

that teachers carefully monitor and describe their attempts at experimentation. This latter task is crucial if education is to progress in this country. One of the founding fathers of Sociology, Georg Simmel remarked:

Nothing more can be attempted than to establish the beginning and direction of an infinitely long road. The pretension of any systematic and definitive completeness would be, at least, a self-illusion. Perfection can here be obtained by the individual student only in the subjective sense that he communicates everything he has been able to see.

It is in this special sense of "seeing" that I ask all of those engaged in the world of education to become good researchers of their own practice and give us 'thick description' fed by understanding. We must be able to not only narrate and describe educational phenomena, but we must be able to justify and evaluate these phenomena. What this means is that each educator will have a disposition to critically and systematically examine one's own educational setting. It is not enough that outside 'experts' trained in social research methods study educational settings - teachers and others need to become more skilled researchers and reporters. I believe that education, and particularly school curriculum, will not make significant advances on past practice until we have evolved a more effective system of research and curriculum development in which teachers are supported by outside researchers and that a more thorough commitment is given to action research methodology than to natural science models of educational research. This is a significant part of the great challenge of change in Irish education.

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THE FORTUNES OF EDUCATION AS A SUBJECT
OF STUDY AND OF RESEARCH IN IRELAND

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Introduction

When one examines the traditional pattern of the study of Education in modern Ireland one is struck by its very chequered history. There have been periods of breakthrough, promise and of serious concern for its promotion. These were succeeded, however, by long valley-periods where the approach to the subject was unimaginative, instrumental and intellectually shallow. Regrettably the latter was the more predominant pattern. One considers that an appraisal of this tradition is important for a number of reasons. It is a topic of considerable interest in itself. It is a topic which has been very much neglected in published research. The strength or weakness of educational studies has had an intimate bearing on the quality of the education system in modern Ireland. One asserts that the neglect of educational studies has been a weakness in the intellectual and cultural life of Irish society. Such an appraisal may also be timely in that certain gains which have been made may be under threat through current policies and further desirable developments may be seriously restricted.

An appraisal like this may be desirable but is difficult to achieve in a short paper. Nevertheless, this synoptic presentation attempts to reveal the key approaches to the study of Education, to give some evaluation of them and to establish a perspective from which current developments in the subject can be assessed.

Many relevant questions and much interesting detail are set aside perforce for treatment on other occasions.

Early Conceptions of Education

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and in the wake of the profound societal changes associated with the Agricultural, Industrial and French Revolutions the challenge of providing mass education was faced by many European states. It was a period characterised by considerable optimism about the potential of education to lead forward to a new era of progress and civilisation. It was a seminal and rich period for educational theory and experiment. Among the rationalists evolved the view that a Science of Education might be established based on a study of what was termed the science of mind. Brian Simon has written, "The idea that education could be developed as a science, utilising observation and experiment, arose directly from the tradition of English materialist philosophy deriving, in particular, from the work of Hobbes and Locke".¹ Simon went on to examine the work of Joseph Priestley in this regard, but he also acknowledged the work of Richard Lovell Edgeworth.

Edgeworth's Practical Education, published in 1798, was the first full-scale treatise on education by an Irishman and it won an international reputation. Strongly influenced by the Lockean tradition he stated in his preface "Experimental education is yet but in its infancy, and boundless space for improvement remains. To make any progress in the art of education it must be patiently reduced to an experimental science".² The long work of twenty-five chapters was a remarkable, if uneven, demonstration of educational principles and practice. While many insights in this book are of perennial value

Edgeworth's system, as he admitted himself, was a beginning rather than a comprehensive system.

What was important was the conception that an understanding of the education process required reflection, reading, and structured experiment by educators; that teaching was worthy of the serious concern of leaders in society. A friend of Edgeworth, Dr. Reuben Bryce in many educational works pressed the cause of Education as an area of study central to establishing teaching as "a fourth profession". In his Plan for System of National Education, in 1828, he wrote:

All endeavours to improve education, however zealous and generous they may be, must utterly fail as to every purpose of real value, unless means be provided for enabling teachers to study education as a liberal art, founded upon the philosophy of the Human Mind. 3

Bryce urged that Professors in the Art of Teaching be established in the University of Dublin and in regional universities, which should be instituted. In Bryce's view:

Every teacher, before entering on the duties of his profession ought to make himself acquainted with the Art of Teaching; that is, with a system of rules for communicating ideas and forming habits and ought to obtain such a knowledge of the philosophy of mind as shall enable him to understand the reasons of these rules, and to apply them with judgement and discretion to the great diversity of dispositions with which he will meet, in the course of his professional labour. 4 (Author's underlining).

Thomas Wyse was a contemporary of Edgeworth and Bryce and took a leading role in the establishment of the national school system. In 1836 Wyse published Education Reform, the second large-scale work (and sadly the last) on the theory and practice of Education by an Irishman which won wide international readership. Throughout the

book Wyse indicated acquaintance with a vast range of educational writing and experiments abroad. In his striking philosophy of the curriculum he differed from Edgeworth in the emphasis he gave to aesthetic education and the cultivation of the imagination. He envisaged long and assiduous preparation by intending teachers. He went on to state:

The teacher must not only be a perfect master of the various branches of education which he is called upon to teach, but he must also, in addition, be thoroughly acquainted with the art of Education itself. He must understand the science of mind, the principles of instruction, the best methods, the latest improvements; and not only must he understand them, but he must also have so repeatedly exercised them, that their practice shall be as familiar as their theory. 5

Wyse regarded pre-service training as essential and wrote tellingly of the value of University Chairs of Education for building a teaching profession. He acted as Chairman of the Committee on Foundation Schools and Education in Ireland which reported in 1838. Among its wide-ranging proposals it urged a two-year course in central and regional écoles normales for primary teachers. Secondary teachers would benefit from "courses in the art and science of teaching" under professors of education in the universities. 6

The concern of individuals such as Edgeworth, Bryce and Wyse was to establish a body of knowledge and formalised experience which would establish principles and perspectives on the education process, would urge teachers to understand such principles and inform their teaching with them and would mark out teaching as one of the learned professions. Education was one of the great public issues in the 1830s and it is interesting that one

of the earliest societies of Irish teachers we know about - the Armagh Teachers' Society - in 1839 adopted as its principal object "the improvement of the literary and professional character of its members". 7 The first teachers' professional journal in Ireland seems to have been The Schoolmasters' Magazine and Educational Inquirer founded in September 1839. This journal of impressive quality urged its readers to lift their sights towards genuine professional status. It commented:

Until teaching is studied as an art, and practised on the principles of mental science, you will never be recognised as professional men. You must study Paideutics (sic) 8

Teachers were urged to set up Teachers' libraries stocked with the works of writers such as Edgeworth, Wyse, Pestalozzi, Hill, Hamilton and journals such as The Journal of Education and The Education Magazine. Teachers were urged to study and discuss these works and "to make the schoolroom the theatre of experiment, testing their utility, and trying whether their opinions suit you as an elementary teacher". 9

"Education" in the Training College, 1837-1896

The Commissioners of National Education in 1835 and in 1837 set out plans for a two-year pre-service teacher training programme and for the appointment of five Professors to their new Central Training Establishment. The National Board saw itself as moving away from the apprentice tradition of the hedge school and from the mechanical and rote methods of the monitorial system introduced to Ireland by the Kildare Place Society in its model school in 1814. The first Professor of Teaching Method in the Board's Training College, Robert

Sullivan, stated in a lecture delivered to his students on 12 April 1838:

I would consider it an insult to your understanding to offer a single argument in favour of the new or intellectual system, which indeed, alone deserves the name of education. ¹⁰

The "new or intellectual system" favoured the simultaneous teaching method over the individual and the monitorial instruction methods. Apart from that however, it is not at all clear that the term "intellectual" was appropriate for it. Instead of the two-year training course envisaged, the course was to amount only to four or five months and two professors rather than five were appointed. The main concern of the training course came to be the mastery of the content of the Board's reading books and the content of subjects which could be taught in the national schools. The approach to the study of Education was confined to lectures in teaching method, supplemented with observation and teaching practice in the model school. Thus, was set the predominant pattern of national teacher training for well over a century. At all times the need was felt that the content of subjects, rather than the study of education as such, should dominate the college courses. A new form of apprenticeship was also adopted whereby selected pupils at the end of their own schooling would be apprenticed as monitors to the local master, pass a number of examinations largely based on subject content and qualify as teachers.

One of these monitors was Patrick Keenan who graduated to become in turn, assistant teacher, headmaster of the Central Model School, a district inspector, an assistant professor in the Training College, a chief of inspection and at the age of 45, Resident Commissioner of National Education, a post which he held for 23 years.

Keenan had a gift and flair for the practice and organisation of teaching. In 1856, as Head Inspector, he gave a course on "The Science and Practice of School Management" to "organising teachers".

One of these teachers was P.W. Joyce, later headmaster of the Central Model School. Joyce was very impressed by Keenan's lectures and went on to write A Handbook of School Management and Methods of Teaching in 1863. In his preface Joyce acknowledged "I have incorporated the most important of them (Keenan's lectures) and they form a very considerable portion of the books".¹⁰ This book formed the central text for Irish teachers in their study of Education and teaching for over half a century. An introductory statement indicated the author's approach, "While carefully avoiding all mere theory, I have endeavoured to render the instruction contained in it plain, useful and practical".¹² The suspicion of "mere theory" was to have a long life in Irish education circles. The book was a very useful, clearly written compendium of practical guidelines, model lessons and hints relating to methodology and organisation of the school. It had a strong didactic tone expressive of a "This is the way" approach.

The Powis Commission of 1870 was highly critical of the Central Training Institution and the courses pursued in it. Among various criticisms the investigators stated:

To spend twenty weeks in incessant occupations, wandering from one subject to another, is hardly the most promising method of changing an inefficient teacher into a competent one. ¹³

It criticised the system of teaching practice and student assessment. It was urged that fewer subjects be taken and the course extended to, at least, one year's duration. The need for a good library and encouragement in its use were stressed. It was pointedly remarked:

Less meagre fare for the mind than the "Books of the Board" should be put before the students. This perpetual feeding on husks stunts and dwarfs the minds of these people. 14

The course was extended to one year and from 1884 to two years for non-certificated teachers. The concept of the closed, boarding institution with students subject to set regimens of timetable and close supervision from early morning until late at night was intensified within the new denominational training colleges. Education as a subject had very low status. A written paper on "Methods of Teaching and School Organisation" was introduced for all students in 1884, but a pass in it was not essential for graduation. Five questions were to be answered in an hour and a half and it is clear from the structure of the questions that definite, clear-cut, factual answers were being sought. That the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject Education were seriously undervalued vis-a-vis the other subjects in the Colleges is clearly evidenced by contemporary comment of inspectors and others.¹⁵ The introduction of payment by results in 1872, with the strong support of Patrick Keenan, implied a functional definition of teaching as a job with clearly defined targets which encouraged a great deal of mechanical and rote learning and positively discouraged professional flair and personal initiative.¹⁶ Imagination in teachers was not considered a prized talent by officials in charge of education in the nineteenth century.

Developments in Education, 1897-1922

A less closeted approach to the study of Education emerged from the mid-nineties. Payment by results fell out of favour and the New Education Movement was having international influence.¹⁷ Ireland again opened windows on to international thought on Education and there was a resurgence of interest, as in the early part of the nineteenth century, in Education as a subject of study. This was clearly reflected in the new programmes for the training colleges introduced in 1897. There was a change of title to "Theory of Method" and as part of a special course for high level students a subject called the "Science of Education" was introduced. The programmes and examination papers clearly reflected a concern to lift the pattern from basic factual questions on methods and regulations to "The general principles of teaching and the intelligent application of these principles to the teaching of the elementary subjects". The type and standard of questions now being asked were indeed impressive.¹⁸ Education was now allocated about 20 per cent of overall marks, a large improvement.

However, the Revised Programme for National Schools introduced in 1900 placed new pressures on the colleges and the continuous tendency to overload the courses re-exerted itself. Inspectors complained that over fifty hours a week had to be devoted to lectures and associated study and remarked on "the want of time for thought or for assimilation of what has been learned".¹⁹ The fact that students could qualify from the colleges without passing in the Theory of Method examination reveals the continuing suspicion of "mere theory". There were usually only one or two staff members specialising in Education who worked extremely hard with lecture schedules of about 32 hours per week.²⁰ From 1 April 1900 training in a recognised training college became essential for appointment as a principal teacher in a national school.

The hopes of Bryce and Wyse that Chairs of Education would be established in Irish universities had not materialised in the nineteenth century. Secondary education was largely a private concern with no direct state involvement. The Intermediate Education Act of 1878 introduced an indirect involvement through its payment by results examination system and totally ignored the teacher or teacher training. The cult of the amateur held full sway for secondary teaching; a knowledge of subject content being deemed quite sufficient for secondary school teachers. Orders such as the Jesuits and the Christian Brothers had a more organised form of teacher induction. About the same year, 1897, as the changes were introduced to give Education a more serious position in the training colleges, the first steps were taken to provide a qualification in Education for secondary teachers in Ireland. Trinity College decided to hold examinations in the History and Theory of Education and in the Practice of Education for graduates. No formal courses were provided and the first examinations were held in January 1898.²¹ Successful candidates in both examinations were awarded a Diploma in Education. This was also the title of the award for two similar examinations established in 1898 by the Royal University. At first confined to Arts graduates they were later extended to Science graduates. As was the case with all its academic awards the Royal University provided no courses for students. The standards of the examination papers were high and the papers were in line with the conception of Education as a subject in England and Europe at the time.²² Very few students took the examinations; there were about three or four successful students in any year. Also in September 1896 the Ursuline Convent in Waterford established a training course for women secondary teachers which was recognised

by the Cambridge Syndicate.²³ The Dominican nuns and Alexandra College in Dublin also set up training courses for women.

The questions of teacher training and the setting up of a Chair of Pedagogy were raised in the deliberations of the Commission of Inquiry into Intermediate Education (Palles) in 1898-99 and in evidence to the Commission on University Education (Robertson) 1901-03, but neither Commission regarded the matter as coming within its terms of reference.²⁴ The new Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (1900) established courses from 1901 for secondary teachers of Science and from 1905 required candidates for the Irish Secondary Teachers' Science Certificate to pass an examination in the Principles, Methods and History of Education with special reference to Science teaching.²⁵ Among the terms of reference to the Dale and Stephens Committee on Intermediate Education established in 1904 was the issue of "training for secondary teachers". While urging flexibility in the requirements for training, Dale and Stephens favoured a system of training and commended the German pattern whereby the course would be post-graduate, should include "a systematic course of study in the Mental and Moral Sciences bearing on Education, and in the Theory and History of Education". These were to be complemented by teaching practice and classroom observation and, before accreditation as a teacher, there should be a probationary period in a recognised school.²⁶ These proposals were later to form the core of the registration requirements introduced in 1918. Dale and Stephens went further to recommend encouragement "to teachers to interest themselves whilst teaching in original work connected either with some branch of scholarship or with studies of value for the science and art of teaching". The Report stated that funds should

be available to publish theses by secondary teachers, holding that the stimulus to teachers would be of great value and would enhance the dignity of the teacher and of his profession.²⁷

Thus we can note that the question of providing a structured course in Education for secondary teachers was a live one around the turn of the century. Some important initiatives followed and the first Chair of Education in Ireland was established by Trinity College in May 1905, following the publication of the Dale and Stephens Report. Professor Culverwell was the first occupant of the Chair. The establishment of the National University of Ireland in 1908 resolved the long-disputed issue of providing university education acceptable to Catholics. Two of the constituent colleges, University College Dublin and University College Cork established Chairs of Education straight away, to be followed by University College Galway in 1915. Queen's University Belfast set up its Chair in 1914.

At long last it seemed as if Education was being accepted as a serious subject whose status was endorsed by the establishment of Chairs of Education in all Irish universities. This seemed to be particularly the case in U.C.D., where Rev. Professor Corcoran succeeded in having Education at Diploma and Higher Diploma levels, as an undergraduate subject for the B.A. and the B.Sc., and also for M.A. and Ph.D. levels.²⁸ An Education Society was established in the university and publication of educational studies was initiated. Another important initiative which followed the establishment of the National University was that a two-year course was made obligatory for all training college students and provision was made for the best students to add a third year of university-based studies leading to a university diploma or higher certificate in Education. The INTO had urged

closer links between the colleges and the university since 1902.²⁹ From that time until the establishment of the B.Ed. degrees in 1974 the INTO remained steadfast in its belief in the importance of the university dimension for national teachers. The third-year course for matriculated students attending university lectures in Education was inaugurated in 1912 and continued under various regulations until about 1950.

The Higher Diploma in Education was the training course introduced for graduates and it was geared towards secondary teaching as a career. The consecutive pattern of the one year post-graduate course has survived as the basic structure for secondary teachers of general subjects to the mid-eighties. A key problem in its early years was the lack of demand for the course as secondary teachers were not required to have a pre-service qualification in teaching. A revealing, if somewhat shocking statement of the appalling condition of secondary teachers was made by Professor Culverwell at a public meeting in 1910. He stated that he had never advised one of his students, who had any other prospects, to go in for the position of secondary teaching in Ireland.³⁰ The Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI) was set up in 1909 and pressed strongly for the raising of the status of secondary teaching. Due largely to its pressure a Registration Council was established whose regulations came into effect from 31 July 1918. To qualify for registration candidates needed to have a university degree, a diploma in Education and probationary experience in approved schools. This was a landmark development, but it was still the case that teachers could be employed in secondary schools who did not satisfy the registration requirements. M.A. studies in Education were by now well established and Professors of Education had published some important

works. Thus, the period from 1898 to 1918 was a period which witnessed significant breakthroughs on several fronts for Education as a serious subject of study. The foundations seemed to have been laid for further development as Ireland emerged into independence.

"Education" in Independent Ireland, 1922-1962

Following political independence in 1922 renewed efforts were made to establish more integrated links between the universities and the training colleges. A scheme of 1923 for a university degree course for national teachers was not proceeded with because of opposition from the new Department of Education, formally established in 1924. Both the National University and Trinity College extended some credits to academic subjects in the training colleges. Other than these arrangements no liaison was established between the colleges and the universities and the Education departments grew apart from one another.

The primary educational aim of the new State was the preservation and revival of the Irish language as a living language. A heavy onus was placed on the training colleges and schools to promote this aim. Irish was to be the medium of instruction and of social life within the colleges. In 1931 recruitment to the colleges became based on the levels of performance in the Leaving Certificate examination and in specifically designed oral examinations, and a high level of competition existed for entry. New courses were introduced in 1932-33 which were to remain in operation for 30 years. Examination papers were taken in "Principles of Education" as well as in "Teaching Methods". For the first time

ever success in the written papers in Education became essential for a pass in the overall examination. The marks allocated to Education in the second year course amounted to about 23 per cent of overall marks.

The colleges continued to be denominational, single-sexed and highly routinised and closed off as boarding institutions. The students' day was very crowded; as late as 1959 the average attendance at lectures was 30 hours per week, apart from other organised activities.³¹ Lectures were given through the medium of Irish but no books on educational studies were available in the Irish language. Thus, the tendency to rely on lecturers' notes was intensified. Lecturers were neither expected nor facilitated to engage in educational research other than lecture preparation. A heavy reliance was placed on practical experience, an excellent thing in itself, but the value of which is augmented by probing at new frontiers. The Colleges had very little academic autonomy with entry standards and numbers decided by the Department of Education which also prescribed the courses. Departmental inspectors set and corrected the examination papers as well as inspected lecturers' work. The inspectors themselves were inducted through the apprenticeship system. They were regarded as "outdoor staff" and their influence on educational policy within the Department of Education was limited. There was very little time for personal reflection or wide reading by the lecturers or the students in the colleges. The libraries were inadequate and little used. This probably was a factor in the predominantly anti-intellectual sub-culture which prevailed in the colleges and which had carryover effects on their graduates.

To delineate these general characteristics is not to denigrate the tremendous input of work by committed and often gifted staff members or the resilience of

talented and motivated students to benefit from and go beyond their college experiences. Rather it is to remind us of the context in which they had to work and the lack of scope and of vision with regard to educational studies for a well-educated and highly intelligent student clientele.

It would be refreshing if we could shift our gaze and be impressed by the state of educational studies within the universities in the first forty years of independence. Regrettably, this is not so and the promising early beginnings were not improved on or even satisfactorily sustained. The staffs of Education Departments remained pitifully small up to the nineteen sixties. Indeed, the very serious situation developed whereby different universities left the Chair of Education vacant for considerable periods of time. For instance, the Chair was vacant in Trinity College from 1916 to 1922, in U.C.D., for 16 years - from 1950 to 1966, in Maynooth College at various times and in U.C.C. from 1962 to 1969. The predominant concern of the small staffs became the teaching of the one-year Higher Diploma Course to graduates. This affected the status of Education among other university staff. This course was conducted under very difficult circumstances whereby lectures had to be given in the late afternoon or evening, up to the nineteen seventies. Efforts were made to erode its status further during these decades by trying to make the Higher Diploma a vacation course taken by serving full-time teachers and by attempts to admit categories of teachers to registration without the Higher Diploma in Education.³² Such efforts were resisted by the ASTI. While the Higher Diploma was a necessary requirement for registration the fact that for decades almost 50 per cent of secondary teachers were unregistered seriously weakened the status of the

pre-service studies in Education. U.C.D. removed Education as an undergraduate subject for the B.A. and the B.Sc., in 1945. A significant decline also set in the number of students successfully concluding masters degree studies in Education. Only about 80 Masters theses on educational topics were produced in the universities of the Republic of Ireland in the 20 years from 1946 to 1965, and these were not all directed in Education Departments.³³ While many other European countries re-organised their educational systems in the post-war years this did not happen in Ireland and neither did the subject Education benefit from any re-structuring.

Thus, while established subjects were being strengthened and some other subjects were being introduced and fostered within the university, Education was holding a very tenuous position within the academic community. Education had in fact declined from the position it occupied circa 1920. It had reached a very weak position by the early nineteen sixties just at the time that there was to be a great renewal and development of the Irish education system generally, including a massive expansion in post-primary school enrollment.³⁴ University Education Departments were in a weak position to contribute to or indeed cope with the situation. The dangerously weak position in which they found themselves is illustrated by the following table.

Number of students and staff in University
Education Departments, 1965/1966

College	No. of Students	Number of Staff			
		Professor	Lecturer	Junior Lecturer/Assistant	
				Full Time	Part Time
U.C.D.	346	-	2	2	6
U.C.C.	164	1 (vacant)	1 (vacant)	4	6
U.C.G.	152	1	1 (vacant)	2	11
Trinity	60	1 (vacant) 2 Visiting part-time	1	2	8

Source: Report of Commission on Higher Education, Vol.1, p.220

These figures meant that a full time staff of 14 had to cater for 722 students and only 4 of this staff were above junior lecturer status. Well might the Commission on Higher Education (1967) comment:

There are indications that academic opinion does not regard university departments of education on the same footing as other university departments. 35

The situation had reached the stage when the Minister for Education could remark cavalierly in the Dáil in 1967 "Maybe I will do away with the Higher Diploma in Education".³⁶

During the four decades following independence, 1922-62, publications dealing with Irish education were very limited. Of the nineteen books one has counted they all dealt with historical themes and twelve of them were institutional histories or dealt with specific categories of schools. There were no books which dealt with wider aspects of education. The INTO's booklets of 1941 and 1947

as well as Rev Dr. Ó Catháin's booklet on Secondary Education in 1958 stood out as lonely beacons throwing light on general policy. Articles on Education in periodicals and journals were few in number and very uneven in quality. Apart from teacher union magazines there was no educational journal as such and no educational correspondent was appointed to any newspaper. Following the reports on inspection and on technical education in 1927 no committee of enquiry was established for education until the Council of Education was set up in 1950. One wonders if the duration taken to produce the Council's Reports on the primary and secondary curricula and the quality of these Reports were not injuriously affected by the lack of a live tradition and range of research skills for such studies. The Department of Education sponsored no educational research project. Its annual reports became dull and routinised, petering out altogether in the mid-sixties.

One is of the opinion that debate on education and the quality of Irish intellectual and cultural life generally suffered deeply from the State and institutional neglect of educational studies over these four decades. Eventually it was again the re-establishment of links with educational thought and developments abroad, as well as with the work of economists, which drew public attention to the rather dismal condition of Irish education studies in Ireland after forty years of independence.

The Revitalisation of "Education", 1962-1984.

Several major reports were published on Irish education in the sixties which had implications for educational studies and teacher training. One of these was the Investment in Education Report, published in 1965. From a close scrutiny of the supply and demand pattern the Report demonstrated that an increased output of teachers would be required at all levels and urged a redeployment of teaching resources to secure a more satisfactory and economic return from the teaching force. The Report of the Commission on Higher Education (1967) had more specific proposals to make regarding education and teacher training. It urged the re-structuring of the teacher training colleges so that their education staffs would become the education departments of a new type of third-level institution - somewhat on the lines of a polytechnic, termed New Colleges. The course for primary teachers would be lengthened from two to three years and lead to the award of a degree from the New Colleges. The courses for teachers in vocational and technical schools should also be lengthened and become more formalised. However, the Report took most direct issue with prevailing trends when it objected to the neglect of Educational Studies by the universities. It stated unequivocally:

In our opinion, the study of education should not be regarded as the "poor relation" of university studies. It should be given equal importance with other studies. It would be wrong to conceive of the function of university departments of education simply as departments for the training of teachers in pedagogics. Education, with all its philosophical, historical, economic and sociological implications, forms a field of study that requires to be pursued and investigated no less than other university subjects; ... 37

The Report also deprecated the lack of educational research remarking:

Paucity of research into educational problems in this country has been disclosed by the evidence. So far as we can ascertain, educational research is neither well organised nor well supported. 38

Such statements were an authoritative indictment of the state of affairs which had come to exist. The Report urged "that the university departments of education should all be staffed and maintained at a level and to an extent appropriate to a major university department" 39

While full-scale remedial measures were slow to emerge some changes were already taking place which gradually, and on accumulation, would change significantly the overall situation for Education. The training colleges benefited from new extensions and larger intakes of students. The colleges became more regularly known as Colleges of Education and became more "open" as institutions, with more personal responsibility devolving on students in the management of their scholastic and leisure time. The single sex college gradually gave way to mixed colleges with female students forming the majority of the student body. The student body became more diversified by a greater infusion of university graduates on a one year training course and the participation of what were known as "mature" students within the student body. From 1962 the colleges assumed greater academic responsibility for their courses and examinations and were less under the control of the state Department of Education. An important change occurred in 1963 when, following discussions between College of Education and Department of Education personnel, new courses were devised which reduced the range of subjects to be studied and established a restructured course in Education. As well as re-vamped courses in Methods and Principles of Education, this now, included Psychology and elective courses such as History

of Education, Sociology of Education and Comparative Education. The change was directed at giving a more theoretical underpinning to the students' studies. The staffs in the Education Departments were greatly expanded allowing much more scope for specialisation.

A key figure in guiding the new developments was Rev. Dr. D.F.Cregan. He also took the important initiatives of establishing the Special Education Unit in St. Patrick's College, in 1961, and the Educational Research Centre in 1966. To help widen the academic and cultural horizons of the college of education Dr. Cregan initiated series of public lectures on education by national and international scholars and he also initiated the publication of two scholarly journals. Both Dr. Cregan and the first Director of the Educational Research Centre, Dr. Kellaghan, urged the universities to give greater support to Education and to educational research.⁴⁰ The establishment of the Educational Research Centre was symbolic of a new concern that the health and vitality of a modern education system were closely connected with empirical research on the system. Since its establishment the Centre has carried out a wide range of research, and, while acting as an independent agency, the Centre has been a yeasting influence among college staffs and some teachers.

Meanwhile the understaffed Education Departments of the Universities were being stretched to breaking point to cope with the greatly expanded numbers taking the Higher Diploma in Education. The student numbers more than quadrupled within the decade 1959-1969, which was an extraordinary increase over such a short period.⁴¹ It is a tribute to the limited staffs that they were able to cope at all. The predicament of Education in the Universities reached its nadir in the mid-sixties in terms of insufficient staff, resources and funding.

Heed was taken, however, of the calls of the Commission on Higher Education that the university departments should be expanded as a matter of urgency and that a more active research role be developed. Steps were taken to re-establish or re-fill the Chairs of Education. Fr. Ó Catháin became Professor in U.C.D., and Professors Rice, O Suilleabháin, Ó h-Eideáin and McClelland were appointed as new Professors in Trinity College, Maynooth, U.C.G., and U.C.C., respectively. Recruitment of more full-time staff with various specialisms took place. Premises and facilities were also improved, particularly in the areas of audio-visual equipment, resource rooms, micro-teaching studios, workshop spaces and library resources.

The courses for the Higher Diploma have been re-structured with less reliance on mass lectures and more scope for seminar, tutorial and workshop groups. More emphasis has been given to Psychology and Sociology, with educational technology, micro-teaching and elective specialisms also becoming more prominent. Efforts have been made to give a more practical thrust to the courses and they have also assumed a more strictly full-time complexion. Reduced student numbers in recent years have allowed for more individual attention to their needs.

While Education does not exist as an undergraduate subject in any of the universities, except U.C.G., all Education departments have re-vitalised their post-graduate work since 1970. M.Ed. courses now exist in all the Departments while M.A. degrees in Education exist in the National University colleges and Ph.D's in all the Universities. Trinity College provides an M.Litt. degree which may be taken in Education. The greater availability of post-graduate degrees in Education, with flexible formats to match student requirements, has allowed scope for much-needed specialisation of an advanced

character to meet the needs for expertise and skill within the education system to-day.

There has also been a great increase in diplomas of a specialist character. These include diplomas in Career Guidance, in Special Education, in the Education of the Deaf, in Remedial Education, in Computers for Education, in Catechetics, in Compensatory and Remedial Education. Departmental policy in recent years has placed some of these courses in jeopardy.

A significant new departure in teacher education was the setting up of Thomond College in Limerick in 1970. This was on different lines from the traditional colleges of education and from the university education departments. It was to concern itself with the education and training of specialist second-level teachers. The first group of such teachers was the Physical Education teachers who underwent a four-year degree course with Education taken as a concurrent subject. The degree was awarded under the auspices of the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA). Since then Metalwork, Woodwork and Rural Science trainee teachers have embarked on similarly structured degree courses. A four-year degree course for Art teachers based in the National College of Art and Design is also expected to be validated shortly by the N.C.E.A. A university-linked B.Ed. degree course exists for Home Economics teachers.

Meanwhile primary teachers had continued to urge that their education and training should lead to a university degree course. The Report on Teacher Training by the Higher Educational Authority in 1970, favoured a degree course linked to the new National Council for Educational Awards. The INTO for seven decades had urged a university-linked award and

Mr. Sean Brosnahan, the General Secretary, was particularly to the fore in the early seventies seeking a university degree for national teachers. Eventually the Government decided to request the universities to agree to the award of degrees to primary teachers and a notable landmark in teacher training was the introduction of the B.Ed. degrees in 1974. The three largest colleges of education became "recognised" colleges of the National University while the Church of Ireland College and some smaller colleges became associated with Trinity College for their B.Ed. degrees. Under the B.Ed. structure Education became the central subject within the Colleges of Education and the increased course duration as well as greatly improved library facilities allowed the expanded staffs to help students towards a deeper grasp of the subject. In 1983 the National University approved a plan for a composite M.Ed. Degree between one of its constituent colleges and two of the new Recognised Colleges but the Minister for Education did not approve of the Recognised Colleges participating. Plans have been formulated in recent times to set up in-service B.Ed. degrees.

These various developments have led the way towards an all-graduate teaching profession in Ireland. The teaching force has doubled in the last twenty years and teachers participate in a common salary scale.⁴² The teacher unions have developed co-operative relationships between them leading to the Council of Education Unions in 1981. A Ministerial Committee in 1974 recommended the establishment of a Teaching Council with wide-ranging functions in relation to teacher education and the study of Education and educational research but the recommendation has not been implemented.⁴³ The early seventies was also a period when the importance of in-service education for teachers was more emphasised. Teacher

centres were established. Various courses, largely of a short-term and non-certificated variety, were made available. No contractual entitlement to release from full-time teaching to participate in in-service training exists for Irish teachers and the needs of the teaching profession in relation to in-service provision have not been met by Government policy and support.⁴⁴ The Programme for Action, 1984-87, has ruled out action on the recommendations of a Ministerial Committee on in-service education, which reported in 1983.⁴⁵

Contemporary with the many developments which occurred in teacher education the last twenty years have seen significant developments in educational research. The expansion of post-graduate theses on education is emphasised when we note that from 1966 to 1982 over 550 theses have been produced in the Education Departments of the Republic's Universities.⁴⁶ Benjamin Alvarez in a bibliography confined to empirical research from 1960 to 1980, excluding post-graduate theses, listed 148 titles.⁴⁷ Vincent Greaney and Brendan Molloy have listed 155 studies on Reading which have been produced within the period 1960 to 1982.⁴⁸ This is remarkable evidence of research vitality, particularly when the miniscule direct input from Government finance is borne in mind.

There has also been a great vitality in the number of bodies and associations which have been involved in promoting educational debate, conferences and workshops. Publications of various kinds by such agencies have provided a good range of outlets for articles and research findings in Education. A list of some of the associations and publications is set out in the appendix.

The last 20 years then, have been a watershed period for the subject Education and the profession of teaching. The improved staffing and facilities in the Education Departments of Colleges of Education and Universities is very striking. The more central place allocated to "Education" in pre-service courses is highly significant. The increased duration and altered structure of courses is important in allowing students to get a more thorough understanding of Education and a greater opportunity to formulate a professional outlook. Publications in the forms of books, articles and reports on the system are evidence of an extraordinary flowering of educational debate and research. Professional debate and interchange of ideas is further fostered by the impressive calendar of conferences, seminars and professional workshops which are now a feature of the educational year. Teacher centres provide a resource which could only be dreamed of by generations of teachers, going back as far as the Armagh Teachers' Association with its plans for teachers' study centres in the 1830s.

Concluding Comments

One cannot pursue here some vitally important questions such as the nature of educational studies today, the theory-practice problem, the use of educational research. However, in conclusion, one would like to offer some general comments. While attitudes have changed within the Irish academic world toward Education the subject, it still has a long way to go before it is fully endorsed as a field of study which is underpinned by a serious theoretical structure, which is studied and expanded according to rigorous canons of scholarship and experiment and which is taught in a manner and a style

which sets a headline for other disciplines or areas of knowledge.

A criterion of professionalism in education is the command over, and skill in the application of a body of specialized and systematized knowledge. The manner of the organization of, and initiation into the knowledge and skills evolves in the light of experience, insight and further research. The content and teaching of Education need to be of a quality to provide a secure basis from which professional development may grow and be fostered giving assurance, competence and sense of direction to practitioners. Ironically, if it is to do that it needs to be realised more generally that there is more to Education than teacher training. If Education as a field of study and teacher education as a professional programme are allowed to deteriorate and become stale and moribund then the deleterious effects range much further afield than the on-going professional competence of teachers. Some elements of the study of Education can and should lead directly towards professional competence in the classroom. Other aspects do not pretend to and cannot deliver on precise guidelines and skills for specific situations. What the overall study of Education in a professional programme should do is to equip the educator with classroom skills, deepen his understanding, widen his area of knowledge reference, and motivate him to act in an intelligent, artistic and developing manner. There is a heavy onus on those teaching educational studies to ensure that their content and mode of handling courses are such that students genuinely benefit and are inspired by them.

The teaching of Education is enriched, deepened and kept vitalised by educational research. As well as this, educational research enriches the education system in a variety of ways. It can be of direct benefit to

teachers in the classroom. It can widen the horizons and deepen the understanding of many involved in education - teacher educators, policy makers and administrators. It can be personally developmental for those involved in it. It contributes to the gradual accumulation of knowledge and truth in general, and to the development of Education, in particular. Problems exist in the mode of communicating the research to different audiences with varying backgrounds and interests. The research should always be subject to scrutiny but one needs to guard against a prevalent tendency to dismiss educational research by a brusque, commonsense, no-nonsense attitude which is unworthy of professionals.

There are over 40,000 people professionally involved in a direct way with the education system. For many the exposure to educational studies has been limited, its quality has been thin and the circumstances in which it occurred very restricted. The lack of serious provision for in-service studies of a satisfactory character is a further significant loss for people operating at all levels within the education system. Yet we expect educators to be curriculum innovators, to be skilled in many aspects of their job at a time of fundamental, social and cultural change and to retain a fresh enthusiasm for a career span of up to forty-five years, fuelled by such limited resources. Is it a cause of surprise that for many the shallow well of fructifying ideas and inspiration has already run dry long before they draw their pension? There is a great pool of talent among the corps of Irish educators but there is also, what might be termed a great silence from many of them. The sad fact is that few teachers write on Education or, let it be admitted, read in Education. Is it a case that many educators lack confidence and do not feel at home in writing on Education? Do they fail

to realise that communicating their experiences and reflections can enrich the system as well as be professionally developmental for themselves?. Are such attitudes connected with the quality of their experience of educational studies? Knowledge gives freedom, power and confidence. The Irish nation can only benefit when its educators have access to the knowledge, attitudes and skills which help to lead to the realisation of their full potential as professionals.

There is a community of interest, in the best sense, for the many agencies involved in education to ensure that the study of Education and the pursuit of educational research are promoted and developed. To remind us of Edgeworth's phrase "boundless space for improvement remains". Co-operation between individuals, interest groups and institutions is vital in meeting the challenges ahead. From its foundation in 1976 one of the key aims of the Educational Studies Association has been the promotion of co-operation between educational researchers and educational interests throughout Ireland. One hopes that in the years ahead it may continue to do so and help to retain, and build on what has been achieved in the development of educational studies in Ireland for the long-term benefit of its new generations.

APPENDIX

Some Educational Associations and Publications

Post-Primary School Subject Associations	- Journals
Teachers' Study Group	- Occasional publications
Educational Research Centre	- <u>Irish Journal of Education</u> and many publications.
Curriculum Development Association	- <u>Compass</u>
Department of Education	- <u>Oideas</u>
Reading Association of Ireland	- <u>Proceedings</u> and other publications
Educational Studies Association	- <u>Proceedings, Irish Educational Studies, Register of Theses</u>
Teacher Unions	- Journals and Special Reports
School of Education, T.C.D.	- <u>Studies in Education</u> and occasional publications.
Linguistics Institute	- <u>Teangeolas</u>
H.E.A.) N.C.E.A.) E.S.R.I.)	- Special Reports on Education
Remedial Teachers' Association	- <u>Learn</u>
Association of Teachers in Special Education	
Computer in Education Society	
Technological Education Society	
Association of Principals and Vice-Principals in Community and Comprehensive Schools	- <u>Guth agus Gairm</u>
<u>Education Ireland</u>	

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THE IRISH CHARTER SCHOOLS: THE GRAND DESIGN IN
PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE

Kenneth Milne

The history of educational ideas and institutions in the eighteenth century while not throwing as much light on today's situation as nineteenth century history does, for all that provides a great deal of information on the society of its day. A study of the charter schools adds to our knowledge of some of the elements of eighteenth century social and economic life: there is much data on apprenticeship, food prices, et cetera. On a larger scale, such a study also contributes to a debate that has been kindling for some time about the penal laws, a debate summarised by S.J. Connolly in a review article in the most recent issue of Irish Economic and Social History where he asks for more thought to be given to the possibility that the penal code was what it was said to be: an attempt to eliminate Catholicism and make Ireland Protestant, and that this was the legislators' prime motive, rather than that of making the Catholic population a subject class.¹

I think that even the brief introduction to the charter schools that follows will give substance to Dr. Connolly's suggestion that "The launching in 1733 of the charter schools makes clear that even at this stage the idea of converting the Catholic population to Protestantism was not dead."²

Historians of education are not the only ones to neglect the eighteenth century, its early decades in particular. Perhaps this neglect owes something to the headline set by Lecky - still a force to be reckoned with -