
The Creation of a Modern Education System for Ireland

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Nelson Mandela.

Education has always been a crucial part in forming a country's identity. Many believe that an education is a privilege. Some believe that an education is a right or even an obligation. But the only obligation we might have towards education is to treat it as a privilege as well as a right, but certainly not an obligation to have an education. Education has been one of the main aspects of the success we see in our parents, our teachers, and more importantly, ourselves. A nation's way of teaching can be seen to shape a child's frame of mind from an early age. These teachings can be seen as a way of nurturing certain character attributes, and can fundamentally be related back to the development of a national disposition. Later effecting the mentality of the general workforce, government, and educational bodies. So, it's essential that people also strive to improve their states' education as so the succession of the next generation will hopefully generate individuals that can access their true potential and feel a sense of pride in contributing to their society. This idealistic approach isn't always easy to achieve.

Many things can hinder this progression from war, poverty, political and religious differences, all of these can hinder a child's progression in education. In the past, people have considered and concluded that post-primary and higher education, in particular, was only for the privileged few. It was seen as an unneeded expense many people of Ireland couldn't afford. Sequentially this led to many people with only primary level education entering the workforce. This divide in Irish society was a perpetual cycle that was starting to break in the early 20th century. The educational sector in the Irish state, which had been notable for the enduring power of the traditional institutions and values in the first generation in the of the independent Irish state, experienced a far-reaching transformation in the mid-twentieth century, linked to governmental intervention on the unprecedented scale.

A dramatic change in government policy towards post-primary and higher education was designed to produce a more highly qualified workforce. This democratic shift in Irish education led to a shift in many people's attitudes towards post-primary and higher-level education. Consequently, ushering in a nation more adaptable to an expanding global market and growing international relations. The history of education in Ireland has always been a battle of power. Thus, many lasting consequences can be seen in Ireland's social dynamics, particularly during the 19th and early 20th century. The notion of a middle-class sector is a very modern concept in Ireland. As individuals from modest upbringings struggled to cross a divide in society, to find a

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place of importance or wealth. With this perpetual cycle of power, a change in the status quo was hard to promote among the elite few in high society. This had a vicious domino effect on creating a class system in Ireland and reinforced the opinion that higher education is for the privilege. Many people turn to Hedge schools and later than to the National schools for their education as the later was funded by the state. The State appeared to be getting more control of the education system since the Free State was established.

Conversely, the development of the 1937 Constitution reversed this advancement. The Constitution merely reinforced the Church's right to education through Article 42. The Article states that parents hold the responsibility 'to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children' (Article 42.1). Moreover, the government had restricted themselves from interfering with the decisions of any parents by stating in Article 42.3.1, that the State will show "due regard... for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation". Parents could enroll their children in any denominational school and the Constitution effectively constrained the State from interfering with the Churches. It has been suggested that the Constitution inevitably put the advancement of Irish education back in the hands of a religious order (O' Donoghue 1999). Though the National school was by law consider multi-denominational, over 90 % of the schools were under the Catholic denomination.

The Catholic Church at this stage had control of the majority of education systems within the country. The following brief history of the Irish Education system was attached to the Constitutional Review Group Report in 1995 and written by Professor A. Hyland. When the National School system was set up in 1831, its main object was to 'unite in one system children of different creeds'. The National Board was 'to look with peculiar favor' on applicants for aid for schools jointly managed by Roman Catholics and Protestants. While many of the schools which were taken into connection with the Board in the early years were jointly managed, the main Christian churches put pressure on the government to allow aid to be given to schools under the management of individual churches. This pressure was so effective that, by the mid-nineteenth century, only 4% of national schools were under mixed management. (A. Hyland, 1995) Over the next twenty years, the education system remained relatively unchanged. But the repercussions of Article 2. 3.1 meant that the parents had sole control over the pupil's attendance. The led to the attendance among the certain factions' children was weak. This can relate back to the social background the child is brought up in. Example being children with agricultural backgrounds would be called to work the fields throughout the year. The same could be said about children from impoverished homes, most of them would be sent to earn a wage. This cause many people to traditionally grow up being illiterate and/or very weak numeracy skills. The education girls received was very similar to boys, their education came with The addition of some sewing and knitting. The girl's education was expected to be more focuses on developing a curriculum which a focus on domestic science, cooking, laundry, and needlework.

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According to R. John's 2011 research on Educating girls 1800-1870. Thus due to these social expectations for a woman, in the early twentieth century, many girls were still pulled from mainstream education to prepare for a domestic life. This though purposed a question to the Irish government in the late 19th Century. Should a girl be educated for the private sphere and a dutiful subservience, or should she be educated for independent thought and paid employment? Nonetheless, Ireland's long history of patriarchy is matched by an ongoing evolution of its women's movements. The first wave of Irish women's movement dates from the mid-19th century, with the franchise secured for women in 1918 while still under British colonial rule. First-wave feminists played a role in the nationalist movement, but their demands were later sidelined during the construction of a conservative, Catholic, post-colonial Irish state. It was only in the 1960s, did things start to significant change really began. There was a shift in emphasis in Irish culture from 'education as being a social expenditure to one of investment in the individual and society as a whole.' (Coolahan, 1981) It is also important to mention that the change in education policy came about as a result of the change in economic policy. Ireland's economic policy had become one that focused on "encouraging industrial growth and attracting foreign investment" (Raftery & Hout 1993 p.44).

All over Europe, the mindsets were was widening and international relationships were forming and businesses start to cross borders. No longer was it to Ireland benefit to be isolated. An old traditional Ireland was quickly going to be left behind as the rest of the world progresses into a modern society. Drastic action was needed, and this came when Ireland became one of the founding members of The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It was only in 1965, did the first findings of the OECD report on Irelands 'Investment in Education' become available to the public. It was a great wakeup call for the Irish government that was long overdue. The report identified many of the major faults in the Irish education system. - Social and geographical inequalities of opportunity, - Inefficient use of resources - Imbalance of the system's output of fewer persons with an adequate education and/or technical qualification compared to more persons lacking in a basic education and/or technical qualification. - It also drew attention to the inadequacy of the statistical data available on the system, - The absence of any forward planning mechanism (OECD Reports)

The report was one of the first steps that "promoted the planned development of education as a contribution to economic growth" (O' Callaghan 2013). In his panel review with the OECD, Minister for Education George Colley stated that the report had an instant impact on policy in Ireland. Since then, the Irish education system has been altered to cater to the requirement of the nation with the aim of encouraging economic growth. Therefore, since the 1960s, Irish education has been characterized by economic factors. Any changes to the curriculum were made with the objective of industrializing the economy. These consequences of this report led to a "period of seven years from 1962 was the only one since Independence in 1922 when education policy was a very high priority on the government's agenda." Fleming and Harford

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Concurrently, An Taoiseach Lemass appointed Donogh O'Malley and others as Ministers for Education and these individuals transformed the Ministry of Education from its previously laissez-faire function to a new role of assertive leadership/initiator of change. In his first major speech as Minister on 10 September 1966, he condemned the inequalities inherent within the existing system, describing the fact that one-third of young people received no education beyond primary level as 'a dark stain on the National conscience'. He continued: "I am glad to be able to announce that I am drawing up a scheme under which, in future, no boy or girl in this State will be deprived of full educational opportunity – from primary to university level – by reason of the fact that the parents cannot afford to pay for it." Donogh O'Malley served as Minister for Education for twenty months until his untimely death on 10 March 1968. During this short period, caused a great upheaval as he abolished the Primary Certificate examination, considered reports on Regional Technical Colleges and the Commission on Higher Education, established the Ryan Tribunal on Teacher Salaries and controversially proposed a merger between University College, Dublin and Trinity College, Dublin. He is best known as the Minister for Education who proposed a scheme of free second level education in 1966. The new scheme aimed to increase the availability of secondary education to all social classes.

During this time, government spending on education almost doubled (Raftery & Hout 1993) The responses from the public were overwhelmingly positive and the pressure by the public sustained the momentum for change regardless of any cabinet and religious orders protest. I know I am up against opposition and serious organized opposition but they are not going to defeat me on this. I shall tell you further that I shall expose them and I shall expose their tactics on every available occasion whoever they are. I see my responsibilities very clearly to the Irish people and to the Irish children. No vested interest or group, whoever they may be, at whatever level, will sabotage what every reasonable minded man considers to be a just scheme." Donogh O'Malley, 1967 in Seanad Eireann. This large shift in paradigm may have been the nail in the preverbal coffin for the control the Catholic Church had on Irish education. Cause soon enough church authorities, started to demand more money when they heard of the fund soon to come available to the education sector. They wanted to water down the influence of the state, had on curriculum/policies in secondary. But with the funds came the right to have a say. Furthermore, powerful Irish leaders began to question the authority of the Catholic Church. Example being Seán Lemass in 1968, he assembled a teaching council to debate the allocation of funds and the implementation of curriculum in national schools across the country, no member of the church was invited to the table. It can be argued that secularisation was another factor that contributed to the downfall of the Catholic Church. Catholicism was no longer the national identity as it was replaced by secularisation.

The Welfare Period: From the 1960s onwards, in Ireland as in other countries, Schooling

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became a more central element in the social structure: links between schooling and occupational placement became stronger and the school became more important as a mediating institution between children's social origins and their Occupational destinations (Breen, et al.1990, pp. 123-142). Ireland's pedagogy had also started to change during this period. Education-as-usual assumes that kids are empty vessels who need to be sat down in a room and filled with curricular content. Dr. Mitra's experiments prove that wrong. The notion that the child is an empty vessel, alludes common sense. Instead, the idea is ripped out of context, passed on in a game of digital Chinese whispers, and vilified in a manner that speaks not of radicalism but of thoughtlessness.

First the record. The idea of the human mind as originally an empty vessel or a blank slate has a long history dating back at least to Aristotle (see De Anima, Bk. 3, chap. 4), who argued that the human intellect must be something like a blank writing tablet able to receive the imprint of the ideas that come to be written on it. Irish education relied heavily on this pedagogy. This approach to teaching led to a restriction of knowledge in society and later created that foundation for a higher hierarchic in Ireland. So as the state was finding its own identity in Europe, Irish pedagogy started to change into more humanisms mind frame. This philosophical approach, purposed by Paolo Freire (1921-1997), can be seen to produce a greater democratic society.

Education is a social tool for change as people became more critical thinking, a better sense of their own potential can led to an empowerment of self. This method can be seen to create a more independent and problem-solving society that feels a sense of responsibility to share information and progressions. This was possibly an idealistic solution that the Irish state was searching for as this new approach to education can reflect a new modern workforce. As a change trickled down to the classroom the fundamental relationship between student and teacher was changed forever. The role of the teacher now was to idealistically create a comfortable environment for a student. Voidance of banking method was key.

As American philosopher, Carl Rogers states that To experience their own education that meets the three core conditions that are needed to be addressed. Congruence (realness), acceptance and empathy. It a tall order for the teacher. But if the teacher aims for this approach the results over time will be as beneficial for the education system and later the Irish landscape as a whole as it approached the 21st Century. In conclusion, there were many hurdles that hindered the development of the Irish education sector. The most notable difficulty was Ireland's inherited habit to always rely on insular traditions. It was this trust in these set traditions, that led to the state willing giving complete control of the education sector to the Catholic Church. With this reluctance education went stagnate for decades, it was no wonder when the OCED released report's, in the 1960's, it reviled that Ireland was in great need of renovation if it want to compete with its European counterparts. This was when the

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unquestioned acceptance of clerical domination began to break under strain. But if it wasn't for the few key deep seat politicians like Donogh O'Malley and George Colley. I believe that the decade of change wouldn't have been as reforming and the education standards of today wouldn't be as high as they are now.

As stated above, free post-primary education was one of the biggest policy that took the education sector in the right direction and as on as the scheme was implemented the effect was immediate – 21,000 enrolled in a secondary school that year (Department of Education, Annual report, 1967-1968), thus improving the numbers accessing third level education. This dramatic change in government policy towards education did produce a more highly qualified and driving workforce, which involves woman just as equally as men. Everyone for the first time in Irish history had an equal chance at success. This democratic shift in Irish culture consequently, ushered in a nation that was more adaptable to an expanding global market and growing international

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