-leaving age; the preservation of second level education for the middle classes and third level for the elites, (often the political class and the clergy); and the outsourcing of schooling to a private body - a religious elite. There was no innovation in terms of pedagogy or engagement with critical philosophical debate; a stagnant, repressive and authoritarian classroom prevailed where the individual needs of the child were ignored in a drive to achieve the gaelicisation of a nation of acquiescent Catholics using strict discipline. In addition, analysts like Lynch (1989) and O’Toole (2009) theorise that the reasons for laissez-faire policies on education were connected to a common State and Church economic agenda to reproduce traditional bourgeois class structures. An old system, inherited from the nineteenth century continued to operate but it was unfit to meet the needs of a twentieth century population with hopes for a better future.

Education was not an arena for the type of clash of ideas which Williams (1973), Inglis (1985) and Carr (1998) outline characterises democratic societies. Akenson provides a possible explanation for the absence of contestation in his theory of the hegemonic dynamics at work within education. Inglis (1998) outlines the importance of religious capital in gaining respectability in society and in gaining access to power – political, economic and symbolic. Garvin (2004 & 2010) and O'Toole (2012) conclude that a culture of fear and a code of concealment and secrecy operated and worked to supress any potential dissention. Agency was not visible and critics of the system, like McElliggott writing in the 1950s and 1960s, repeatedly lamented the apathy of parents in challenging the system. Thus it can be concluded that it is legitimate to question the extent one can apply the term "democratic" to education at this time. Independent democratic institutions had been established after 1922 and functioned politically but democracy as a more civic and participatory model was absent. Parents accepted the grip the religious had on education and among public representatives there were no probing ideological debates about how education might contribute to the "good society". How the "good society" functioned was a given, determined and defined by the ruling elites. Change, though, was slowly afoot and from the 1960s onwards outside influences were beginning to have an effect on all aspects of everyday life. But a consensus culture was already established and an analysis of this early period in the educational history of the new State highlights how the groundwork was laid for policy and practice which would have an impact into the future; patterns of passivity were formed, deference to elites fostered, markers for positions of influence were established by power blocs and certain voices had a forum for expression whilst others, like those of parents and children, were excluded.

Chapter 6: A Critical Analysis of Education Policy 1961-1999

Introduction

In the 1960s new political leaders spearheaded a move away from protectionism and embraced more outward looking economic and social policies. It was recognised that education would play a pivotal role in paving the way to industrialization and increasing living standards. In a bid to achieve this goal there was a drive to increase participation, open up education to all sections of society and reform the curriculum. The modernization project involved addressing changes at the domestic level but would also incorporate an international dimension: outside organisations like the OECD begin to play an important role. Education policy in this period is characterized by interplay between traditional perspectives and new directions resulting in a certain tension as the historical power dynamics broaden to accommodate other stakeholders: parents, as well as the market. On one hand education begins to reflect social and economic change. On the other hand the old order jostled for position in the power stakes and there are concerted efforts to defend the status quo. This duality often manifested itself in policies characterized by hyperbole rather than a real paradigm-shift in thinking. Anomalies are discernible in many educational developments – the bid to democratize management structures, the instigation of a new child-centred curriculum, and the gradual acceptance of multi-denominational schooling. These innovations were however operating within a culture of caution. A reactionary stance is particularly evident in the framework of legislative developments during this period; the issue of religious ethos in education becomes central and is assigned an explicit political role which is safeguarded in law on the eve of the twenty-first century. When the policy of the era is deconstructed what emerges is ambivalence. There is a striking discord between what political leaders say about liberalizing education and what is actually enshrined in law and implemented in practice. Real commitment to democratic ideals is called into question as ambiguity and incongruity surround policy.

Investment in education

The OECD Investment in Education Report (1965) is seen as a landmark development in Irish educational policy. As O'Sullivan notes:

> It is credited with rescuing Irish education from its concern with character development and religious formation pursued through the medium of a general education largely comprised of literary and classical studies. IIE is said to have reconceptualised education as a social institution, directing attention to the needs of the economy and the imperative that schools respond to the technological requirements of industry. (2005, p. 129)

The OECD report, which was conducted jointly with Irish representatives, highlighted the unsatisfactory state of schooling and advocated the need for a more concerted approach to the

planning of education as well as the necessity of increasing educational opportunity. It was driven by economic concerns and incorporated the idea that previous social and economic policies had not worked and so for the country to move forward a different way was necessary. There was now a heightened awareness of the connection between economic advancement and educational progression. As O'Sullivan (2005) notes, the report drew attention to the human capital potential of education – invest in people so that they can fit the requirements of the capitalist system: "A country must seek in designing its education system to satisfy, among other things, the manpower needs of the future" (OECD, 1965, p. 350). As was pointed out in this report, in 1964 only 36% of 16-year-olds were in full-time education and just 14 per cent of 18-year-olds. Ferriter (2010, p. 597) emphasizes the class inequality of the system at the time with less than 10% of the children of semi-skilled or unskilled workers in full-time education. Due in part to the recommendations of the report to address such inequalities the government adopted the slogan "equality of educational opportunity for all" and significant changes were instigated: the "free second level" scheme (1967) which made second level schooling available to all and in conjunction with this the school transport initiative, as well as raising the school-leaving age to 15 in 1972. There was an urgency to meet requirements for EEC entry in 1973 and therefore a need to reform educational policy in line with European standards and practices. As Ó'Buachalla (1988, p. 284) puts it these changes signified an end to the "gradualism" which had characterized education policy in the first fifty years of the independent State. From now onwards a more active role by the State is discernible and also the emergence of a new paradigm, that referencing the demands of the market.

The "new" curriculum

In 1971 the Department of Education issued a new curriculum for primary schools published as a two volume Teacher Handbook. The aim was that the curriculum "endeavour to cater for the full and harmonious development of each child" (1971, p. 13). The "new curriculum", as it was known, was seen by many commentators (Murphy, 1972; Coolahan, 1989) as one of the most significant and far-reaching developments to occur in the sector since the foundation of the State for it sought to implement a child-centred, discovery approach. It signified that the Irish system was embracing progressive educational ideas which had already made their mark in other parts of Europe and was, as Murphy (1972, p. 203) and Limond (2010, p. 455) note, heavily influenced by the child-centred principles of the British Plowden Report. It was seen as instigating a move away from an authoritarian system towards a less intimidating classroom where the child could express herself. Ferriter sees it as a move to counteract "the idea prevalent in the 1954 Council of Education report on primary education that a child was born in a state of sin" (2010, p. 598). In the words of Coolahan: "It involved a radical shift of the ideological position and methodological approach to

primary education" (1989, p. 50), introducing small group teaching as well as drawing on Dewey's ideas of developing links between the school, the local community and the local environment. Teachers were generally in favour but because it was such a new departure its implementation was not always immediate or seamless. Coolahan (ibid) outlines how lack of funding hampered in-service training for teachers as well as the purchase of new equipment which should have gone hand-in–hand with the new methodologies outlined for the curriculum. Implementation differed from school to school and whereas the school day may have become more pleasant for some for others it continued to be a terrifying experience – old teaching habits die hard (c.f. Kelly, 1975). According to O'Sullivan, the Irish school teacher was seen at the time as being authoritarian, "a key figure in the cultivation of deference to authority figures, particularly religious" (2005, p.443). Although the new curriculum did address innovations in methodology and content the same cannot be said of elements of the thinking underlying its foundations. In particular I refer to the "integrated" nature of the curriculum: that "the curriculum is to be regarded essentially as an integrated entity" (Ireland. Department of Education, 1971, Teachers Handbook, p. 20).

In 1901 the *Revised Programme for National Schools*, furthering the recommendations of the 1897 Belmore Commission, introduced the idea of integrated learning in a bid to reform school pedagogy in the Irish classroom: now this concept was revisited. Whilst the theory of integrated learning has many positive aspects, in the 1971 Irish context it was manipulated to accomplish a particular ideological goal – that of religious indoctrination. As Hyland (1996, p.5) notes, the 1971 curriculum can be viewed in the context of a continuum with previous moves to formalize the infusion of the religious into all aspects of school life. In 1965 the revised Rules for National Schools pronounced that the State "gives explicit recognition to the denominational character of these schools." Rule 68 of the Rules adopted the 1926 Catholic hierarchy proposal that, "Of all parts of a school curriculum, religious instruction is by far the most important" and that "a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school" (Report of the Second National Programme, 1926). Hyland makes the point that, taken as a package these measures secured and legitimized the exclusive denominational nature of primary schooling:

> The State now formally recognised the denominational character of the national school system and made no provision for, nor even adverted to the rights of those children whose parents did not wish them to attend exclusively denominational schools…While the rule under which parents were allowed to opt their children out of religious instruction still remained [Rule 69.2 (a)], the rule became effectively inoperable since religious and secular instruction would now be integrated. Even if religious instruction were separately timetabled, it could be assumed that a specifically denominational ethos would "permeate the day." (1996, p. 5)

One is left to wonder how such legitimised comprehensive religious control can comfortably sit with the stated principles of the curriculum based around child-centred learning and the "natural curiosity" of the child (Ireland, Department of Education, 1971, p. 8). There is an inherent contradiction between the philosophy of progressive education, based as it is on seeing the child as an active agent in their own learning process, and Catholic social teaching which traditionally saw the child more as a passive recipient of a pre-determined knowledge. As O'Sullivan notes: "In the traditional Irish Catholic view the child was passive: 'formation, 'instilling' and inculcating' dominated its rhetoric" (2005, p. 443). The questioning and critical thinking skills which define progressive education are somewhat at variance with Canon Law which sees that children are to be educated "in accordance with the teaching of the church" (Canon 226.2, in Hyland, 1996, p.3). On the surface level the State was endorsing a new type of pedagogy but at a deeper level, in underwriting Catholic social teaching as the basis for Irish education, it was supporting the continuance of tradition. The new curriculum can be seen as an exercise in hyperbole rather than an embracing of radical philosophical change. It is an example of lip service to an ideal rather than a blueprint for tolerance and understanding or the fostering of critical and rational thinking.

Although the 1971 curriculum was revised in 1999 many elements of the original are still in force. Today's curriculum maintains a dedication to a child-centred approach and it also continues to support the Integrated Curriculum. Significantly the State body, NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment), which produced it has no input into religious education leaving this aspect of the curriculum, and any other which references religious ethos, in the hands of the respective patron. Thus the State continues to shirk from adopting a leadership role in the issues concerning belief systems, morality and freedom of conscience and allows a private organisation full control over this aspect of the curriculum.

Boards of Management

Until 1975 the running of primary schools had been wholly controlled by the patron but now Boards of Management were created which gave representation to parents and to the school principal. Ferriter (2012a, p. 629) states that the political opinion of the time saw in the proposals to create Boards of Management the first major change in the primary school system in one hundred and fifty years. Today there is a 25% parental representation, 25% teacher and 50% patron control. However, in reality this development has been more of a nod towards democracy rather than the implementation of realistic change. Although in practice most schools do have a Board of Management schools are not obliged to operate with a Board if the patron decides against it (this decision must be justified to the Minister for Education and Skills). In the denominational school

sector the local clergyman is still the chairperson of the Board of Management and has the final say in school business as well as in who will be appointed to the board. The role of the patron was still paramount as the 1996 Report of the Constitution Review Group outlined:

> The patron of a national school is responsible for the nomination of the board of management of that school although parents and teachers have a role in electing representatives to the board – the names to be subject to the formal approval of the patron. The patron also plays an important role in setting up the selection board for a school principalship and for approving all appointments to a school. The patron also has the powers to assume management of a school in the event of unsatisfactory performance by a board of management. (p.316)

The second OECD Report (1991) called for "devolution of responsibility for management and delivery of educational programmes" (OECD, 1991, p. 65), but this recommendation went unheeded. Coolahan (1989, p. 59) notes that there was little public debate on the effectiveness of Boards of Management, reflecting perhaps parents' recognition of their limited powers. Legislation enacted in 1998 would copper fasten the powers of the patron. The Education Act 1998 outlined the functions of the Board including that of being responsible for upholding the ethos of the school and being accountable to the patron for doing so. The creation of a more diverse management system may have seemed like the commencement of a more democratically functioning primary school sector in the mid-1970s but with the benefit of hindsight it can be seen as an exercise in window-dressing as the balance of power still remains firmly in the hands of the religious authorities. As the editor of the Irish Times noted (2014a), today the State is still excluded from any "robust" input into how Boards of Management function and is thus unable to ensure protection of children in receipt of a State-funded education because in the final analysis that power lies with the patron who controls the Board.

Multi-denominational schools

Changes though were beginning to happen as some parents began to organize politically and express dissatisfaction with the system. In the 1970s in parts of Dublin parents began calling for the establishment of multi-denominational, democratically-run primary schools. Both the Catholic Church and members of the political elite were very suspicious of the Dalkey School Project (as the organization then was known; it later became Educate Together). In the words of Áine Hyland, one of the founding members: "The task confronting the Dalkey School Project in 1974 was "formidable" for the primary school system had been "undisturbed for over 100 years" (1993, p.4). There was no immediate political support for the project or indeed widespread cultural recognition of the desirability of having anything other than church controlled schooling. Oliver J. Flanagan (1976), the Fine Gael Minister for Local Government, declared that the lobby group consisted of "crackpots"

whose one aim was to try "to drive God out of education and prevent religious instruction in the classroom." A secret Catholic organization was also trying to mobilize local objections in South Dublin, calling for the public to register their protest with members of the Dáil (parliament) against a school which was "hostile to religion" and a "precedent for major trouble in other areas" (pamphlet from Knights of Columbanus, in Hyland, 1996). Such attitudes are a reminder of the tenor of the general cultural climate at the time. A widespread liberalisation of society had not taken place. Hyland (ibid) says that in the eyes of most of the public they were seen as radical subversives trying to shake the very foundations of society: in their view the project was not so revolutionary; the goal was to achieve an element of choice in an educational landscape which, at all levels, was basically sectarian (ibid). Despite major political, financial and bureaucratic obstacles the first multi-denominational, State-funded primary school was opened in Dalkey, South Dublin in 1978. The school was to follow the same curriculum as other schools but the ethos was different – it was democratic, child-centred, co-educational and multi-denominational (see Rowe, 2000) and the management was not under Church control. This meant that there was freedom within the curriculum to develop a different approach to learning. Parents had worked relentlessly to try and change the system, had invested time and money into something which did not have widespread popular appeal. Hyland (1993), reflecting on the movement, recounts that the group did eventually garner political support, the Labour Party was behind the project but it was also significant that the Fianna Fáil Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, supported the initiative. She also outlines how the Catholic Church tried to deter progress, refusing to lease or sell accommodation for multi-denominational schools even though many school buildings, managed by the Catholic Church, lay empty. However, the voices of parents were now organized into a lobby group which was determined to be heard. The political magazine *Magill* maintained that the success of the campaign "represents a triumph over prejudice, intolerance and polite stone-walling on the part of the coalition government lasting 4 years" (Arnold, 1978).

In the 1990s the Dalkey School Project became known as Educate Together and went from strength to strength. By the end of the millennium all political parties had come to see multi-denominational schooling as part of Irish primary school education. However it cannot be concluded that support from central government was intrinsic or unconditional. It was still difficult to establish schools; parents who wished to do so faced the daunting task of trying to find a school site, finance this and contribute 20% of the building costs, for unlike Catholic or Protestant schools Educate Together had first to prove their viability before receiving any capital grants. Hyland (1993) and Rowe (2000), in discussing the history of Educate Together, outline the enormous difficulties faced by each school in

bringing the idea of multi-denominational education to the reality stage. As Hyland articulated: "All other member states of the European Community provide publicly owned buildings for basic education. Ireland is unique in requiring citizens to provide privately owned accommodation for this purpose" (1993, p. 23). One journalist expressed the ideology inherent in such deterrents: she toyed with the idea of sending her un-baptized children to an Educate Together school but in the end opted to have them baptized so they could attend the local Catholic one. She explained that the new multi-denominational school was a "series of rundown shacks" but the Catholic school premises was well resourced and equipped: "My local school is bright and sparkling. I am a coward and will stick with the mainstream, something I would be less likely to do were I not a parent. Thus are societies bent into submission and questionable authorities and practices maintained. Thus are things set in stone" (Jones, in Hyland, 1996). However a marker had been laid, a challenge had been mounted to the establishment and a breakthrough had occurred in an educational landscape dominated for centuries by a denominational system of education. There may have been only 18 multi-denominational primary schools by 2000 in the Republic of Ireland but a significant cultural transformation had occurred and it had been instigated by one of the new partners in education – parents. It was an example of local democracy at work, of the power of agency working from the ground up to challenge the establishment: an attestation to the fact that it was possible to make inroads into rigid system not always accommodating of innovation or change.

Legislation and the issue of ethos

The 1991 OECD review of education noted anomalies in the primary school system:

> At primary level, notwithstanding the significant gains since 1971, the curriculum still reveals, to a greater extent than many Irish educators wish to see continued, a great deal of the character of a watered-down and extended form of the old elementary education with its emphasis on predefined and narrow performance standards in the traditional basics, together with religious, moral and civic instruction. (1991, p. 68)

The report pointed out that reform was required in the areas of curriculum, teacher training, allocation of resources and also the definition of the goals and values of education. These goals were as the report articulated "tacit" when they should have been "explicit"; it was an era of marked social transformation and education needed to reflect the realities of the contemporary world in which it was situated (OECD, 1991, p. 76). Following on from this there is what may be described as a flurry of activity in education. A Green Paper (1992*) Education for a Changing World* was published and in 1995 the White Paper *Charting our Education Future.* The White paper, published under Labour Minister, Niamh Breathneach, made reference to the economic agenda expressed in previous OECD reports and also recognized the need to outline a philosophical basis for policy and practice, which should incorporate issues based on pluralism, equality, partnership, quality and

accountability (pp. 6-9). The White Paper pointed in the direction of real change in terms of a democratization of management, devolution of power to Educational Boards and recognition to respect the rights of minority groups, particularly in terms of ethos (p. 23-24). It was the intention of the Minister of the day, that both papers be preparatory documents for the first Education Act. However, this did not entirely come to pass as Labour was not re-elected following the 1997 general election.

The Education Act came into being on 23rd December 1998 under Bertie Ahern's Fianna Fáil government and was the first comprehensive education legislation enacted since the founding of the State in 1922. It was designed, as Walshe notes, to "give a sense of direction to Irish education into the twenty-first century" and in particular to establish a partnership model which would broaden ownership of education (1999, p. 6). However, the Education Act, 1998, the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000 (which must be read as a package in considering matters pertaining to religious ethos) embodied a particular agenda somewhat different from the original aims of the White Paper. Whist the Act claims to advocate a partnership model involving patrons, the State, parents, teachers and business leaders it mirrors predominantly the positions of certain partners. Critical analysis of the Education Act shows where the balance of power really lay at the time since, as Hyland notes, it bore all the hallmarks of "intensive behind-the-scenes negotiations… between the churches and the State" (1996, p.10).

Primary schools operate under the regulatory framework of the Rules for National Schools 1965; The Boards of Management of National Schools: Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure (2000); the Education Act 1998 and on issues relating to ethos, the Employment Equality Act 1998 and Equal Status Act, 2000 are applicable. The Education Act outlines its purpose as being:

> in the interests of the common good for the education of every person in the state…to ensure that the education system is accountable to students, their parents and the state for the education provided, respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership between schools, patrons, students, parents, teachers and other school staff, the community served by the school and the state. (Education Act, 1998)

Thus the Act clearly expresses intent to respect diversity but its modus operandi negates this. The nebulous issue of religious ethos in education was rendered less oblique by the Act. For the Education Act, 1998 and, in conjunction with this, the Equal Status Act, 2000 establish the prima facie status of the "characteristic spirit" i.e. core values or ethos of a school. The Act copper fastens the role of the patron, recognizing the patron as the owner of the school. It is in the section on

Boards of Management that the legal status of ethos is enshrined: the Board of Management is answerable to the patron (the bishop) and is responsible for upholding "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" (Education Act, 1998, Section 15). But as previously pointed out the Board is controlled by the patron, so it is not independent. This precedent is further secured by the Equal Status Act, 2000 which explicitly allows for religious discrimination on the basis of protecting ethos[4]. In reality this means that the "characteristic spirit" of a school will determine enrolment and employment policies as well as curriculum issues. Schools can legitimately protect their ethos in adopting policies of exclusion and can act to remove a person who is seen as "undermining the religious ethos of the institution" (Section 37(1) Employment Equality Act, 1998). Thus, for example lesbian or gay teachers can be refused a position, can be dismissed or not have contracts renewed for as McNamara and Norman (2010) outline, in the eyes of the Catholic Church homosexuality is "an intrinsic moral evil" (Ratzinger, 1986 cited in ibid). As the journalist Patsy McGarry (2014) noted, the Minister for Justice in 2000 (John O'Donoghue) applied for an exemption to the European equality directive on the grounds that schools have a right to protect religious ethos: the exemption "is a State-sponsored license to discriminate against gay people." A glance at the admission policies of a number of State-funded Catholic schools shows how religious ethos is used to shape enrolment policies: "Seamount College has a legal duty to the patron [The Bishop] to uphold the characteristic spirit of a school" (Drennan, 2013). The "characteristic spirit" of this State-funded secondary school is defined below in terms of Catholic moral values and as part of its admissions policy parents must sign an ethos form indicating their acceptance of it:

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[4] **Employment Equality Act, 1998** 37(1) A religious, educational or medical institution which is under the direction or control of a body established for religious purposes or whose objectives include the provision of services in an environment which promotes certain religious values shall not be taken to discriminate against a person for the purposes of this Part or Part II if—

(*a*) it gives more favourable treatment, on the religion ground, to an employee or a prospective employee over that person where it is reasonable to do so in order to maintain the religious ethos of the institution, or

(*b*) it takes action which is reasonably necessary to prevent an employee or a prospective employee from undermining the religious ethos of the institution.

Equal Status Act, 2000 7 (3) An educational establishment does not discriminate under *subsection (2)* by reason only that—

(*c*) where the establishment is a school providing primary or post-primary education to students and the objective of the school is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values, it admits persons of a particular religious denomination in preference to others or it refuses to admit as a student a person who is not of that denomination and, in the case of a refusal, it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

> As Patron of Seamount College I ask the Lord's blessing on all who are involved in the life of the school: The Board of Management, Parents, Principal, Teaching Staff, Students and Ancillary Staff. Each one of us is made in the image of God, created in love and given the potential to grow so that we become more and more like Jesus. To be Catholic is to see as Jesus sees, to share his attitudes and his values, to know the peace and joy he gives. (http://www.seamountcollege.ie/)[5]

This second level school does not list the local Education Together primary school (6 miles away), as being a feeder school thus effectively excluding admission of ET pupils, perhaps because there is a fear that pupils might undermine the Catholic ethos of the school. As Daly (2009, p. 250) concludes there is a "legislative validation of religious discrimination in enrolment" in Irish schools as schools are legally entitled to turn away a pupil simply because they are not Catholic.

Walshe (1999) provides an insightful picture of the power dynamics at play behind the scenes at the time leading up to the publication of the Education Act, 1998. As he notes it was the culmination of almost ten years of intense debate and six different Ministers for Education were involved in the negations. The Labour Minister for Education, Niamh Breathnach, attempted to instigate democratic change but encountered stringent opposition from the Churches, and their political supporters, who denounced the Bill as they feared it signified an erosion of the powers of the patron (see Walshe 1999, pp. 190-202). There was, however, counter opposition from the teachers' unions who feared that their private lives could be undermined by guaranteeing the role of the patron in employment matters, under the guise of protecting religious ethos of a school as outlined in the Employment Equality Bill (ibid, pp. 199-200). However, this resistance came to nothing as the Education Act and Employment Equality Act were passed under the new Fianna Fáil administration.

Conclusion

In this period there were moves to change primary school education. In the 1970s the "new" curriculum sought to employ a child-centred approach and used the language of progressive educational philosophy to outline its goals. It was undoubtedly a step in the right direction. However it did have another aim. It also legitimated the right of the Catholic Church to place the Integrated Curriculum centre stage. This meant that there was now statutory provision for religious ethos to infuse all aspects of the school day. The integration of religious dogma into all secular aspects of schooling has not changed in the intervening 45 years. At the end of the 1970s the movement for multi-denominational education, led by parents, appears on the educational landscape. On one level the endurance of Educate Together, in the face of stringent opposition, can be analysed in terms of cultural transformation and the power of agency to challenge the status quo. For the first time in the history of the independent State comprehensive educational legislation is

[5] For other examples see: http://www.colaisteiognaid.ie/ and http://www.salerno.ie/

enacted with the passing of the Education Act, 1998. One of the impetuses for the Act was the recognition of the need to address the lack of inclusivity inherent in the system, to accommodate a multi-denominational and a democratic perspective. However, the final document deviated significantly from this original idea. The Fianna Fáil government, who finalised the Act and the subsequent Equality and Employment legislation, guaranteed the right of schools to protect religious ethos. This is a staggering attestation to the triumph of traditionalism over the interests of the common good. Despite the best efforts of some educationalists and elected representatives to instigate a more just educational structure the voice of religious elites was loudest and was heeded by right-wing political elites: a synergistic, consensual arrangement between the Church and State continued in primary school education.

The era 1960-2000 is definitely different from the proceeding one in terms of looking beyond the domestic environment in the formulation of educational frameworks. The OECD begins to play a role and indeed cast a critical eye on Irish primary school education, including the questionable issue of religious indoctrination via schools. It is notable that there are much higher participation rates in second level and third level education indicating increased social mobility and a shift in thinking on the economic role education can play. But it cannot be concluded that at the level of philosophy guiding Department of Education thinking there is a major turnabout. The evidence points to a safeguarding of tradition despite the rhetoric of a more diverse partnership model and despite lip-service to the ideal of pluralism in education. An analysis of education policy in the period shows an attempt to juxtapose the traditional with the new but in reality one paradigm assumed prime position in educational discourse. At the end of the twentieth century the relationship between the curriculum and society still reflects the deeply conservative nature of Irish society. It also shows the validity of Bourdieu's point that the school curriculum can mirror the values and interests of powerful and dominant elite groups at the expense of the interests of subordinate groups. On the eve of the new millennium regressive steps had been put in place at a time when Irish education should have been embracing - in real terms rather than in rhetorical - a more transparent, tolerant and democratic system fitting for a modern culture becoming increasingly more heterogeneous and in some respects seeking to re-define itself.

Chapter 7: New Directions in 21st Century Education Policy

Introduction

In 2009, when I commenced this doctorate there was little indication that the historical legacy of denominational education would change at any time in the near future. Successive Fianna Fáil ministers for education in the preceding decade had shown no political will to critically examine the foundations of primary school education. A close relationship existed between the dominant educational stakeholders, the Catholic Church and the State, and many of the attempts to bring primary school education in line with the growing diversity of contemporary society were met with rejection. This was aptly illustrated in 2008 when assurances were given by the then Minister for Education to the Catholic bishops that faith-specific religious programmes, entailing segregation of pupils, would be provided in the newly established Community Primary Schools. This occurred covertly and despite robust campaigning from various bodies to employ an inclusive multi-denominational model.

This chapter will examine the first fourteen years of twenty-first century primary school educational policy – a short but dynamic period and one where a radical re-shaping of primary school education has been set in motion. I identify three areas of importance in policy development: the appearance of intercultural education policies; the augmentation of a commercial approach to education known as the "new managerialism" paradigm and the bid to divest patronage from the Catholic Church and thus provide an element of choice within a largely homogenous system. It is the Minister for Education's initiative to broaden the patronage model which is the most striking change and that which has gripped the public imagination. However there is an underlying thread linking these policy measures: they can be analysed in the light of being political responses to particular societal and economic developments which arose from changes in demographics, a values change in Irish society and a shift in interpretations of capitalism. The underlying idea explored in this chapter is that there is a further link in this policy relationship: whilst specific local factors have given rise to a political response, there is also a global context informing national educational policy today. Thus the focus of the policy excavation is on exploring the nature of the connection between the local and the global at this particular historical juncture. In undertaking this two-fold analysis I will firstly examine the local societal factors underpinning new departures in education. An analysis of recent census data (CSO, 2011) on inward migration and religion provides an insightful picture on the diversification of Irish society and highlights some of the grassroots reasons for the current changes in primary school education. Secondly intercultural education policies, which have appeared in Ireland only since 2005, will be examined. It is recognised that domestic cultural upheavals are

pivotal factors influencing policy and it is dramatic change at this level which ignited a government response to deal with the emergence of the new concept of the multi-cultural Irish classroom. However an analysis of Intercultural Education also provides a platform for an examination of the influence of international developments on changes to local policy. Indeed it may serve to elucidate or situate thinking underlying educational philosophy in twenty-first century Ireland as the document is influenced by a global education policy discourse. It contains a rhetoric which reflects the "new managerialism" focus in policy making now evident across much of western Europe and the next part of the analysis focuses on the emergence of this paradigm. I return to the specific cultural setting for a discussion of The Forum for Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector. This is the body established to set in train the historic task of divesting patronage and how this is being accomplished is worthy of attention, as are an examination of the recommendations it makes for changing the system of denominational primary school education. In addition I consider, from a perspective of social reproduction and resistance theory, the influence of counter-hegemonic groups on affecting policy change as well as the reaction of the dominant stakeholder to challenging its power. At the time of writing the implementation of the recommendations from the Forum is still a work in progress as the report of the Advisory Group was only published in April 2012 and proposals for radical change do not always proceed at a rapid pace, in this particular cultural context at any rate. The concluding section of this chapter will debate the level of interconnectivity between policies focusing on how current thinking in education has informed the two key policy areas under review.

Societal change at the start of the 21st century

Radical economic changes have influenced both demographic and values shifts in recent Irish history. At the start of the twenty-first century a reversal of the historical characteristic of emigration occurred because of the availability of home-grown employment and for the first time since the plantations of Ulster in the seventeenth century there was large-scale inward migration. The ensuing diversification of Irish life meant that homogenous cultural standards no longer automatically applied to every aspect of society. Only 5% of the total labour force now earns their living from agriculture (CSO, 2011, Part 2) and 62% of the population reside in urban areas (CSO, 2011, Profile 1), thus increasing industrialisation and urbanisation has caused a shift in values. Irish society has become more secular or perhaps less orthodox in its expression of religious beliefs. Numerous scandals involving religious personnel regarding the sexual, physical and emotional abuse of children in educational institutions, orphanages, Mother and Baby homes and hospitals have contributed to a questioning of the power of the Catholic Church to continue controlling primary school education. Since the 1990s there has been a litany of official reports (four in total, and a new

report is now being commissioned on how State-Church homes for unmarried mothers and their babies operated) which have detailed the brutal abuse of children and young people by religious personnel and also the Catholic hierarchy's cover-up of this and thus their role in knowingly facilitating it. This dark episode has caused shock waves in Irish society and caused a questioning of traditionally held beliefs.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures from 2002 to 2011 can be applied as a barometer for the extent of change which has occurred in Irish society over a relatively short period of time. In 2001 unemployment was at a record low of 3.7% and there were not enough people to fill vacant jobs; the economic boom of the "Celtic Tiger" years from approximately 1999-2007 was one of the main reasons for the increase in inward migration. The population rose from 3.9 million in 2002 to 4.5 million in 2011 and net inward migration peaked in the 2002-2006 period at 48,000 per annum and in the period 2006-2011 was at 24,000 (CSO, 30th June 2011, p.10). These figures contrast sharply with the 1986-1991 period where outward migration characterised society, the CSO recorded minus 27,000 during this period but from 1991 onwards, a "turnaround" (ibid, p.13) is discernible. Interestingly, before 2002 the census did not carry a question on nationality, presumably the assumption was that the vast majority of the population were Irish or that issues concerning ethnicity were not very relevant in policy making. The census returns for 2002, when the question on nationality first appeared, showed that society was not exclusively mono-cultural with 224,261 non-Irish nationals resident in the State. By 2006 this had increased by 87% to 419,733 and in 2011 was at 544,357 (CSO 2012, Profile 6 p. 7). At the moment there are people from 194 different nations resident in Ireland and 17% of Irish residents were born outside the country (CSO report 2011, "This is Ireland", p. 2). The CSO figures also show that despite the collapse of the Celtic Tiger, inward migration did not halt. It did slow down but in the period 2006-2011 there were still increases in the numbers of migrants choosing Ireland as their home with the overall number of non-Irish nationals increasing by almost 125,000 in that five year period (see CSO report 2011, "This is Ireland", p.3).

Not only has the country become more ethnically diverse but there has also been a marked shift in cultural values. This is evident when CSO results on the question of "Religion" are analysed. The 2011 census shows that 84% of the population is Catholic. This may seem like a very significant number but in the historical context represents an all-time low since the 1881 census and is 11% less than the highest figure of 95% recorded in 1961. In the words of the former Minister for Education, Ruairi Quinn, the figure of 84% cannot be viewed as a true indicator. He points out that studies

show that "only 67 per cent fit the actual profile of being Catholic" (in Donnelly & Riegel, 2013). This decline is not only accounted for by the presence of other ethnic groups from different religious backgrounds residing in Ireland but also by the fact that fewer Irish nationals profess Catholicism as their religion. As the CSO report notes the percentage of Irish nationals delineating themselves as Roman Catholic fell from 92.2% in 2006 to 89.7% in 2011 (CSO 2012, Profile 7, p. 10). The second largest group after Roman Catholic is now those who have "No religion" and the majority of this group are Irish nationals (CSO, 2011 "This is Ireland," p. 43). There has been a 45% increase since 1991 with 277, 237 people belonging to the "No religion" group in 2011. This is 141,000 more than the next group, "Church of Ireland" to which 2.8% of the population claim religious allegiance. In terms of educational policy and planning this is a significant development because whilst there are 174 specialist Church of Ireland primary schools catering for about 15,000 pupils (see education.ie), there are only 68 Educate Together schools - these are the only State-funded schools which do not have a specific religious ethos. Atheist or agnostic children generally have no choice but to attend the local Catholic school where they will be involuntarily exposed to Catholic doctrine in their everyday school life. Census analysis also yields another interesting fact in that there are 14,769 primary school children part of the "No religion" group which is the same number as those attending Church of Ireland[6] schools (the total number of pupils in primary school is circa 502,000). In addition the census shows that there are 10,339 non-Catholic babies under the age of one year. This may point to an increase in demand in the future for education which takes account of a diversity of belief systems. In Ireland weekly mass attendance is often a metric since religious labelling is used as a badge of identity rather than a reflection of orthodoxy. As Mc Garry (2012 & 2013) points out figures for weekly mass attendance have fallen significantly from 58% in 1998 to circa 30% in 2013 and in some urban areas are as low as 3%.

[6] For information on number of Church of Ireland primary schools see: http://education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Diversity-of-Patronage/Church-of-Ireland-Ethos-Description.pdf (Accessed: 14 August 2013).

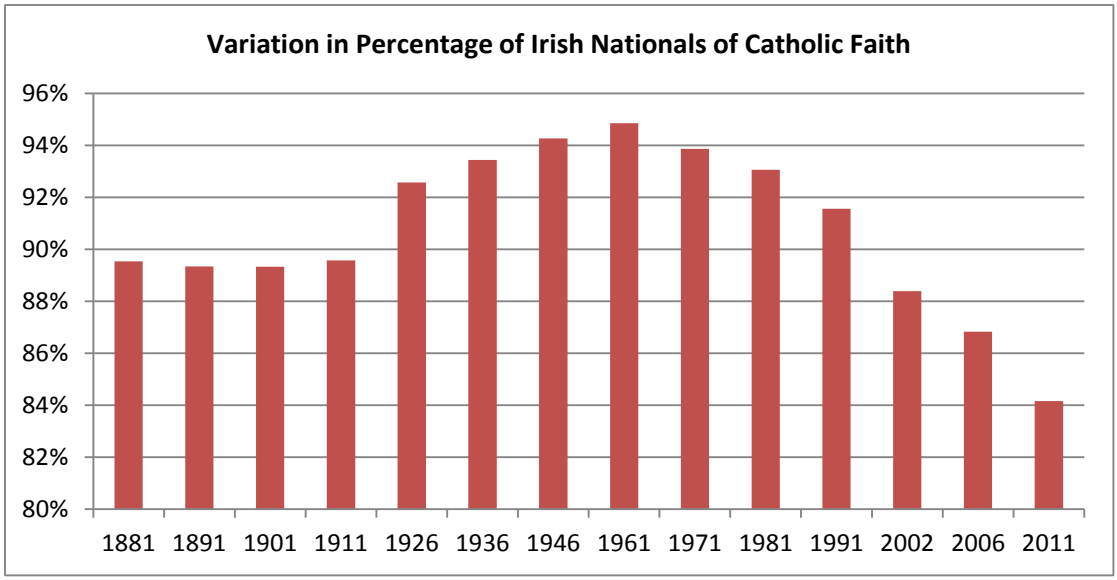

Figure 1: Variation in percentage of Irish nationals of Catholic faith, 1881-2011 (data: CSO, 2011).

It is therefore evident that there have been major changes to the social fabric of Ireland in terms of a redefinition of previous constants. In countries like Britain or Germany multi-culturalism, and the diversity pertaining to it, has been a feature of everyday life since the 1950s but the notable diversification of Irish society happened only over the past fifteen years. The metamorphosis from cultural homogeneity to heterogeneity had a direct influence on education in the first decade of the new millennium. Schools are at the coalface of dealing with the challenges and opportunities presented by a change in values, perspectives, outlooks, learning styles, language usage and communication strategies in the classroom. The education system is still structurally and sometimes philosophically operating on the basis of age-old traditions rather than current realities. Devine (2005) studied teacher responses to immigration and ethnic diversity in Irish schools and found that State policy on immigration had been "highly conservative" (p. 57) and underscored by a drive to maintain the status quo. This had significantly framed the context of teachers' work and had led teachers to feel uncertain as they struggled to cope with the new multi-cultural classroom (ibid, p. 57 & 64). She highlights that none of the schools in the study had a policy on managing ethnic diversity and thus teachers were operating within a policy vacuum leading to an ad hoc response based on individual teacher reactions (ibid, p. 59). In 2005 the Irish National Teachers' Organisation noted that "changed times demand changes in schools" (INTO, 2005, p. 1) and that a government response was required to address the realities of the multi-cultural classroom.

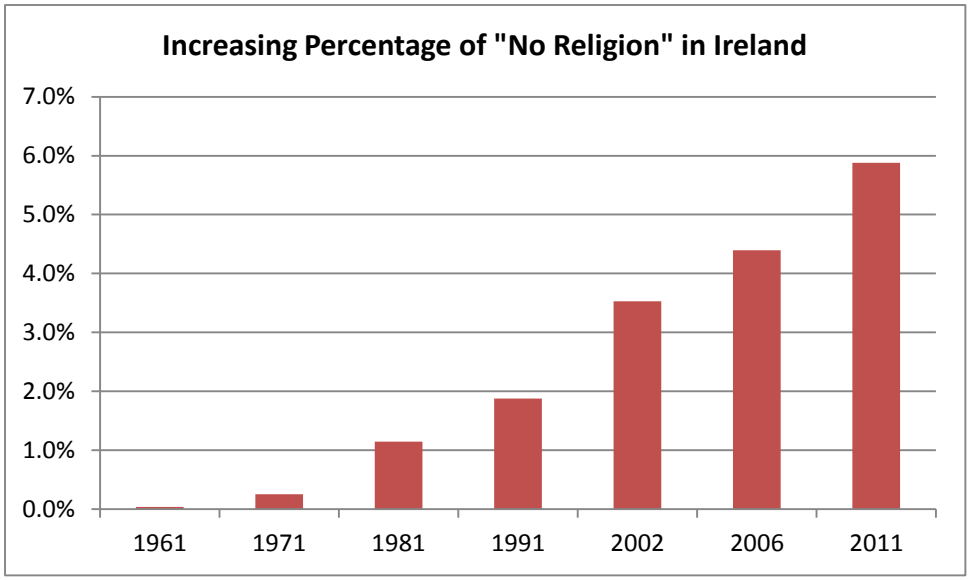

Figure 2: Increasing percentage of persons of no religion in Ireland, 1961-2011 (data: CSO, 2011).

Intercultural Education

Major policy change rarely emerges from a single trigger factor, neither is it produced in a vacuum. It is usually the product of specific historical conditions and a number of contemporary societal changes and often results when policy makers seek a solution to a perceived problem. In our globalised contemporary world policy often bears the mark of international trends or borrows ideas from other jurisdictions. In 2005 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA, acting for the Department of Education, produced the initial guidelines on Intercultural Education in the Primary School. The timing of these guidelines was significant: in 2004 new peaks in non-EU migration and asylum applications in Ireland were reached and from 2004 citizens from the ten new EU accession member States were allowed immediate entry to Ireland (Migration Information Source, 2009). In the school system there was an 87% increase in the number of immigrant children attending between 2001 and 2006 (Smyth, 2010). This Department of Education and Skills/NCCA 2005 document on Intercultural Education was one of the first concerted efforts by the government to address issues arising from the new social order. It was replaced in 2010 by a modified Department of Education and Skills policy on intercultural education. The document "Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010-2015" (IES, 2010) was the culmination of the work of two government departments, The Department of Education and Skills as well as the Office of the Minister for Integration. The appearance of a new dimension in Irish educational policy can be seen as a response to local economic, social and political issues as well as a direct response to pressure groups like the teacher unions; it was however also as part of a wider framework referencing European and international developments and concerns.

Paralleling the development of global migration is an increase in ethnocentric attitudes and racist behaviour. This phenomenon characterises many societies, including Ireland. It is widely recognised that the number of racist incidents is rising; a review of the national newspaper archives over the past five years verifies this with the latest figures (August 2013) showing reported incidents of racism have doubled in the last year to 120 (McKinley, 2013). The Teachers' Union of Ireland conducted research in April 2010 on "Interculturalism, Racism and Resources for Minority Ethnic Students" and found that 46% of teachers in community and comprehensive schools were aware of an incident of racism in their school in the past month. Combating racism is inherent in intercultural policies transnationally: as Gundera (2002) concludes the "developing of integrative or intercultural measures has to start from negating racism…" (p. 41). Colby notes the vital role intercultural education should play in combating racism and xenophobia: "human history is increasingly a race between intercultural education and disaster…If education is not intercultural it is probably not education, but rather the inculcation of nationalists or religious fundamentalism" (2006, p. 245-246). In the case of Ireland the new phenomenon of ethnic and belief diversity and the ensuing increase in racism catapulted Intercultural Education onto the educational and political agenda. Byram concludes that in the Irish context intercultural education was in part devised to "help prevent racism" (2008, p. 50). The IES 2010 is permeated by the idea of schools acting to combat racism and the stamp of National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR), affiliated to the Department of Justice, is firmly on the document. In some respects then this policy can be read as a political response to a societal problem with the sub-text being that schools could help in solving the issue. Combatting racism was to be tackled by the broad goal of instilling a sense of respect for ethnic diversity. The IES (2010) recommends promoting a partnership approach to tackling the issue of racism and concludes that it is the responsibility of all in Irish society to "reject racism, bias, stereotyping and discrimination" (IES, p. 67). It does not, however, outline a definitive strategy for teachers or the whole school community to actively and critically examine issues pertaining to racism, neither does it make any financial commitment to the project. In its own words – "IES is not about radical change" (ibid, Executive Summary).

Intercultural education is not simply about the creation of a more inclusive classroom and tolerant school environment for the intrinsic worth of these values, it also encompasses a range of complex and interrelated long-term political and societal aims such as social cohesion and the maintenance of democratic values. It was not by chance that the Minister for Integration was also involved in the production of the IES (2010) and the goal of integrating new ethnic minorities into mainstream Irish society informs the document. It is within the political context of maintaining societal harmony that another salient feature of intercultural education fits. Respect for and tolerance of religious

diversity is the principle driving international policy documents on interculturalism, post 9/11. Such policies recognise that modern societies are pluralistic in terms of ethnic makeup and belief systems and their raison d'être is to steer schools to facilitate communication and understanding regarding such diversity (c.f. Council of Europe, 2007). As Bîrzéa (2007) outlines many European school curricula have a mono-religious and mono-cultural approach to the teaching of religion rather than one of sensitivity towards and empathy for a variety of perspectives (ibid, p. 11). The preservation of traditional or ethnocentric thinking on religious education, however, does not correspond to the direction envisaged for modern western democracies at a supranational level. Indeed as some powerful international organisations recognise such thinking is, in the long run, damaging to the development of systems of cooperation and discourses of dialogue. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has made mutual understanding and respect for various belief systems one of its top priorities:

> Recent events across the world, migratory processes and persistent misconceptions about religions and cultures have underscored the importance of issues related to tolerance and non-discrimination and freedom of religion or belief for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. In the OSCE region, and indeed in many other parts of the world, it is becoming increasingly clear that a better understanding about religions and beliefs is needed. Misunderstandings, negative stereotypes and provocative images used to depict others are leading to heightened antagonism and sometimes even violence. (Forward, 2007)

As the Council of Europe (2007) notes the qualities of tolerance and understanding are not innate but need to be learned: "States therefore have an interest in educating young people, most of who will have to live together in a given political context with or despite the differences in their religious and moral outlooks. It is this way that the religious dimension has to be taken into account in intercultural education" (p. 22).

Current thinking on religious education sees that it has the potential to promote shared values across communities if approached from the perspective of plurality rather than being purely confessional (Richardson et al., 2013, p. 236). This viewpoint also advocates that multi-cultural religious education incorporate critical thinking and debate and not just the transmission of knowledge (ibid, p. 245). Underlying EU intercultural education policy is the idea that respect for religious diversity is essentially a human rights issues and should be acknowledged as such (c.f. Bîrzéa 2007, pp. 11-14). Given the priority assigned to respect for different belief systems at a European and international level (c.f. Council of Europe, 2008 & 2009; United Nations, 2001; OSCE, 2007) it might be expected that Irish intercultural education policy would address this glaring human rights aberration inherent in the primary school system. Such an expectation was not met in the Intercultural Education policies of 2005 or 2010. Neither document addresses the fact that the

overwhelmingly majority of State-funded primary schools not only teach one religion but also implement indoctrination in a particular faith. This ambiguity did not escape the OECD who commented that the patronage system was problematic: "The question that emerges in this context is whether the relative share of schools operated by the different patron bodies reflects the changing composition of society in Ireland…Indeed in a society that is becoming increasingly heterogeneous the practice of relying on patron bodies for the provision of education begins to look anachronistic" (OECD, 2009, p. 56). But the contentious issue of patronage was not debated in the strategies on intercultural education, indeed it is hardly mentioned. Thus it can only be concluded that a genuine engagement with issues at the core of intercultural education is absent from this policy.

Olssen et al. (2004) conclude that all education policy in the twenty-first century is centred on the "security, sustainability and survival" (p. 1) of the modern nation State: a consequence of the 9/11 attacks is the global preoccupation with counteracting terrorism and thus protecting the western nation-state. Crozier et al. (2010) note that government policy on ethnic minorities is influenced by a view which sees "migrants simultaneously positioned as key contributors to economic development on the one hand, and on the other, constructed as a potential threat to the social stability and harmony of everyday society and the identities of nation states" (p. 207). Banks et al. outline the specific function schools can play in the political project of securing that western democratic values survive:

> Schools can make a significant difference in the lives of students, and they are key to maintaining a free and democratic society. Democratic societies are fragile and are works in progress. Their existence depends on a thoughtful citizenry that believes in democratic ideals and is willing and able to participate in the civic life of the nation (2004, p. 196).

In the words of Olssen et al. (2004) the "education State" has arrived: "Education for us, as once for Dewey (1916) is seen as pivotal to the construction of a democratic society, and for the model of citizenship that such a conception of society implies" (p. 15). The Intercultural Education policies of the Irish government can be read as a vehicle to protect European and Irish democratic values: quoting the OECD, IES (2010, p. 48) pronounces that successful policy is synonymous with "mutual respect for cultural differences as long as these do not conflict with the fundamental democratic values of society" (OECD 2009c: 41). Stoer and Cortesão (2000) contend that the union of European States is no longer purely economic but also cultural and political "where a sense of shared identity and citizenship can thrive" (pp. 253-254). As UNESCO points out school curricula can play a positive role in the project of cultural and political integration: "There is a great potential for educational

curricula to promote understanding, tolerance, diversity, human rights and democracy, in order to foster socially cohesive societies" (UNESCO 2013, p. 3).

The Irish government, whilst it may have wished to subscribe to such a focus, was faced with a domestic dilemma: how to deal with State-supported denominational education within a globalised framework of promoting respect for different beliefs as well as attempting to integrate diverse groups within a common democratic set of values. As Keast (2009, p. 2) commented to the Council of Europe, it is necessary for schools to be democratic and respectful of religious and non-religious convictions: "democratic does not simply mean the majority gets its own way, though the wishes of the majority clearly have great significance in making decisions, but it also includes the capacity of minorities to enjoy their rights too. The functioning of democracy includes the safeguarding of the position of the minority." IES (2010) did not solve the cultural contradictions operating within the Irish school system. How can a school system which is not democratically managed or governed support the inculcation of the values of a pluralistic post-modern environment? Here the position of the majority is safeguarded; the minority marginalised. As a teacher at a State-funded Catholic school in my locality put it when asked how non-Catholic pupils would be accommodated: "we don't run any side-shows here."

The market and education

Recent analysis of education policy in modern Ireland notes that a new paradigm has emerged, namely "new managerialism," a term which refers to the commercialization and commodification of education (see Lynch et al., 2012; Lynch, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2005). Considine and Dukow (2009) observe that the "mercantile paradigm", characteristic of policy in many developed nations, incorporates a view of education in terms of human capital. Its underlying function is to produce workers who have the appropriate skills for the knowledge economy and those who educate or train students are seen as a "resource." This way of viewing education can be seen as emphasising the extrinsic values of education. In other words the goals of education are determined by external forces such as the economy rather than a Deweyian perspective which sees the goal of education being education in itself in the form of growth of the individual in relation to her/his community. The language surrounding education has become the language of business and this in turn represents the thinking informing policy and is a powerful force in shaping perceptions and ensuring implementation.

O'Sulllivan (2005) and Lynch et al. (2012) note that the "mercantile paradigm" was becoming the driving force in Irish education by the end of the 1990s replacing the traditional theocratic focus and has now become normalized in educational policy. As Limond (2010, p, 456) notes a distinct "neo-

liberal" turn is noticeable in educational policy from the 1990s, an example of policy borrowing from Britain where such moves had been in train since the 1980s. The "new managerialism" discourse was conceived as a distinct political project to achieve neo-liberal economic goals, to fuel the wheels of a "new form of capitalism" which emerged in recent times in Ireland (Lynch et al., 2012, p. 3). In concrete terms it meant placing competition above economic development and social equality (ibid, p. 8). In ideological terms it saw the function of education as being underlined by materialistic gain rather than a humanistic view which saw education playing a role in the individual and social development of the person. Hay and Smith (2004) conclude that political philosophy in Ireland, as articulated by the centre-right government from 1997-2011, adopted the free-market approach: "In both cases [Britain and Ireland], policy has been characterised by a 'third way'-style rhetorical commitment to competitiveness and social justice, set in the context of the pressures unleashed by globalisation and, indeed, regional economic integration" (ibid, p.2). There is a strong tradition of policy borrowing from Britain into Ireland (albeit it not vice versa) but Taylor (2005) concludes there was a slightly different shade of neo-liberalism being pursued here to that in the UK or the US. The dynamics of the Celtic Tiger era suited a neo-corporatist modus operandi where there were "educational objectives that sat comfortably with a managerialist ethos that government wished to instill, emphasising the need to establish closer links between educational curricula and the needs of business" (p. 77).

Today, in the post-Celtic Tiger era, the "new managerialism" approach is being applied to meet the needs of the "smart economy" – this may be an opaque term but the primary goal attaching to it is for education to supply graduates who will guide Ireland out of recession. The juxtaposition of commercialization with social justice can be seen in Intercultural Education policy where there is a rhetorical commitment to the principles of social justice, such as respecting diversity and providing equality of educational opportunity. However when such policy is excavated its language reveals another intention based around fulfilling an economic agenda. An inclusive, integrated society is equated with a society where the "successful integration of migrants into society remains a precondition for Europe's economic competitiveness…" (IES 2010, p. 57) Bryan (2010) contends that it is "corporate multiculturalism" which, in essence, informs intercultural education policy in Ireland: a type of thinking which "privilege[s] national economic and corporate interests over social justice concerns and which actively discriminates against, and prevents meaningful inclusion of, those who are least endowed with the kinds of (national) cultural capital valued by the State" (p. 254). Recent educational policy in Ireland, in line with European trends, is informed by the interrelated aims of

increasing social equality in order to ensure not only social cohesion and political stability but also economic advantages and success.

Another salient feature of the "new managerialism" paradigm in education is the promotion of partnership. Partnership involves the notion of cooperation, networks, coordination and participation; of various actors working together or collaborating to find "joined-up-solutions" to social issues and challenges. This can be at the level of inter-agency cooperation, institutional collaboration or public-private partnership and can thus involve public agencies, private companies, community groups and voluntary organisations (Cardini, 2006). The partnership idea of governance is a label to denote a shift in how social democratic politics should work in a globalised or post-Fordist world. Lister outlines that it has developed into a resounding belief in the power of the free market as an inherent feature of globalization and is ambivalent about the role of the State:

> …in place of the providing state, the third way promotes the enabling and the social investment state, in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors. The voluntary or third sector is accorded a much more significant role than under democratic socialism…For all the talk of a pragmatic, what-works approach, the impression is given that the private sector is assumed to be superior to the public as a point of ideological faith. (2010, p. 49)

At the heart of partnership is the idea of diluting the responsibility of the welfare State and instead forging a path for outside influences to fund, support and manage educational provision. Education policies in Britain and elsewhere in Europe (for example Sweden, Finland and Germany) have reflected this turn and continue to do so. In Ireland, as Lynch et al. (2012, p. 5) note, the concept of the welfare State was never as robust as in neighbouring States like the UK. This was due in part to the conservative, nationalistic and Catholic nature of the society: there was a suspicion of any social-justice type initiatives which were viewed as embodying a left-wing ideology and effectively counteracted by the powerful elite groups often motivated by protecting self-interests. The notion of diluting further the already weak State responsibility for basic welfare services was not actively challenged on a societal scale. It must also be remembered that education at primary level, and also predominately at second level, has been controlled by private organisations for well over one hundred years; the State has a tradition of outsourcing responsibility for education to private bodies or educational partners.

The importance of the partnership model is outlined in IES (2010) (see Executive Summary), however reference to it can be found much earlier in policy documents, for example in the Green and White Papers produced prior to the Education Act, 1998 and it is a fundamental aspect of the Act itself. The principles of partnership are particularly evident in higher education where strong links, for example in terms of research and development, exist between universities and the private sector.

At other levels input from the private or voluntary sector also occurs; primary schools depend on voluntary financial contributions from parents or donations from other community sources for the day-to-day running of the school, sometimes for basics such as heating and electricity. Indications are that, in the face of further cuts in government spending, reliance on input from the private sector and individuals will continue, if not intensify. Such a system of covert privatisation has the potential to establish a correlation between influence and financial input, particularly in schools where governance is not regulated by a statutory body but a private organisation. It also contributes to inequality based on social and class status whereby schools in affluent areas may be better resourced due to the ability of parents to make "voluntary" contributions. These developments go hand-in-hand with market-driven economic thinking, namely the underfunding of welfare provision as well as the "outsourcing" of responsibility for political decisions. Whilst policy documents such as IES (2010) seek to augment the role of "community groups" and other partners in the educational sphere and thus appear to democratise elements of education, there is a fine line between diversifying partners and an abdication of State responsibility, particularly when this affects the youngest members of our society. Arguably this is not the type of intrinsic goal of education which Dewey had in mind when he proposed that a democratic form of education was one where the individual flourished in an associated form of community life and shared values. As Seery (2011, p. 24) notes, for Dewey "individuality is a virtue in education but not individualism."

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector

In 2011 a new government coalition of Fine Gael (the majority partner) and Labour replaced the Fianna Fáil administration. The Education portfolio went to Mr Ruairi Quinn of Labour whose explicit aim was to change the power structures which had controlled education since the mid-nineteenth century. Management of half of all Irish primary schools under control of the Catholic Church was to be taken over by the State and this was to happen within a time framework of two years. The aim of divesting half of the country's schools of religious patronage can be viewed as the most radical proposal for Irish primary school education since Stanley's creation of the system in 1831. This intention to bring education into step with significant societal changes signalled an acknowledgment of a mis-match between primary school education and the requirements of the new prevailing social order as well as an intention to challenge sections of the establishment who had been the key stakeholder in education for almost two centuries. The reasons which lead to this dramatic announcement in the new coalition's programme for government have their roots in the demographic and values changes taking place in Irish society; the lobbying by groups such as the teachers unions, Educate Together, parents, and voices from minority rights groups such as those representing migrants, the Humanist Association and Atheist Association of Ireland; the influence of

international organisations like the EU and the UN and the fact that there was now a Minister for Education committed to far-reaching reform.

The Forum for Patronage and Pluralism was set up under the chairmanship of the respected education specialist and author, Professor John Coolahan, in April 2011. The remit of the Advisory Group was to produce a report for government which would recommend how best to proceed with divesting patronage and this would lay the groundwork for a subsequent White Paper on Pluralism and Patronage. Public consultation with the various education stakeholders and pupils (see Report of the Forums Advisory Group, April 2012) was the method to inform the work of the group. Submissions were invited from the major Churches, the teacher unions and representatives, Educate Together as well as parents and the wider community. Two hundred and forty seven submissions were received (including one from this author).

The Advisory Group published its report in April 2012. Extensive and compelling recommendations for change are made providing a blueprint for real alternatives which could, if implemented, help change the face of Irish education. Broadly speaking the Advisory Group concludes that the education system must adapt to meet the needs of a diverse society and that there is a clear demand for multi-denominational and non-denominational schooling. Minister Quinn commenting on the publication of the report noted that primary school provision needs to reflect the changed nature of Irish society and provide for increased diversity (Quinn, 2012a). The report outlines that divesting of patronage occur in areas where there is a stable population, where there is already a cluster of denominational schools - in other words where there is currently no choice of patronage or planned choice - and where there is evidence of parental demand for a change of patronage. This evidence was subsequently obtained by conducting surveys on parental preference in specific locations. In areas of population growth new schools would be created with a patronage system which reflected parental preference. Change of patronage, however, is to be accomplished in a "cost-neutral" way, by using the existing stock of schools rather than by the creation of new school buildings. The report also addressed the necessity of making "stand alone" schools more inclusive. "Stand alone" schools refer to those schools which will remain under Catholic patronage due to falling population or lack of demand. It is this issue, pertaining to 1,700 schools mainly in rural areas, which will prove decisive for it means that existing Catholic schools will have to address the issue of protected ethos and permitted indoctrination. It is also decisive for many non-Catholic parents for they will continue to have no choice but to send their children to faith schools. The Advisory Group makes definite recommendations on how inclusiveness can be fostered in such schools. The advice

is for the Department of Education and Skills to issue a protocol on protection of the rights of minority belief pupils and this is to be translated into action by the school. It outlines a need for an examination of the areas of: composition of Boards of Management; school ethos; patronage; enrolment; opting-out of denominational religious education; the creation of a new strand to the curriculum to be called "Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) and also Ethics" and finally an examination of the role religious artefacts, celebrations and other non-taught issues play in denominational schools (Coolahan et al., 2012, p. 74).

To judge parental demand it was recommended that parents in 38 towns (identified as meeting criteria for divesting) be asked what model of patronage they would like via questionnaires. Following this a report on the options of patronage would be drawn up and thirdly the Catholic bishops would be required to respond. The surveys of parental preference for a patronage model were completed in February 2013 and the results published by the Minister in April 2013. They showed that of 38 towns surveyed 23 requested a change of patronage with 20 favouring patronage to be provided by the multi-denominational Educate Together model whilst one area requested a multi-denominational Irish language patron. Thus the majority of parents unequivocally choose the Educate Together patronage model as their first choice. In addition in November 2013 submissions from parents on a nationwide basis on how to make "stand alone" schools more inclusive were also sought.

The very act of establishing the Forum indicated a different course was being mapped for Irish primary school education and that new agents would be required to steer the process of modernisation. As Donnelly (2013a) put it "in terms of Irish education history, it is a seismic moment." The Church's moral monopoly, previously legitimated by the State, is now being challenged. The State is attempting to assert its position as the major stakeholder in education by shifting the balance of power from uncontested religious control of primary school education to a more fluid arrangement. The new parameters of the Church and State relationship are clearly visibly in the aims of the Advisory Report on Pluralism and Patronage. Particularly striking are the suggestions to rescind powers protected in legislation. It is recommended that Section 7(3) of the Equal Status Act, 2000, which allows schools to protect their religious ethos, for example in enrolment and employment practices and policies, be amended. The Report also advocates that the Education Act, 1998 be amended to make the Board of Management accountable to the parent body and not just the patron as well as ensuring that Boards of Management reflect the diversity of the local community. In addition Rule 68, which allows children to be indoctrinated via the

Integrated Curriculum, is to be abolished "as soon as possible" (p. 110). Such a move would mean changes in the functioning of the hidden curriculum, the instrument which effectively serves to transmit Catholic dogma. Mr Quinn has also recently pointed out that too much time is spent on religion teaching in faith-run schools (a minimum of 2.5 hours per week in contrast to just one hour on Science and one hour on Physical Education) and has called for a public discussion on the issue (see Holden, 2013 and Donnelly, 2013b). The Minister is proposing fundamental changes to how religion is taught in schools, that preparation for Catholic sacraments takes place outside of school time and that a new curriculum based on world religions and ethics be introduced. In addition it is also recommended that other religious symbols are displayed in schools in addition to Catholic ones and that other religious festivals be celebrated. These proposals are proving to be contentious and the "battle lines" (Donnelly and Crawford, 2013) between Church and State are drawn in what may be a protracted and decisive struggle over control of the curriculum and religious ethos in primary school education.

The influence of counter-hegemonic groups

It is perhaps a mark of the democratic journey that there are now a variety of players attempting to shape policy rather than the consensus culture which previously determined educational direction. The primary school teachers' union (INTO) traditionally was not an outspoken opponent of Church monopoly of education but is now aligned with the State in supporting a divesting of patronage (c.f. INTO, 2011). It has also critiqued the Integrated Curriculum concluding that it amounts to preaching in an attempt to convert others (c.f. Donnelly 2013c). Teachers deal with the day-to-day issues which the uncomfortable juxtaposition of indoctrination with multi-culturalism entails and this anomalous situation affects their daily working conditions. Thus practicalities lie behind their support for change. The values and attitudes of teachers, in line with society in general, have also changed. The existence of a vocal lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual group within the INTO reflects the reality of modern Irish society and stands in direct opposition to the moral teaching of their manager, who does not recognise the legitimacy of non-heterosexual orientation. The priority of this section of the INTO is the abolition of Section 37 of the Equality Act, which allows employers to discriminate on the basis of religious affiliation (see, INTO 2013).

Resistance to the dominant ideology has been expressed by Educate Together since the late 1970s and this action has been a "long march" through the cultural institution of education. Indeed the Minister for Education and Skills himself remarked that he finds it remarkable that there are so few multi-denominational primary schools in the State (Quinn, 2012b), yet in all of these schools enrolment exceeds capacity. In the future there should be a significant increase in such primary

schools around the country for it is clear that there is both a requirement and a demand for such an alternative. It is obvious that Educate Together is now established as one of the important stakeholders in education, both in primary and recently in second level.

There are other community groups which are making their mark in education and act like watch-dogs to highlight the rights of minorities. Amongst those are the Humanist Association of Ireland and Atheist Ireland. Their platform is the violation of human rights inherent in Irish schooling and both organisations have made numerous submissions to Human Rights Commissions (see UN 2008) on this issue in addition to highlighting the State's disregard for various Human Rights agreements. The Humanist Association of Ireland (2011, p. 2), in its submission to the Irish Human Rights Commission lists five instances of human rights breaches including Article 9 of the European Convention which establishes the right of European citizens to "freedom of thought, conscience and religion." Atheist Ireland through its web site "Teach don't Preach: A Campaign for Secular Education" acts as a forum to provide parents with information on their rights and how they can challenge the denominational system. In particular is attempting to effect change by highlighting the flaws in Irish educational legislation and is directly lobbying government to change the current discriminatory system and to honour its human rights obligations.

An interesting development in the work of counter-hegemonic groups is that the internet is being used effectively to garner support and supply information to a wide audience. Electronic media is thus helping to effect change and contribute to furthering the cause of democracy for parents and other interested parties. Migrant rights groups are also employing similar means. The Integration Centre has expressed concern that selective admissions policies are leading to segregation and separation of ethnic children from mainstream society, for example some schools now have 70% of the pupils from migrant families (see Holden, 2013). The Integration Centre concludes that discriminatory religious enrolment policies contribute to "clustering" of migrant children and that religion is one of the contributing factors being used "to keep migrants out of certain schools" (ibid). This is leading to segregation of local children from migrant children and can in the long term, as the international experience has shown, lead to social problems and unrest and indirectly contribute to racism (ibid and in Murray, 2013b). The Integration Centre has called on the government to change equality legislation which allows schools to discriminate on the basis of religion and has initiated an online campaign to lobby the Minister to change the discriminatory clauses in both Equal Status Act, 2000 and Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act.

A commonality is emerging in the agendas of many of the groups working to try and change policy. The human rights issue, expressed as an aim of ending religious discrimination, is an underlying unifying theme. It is also possible to see that these campaigns are beginning to have an effect. The language and the message of the Minister's statement sometimes mirrors that of the human rights issue which these lobby groups emphasise (e.g. Quinn in Roseingrave, 2013). Minister Quinn refers to international law to justify changing the fundamental structure of primary school education, stating that Ireland has to honour the international agreements on children's rights it has signed and that "we have to find a way in which existing rights, underpinned by international law and decisions of the Oireachtas [government], can be implemented in the classroom and the school" (ibid). The first page of the Advisory Group report also draws attention to the international obligations on the State:

> It is also the case that over recent decades a number of international conventions has been agreed, to which Ireland is a signatory, which set out the rights of children and which highlight the human rights of all citizens, including their educational rights. (Ireland: Advisory Group Report, 2012, p.1)

Indeed in the view of Rev Professor Eamonn Conway (Catholic theologian opposed to Minister Quinn's reforms) Atheist Ireland and the Irish Human Rights Commission have had a significant influence on the recommendations of Advisory Group Report (see Murray 2013a). It is further verification that community lobby groups are educational stakeholders when Atheist Ireland is contributing to a section of the Ethics and Religious curriculum of ET schools at the request of the Minister for Education and Skills. This programme may in the future be adopted by schools on a nationwide basis if they heed the Minister's call to embrace all faiths and none in their school religious and ethics teaching.

Counter-challenges to policy reform

Mr Quinn frequently points out that the proposal to divest patronage was instigated by the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin (c.f. Irish Catholics Bishops' Conference, 2011), indeed the introduction to the Advisory Group report refers to the "expressed willingness of the Roman Catholic Church to consider divesting patronage of primary schools" (2012, p. 4). This "willingness" cannot, however, be interpreted as an indication of unconditional support by the ecclesiastical establishment for creating choice. Rather the Catholic Church was, during the Celtic Tiger era, formulating a response to a specific demographic situation. The initial concession to diversity was predicated on particular conditions: diversity of patronage was envisaged for certain urban pockets where the school population was predominantly immigrant and non-Catholic. Indeed the Church's move to recognising the necessity of patronage change came as a result of a crisis situation in Dublin

whereby approximately 200 immigrant children did not get a place in local Catholic schools and in September 2006 had no school to attend (see Burton, 2006). Thus a hornet's nest concerning issues of discrimination, equality and even racism was opened, necessitating some solution from the stakeholders. Legally the Catholic Church can discriminate on the basis of religion, so Catholic schools for Catholic children can prevail but where then are the non-Catholic children to go if a school is oversubscribed and there are no other options available? These were the circumstances which led to a realisation that the only practical solution was to accede to widening patronage. However allowing diversity of patronage would only happen "where that would be appropriate," as Fr Michael Drumm of the Catholic Schools Partnership expressed (Drumm, 2012). It was never the intention that the Catholic Church secede control of schools on a nationwide basis and certainly not where it had an established and assured following.

As Donnelly (2013d) noted history was made on 21st September 2013 as the Christian Brothers handed over the first Catholic school to Educate Together after months of wrangling with the Department of Education and Skills. Under the agreement with the State the Christian Brothers Trust (ERST) will lease its inner city Dublin premises to the Department of Education and Skills for ten years. However, it is clear that the process of divesting is neither harmonious nor uncontested. The Catholic Church is attempting to mobilise parents and other interested parties to challenge government policy in an umbrella organisation known as The Catholic Schools Partnership headed by Fr Michael Drumm. They have stated that "clear markers" will be laid down to counteract change and the Catholic Church can rely on its strong local support-base to help in opposing change (Flynn, 2011). The problem on the part of the Catholic Church is that it fears its ethos will be diluted thus leading to a loss of control. Recent press releases from the Catholic Bishops and the Iona Institute document opposition to divesting patronage. The Iona Institute, which is a conservative Catholic lobby group, or in the words of Foley (2013) a "pro-denominational education think tank", has been critical of Minister Quinn's proposal to ask parents to give opinions on how to make schools more inclusive, expressing that the consultative process promotes a diluting of the Catholic ethos of schools (ibid). David Quinn of the Iona Institute has called for the Catholic Church to "transfer not a single school to new patrons" should the Minister insist on making stand-alone Catholic schools more inclusive (Quinn, 2013). Drumm (2012) has outlined opposition on the basis of pluralism. The argument put forward being that the proposal to dilute Catholic influence prohibits pluralism in that it does not take into account the religious beliefs of the majority: "Catholic parents have the human right to form their children in accord with their philosophical and religious convictions" (2013, p. 2). Continued reference to parental preference as the criterion on which to base patronage of schools is being made: school provision should match "the religious and sociological realities in local

communities" (Drumm, ibid, p.1). Parental preference is being used as a justification to resist handing over schools with Drumm reassuring local communities that "no change will be implemented without widespread support in the area" (in ibid). A warning note is being sounded that schools in the future will be invited to "take ownership" of their characteristic ethos: schools will be facilitated in "reflecting on their identity and priorities with all of the school community" (Drumm, 2012, p. 6). Thus as Drumm (ibid) himself concludes the debate is about to take on a very local hue. This may mean an entrenchment of the position of the religious establishment in how schools are managed and operate.

The Catholic Church is now seeking guarantees from the Minister on the protection of its ethos (Donnelly & Crawford, 2013). This would entail a protection of the right to continue to display religious specific symbols and iconography as well as singing Catholic hymns and reciting prayers. Such an action would directly contravene the recommendations outlined in the Advisory Group report to the Forum. The theologian, Rev Professor Eamonn Conway, is campaigning to have a number of the Advisory Group recommendations overturned: the recommendation to abolish Rule 68 and is challenging the Advisory Group proposal to amend Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act. Conway is also opposed to the new ERB programme because it "could teach pupils a secularist view of religion" (Donnelly & Crawford, 2013). The issue of identity is also raising its head in the campaign to protect ethos with some Catholic bishops drawing correlations between loss of Irish identity and loss of Catholic ethos: Bishop Kelly outlined at the launch of Catholic Schools Week that it would be a "terrible travesty" for children "if a natural part of who they are is not acknowledged and nurtured in our schools" (ibid).

Minister Quinn outlined that Catholic bishops would be asked to respond within six months with proposals on how to proceed with divesting, as he expects the new patronage models to be in place by September 2014. According to the Irish Times editorial (April 3, 2013) the great enemy of reform is delay – the author was commenting on the length of time it is taking to implement the Minister's reform measures for primary school education. Delay also militates against reform in that the longer the delay the greater the chance that the political energy will dissipate, as the author notes (ibid), and that the public begin to lose interest in the issue. Some religious organisations, who own schools, are asking for financial compensation (e.g. the Christian Brothers) leading to protracted negotiations with the State. One has to bear in mind that following the publication of the Ryan Report (2009) on child sex abuse the Christian Brothers, once the largest teaching organisation for males in the Republic, is to financially compensate victims of child sex abuse in Ireland with €161

million. Much of this figure is to come from the hand-over of schools and other property assets (see Walshe, 2009).

Some commentators note that a "rift" is opening up between Mr Quinn and the Catholic Church (Irish Independent, 15th April 2013) and the Minister has issued a warning saying that the State will act if school handovers are delayed further (Donnelly 2013c). In reality though what can the Minister do to force the Churches, who own the school properties, to comply with reform proposals? It is prudent to bear in mind that the Catholic Church is still a considerable power force influencing various elements of social policy. In 2008 it used its bargaining position very effectively in negotiations with the State on the creation of the new Community Primary Schools model which were to be set up in urban areas where there were many newcomers. The Catholic Church proposal was for segregated religious instruction at particular times – Catholic, Christian, Muslim and other. It outlined that its demand was a "minimum non-negotiable requirement" for their support of a new multi-denominational education system (see O'Kelly, 2012). As O'Kelly comments "this was and remains a completely new approach both here and internationally"(ibid) and it files in the face of all objectives detailed by the Council of Europe in the Toledo Guiding Principles which aim to promote tolerance and understanding of diversity of beliefs. There are currently five Community Schools operating on this basis and more are planned for the future. While currently there is a battle between the State and the religious establishment for control of education the fact remains that as Paul Rowe of Educate Together notes: "we still have a system that profoundly disadvantages any child whose family thinks differently from the majority education provider, the Catholic Church" (2013).

The report advises proceeding in a gradual fashion or a phased way in divesting patronage rather than following a "big bang" approach (Ireland, Department of Education and Skills, 2012, p.55). It also emphasises that the view of parents be afforded serious consideration in any attempts to change patronage representing something of a new departure in Irish educational policy. Whilst including parents is to be welcomed it must also be viewed with an element of caution. In some respects central government is, once again, outsourcing decision making in key educational policy areas to another body. Previously private organisations such as the Catholic Church were given responsibility for educational direction, currently private individuals are entrusted with forging a pathway for change. Perhaps, it is time for the elected representatives to show leadership and take responsibility for far-reaching and crucial societal issues, those which affect the rights of all citizens

and not just the majority. As Hickey (2012) points out in his critique of the report from the Advisory Group "when a structure is flawed in a foundational way, does it not call for a 'big bang'?"

There is concern at some levels that current reform measures do not go far enough to guarantee the human rights of children and families. In particular draft legislation on enrolment and admissions policies currently being completed by the Minister for Education and Skills is being scrutinized. The Ombudsman for children, Emily Logan, has commented that the draft bill does not address the rights of minority belief children in that it continues to allow for religious discrimination on the basis of ethos. In a submission to the Department of Education and Skills she emphasised that "children should not have preferential treatment to education on the basis of their religion and that the Equal Status Act should reflect that principle" (2013, p. 19). Logan (2013, pp. 5-13) has highlighted that seven different international human rights organisations have outlined their scepticism on how human rights operate in practice in the context of religious freedom in Irish education. In addition Logan questions the wisdom of the government proposal to remove the appeals mechanism on refusal of admission from the Department of Education to the Board of Management of individual schools outlining the impartiality which this may entail. She also makes the point that although there is significant devolution of power to the local level in Irish schooling it is still incumbent upon the State to "exercise a greater level of oversight" in the interests of ensuring that the human rights of children are protected (ibid, p. 26). Jane Donnelly of Atheist Ireland (Nugent, 2013) points out that government is disregarding its international human rights obligations by ignoring Article II of Protocol 1 of the European Convention (the right to education). This agreement "obliges the State to respect secularism as a philosophical conviction, and there is a positive obligation on the State to respect this conviction throughout the entire education system" (ibid). For education to be truly reformed institutional discrimination, as enshrined in the legal framework of the State, has to be tackled.

Conclusion: policy interconnectivity

In this chapter I have identified what I see as pertinent policy developments in primary school education in Ireland in the early twenty-first century. The analysis points to a certain interconnectivity between these areas. Intercultural Education policies arose from dramatic societal changes but the policy which emerged as a response to a local condition strongly referenced the international, namely a European project to maintain social cohesion and democratic values of tolerance and pluralism and the attaching economic dynamic integral to such measures. However despite outside pressures from international organisations various IE policies in Ireland did not address the pressing question of denominational education and the denial of freedom of conscience

inherent in the state-supported primary school system. As the drivers of policy at EU level articulate the essential ingredient in a genuine intercultural education policy is respect for difference of belief systems. The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism can be analysed as an attempt to address previous policy omissions and thus both policy areas can be seen as part of a continuum on a spectrum of responding to societal change. The patronage policy, whilst explicitly dealing with a specific historical and cultural problem, is also an attestation to international influences. In a general sense it is an attempt to offer parents more choice but it can also be interpreted as an attempt to honour international commitments and thus maintain a degree of credibility on the global stage. Indeed the Minister for Education and Skills in recent press releases and public addresses refers to the imperative of meeting international obligations in terms of human rights commitments and international best practice and policy (c.f. Roseingrave, 2013). Denominational education is so culturally imbedded in the Irish psyche and historically has been such a part of Irish society that perhaps it could not be comprehensibly addressed within the confines of a generic report on inclusiveness in education. Its complexity and longevity required a separate and more delicate process, hence the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector. So, it can be concluded that recent policy initiatives be viewed as an example of what Rizvi and Linguard (2009, preface) see as the growing phenomenon of "deparochialization" of education policy, meaning that one of the influences of globalisation on education has been that national governments "take seriously their global, post national dimensions without ignoring the realities of the state."

Packaging these two interrelated strands of recent Irish education policy is the phenomenon of a new type of thinking in education, namely new managerialism. The concept of policy-borrowing, so apparent in the IE strategy, is a feature of this new paradigm, embodying as it does an "emerging global market for ideas" (Mulgan, 2003, p.1). The most striking manifestation of the influence of this new market-led paradigm on the policies analysed here is their commonality in terms of a lack of financial commitment from the State in driving some of the most radical and far-reaching policies ever proposed for Irish education. The IES (2010) guidelines conclude that the delivery of Intercultural Education in terms of curriculum change, teacher training, a whole-school approach to anti-racism is to be implemented in a way which is "not resource intensive" (Executive Summary). The Advisory Group report on changing the system of how schools operate states that this is to happen in a "cost neutral" way (2012, p.103) and the "value for money" narrative also characterises the current Minister for Education's educational vision (see Quinn, 2012b). These trends echo Galvin's conclusion that the Irish State is now becoming a "regulatory competition state" (2009, p. 278) which "seeks to avoid direct service delivery, operates through regulation, privatisation and

new public management and which delegates policy making and implementation to new actors at national and local levels" (ibid). This development also resounds with Rizvi and Lingard's delineation of globalised education policy whereby the input of the welfare State is diluted in preference of a "minimalist State concerned to promote the instrumental values of competition, economic efficiency and choice, to deregulate and privatize State functions" (2012, p. 31). Outsourcing and delegation of responsibility have previously been mentioned in the context of the modus operandi of the Forum for Patronage and Pluralism and the IES (2010). It is particularly evident in the State's delegation of responsibility for policy formation on pluralism to parents. Whilst this development may be presented as a means for enhancing democratic participation or labelled "partnership" its central flaw is that it is essentially outsourcing key decision making to private individuals who may not embody an ideological commitment to this particular human rights issue. Designating parents as policy makers also presents problems in that powerful interest groups may use the outcomes of the process to persuasively justify the position of the majority. In other words to further legitimise the "tyranny of the majority", thus negating any element of "voice" minority groups might hope an informed central government would represent. This new development in policy making also reflects interpretations of democracy characteristic of third-way politics, namely "audience democracy." Or what Michailidou and Trenz term "surrogate representation" (2013, p. 266), whereby the opinion of a specific group is seen to represent the common good for it constitutes a "true microcosm" of the whole population (ibid, p. 267). But as they also point out such forms of representative politics also imply that the democratically elected representative is not fully responsible for important decisions and cannot be held directly accountable (ibid, p. 266). Rizvi and Lingard refer to such neo-liberal policy features as representing notions of decentralisation, the rationale of which is to ensure greater social efficiency:

> The enhancement of democratic participation, local control and community decision-making are major characteristics of devolution. This form of governance typically involves major shifts in control from the central ministerial level down to local community levels, promoting the aims of democracy, equality and the public good. (2010, p. 120)

The internationalisation of Irish education policy can, as some observers point out (e.g. Galvin, 2009), be traced back to 1965 and the OECD Investment in Education Report which laid the groundwork for an application of the human capital theory. Since then Irish policy has developed a more outward looking approach and this has culminated in embracing many of the features of globalisation in policy-making characteristic of twenty-first century western States. Educational policy directions in Ireland mirror international policy developments culturally, economically and politically or, at the very least, aspire to do so. But at the same time they embody a particularistic approach which reflects the specific cultural complexities underlining, for example, historical issues

like school patronage. What remains to be seen is how both these approaches may meet – if there can be any marrying of the perspectives of internationalisation and parochialism. On the one hand the State is seeking to modernise Irish education so that we have a system which reflects societal and economic developments both at home and abroad. On the other the local context is still significantly defined by a peculiar adherence to the past and tradition and the hegemonic religious control, such a prominent feature of education in the past, has not disappeared.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Findings

This work has highlighted a specific societal issue and tried to work out the reasons why this problem arose and why it persisted. The starting point was that there was an anomalous situation, a difference between rhetoric and reality, in the expression of democracy in one of the most influential cultural institutions of a state. To establish why this is so, Irish primary school education policy was analysed using a democratic lens and referenced the social, economic and political context in which the school is situated. The policy excavation applied criteria informed by the theories of Dewey and a social and cultural reproduction framework to gauge the nature of the democratic discourse. It was shown that there are serious aberrations in the practice of democracy in first level education, arising from the agenda of a religious elite who in colonial times established a position of dominance within education. This sphere of influence has persisted to the present day. When the question is posed – who makes decisions about primary school education in Ireland – then the answer is that an unaccountable private organisation, supported at state level, has had a significant input into determining educational direction. Gutmann's theory that "more or less civic equality distinguishes more from less democratic societies" (2004, p. 71) can be applied to raise questions about the level of democracy in this cultural context. Throughout the entire twentieth century, denials of human rights of freedom of conscience and the basic democratic right of equality have been copper-fastened in legislation. One of the aims of this thesis was also to explore if there was evidence of an evolution of democracy via primary schooling. It examined societal factors and political initiatives to ascertain if today, in a more modern Ireland, there is evidence of change happening in education which mirrors change happening in the wider society. Was there evidence of the people participating in the formulation of educational ideas? One of the underlying concerns of this project was to establish if there was cause for hope – hope that a better and more inclusive future may be on the horizon for all the children of the nation.

Chapter 2 showed that democracy is not only a political or electoral concept but encompasses the cultural realm too. Drawing on the classical Athenian tradition and Rousseaus' ideas, it focused on how democracy is expressed by civic engagement where all members of the community can express and debate their concerns, thus contributing to shaping the course of their society. Active citizens participating in the creation of the common good rather than the pursuit of individualistic requirements is the rubric by which equality is established. But we are not all born with this innate disposition: democratic behaviour needs to be fostered and practiced – a "habituation" (Blokker,

2008, p. 161) needs to be cultivated. The school is one of the institutions of society which can facilitate this process if it engages in preparing students for democratic citizenship and fosters a culture of learning about and appreciating difference. This chapter concluded that there has been something akin to a two-tier system of democracy in Ireland whereby politically there has been democratic stability but society has not been characterised by an active and engaged citizenry challenging the ruling elites and contesting traditional practices. Thus there is evidence of "low intensity" democracy, if one scrutinizes cultural institutions like education, where consensus rather than debate has characterised the landscape contributing in no small way to the present monolithic system. A strong centralised decision-making culture can lead to the imposition of a top-down form of control where because the voices of the people are not encouraged they do not feel a sense of "ownership" of the institutions of society. Apathy militates against reform. The hallmarks of a healthy democracy are participation, deliberation and contestation rather than withdrawal which can result from an imposed political and cultural authoritarianism. Ireland may be a republic in name but, as a number of scholars have concluded, in practice it was the strict moral code of the Catholic Church which defined society resulting in the citizens of the republic being anything but free (c.f. Limond, 2010; Garvin, 1996; and Fitzgerald, 2005). A strong sense of civic morality did not develop because of the preponderance of a particular Catholic Irish morality. Some parallels can be drawn between such "low intensity" democracy and the liberal tradition, where democratically elected experts only are entrusted with decision making and there is an elevation of the private above the political often resulting in the outsourcing of public services. In Ireland there has been a focus on local or sectional interests rather than a commitment to ideals of civic republicanism. The bigger picture has tended to get lost in the concentration on parish politics and individual interests, thus a system of representative democracy rather than a working model of participatory democracy has developed. I also examined democracy for the twenty-first century and showed that there has been a re-working of the classical model for an application of democratic theory to modern-day societies. In particular the human rights perspective is important. If we apply this thinking to the educational context it means that all children have equal rights to an education where they do not experience discrimination or exclusion. Integral to such thinking is the idea that it is not just the majority who has basic human rights. It is incumbent on the education system of a secular state to respect the principle of providing an education which is democratic, reflecting equality for all, rather than concentrating on the rights of the majority group. As Gallagher (2014) notes, "the idea that the majority has more 'rights' than minorities do is tyranny." In Irish primary schooling it is still the majority who have rights rather than all the children of the nation. Measured against principles of non-repression and non-discrimination the system of mainstream schooling falls short.

The theories of Dewey on democracy were also outlined to highlight how important education is in the creation of a democratic consciousness. It highlighted Dewey's idea that there is a direct relationship between the school and the wider society. Thus the school has a duty to foster democratic principles and practices which will feed into the creation of a democratic society. Simply put, the function of the school is to prepare pupils for being democratic citizens. Dewey's ideas on celebrating individual creativity, critical thinking skills and moral reasoning have greatly influenced thinking on school curricula worldwide. Integral to Dewey's thinking is the idea of growth – that change and diversity are positive attributes which arise from the deliberative communicative process and lead to change and transformation which an evolving society requires. It was also pointed out that Dewey's theories are relevant for pluralistic multi-cultural societies since their focus is on how tolerance of alternative viewpoints and diverse opinions can contribute to positive change as well as the development of a sense of civic engagement and the feeling that all can contribute in the creation of the "common good." There was an engagement with Dewey's progressive educational ideas during the 1970s but it was emphasised that there is an inherent contradiction between the Irish primary school curriculum, which pays homage to Dewey's theories, and reality. A curriculum which has religious indoctrination as its aim contravenes educational growth because indoctrination and critical thinking are incompatible. A school system structured on exclusivity is not a breeding ground for fostering democratic consciousness.

Chapter 3 explored ideas which explain how education reproduces existing cultural practices and patterns but also has the potential to transform and help progress the society. It showed that the curriculum in Irish primary education is highly politicized, being used by elites to consciously select a particular type of knowledge to be passed on. The Integrated Curriculum is designated to accomplish religious indoctrination across the entire school day via transmission of ethos. The concept of ethos, on statutory footing since 1998, is a highly charged and an extremely influential political tool used to propagate a way of thinking and to legitimise a way of behaving which, in turn, creates a cultural consensus. Gramsci's ideas on hegemony were also outlined and used throughout the work to highlight that they can explain how this consensus is maintained and becomes the "common sense" view even if it does not always serve the best interests of all the members of the community. By specific examination of the formal and the hidden curriculum it was shown how elites select a particular type of knowledge whilst omitting other perspectives. It was also emphasised that this way of thinking and learned behaviour becomes accepted as a type of cultural DNA and incorporated into the social fabric of society. It is this process of creating consciousness that lays the groundwork for formation of group identity and, in this particular case, identity is a

nexus of shared interpretations around religious traditions and particular cultural norms which together create a sense of Irishness. This is akin to what Williams (1961) terms the creation of a "common culture" – an illusion that we all share common values, usually those defined by the elite although their reality is rarely that of the ordinary person. Shifting such perceptions, even in the light of revelations which shatter previous "truths", does not happen easily as these values are deeply ingrained in the individual and the collective consciousness, have become personal and embody affective characteristics. As Kohli (1993) outlines, when the values of elites become internalised as the values of the group, people consent to their subordination. It was also pointed out that a level of subordination is achieved via the State endorsement of the right of religious organisations to protect their religious ethos over and above a protection of democratic freedoms like equality. Theories which show the transformative potential of education were also presented but it was concluded that up until recently this aspect of social and cultural theory has not been pertinent in the Irish case. It was concluded that for education to be able to realise its transformative function, there must be a level of democratic sophistication which allows for debate and contestation to emerge, conditions which have been underdeveloped in Irish society due to the rigid grip of elites on consciousness. As Williams (1961) and Eagleton emphasise – hegemonization is the longest revolution; "it is in fact a never-ending revolution" (Eagleton, 1989, p. 105).

The section on education policy from 1800-1919 showed the origins of many of the undemocratic features characterising primary school education today. The system was established in 1831 for a number of reasons, including the goal of using education to civilise the unruly masses where centuries of direct coercion had failed to achieve acquiescence or social cohesion. The British government intended for the "national" system of primary school education to be non-sectarian, i.e. children of all faiths to be educated together and for religious instruction to take place outside of normal school hours. This did not happen. Primary school education quickly became dominated by the main Churches, none of whom would accept interdenominational education. What is remarkable is that the Catholic Church, who in the nineteenth century was the outsider establishment, successfully used primary school education to secure a hegemonic position. It did this by winning the approval of the oppressed Catholic majority for its agenda, positioning itself as the political spokesperson for them through education and by using astute tactics which resulted in the British administration yielding to its continuous demands. Once its sphere of influence was established it created a system whereby it had exclusive control of the management and ownership of the majority of schools; it had influence over the curriculum and text books, controlled most of the teacher training colleges and vetoed any central reform attempts which it interpreted as a threat

to its ideology. Any changes which would have made the system more democratic, pedagogically progressive, extended it or increased the role of the State were interpreted as socialist reforms and rejected by the Catholic Church on the basis of infringing parental rights. In reality it was the perceived threat of secularisation which drove its opposition; parents had no voice in education and would remain excluded until towards the end of the twentieth century. In some regards the British government and the Catholic Church had a common goal for education – collective control. The colonial power saw education as a means of achieving political acquiescence and for the Catholic Church it was a means of achieving "moral monopoly" (Inglis, 1998). The project to achieve moral monopoly took root. Securing this ideological domination however meant that the original aim of a non-sectarian education system was quashed and it is one of the ironies of history that today we are still trying to ameliorate this element of cultural inheritance.

The review of education policy from 1920-1961, in Chapter 5, examined how the new independent Irish State developed education. It was shown that its primary goal was to use education to foster a cultural nationalism where patriotism and Catholicism were intertwined. There was little or no debate on how to create a newly structured system which would reflect reform or a philosophy embodying a vision of the potential of education to improve the everyday circumstances of the ordinary citizen. From the moment the State was established the Catholic Church made clear its intention to continue dominance in education. The political leaders of the time accepted this right and handed over control of primary school education to the bishops. Thus the chance to create a public system based on principles of democracy rather than theocracy was by-passed. In Chapter 6 I also looked at the reasons why those who had fought for political independence willingly accepted cultural repression which was energetically exercised by the Catholic hierarchy through their grip on the primary school and other cultural institutions. The analysis showed how hegemony worked effectively in legitimizing the religious elite's position. The population accepted authoritarianism emanating from a culture where strict discipline defined much of life. The imposition of a top-down form of control, implemented also by a draconian form of censorship and cultural isolationism, did not foster a climate for debate, deliberation or openness. The social good was defined along religious lines and acquiring religious capital became aspirational as it also embodied symbolic capital. Economic status, respect and social standing in the community could be gained by adherence to and promotion of its strict moral mores and deference to authority. Respectability was a valuable cultural commodity in communities where other forms of social and economic capital were often in scarce supply. But, as a number of commentators have concluded (c.f. Garvin, 2004; O'Toole, 2012 & 2014b) this obedience was often achieved often by fear and the cultivation of a

code of secrecy. An opaque society was created, not practiced in questioning and blindly accepted the right of the hierarchy to set moral standards and to implement social policy according to their criteria. It was such a covert and cruel culture which contributed to a retreat into the private sphere rather than active citizens debating and deliberating in public. An almost complete hegemonisation was achieved in that the general population accepted the saturation of everyday life with an ideology defined by a particular elite group although this in effect meant deprivation of their freedom. In education there was a neglect of improving standards or facilities, curricular and teaching innovation was not prioritised and education beyond the age of twelve was not made available to all. The lack of State involvement and investment in education led directly to poverty and emigration. The standards which defined the era were "cultural poverty" (Williams, 1961, p. 380) as well as material poverty. This abysmal record was caused by a political elite devoid of a progressive vision or philosophy for education and religious elite who, with the blessing of the elected representatives, were allowed to keep a firm grip on education for their own ends: to maintain power. A further legacy of the Catholic Church-State partnership is the indelible religious influence which has been stamped on legislation. The 1937 Constitution which ascribed special status to denominational education is still in force and is one of the stumbling blocks to achieving inclusive primary school education because it provides the Church with a constitutional argument to maintain the present situation.

Chapter 6 dealt with education policy from 1962-1999; here it was shown that change slowly began to happen. The 1960s heralded a more outward looking attitude in economics, cultural behaviour and educational policy. The OECD began to cast a critical eye on education policy, with the long-term goal of preparing the country for EEC entry in 1973. Investment in education was recommended and thus began the drive to broaden second level and make it universal. In primary schooling a reform of the curriculum was introduced which included, for the first time, an engagement with progressive education philosophies and an attempt to move away from the strict disciplinary rote-learning approach. However this reform measure was hijacked by the Catholic hierarchy. A cynical spin was put on the idea of an Integrated Curriculum so that in an Irish context it means the right to integrate religion into every aspect of the primary school curriculum and the entire school day. As previously pointed out, the Integrated Curriculum makes a mockery of Dewey's philosophies, which are supposed to guide primary school teaching. It contravenes contemporary thinking, as outlined in the European Council Toledo Guiding Principles on the necessity of considering a variety of belief perspectives in schools so that mutual understanding and communication can be promoted – standards which will benefit all who live in diverse, pluralistic

societies. After years of debate on how to formulate the State's first Education Act the final document, enacted in 1998 under the Fianna Fáil administration, deviated significantly from the original aim of creating a more diverse system. This piece of legislation actually strengthened the position of the Catholic Church in the management and control of schools by formally recognising the role of the patron and enshrining the legal status of religious ethos. The protection of ethos is further clarified and guaranteed in the Equal Status Act, 2000 which grants schools the right to practice discrimination in order to protect their religious ethos. Thus despite the aims of the Education Act, 1998 to respect all forms of diversity the right of religious bodies to defend and propagate dogma supersedes basic human rights of equality and fairness. The rhetoric versus reality conundrum is the cornerstone of Irish primary school education. During this period, however, an entirely new educational phenomenon appears. Multidenominational, democratically-managed primary schooling in the shape of the Educate Together movement is founded by parents in 1978 looking for an alternative to Church controlled education. By the year 2000 it has, despite stringent opposition from the established religious and political elites, made modest inroads into the educational landscape.

The section on contemporary educational policy (2000-2014) considered how primary school education is now more dynamic than at any other point in the State's history. This is so because the culture of consensus between the major stakeholders has changed. The Church-State relationship is no longer the defining binary in primary school education: there are now other agents playing a part. On the domestic front the teachers' unions, Educate Together, diverse community groups and parents are playing a role. Currently one of the main driving forces for change is the State itself. The Forum for Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, operating under the remit of the Department of Education and Skills, represents a direct challenge to the institutional power of the former dominant partner in education. It is a watershed: the monopolistic position of the Catholic Church in education is being challenged by the State. It is an initiative which has the potential to fundamentally change the face of schooling. It is also laying the groundwork for a re-definition of the ideology which has guided first level education because it is an acknowledgement that what we have at present does not correspond to how modern Irish society is beginning to define itself. But change does not happen in a vacuum. The societal factors which have been instrumental in bringing us to this point were also highlighted in this chapter. The diversification of Irish society in terms of population and ethnic composition as well as a diversification in terms of norms and values are the keys which unlock the reasons why change is happening now. Irish society is more secular and multi-cultural and Irish identity is defined by a range of factors, and not just religious affiliation.

Indeed as the recent Gallup poll (2014) showed, just 46% of Irish people say religion plays a positive role in their lives in contrast to the 59% global figure and those professing “no religion” has risen by 400% in ten years, due in no small way to a breakdown in trust between the Catholic Church and the people resulting from numerous abuse scandals and cover-ups by religious personnel (Counihan, 2013).

There are other contributory factors too: it was noted that domestic education policy is no longer only local. In line with many western states national policy is now influenced by globalisation. The degree of interconnectivity between the local, national and the global was debated and it was concluded that educational policy is a mixture of these different forces. The influence of bodies like the EU and the OECD can be seen on policy which references an intention to meet the demands of the market. Policy documents are characterised by the language of the market, the other “marketization” feature is the enhanced role given to “partners” in the implementation of policy as a substitute for financial commitment from the State. It was highlighted that the role of the Welfare State has traditionally been weak in Ireland due to a suspicion among elites of the potential of social justice policies to reflect a left-wing ideology. This ideological paranoia contributed to a neo-liberal type culture of privatisation from the early days of the independent State right up to the present and is manifested in education by the continuation of a system of out-sourcing primary schooling to religious bodies and the gross underfunding of the sector which has led to an expectation that parents provide a financial input. Thus it is possible to see present-day marketization education policies as a continuation of a tradition of laissez-faire conservative thinking which has characterised education for many decades. One can detect the fingerprints of supranational organisations like the UN, the EU and the OECD on all major contemporary Irish educational policy in terms of a drive to fulfil an economic imperative of maintaining European competitiveness. But this does not remove a parochial tone and tenet from current debates on education or indeed at the level of praxis. The present analysis has shown that in primary school education, the theocratic paradigm has not entirely been subsumed by the mercantile in the philosophy underlying practice. There is still a concern among the effective managers of primary schooling for education to fulfil a specific moralising function and not merely a utilitarian one.

One of the conclusions of this work has been that the inherently conservative nature of Irish society has greatly contributed to a gridlocked education system at primary level. This national trait has not evaporated despite the radical changes which have taken place in everyday life over the past twenty years. A reverence for the past and fear of the new manifests itself in resistance to change in some

quarters. Hegemonic forces with an agenda to maintain their position of power and subvert educational reform can harness this attachment to tradition and play on fears of the "other". It has been shown that despite the admittance by the Catholic Church that there is a necessity to broaden patronage it is not readily handing over schools to the State. In effect it is blocking reform by forming alliances with Catholic parents and conservative religious lobby groups using the argument that there will be no movement unless it is the wish of the majority of parents in each locality to have a different patron. The majority of parents are Catholic and many feel that the system does not need to change. Thus the "tyranny of the majority" is in danger of persisting. In tandem with this conclusion is the point that this conservatism arose in some measure from a Catholic Church-controlled culture. In the words of O'Toole (2014b); "it was the Irish secret service" and the institutionalised Church achieved its form of control by "the mass production of shame and secrecy" (ibid). But once a cultural habitus has been created it does not easily shift.

The future

The future course of primary school education is not clear. It has, from the start, been my opinion that the remit of the Forum did not go far enough and that nothing short of 100% divesting of patronage from religious organisations to the State was the only really inclusive and democratic solution (see Appendix Number 3). The inescapable fact is that the Catholic ethos, which defines so much of primary and indeed second level schooling, is incompatible with an intercultural ethos which is based on equality and respect for difference. Commencing from a position of addressing diversity for 50% of schools was a watered-down proposal from the start. The total number of schools now to be divested is 29; this represents 1% of the 3,000 Catholic schools. To date only four schools have been handed over by the Catholic Church (Donnelly, 2014b). What has emerged is that parents in rural areas, where there are 1,700 schools from a total of 3,200, will have to continue sending their children to schools where they will be exposed to religious indoctrination because there is no alternative. The Minister is attempting to ensure that such "stand alone" schools become more inclusive by inviting their Boards of Managements to adopt an inclusive charter. The Minister's proposals have met with opposition and responses from the bishops that they can and will guard their religious ethos. Media reports outline that the Minister is increasingly frustrated with the stalling attempts of the traditional patron and that "the provision of a genuinely inclusive education for children of all faiths and none remains a distant aspiration" (Editorial, Irish Times, 2014b). Minister Quinn continues to attempt to dismantle hegemonic patterns by criticising the amount of time spent on religion teaching in faith-run schools, advocating religious instruction to be taught outside of school hours and appealing to the Churches on the logic and necessity of creating a pluralistic system. If change will not be achieved by dialogue and discussion then the only route

open is to legislate for it. The inescapable fact is that the legal structures which permit human rights abuses must be dismantled. This means amending the Constitution; repealing the Education Act, 1998, the Equal Status Act, 2000 and Employment Equality Act, 2000 which protect patronage and religious ethos as well as abolishing Rule 68 for Primary School Teaching, which legitimises the Integrated Curriculum (some of the above have already been recommended by the Forum). These are identifiable remedies but few politicians seem willing to engage with such a course of action. In the meantime draft legislation on enrolment policies is being debated with the new Education (Admission to Schools) Bill aiming to tackle discriminatory school admission practices such as blood relations influencing admittance, taking financial deposits and interviewing, which lead to academic cherry-picking. Its glaring omission, however, is that it does not consider removing the rights of schools to discriminate on the basis of religious affiliation. Thus, in the future the growing practice of baptising your child purely to gain admittance to your local Catholic school will possibly continue. In the words of Gutmann: "good laws, which are the consequence of peaceful political agitation in a democracy, are the source of good education, and good education in turn creates good citizens" (1999, p.282). At the moment Ireland does not have good educational laws. This is an issue where there should be no "half-measures", either we live in a democratic state which guarantees freedom of conscience or we are living in a quasi-fundamentalist one which does not.

Little has been implemented to make the training of primary school teachers more inclusive. All State-funded teacher training colleges are still controlled by religious organisations, indeed it appears that there is somewhat of a closing of ranks in terms of protecting the religious ethos of the colleges. In 2010 student teachers, for the first time, had the option of taking an Ethical Studies course instead of the mandatory Certificate in Religious Studies (CRS). However the effect of this reform is for Catholic and Church of Ireland schools to adopt a harder line acknowledging that they will only employ those who have the certificate in their specific religion (O'Toole, 2014a). What this means is that those newly qualified teachers who do not have the CRS can only realistically apply for jobs in 2% of schools in the State. It also means that non-Catholic teachers in the 92% of Catholic controlled schools have limited chances of being promoted. Teachers can also be fired if their private behaviour is seen to threaten the ethos of the school, for example LGBT teachers (Gamble, 2014). This is nothing short of institutionalised discrimination and if the same criteria were used, say in the employment of only white people, it would be justifiably termed "racism", a distinct form of oppression which would not be tolerated in a functioning democracy. How can teachers effectively transmit the values of inclusiveness and tolerance it their training only takes account of one particular religious paradigm and if it elevates this above all other philosophical systems? It would

appear that the effect of challenging the monopolistic hold the Catholic Church has had on education for one-hundred-and-fifty years has led to an entrenchment of its position.

Notwithstanding the potential for regressive steps there is a sense that the zeitgeist is ready for change. This is evidenced by the recognition, at political level, that the system must be made inclusive to reflect the multi-cultural society that now is Ireland. But it is also tangible at some levels of community activity. The voice of the minority has most definitely become more vocal. There is now a narrative incorporating the human rights perspective and it is not dismissed as a trivial issue pertaining to an irrelevant minority. A glance at the "Letters to the Editor" page of the Irish broadsheets in any given month shows many people expressing dissatisfaction with the current discriminatory system. There are also a number of respected journalists and academics writing on the topic to highlight human rights abuses (c.f. Daly, 2014; Hickey, 2011 & 2012; O'Toole 2014a; Rowe, 2013; Devine, 2011). In addition individuals are helping to change the system by using their democratic right to access EU Human Rights Courts. Louise O'Keeffe's landmark case against the Irish State (*O'Keeffe v. Ireland*, [2014]) is set to change the history of Irish education. Ms O'Keeffe spent 15 years trying to establish that the Irish State was responsible for sexual abuse perpetuated by her principal teacher when she was in primary school. The European Court of Human Rights (January 2014) overturned the Irish Supreme Court judgement which had concluded in 2009 that the State was not responsible because the State does not own or manage primary schools. The European Court ruled that the State had failed in its obligations to protect Louise O'Keeffe from sexual abuse (Wall & MacCormaic, 2014) and was in breach of two articles of the European Convention on Human Rights. In the words of one Irish Minister, the case has "very profound" implications for the patronage system of schools (Gilmore, in O'Halloran, 2014). What this means is that the State can no longer shirk from its responsibilities to children. How this sits with the fact that 98% of primary schools are managed by religious organisations remains to be seen. But it would seem untenable that a private organisation controls a school but the State is then responsible for how it functions particularly, if the school fails to protect children and treat them fairly. As Nugent (2014b) outlines, the State can no longer turn a blind eye to discrimination and in the long run will have to address all breaches of human rights inherent in the current schooling system. In the future it is also conceivable that the European courts route will be used by other individuals or groups seeking to establish their democratic rights.

The growth and success of an alternative to denominational education as represented by Educate Together schools is an attestation to the triumph of agency in the face of goliath-like opposition. In

Ireland sending your child to an alternative school is a political act and transmits a message that many parents are not happy with the state of affairs in primary school education. It was the overwhelming choice of patron among parents polled by the Forum on widening patronage. All sixty-eight ET schools are heavily oversubscribed despite having fewer financial resources than mainstream schools and start-up schools being housed in temporary accommodation for many years. It is not only non-Catholics who choose an ET school for their children but it is estimated that there are up to 50% of Catholic pupils also attending (Darmody et al., 2012), signifying perhaps awareness in the wider community that this model of democratic education is the way forward. Being recognised in 2013 as a patron for second level schools is a further milestone: the first three ET second level schools will open on the east coast in September 2014 and the Educate Together model is now also being exported to other jurisdictions, like Bristol in the UK. Is this the first example ever of educational policy borrowing from Ireland into England? From working in the second level ET campaign I am heartened by the level of public support, for example, expressed when we do information stands at local shopping centres and by the very dedicated and intelligent people who work on an entirely voluntary basis to win support for the idea of a more inclusive and creative type of education, where students as well as adults have a voice. We are hopeful that it is only a matter of time before the first second level Educate Together school shall be established in the west of Ireland, even if there are some people who see Educate Together schools as for "tree huggers." [7] However, this is still a minority movement representing only 2% of primary schools. It is difficult to understand why there are not more schools with a democratic ethos and democratic practices on this island.

One of the aims of this work has been to see if it is possible to analyse Irish primary school education as an expression of the evolution of democracy. The historical inquiry has shown that change has come about but that it has indeed been evolutionary rather than revolutionary. There has not been a visible metamorphosis to a more comprehensive expression of democracy, indeed any developments have happened at a snail's pace and from the perspective of someone who is personally affected by the preservation of an undemocratic tradition it is difficult to understand the cultural behaviour which tolerates the continuance of irrational actions. In many respects mainstream primary school education is still not meeting the requirements of the environment in which it operates. This fact is aptly summed up by the American magazine, *The Atlantic*, headline: "A New Problem in Ireland: Where to find a Non-Catholic School?" (Schrank, 2013), which documents that demand far outstrips supply for access to Ireland's multi-denominational schools.

[7] Comment of a local auctioneer to a prospective house buyer in County Galway (2012).

The education system is not fulfilling its obligation of advancing democracy because it still does not meet basic democratic requirements. As Donnelly, J. (2014) outlines, Ireland is to appear before the UN Human Rights Commission in July 2014 to explain why it continues to marginalise minorities and to report on how many non-denominational schools it has established. The Irish situation echoes Carr's (2014, pers. comm.) conclusion that the tendency is towards reproduction triumphing over transformation in the struggle to establish democratic frameworks as those whose core interests are under threat will attempt to subvert reform initiatives. Or as Williams concludes: "the long revolution is continually limited and opposed" (1961, p. 377). An active and engaged citizenry questioning and challenging prescribed conventions has not been a strong feature of Irish democracy. There has been a history of resistance to change and little appetite for tackling difficult issues in a deliberative, public process; as O'Toole notes there is a cultural tendency to adapt to circumstances rather than to change them (2012, p. 28). Neither is there a strong tradition of the State machinery standing up to powerful vested interest groups. In addition it is not inconceivable that in the near future yet another conservative public representative could be at the helm of the Department of Education and Skills as the Labour Party are preforming badly in the opinion polls. This would not augur well for the reform agenda.

Carr and Hartnett (1996, p. 14) point out that there is a direct relationship between a state's education system and how it defines the "good society." If we apply this thesis to Irish society then it is not piecemeal change that we need but a radical overhaul of our education system as well as serious consideration as to the type of society we want to create, how we shall shape it and the role of education in this. We may look to history to understand who we are, and why "we are where we are", but we need to also liberate ourselves from the past, from the "dead weight of tradition" (Carr & Hartnett, 1996, p. 13). We need to think rationally, to find workable solutions for all members of the community and then move on to create something which is better than what came before. This is a story without a neat ending. The road to democracy is still under construction. But it is, at least, a work in progress. And those who, for a long time, had no voice in shaping educational policy and practice are challenging the "common sense" view and beginning to have an impact. As Michael Apple notes there is space in the democratic project for counter-hegemonic activity even if such challenges are fragile and constantly open to threat (1993, p. 10). That this space now exists is a preferable outcome to the stagnation which has characterised so much of Irish educational policy in the past, for it represents the germination of hope that the future for our children may be brighter and that the democratic project is moving slowly forward. It should just move faster.

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Appendices

Appendix No. 1: Example of how religious ethos can permeate the formal curriculum at primary school.

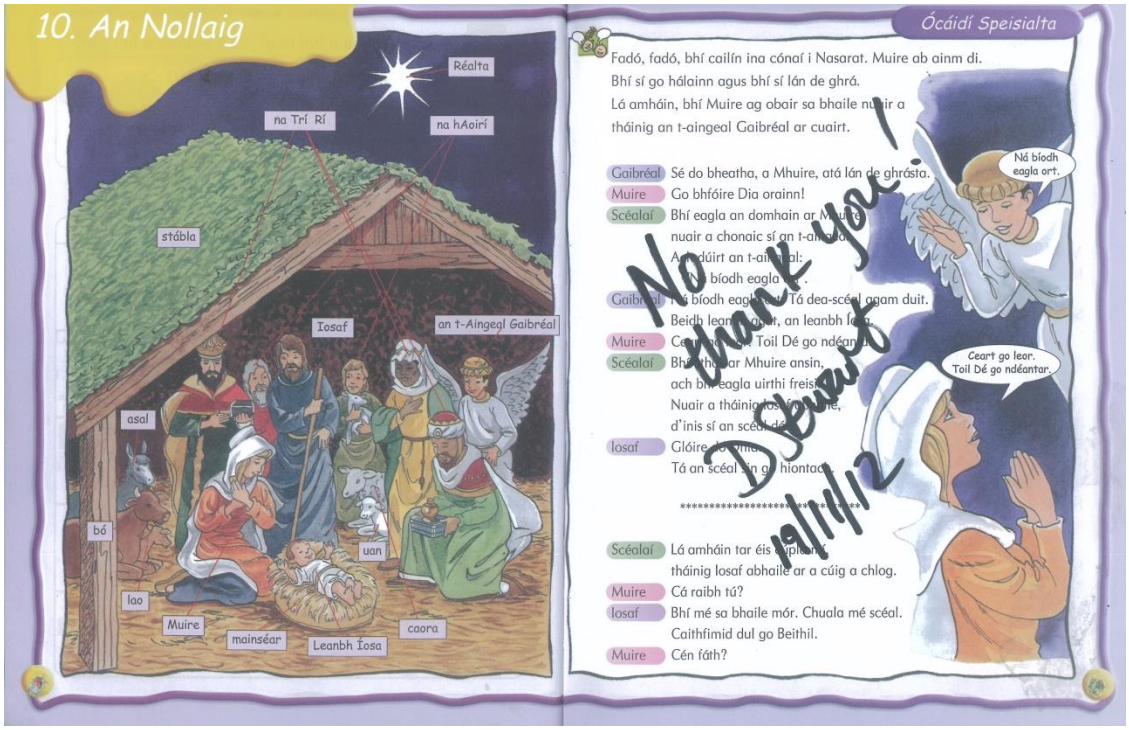
Translation (by Áine Ryan) of the poem *Táim láidir* from the Irish language text book *Bun go Barr 4*, p. 19 (no author): Dublin: CJ Fallon (2011). Irish language is a compulsory subject.

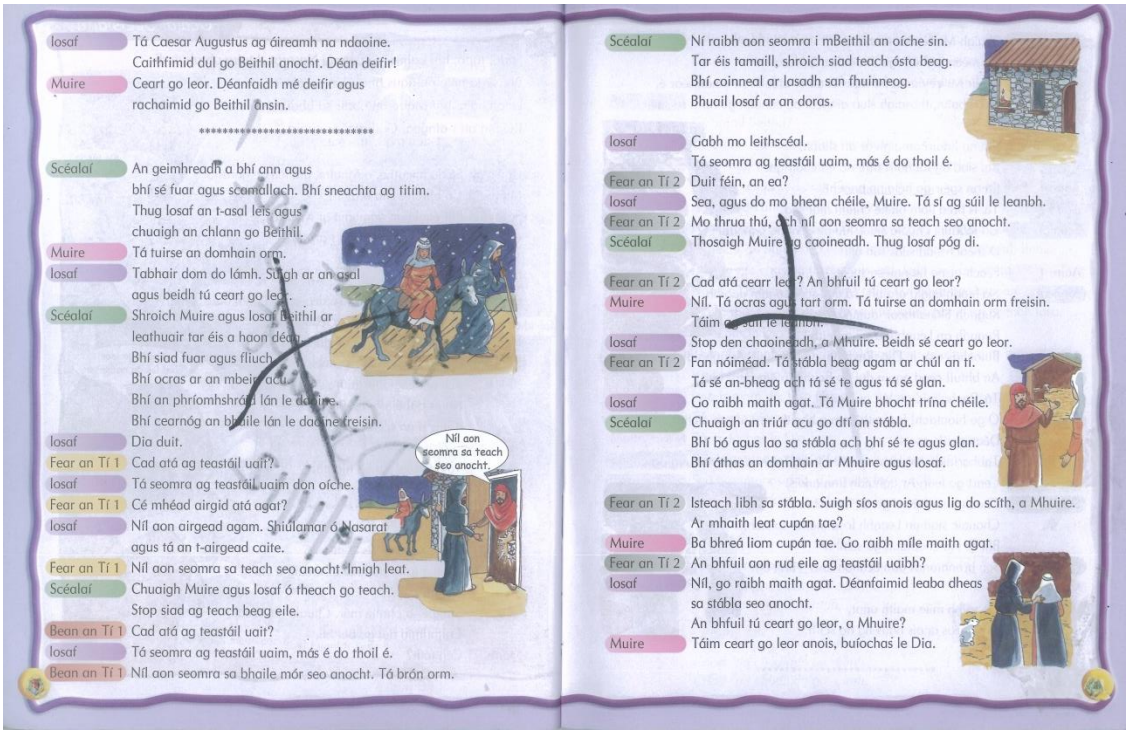
I am strong	**Táim láidir**
"I am strong," said the flower	"Táim láidir," arsa an bláth.
When the wind blew.	Nuair a shéid an ghaoth.
But a cow came along	Ach tháining bó
and ate it.	Agus d'ith sí é.
"I am strong," said the man	"Táim láidir," arsa an fear.
To his son Tomás.	Lena mhac Tomás.
But the day came	Agus thánaig an lá
when he died.	Agus fuair sé bás.
"I am strong," said the cow.	"Táim láidir," arsa an bhó.
Lying down in the field.	Sa pháirc ina luí.
But a man came	Ach thánaig fear
And killed her.	Agus mharaigh sé í.
No one is strong	Níl aon duine láidir.
We are all made of clay	Níl ionainn ach cré.
No one is strong	Níl aon duine láidir
Except the son of God.	Ach Críost Mac Dé.

Poet: Lionard Ó hAnnaidh

Appendix No. 2: Example of how religious ethos can permeate all elements of the formal curriculum at primary school.

Chapter 10 *An Nollaig* (Christmas) from the Irish language text book *Bun go Barr 4,* pp 60-65 (no author): Dublin: CJ Fallon (2011). Irish language is a compulsory subject.





Scéalaí Shuigh Muire síos sa stábla.
Ag meán oíche rugadh an Leanbh Íosa.
Chuir Muire éadaí air agus chuir sí isteach sa mhainséar é.
Go tobann, thosaigh slua aingeal ag canadh go hard sa spéir.

Scéalaí Bhí na haoirí amuigh ar an sliabh.
Bhí siad ag tabhairt aire do na caoirigh.
Aoire 1 Tá an spéir go hálainn anocht.
Aoire 2 Tá. Is breá liom oíche chiúin mar seo.
Scéalaí Go tobann, chuala siad slua aingeal ag canadh.
D'fhéach siad suas san aer.
Aoire 1 Féach ar na haingil sa spéir.
Aingeal Ná bíodh eagla oraibh. Tá deas-scéal agam daoibh.
Rugadh Slánaitheoir dúinn anocht.
Rugadh an Leanbh Íosa i mBeithil.
Aoire 2 Buíochas mór le Dia. Rachaimid go Beithil. Ar aghaidh linn.
Aoire Óg An bhfuil cead agam dul go Beithil in éineacht libh?
Aoire 1 Tá. Rachaimid go léir go Beithil.
Aoire Óg Ó go hiontach! Is maith liom a bheith ag siúl san oíche.
Aoire 2 Déan deifir anois!
Aoire Óg Tabharfaidh mé bronntanas d'Íosa. Tabharfaidh mé uan óg dó.
Aoire 2 Ceart go leor. Ar aghaidh linn anois.
Scéalaí Chuaigh na haoirí go dtí an stábla.
Chonaic siad an Leanbh Íosa ina luí sa stábla.
Bhí sé ina chodladh go sámh.
Aoire Óg Seo bronntanas don Leanbh Íosa – uan óg.
Muire agus Iosaf Go raibh míle maith agat.
Suigh síos anois agus lig do scíth.

****

Scéalaí I dtír eile, bhí trí rí ag dul go Beithil freisin.
Chonaic siad réalta gheal sa spéir agus lean siad í.
Bhí tuirse an domhain orthu ach lean siad ag siúl.
Balthazar Tá tuirse an domhain orm.
Cá bhfuil Beithil?
Cá bhfuil Slánaitheoir an domhain?
Caspar Níl a fhios agam ach féach ar an réalta sa spéir.
Lean an réalta.
Melchior Ar aghaidh linn. Táimid beagnach ann.
Balthazar Feicim rud éigin sa spéir. Réalta gheal os cionn an stábla.
Caspar B'fhéidir go bhfuil an Leanbh Íosa sa stábla. Ar aghaidh linn.
Scéalaí Is beag nár chas na trí rí an stábla ais, ach lean siad an réalta.
Nuair a shroich na trí rí an stábla, bhí áthas an domhain orthu.
Melchior Maith thú, Caspar. Fuair tú an stábla ina bhfuil an Leanbh Íosa.
Balthazar Buíochas le Dia.
Caspar Thángamar ar cuairt chuig Slánaitheoir an domhain.
Cad is ainm dó?
Muire Íosa is ainm dó. Íosa Críost.
Melchior Tá sé go hálainn.
Muire Tá, buíochas le Dia.
Balthazar Seo bronntanas duit, a Leanbh Íosa – ór.
Caspar Seo bronntanas duit, a Leanbh Íosa – túis.
Melchior Seo bronntanas duit, a Leanbh Íosa – mior.
Muire agus Iosaf Go raibh mile maith agaibh.
na Trí Rí Tá fáilte romhaibh.
Cór *Oíche chiúin, oíche Mhic Dé,*
Cách 'na suan, dís araon,
Dís is dílse faire le spéis,
Naíon beag naíghneal ceananntais caomh,
Críost 'na chodladh go séimh,
Críost 'na chodladh go séimh.

Appendix: Number 3: Submission made by Áine Ryan and David Stewart to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, June 2011.

Consultation for the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector

Respondent's Details Name Áine Ryan, David Stewart
Position (if applicable)
Organisation (if applicable)
Address
Telephone
Email address
Date 07/06/11

Is this response a personal view or is it made on behalf of an organisation?
Personal [x] On behalf of an organisation [ ]

A chara,

We welcome this opportunity to articulate our views as parents of children who are non-Catholic. The views we express on the divesting of patronage from religious bodies to the state are informed by our experiences and those of our children of what we see as an infringement of our human rights to an educational provision which does not include involuntary indoctrination and the curtailment of our freedom of conscience. We feel that schooling in Ireland does not reflect the principles of democracy as outlined in the 1916 Proclamation of Independence, nor does it mirror the central message of the Education Act 1998 which states that education in this state will respect the diversity of beliefs of its citizens. We feel that a secular state should support a secular education rather than a segregated one which promotes one particular belief and excludes and discriminates against other philosophical positions or beliefs.

1. **Establishing demand**

Our position is that a modern democratic European state should provide education which is inclusive of all its citizens regardless of creed, ethnicity, socio-economic background or geographical location. Therefore the only real pluralist solution is to change the entire system to reflect the ideal of inclusiveness articulated in various Irish governmental policy documents. This means that all state schools should be non-denominational and not just the 50% proposed by the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector. If the Republic of Ireland is, for the first time in its history, to have a publicly-administered state school system as opposed to a privately-managed one then a democratic system must be available to all and not just to half of the children in the state. The question therefore is not of establishing demand for non-faith or for faith schools but of legislating for the entitlement of all the children of the state to be in Padraig Pearse's words "cherished equally" in having access to equality in educational provision. Any ambiguity within the Constitution regarding state sponsoring of faith-based education should be removed, by referendum if necessary (perhaps in tandem with the Children's Rights referendum).

2. **The creation of a two-tier system**

A two-tier system will be created when the Catholic Church divests patronage from socially disadvantaged areas where there is a predominance of ethnic minority children who are non-Catholic. The danger is that the Catholic Church will maintain control of schools in more affluent, conservative and rural areas, thus a situation will develop whereby Catholic schools are seen as desirable and state schools as less so. Faith schools will be the precinct of the middles classes, state schools for the less well-off, socially disadvantaged and/or ethnic minority groups. Catholic schools will be seen as those of the elite. This is a recipe for segregation, ghettoization and social problems in the future and is a further argument for 100% state management of schools.

3. **Teacher education**

Teacher education should be secularised immediately. The present situation is discriminatory against all those who are neither Church of Ireland nor Catholic as all teacher training colleges in the state are controlled by these religious organisations, Where then do students who do not belong to

these congregations train? If they accept a place in one of these training colleges must they subvert their freedom of consciousness and pretend to adhere to the dogma? Is this in contravention with individual freedom and freedom of religious expression? Currently all teachers (with the exception of those working in the 58 Educate Together Schools or the 10 non-denominational Gaelscoileanna) are appointed by the Chairperson of the Board of Management who is either the Catholic or Church of Ireland bishop. The Chairperson can ask the potential teacher to present a certificate of compliance with the religious dogma which is proof that the teacher will comply with the religious ethos of the school. The unfairness of such a system should not be allowed to continue: if the state pays the teacher's salary then the state should determine the criteria by which a teacher is employed. Such criteria should exclude all references to religious persuasion. In very few other job interviews is a candidate asked questions about religious beliefs and if they were may have grounds for challenging such an imposition. There are also issues surrounding sexual orientation: a teacher who is a practicing homosexual is not in compliance with Catholic dogma and can be discriminated against.

The Department of Education and Skills should, as a matter of urgency, take control of the teacher training colleges: it is essential, if the department is serious about implementing diversity and inclusiveness in our schools, that the training teachers receive reflects openness, tolerance of others beliefs and an understanding of difference.

4. Irish Language Schools

Schooling through the medium of Irish is not a language-ideology issue. Very often it is a middle class choice to educate children where there is a low pupil-teacher ratio and where there is an absence of ethnic minority children who require more assistance from the teacher. Parents may thus see such schools as establishments where their children will receive more attention from the teacher and in their view a better education. The term "white apartheid" is currently being used in some circles to describe the Gaelscoileanna. The department may consider undertaking research to explore the foundations of this term.

5. Curriculum

The legal standing afforded the Integrated Curriculum whereby a religious ethos or characteristic spirit shall infuse the entire school day should be abolished. The Integrated Curriculum in effect legitimizes religious indoctrination because it incorporates not just religious instruction but allows for religion to be an integral part of every aspect of school life, thus meaning that children are exposed to the dogma on a continuous basis via the official curriculum and the unofficial curriculum. This is particularly so in classes where there is preparation for religious sacraments – 2nd and 6th class where sometimes two hours per day are dedicated to ritualistic religious matters. Children who are not of the majority faith have no choice but to be exposed to this for schools, in the main, are not in a position to provide an alternative. Thus because of the lack of an alternative to religious indoctrination and because of the all-encompassing nature of the Integrated Curriculum freedom of conscience and freedom of religion is curtailed for those not belonging to the majority belief system. In reality this can be very difficult and painful for families. In addition children because they are marked out as different are excluded, isolated or indeed bullied.

The Department should be actively involved in changing the curriculum on the micro-level also to replace instruction in just one faith with a more ethics based subject where there is exposure to a variety of philosophical positions and belief systems which would function on the level of citizenship and democratic education.

6. Property

The state should assume ownership of all schools. If the churches refuse to hand over properties then there should be recompense for the clerical abuse scandals and a revoking of the Michael Woods secret deal with the Catholic Church which capped the maximum amount of redress the Catholic Church was liable for.

7. Boards of Management

The present system of local boards of management should be abolished; instead the Department of Education should control schools centrally (for the time being at least). Local people are not qualified for this managerial position and have received no formal training in the complex and time-consuming issues of leadership and educational management. Too often parish-pump politics characterise the Board of Management and anyhow how much leverage do the lay members really have? In the final analysis the Chairperson, i.e. the Bishop makes all the important decisions. Democracy for parents is an aspiration but is difficult to achieve in reality. Even in schools purporting to have a democratic ethos questions about the democratic nature of the board need to be asked. The whole area of who will run schools in the future is a very important one requiring careful consideration and some degree of guidance and input from central government.

8. The international experience

Personal experience of two tier, non-denominational (comprehensive) and Catholic-faith schooling in Scotland indicates the divisive and unsatisfactory nature of such systems. Intolerance, bigotry and sense of "otherness" are fostered in such split education systems. In England single-faith (non-Christian) schools are of significant concern due to lack of integration of non-English ethnic groups and accusations of racism and bigotry on both sides. The UK experiences show that separate state funding streams of religiously-run schools are not defensible and do not conform to the ideology of integration and mutual respect. Educating together fosters understanding, respect and will reduce intolerance and bigotry. Costs and practical concerns will not allow separate schools for every faith and the Irish State should not promote or sponsor one particular faith over another hence the full secularisation of the Irish education system is the only option.