



# The evolving status of elementary teachers in Ireland (1831–1921): from ‘feckless and impoverished’ to ‘respectable’

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# The evolving status of elementary teachers in Ireland (1831–1921): from ‘feckless and impoverished’ to ‘respectable’

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## ABSTRACT

This research critically examines the efforts of the British State and the various churches to re-vision the character and status of elementary school teachers in Ireland between the 1830s and the 1920s. In a climate of regular political revolution and denominational hostility, the Westminster government and all churches were anxious to promote civility, loyalty and religious allegiance among the Irish populace through education. To advance these aims, strict criteria for the selection, training, recruitment and management of teachers were developed and introduced by the State and churches. The aim here is to explore and analyse the interface between, and impact of, national and local oversight on the professional standing and identity of teachers. Collectively, the concerted efforts of the State and churches led to a re-vision of the position and a change in the status of teachers that has had a lasting impact on their professional identity.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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Elementary education; teacher education; teacher character; teacher identity; Ireland

## Introduction

The focus of this research is on teacher selection, training, recruitment and management in elementary schools in Ireland from the 1830s to the 1920s. This period is of particular importance as it represents the era during which the national system of education was established (1831) by the Westminster government up to the achievement of political independence in the 1920s. The period also aligns with wider developments that witnessed the reform and development of teacher training and education across the United Kingdom<sup>1</sup> and beyond.<sup>2</sup>

The research reported here builds on existing knowledge concerning teacher education and status in the national system of education in Ireland from 1831 to 1922. Coolahan and Akenson have comprehensively mapped the general history of educational

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<sup>1</sup>R. W. Rich, *The Training of Teachers in England and Wales during the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); David Wardle, *English Popular Education 1780–1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); H. C. Dent, *The Training of Teachers in England and Wales 1800–1975* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1977).

<sup>2</sup>Scott O. Moore, ‘The Professionalisation of Teaching: Teacher Training and Education Reform in Austria, 1867–1914’, *History of Education* 48, no. 3 (2019): 336–55; Narciso De Gabriel, ‘Schoolteachers, Social Control and Professional Conflict: Government Procedures brought against Schoolteachers in Galicia (1859–1910)’, *History of Education* 47, no. 4 (2018): 466–87.

institutions and actors in Ireland.<sup>3</sup> Parkes's contribution complements this analysis with a delineation of the role of the National Board in establishing teacher education structures.<sup>4</sup> Tittley's and Whyte's work focuses on Church–State relations pertaining to education, albeit with a focus on the period following 1900.<sup>5</sup> O'Donoghue, Harford and O'Doherty's comprehensive review of teacher education history and policy in Ireland concentrates on the post-independence period.<sup>6</sup> This research augments the earlier work and focuses specifically on the systematic attempts to re-vision teacher character and identity and the complex relationship between churches and the State in the design and delivery of teacher training during this period.

A broad overview of the wider landscape and context is important at the outset. Irish affairs were determined under the auspices of the British State following the Act of Union of 1800. This formalised the relationship that had begun with the annexation of Ireland in the twelfth century and declared Great Britain and Ireland to be one united kingdom. The Act of Union led to the gradual separation of administration from politics and a growing sense of the State being neutral and impartial towards all citizens as the Protestant ascendancy weakened.<sup>7</sup> While there is much debate over the status of Ireland within the British Empire, which indeed evolved over time and was perceived differently by various groupings, Ireland was never a formal colony but its governance and administration could be seen to exhibit 'colonial features'.<sup>8</sup> Ireland proved to be an irksome territory in the British Empire with ongoing instances of insurrection and revolution. This tendency towards insurgency was a concern to the State and the churches, all of which desired a more law-abiding and deferent populace in Ireland.<sup>9</sup>

The concern with establishing an identity for nation-states was prevalent in Europe from the 1800s, with borders becoming increasingly defined and governments more active in their management of populations.<sup>10</sup> The gradual abandonment of laissez-faire policy in Westminster led to increased State interest and intervention in the lives of citizens across the British Empire. One manifestation of this in Ireland was the provision of a national education system, the first in the English-speaking world, and its use to assimilate the Irish population. The education system was imbued with colonial values and its provisions formed part of a civilising and anglicising project in Ireland to extend British social and political inscription.<sup>11</sup> Its aim was to achieve control over the existing schooling structures, which had predominantly developed as a counter-system to the ad hoc State-sponsored provision.

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<sup>3</sup>Donald Akenson, *The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970); John Coolahan, *Towards the Era of Lifelong Learning: A History of Irish Education 1800–2016* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2017).

<sup>4</sup>Susan Parkes, "'An Essential Service': The National Board and Teacher Education, 1831–1870", in *Essays in the History of Irish Education*, ed. Brendan Walsh (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 45–82.

<sup>5</sup>Brian Tittley, *Church, State and the Control of Schooling in Ireland 1900–1944* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983); John Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923–1979 – Second Edition* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1990).

<sup>6</sup>Thomas O'Donoghue, Judith Harford and Teresa O'Doherty, *Teacher Preparation in Ireland: History, Policy and Future Directions* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2017).

<sup>7</sup>Oliver MacDonagh, *Ireland: The Union and its Aftermath* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1977).

<sup>8</sup>Stephen Howe, 'Questioning the (Bad) Question: "Was Ireland a Colony?"', *Irish Historical Studies* 36, no. 142 (2008): 138–52.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas Walsh, *Primary Education in Ireland 1897–1990: Curriculum and Context* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012).

<sup>10</sup>Andy Green, *Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA* (London: Palgrave, 1990).

<sup>11</sup>Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 2001).

The State saw the potential of schools and their teachers to be sources and instillers of civility, obedience and deference to lawful authority among pupils.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the careful selection and management of teachers that this research explores, this was achieved through the explicit production and selection for use in schools of ‘lesson books’ or textbooks that were imbued with a particular ideology of the reader’s relationship with the wider British Empire.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, the books produced by the National Board in Ireland were exported widely to many other colonies of the British Empire due to their lack of specific reference to the Irish context and the skilful way in which they imbued colonial and imperial values.<sup>14</sup> As national institutions, schools exercised a status and authority to inculcate pupils with a particular set of values and loyalties that were subsequently extended to their parents, families and wider communities.

The Catholic Church and other churches, with their extensive parish networks, proved a natural ally to the State in the delivery of education nationwide. Hickman asserts that an alliance with the Catholic Church in Ireland became a policy objective in Westminster following the repeal of the Penal Laws<sup>15</sup> and the granting of Catholic Emancipation in 1829.<sup>16</sup> The role of the churches might be seen as an ‘intermediate group’ as termed by Bayly, which exercised a form of mediating role or intermediate position between the State and the indigenous population.<sup>17</sup> O’Donoghue and Harford argue that this situation was precipitated by the increasingly ultramontanist orientation of the Catholic Church, asserting that papal authority was superior to the authority of local, temporal or spiritual hierarchies.<sup>18</sup>

The churches were aware of the powerful potential of education, and of teachers, to imbue religious values and to ensure loyal adherents to their faith. While the national system of education did not achieve all of the aspirations of the Catholic Church, Dr Murray, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, welcomed the system and accepted the invitation to join the National Board. However, the system was criticised by many within each of the religious denominations and there was a gradual etching away of some of its key principles and features in the years following 1831, most particularly the aim for non-denominational schooling. This led to many Church–State tensions in the early years of the national system as both institutions sought to maximise their control over, and rewards reaped from, their involvement and investment in education. Teachers were central to this potential and the selection, training, recruitment and management of teachers became a central focus of the State and various churches following the establishment of the national system.

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<sup>12</sup>Judith Harford, ‘The Emergence of a National Policy on Teacher Education in Ireland’, *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 41, no. 1 (2009): 45–56.

<sup>13</sup>John Coolahan, ‘Imperialism and the Irish National School System’, in *‘Benefits Bestowed?’: Education and British Imperialism*, ed. J. A. Mangan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 76–93.

<sup>14</sup>Tony Lyons and Noel Moloney, *Educational Resources in the British Empire: Examining Nineteenth Century Ireland and Literacy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

<sup>15</sup>The Penal Laws were various statutes passed in Britain and Ireland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that imposed harsh restrictions on Roman Catholics, including their right to be educated.

<sup>16</sup>Mary Hickman, *Religion, Class and Identity: The State, the Catholic Church and Education of the Irish in Britain* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), 127.

<sup>17</sup>Chris Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>18</sup>Tom O’Donoghue and Judith Harford, ‘A Comparative History of Church–State Relations in Irish Education’, *Comparative Education Review* 55, no. 3 (2011): 315–41.

In terms of structure, the next section briefly delineates the role and status of teachers prior to the establishment of the national system of education. It then moves to examine critically the system of teacher selection and training following 1831, exploring the role of the national training college(s), the district model schools and the system of graded examinations. The next section explores the role of the National Board, the Inspectorate and the local (largely clerical) managers in the oversight and governance of teachers' work and lives. Before concluding, the remuneration and evolving conditions of teachers are then examined, noting the improvements in their professional status and strength in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Ultimately it is argued that the strict rules, regulations and oversight imposed by the State and churches on the work of teachers had the effect of homogenising, but ultimately uniting and empowering them as a professional group, leading to their re-visioned status and respectability in Irish society by the 1920s.

### **'Morally dissolute and politically subversive': role, status and qualifications of teachers prior to the national system**

An extensive network of elementary schools existed across Ireland prior to the establishment of a national system in 1831.<sup>19</sup> In 1824, the *Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry*, established to survey the state of Irish education by collecting statistical data on the number of schools, teachers and pupils in each parish, reported that there were 11,823 schools in operation, catering for over half a million pupils.<sup>20</sup> Of these, a small number were funded by the State through philanthropic organisations such as the Kildare Place Society (KPS) while others were parochial or free schools linked to the churches. However, the vast majority were 'Hedge Schools'<sup>21</sup> funded by the fees of parents and these were primarily attended by the Catholic population, which feared proselytism in the State-funded schools. Many Hedge Schools had been established, illegally, in response to the Penal Laws, which had aimed to suppress Catholic schooling systematically. While most sections of the Penal Laws were repealed by the 1780s, the desire to control the work of Catholic teachers is evident in the continued requirement for them to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown before a judge, to teach in Catholic schools only and to obtain a licence from the local Protestant ordinary of the ecclesiastical district.<sup>22</sup>

By 1800, the State and churches were not concerned by the lack of schools but by the 'crisis of order' and lack of control they exercised over the vast majority of schools, what was taught in them and who had the right to teach in them.<sup>23</sup> Ó Conchubhair asserts that there was a large variation in the calibre, character and quality of teachers in the schools and in the range and nature of education offered prior to 1831.<sup>24</sup> Equally, there

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<sup>19</sup> Antonia McManus, *The Irish Hedge School and Its Books, 1695–1831* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Gillian O'Brien, 'The 1825–6 Commissioners of Irish Education Reports: Background and Context', in *Irish Primary Education in the Early Nineteenth Century: An Analysis of the First and Second Reports of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry, 1825–6*, ed. Garret Fitzgerald (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2013), 1–44.

<sup>21</sup> Hedge Schools were fee-paying schools established in temporary accommodation, sometimes outdoors under hedges, to provide education primarily for Catholics, who were precluded by the Penal Laws from being educated.

<sup>22</sup> Department of Education, *Report of the Council of Education* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1954), 20.

<sup>23</sup> Hickman, *Religion, Class and Identity*, 127.

<sup>24</sup> Pádraig Ó Conchubhair, 'The Early National Teachers', *Oideas* 18 (1977): 15.

were concerns that some masters were morally dissolute, politically subversive and of a 'more liberal nature', potentially undermining church authority and instilling revolutionary ideals.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Coolahan asserts that the creation of the national system was a response by the State to the perceived subversive nature of the Hedge Schools and their masters.<sup>26</sup>

In the Hedge Schools, Dowling stresses that the 'income derived from teaching was usually very small' and it was often paid in kind through agricultural products or board for teachers.<sup>27</sup> Whatever the economic position, there was a deep respect for the learning of teachers and they played a prominent and elevated role in local communities. Hedge School masters undertook such roles as scribe, copying manuscripts, conveyancing or the position of parish clerk and these roles afforded teachers a position of trust and status among local communities.

The issues of teacher qualification and supply were treated in both the 1812 and 1825 Commissions on Education in Ireland.<sup>28</sup> The KPS had established a training college for teachers as well as an inspection system and many of its systems were adopted by the subsequent national system from 1831.<sup>29</sup> The KPS was alert to the importance of the character of the teacher sent to training, stating:

in temper they should be patient; in disposition mild, but firm; of diligent habits; of unblemished moral character; and fully convinced of the importance of inculcating on the young mind, a love of decency and cleanliness, of industry, honesty and truth.<sup>30</sup>

Prior to the 1830s, preparation for the role of elementary teacher was undertaken mostly in an apprenticeship or monitorial style with experienced teachers. In most instances, monitors were chosen from among the most able and promising students. Training varied in context, duration and focus.<sup>31</sup> Following a period of apprenticeship with a master or a number of masters, the young teacher moved to an area with a vacancy or replaced his master. This concern at the lack of training and control of teachers is evident in a letter issued by Bishop Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin in the 1830s, stating that a system of training 'will aid us in a work of great difficulty, to wit, that of suppressing hedge-schools, and placing youth under the direction of competent teachers, and of those only'.<sup>32</sup> The next section explores the structures introduced by the national system of education to control and manage the work of its teachers.

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<sup>25</sup>Patrick Dowling, *The Hedge Schools of Ireland* (Dublin: Phoenix Publishing, 1935), 53.

<sup>26</sup>John Coolahan, 'Education and Ethnicity': Education as Cultural Imperialism: The Denial of the Irish Language to Irish Speakers, 1831–1922', *Paedagogica Historica* 37, no. 1 (2001): 16–33.

<sup>27</sup>Dowling, *Hedge Schools of Ireland*, 98.

<sup>28</sup>Parkes, 'An Essential Service'.

<sup>29</sup>Harold Hislop, 'Inspecting a Doomed Non-Denominational School System: The Inspectorate of the Kildare Place Society in Ireland, 1811–1831', *Paedagogica Historica* 35, no. 1 (1999): 177–91.

<sup>30</sup>'Eighth Report of the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor of Ireland' 1820, in *Irish Educational Documents, Volume 1: Selection of Extracts from Documents relating to the History of Irish Education from the Earliest Times to 1922*, ed. Áine Hyland and Kenneth Milne (Dublin: Church of Ireland College of Education, 1987), 85.

<sup>31</sup>Andrew Burke, *Teaching: Retrospect and Prospect* (Dublin: Brunswick Press, 2002).

<sup>32</sup>Commissioners of National Education [CNEI], *The Sixth Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland for 1839* [246–XXVIII], Appendix, Copy of a Circular Letter addressed by Bishop J. Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin (J.K.L.) to his Clergy upon the First Announcement of the National System of Education, (London: HMSO, 1840), 107.

## The national system of education and teacher training: a desire for 'complete control'

The introduction of the national system of education rang the death-knell for the independent Hedge School and the ad hoc provision for elementary education that preceded it. Consequently, the vast majority of children became pupils of a national system over which the State and churches had ultimate control. The Stanley Letter (1831) provided a framework for the operation of the national education system under the auspices of the National Board, which comprised the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland (CNEI). The Stanley Letter expressed a desire to exercise 'complete control' over the national system of education, including the teachers who would work within it.<sup>33</sup> At a local level, school managers applied to the National Board for recognition of their schools. Many schools recognised by the Board, as well as their teachers, had previously operated under different auspices such as Hedge Schools.<sup>34</sup>

Teacher training became central to the work of the National Board, which saw the importance of teacher formation to achieve the objectives of the new system. The Second Report of the CNEI identified the teaching workforce as one of the main issues with the system prior to 1831, with most teachers being 'extremely ignorant' and 'unable to teach even the mere art of reading and writing'.<sup>35</sup> While the National Board envisaged that all teachers would be trained prior to appointment, it also made provision that existing teachers from schools already operating could be approved for appointment. As early as 1835, the National Board made the case for the necessary finances for attracting, training and remunerating teachers 'whose conduct and influence must be highly beneficial in promoting morality, harmony and good order'.<sup>36</sup>

The plans of the National Board for teacher training evolved throughout the 1830s and ultimately three levels of teacher education were initiated: a national training college (and subsequently denominational training colleges); a network of district model schools; and a graded system of examinations for teacher classification. These are examined in turn below, followed by an overview of the development of teacher education from the 1870s to the 1920s.

### National training college(s)

A national training institution with adjoining model schools was established in Dublin for the training of male teachers from 1834 and female teachers from 1842. Practising teachers were summoned to training at the national training college based on the selection of the local inspectors and were obliged to attend.<sup>37</sup> While the national training college was operated by the National Board and entrants were required to take an oath of

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<sup>33</sup>Letter from the Chief Secretary for Ireland, to His Grace the Duke of Leinster, on the Formation of a Board of Commissioners for Education in Ireland (The Stanley Letter), <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Boards-of-Management/Stanley-letter-1831-Boards-Of-Management.pdf>, 2 (accessed February 3, 2020).

<sup>34</sup>Ó Conchubhair, 'Early National Teachers'.

<sup>35</sup>CNEI, *The Second Report ... for 1835* [300-XXXV], HC 1835, 2.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>37</sup>Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Conclusions and Recommendations Contained in the General Report*, Volume 1 [C. – 6], HC 1870 XXVIII, 45.



allegiance, the churches were also afforded a level of control in relation to the selection of teachers for training:

Persons presented for admission to the normal establishment (national training college) must produce a certificate of good character from an officiating clergyman of the communion to which they belong; they must take the oath, or make a solemn declaration of allegiance before a magistrate and in the presence of the Commissioners.<sup>38</sup>

While the training college operated on a non-denominational basis, the annual reports of the CNEI asserted that teachers in training received religious instruction from their respective pastors and that 'a vigilant superintendence is at all times exercised over their moral conduct'.<sup>39</sup>

While the National Board proposed a two-year training for teachers, the scale of demand resulted in short three- to six-month courses for practising teachers from the 1840s. Atkinson asserts that the training experience was intense, with long days spent on both theory and practical teaching.<sup>40</sup> There was also a concern that providing training that was too rigorous or efficient 'would give teachers ideas far above their position, or render it likely they would seek other employment for their acquirements than in the office of teaching'.<sup>41</sup> Teachers were examined on completion of their course and were subsequently classified for payment purposes 'according to their conduct, success in teaching, and proficiency in the various branches'.<sup>42</sup> By 1867, 4944 male teachers and 2553 female teachers had been trained in the national training college.<sup>43</sup> Professor McGauley of the national training college concluded in 1855 that teachers 'have become a respectable class of persons' and that it was advantageous that teachers were not drawn from 'too high a class in society'.<sup>44</sup> This comment is insightful as it reveals the concern of the authorities with teacher status and character. Moreover, social class issues were to the fore and it is arguable that recruiting teachers from lower social classes facilitated their management and governance by the State and churches more easily.

### **District model schools**

A network of district model schools was announced in 1837 to provide preliminary training to intending teachers.<sup>45</sup> The plan for the model schools was that they would provide six-month courses to train pupil teachers and monitors from the surrounding area and such training would subsequently be supplemented by a course in the national training college following a period of practical teaching experience.<sup>46</sup> These were

<sup>38</sup>CNEI, *The Fifth Report ... for 1838* [160–XVI], HC 1839, 6.

<sup>39</sup>CNEI, *The Ninth Report ... for 1842* [471–XXVIII], Appendix II, Rules and Regulations of the Commissioners of National Education, and Directions for making Application for Aid towards the Building of School-Houses, or for the Support of Schools, Section V, HC 1843, 21.

<sup>40</sup>Norman Atkinson, *Irish Education: A History of Educational Institutions* (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1969), 104.

<sup>41</sup>CNEI, *Twenty-second Report ... for 1855* [2142–XXVII], Appendix IV, Professor McGauley's Report on the Training and Central Model Schools, and Head and District Inspectors' Reports on District Model Schools, HC 1856, 170.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>43</sup>Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), Vol VII, containing the Returns published by the National Board [C. – 6], HC 1870, 3.

<sup>44</sup>CNEI, *Twenty-second Report ... for 1855*, 170.

<sup>45</sup>Thomas Mangione, 'The Establishment of the Model School System in Ireland, 1834–1854', *New Hibernia Review* 7, no. 4 (2003): 103–22.

<sup>46</sup>Parkes, 'An Essential Service'.



established and managed by the National Board and operated on a non-denominational and mixed-gender basis. This was contrary to the desires of the churches, particularly the Catholic Church, which wished for far greater control of teacher formation.

The growing power and unity of the Catholic Church in Ireland by the mid-nineteenth century was a precursor to its increased demands in the sphere of education.<sup>47</sup> Under the reforming influence of Cardinal Paul Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin from 1852 and later the first Irish Cardinal, the campaign against the lay-controlled and non-denominational model schools and the demand for denominational training colleges was galvanised.<sup>48</sup> The Catholic Church placed a ban on Catholics attending the district model schools or the national training college from 1863, following which Catholic teachers trained in either would not be appointed by Catholic managers.<sup>49</sup> This position illustrates the growing power of the Catholic Church in education, particularly its dominance in controlling teacher training and recruitment. Following the recommendations of the *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education* (commonly termed the Powis Commission) report in 1870, the first major State inquiry into the national system of education, the 26 model schools that had operated between 1849 and 1866 were discontinued as training schools and became ordinary national schools.

### Graded system of examinations

Finally, an in-service graded system of examinations for teachers was established from 1838 to allow teachers to improve their grading and classification outside the formal training system. As was stated by the CNEI in 1842,

National teachers are eligible to be re-classed at the termination of one year, from the date of any previous classification. They are also likely to be *depressed* a Class if they have conducted themselves improperly, or if their Schools have declined, either as regards attendance, or in any other respect.<sup>50</sup>

These examinations were organised by inspectors at local centres and resulted in three main classifications for teachers (from First Class to Third Class), as well as a probationary grade. This system was based on teacher self-study and usually involved large numbers of monitors presenting annually. The classification system was revised in 1848 to include a larger number of divisions (seven) and classes for salary but most teachers remained in the lower classification divisions.<sup>51</sup> Teachers who wished to present for promotion were required to inform their inspector who would then decide on their suitability for undertaking the examination. The classification process involved two days of written and oral examinations as well as a review of inspectors' reports. Inspectors used a range of criteria for the classification process and rated answers on a scale from 'excellent' to 'bad'.

<sup>47</sup>O'Donoghue and Harford, 'Comparative History of Church-State Relations'; Colin Barr, 'The Re-energising of Catholicism, 1790–1880', in *The Cambridge History of Ireland, Volume III: 1730–1880*, ed. James Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 280–304.

<sup>48</sup>Pastoral Letter of Archbishop Cullen, *Freeman's Journal*, November 10, 1859.

<sup>49</sup>Parkes, 'An Essential Service', 66.

<sup>50</sup>CNEI, *Ninth Report ... for 1842*, 21. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>51</sup>Michael Moroney, *National Teachers' Salaries and Pensions 1831–2000: A Historical Chronology and Review of the Role of the INTO* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2007), 340.

Parkes asserts that, ultimately, the graded examination system was the most successful entry to the profession for teachers.<sup>52</sup> This examination system to classify teachers was replaced by the system of 'Payment by Results' in 1872 in which, in addition to classification at five levels, pupil outcomes became a major determinant of teacher remuneration.<sup>53</sup> This placed a focus on the attainment of individual pupils and was governed by labyrinthine procedures governing the examination process. As O'Donovan observes, under this system 'Part of their incomes, not to mention their standing with managers and parents, ultimately depended on the overall percentage of passes.'<sup>54</sup>

Collectively, under the three pathways, intending and practising teachers were rigorously vetted and entry to teaching became controlled by both the State and the churches.

### ***A new direction for teacher training, 1870s–1920s***

By 1870, it was becoming clear that the provisions for teacher training were failing to provide an adequate supply of trained elementary teachers. This was due to the high attrition rates from the profession as well as the ongoing growth of the national system. For example, the Powis Commission reported that 8.6% of teachers left the service annually between 1863 and 1867 and that two-thirds of teachers were still untrained in 1870.<sup>55</sup> Owing to the Catholic Church ban on attendance at the national training college and the district model schools, the percentage of untrained Catholic teachers was even higher. The Powis Commission recommended the provision of religious-based boarding houses for students in Marlborough Street, the recognition and State support of denominational training colleges for teachers, the closing of the district model schools for training purposes and increasing training courses to 12 months. The basis for the Powis Commission recommendation for denominational training colleges was to ensure that teachers would 'be under good moral influences' and that 'the education of the teachers being based upon religion will be more thorough and real'.<sup>56</sup>

This report catalysed the establishment of denominational colleges from the 1870s. In a letter from the Chief Secretary to the National Board in 1883, he asserted the 'absolute urgency' of providing for the training of teachers to ensure the efficient and expedient use of the outlay on national education in Ireland.<sup>57</sup> The denominational training colleges were supported on a 'credit system' or capitation basis by the State from 1883 and were taken into connection with the National Board in 1884.<sup>58</sup> The National Board appointed a head inspector over each college to ensure oversight and effective administration. While the course of study was extended to two years, O'Donoghue, Harford and O'Doherty assert that the scope of the training provided after 1883 narrowed, with students living like boarders in monastic-like

<sup>52</sup>Parkes, 'An Essential Service'.

<sup>53</sup>Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Conclusions and Recommendations*.

<sup>54</sup>Patrick O'Donovan, *Stanley's Letter: The National School System and Inspectors in Ireland 1831–1922* (Galway: Galway Education Centre, 2017), 177.

<sup>55</sup>Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), Vol. I, containing the Report of the Commissioners with an Appendix, [C. – 6.] (Dublin: Alexander Thom and Co, 1870), 248.

<sup>56</sup>Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Conclusions and Recommendations*, 519.

<sup>57</sup>'Government Decision to give State Aid to Denominational Training Colleges' 1883, in *Irish Educational Documents, Volume 1*, 142.

<sup>58</sup>Atkinson, *Irish Education*.

conditions and subject to the same strict rules as religious orders.<sup>59</sup> By 1900, there were six denominational training colleges (five Catholic and one Church of Ireland) as well as the non-denominational national training college, which largely served the Presbyterian community. The advent of denominational training colleges greatly increased the proportion of teachers who were trained, which reached 50% by 1900<sup>60</sup> and 80% by 1920.<sup>61</sup>

The establishment of denominational training colleges enhanced significantly the power and prominence of the various religious denominations in the area of teacher training. While there was oversight from the National Board within the colleges, they were managed by the religious orders or diocesan structures. This empowered the various denominations to control entry to the training colleges and afforded them significant oversight over teachers' pedagogical training and moral formation. As O'Donoghue, Harford and O'Doherty state,

With the education of primary school teachers being almost entirely run by the Churches and with intake to the primary school teacher training colleges being on a denominational basis, the clergy rarely had to worry about the religious convictions of those they employed.<sup>62</sup>

## Management of teachers in the national system

One of the key concerns that precipitated a national system of education in Ireland was a desire to imbue the education system with colonial values and to control the professional and personal lives of teachers. While the State could set national rules and regulations, it realised the need for a local partner to establish schools and manage teachers. The control and management of teachers is treated in three sections below: the role of the National Board; the Inspectorate; and the churches through the local managers.

### *The management of teachers by the National Board*

From the outset, the National Board developed extensive and elaborate rules to underpin the national system of education, including the desirable characteristics and attributes of teachers. These were underscored by colonial values and very much envisioned the role of the teacher as a model of civility, respectability, obedience and loyalty. The official status and standing of the teacher was not envisaged to be highly elevated but rather one that would be influential at a local level by being in close affinity with the people. The Second Report of the CNEI articulated a particular vision of the teacher:

living in friendly habits with the people, not greatly elevated above them, but so provided for as to be able to maintain a respectable station; trained to good habits; identified in interest with the State, and therefore anxious to promote a spirit of obedience to lawful authority, we are confident that they would prove a body of the utmost value and importance in promoting civilisation and peace.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>O'Donoghue, Harford and O'Doherty, *Teacher Preparation in Ireland*. See also John Coolahan, "'Education" in the Training Colleges – Carysfort 1877–1977: Two Centenary Lectures. Our Lady of Mercy College Blackrock' (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>60</sup>CNEI, *Sixty-eighth Report ... for 1901* [1198-XXX], HC 1902, 6.

<sup>61</sup>CNEI, *Eighty-sixth Report ... for 1919–20* [Cmd. 1476], HC 1921, 28.

<sup>62</sup>O'Donoghue, Harford and O'Doherty, *Teacher Preparation in Ireland*, 23.

<sup>63</sup>CNEI, *Second Report ... for 1835*, 4.

The rules and regulations of the National Board constantly reiterated the role and status of the teacher as being the educator of the common poor. There was a desire that the teacher would not be elevated above this status or have ideas above his/her station.

While the State conceded the responsibility for the appointment and dismissal of teachers to the local manager, which generally became the local clergyman, the National Board required 'to be satisfied of the fitness of the teachers, both in regard to moral character and to literary qualification, by testimonials, and also, if, they see fit, by training in a model school, and examination'.<sup>64</sup> To achieve this, the National Board required details of the teachers working in recognised schools. Managers were required to provide certificates and references to demonstrate teachers' fitness to hold their position to the National Board, as well as their opinion as to the teacher's character, as part of the application for recognition by the National Board.<sup>65</sup>

To further its aspirations in relation to moral formation, the National Board communicated on an ongoing basis its conceptualisation of teachers fit for service in the national system. The following extract from the Fifth Report of the CNEI in 1839 outlines the desirable qualities of teachers in the national system:

He should be a person of Christian sentiment, of calm temper, and discretion; he should be imbued with a spirit of peace, of obedience to the law, and loyalty to his Sovereign; he should not only possess the art of communicating knowledge, but be capable of moulding the mind of youth, and of giving the power which education confers a useful direction.<sup>66</sup>

These characteristics were further elaborated upon within the *Twelve Practical Rules for Teachers* issued in 1845.<sup>67</sup> These rules provided a succinct official summary of the desirable characteristics of a teacher, placing an emphasis on a high moral code of conduct and of acting as a model to pupils. They placed a number of social constraints on the liberty of teachers, who were prohibited from attending fairs, markets and meetings. Within the rules, teachers were also tasked with promoting, 'by precept and example', cleanliness, neatness and decency among the pupils. Engendered in the rules for both teachers and pupils was the 'the very great rule of regularity and order – a time and a place for everything and everything in its proper time and place'. Over time, these practical rules re-envisioned the role of the teacher and were subsumed into the rules and regulations of the National Board, becoming 'the warp and weft of the national school system for inspectors and for teachers for generations'.<sup>68</sup>

It was only in the early 1900s that some of these rules regarding the civil liberties of teachers were relaxed (e.g. teachers could attend fairs from 1906, and the quarterly Character Query prepared by managers on each teacher's character and conduct was discontinued from 1911).<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, the Dill Inquiry in 1913 concluded that it would not be expedient to grant unrestricted civil rights to teachers given their position and the political climate of the country but suggested the compromise that teachers could attend

<sup>64</sup>CNEI, *Second Report ... for 1835* [300-XXXV], Appendix B, Regulations and Directions to be attended to in making application to the Board of Commissioners of National Education, for Aid towards the Building of School-houses, or for the Support of Schools, HC 1835, 67.

<sup>65</sup>CNEI, *Ninth Report ... for 1842* [471-XXVIII], Appendix V, Form of Superintendent's Report upon Application for Aid towards Payment of Teacher's Salary, and for the Supply of Books, Section V, HC 1843, 27.

<sup>66</sup>CNEI, *Fifth Report ... for 1838*, 6.

<sup>67</sup>CNEI, *Thirteenth Report ... for 1846* [846-XVII], HC 1847.

<sup>68</sup>O'Donovan, *Stanley's Letter*, 67.

<sup>69</sup>Teresa O'Doherty, 'William Starkie: The Teachers' Adversary?', *Irish Educational Studies* 18 (1999): 253.

political meetings but not actively participate in them.<sup>70</sup> While it may not originally have been the purpose to introduce restrictions to teacher civil liberties, Puirseil argues that prohibition from being politically active or expressing grievances publicly impacted upon teachers' capacity to fight for better rights and conditions.<sup>71</sup> This disempowerment was further compounded by the oversight role fulfilled by the Inspectorate.

### *Management of teachers by the Inspectorate*

To oversee the system, the National Board established a national Inspectorate in 1832 and inspectors became the liaison between central and local management. As Coolahan and O'Donovan state,

He [the inspector] was the eyes and ears of the Board, promoting its objectives, evaluating progress, gathering information, ensuring implementation of regulations and reporting back on a regular basis.<sup>72</sup>

The Inspectorate allowed for very centralised control of a system that was managed locally and ensured compliance with the detailed rules and regulations of the National Board. Modelled on the KPS structure, inspectors appointed were men of elevated social status so they would have the standing to engage with patrons and managers.<sup>73</sup> 'Instructions for Inspectors' were issued for the first time in 1834 and inspectors were required to report issues and observations to the National Board in a regular and comprehensive manner. The Commissioners instructed inspectors to be as conciliatory as possible as they wished to be on the 'most friendly and affectionate terms with patrons, conductors, and teachers of all schools aided by them'.<sup>74</sup>

The roles and functions of the Inspectorate grew from the 1840s and it was involved in most key decisions relating to schools and teachers. It oversaw adherence to the rules and regulations of the National Board, it classified teachers based on examinations and it examined individual pupils and classes to determine the quality of teaching. A comprehensive code for inspectors was issued in 1855 and this informed their work in the decades ahead. This involved visiting and reporting on the work of schools three times a year, examining rolls and registers for evidence of falsification, following up on earlier advice given and recording findings in the Observation Book. In addition to the notes recorded in the Observation Book for the teacher and manager, 'the inspector is to append a brief minute on the result of the inspection, suitable for transmission to the manager'.<sup>75</sup> This ensured full surveillance of the teacher at a local and national level and a form of communication between both systems that was beyond the reach of the teacher.

'Instructions for Inspectors' placed a strong emphasis on inspecting 'the moral character of the school'.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, inspectors were advised to inquire discreetly into the general character of the teachers:

<sup>70</sup>Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Final Report of the Committee* [7235], 1913, 49.

<sup>71</sup>Niamh Puirseil, *Kindling the Flame: 150 Years of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation* (Dublin: Gill Books, 2017), 256.

<sup>72</sup>John Coolahan with Patrick O'Donovan, *A History of Ireland's School Inspectorate 1831–2008* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 18.

<sup>73</sup>Hislop, 'Inspecting a Doomed Non-Denominational School System'.

<sup>74</sup>CNEI, *Third Report... for 1836*, Appendix E, 'Instructions to Inspectors' 1836, in Reports of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, from the year 1834 to 1845, inclusive, HC 1851, 109.

<sup>75</sup>Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Final Report*, 12.

<sup>76</sup>CNEI, *Twenty-first Report... for 1854*, Appendix D (V), Instructions for District and Sub-Inspectors, HC 1855, 437.

The Inspector, without seeming officiousness, unbecoming intermeddling, or too much curiousness, should as far as possible, inform himself of the *general* character borne by the Teachers in his District, the estimation in which they are held by the people of their locality, their social position, and their conduct as members of society.<sup>77</sup>

This line of inquiry went beyond the professional competence of the teacher and highlights the concern of both the State and the churches with the moral character of the teachers in the national system. Coolahan and O'Donovan assert that this controlling function of the Inspectorate was less evident in England in a more *laissez-faire* climate.<sup>78</sup>

While teachers had been appraised by virtue of their students' outcomes in examinations under the system of Payment by Results, a new way to inspect the work of schools and remunerate teachers was required following the introduction of the *Revised Programme* (1900).<sup>79</sup> From 1901, a number of 'tone circulars' were issued by the National Board to direct the inspector to examine the character of the teacher and school rather than the individual work of pupils. Inspectors were advised that evidence of character would be found in the discipline and effort of pupils as well as in the physical appearance of the classroom. As one circular stated in 1911:

The tone of a school is its most important characteristic, and it is largely by its tone that the value of a school should be appraised. When the tone is good, deficiencies in the acquisition of knowledge, even defects of method, may to some extent be disregarded.<sup>80</sup>

This appraisal of the character of the teacher and school by inspectors led to much discontent as it was intangible for teachers and yet their salary and promotional prospects depended on it. It was ultimately this discontent, among other issues, that led to the institution of the Dill Inquiry in 1913. This Inquiry found that 'grave defects have disclosed themselves in the organisation of the Inspectorate, and in some cases in the relations between inspectors and teachers which have given rise to just discontent'.<sup>81</sup> Overall, inspectors exercised a high degree of control over the work of teachers and schools, and relationships between teachers and inspectors were often characterised by mistrust and acrimony. As Coolahan and O'Donovan state,

The inspectorate exercised significant influence on the gratuities being paid to teachers and on their promotion, demotion, or dismissal in the classification grade. This gave them intimate power over teachers.<sup>82</sup>

As well as superintendence by local managers and inspectors, teachers were required 'to receive courteously *visitors of all denominations*, to afford them free access to the school-room, and full liberty to observe what books are in the hands of the children'.<sup>83</sup> Such visitors could then record any comments in the Visitors' Daily Report Book, which was to be examined by the inspector and relayed to the National Board. This provision allowed another parallel level of oversight of the work of the teacher in addition to the official channels of the inspector and local manager.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 440. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>78</sup>Coolahan with O'Donovan, *History of Ireland's School Inspectorate*, 29.

<sup>79</sup>Thomas Walsh, 'The Revised Programme of Instruction, 1900–1922', *Irish Educational Studies* 26, no. 2 (2007): 127–43.

<sup>80</sup>'Circular to Inspectors' 1911, in Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Final Report*, 12.

<sup>81</sup>Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Final Report*, 49.

<sup>82</sup>Coolahan with O'Donovan, *History of Ireland's School Inspectorate*, 27.

<sup>83</sup>Instructions for the Guidance of Inspectors' 1842, in Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), Vol. VII, Returns published by the National Board, 182.



### *Management of teachers by local managers*

Although there was a climate of much distrust and acrimony between the Catholic Church and the State in the nineteenth century,<sup>84</sup> both parties understood the mutual advantages of partnering in the field of education. The use of an ‘intermediate group’<sup>85</sup> by the State ensured penetration across the population and a local buy-in that increased the effectiveness of the national system of education in meeting its objectives. While the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland played a more prominent role in the training of teachers from the 1880s, their substantial power in the local management of teachers and schools was apparent from the 1830s. An unintended consequence of the national system was that the managerial system became largely clerical in the absence of local government structures and the reduced requirements to make joint applications for school recognition. As Akenson describes, as the century progressed,

the typical national school, whether vested or non-vested, was under the control of the manager of a single denomination, not of joint religious managers, that the teachers were almost inevitably of the same denomination as the manager, and that the children were preponderantly, and often solely, of the same faith as the managers and teachers.<sup>86</sup>

While the CNEI had expected that schools would be vested in the National Board, most became vested in the local patron (bishop), which solidified church control and ownership of schools as the patron then appointed the manager. As O’Donovan states, the well-funded national system supplanted the extensive indigenous network of elementary schools over which there was little control ‘and gradually extirpate[d] or assimilate[d] the schoolmasters of an earlier period’.<sup>87</sup> The right of appointment, management and dismissal conferred substantial powers on bishops as patrons and clergymen as managers. Coolahan asserts that the ‘power of appointment was frequently exercised in an arbitrary manner, and was often linked to local family status or connections’.<sup>88</sup>

The National Board operated a system whereby it paid a gratuity to managers towards the salaries of teachers and it was envisaged that this would be supplemented locally by additional funds. In reality, this rarely occurred and the salary of teachers remained largely based on the gratuity paid by the National Board in the 1800s. Akenson argues that the reluctance on the part of communities to contribute to salaries reflected the lack of civic ownership of schools, which were seen by communities as ecclesiastical and State concerns.<sup>89</sup> Moroney surmises that many teachers resented having to call to their local manager to collect their quarterly salary and this increased the subservience of the teacher to the manager.<sup>90</sup> As Puirseil states, the salary was ‘handed over from the manager at his doorstep to the teacher, as though the teacher was a supplicant looking

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<sup>84</sup>K. Theodore Hoppen, *Ireland Since 1800: Conflict and Conformity* (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>85</sup>Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*.

<sup>86</sup>Akenson, *Irish Education Experiment*, 214.

<sup>87</sup>O’Donovan, *Stanley’s Letter*, 352.

<sup>88</sup>John Coolahan, ‘The Schoolmaster in the New State’, in *The World of Bryan MacMahon*, ed. Gabriel Fitzmaurice (Cork: Mercier Press, 2005), 173.

<sup>89</sup>Akenson, *Irish Education Experiment*.

<sup>90</sup>Moroney, *National Teachers’ Salaries and Pensions*, 32.



for alms'.<sup>91</sup> Teacher salaries were paid quarterly until 1917 after which teachers were paid directly by the National Board on a monthly basis.<sup>92</sup>

### Remuneration of teachers under the national system

In the 1830s, in the absence of a supplement to the Board's gratuity, most teachers earned between £8 and £12 annually. With the introduction of the classification system in 1839, salaries varied between £10 for a Third Class female teacher and £30 for a First Class male teacher. By 1863, this had increased to between £15 and £52 for male teachers and £14 and £42 for female teachers. The Powis Commission gathered evidence of the classification of teachers and reported that only 8.8% were in the First Class, 25.4% were in the Second Class, 49% were in the Third Class and 16.7% were probationers in 1867.<sup>93</sup> It is important to note the salary scales of other workers at this time. In 1832, an inspector earned £300 while the Resident Commissioner enjoyed a salary of £1000 in 1839.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, in the 1850s, excise officers and clerks in post offices were paid a salary starting at £60 annually.<sup>95</sup> Teachers were often forced to supplement their income by acting as scribes or land surveyors, or by knitting and sewing.<sup>96</sup>

From 1900, the classification system was replaced with three grades (with two sections in the First Grade) but there was a restriction on promotions from one grade to another and more strict criteria and quotas for higher classifications owing to the limited finances available to the National Board.<sup>97</sup> Increments were awarded triennially, so three consecutive favourable annual reports were required for the award of an increment. Merit marks were also introduced for teachers and schools, with six gradations of merit ranging from Excellent to Bad. Moreover, promotion depended on a myriad of additional factors including training, position in the school, ability and attainment, good service, seniority, average attendance of pupils, three years of service at the maximum of the previous grade, the number of pupils in the school, years of service and the reports of inspectors.<sup>98</sup> This labyrinthine system surrounding promotion lacked transparency and disempowered teachers by placing so many variables outside their control or remit.

The movement away from Payment by Results effectively placed absolute control for the awarding of increments and for promotion in the hands of inspectors, who could depress a teacher's salary by an adverse report. Puirseil asserts that, following 1900, this led to a demotion for more than half of teachers who had attained higher classification under the previous system.<sup>99</sup> The 19 recommendations of the Dill Inquiry focused on improving the rights and standing of teachers in the system. These involved a modification of the system of grading and promotion to allow more rapid promotion, the abolition of merit marks, the automatic award of annual increments unless a bad report

<sup>91</sup>Puirseil, *Kindling the Flame*, 256.

<sup>92</sup>Coolahan, *Towards the Era of Lifelong Learning*, 26.

<sup>93</sup>Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Conclusions and Recommendations*, 242.

<sup>94</sup>John Coolahan, 'The Daring First Decade of the Board of National Education, 1831–1841', *Irish Journal of Education* 17, no. 1 (1984): 35–54.

<sup>95</sup>Puirseil, *Kindling the Flame*, 2.

<sup>96</sup>Moroney, *National Teachers' Salaries and Pensions*, 339.

<sup>97</sup>O'Donovan, *Stanley's Letter*, 279.

<sup>98</sup>Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Final Report*, 5.

<sup>99</sup>Puirseil, *Kindling the Flame*, 32.

had been issued in relation to the teacher, and consultation with teachers and managers on proposed regulations.<sup>100</sup>

Moroney argues that the low salary paid to teachers during the period under review indicates the low value that the State placed on the work of teachers and relegated teachers to the lower orders of society's social structures. As he states,

Although the teacher continued to be held in high esteem by his/her local community, in the world of officialdom he/she was less highly regarded. The Commissioners considered teachers to be on the lowest rung of the ladder and laid down a detailed set of rules and regulations that ordered the teacher's life, work and behaviour.<sup>101</sup>

This tension between the high regard of local communities for the role and position of the teacher and the treatment and remuneration by the State, 'which was always minimal and parsimonious',<sup>102</sup> was one that was navigated by generations of teachers in the period under review.

### Elevation of the status of the teacher from the 1870s

The various rules and regulations imposed by the National Board, as well as the local management structures, prompted teachers to unite against what was perceived to be an unfair and restrictive regime. Following a number of efforts, the Irish National Teachers' Association (subsequently the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)) was founded in 1868 with the stated objectives being 'the promotion of education in Ireland and the social and intellectual elevation of the Irish National Teachers'.<sup>103</sup> The INTO worked assiduously on a range of campaigns to improve the terms and conditions of employment of teachers and to raise the status of teaching.

While there was little appetite among the State and churches to ameliorate the position of teachers, a number of concessions were achieved in the decades following 1870. Following on from the Powis Commission recommendation that managers develop a contract of employment for teachers, 'specifying his duties and emoluments, and containing a proviso that the engagement is terminable on three months' notice given by either the Teacher or Manager',<sup>104</sup> written agreements or contracts of employment were introduced from 1873. The right to appeal an unfair dismissal was also achieved in 1873.<sup>105</sup> The Powis Commission had also advocated a system of teachers paying premiums for deferred annuities but had not recommended a pension scheme on the lines of other civil servants.<sup>106</sup> From 1880, teachers received a lump sum on retirement to which they contributed. While this was less favourable than the civil servants' scheme, it established an important principle for teachers that was built on in 1914 and 1920.

Another important milestone in the improvement of teachers' material position was delivered in the Irish Education Act 1892, which included the concession that the State would assume full responsibility for paying teachers' salaries, as the local element of

<sup>100</sup>Vice-Regal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Final Report*, 50.

<sup>101</sup>Moroney, *National Teachers' Salaries and Pensions*, 23.

<sup>102</sup>Coolahan, 'Schoolmaster in the New State', 170.

<sup>103</sup>Puirseil, *Kindling the Flame*, 8.

<sup>104</sup>Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Conclusions and Recommendations*, 383.

<sup>105</sup>Moroney, *National Teachers' Salaries and Pensions*, 23.

<sup>106</sup>Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), *Conclusions and Recommendations*, 529.

support and payment had never materialised under the national system. Between 1872 and 1900, five Acts relating to teacher pay and salaries were passed.<sup>107</sup> Progress was also made on the provision of teacher residences up to 1914. However, the pay and conditions of teachers in Ireland remained suppressed relative to their counterparts in England and Scotland. For example, in 1900, the average salary of a teacher in Ireland was £100, compared with £151 in England and £176 in Scotland.<sup>108</sup>

The INTO continued to develop as an organisation with a membership of 5000 teachers by 1892 and it registered as a trade union in 1917.<sup>109</sup> While the INTO and the school managers sometimes collaborated and joined forces on educational issues against the National Board, this collaboration rarely involved matters of power and control in schools on which the two sides had divergent views. Relationships between the INTO and the Catholic managers in particular deteriorated considerably in the 1890s around the issue of security of tenure and summary dismissals when the Catholic hierarchy accused the INTO of exhibiting anti-clerical and secularist tendencies.<sup>110</sup> The First Maynooth Resolution in 1894 made provisions that no Catholic teacher could be dismissed (unless an immediate dismissal) before the patron was informed and consented. However, the Catholic hierarchy reiterated the need for maintaining the existing management system ‘to safeguard the faith and morals of the pupils at the most perilous period of their lives’.<sup>111</sup> It saw its management role to include ‘a constant supervision over the conduct of the teachers, the choice of books and the religious and moral training of the pupils’.<sup>112</sup>

In 1900, teachers were advised by the Catholic hierarchy to sever their connection with the INTO ‘unless their Association takes up and maintains, unequivocally, a correct and becoming attitude towards the Bishops and Priests of the Church’.<sup>113</sup> While a ban was enforced on INTO membership in some dioceses such as Tuam and Armagh, tensions de-escalated by 1905 and the ban was lifted.<sup>114</sup>

Following the defeat of the Education (Ireland) Bill 1919, which allowed for salary increases and a superannuation scheme for teachers, improved salary scales and bonuses for qualifications were achieved in April 1920.<sup>115</sup>

## Conclusion

This research has delineated the evolving role and status of teachers in Ireland from the establishment of the national system of education in 1831 until the achievement of political independence. The national system incorporated a number of policy intentions from the Westminster government, namely the maintenance of order, the promotion of support for the Union and the Anglicisation of the Irish population. The strategy towards education in Ireland aligns with the arguments of Said, who views the role of colonial education to be the promotion of the culture of the coloniser by implanting an ideological

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<sup>107</sup>Moroney, *National Teachers' Salaries and Pensions*, 28.

<sup>108</sup>Atkinson, *Irish Education*.

<sup>109</sup>Puirseil, *Kindling the Flame*, 19.

<sup>110</sup>O'Donovan, *Stanley's Letter*, 243.

<sup>111</sup>*Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, July 1898, 83.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup>*Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, November 1900, 554.

<sup>114</sup>Puirseil, *Kindling the Flame*, 20.

<sup>115</sup>Moroney, *National Teachers' Salaries and Pensions*, 78.

vision and the demotion of native culture.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, as asserted by Bayly, the stringent measures around teacher selection and training in Ireland may have reflected the fear of the colonial influence on indigenous ways and culture and the attempts to achieve assimilation to more familiar cultures, language and practices. The success of the national system necessitated a reliance on institutions and agents that were not integral to the State and the churches fulfilled this ‘intermediate’ role in education.<sup>117</sup> These attempts to control and oversee both the professional and personal lives of teachers aligned well with similar strategies in Great Britain and beyond.<sup>118</sup>

Emerging from an ad hoc and independent system of education, teachers found their professional and personal lives increasingly bound by rules and regulations initiated by the State and local (mostly clerical) managers. The vision of the professional teacher was manifest in official education policy documents from the 1830s and this was largely framed, as termed by Johnson, by the ‘realpolitik of Church and State’ rather than by overt pedagogical considerations.<sup>119</sup> This provided boundaries to the personal and professional lives of teachers and created a tension between the high status of teachers among the local community and the parsimony that often characterised their relationship with the National Board, inspectors and managers. An imperialist vision underpinned this revised conceptualisation of the teacher as part of the endeavour to imbue the Irish populace with colonial values. This resulted in a re-vision of the status and identity of teachers, accompanied by reduced autonomy and control over their professional and personal lives, which had not existed prior to the national system.

Collectively, the framework governing the work of teachers created a uniformity of expectation in terms of their role and eliminated much of the independence of thought and action that preceded the national system. For those admitted to the profession and those remaining within the profession, an adherence to rules and regulations and a deference to authority were prerequisites to progression. No doubt many intending or practising teachers did not exhibit the qualities necessary and there were selection, training, recruitment, management and dismissal mechanisms within the system to ensure the desired character of the teacher was achieved and maintained.

The State and the churches had different motivations for involvement in education, ranging from cultural assimilation to a spiritual endeavour. Teachers often fell between the vagaries of their employers at a local level and the National Board that paid their salaries, with both groups abdicating the responsibility for improving the terms and conditions of teacher employment. Ultimately, the sense of disempowerment engendered by the system unified teachers’ quest for better professional working terms and conditions. Much was accomplished in this regard following the establishment of the INTO in 1868, resulting in the achievement of greater professional recognition, identity and status by the 1920s. In this way, teaching became an important vehicle for social mobility and

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<sup>116</sup>Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.

<sup>117</sup>Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*; Hickman, *Religion, Class and Identity*.

<sup>118</sup>David James and Brian Davies, ‘The Genesis of School Inspection in South East Wales 1839–1843: Issues of Social Control and Accountability’, *History of Education* 38, no. 5 (2009): 667–80; Andrew Knudsen, ‘Profession, “Performance”, and Policy: Teachers, Examinations, and the State in England and Wales, 1846–1862’, *Paedagogica Historica* 52, no. 5 (2015): 507–24; Moore, ‘The Professionalisation of Teaching’.

<sup>119</sup>Richard Johnson, *The Blue Books and Education, 1816–1896: The Critical Reading of Official Sources*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Occasional Paper. Available at: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-arts-law/history/cccs/stencilled-occasional-papers/1to8and11to24and38to48/SOP03.pdf>, 13 (accessed November 13, 2019).

progression, especially for women, from the late 1800s in Ireland.<sup>120</sup> Indeed teaching remains one of the most highly unionised professions in Ireland and the teacher unions wield much power in the mediation of education policy.<sup>121</sup>

Garvin posits that teachers in this period were imbued with a curious mix of power and powerlessness.<sup>122</sup> This tension was reinforced by the dual powers that governed the work of teachers, from the National Board and inspectors at a State level and from the patrons and managers at a local level. These tensions between national and local demands often placed the teacher in an unenviable position of trying to serve two taskmasters with differing objectives. These circumstances impacted on teacher professional identity by virtue of the training provisions, prevailing discourses, relationships and expectations placed on them.<sup>123</sup> Collectively, the control of the churches and the State was far reaching and extended both inside and outside the classroom life of teachers. By the time political independence had been achieved in the 1920s, there had been a substantial re-vision of the role and status of the elementary school teacher in Ireland from the era prior to the establishment of the national system. The majority had received training for their role and through their trade union had achieved enhanced salaries, pensions, civil liberties and terms and conditions of employment. In the contemporary context, it is interesting to note a return in some jurisdictions to tighter control, prescription and regulation of the professional work of teachers, reducing the professional autonomy afforded in previous decades with the introduction of prescriptive curricula, increased accountability and a focus on external regulation.<sup>124</sup>

While one of the key aims of the national system was to exert control over the teachers in schools, and extensive measures were initiated to achieve this outcome, it is interesting that the 1916 Rising in Ireland was known as the ‘Schoolmasters’ Rebellion’. This had been asserted by J. P. Mahaffy, Provost of Trinity College Dublin, who blamed the rebellion on the seditious teaching in schools.<sup>125</sup> An investigation by the National Board found little evidence to substantiate the claim<sup>126</sup> but it is interesting to note that despite the re-visioning of the role, suspicions around the revolutionary and ‘politically subversive’ teacher were still embedded almost a century after the establishment of the national system.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

<sup>120</sup>Judith Harford, ‘The Movement for the Higher Education of Women in Ireland: Gender Equality or Denominational Rivalry?’, *History of Education* 34, no. 5 (2005): 497–516.

<sup>121</sup>Kathleen Lynch and Bernie Grummell, ‘New Managerialism as an Organisational Form of Neoliberalism’, in *The Transformation of Work in Welfare State Organizations: New Public Management and the Institutional Diffusion of Ideas*, ed. Frank Sowa, Ronald Staples and Stefan Zapfel (London: Routledge, 2018), 203–22.

<sup>122</sup>Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland 1858–1928* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>123</sup>Stanley Tucker, ‘Youth Working: Professional Identities Given, Received or Contested?’, in *Youth in Society*, ed. Jeremy Roche, Stanley Tucker, Rachel Thomson and Ronny Flynn (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 81–9.

<sup>124</sup>Mark Priestley and Gert Biesta, *Reinventing the Curriculum: New Trends in Curriculum Policy and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Ciarán Sugrue, ‘Changing the Educational Landscape: Transforming Teacher Professionalism?’, in *Education for All? The Legacy of Free Post-Primary Education in Ireland*, ed. Judith Harford (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018), 203–30.

<sup>125</sup>Niamh Puirseil, ‘The Schoolmasters’ Rebellion: Teachers, the INTO and 1916’, *Saothar* 41 (2016): 286–92.

<sup>126</sup>Puirseil, *Kindling the Flame*, 49.

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