

Equality and Curriculum in Education

A Collection Of Invited Essays



Rose Dolan (Ed.)
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Introduction

Rose Dolan

The Department of Education in NUI Maynooth is pleased to publish the first of a series of publications that commemorates the work of our colleagues and our graduates. The series was conceived as a way to mark the contributions of two members of the department on the occasion of their retirement. This publication marks the work of Dr. Rose Malone. Colleagues and graduates were invited to contribute an article on a topic that related to the overall theme of the publication, a theme chosen to reflect the multifaceted work that Rose has engaged with over the course of her career in education, not just in our department but in the education system as a whole. This collection allows others to dip into this world and to experience it through the writings of practitioners in the field of education.

For our student teachers, the essays will serve as valuable introductions to some key ideas about teaching and learning but also ones that challenge their assumptions about schooling. For the more experienced teachers on our Postgraduate Diplomas, Masters and PhD programmes, the essays might inform and enthuse, nudge readers towards innovation and experimentation and emphasise that the *status quo* is not inevitable.

In the opening chapter, *Higher education policy in an economic recession and its impact on universities in the Republic of Ireland*, [Dr. Marie Clarke](#) examines the impact of economic recession on policy development in the Higher Education arena and considers how formulation and implementation tend to focus on structural reform in order to achieve economic efficiencies. The significance of this on the quality of experience for students and on the development opportunities for academic staff is also highlighted. Marie is a senior lecturer in the School of Education in University College Dublin and preceded Rose as president of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT).

This is followed by [Dr. Grace O Grady's](#) thought-provoking chapter on *Constructing Identities with Young People: Rethinking Educational Practice*. Through her work with a group of Transition Year students, Grace invites us to consider the role of the Trickster in the educational situation and how this role challenges us to see things differently. Finn's musings on streaming and intelligence, combined with the pragmatic response of the principal, allows us to see the Trickster in action. Grace is a lecturer in the Education Department, NUI Maynooth and has been Rose's colleague since 2003.

As a second level teacher, Rose taught both science and mathematics. The third chapter, written by [Maeve Daly](#), links to that role. In *Accessing the maths curriculum; applying psychological theory to help students with specific learning difficulties and with benefits for all*, Maeve draws on the work of Piaget, Bruner and Vygotsky to show how the teaching of mathematics can be based in

concrete operations, thus making mathematics accessible to all learners, including those with specific learning difficulties. Maeve is a lecturer in the Education Department of NUI Maynooth and is also a clinical psychologist.

In 2003, the research and development project *Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century* began in the Education Department. From the outset, Rose was involved both as a member of the project team and as a contributor to the workshops, especially in the area of assessment. This chapter, written by [Dr. Pádraig Hogan and Anthony Malone](#), draws on the continuing insights arising from ongoing work in this area. *Cultivating Transformations through Learning Experiences: Priorities in Continuing Professional Development* revisits the final chapter of the project report and reviews the most recent developments in the TL21 professional development programme for teachers. Pádraig is a senior lecturer in the Education Department and was the project leader for TL21. Anthony is a lecturer in the Education Department and has worked with Rose since 2003.

The working lives of Rose Malone and [Professor Gary Granville](#) have intersected on many occasions. Both worked in the City of Dublin Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) and published together on Poverty Awareness in the Classroom. They have also worked in the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) and the Education Department in NUI Maynooth. Gary's beautifully illustrated article, *Tapestry*, considers the Dublin 1913 Lockout Tapestry Project and indicates how political, social, gender and educational issues were both experienced through and shaped by this three-year project.

The final chapter, *Junctions and Disjunction in the Aims of Irish Education Policy* by [Professor Tom Collins](#), is a wide-ranging discussion about the main aims that underpin the direction of Irish education policy. Using the twin concepts of junction and disjunction, it questions whether there is congruence or dissonance between the aims of the different sectors. It prompts us to think about the effect on the system as a whole when the parts are divided or fragmented. Both Tom and Rose worked together in the Education Department in NUI Maynooth and also served together on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the meticulous work of Keith Young in preparing the text for publication. His capabilities in copy editing and e publication were of tremendous assistance in the completion of this manuscript.

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Chapter 1

Higher education policy in an economic recession and its impact on universities in the Republic of Ireland.

Marie Clarke

The study of education policy is aimed at explicating the mechanisms and processes of change and development and the altering relationships between sub-sets of the education system. Archer (1979, 54) has defined a state educational system as “a nationwide and differentiated collection of institutions devoted to formal education, where overall control and supervision is as least partly governmental, and whose component parts and processes are related to one another”. Consequently, any analysis must take the national policy making context and the policy implementation instruments into account (Odden, 1991). The provision of public services is not defined solely by economic rules; rather decisions resulting in social consequences which involve political decisions should be mediated through discussion and public debate. This is particularly true of universities that have a major educational role in promoting research, providing education and training for higher-level professional, technical and managerial personnel. This makes the policy formulation and implementation process in higher education a complicated one from a financial perspective.

Many governments see periods of recession as an opportunity to accelerate educational reform, which is focused on increasing efficiency in education systems (Van Damme, 2011). Confronted with demands of world economic crises, governments are reluctant to increase public funds for long-term investment in higher education (Castagnos & Echevin, 1984). Equally, during periods of economic recession, governments introduce public policies which are designed to achieve the rationalisation of human, physical and financial resources in higher education and promote initiatives that shape university teaching and research to serve the needs of national economic recovery (Clarke, Hough & Stewart, 1984). This chapter examines the development of higher education policy in the context of an economic recession and its impact on universities in the Republic of Ireland. It is argued that policy formulation and implementation tends to focus on structural reform as a way of achieving economic efficiencies.

TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE

During the late 1980s and 1990s, in a European context, public support for higher education decreased in a number of countries, both financially and politically (Enders & deWeert, 2004). Colleges and universities were expanding and new activities were added. This was accompanied by growth in academic staff numbers. By the late 1990s this situation had changed and impacted negatively on the size and profile of the academic profession as well as faculty work-load, productivity and outputs. The balance between block and grant funding for research had shifted in favour of a performance based funding approach (Enders & de Weert, 2004). In most countries, public funding for higher education declined sharply from the late 1990s (Enders & de Weert, 2004). Higher education institutions became more dependent on private financing, primarily in the form of tuition fees and private research contracts (Robinson, 2006). For non-EU OECD countries, the funding system seems to be characterized by greater dependence on the private sector than is the case in the EU (EU-RA, 2004). The roles that regional authorities play in the financing of education varies from country to country. In Ireland, the Netherlands, Finland, United Kingdom, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, and the Slovak Republic, regional authorities play no role at all. In Denmark, Greece, France, Italy, Austria, Sweden, Czech Republic, and Poland, the regional authorities play some role, while in Belgium, Germany, and Spain, they play very major role (EU-RA, 2004).

The decline of public funding has been accompanied by greater government oversight and management. New Zealand and Australia have instituted extensive policies of performance-based assessments. Universities in the United Kingdom, traditionally decentralised and largely autonomous from government, have become more and more tightly controlled. Teaching and research are regularly subject to assessment based on externally imposed performance indicators. Several Canadian provinces and many American states have also imposed performance indicators on higher education institutions (Robinson, 2006).

There is a general consensus in the literature that European universities have increasingly begun to adopt a working culture and ethos traditionally found in the private business sector, a development that has had a longer tradition in the USA (Hyde et al., 2012). While Smeenk et al (2009: 591) date the arrival of the market-model of HE in Europe to the late nineties, in some countries aspects of the model were rolling out much earlier; indeed, Enders and Musselin (2008) note that the extra-scientific relevance of academic research, for example in industry and healthcare, have always been part of the academic world, but that entrepreneurial academic work has become more prevalent since the 1960s (Hyde et al., 2012). Furthermore, Neave (1988) notes that a concept referred to as the Evaluative State - a precursor to the market model in universities - has been circulating in educational scholarship since the late 1980s. Thus, while there is broad agreement that third level institutions are experiencing a new kind of scrutiny, the reasons why this arose and the pace of its roll-out

across Europe has varied. Neave (1998: 271) roots the genesis of the Evaluative State primarily to European political ideas in the case of France, Sweden and Belgium, and later in Spain, and by contrast, largely to the influence of US economic discourses in the case of Britain and the Netherlands (Hyde et al., 2012). The reasons for this shift from the traditional model to a managerialist one in the HE sector have been well documented and include fiscal restraints, increasing emphasis on quality and accountability, the ‘massification’ of HE, and its decentralisation (Smeenk et al. 2009).

Since the 1990s the DES, in line with other government departments, has begun to focus on budgetary priorities commencing with the Expenditure Review Initiative in 1997 and the Value for Money Policy Review in 2006 (DES, 2007). This has resulted in more focused decision-making on matters of educational expenditure with consequent altered approaches to policy formation by the DES. Recent educational discourse has reflected this development (Gleeson & O’Donnabhain 2009). Policy decisions are influenced by both the global and, more importantly, the European context. This is evident in the language employed by the DES in policy documents, which reflects that of international organisations such as the World Trade Organisation, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU) (Seery 2008). The EU Lisbon Agenda (2000) in particular and the introduction of National Reform Programmes in 2005 under the revised Lisbon Agenda resulted in the Irish government identifying major policy areas including education and training, lifelong learning and the development of a high-skilled and adaptable workforce for the knowledge economy (Government of Ireland 2007).

Higher education systems require a regulatory framework in which their universities can act and there must be a balance between autonomy and accountability. Autonomy, along with academic freedom, is intrinsic to the nature of the university, and a precondition if a university is to best fulfil its role and its responsibilities toward society (Thorens, 1993). University autonomy means that universities must be free from pressure of external interests of different kinds, be it economic, political, social or cultural. This ensures that universities can best serve both learning and the society of which they are an integral part. Autonomy is not inherently in conflict with accountability; rather it guarantees an academic climate in which learning and research can flourish.

HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY IN IRELAND

Education policy in Ireland is the prerogative of government and it is vested in the Minister for Education and Skills under the Ministers and Secretaries Act 1924 and the Education Act 1998. The DES is one of the higher spending departments in the Irish civil service and its significant budget means that it is of considerable importance not only educationally but also socially. The DES sets the general regulations for the recognition of schools, prescribes curricula, establishes regulations for the management, resourcing and

staffing of schools and centrally negotiates teachers' salary scales. Through the Higher Education Authority (HEA), it funds higher education Institutes of Technology and universities.

Little by way of investment or policy development occurred within the higher education sector during the period 1922 and the late 1960s (Hyland & Milne, 1992). In 1957, a *Commission on Accommodation Needs of the NUI Colleges* was appointed by the Minister for Education and chaired by Mr. Justice Cearbhall O Dalaigh. It published its final report in 1959 and was severely critical of the neglect that had taken place in relation to higher education (Hyland & Milne, 1992). It recommended that a University Development Committee should be established which would advise the government in relation to higher education. This proposal was not accepted, but Hyland and Milne (1992) argue that it may have been influential in prompting the establishment of a Commission on Higher Education in 1960. This provided the first major opportunity for an in-depth study of all aspects of Irish higher education and future needs. The report was not published until 1967 (Hyland & Milne, 1992). It was critical of the lack of unity within the system and the absence of planning for the system in general; individual institutions were also criticised in relation to this. It was also acknowledged that higher education outside the universities was also under-developed. The Commission considered that the universities were under-financed, understaffed and poorly equipped (Hyland & Milne, 1992). After the publication of this report the HEA was set up on an ad hoc basis in 1968 and was established on a statutory basis in 1971. Since the Higher Education Authority Act of 1971, funding and policy advisory responsibility have been vested in the HEA. As an advisory body to the Minister under this legislation it should monitor, review, advise in relation to the furthering of higher education and coordinate public investment in the sector. Its central statutory power and function as an executive body is to assess in relation to annual or other periods the financial requirements of the institutions of which it is the funding agency and to allocate to the institutions concerned the State funds provided. In 1997 the Universities Act was passed, which was a significant landmark in Irish higher education.

The Universities Act (1997) outlines a comprehensive set of objectives for the Irish universities. The concept of a university espoused by the Act has at its heart a community of scholars, composed of students and academics, engaged in teaching, scholarly research and scientific investigation. The Act makes reference to its roles in the social and cultural life (in particular, with regard to Irish culture), in the realisation of national and social development, the dissemination of knowledge and the development of independent critical thinking among its students. Academic freedom is also recognised under Section 14 of the act. Apart from control of salaries, the universities have autonomy of operation within the overall budgetary framework (HEA, 2012).

Good policy requires a clear explanation of the problem and an equally clear explanation of how the policy solution will solve it (Gash & Roos, 2012). This is not evident in many of the

policy documents published by the HEA which include the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (2011); *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape* (2012); *Review of Funding Model for Higher Education Institutions: Consultation Document*; *Completing the Landscape Process for Irish Higher Education* (2013).

Ireland's national strategy for higher education for the next twenty years, as detailed in *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, sees collaboration, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally as being key to system development (HEA, 2011). The strategy recognises that Ireland has a significant number of small higher education institutions that are in receipt of public funding and recommends 'that these should be consolidated, where appropriate, to promote coherence and sustainability' (HEA, 2011). In a paper entitled *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape*, the HEA outlined proposals for the implementation of their National Strategy HEA (2012). The process proposed involved the exploration of the nature of programme and disciplinary offerings with the institutions involved. It was clearly indicated that the objective was the rationalisation of the system. The school going population in Ireland unlike other EU countries is increasing. Consequently, pupil enrolments at primary, second and third level education in Ireland are projected to grow significantly in the next five years (Hyland, 2012). *The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 – Report of the Strategy Group* (2011) provided projections regarding the future numbers participating in the Irish higher education sector. In the 2012, following the publication of the Strategy Group, the HEA commissioned another report to be undertaken by the ESRI on future demand for higher education. Some doubts were cast on the 'usefulness' of the Strategy Group projections by the ESRI report, which stated:

On the basis of current participation rates and demographic projections, the number of potential undergraduate HE entrants is expected to grow from 41,000 in 2010/2011 to 44,000 in 2019/20 (7%) and to just over 51,000 by 2029/2030. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) estimates are broadly in line with recent projections produced by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). These estimates are not considerably impacted when the underlying assumptions relating to migration are altered. Both the ESRI and the DES estimates lie substantially below the projections that were used in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. Consequently, any policy suggestions centred on the projections contained in this National Strategy document require re-examination. (ESRI, 2012, p. 7)

Questions concerning the existence of a 'discrepancy' and the reasons why such a discrepancy exists are a repeated feature of Irish education policy discourse and planning, which requires investigation. All too often policy decisions concerning the future of major aspects of our higher education system have been taken in the absence of adequate policy and planning considerations. One of the first higher education policy decisions with links to recessionary considerations was the closure, in the mid 1980s, of one of the three major teacher providers in the state, Carysfort College of Education.

In February 1986 the then-Minister for Education, Ms Gemma Hussey, announced the decision to close the 111-year old Carysfort College. She attributed the decision to "falling

pupil numbers, a young teaching force, which was giving rise to few retirements, and the need to contain public expenditure and achieve a better allocation of resources” (Dáil Debates, 1986). Surprisingly, very shortly after the closure, the numbers of students were increased significantly for the other colleges. The need to contain public expenditure may well have been the basis for this decision; however, no analysis of the situation, identification of the processes involved, or the projected savings were ever presented (Clarke & Killeavy, 2012). Two reports were published on the area of teacher education in 2012, *A review of the structure of initial teacher education provision in Ireland: Background paper for the international review team* (Hyland, 2012) and *Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland: Review Conducted on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills* (Sahlberg, et al., 2012). Hyland (2012) focused on the structure of teacher education provision in Ireland and the question of teacher supply. Sahlberg, et al. (2012, p.6) placed initial teacher education firmly at the centre of Ireland’s economic and social structures and asserted that teachers and teacher education are core to “the implementation of national programmes for sustainable economic growth and prosperity”. Like Hyland (2012), the report emphasised the need for the Government and teacher education providers to address the issues of teacher supply. Further, they recommended that two teacher education providers be closed and that teacher education be reconfigured into six centres across the country as a means of achieving critical mass (Sahlberg, et al., 2012). However, no definition of “critical mass” was offered (Clarke & Killeavy, 2012). Given the lack of clarity concerning teacher supply needs in the system, this is not surprising. The increasing presence of private provision in pre-service primary and post primary teacher education makes this situation more problematic, particularly as private bodies are not subject to any quotas on student intake.

Little has changed with reference to the higher education policy process in the intervening period between the closure of Carysfort College and the current situation. The approach adopted is one of restructuring, where structural reforms are introduced as a solution. In 2013 a major programme of structural reform, including institutional mergers and much greater levels of institutional collaboration, with the creation of a series of regional clusters of institutions, was announced. Included in this was approval for three groups of institutes of technology to proceed towards detailed planning for a formal application for designation as technological universities (HEA, 2013). The narrative suggests that there will be less inefficiencies in terms of “scale” or “critical mass” and this is put forward as the rationale for change. However, the policy process should focus on the type of reforms necessary within the system and the conditions for success (Ball & Youdell, 2008). The policy approach is determined predominantly by economic considerations.

INVESTMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Since 1996, tuition fees, which had previously been paid by students, are paid by the State. The recurrent funding of institutions by the State is driven mainly by student numbers, cost and policy requirements. Between 1995-2001, there was a 92% increase in income of higher education institutions from recurrent grants awarded by the HEA. In addition to meeting the running expenses of the institutions, recurrent grants may also be used for certain purposes including the purchase of furniture, replacement of equipment or carrying out capital projects. While investment in higher education in Ireland increased from the mid 1990s onwards, per capita expenditure remained modest by international standards throughout the period of growth and has significantly decreased since 2009. As a consequence, staff-student ratios, which were close to international norms have worsened (HEA, 2012).

The OECD (2004) reported that Ireland's investment into its education system as a whole was lower than the OECD average. In public expenditure terms, it ranked only 25th out of 30 OECD countries and, with private expenditure added to public, 23rd out of 27 countries for which data were available (OECD, 2004). In fact, public expenditure declined from 4.7% to 4.1% as a proportion of a rapidly growing GDP between 1995 and 2000 (OECD, 2004). In 2012, Ireland spent less than the OECD average on tertiary education [€52,000 over the college span versus OECD average of €57,000 and EU average of €62,000] (Lucey & Larkin 2012).

The funding higher education in Ireland must be viewed in the context of the recession and the consequent economic reforms mandated under the National Recovery Plan 2011–2014, and the Programme of Financial Support for Ireland, sponsored by the EU and the IMF. The OECD's Economic Survey of Ireland (2011) concluded that the Government must preserve on the path of fiscal consolidation. This includes fully complying with the EU-IMF targets, reducing the budget deficit, broadening the tax base, strengthening fiscal frameworks and increasing public service efficiencies (OECD, 2011).

The Estimates for Public Expenditure (Government of Ireland, 2011) indicated a 7% reduction in the Higher Education vote. This reduction was offset to some extent by the introduction of a student contribution share to replace the existing student service charge. The prevailing economic climate has presented the higher education sector with significant challenges given the cumulative effect of budget cuts over recent years and continuing headcount reductions under the Employment Control Framework (IUA Review, 2011). It is predicted that the higher education sector is likely to continue to service increasing student number enrolments while at the same time having to operate with reduced exchequer provision.

Between 2008 and 2012 recurrent grant allocations to universities and colleges fell by 25%. The largest cuts in recurrent grants were at UCD, which experienced a reduction of over 25%. Other universities have taken major cuts, including TCD (- 22%), UCC (-21%), NUI Maynooth (-18%) and NUIG (-16%). The recurrent grant to St Patrick's College, Drumcondra was cut by 25% and Mary Immaculate College in Limerick was down 18% in the four-year period reviewed. Irish higher education institutions consistently report that the value of their 'core' or 'recurrent' grant does not match the real cost of educating students or maintaining their physical resources. Inevitably, this places pressure on teaching and research infrastructure. While the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) has brought greater transparency to higher education funding, it cannot make up for apparent shortfalls in the core grant or the absence of multi-annual funding which prevents institutions from forward planning in a meaningful way (Duffy et al., 2007).

The government's allocated budget for education in Ireland in 2012 was just over €8.242 billion. Third level education accounts for €1.6 billion of which €1.1 billion relates to recurrent provision to institutions (Hyland, 2012; Government of Ireland, 2012). The government funding of the universities and other designated institutions in 2012 was €636 million out of a total budget of €1.119 billion allocated to the higher education sector. This is represented a cut of 5.4% on the 2011 allocation (HEA, 2012). The government's Comprehensive Expenditure Report 2012-14 indicates that there will be continuing overall reductions in core funding for higher education. Even after higher tuition fees are taken into account core funding will fall by 2% in both 2012 and 2013, then 1% in 2014 and 2015 (Government of Ireland, 2011). The budget introduced in 2013 brought a further 7.4% reduction in general recurrent funding levels for the third level education sector.

Under proposals sent to higher education institutions by the HEA (2012) in a document entitled *Review of Funding Model for Higher Education Institutions: Consultation Document*, it is proposed to allocate funding for a specified number of courses. It is envisaged that core funding, strategic / earmarked funding and performance funding would form the three elements of the proposed funding model. The performance funding element would be linked to satisfactory performance in relation to agreed targets. The HEA (2012) stated that 'we need to encourage and reward the development of a more cost effective sector. Programme rationalisation and greater collaboration between HEIs have been identified as priority areas for action in 2012 / 13'. In order to achieve this, it is proposed that each HEI will agree a funding contract with the HEA which will set out the key outputs, outcomes and level of service to be delivered and the resources allocated to achieve these (HEA, 2012). The performance indicators include engagement in regional clusters, co-operation between individual colleges, student retention rates, the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, teaching and learning excellence, research and increased commercialisation, meeting regional labour market needs and enhanced internationalisation, and attracting more non-EU students. This has not been accompanied by any proposal which indicates how these indicators will be

measured. This system will be implemented from 2014 and a certain percentage of funds will be withheld from institutions that do not perform according to these agreed criteria. The focus has shifted towards outputs rather than on inputs.

In order to deal with existing budgetary deficits and resulting cuts in state expenditure, higher education institutions have begun to focus on measures involving staff student ratios, research income metrics, the recruitment of international students and cuts in non-pay budgets. Cuts in expenditure affecting staff student ratios tend to be blunt measures that are taken with the objective of saving money and educational issues are rarely - if ever - considered in justifying these measures. Typically, reductions in full-time staffing take the form of non-replacement of existing staff on their retirement. This means that areas of course work can no longer be provided for students and their experience deteriorates (Clarke & Killeavy, 2012). The extensive nature of these cuts highlights the seriousness of the crisis that faces Irish universities in the current economic context.

The direct financial implications of current economic recession are contributing to the lower rankings of Irish universities in recent years, particularly through increases in staff-student ratios. All Irish higher education institutions fell in their academic reputation ranking (HEA, 2012). This decline was particularly notable in the Times Higher Education rankings in the areas of science, engineering and technology (HEA, 2012). The impact of Irish research is regarded highly but this is undermined by declining income levels, increases in staff-student ratios and the weakened reputation of teaching and research. The HEA (2012) concluded that it would be regrettable if the advances made in Irish higher education in the past decade, due to institutional effort and public investment, were now to be reversed due to unsustainability in funding. The economic situation also impacts on the recruitment and the retention of academics in the university sector.

ACADEMIC STAFF IN IRISH UNIVERSITIES

In many countries the career patterns and employment conditions of academic staff as well as the attractiveness of the academic workplace are of major concern, with particular reference to the career perspectives of those working in higher education compared to other societal sectors where highly qualified work is demanded (Enders & de Weert, 2004). There are 10,300 WTE core staff employed in universities and colleges, of which 4,701 (45.5%) are academic and 5,599 (54.4%) are non-academic (HEA Key Facts and Figures 2011-2012). The Irish university system has a higher proportion of non-academic staff than academics employed in our universities. This is a matter of concern and highlights the overbureaucratisation of Irish universities at the expense of their core academic teaching and research functions.

Table 1: Staffing levels in universities in Ireland 2008-2011

University	Academic Staff Only	Student (WTE) Numbers	Ratio
2008-09	4,795.56	89,650	18.7
2009-10	4,543.98	95,061	20.9
2010-11	4,426.31	106,448	24.0

Source HEA, 2011. Report Sustainability Study: Aligning Participation, Quality and Funding in Irish Higher Education.

Since 2009, staffing levels in third-level have declined by almost 1,500, while student numbers have increased by 15% in the same period (IFUT, 2011). In teaching, Irish academics emphasise international perspectives, a values-based and meritocratic approach in line with their colleagues from Finland, the United Kingdom and Austria (Höhle & Teichler, 2013). The range of diverse teaching methodologies employed by Irish academics compares very favourably - ranking third after their colleagues in the UK and Finland on these approaches (Höhle & Teichler, 2013). University academics want to develop an intellectual curiosity in their students – to give them the potential to develop. To do this, students need individual support. It is difficult to achieve this when staff-student ratios are deteriorating significantly in the university sector.

Higher education institutions increasingly depend on diversified funding sources. The rise in externally funded research projects in the last decades has gone hand in hand with the rise in fixed-term employment positions (Altbach 2006). In several countries, for example Austria, Ireland or the UK, measures to increase the flexibility and reduce the financial liability of universities make it difficult for academics to obtain permanent full-time appointments. In Ireland, many early career academics have very fragmented employment experiences. Many move from position to position on short term or part-time contracts. There is little by way of support for these early-career academics within university structures and this impacts negatively upon the formation of their professional identity (Clarke et al., 2012). Increasing pressure on Irish and European academics to raise research funding from external agencies has been a feature of academic life over recent years. This is particularly difficult during a period of financial stringency. Certain subject areas, particularly those within the arts and humanities, are much less likely to secure research funding than areas connected with subjects such as science and medicine. Further, there is pressure on all academic staff to produce more extensive research than heretofore. Drennan, et al., (2013) reported that both senior and junior academics in Ireland, similar to colleagues in Europe, are in agreement that the pressures to increase research productivity are a threat to the quality of research.

CONCLUSION

It is important for any higher education system to retain an expansive view of the university as an engine for social change and economic self-direction. Since the start of the recession, the Irish higher education system has endured severe cuts that have impacted upon staff–student ratios, research performance and placing in international rankings. The policy approach is one of structural change as a way of achieving economic efficiencies. This has not been accompanied by a wide scale debate about the role and functions of Irish universities in the wider society. Equally no clear rationale has been outlined that identifies how the proposed structural solutions will solve the challenges faced by the higher education system in general. In an extended recessionary period, when major policy decisions concerning university education are based almost exclusively on reduced resourcing for the sector, the outlook for growth and development is bleak - for the universities themselves and for the higher education sector in which they are located.

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Chapter 2

Constructing Identities with Young People: Rethinking Educational Practice

A Performance Piece

Grace O’Grady

If you believe in the world you precipitate events, however inconspicuous, that elude control, you engender new space-times, however small their surface or volume. (Deleuze, p.81, 1990)

One of the aims of Irish Education is “to nurture a sense of personal identity...” (*Charting our Education Future*, 1995, p.10). Thomson and Hall (2008) confirm that schools are places where children and teenagers are continually engaged in identity formation, but where formal opportunities to play with and reflect on this subject are not available to them (p.148). Personal and Social Development Programmes are cited as far back as the *Role*¹ document and the *Guidelines*² document as an essential part of guidance provision in second level schools in Ireland. To date, this aspect of guidance has not been developed as a curricular programme. While a focus on identity formation is part of the SPHE curriculum at both Junior and Senior Cycle, this programme and personal development programmes in education generally (Ryan, 1997) are informed by humanistic conceptions of the person and therefore fall prey to much of the critique of, what is referred to in some UK publications as, the ‘therapeutic culture’ of schools (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009, Furedi, 2004, Craig, 2007); a culture that can remain blind to the constitutive power of discourse.

This paper offers a participants’ perspective on the pedagogical work I carried out as part of a larger CAP (Creative Analytical Practice/Processes) ethnographic study, using arts-based activities to provide a creative space for a group of Irish Senior Cycle students to explore narratives of self/identity (O’ Grady, 2012). I firstly give a brief overview of that work with the young people situating it in the research context. I then present the voices of the students as they dialogue with their teachers at an exhibition of their creative artefacts. In this ‘Performance’ there is an opening up to new discursive school practice so I title it, *Rethinking Educational Practice*’ and close the paper with musings about the age old ‘trickster’, who has been reclaimed as a metaphor of transformation in our classrooms (Conroy & Davis, 2002).

1 Mark Guidance and Counseling Service in Second Level School and the Role of the Guidance Counsellor, (Dublin: Institute of Guidance Counsellors, 1996).

2 Mark Guidelines for the Practice of Guidance and Counseling in Schools, (Dublin: NCGE, 1996).

RESEARCH PROGRAMME IN SCHOOL

As part of the research design of this inquiry, I facilitated two Identity Programmes with a group of ten Fifth Year students and eleven Transition Year students (February-May 2008/February-May 2009). Each programme involved twelve two-hour creative workshops over a semester in two Irish Community Schools. In each case the self-selected students (5 male/5 female in first programme and 5 male/6 female in second programme) were facilitated in an exploration of their identity narratives using arts-based educational activities such as drawing, collage-making and journaling. The young people selected their own media to work with as they creatively constructed portraits of themselves in their world.

While it might loosely be called a personal development programme, the pedagogical space was comprised more accurately of a series of workshops, structured around the production and audiencing of creative images. In their unfolding stories I attempted to make visible some of the ways the young people constructed their identities, the cultural/institutional discourses and dominant discourses of self they drew on, how they were positioned by these stories/ideas/discourses and how they continued to position themselves/others. I also explored with the young people, how these stories both served and limited them, and in some cases began a process of re-storying/re-symbolizing aspects of their identities that they found problematic; finding movement out of fixed/limiting stories of self by creatively puncturing dualistic notions of self.

The purpose of these interweaving pedagogical aims of the research was to ‘make visible’ how identities were constructed in the ‘between-the-two’ narratives (Deleuze & Parnett, 2002, p.13) as both the young people and I moved through the text of the inquiry. In this way the constitutive process of identity construction can be seen as a ‘narrative performance’ (Reissman, 2008, p.102):

To emphasise the performative is not to suggest that identities are inauthentic...but only that identities are situated and accomplished with audience in mind. To put it simply, one can't be a ‘self’ by oneself; rather, identities are constructed in ‘shows’ that persuade. Performances are expressive, they are performances for others. Hence, the response of the audience is implicated in the art of storytelling. (ibid, p.106)

Performativity is the writing and rewriting of meaning that continually disrupts the authority of the text (ibid): In their creations, re-creations and audiencing of images, the students performed multiple narratives of self and in the process began to unsettle fixed limiting identity categories.

CONNECTION BETWEEN AGENCY AND DESIRE IN THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S TALK

The focus of this paper is on how the young people in the second school perceived what had happened in the workshops. In this context it is worth noting the connection between agency and desire in their talk. The dialogues and creative work produced in the workshops and one-to-one follow-up conversations, made visible their interpretations of themselves as people who can make choices and act upon those choices. Poststructuralist thinking, which provided the conceptual and methodological frame for this study, views these beliefs as based on a humanist definition of oneself as having desires or wants that stem from and signal who one really is (Davies, 1993). That those desires might be discursively constructed was difficult for many of the young people to incorporate into their interpretive frameworks. For Butler (2004) the desiring subject does not exist prior to its subjection to power. Processes of desire are implicated in the very formation of the subject:

Power that at first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self-identity (p.3).

When the students' awareness was raised about the hegemonic/cultural/institutional discourses/categories in which they were positioned i.e. male/female, heterosexual love, black/white, personhood etc., their positioning in a humanist discourse continued to jar with this newly acquired knowledge: "...this is what I want, it is who I am". This provided, as in my own journey, multiple asignifying ruptures in the telling of their stories, thereby constructing themselves as multi-voiced and contradictory.

PREPARATION AND RATIONALE FOR THE MOUNTING OF THE VISUAL ART

COLLECTION

At the end of the programme in the second school, the young people were invited to display their collective art pieces in a location of their choice, providing space for textual responses. They chose the floor of the room in which we worked to 'mount' their visual art exhibition, their rationale being that it was disrupting the notion of 'Exhibition as usual':

You expect to look horizontally at the wall when you go to an art gallery, it would be cool to surprise people, like, make them think (Finn).

Also, they saw it as being appropriate because it was less permanent this way, reflecting the temporary constellations of self/identity, dependent on audience:

'If we *fixed* [emphasised] the work on a display panel or wall we wouldn't be able to...erm... change it after that. You know like, I mightn't want *everybody* [emphasised] to see it this way. Like, I wouldn't want Mooney [name of teacher] to see that bit [pointing to a girl in bikini on the right corner of his collage]' (Eoghan)

Some of the group expressed slight ‘inhibition’ at the idea of displaying their work, believing that their teachers would recognise the creators. I suggested that they only include that which they felt comfortable including. At many times throughout the workshops we played with the meanings of words in an effort to make visible their discursive power. One of the girls (Susan) loved this exercise and so at the final stage in the group, was quite adept at deconstruction:

Susan: ‘Inhibit...emm...exhibit, in/exhibit.’

Grace: ‘Is there inhibition in every exhibition?’

Susan: ‘I think every artist is inhibited. I think we all are inhibited so do we need to exhibit that?’

To which Finn responded: ‘Wish I thought of that. Let’s call it Exhibition/Inhibition!’

The final title was agreed: Creative Identities Ex/In/hibition (Transition Year)

Finn: ‘That will be the first question from everybody, ‘wat’s dat?’”

The young people suggested many times during the workshops that the type of creative discursive space made available to them during this inquiry should be part of the Transition Year Curriculum. Hence, the school principal, three class tutors and the Transition Year co-ordinator were invited to the Ex/In/hibition because of their perceived power and influence on the Transition Year Programme. Below I present vignettes of dialogue that took place at the Ex/In/hibition. The voices of the young people and their teachers in this performance piece create tiny openings for new possibilities in terms of student/teacher subject positions and school discursive practices. In the flow of conversation at the showing of their work, the palimpsest of interlapping, often conflicting discourses between newly acquired and older ideas in the young people’s talk was visible. At times it seemed to me that they appropriated my voice, using similar terms and vocabulary. The new audience which brought with it the institutional gaze, may account for this – the belief that there was a ‘correct language’ to use in order to present the work properly.

This reminded me of the feeling of unease I had when I first read Davies’ *Shards of Glass* (1993), because of the persistent use of research terms that were being used in the conversation with very small children and their appropriation of these terms. However, being aware of the constitutive power of language to create new realities, meanings, identities, I sit with the discomfort and allow the conversation to flow; rupturing and connecting with other voices. Also noteworthy in the dialogue below is the way in which this new discursive context allowed for increasing contributions from the girls. The conditions of possibility were ripe for the performance of ‘good student’. The audience always shapes what can be said, and how.

Although the conversation between the teachers and students was recorded, I was aware that the noise level in the room would make the transcription process very difficult so I also jotted notes during and immediately after the exhibition, and later invited all participants who wished, to help with the editing process. Six students spent an hour working with me on the first draft a day later, and the final draft a week later, during double P.E classes. Changes were

made to some original utterances/words as a collective effort to ‘tidy up’ the final ‘presentation’, while retaining the rhizomatic flow of the conversations. The occasional bracketed comments on the right of the text document my own response to what is being said or serve to extend the story being told. The vignettes below are not a pure representation of an outside reality but a new construction, a performance that frames reality. The dialogue is a jointly constructed between-the-two activity which seems to me to achieve at least three things:

1. In the presentation of their work to an audience of school managers, we glimpse a situated, contingent and partial knowledge of the young people’s understanding/ experience of what happened during the research programme and conversations.
2. The dialogue provides another context for the discursive construction of identities; at times reconstituting ‘school as usual’ discourse and its subject positions of teacher/ student; at times puncturing this discourse and re-arranging power relations.
3. We see possible lines of flight out of limiting notions of pedagogical/curricular practice.

THE PERFORMANCE



Ex/In/hibition of creative artwork

After the initial greetings and chat, the teachers, led by the principal, begin to move around the display with an air of curiosity and awkwardness.

Introducing the Territory

Principal (male): How interesting...so this is what you have been doing all these weeks.

Finn: These are our drawings, Sir, collages and masks. We used art material to tell different stories of our lives.

Susan: The idea was to explore our identities. Identities change depending on the situation so we had a chance to create ourselves in different scenarios type thing.

Principal: I see. It makes a very colourful display. Yes, the masks are very interesting.

Mandy: They were fun to do coz you had the face there already.

Finn: But we all had different ideas about how the mask could be used to tell the story of the self and identity.

Principal: Oh, I see...because you all have different stories to tell about your lives.

Finn: Yes that and also we all have different ways of conceptualising the self. When we did the masks we were really conscious of how we understood identity... Like we just take our identities for granted and the workshops were about helping us to see what we take for granted and questioning it.

Making visible inherited discourse of self/identity



Inside of Mandy's Mask



Outside of Claire's Mask

Mandy: Like some of us coloured the outside and inside, the outside being what we show to the public and the inside the hidden side, like you can see here [picking up her own and Claire's masks]. And then some just coloured the outside, which emphasised the way they viewed the self, like, as not having a hidden side.

Principal: I suppose most of us think of ourselves as having an inner and outer self, no?

Susan: Yes we do think of ourselves like that and most of us did the masks like that, but there's other ways of looking at the self as well. That's a concept of the self that we just automatically have because it is the one that is in our culture and we just accept it as if it was real.

Finn: Like you could say it's just a way of talking about the self. Like what we say has an impact on who we are... Like if we say we have an inner self then we think maybe that is the true part of me, like my deep side. So then we might categorise people as deep and shallow and that kind of thing or real or false. Like it has an effect on how we behave. Like we end up categorising people as stupid and bright, all that kind of stuff.

[When I consider the length of time it took me to de/essentialise our inherited humanistic /psychodynamic discourse of self/identity and become aware of the power of this discourse in creating subject positions, I marvel when hearing Finn's response above.]

Pedagogical/curricular discourses under scrutiny

Principal: Very interesting. Maybe I should have come to a few of your classes. [He moves over towards John who, with Kenneth, has now joined the others around the display]

John: Well they weren't really like classes.

Mandy: They were workshops.

John: We drew ourselves and then we talked about the drawings and masks and stuff and then we had all kinds of conversations like about not being one of the crowd and being different and kind of having an ethnic background. [Interesting that he steers clear of masculinity]

Mandy: And gender, like what it's like to be a boy and girl, kind of youth culture.

Kenneth: It was completely different to regular class. Like we had a lot of time to think about things about our life. And if you didn't get it finished, you did it again the next week. No pressure like and you could just sit and listen to your iPod if you were finished before the others or you could move around and work on something else.

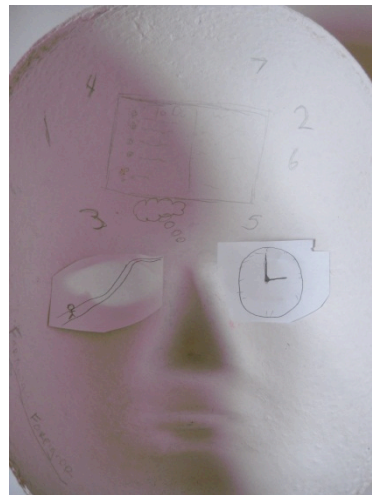
[Find myself blushing at this. Under the institutional gaze, it might it be seen as 'wasting time?']

Principal: So you found it relevant to your life. Sounds a bit like what you might do in Religion or SPHE class.

Kenneth: Yeah, a bit. But...kind of, no right or wrong. Like just drawing and talking.

John: Well, there was a smaller group and we had lots of time to do it like, we weren't rushed.

Principal: I see. [Picking up Susan's mask].



Front and back of mask

This one has an interesting back. Is that a clock?

Susan: I drew that to indicate the pressure I feel regarding time and all that needs to be done within such a short period, so it is something that is at the back of my head all the time. But it's also visible in front.

Principal: That makes sense, but I would have thought in Transition Year you wouldn't be feeling such pressure.

Susan: Well, we're coming to the end of Transition Year and Fifth Year isn't far off.

Y.Head (male): And it's back in the straitjacket again.

Susan: Yeah.

Finn: I'd say we have the straitjacket on already.

Knowledge of discursive construction of hegemonic masculinity

Y. Head: What were you saying Mandy about gender? The collages here are very definitely identifiable as male and female students' work. [He picks up Kenneth's collage].



Kenneth's Collage

Kenneth: It's just Formula One racing in the centre and other cars around. Like lots of the lads have football and cars as well. Yeah, they're fairly the same.

Conor: And music like Oasis and The Who. John put Owen Wilson (American Actor) there coz he thinks he looks like him.



John's Collage

Y.Head: What does it say there? [Reading the caption under the image of Owen Wilson] '... the nose of a man who's split a few pints.'

Tutor 1 (female): Mmm...not surprised. Lads your age.

Oisin: Well we looked at how we're kind of influenced by the type of guys that are in the media, like footballers, celebrities, singers and stuff. Like you get a lot of kudos from being like the macho guy...

[Masculinity as predatory was epitomised through the purchase of consumer goods (i.e. football boots and cars) and the consumption of media images.]

Tutor 1: Like it's fine to drink yourself senseless.

Finn: It's in the culture like, the story of being male, like all of this [Pointing to the collages]. If you go outside this there's consequences, like you get slagged, poof, all that stuff.

[The boys scrupulously monitored and policed their sexuality in terms of proscribing the limits of desirable, normative, heterosexual masculinities.]

Y. Head: Whose is this one? [Picking up Finn's collage]. It's a bit different.



Finn's Collage

Finn: I don't mind saying that's mine. I just wanted to be a bit artsy...let the imagination flow sort of thing. Kind of a circle in the middle and question mark underneath. Question everything but have a good time. Keep an open mind.

Y.Head: So did you get slagged?

Finn: Not this time.

Knowledge of discursive construction of hegemonic femininity

Tutor 2 (female): The girls' work is my type of thing. I love all that stuff [Looking at the collages].

Mandy: Yeah, most of us used images from girls' magazines to tell our stories.

Tutor 2: Is that what you were doing, telling your stories with the images?

Mandy: Yeah, like we really got into it. I loved doing the collages and we had great fun doing them together. Then after, Grace asked us what the images were saying and like where did we hear the story.

Mary: Like we realise that we hear the story all around us like from our friends and family and definitely the media. This one is mine and it shows how the story affects me - bombarded with images, putting me in a spin. Then we looked at how the story serves us and how it limits us and we wrote that down in our journals. It just makes you think.



Mary's Collage

Tutor 2: Do you have your journal? I would love to know how the story limits you?

Mary: That's private Miss. [Risking the disapproval of teacher and her positioning as 'good student'].

Tutor 2: Oh of course, I see. I didn't mean you in particular Mary. But...

Mandy: Well, it puts pressure on you to look like the others and if you don't sometimes, you feel excluded. It's fine until you do something different and then you realise that you kind of have to toe the line. Like girls will always look at how other girls look.

[While there was increasing awareness by the girls of their positioning in the male gaze -subjecting their bodies to rigorous surveillance and discipline in order to achieve correct female form (Davies, 1993) - this knowledge continued to jar with an essentialist notion of femininity]

Abject Categories

Mary: And also like if you think there is an ideal way to look, you might look down on people who don't look like that.

Susan: Then you've got the superior/inferior thing going. Like colonised minds always comparing everything. Like my collage was different, like all my stuff was different to the others but I am different, like that's just me. I'm not inferior or superior.

Tutor 2: And it changes, doesn't it? Like historically, people with a disability would be treated with scorn and now they can have a full life, with assistance.

Susan: Yeah, like time and place have a big affect on identities and different cultures and backgrounds. We looked at how we are living in an individualistic culture and how that has an effect on us, like how we think.

John: Like anything that is outside of what everybody else does is kind of pushed outside, like in our minds too.

Susan: And maybe disabled people are still looked at as inferior.

The Transformative power of Creative Dialogue

Tutor 3 (female Art teacher): Did you enjoy doing the creative artwork?

Claire: Yeah, like that was the best bit for me.

Tanya: Me too.

Claire: Like you draw yourself first and then you kind of start asking questions about what you drew. And if you go back to your drawing later you can see other things like that you didn't notice first or didn't talk about.

Tutor 3: That is what you might call creative process or art in the making.

Tanya: Yeah, it was like the end result wasn't important. It was about finding out about ourselves. Like sometimes someone else said something about your portrait and then you'd kind of think yeah that's kind of interesting and it would make you think of something else.

Tutor 3: You mean interpreting it.

Claire: ...Yeah, and sometimes like you can just pretend that the images are doing something, or you can change them. It's just kind of fun as well.

Tutor 3: And all this was about looking at your identity?

Claire: Yeah.

Tanya: Like everything we did was a portrait of us. So it was like talking with ourselves and then changing it if we wanted. Like who we are doesn't stay the same.

Claire: Or like sometimes you just spoke about the images differently and then you felt different.

Making visible difference and the desire to belong

Y.Head: You were saying about ethnic background.

John: Well, we spoke about a girl from Africa who didn't colour herself in brown. Like she didn't want to be different.

Kenneth: Like you couldn't believe that she was from Uganda because all her stuff looked like the other girls'.

Mary: We didn't know why she didn't colour herself brown but like the purpose of the discussion wasn't ...was to get us to think about being white.

John: Like Irish people are white mainly so you don't think about it until like you're with people who aren't white.

Mary: It's hard to hide your colour, like if you're...not white, so it makes you different straight away.

Kenneth: And like you just want to blend in, like especially at our age.

Mary: ...To belong.

John: Like you want to but sometimes you don't, and that goes for everybody not just coloured people.

Y.Head: Everybody wants to belong but we want to be individuals as well.

John: Yeah.

Mary: That's the tough bit.

Y.Head: Did you talk about how schools might foster a sense of belonging?

Chorus: Not really.

School Structures and Practices

Susan: We talked about like how the school has a certain way of operating that segregates people depending on like intelligence or even whether you're a boy or girl and stuff.

Finn: Like there's a big debate about whether there should be streaming or not.

Principal: If there wasn't streaming, you'd soon know about it.

Finn: Yeah, but like we really don't know much about intelligence. Like we stream people because we think they are this way or that way but maybe they just don't fit into the school system, like as it is now.

Principal: When you have a school to run and a Leaving Cert. to get through every year, you do what is the best for the students and their parents. Streaming is another issue. Do you think your parents would have appreciated if you were in with a mixed ability class Finn?

Finn: Yeah, it's tough running a school Sir. But something to consider all the same.

Susan: Like it was still good that the timetable could be changed to fit in this (the research programme).

Principal: There is some flexibility in Transition Year and it's good to make links with the college. The majority of you go to (naming the university).

Susan: [Persisting] I think it's good that we get to do this kind of stuff, like becoming aware how we are influenced by our families, school and kind of culture in general.

Finn: And a lot of it we take for granted, like it's invisible to us.

Principal: Well maybe we can make some links with the university and see what comes of it... What's over here?

And there...

And on...

LINES OF FLIGHT: RETHINKING EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Moving through the electronic folds of his book, *betwixt & between: The Liminal Imagination, Education and Democracy* (Conroy, 2004) and a co-written paper 'Transgression, Transformation and Enlightenment...' (Conroy & Davis, 2002), the figure of the age old 'Trickster' jumped out at me. This rupturing rhizomatic shoot provides a brief line of flight in re-thinking educational practice alongside the voices of the young people and their teachers in the previous performance – closing the paper with further openings and connections. Conroy refers to the Trickster as 'a liminal figure' which has been called on through the ages to 'combat hubris and recuperate that which is playful and surprising about our being' (2004, p.10). Inhabiting the borderlands 'between different worlds or different conceptions of the world...his function is to mock and challenge the 'forces of the status quo' (2002, p.256). In underscoring, as a metaphor, 'relativising, transformative and corrosive energies,' 'it might be argued that the Trickster is an ironic harbinger of the postmodern turn' (ibid, p.267).). As both a traditional figure and a quintessentially poststructuralist figure, s/he punctures the way we dualistically construct our world, occupying a liminal space between ancient/new, critical/creative, playful/serious, subversive/responsible, and on.

How my young participant researchers would have had a ball with this figure. How well it would have served us in terms of the primary aims of the programme – to make visible the taken-for-granted, dominant institutional/cultural stories that constitute us and how we

categorise ourselves and others based on the hidden assumptions in these storylines. We spoke quite often about the ‘messer’ in class and how ‘the conditions of possibility’ (Davies & Gannon, 2006) within the context of the classroom were never in question; how the ‘messer’ is essentialised and pathologised and positioned outside the fold. The ‘messer’ as Trickster would have politicised the position and metamorphosed him/her into an anarchic, subversive, deadly serious/responsible player. It would have invested the ‘messer’ position with a playful intelligence (unsettling the status quo) that a ‘Trickster teacher’ would welcome and nurture. In the classroom, the teacher as Trickster opens up new ways of seeing old problems:

The Trickster is a learning and teaching style...where every text is opened to the unsettling influences and counter-readings of pleasure, joy, sexuality, ethnicity, embodiment and laughter; where new readings and innovative methodologies are sought at the edges of texts, where readers connect with [the subject] in unexpected ways. (Conroy, 2002, p.269)

To conceive of this metaphor as redefining the pedagogical practices of the classroom is extremely exciting: opening up the discursive spaces of the curriculum ‘*to the energies of transformation, play, difference and paradox*’ (Conroy, 2002, p.260); to that for which I have been underscoring in my work with the young people in this study.

Finn: ... we really don’t know much about intelligence. Like we stream people because we think they are this way or that way but maybe they just don’t fit into the school system, like as it is now.

The Trickster figure is traditionally opposed to the assault on our modern imaginative lives of an over-dependence on an “arithmetic calculus as the primary mythic, and therefore heuristic, device of our culture” (Conroy, 2002, p.256). When we talk, often in a corporate way, about ‘re-culturing’ schools and the teaching profession and developing ‘moving’ and ‘learning enriched’ schools (Fullan, 2007, 4th Edition), we need to be making space for a political/creative pedagogy in the classroom and opening up complex social configurations through which energy flows (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Principal: When you have a school to run and a Leaving Cert. to get through every year, you do what is the best for the students and their parents. Streaming is another issue. Do you think your parents would have appreciated if you were in with a mixed ability class Finn?

The constriction in the voice of the principal is his positioning in a discourse that views the fundamental role of schooling as filling students with a knowledge that is necessary to compete nationally and internationally in today’s rapidly changing world (Apple, 2009, xi). However, in viewing this knowledge as neutral, the discourse misses the intricate link between knowledge and the operation of power. Questions of whose knowledge, who chooses, how this is justified – “these are constitutive issues, not ‘add-ons’” (ibid). Also, this discourse and most of our models of education tend to ratify social inequalities (Apple, 2001). Much of this has to do with the relations between schooling and the economy, with gender, class and race, intelligence, the politics of popular culture and so on. School space, as a result, is shaped

through commodified gendered, sexualised, class and ability norms and idealisations (discourses), which striate the space (Ringrose, 2010).

Susan: We talked about like how the school has a certain way of operating that segregates people depending on like intelligence or even whether you're a boy or girl and stuff.

An opening, in our schools/classrooms, to the 'other', the 'foreigner', the 'misfit' – marginalised voices within/out – seems to me to be predicated on the introduction of a pedagogy that invites student and teacher to critically scrutinise the givens of the subject, subjectivity, knowledge production and the operation of power. This need not be confined/compartmentalised into discrete subject areas like SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education), English, Religious Studies, CSPE (Civic, Social, and Political Education) but capillaried across the entire curriculum in terms of how and what is taught/learnt. Aronowitz and Giroux's idea of 'border pedagogy' in *Postmodern Education...*(1991) fits with what I'm saying:

Border pedagogy offers the opportunity for students to engage the multiple references that constitute different cultural code, experiences, and languages. This means educating students to read these codes, including the ones they use to construct their own narratives...(p.118-119)

AND SO...

*Towards Learning: An overview of Senior Cycle Education*³ is a work that presents an overview of senior cycle education in Ireland. The changes envisaged leave an opening for the critical self/reflexive work I have been espousing in this study. One of the key skills being promoted in this new vision, is precisely critical and creative thinking: "In engaging with this key skill, learners reflect critically on the forms of thinking and values that shape their own perceptions, opinions and knowledge" (p.21). A stated aim of assessment is "to ensure that, where possible, the examination/s in a subject area are a more valid reflection of the teaching and learning approaches recommended in the syllabus" (p.28). This is where the learning moves or stalls it seems to me and is predicated on how we answer the following questions: How are we going to credit critical, reflexive practice across all subjects? Are teachers sufficiently resourced and supported to embody and promote this form of teaching and learning? Are they attuned to recognising the power of discourse in constructing knowledge and in creating subject positions? Who is writing the syllabus and making the recommendations? Are we continuing to maintain, in our schools, the hegemonic voices of humanism/developmentalism (without making them visible), constructing as they do essentialist notions of identity and developmental stages, relegating to the margins all that does not fit in? Humanism is, after all, 'our mother tongue' (St. Pierre, 1997, p.406): '*a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity*' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004b, p.8). So

³ Mark See website www.ncca.ie for full text.

changes will be slow but must happen if we hope to promote an education that attempts to make visible the constitutive power of discourse in constructing us and our world.

In terms of the critical/creative skills envisaged and arising out of the partial, contingent insights of this inquiry, it is important that we build capacity in the teaching profession and work towards developing appropriate assessment instruments (across the curriculum) that can 'map' the multiple, open-ended, always connecting/rupturing narrative of any subject/ivity.

Still rummaging round in our school-bags... (John Moriarty, 2001, p.599)

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Chapter 3

Accessing the maths curriculum; applying psychological theory to help students with specific learning difficulties and with benefits for all.

Maeve Daly

It is important to take an ecological view of the problem of failure in mathematics, not only recognising the difficulties that are embedded at an individual level (cognitive and emotional factors), but also contextual factors (inappropriate instruction, the subject itself, curriculum and assessment) that impact on the problem. With the aim of promoting deeper conceptual understanding of mathematics, the contextual issues surrounding teaching approach in mathematics will be discussed. The extent to which appropriate instruction, which is grounded in developmental methods, alleviates difficulties at the individual level and the contextual level will be examined. This will be done through a discussion of the theory that has informed the practice of developmental methods and examples of this practice in the classroom will also be highlighted. The nature of specific learning difficulty (SLD) in the area of mathematics and of mathematics itself will be analysed first to determine why students underachieve in mathematics.

Failure in mathematics can be a consequence of dyscalculia but it can also happen as a consequence of other factors associated with the learning of mathematics. Dyscalculia is recognised as a deficit in number-sense with Butterworth (2003) describing it as a deficit in the most basic capacity for number upon which everything in number work seems to be built. SLD in mathematics, however, seems to account for children with dyscalculia but also for children with difficulties in mathematics for other reasons related to the demands of the subject and the teaching approach. Chinn (2008) notes that students may present with what looks like dyscalculia where they show symptoms (low motivation, anxiety towards mathematics, poor attitude) and claims that whilst this is not a direct result of dyscalculia, it arises as a consequence of mismatch between the learner and the instruction given. Westwood (2000) claims that maths difficulty is more of a reflection of the teaching approach used and the curriculum being taught, than the pre-disposition of the learner and this statement prioritises the need for better teaching approaches to mathematics. For students with SLD in the area of mathematics, there is speed of processing difficulties at a practical

level where time limits expect students with SLD to read and process questions rapidly where copying difficulties lead to chaos and untidiness on the page. There are difficulties with the language of mathematics which ‘is high in density and low in redundancy’ proving difficult for a poor reader who may normally rely on contextual cues for decoding language, (Coventry, Pringles, Rifkin & Weldon, 2001, p. 128). At a conceptual level, there are difficulties with working memory (WM) in manipulating and processing incoming material. Coventry et al (2001) describe WM as a large workbench where something can be done to manipulate the new information and to store it more meaningfully. Research shows that WM deficit is very characteristic of SLD where rote retention of arbitrary information is especially hard, (Chinn, 2008). This is why a shift away from rote learning towards discovery learning is crucial for success in the subject for students with SLD. Adopting a multi-sensory approach to learning is important and experiences of success at mathematics are crucial to address self-esteem as an inhibitor to mathematics performance. The important role of developmental methods, in addressing this aspect of intelligent learning in mathematics, will become clear.

Developmental methods appeal to the very nature of mathematics as mathematics is a subject that is cumulative in style. Mathematics has been described as a subject where one learns the parts, with the parts build on each other to make a whole and that, knowing the whole enables one to reflect with more understanding upon the parts (Chinn & Ashcroft, 1998). Mathematical thinking is akin to intelligent thinking in that it too evolves through a series of stages. Development of mathematics seems almost synonymous with the development of schemas and intelligent learning. The latter has been described as “the formation of conceptual structures communicated and manipulated by means of symbols” (Skemp, 1971, p.16). The content and structure of mathematics as a contributing factor to student’s difficulties cannot be ignored because it is a subject that makes demands on numerous abilities, for example, the ability to order and sequence information. It also demands exactitude and precision and is dependent upon arbitrary symbols. It requires effective storage, access, retrieval and a flexible working memory for information. It combines creativity with rigorous mental organisation and the ability to learn and apply rules, the ability to process high density and low redundancy text effectively and the ability to draw simultaneously upon a range of learning styles and preferences. Coventry et al (2001) state that these are not qualities that is typical of the SLD learner and must be explicitly taught. Langer (1957) recognised that mathematical data are arbitrary sounds or marks called symbols and that difficulty in symbol interpretation may be a major cause of failure at mathematics. In addition to this, mathematical lessons all too often involve learning series of facts in the absence of relational understanding which is merely rote learning of mathematics. Whilst the nature and demands of the subject cannot be eliminated, however, it is possible that adjustments in instructional approach go far in alleviating the difficulties associated with mathematics for learners with SLD. With this goal in mind, developmental methods, in place of rote learning, as an effective teaching approach for this purpose will be examined.

To teach conceptual understanding, the use of the concrete- representational- abstract sequence is an effective developmental method. This sequence for mathematical teaching is derived from developmental theories of cognition such as those proposed by Piaget and Bruner. Piaget makes two important claims about the sequence of stages in cognitive development; each stage derives from the previous stage, incorporate and transforms that stage and prepares for the next stage. That is, the previous stage paves the way for the new stage. Secondly, “the stages must follow an invariant sequence” (Miller, 2002, p.35). Since the first stage does not have all the building materials needed for the third stage, the second stage is required for learning to occur. Most importantly then, no stage in this learning sequence can be skipped when using developmental methods for teaching mathematics. Learners must progress through a series of stages beginning with the most concrete in order to lay the foundation for conceptual understanding. Where the foundation is not there, a gap in understanding arises and pupils miss a vital link. Over reliance on meaningless memorisation or rote-learning of rules is a consequence of missing links and lead to mathematical failure, particularly for pupils with SLD where impairment in working memory is a common problem (Chinn, 2008). According to Piaget’s theory, all children discover the world through the manipulation of objects. Children should discover information themselves and learn through experience by the construction of schematic models to form an internal representation of the world around them (Miller, 2002). Schema about events, objects and situations in the world are changing constantly as the child discovers new information. Children experience temporary disequilibrium when they encounter new properties of objects that do not fit into their present cognitive structures or set of schema. A process of assimilation (interpreting the new experience) - accommodation (reorganisation of thought) happens to restructure cognitive schema when new information is processed and the discrepancy between them is resolved to restore equilibrium. In learning mathematics, therefore, pupils must be allowed to play with objects to learn concepts at the concrete level. In teaching fractions, for example, the teacher introduces the topic by allowing students to manipulate fraction bars and card bars. At this concrete level, they should make their own bars, cut them into fractions and discover that 4 quarters makes a unit, 3 thirds makes a unit, 5 fifths makes a unit and so on. Once they physically compare their cut-out pieces, they should discover that 2 quarters makes a half, 2 sixths makes 1 third and so on (Kinsella, personal communication, February 2011). In the representational stage of the lesson, they should compile all their own newly discovered information into tables. Pupils then identify fractions that are bigger and smaller and discover that all fractions with the same top and bottom are equal to 1, while those in which the top number is smaller are less than 1 and those with the top number bigger are greater than 1. This leads onto identifying proper fractions, improper fractions and mixed fractions. In this approach the pupils have discovered many basic principles about fractions before any formal work begins and it is only once this is well consolidated, that work on operations such as addition and subtraction ensues. An example of a programme that has empirical support for increasing student achievement in mathematics following the concrete-symbolic-abstract learning sequence is ‘*The Strategic Math Series*’ by Mercer & Miller (as cited in Mercer & Miller,

1997, pp. 103- 110). Researchers found use of this sequence, in combination with systematic and explicit instruction, the provision of feedback to pupils in addition to teaching mnemonic strategies and fluency practice, resulted in achievement in mathematics for their sample of over three hundred students, (Mercer & Miller, 1997). The sequence of learning involves solving problems through the manipulation of concrete devices only. It is only once the pupil understands the maths skills at this level that representational instruction may begin. At this level, the concrete materials are replaced by pictures and tallies that represent these objects. As before, only once the student understands the skill at the representational level, may abstract level instruction begin where problems are now solved using only number symbols. Memorisation and fluency building only enters instruction at the level of abstraction. Hutchinson (as cited in Mercer & Miller, 1997, p.102) promotes teaching students specific strategies to help in problem solving. Mnemonic devices help students with memory deficits in remembering the steps to take and promote independent problem solving. For example, the RIDD strategy, Read, Imagine, Decide and Do. Many similar strategies fit in well into a learning sequence based on developmental methods, particularly at the abstract level.

Similarly, Bruner's theory states that children's learning is an active process and they construct knowledge actively through the linking of new information to previously acquired information. An internal representation of the world that makes sense to the child is built up through the representation of an event, object or situation in three forms through three media, that of action (the enactive mode), through imagery (the iconic mode) and through language (the symbolic mode). Bruner claims that intellectual development occurs through these modes and in this order whilst each mode has a set of skills that depends on the accomplishment of skills from the previous mode (Bruner, 1966). In the enactive mode the child learns the how to do something, learning procedural knowledge while in the symbolic mode the child learns declarative knowledge where they can manipulate symbols without concrete props. This can't come about, however, without passing through the middle stage of learning which is the iconic mode where a child gets used to using sets of images that stand for a concept. Imagine then a classroom where mathematics is taught purely through language in the symbolic mode, the mode which the teacher is most likely to have representations of the concept. A clear mismatch between the teacher's mode of representation and the pupil's mode ensues and so the child does not develop conceptual understanding but rather learns off a collection of unintelligible rules (Skemp, 1971). Knowledge over procedure is important to emphasise with the aim of building conceptual understanding in mathematics. The outcome of learning based on 'relational mathematics' versus someone who has an 'instrumental' understanding of a concept is illustrated through an analogy of a cognitive map of a town (Skemp as cited in Frederickson, Miller & Cline, 2008). In this analogy, instrumental understanding shows how pupils can find their way only from fixed points with a very limited range of application and this corresponds to the outcome of rote learning in mathematics. Again, Skemp (1989) shows concern over the mismatch between teacher's style of teaching and the content of modern mathematics

curricula where he states that there is evidence to suggest that strands of material that is relational in nature is actually being taught in an instrumental way. A music lesson is described to illustrate this and this analogy serves to illustrate the point that despite recent moves in curricula towards discovery learning, mathematics still has the potential to be taught in an instrumental way leaving it boring, heavy on memory work and rote learning. With Bruner's theory informing developmental methods, however, it is the responsibility of the teacher to create opportunities for children to experience concepts through action, image and language followed by enabling pupils to link up existing representations through new insights in each mode. To succeed with this, teachers must follow the developmental stages in teaching mathematics, starting with manipulating concrete examples (enactive). For example, concepts of factors, divisors, multiples and prime numbers should be introduced by making square and triangular numbers from coins or counters (Connolly, personal communication, March 2005). These patterns should be recorded in picture form, word form and symbol form. This activity is followed up with tabulating newly discovered information (iconic) such as colouring in every third, sixth, ninth square in a 100 square (Connolly, personal communication, April 2005). Finally material from the first two modes should be used to scaffold work in the symbolic mode using laminated tables of factors and multiples to support calculations until the pupils can do without them. Eventually as automaticity develops in the abstract level of learning topics, scaffolds can gradually be removed. The idea of scaffolding is for the teacher to take control only when needed and to hand over the responsibility to the students whenever they are ready. Drawing from developmental methods to inform practice, the teacher takes the children through the full journey from enactive to iconic to symbolic modes of representing concepts from topics in mathematics (Bruner, 1964). Most crucially, each stage is linked to coincide with linking internal representations and no stage is skipped.

Successful use of developmental methods and the concrete-symbolic-abstract sequence is dependent on the identification of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and on the notion of optimal discrepancy from Piagetian theory. The ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The ZPD therefore denotes the space between actual knowledge and potential knowledge. The first step in using a concrete-symbolic-abstract sequence is establishing where child is at in relation to mathematical thinking. This allows informed teaching and is a crucial ingredient in pitching material at the right level. Monitoring progress and providing feedback, which becomes an integral part of every lesson in the use of developmental methods, helps to establish a pupil's ZPD. Miller and Mercer (1997) recommend the use of informal assessment procedures to verify student understanding of content and grouped learning embedded in developmental methods can help this. In addition to qualitative assessments, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests can also be used. When pupils are set to work in groups to help each other, learning is facilitated for students with SLD. What children can do with the assistance of

others is “even more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85). Also, two distinct learning styles recognised in the current literature and this has implications for teachers in their approach. Bath, Chinn, and Knox (1986) identified two styles, the inchworm approach (looks for relevant formulae and works in serially ordered steps but is unlikely to check and evaluate answers) and the grasshopper approach (who has flexible methods and a holistic approach but rarely documents methods). A mismatch in teacher and pupil’s cognitive style contributes to pupil’s underachievement in mathematics. Group learning may be an opportunity for learners to influence one another and become flexible in the use of both styles. Krutetskii (as cited in Bath et al, 1986) favours use of both styles in becoming a good mathematician. There are two key elements at the first stage of learning, the experience is child-centred where the child is making their own discoveries and optimal discrepancy between old information and new information is also crucial. The notion of optimal discrepancy should address maths anxiety as an inhibitor to learning and also arouse motivation for learning in the student. If the discrepancy between old information and new information is too small, there will be no intrinsic motivation for the child to become interested and no learning will take place. The teacher must organise learning appropriately to achieve optimal discrepancy. Sousa (2008) emphasises the importance of meaningful learning and how teachers must become the link between mechanical calculations and the meaning behind them. On the other hand if the discrepancy is too large, it may invoke a state of anxiety in the child, thus creating a barrier to learning. Skemp (1986) noted that the reflective activity of intelligence is inhibited by anxiety. Teachers strive to create new learning for pupils which in the context of developmental psychology means throwing a child’s existing schema into a state of disequilibrium thus creating a feeling of dissatisfaction with current information so that they will learn. The challenge for an effective facilitator lies in creating a dilemma for pupils from problems that are structured to provide insights into different mathematical concepts. The teacher must ensure not to be presenting information that is neither too easy nor hard because in either case learning will not occur. The teacher plays a crucial role in organising the learning environment to facilitate pupils in forming their own internal models of mathematical concepts they meet. It is unlikely that standard textbooks are still useful in lessons with this approach as problems that are presented at optimally discrepant levels are the key to learning. Through the use of developmental methods the teacher is enabling the child to learn with their own intelligence. This marks a complete shift away for traditional transmission models of learning towards a student-centred developmental approach of learning.

The application of theories of developmental psychology to the mathematics classroom means teachers work to elaborate pupil’s schemata for mathematical concepts and to link up the enactive, iconic and symbolic representations pupils hold about the world to link into meaningful chunks for pupils. Upon examination of the theory that informs developmental methods, development of conceptual understanding is the hallmark of intelligent learning and can only be achieved once certain conditions are met in the classroom. Identifying the

ZPD in pupils, optimal discrepancy of information, scaffolding pupil's learning, setting up group learning to create a child-centred classroom, addressing the teacher's role as facilitator and following a concrete- symbolic- abstract sequence are all crucial elements in the use of developmental methods. Through these methods, a complete shift from rote-learning to a student-centred environment that promotes intelligent learning can be achieved. In this way, barriers to the learning of mathematics such as pacing of the curriculum, lack of differentiation, mismatch between teacher's style of instruction and a learner's cognitive style, underdevelopment of automaticity, badly designed tasks, introduction of material that is outside the student's range, reading difficulties, beginning of formal work too early in classrooms, can all be alleviated to some extent for students with SLD in the area of mathematics. Developmental methods, as outlined above, go a long way towards meeting the diverse and often competing needs of learners with SLD in the mathematics classroom. It is fair to conclude that developmental methods play a pivotal role in the quest to replace rote-learning of mathematics with intelligent learning for learners of all ages in mathematics.

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Chapter 4

Cultivating Transformations through Learning Experiences: Priorities in Continuing Professional Development

Pádraig Hogan & Anthony Malone

In this contribution we would like review developments in the TL21 professional development programme for teachers in the last few years. Learning Anew, the final report on the TL21 project, was published in January 2008. The last chapter contained not a set of recommendations but a collection of “ideas worth considering” by all of the main parties in Irish post-primary education: teachers, school leaders, students, managerial bodies, schools inspectors, policymakers. These ideas, seven in total, were based on priorities for teachers’ CPD that came to define the project’s work during its active phase. Some of these were envisaged from the start in the project’s main aims. Others emerged during the course of the project’s intensive research phase (2003-07). All of them however became central concerns in the project’s developmental initiatives, and in the ongoing TL21 Professional Development Programme that was inaugurated following the completion of the intensive research phase. The seven priorities are:

1. Teachers as the authors of their own work
2. Students as active learners
3. Teachers as a strategic national resource
4. School leadership and the demands of administration
5. Providing for different categories of need in continuing professional development
6. CPD as integral as distinct from an ‘add-on’
7. Accreditation for CPD

The TL21 Programme is currently working in partnership with five Education Centres – Co. Wexford, Kilkenny, Laois, Monaghan, Sligo – and with Dublin & Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board. This involves a total of 35 post-primary schools. In each of these regions teachers from participating schools in the region attend CPD workshops on five or so occasions per year over a two-year period. Accreditation is provided for all the teachers by the Education Centre or ETB. In addition there is an optional university accreditation path provided by NUI Maynooth leading to an M.Ed. in Innovative Learning. All of the participating teachers carry out some action research exercises on their own practice but those

following the university accreditation path undertake more intensive action research for their assignments and theses.

Here we will select each of the seven priorities in turn, comment on how it is faring in the programme's work and identify some issues that we continue to grapple with in our efforts to make headway.

TEACHERS AS THE AUTHORS OF THEIR OWN WORK

After an initially unpromising start, in the wake of an acrimonious industrial dispute, the early experience of the project in 2003 disclosed a more encouraging vista. This early insight was that once initially successful inroads are made on the insulation and isolation of teachers in Irish post-primary schools, some exciting if also challenging possibilities open up. Inherited attitudes that cast teachers in a conformist role are often sustained by teachers themselves, and are reproduced by practices that are deeply lodged in school cultures. We felt that tackling such attitudes head-on would in all likelihood lead to defensiveness and conflict. Workshops that take teachers out of their schools however proved from the beginning to be particularly helpful here. They provided the teachers with a hospitable climate to discuss issues in their pedagogical practice with previously unknown colleagues on a recurrent basis.

Such workshops are now a mainstay of the TL21 programme and they are organised and monitored as a developmental series in each centre by a co-ordinator who works closely with the Centre Director. As these workshops proceed bigger issues can enter the discussions and most participants reveal substantial advances in their capability to deal with them. Such enhanced capability can be exercised back in the teachers' own schools in at least two crucial ways. Firstly, within their own classrooms, perhaps initially with certain selected classes, teachers begin to introduce innovations that promote more active involvement by the students in learning. The effects of these innovations are monitored so that the teacher can give a telling account (to himself/herself and to colleagues) of what has worked, what hasn't, and why. Secondly, teachers can also exercise their enhanced capability by endeavouring to strengthen subject teams or departments, and by contributing to such meetings in ways that they wouldn't have ventured to do previously. It is particularly important that the school leadership overtly promotes action on both these fronts. In addition to the encouragement such support gives to teachers, it also sends messages to the school as a whole that words alone couldn't do.

There is also a more advanced sense in which teachers can become the authors of their own work. This is when the focus is placed more on whole-school issues than on the work of an individual teacher or subject team. Our experience with the schools shows that it takes longer to cultivate this more advanced capability. It also reveals that this cultivation calls for nothing so much as an intensifying and broadening of the kinds of co-operative practices that are

important to get underway from the start. Increasingly however, the location for cultivating this more advanced capability becomes not just the workshop, but also the school. Significant here are informal and more structured exchanges between teachers, whether through critical-friendly deliberations in schools or in local professional development networks. This work of cultivation professional learning communities in an unforced way, whether in-house or at-a-distance, enhances the kinds of capacities that are needed among teachers if policy initiatives like School Self-Evaluation are to become embedded in professional practice and prove really fruitful (DuFour 2004; Hord 2009).

STUDENTS AS ACTIVE LEARNERS

The range of pedagogical approaches introduced in the workshops in the TL21 programme – many from the assessment for learning family – have shown themselves to be productive in tackling boredom and low motivation among students. Yearly evaluations by the participating teachers show that encouraging advances are made not only in students’ achievements in learning but also in students’ attitudes towards learning and in their actual practices of learning. In making these evaluations more searching we have adapted Thomas Guskey’s five-level evaluation strategy (Guskey 2002) to try to capture the quality of learning, not just the effectiveness of teaching. In their evaluations teachers characteristically acknowledge that they have been agreeably surprised by students’ willingness to share more of the burden of work in the classroom, and to follow through with more sustained efforts in their homework. This kind of surprise marks a welcome shift of perspective on the part of teachers themselves ; a change of mindset – even a change of heart – that enables them to perceive things that they previously disregarded or overlooked. In short, it enables them to learn in new ways with their students.

A more active involvement by students in their own learning over a sustained period invariably leads to higher achievements in tests and examinations, and particularly so among students described as less academic. The point we wish to stress here is that such higher achievement is the natural product of something intrinsic, namely a higher quality of educational experience on the part of the students. Recent examples from the participating schools include: (a) how the judicious use of iPads transformed the learning environments in 1st year maths classes in a DEIS school, with regular discovery by the students themselves of apps with ingenious pedagogical potential; (b) how the use of a Problem-Based-Learning approach in science proved initially counter-productive but then yielded great advances in motivation and achievement among (c) how the sustained use of a comment-only marking system in English enhanced students’ engagement with texts and deepened their interest in a sustained way. As these examples show, this higher quality of learning experience should not be confused with the increases in marks and grades that are driven chiefly by extrinsic factors, such as pressures to compete for higher positions on league tables, including unofficial or unacknowledged league tables.

In some instances changes in the quality of students' learning have occurred in Leaving Certificate classes, as have increases in their examination achievements. This suggests that despite the pressures for conformity to older ways that spring from a centralised examination system, there are still opportunities for teachers to practice creative forms of learning, at least in some subjects, with their Leaving Certificate students. Notwithstanding this, many teachers remain reluctant to introduce innovations with examination classes. This is because of a strong belief that the examinations, and the points system for entry to higher education based on the Leaving Certificate, chiefly reward qualities like accurate recall and comprehension. While the points system is likely to remain with us for some time, efforts to reform the Certificate Examinations will continue, notwithstanding the recent rejection of the new Junior Cycle Framework by the post-primary teachers' unions. Feedback we continue to receive through the teachers' evaluations and comments, as well as the evidence from action research projects, gives us good reason to believe that if the Certificate Examinations were clearly seen to reward a wider range of accomplishments on the part of students, including those that flow from active learning approaches, the effects of the points system on schools would be far less constricting. In such circumstances, teachers generally would be much more likely to pursue active learning approaches with Leaving Certificate students.

TEACHERS AS A STRATEGIC NATIONAL RESOURCE

We continue to observe that the possibilities for enriching each student's personal development and for advancing a healthy community of learners are greatly enhanced where classrooms become environments of imaginative teaching and active participation by students. We also see that such gains move to a higher level and become more widely influential where collaboration between colleagues is successfully cultivated by school leaders. Such productive possibilities and gains are essentially concerned with the intrinsic benefits of education. Where they are fruitfully and widely pursued however, there are very considerable social, cultural and economic consequences; what we might call extrinsic benefits. To put it concisely, imaginative learning environments in schools and colleges are the nurseries for imaginative cultures of innovation in all walks of life and work.

An incisive grasp of this point is of first importance for post-industrial societies (i.e. societies where 'brawn-power' work, and even automated manufacture, is irreversibly declining in proportion to 'brain-power' work). Hence the appropriateness of viewing teachers as a resource of comparable significance for a 'knowledge society' to what reserves of mineral wealth were for an industrial society. We are touching here on an aspect of our work with teachers that we did not have in mind at the beginning of the TL21 project. In arguing now that teachers need to be seen as a strategic national resource however, we are keen to stress that we are not talking about entrepreneurship in education. Entrepreneurship is a concept whose proper home is the field of economics and business. Public education in a pluralist democracy is a practice in its own right. It has much to contribute to the fruitful and ethical

conduct of practices of business and economics, just as it has to cultural and social renewal and to personal development. But it is likely to lose its own soul whenever it succumbs to the demands of the currently stronger party; if it trades its former ecclesiastical masters for a more secular and mercenary set of masters.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND THE DEMANDS OF ADMINISTRATION

Unlike some earlier research and development projects with teachers in which the Maynooth Education Department was involved, a school leadership dimension has been central to the TL21 initiative from the beginning. In the early days of the project some school leaders who became involved were so busy with administrative work that they delegated to a post-holder the conduct of the school's participation in the project. This gave rise to anomalies, mainly because the project itself was in a key sense about leadership. Principals and Deputy Principals quickly saw that the centrality of leadership in this kind of project meant making important adjustments in their own working patterns; the kinds of adjustments that would allow their own and their schools' participation in the project to be whole-hearted. In all cases this was difficult to do, and in some cases very difficult, due not only to the quantity of demands, but also to the competing demands of school administration and educational leadership. It meant that some schools had to leave the project. More recently it has meant that some schools have been a bit reticent about joining the TL21 programme.

Legislation of recent years in Ireland has placed an unprecedented range of responsibilities on the school Principal, many of which are only secondarily connected with the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The international research literature on educational leadership, by contrast, emphasises repeatedly that building and sustaining high quality learning environments is the proper work of school leaders and that time spent on other actions should be continually reviewed in terms of the loss of time to their primary task (Lieberman & Miller 2004; Hargreaves & Fink 2006; Duignan 2007; Townsend & MacBeath 2011).

Leaders of schools participating in the TL21 programme continue to work with commendable perseverance against the administration tide. Despite losing many posts of responsibility they have used much ingenuity in finding time and opportunities to promote meaningful professional development activities in the school. This has frequently meant availing of Croke Park hours to enable themselves and their teachers to continue their participation in undertakings like the TL21 programme. The efforts involved in this are sometimes all-consuming however, and notwithstanding their fruits they can scarcely be recommended as good practice in any occupation.

In short, the job of school leaders, and specifically of Principals, has become difficult to the point of crisis in Irish post-primary schools; the essential crisis being the daily press of

administration that prevents or frustrates the exercise of specifically educational leadership. If educational leadership is to succeed as it should – and we have seen how well it can – then the bulk of this administration needs be undertaken by someone else, with the specific and necessary expertise. School leaders need the necessary time, support and opportunity to lead high-quality learning environments. We will return to this issue in our concluding remarks below.

DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF NEED IN CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Where CPD is concerned there is now a much greater awareness than a decade ago in educational circles of the need to distinguish between the needs of the system, the needs of the school and the needs of individual teachers. The drawing of such distinctions helps to clarify thinking in the designing coherent CPD policies. Reference to three different categories doesn't mean however that these are three insular domains, with no overlaps between them. Our experience with both the TL21 project and the TL21 programme suggests that it is more appropriate to speak here of a contrast of emphasis as distinct from separate domains. At first sight the CPD priorities of individual teachers might look very different from those envisaged for the educational system as a whole by the DES. Viewing each school as a professional learning community however provides a perspective where different sets of priorities can be viewed in their interaction with each other, while also acknowledging the features that are peculiar to each set.

Since the publication of *Learning Anew* there have been many developments in the field of teachers' CPD in Ireland, two of which are of particular significance. The first is the publication by the Teaching Council of its Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education in 2011. The second is the reconstitution of the Professional Development for Teachers (PDST) in 2012-13, to incorporate a number of former support agencies (incl. PPDS, SLSS, LDS), under a single umbrella organisation. A third development – in fact a two-fold one – is the reconceptualisation and expansion of initial teacher education programmes and the expansion of the national programme for the induction of teachers through the Teaching Council's Droichead initiative. Though neither of these is directly focused on CPD, each has major implications for how experienced teachers and beginning teachers engage with each other. Taken together, all of these developments are placing CPD for teachers in a new context, one which is as challenging as it is promising.

In an era where major importance is being given moreover to research-informed teacher education (European Commission 2012), developments like these are to be welcomed as ones that enable the energies of educational practitioners in a range of agencies to become more confluent and more productive. Regular contact with the national educational agencies –

support, managerial, regulatory and policy-making agencies, as well as teacher unions – has been a feature of the TL21 initiative since its planning stages over a decade ago. Such contacts continue to inform our work on the TL21 programme at present and in the emergent context we look forward to pursuing them in a new key in the period ahead.

CPD AS INTEGRAL AS DISTINCT FROM AN ‘ADD-ON’

During the early days of the TL21 project it was a common experience for us to hear teachers, and indeed some school principals, describe CPD as an “add-on” to an already very busy schedule of work. Work schedules have become even busier in the intervening decade, but few among Ireland’s educational practitioners are now likely to disagree with the description of CPD as “a right and a responsibility” in the Teaching Council’s Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education (p.19). Participants in the TL21 programme are prepared to come to workshops, for two to three hours outside of school time for a two-year period, for concentrated forms of CPD. Few if any of these teachers regard these workshops as an “add-on”, despite the fact that they are not included within their normal scheduled time in school. It is clear however that there isn’t enough time available in school schedules to accommodate the kinds of CPD necessary to sustain schools as professional learning communities. School leaders have been struggling to find ways in which forced measures such as the “Croke Park hours” can be turned to some productive CPD purposes and in some cases their ingenuity has paid rich dividends. In many schools however such ingenious efforts have become stillborn.

Where there is wide agreement in principle that CPD is an integral feature of a teacher’s practice and professional identity, this has important practical consequences, though it is likely to take some outside-the-box thinking for these to be worked out. Chief among these consequences is the necessity for a negotiated settlement that would enable provision for formal CPD to be accommodated at regular intervals in each school’s annual calendar. This has become standard practice in many countries, some of the more interesting ones being countries comparable to Ireland in population and resources. Many maintain that such a provision would mean a lengthening of the school year by some five or so days. Others argue that such days might be designated within the existing totals for the school year. Others still suggest some combination of both. For our own part we will confine ourselves to two comments on this issue. Firstly, it is important that a solution is found by negotiated agreement, as was the case in Scotland in the McCrone settlement of 2001. Where practitioners are coerced into accepting an “agreement” such as the Croke Park hours in much of the good that the extra time could bring risks being frustrated, sometimes even undermined for years. Secondly, the new context for CPD in Ireland referred to in paragraph 5 above provides fresh opportunities for learning from how other countries have resolved . For instance the paths leading to the McCrone settlement in Scotland would repay careful study. Even more interesting are the possibilities that lie in Finland’s “less in more” philosophy (Sahlberg 2011, p.41ff). It is well known that Finland’s school system enjoys an enviable

reputation internationally. Less well known is the fact that class contact time in its schools is amongst the lowest in OECD countries (ibid., p.64).

ACCREDITATION FOR CPD

We have referred in our introductory remarks to two forms of accreditation in the TL21 programme: a university route leading to an M.Ed. degree and a non-university route where itemised accreditation is provided by the Education Centres or ETB. While the university accreditation remains of central importance the fact also remains that it involves participants in scholarly disciplines that include serious and sustained reading, and the production of significant quantities of writing. This means that it is taken up by a minority rather than a majority of the participants – up to 20%, but rarely more than that. Our experience with the accreditation aspect of the programme continues to highlight the desirability of non-university as well as university forms of accreditation for CPD activities.

The Teaching Council's Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education makes reference to teachers inaugurating a professional development portfolio during their initial teacher education and building upon this as they progress through their careers (p.11). Such a policy can work as a welcome support for a teacher's enduring commitment to CPD as a form of professional growth. In this connection non-university accreditation provided in electronic form by Education Centres, ETBs and other agencies could be a key way of developing one's CPD portfolio incrementally, allowing for more advanced as well as more rudimentary kinds of development. From another perspective however, the maintenance of such a portfolio could be seen as a bureaucratic requirement, enforced by a powerful body, for the renewal of one's licence to practice as a teacher. Were the portfolio idea to be implemented in today's circumstances it is likely that the latter perspective would be more prominent among teachers than the former. This indicates that there is much work for initiative like the TL21 programme to accomplish. We are happy to expand our involvement in this kind of work. It is clear that the work itself, and its expansion, are a necessity if Ireland's teachers are in an unambiguous sense if the TL 21 aims are to be achieved nationally: that the majority of Ireland's teachers become the authors of their own work and that the majority of students in our schools and college become truly active and responsible participants in their own education.

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Chapter 6

Tapestry

Gary Granville

This paper considers some research dimensions of the Dublin 1913 Lockout Tapestry Project¹. This participatory, community-based art project was conceived as an art-based commemorative process, with permanent and tangible outcome, to mark a significant but historically eclipsed social upheaval in Dublin in 1913. The research dimensions include political, social, gender and educational issues as experienced through and shaped by collective engagement in an art project that extended over a three year period. In particular, the main issue considered in this paper is the relationship between the materiality of textile work and the nature of the personal reflection and social engagement of the participants.

CONTEXT: THE ‘DECADE OF CENTENARIES’

In Ireland, the decade from 2012 to 2022 is already being referred to as the ‘decade of centenaries’. Historically, the years 1912 to 1922 were definitive years for the subsequent history of Ireland, north and south. Indeed, it could be said that we have been reliving those years repeatedly through the subsequent short 20th century.

The landmark events of those years are bound up with world history – notably the trauma of the Great War 1914-18 – and especially the localised history of pent-up national conflicts on the island. The Easter Rising of 1916 remains the seminal event of contemporary Irish history, begetting the war of independence (1919-21) and leading to the establishment of the Irish Free State (1922) and subsequently the Republic of Ireland. The nationalist narrative of liberation however tends to marginalise the counter-history of Northern Ireland (also established in 1922) and the protestant unionist tradition, as well as the bitter civil war of 1921-23): what the poet W.B. Yeats referred to as ‘great hatred, little room’. The dominant nationalist rhetoric, reflected in the political and educational orthodoxies of a conservative Irish state, had the effect of erasing the immediate pre-history of 1916: thus the Irish participation of over 200,000 soldiers in the British Army, with the loss of nearly 50,000 lives in battle received little recognition in formal education or in state recognition through the twentieth century. Similarly, the labour dispute of Dublin in 1913 was effectively ignored in

¹ For an overview of the 1913 Lockout in Dublin, see Granville (2013). A description of the 1913 tapestry project is provided in *The Making of the Great 1913 Lockout Tapestry* edited by Yeates (2013).

Irish political life. The Lockout Tapestry was then as much a work of historical reclamation as an act of art production.

Landmark events frequently eclipse and obscure the hidden histories and forgotten features of the lives lived by the powerless. In that context, the Dublin Lock-out of 1913 was for many years a forgotten and frequently deliberately ignored event. A classic dispute between capital and labour, the lock-out involved over 20,000 workers and their families in Dublin in a prolonged eight month dispute essentially premised on the right to join a trade union of their choice (Granville 2013). Dublin was a divided city at the time, with a relatively prosperous middle class contrasted with a large working class population living in some of the poorest conditions found anywhere in Europe at the time. Overcrowded tenements, poor or non-existent sanitary facilities, low pay and limited employment were endemic. The Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) was founded and led by Jim Larkin, a dynamic, radical and charismatic personality in the broadly syndicalist vein of labour activism. The most prominent businessman in Dublin at the time was William Martin Murphy, who owned many companies including the Dublin tramways as well as media and hotel interests. Murphy was trenchantly opposed to Larkin's tactics and issued an ultimatum to his workers that they either sign a pledge not to join his union or else forfeit their jobs. He secured the support of a federation of employers in the city for his action. The outcome was an extended Lockout of workers from August through the bitter winter of 1913, which induced major hardship for starving families. The violent intervention of police to arrest Larkin at a public meeting resulted in bloodshed and death on the main streets of Dublin. Food kitchens, with food shipped from England by other unions, kept death by starvation barely at bay, but ultimately, Larkin and the workers conceded defeat by late January 1914.

Yet the trauma of the city in those months from August 1913 to February 1914, has been more or less elided from the conventional narratives of twentieth century Irish history until quite recently. Thus, for example, a standard history of Ireland used in colleges and school in Ireland up to the 1970s made only the following inaccurate and dismissive reference to the event:

The condition of the poor, and the low wages paid in the Irish capital, shocked all fair minded men, but a General strike organised in 1912 (sic) by James Larkin had been defeated by the employers...'. (Curtis, 1966, p. 405)

The inadvertent placing of the 'strike' (not 'lockout', the use of term being significant in itself) in 1912 was telling: the year '1913' had no resonance for the general reader in Ireland, in the sense that 1847 evoked the image of the 'Great Famine' or 1916 that of the 'Easter Rising'. The fact that it would be inconceivable for such an error today to escape the attention of an editor or a proof-reader, or indeed a general readership, is itself a small testament to the recent sea-change in awareness of the Lockout and the significance of the year 1913 in Irish history.

DUBLIN 1913: HISTORY AND IMAGINATION

The initial idea for the 1913 Tapestry Project came from a couple of retired trade union officials and labour activists, an idea formally adopted by SIPTU the largest trade union in Ireland. As that union is the direct descendent of the ITGWU founded by Larkin whose members were locked out by employers in 1913, it was seen to be a natural and appropriate form of centenary celebration. The approach to and involvement of NCAD brought another dimension to the project. SIPTU sought the technical support in textiles assumed to reside within the college; from the NCAD perspective, the project opened up other possibilities in terms of engagement and education, features which were already implicit in the SIPTU thinking.

Ricouer (1996) talks of three ways of engaging with the past: re-examining our own narratives; hearing and engaging with the narratives of others; and, significantly and provocatively, forgiveness. He comments –

... the past is not only what is bygone – that which has taken place and can no longer be changed – it also lives in the memory thanks to arrows of futurity which have not been fired or whose trajectory has been interrupted. The unfulfilled future of the past forms perhaps the richest part of a tradition. The liberation of this unfulfilled future of the past is the major benefit that we can expect from the crossing of memories and the exchange of narratives (p. 8).

This sense of re-engaging with the past underpinned the rationale for the Tapestry Project. It was envisaged that the project would provide an opportunity for participants, in the first instance, and for various audience during and after the process of construction, to engage with the experience of Dublin 1913 (for the first time in many cases), to reflect on that experience and to apply its meaning and relevance to contemporary Dublin and Ireland.

Thus from the outset there was an implicit, if not explicit, educational orientation in the project. The criteria or principles that Stephen Brookfield (1986) applied to transformative education resonate with the experience of the Tapestry Project. Brookfield (1986) proposed six principles of effective practice in facilitating adult learning:

Participation in learning is voluntary; Effective practice is characterised by a respect among participants for each other's self-worth; Facilitation is collaborative; Praxis is placed at the heart of effective facilitation; Facilitation aims to foster in adults a spirit of critical reflection; The aim of facilitation is the nurturing of self-directed, empowered adults.

The tapestry project manifested all these principles to one extent or another. Community collectives, specialist textile workers, unskilled community groups, school children, prisoners, adult education groups, drug rehabilitation groups and many other diverse groups and individuals were all engaged on a voluntary basis. The range and diversity of participants involved in the project along with the coherence provided by the process of direct 'hands-on'

engagement with material within the social, political and historical frame of the 1913 centenary, was a 'perfect storm' of educational opportunity.

NCAD has adopted the concept of 'expanded academy' as an underpinning strategic principle: this enshrines the recognition of learning that takes place outside the formal structures of the college or academy, the need for a partnership of equals between colleges and communities and the construction of education programmes outside the formal academic curriculum. Pablo Helguera (2011, p. 80) suggests that socially engaged art offers an alternative to traditional education models in recognising first, the creative performativity of the act of education, second, the collective construction of knowledge and third, the fact that knowledge of art is tool for understanding the world. Helguera proposes the concept of 'transpedagogy' in referring to

...projects by artists and collectives that blend educational processes and art making in works that offer an experience that is clearly different from conventional art academies or formal art education (2011, p. 77).

While there are dimensions of the Tapestry project that can be described under such a description, the extent to which the project matches the frame of Helguera's socially engaged art remains to be assessed.

THE 1913 LOCKOUT TAPESTRY PROJECT

The 1913 Tapestry project commenced with the invitation in late 2011 of SIPTU, the biggest trade union in Ireland to the National College of Art and Design to collaborate in a community art project informed by the famous Bayeux tapestry of Norman history and the more recent Prestonpans tapestry in Scotland that recounts the story of that mining community. Two artists were recruited to provide the general design and specific imagery of the Tapestry – Robert Ballagh and Cathy Henderson. Crucial to the concept of the project was the involvement of a diverse range of participant groups and individuals in the actual construction process. About 400 volunteers and helpers engaged with the project, through direct textile work or various processes of support and facilitation.

The defining characteristic of the Dublin Lockout has been repeatedly described in terms of solidarity of the workers and their families. In a crucial respect, that concept of collective solidarity and inter-dependence was a central motif in the conception and in the implementation of the tapestry project.

As Cathy Henderson, one of the lead artists, records:

Most visual artists work in isolation and enjoy the solitary aspect of creative work. We are used to making our own decisions about the images we make. Working collectively and making joint decisions about all the aspects that pull images together is often a demanding way for us to

embark on a creative endeavour. At the briefing stage it was clear that one of the primary reasons for commissioning the project this way was to involve as many people as possible from across the community to commemorate the people's history. (Henderson, 2013, p. 19)

Robert Ballagh, her fellow lead artist, notes that 'the collaborative nature of our project involving so many people represents a truly fitting commemoration of an historic event in which ordinary people combined together in a titanic struggle for justice and equality one hundred years ago' (Ballagh, 2013, p. 22). Angela Keane, research officer with the project and an artist and teacher in her own right, reinforces the point: 'Social engagement with the project thus honours both the participatory experience of making and the social history of the commemorative work' (2013, p. 23).

The narrative of the 1913 Lockout was recounted through a story-board design utilising a comic-book or graphic novel approach. The final narrative consisted of 30 panels each depicting a scene or scenes from the story of the Lockout. It was always intended that each group coming to engage with a particular panel would bring their own creativity to the work. While the extent to which this materialised in terms of the images themselves varied according to the technical experience of the group, their historical or cultural familiarity with the narrative and not least, the pragmatic pressures of deadlines, there was a very clear process of ownership, not just of the panels per se but of the incidents, events and locations depicted. As Keane notes

the volunteers have brought the capabilities of the textile process to reflect and enhance the design through the many decisions made. It is a measure of how immersed the participants became in the progression of their work that each design, each panel worked on, became personal to them. Participants have kept photographic records of the stages they took in making a costume through appliqué, or kept a record of different types of cords hand-constructed in order to achieve the perfect couched outline for definition of garment edges. Volunteers have visited buildings depicted in their panel design to be certain of the aspect of sunlight on the facade, or look again at the railings in front of a building in order to best choose an appropriate stitch to render them. (p. 24)

The relationship of the volunteers to the artists' design was necessarily one of interpretation, not translation. In some cases this interpretation was manifested through image design, augmentation and development. In other cases it was demonstrated through adaptation of task assignments to match available skills and techniques. The experience of the tapestry project provides evidence that the materiality of the textile design and construction process was itself a definitive element in the engagement of participants in technical research (the tapestry), in historical research (the lockout) and in a deeper sense in a reflexive process of personal growth.

According to Keane, as a participant observer, the fact that 'the participants have interpreted rather than simply translated a design into textiles, is an integral part of the collaborative creative process. The knowledge and skill applicable to the craft process have informed an

aesthetic and engaged participants to bring their own ideas and preferences to the work' (2013, p. 23). Thus one participant, a skilled and experienced textile worker notes that

the 'tapestry' was not presented as a completed project ready to be stitched, but as an organic project which it appeared would grow with those who were taking part... Probably the most important reason for many of us was the challenge of interpreting the artists' ideas in stitch, the combining of fine art and craft' (V7)²

The facilitator of one group comments on the process: '... it is the heated debates, strong opinions voiced and full-on arguments that made me as a community artist, realise how passionate these women were in their work. The care and interest they gave to these pieces of thread is what will stay with me' (F20).

The work of the lead artists was expressed both in the overall thematic design of the full thirty-panel narrative, and in the individual panel scenes depicting moments in the Lockout story. Interpreting these images and mediating them through the textile processes was a task shared among participants and facilitators. Thus, workshops and 'drop-in' facilities were provided, the artists were regularly available to advise volunteers, and the project research officer visited groups at work, provided technical advice and support in relation to particular design problems and facilitated as required.

In some cases, the volunteers were highly skilled and experienced and brought their expertise to bear on the process with dramatic effect. Thus, an early panel depicting Bloody Sunday, the day a police charge resulted in death and injury on Dublin's main street, went through a number of iterations with members of the Irish Patchwork Society (IPS), as they engaged with the technical, artistic and design issues generated by the initial sketches.

² Quotations from participant volunteers (V) and facilitators (F) are coded according to the panel on which they worked. Thus V7 refers to a volunteer who worked on panel 7.



Figure 1: IPS volunteers pinning up sketches



Figure 2: IPS volunteers at work



Figure 3: An early sketch (by artist Cathy Henderson) of the Bloody Sunday panel. (The blue uniforms were later changed to green for historical accuracy, only uncovered through the work process)



Figure 4: Bloody Sunday - the finished textile panel

In contrast, the engagement of school-children involved quite a different approach, eventually resolved through each child's individual stitched icon being embedded within a flaming torch. This solution honoured the naïve and beautiful images of the children though incorporation within a collective context. This panel was conceived as the final panel in the narrative, as a metaphor of the torch being passed on to a new generation. It also provided an appropriate top and tail imagery for the tapestry: the first panel depicted the foundation of the union in a tenement room, lit by a candle in a bottle, which found its echo in the flaming torch of union growth in the aftermath of the Lockout.

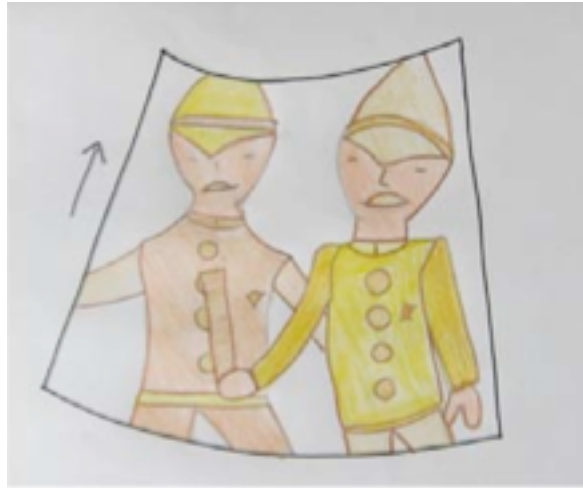


Figure 5: Child's sketch of Bloody Sunday



Figure 6: The Torch – finished panel

GENDER ROLES

A feature of the project, frequently commented upon throughout, was the prominence of women working on the tapestry, contrasted with the actual Lockout, which was dominated by men (although women and children bore the burnt of pain). This gender dimension was significant in the type of conversations that were generated through the process.

A mother and daughter describe the challenge of one particular panel depicting living conditions in the tenement city:

... it has deepened the strong bond between us as we worked together, discussing the finer points of whether we should use one thread or another in a particular section. We discovered our styles complemented each other, and we learned new techniques together. Along the way

the vibrant history behind the images came to life, as we connected with the family in our piece... (V3)

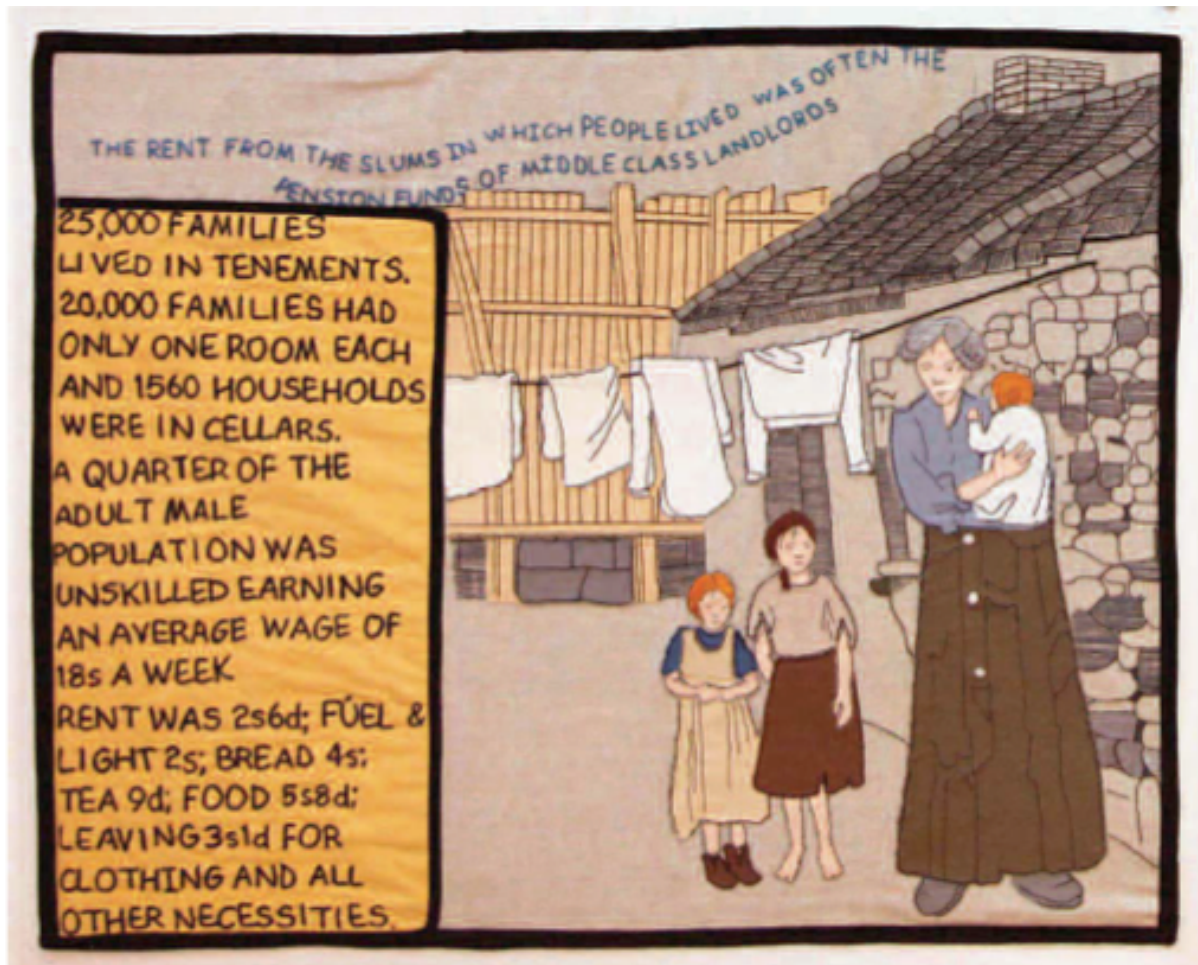


Figure 7: Living Conditions – finished panel (embroidery and appliqué)

A group of women who worked on a panel depicting the food kitchens that were the source of sustenance for many families, described their interactions while working: ‘... many conversations arose on the history of our city, the plight of women and children affected by the Lockout, particularly in relation to the distribution of food as depicted in one of our panels’ (V14).



Figure 8: Food Parcels – finished panel

Another group, depicting a controversy that arose around a ‘save the kiddies’ scheme to take children from starving Dublin families to English foster-homes for the duration of the dispute, reflected on the contemporary resonance of

... the pernicious influence of the Catholic hierarchy and its propaganda machine ...We stitched our panel of priests stoning the children of 1913 to the backdrop of news stories surrounding the survivors of the Magdalene Laundries, the tragic death of Savita Halappanavar³ and changes in law to protect the lives of mothers and we realised that much needed to be achieved for women 100 years later (V 17).

³ The Magdalene Laundries were the subject of major review published in 2013 into the conditions and treatment of women who were sent to these institutions throughout the twentieth century. Savita Halappanavar was a young woman whose death in 2012 while pregnant in an Irish hospital prompted a major debate on women’s rights, and on abortion legislation.



Figure 9: 'Save the kiddies' – finished panel

RESEARCH ISSUES

This paper has been an initial attempt to unpack some of the art-based research components of the 1913 tapestry project. Specifically it has been concerned with one such thread of research – the extent to which the materiality of the textile construction process was in itself an active ingredient in the personal reflection and social engagement of the participants.

There are a number of other fault lines within the project which are rich veins for further research over the coming months and years. For instance, the sponsor partners SIPTU and NCAD achieved a constructive and complementary working relationship from an early stage. Yet there are significant points of interest potentially in exploring their distinct perspectives and evaluating possible divergence of interest. Beyond the main sponsors, the varied forms of engagement, expectation and experience of participants will be rich in insight.

Politics was at the heart of the 1913 Lockout and so it echoes throughout the Tapestry. However, in the changed landscape of contemporary Ireland, the simple polarities of left

and right are much more complicated than in the past. For instance, some groups on the left today view SIPTU and other such trade unions as part of the political establishment. Thus, scepticism or opposition to the tapestry project itself has not been noticeable from the conventional right wing of politics and society: that sector has been noticeably silent, almost as a calculation that silence was the most effective response until the centenary year was over the fuss died down. Instead, such dissonant voices as were heard tended to come from the extreme left, some of whom viewed the project as a cynical public relations act.

Similar views can be discerned within the arts community. The idea that the tapestry project is a manifestation of socially engaged art (SAE) can be disputed. If a criterion of SAE is that the work be defined by the participants themselves, certain elements of the tapestry project can be contested – the top-down nature of the project management, the central design of the work and of its constituent images, even the narrative of the tapestry itself. These and other related lines of research remain to be excavated in the months and years ahead. However, the specifically arts-based research components with which this paper has been mainly concerned will continue to offer a substantial field for researchers. This paper has only opened the ground.

CONCLUSION

While the political orientation of the Tapestry project was unequivocal from the start, the nuanced variations, interpretation and narratives of any historical event or process also came to the surface in this project. Thus one participant, depicting a scene with the British Monarch's representative in Ireland, Lord Aberdeen, and his wife (Figure 10), records that she 'became very fond of Lady Aberdeen when I discovered that she devoted herself to health and housing issues, and delivered food parcels to the poor in central Dublin' (V 5). Even within a polarised conflict, differentiated personal dispositions, whether charity or rights based, can be discerned.



Figure 10: Lord Aberdeen at the Horse Show – finished panel (appliqué and embroidery)

The 1913 Lockout is often described in terms of the dominant personalities – Jim Larkin the firebrand workers’ leader contrasted with William Martin Murphy, the powerful, iron-willed employer. While the immediate outcome of the Lockout was a victory for Murphy, in the longer term Larkin’s union has grown to be a powerful force in the country. The centenary has been marked as a validation of the stance of Larkin’s stance. Larkin is today commemorated in a prominent public sculpture in the centre of Dublin (Figure 11) an iconic image replicated in the Tapestry (Figure 12).



Figure 11: Statue of Jim Larkin, by Oisín Kelly (1980)



Figure 12 : Jim Larkin, centrepiece of tapestry – finished panel

By contrast, Murphy's reputation has languished over the years, his triumph in 1913 seen as a pyrrhic victory. Yet, in the summer of 2013, a ceremony took place in a tiny country village in the south-west of Ireland. At a small cottage, the modest birthplace of W. M. Murphy today used as a farmer's shed, a plaque was unveiled (Figures 13 and 14) to honour a man still highly thought of by his family and the community from which he sprung.



Figure 13: Birthplace of W. M. Murphy



Figure 14: Plaque to W.M. Murphy

In a beautiful phrase, Ricoeur says that ‘the past is a cemetery of promises which have not been kept’ (1996, p. 9). The lockout tapestry was an attempt to revisit ‘the unfulfilled future’ of the Lockout and to make it meaningful in the contemporary world. But Ricoeur also implicitly warns of both triumphalism and resentment in the engagement with the past. He writes of three processes through which the past can be made to serve the present and the future: the processes of tradition (the transmission of things said, of beliefs professed, of norms accepted), of innovation (the reinterpretation of accepted truths) and of forgiveness (the presence of what he describes as ‘narrative hospitality’ where other stories and experiences can be acknowledged).

The tapestry project embodies elements of those qualities. It has been essentially concerned with a re-validation of the values of community and solidarity displayed through the agony of Dublin 1913. But it has also provided the opportunity, through textile art construction, for participants to re-examine those values, to locate them in the context of contemporary Ireland and to reflect on the nuances of history in a spirit of ‘narrative hospitality’.

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Chapter 7

Junctions and Disjunction in the Aims of Irish Education Policy

Tom Collins

This paper aims to isolate and interrogate the main aims that underpin the direction of Irish education policy. In particular, the paper will look at the question as to whether the diverse aims of the different sectors of the system as a whole are aligned and mutually reinforcing or if there are places where there is a disjunction between aims, or even where diverse aims may be at cross purposes with one another.

It is certainly the case that any overarching, system-wide framework of aims is rarely explicitly articulated in official policy statements or initiatives. This, however, is not surprising and should not lead to the conclusion that no such framework exists. Few policy statements have a system-wide focus. On the contrary, they are usually focused on a sectoral or issue basis, according them a narrower remit and more tightly defined purpose.

In the absence of explicitly stated system-wide aims, however, there is always the possibility that sub-system initiatives may not neatly dovetail with one another; some aims may be inadvertently ignored or different parts of policy provision may even be at odds with one another. Indeed this latter possibility is explicitly raised by the inter-agency group exploring transitions from second level to third which refers to a shared concern that, “the very mechanism by which students make the transition from one sector to the other may be working against the kinds of learning valued by both.” (p7, 2013)

It is important to establish, therefore, if there is a generally shared – even if not explicitly articulated - framework of aims underpinning the totality of Irish education policy. If indeed there is such a framework, what are its main elements? What is the relative priority of each component of the framework and is there a consonance and synergy between these components? And are the aims of the system consistent with the aims for it? Based on a desk review of the many policy initiatives and pronouncements over recent years, this paper will attempt to address these questions. It will do so by looking at

1. Early Life Education - Early Childhood to end of Second level
2. Lifelong Learning and Further Education and Training
3. Higher Education

EARLY LIFE EDUCATION - EARLY CHILDHOOD TO END OF SECOND LEVEL

Early Childhood

Throughout the documents and initiatives reviewed here, there is a gradually crystallising view of the young child as an active learner with life-cycle specific learning and developmental needs. The White Paper on early childhood education, *Ready to Learn* (1999b), referred to the “need to provide a range of experiences and learning opportunities to enhance all aspects of a child’s development - cognitive, emotional, linguistic, moral, physical, sensory and social.” (p56, 1999) This theme is developed by the NCCA in the *Final Consultation Report: Towards a Framework for Early Learning* (2005) where the child is presented “as an active learner, interacting and engaging with people, objects and events. Most children display a tremendous drive and capacity to learn from birth. This is evident in their desire to become aware of and to understand the world, and everything in it. Playful interactions with appropriate involvement from others can support much learning which is self initiated, fun, positive and motivating.” (p21, citing Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl, 1999)

This view of the child and the role and nature of early childhood education becomes codified in *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, published by the NCCA in 2009. The Framework is structured around four themes:

- Well-being
- Identity and Belonging,
- Communicating
- Exploring and Thinking.

The Primary School Curriculum pre-dated the above early childhood framework by six years. There is nonetheless significant commonality in the guiding themes between the two. The

opening paragraph of the curriculum asserts that it, “celebrates the uniqueness of the child, as it is expressed in each child’s personality, intelligence and potential for development. It is designed to nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life - spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical.” (p6, 1999a)

The aims of primary education, as expressed in the curriculum are

- To enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual
- To enable the child to develop as a social being through living and cooperating with others and so contribute to the good of society
- To prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning. (p7)

The need for a holistic view of the child is repeatedly emphasised in this curriculum - stressing as it does the child’s innate sense of “wonder at the complexity of the world”, the desire to understand it and the spontaneous impetus to explore it through play.” (p14)

Some tension as between a holistic, developmental focus on the one hand and a more skill specific focus on the other becomes evident as the child progresses through the school system. Literacy and numeracy skills begin to assume a particular precedence where, as stated in the Literacy and Numeracy For Learning and Life (2011a), “both primary and post primary schools have key roles in teaching essential literacy and numeracy skills.” (p10) The Strategy noted that one in ten children in Irish schools has serious difficulty with reading and writing with the proportion in some disadvantaged schools being as high as one in three. There is also some evidence in NCCA evaluations of the Primary Curriculum of the emergence of a stronger instrumentalist approach in the content of 5th and 6th class as the transition to second level comes into focus.

Second Level

The transition from primary to second level is one of the key transitions in the educational life cycle. As the child enters the new world of adolescence, s/he also moves from the familiar, primary school environment to the more daunting, challenging and possibly more exciting environment of the second level school. Second level education consists of a three-year junior cycle followed by a two- or three-year senior cycle.

Currently two major curriculum and assessment change programmes are under way in second level, with sector-wide significance. These are a changed Mathematics programme - Project Maths - and a proposed new Junior Cycle.

Project Maths arose from a concern that Mathematics study had become too narrowly focused on learning rules rather than reasons. Project Maths “focuses on developing students’ understanding of mathematical concepts, the development of mathematical skills, and the

application of knowledge and skills to solving both familiar and unfamiliar problems using examples from everyday life...” (NCCA, in Cosgrove et al p7, 2012).

The proposed new Junior Cycle emerges from a range of long running concerns, including

- continuity between primary and second level
- disengagement in second year and its long term implications for the student
- the disproportionate influence of the Junior Certificate examination on the teaching and learning culture of the first three years in second level.

Junior Cycle

The stated aims of the Junior Cycle are to

- reinforce and further develop in the young person the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, skills and competencies acquired at primary level.
- extend and deepen the range and quality of the young person's educational experience in terms of knowledge understanding, skills and competencies.
- develop the young person's personal and social confidence, initiative and competence through a broad, well-balanced, general education.
- prepare the young person for the requirements of further programmes of study, of employment or of life outside full time education.
- contribute to the moral and spiritual development of the young person and develop a tolerance and respect for the values and beliefs of others.
- prepare the young person for the responsibilities of citizenship in the national context and in the context of the wider European and global communities.

Whatever about the stated aims, the work of Smyth et al in the ESRI /NCCA longitudinal study, as reported in the ESRI Research Bulletin (2009), drew attention, amongst other things, to a widening disjunction between a holistic view of the child's learning and a more instrumental view as the child moves into and begins to navigate second level. The study, which began in 2002, was conducted in twelve second level schools involving 900 students as they progressed through the second level system.

The study shows that in second year in particular a significant minority of students - in the region of 25% - become disenchanted by school and disengage from an active and positive participation. This second year experience can have a major, negative long-term impact on the child's educational attainment in the Leaving Certificate and beyond. Some students, “especially working class(background) get caught up in a cycle of ‘acting up’ and...from second year onwards appear to become disaffected if they feel that the rules of the school are arbitrary or unfair. Even more academically engaged students feel little sense of ownership over the school rules as currently formulated.” (p4, 2009)

With regard to the Junior Certificate examination, the study states that, “the exam influences the nature of teaching and learning especially in third year with the focus narrowing to one of preparation for the exam. This finding is very much in keeping with research in high stakes testing internationally, since both students and teachers will respond to the presence of such tests.” (p5)

The challenge of securing the active engagement of students in Junior Cycle is uppermost in the deliberations of the NCCA in regard to Junior Cycle reform. In *Innovation and Identity* (2010) it is proposed that, “the purpose of any change at Junior Cycle should be to ensure that all learners at this stage of their lives sustain and further develop a strong relationship with learning...” (p15) It defines such a relationship as a ‘strong disposition towards and enjoyment of learning.’ Research on student well-being undertaken by a consortium in St Patrick’s College is referred to with approval - “The balance between the academic achievements of students and their other strengths and capacities needs urgent attention in a performance driven system where talent and achievement are so narrowly defined. Students need to have the skills and cultural tools to participate in society, but the current drive for higher standards of achievement and performance without genuine commitment to holistic development and equality of condition for all, is seriously problematic for the well-being of many young people and for society more generally.” (p7)

Senior Cycle

The aims of the Senior Cycle include

- providing continuity with the Junior Cycle and providing a gateway to further or higher education or work.
- providing a curriculum “characterised by breadth and balance while allowing for some degree of specialisation”.
- contributing to equality of opportunity.
- supporting the development of each individual’s “moral, social, cultural and economic life” and enhance his/her quality of life.
- educating for citizenship.
- ensuring that “the highest standards of achievement are obtained by every person, appropriate to his/her ability. (NCCA, p12, 2002)

The Senior Cycle can be of two years or, if it includes Transition Year, three years duration.

The focus on holistic development, somewhat submerged in the demands of the Junior Certificate examination, re-emerges in Transition Year - an optional programme offered in a minority of second level schools.

The stated aims of Transition Year (TY) are:

- education for maturity, with an emphasis on the personal development of the student
- the promotion of general academic and technical skills with an emphasis on self-directed learning
- education through experience of adult and working life as a basis for personal development and maturity. (DES, p3, 2004)

According to Jeffers, in an evaluation conducted in 2007, there is a “consensus that TY promotes young people’s confidence, improves bonds between classmates and facilitates better relationships between students and teachers. Opportunities to explore adult and working life, particularly through work experience placements, are seen as distinct benefits of TY.” (p7) He also notes that fifth and sixth year students “sometimes indicate a tension between the emphasis on a broad education for maturity (in TY) and the demands of the LC and the associated points system.” (pviii)

With regard to participation in TY, he notes previous research (Smyth, 2004) that found higher levels of uptake among girls in schools that charge fees and in schools in the east of the country. There is a corresponding under-representation of boys, (especially those from family backgrounds with low levels of formal schooling) and of small and rural VEC schools. (pxxiii) This leads to a concern that, notwithstanding the inherent benefits of TY, the class-based nature of its take-up may lend it the character of a quality programme that accentuates inequality.

With regard to sixth year in second level, Smyth, Banks and Calvert, (2011), show that

- students are broadly satisfied with the Leaving Certificate programme they take, but satisfaction was linked to “how well students were doing academically, with many students critical of the increased workload during sixth year and the almost complete reliance on a terminal examination.”
- while students generally preferred active learning approaches, what is distinctive about the Leaving Certificate year is that some students, “particularly those from middle class and academically oriented schools, become highly instrumental in how they approached the impending examination, focusing only on what was required to do well.”
- half of the sixth year students took “grinds” outside school.
- second year experiences “are key influences on later outcomes.” (pxvi)

They further conclude that, “as currently structured, the Leaving Certificate tends to narrow the range of student learning experiences and to focus both teachers and students on ‘covering the course’.”

Amongst its many insights the longitudinal study shows how examination classes, whether junior or senior cycle, depart from learning for its own sake to an instrumental orientation, where children are taught to the test and become increasingly “other directed “ in their

learning. The higher the stakes the more restricted the focus and the more restricted the focus, the greater the emphasis on examination performance as a singular aim.

It is perhaps somewhat ironic, therefore, that the child's first encounter with the formal system - in pre-school - is marked by a greater readiness on the part of the system to accord autonomy and self-direction to the learner than will be encountered at any other stage in the child's career through school, other than in somewhat stand alone programmes such as Transition Year. And in TY there is, as shown, an underlying tension regarding its potential to distract the student from the Leaving Certificate. By the end of second level it can be reasonably asserted that the initial pre-and early-school focus on well-being and self-direction has largely given way to an instrumentalist focus on examination achievement and performance standards.

The pivotal role of the Leaving Certificate in allocating places in higher education is central to the high stakes character of this examination and to the narrow focus of the test. The Commission on the Points System (1999) expressed concern on this in its report of 1999 when noting that, the Commission agreed "that the Leaving Certificate should begin to recognise a wider range of skills, intelligences and achievements than is currently the case. These would include...taking initiative in and responsibility for learning...the ability to work co-operatively, a sense of social solidarity and a variety of other aspects of social and personal development which the NCCA refers to as the 'qualities of the student as a human being'." (4.4,1999)

Of particular significance to this paper, the Commission also noted that many of the submissions it received adverted to the lack "of congruence between the aims and goals of the second level curriculum and the modes and techniques of assessment used for the established Leaving Certificate..." The point was made that Ireland is unique in the extent to which the Leaving Certificate relies on a single, final examination. It went on to recommend that "while a broad senior cycle education should be provided, and the student's attainment in that senior cycle assessed and certificated, in some instances the certification might be of the nature of a record of participation and involvement rather than a grading of achievement. Some element of the certification might not count for points purposes, but would be a pre-requisite for entry into third level." (4.6, 1999)

LIFELONG LEARNING AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Arising from a concern for the continuum of learning from the cradle to the grave, policies around lifelong learning are inevitably more systemic than sectoral - concerned much more with inter-sectoral articulation than intra-sectoral reform. As such, clearly articulated system-wide goals are more likely to be expressed and elaborated in this context than perhaps in any other.

The White Paper on Adult Education – Learning for Life (2000), identified the following six “priority areas” for adult education:

- Consciousness raising
- Citizenship
- Cohesion
- Competitiveness
- Cultural Development
- Community Building. (p12)

Though specifically concerned with adult education the paper argued for a lifelong learning motif as the guiding principle of all education policy. It proposed therefore a “systemic approach” recognising that the “interfaces between the different levels of educational provision, and the quality of the early school experience have a critical influence on learners’ motivation and ability to access and progress in adult education...” (p12) Developing this theme the paper goes on to observe that failure in the early school experience in terms of acquiring “a positive disposition to learning, in acquiring the fundamental learning tools of literacy and numeracy, in developing a positive sense of personal well-being and the requisite interpersonal and social skills needed to participate in the everyday life of the community, can very seriously limit the life chances of children. While adult and general out of school education interventions have shown that such negative early school experiences can be redressed, it is clearly far better that these needs are met in the early school life of the person, with the emphasis on prevention.” (p30)

Similarly generic systemic goals emerge in the deliberations of the National Guidance Forum Report, *Guidance for Life* (2007). This report also takes a lifelong perspective, developing a framework consisting of four integrated ‘groups of outcomes’ as follows:

- Emotional Development
- Social Development
- Learning Development
- Career Development. (p15)

Though the focus of the report is lifelong, its conception of the goals of guidance is somewhat more limited than those found in *Learning for Life*. The guidance pre-occupation is mainly, if not exclusively, concerned with interventions that enhance personal – as opposed to social-development. The social development agenda is largely limited to the development of self-awareness and interpersonal skills.

With regard to further education and training (FET), Dr John Sweeney introduces a somewhat different distinction, that between “social” objectives and “workforce” objectives. He voices concerns that the recently established Education and Training Boards (ETBs) with their origins in the VECs have a more established background in the social arena but have relatively little background in specific workforce initiatives. He refers to the fact that “many

employers believe that the ETBs come to this task (workforce development) poorly equipped by virtue of their wide spread of functions, composition and starting capacity to discharge it. (p61) With regard to youth unemployment he captures the stark seriousness of the interrelatedness between the personal, social and economic imperatives of education success when he observes that, “it is fair to deduce that most of the young with alternatives to being on the Live Register (LR) typically avail of them within a year and that those who remain on it longer than twelve months are at an exceptional risk of facing forty years or more of low grade employment interrupted by spells of unemployment.” (p64)

Workforce development

In a similar vein and tone, the IBEC Education and Skills Survey (2010) observed that, while education and training were “at the heart of Ireland’s social and economic progress over the last number of decades,” current economic conditions affecting Ireland have required a “reassessment and reforms by all stakeholders concerning education and training which has led to decisions being made about expenditure methods and priorities for investment.” (p3) For its part the OECD, in *Learning for Jobs*, notes that, “the current economic crisis is making intense demands on the system to provide education and training for a sharply increasing number of people and poses serious challenges in particular to the apprenticeship system” (p6, 2010). Amongst other things this report talked about the need to “systematically identify the literacy and numeracy problems of those who come into contact with training services and provide basic skills support to those in need.” (p7)

In the period since the financial and ensuing economic crisis hit, there is an urgency in the tone and a recognition of the more constrained parameters in many of the pronouncements and policy provisions, not particularly apparent before the crisis. In this regard, the concern with unemployment and with appropriate further education and training provision (FET) has emerged as a priority goal in recent years. As observed by the Minister for Training and Skills in the Action Plan for SOLAS (2010), “Ireland’s further education training system faces major challenges at a time of severe economic crisis. The unprecedented level of unemployment – 14.8 % of our labour force is unemployed - has resulted in significant increased demand for education and training...the need to upskill those who have lost their jobs has become obvious to us all.” (p1)

More recently, Sweeney calls attention to the differential impact of unemployment during the recession while noting that the incidence of unemployment “varies significantly with characteristics such as educational attainment, gender, nationality and place, duration is the most significant crosscutting problem with 60% of the live register unemployed for more than a year. “ The FET sector, he says, “will have a crucial role in ramping up the government effort to reduce LTU in the coming years.” (p6, 2013) He observed that the recession with its “destruction of jobs, large drop in employer recruitment and escalation in unemployment has sharply increased the numbers of people wanting an appropriate FET course to re-skill or up-

skill as their best strategy for surviving the recession and participating in the incipient economic recovery”. He expressed particular concern with regards to Ireland’s “dual economy” and specifically the degree of polarisation in the labour market, i.e. the wide gaps in earning potential and labour market capability between the educationally disadvantaged in the labour force as opposed to the educationally advantaged.

Despite, or possibly because of, the urgency for action and the “destruction” of jobs, while state spending on labour market programmes has more than doubled, it has been principally absorbed by “passive measures“ and spending on training and job creation programmes between 2007 and 2010 per unemployed person has dropped dramatically. (p15)

In a general sense there is a diffuseness to the world of adult education, further education and training and out of school provision that resists encapsulation. Within this world there are some very different emphases and preoccupations giving rise perhaps to Sweeney’s concern about the fitness for purpose of the ETB’s when it comes to workforce training.

It could be suggested that Sweeney’s concerns revolve around a more fundamental issue than mere functionality capability. This is the ideological schism within the lifelong learning field regarding its social purpose, specifically as to its ‘remediation’ role or its emancipatory role.

Those who critique its remediation role see lifelong learning at the service of economic interests, working to outfit individuals already poorly served by schooling, for an uncertain economic labour market. They argue, rather, for an education for emancipatory citizenship, portraying the citizen in Habermas’ image as a self-directed, active, competent, ethical participant in reasoned conversations about issues of common concern. Citizenship education, therefore, should rely on participatory pedagogies, including a “focus on the quality of dialogue, student voice, contextual knowledge, and relevance to students’ lives and narratives.” (Joldersma and Crick, p142, 2010) Within this worldview if students are not learning, something is getting in the way.

In many significant ways, therefore, this position is different to – and skeptical of - schooling. In the Irish context, in programmes such as Youthreach and the Back to Education Initiative, the sector is dealing primarily with those who, for one reason or another, have either fared poorly or been poorly served by the world of schooling. Against this background it is one of the few ideologically discordant voices in Irish education, drawing on educational influences such as Freire, Illich and Habermas. What is common to much of it though is its second chance emphasis; its counter school leanings; its real life focus; its tendency to eschew summative assessment and evaluation and a difficulty in measuring its outcomes and cost benefit. The sector tends to be wary of formalisation and of the “disfigurement” which might arise in the teacher student relationship when, as Pádraig Hogan puts it, the question of quality in education is redefined as one of “indexed quality and by an associated machinery of inspection“ (p1, 2010) that may be perceived to sideline purely educational purposes.

The sector, therefore, attempts to provide an alternative pathway to educational attainment and accreditation and also an alternative pedagogical experience for many for whom the mainstream system has failed. It suffers, however, from low status. The largely undifferentiated nature of higher education in Ireland and the high national targets for participation in higher education lend a “there by default” character to some aspects of further education and training. This can obscure the impact and value of the sector in its work with those who are most educationally and socially disadvantaged and in the way in which it provides a platform from which its students can re-engage with the world of work and/or the world of education, as well as in the wider democratic discourse.

HIGHER EDUCATION

There is a broad level of agreement in all the documents reviewed on the centrality of a high quality education system in driving economic growth. The needs of the economy, therefore, are central in establishing the overall direction of the system of both further and higher education in the country, with a broad level of agreement on the centrality of both sectors in tackling unemployment and driving economic growth and innovation.

With regard to higher education there is a broad level of agreement on its critical contribution to economic development. Where some contestation arises here it is frequently expressed in the discourse of “education for life” as opposed to, or in conjunction with, “education for work.” While this debate is, as shown above, also to be found in the further education and training area, in higher education it is rarely represented as an irreconcilable duality. Indeed, it is more commonly proposed as a unitary goal consisting of a two-pronged approach. IBEC, for instance, refers to the strong relationship between business and higher education. It insists, however, that this relationship should not be viewed “in simple terms, of developing graduates with the skills and knowledge needed to drive business forward...the belief is that building the relationship between business and higher education should have at its core the principle of equipping people with the skills that industry requires which will maximise their prospects of having rewarding fulfilling and careers, and that this will be a major determinant of their quality of life”. (p2, 2009)

In the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (Hunt Report, 2011b), the chairman refers to a “deep concern to ensure that higher education can continue to deliver the personal, social and economic capital that has enriched this country.” (p3) He goes on to say that the report has been “framed in the context of the objective in the government framework for the Smart Economy” and the report will “complement and support the recommendations of the Innovation Task Force...” (p3) The report itself states that, “higher education is central to the economic renewal we need to support individual well-being and social development.” (p9)

It would appear therefore that IBEC and Hunt would both downplay any tension between the economic goals of higher education and its wider social and personal ones. Similarly, the HEA, while acknowledging the “growing importance of the role of higher education institutions in driving economic and social development” also are at pains to point out that this role “stands as a complement to the historical and equally important significance of higher education institutions as the repositories of cultural and intellectual wealth, as places where the pursuit of knowledge is its own reward, and where the emphasis is on the holistic development of the individual.” (p6, 2013)

Almost all policy documents reviewed in the area of higher education point to the increasing participation levels in the sector. Most welcome it. Hunt (2011) says it is “essential to create an enhanced human capital by expanding participation in higher education.” (p10) Later, the report notes that, “if Ireland is to achieve its ambitions for recovery and development within an innovation driven economy, it is essential to create and enhance human capital by expanding participation in higher education.” (p10)

While Ireland has been remarkably successful in increasing its participation in higher education - 45% of young adults (25-34) have acquired a higher education qualification and nearly two thirds of eighteen year olds enter higher education - Hunt points out that inequalities persist. The report shows that in 2004, with a total participation rate of 55%, higher professionals had 100% representation. The representation of the semi- and unskilled manual groups, however, was only 33% and the non-manual (lower middle income) group had just 20% representation. (p34)

Most official pronouncements, both national and international, welcome Ireland’s high participation rates in higher education. IBEC, however, raises a concern that quality is being diluted by quantity as HEIs leverage the funding model by increasing student numbers. The perception of business, it says, is “that inflating student numbers within the HEIs has taken precedence over striving for excellence. This may have eroded quality within the sector over recent years.” (p3)

It is difficult to establish the validity or otherwise of this hypothesis. What is clear is that the social inequalities in participation rates are also reflected in progression rates with essentially those least likely to gain access also the least likely to progress. According to *A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education* (2010), the “lowest levels of progression are found among the traditional working classes, with non-presence rates between 17% and 19% among the Skilled, Semi-skilled and Unskilled socio-economic groups.” (p38, 2010) The study shows, furthermore, that prior educational attainment is “a very strong factor in whether or not a new entrant progresses past the first year of their course of study.” (p5)

CROSS CUTTING THEMES

Examinations : Social Class

This overview calls attention to a number of persistent themes in the narrative of education policy in Ireland over recent decades. The paper has shown that two factors in particular remain at the core of Irish education, notwithstanding many apparent attempts to ameliorate their impact. These are the centrality of the two State examinations in the child's school experience and the overwhelming influence of socioeconomic background in educational attainment.

The paper has attempted to identify the processes whereby these factors have prevailed with such tenacity in the education arena. With regard to assessment, it has shown that as the child progresses through the school system, from early childhood through to the end of second level, the focus of the experience and the purpose of the project - notwithstanding the stated aims - become ever narrower. The mode of assessment and the assessment content in the two State examinations and the role of the Leaving Certificate in mediating entry and in allocating places in third level are crucial elements in this ongoing process. In concert, these militate against many of the stated aims particularly of early life education, concerning the holistic development of the child and the development of engaged, active, lifelong learners. On the contrary the paper has shown that over time in the schooling lifespan the education compass becomes firmly fixed on the demands of the two State examinations. The Junior Certificate in particular acquires a meaning which greatly outweighs its purpose in this process of educational and developmental reductionism. Against this background, the current discussions concerning changes to higher education entry, together with major change initiatives currently under way in second level such as Project Maths and Junior Cycle reform, assume an even greater significance.

The importance of a successful encounter with early life education attaches profound significance to issues concerning educational opportunity, access and participation. In particular it points to the imperative of enabling children to overcome disadvantages of background, both in accessing education and in their attainments within the education system. The Education Act (1998) defines educational disadvantage as "...the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools."

The longitudinal study by the ESRI referred to earlier is one of many which show that the school system works best for those already advantaged, while the disadvantaged, especially disadvantaged boys, perform least well and are most prone to disaffection and alienation. This is not confined to second level. It is also true of the primary sector, as shown with regard to literacy and numeracy and is, and, as also shown carries forward into both further education and higher education.

In a study for Barnardo's in 2009, *Investing in Education: Combating Educational Disadvantage*, which dealt with the issue of social differentiation in educational outcomes, Smyth and McCoy found "marked differences" across social class groups on all indicators looked at. They show, for instance, that while over 90% of young people from professional backgrounds complete the Leaving Certificate, just two thirds of their counterparts from unskilled manual backgrounds do so. (p8) With regard to performance in the Leaving Certificate they found that 58% of students from higher professional backgrounds achieve four or more honours grades in the Leaving Certificate; this is the case for just 16% of those from semi-and unskilled manual backgrounds. (p9)

This over-riding influence of social class background on educational outcomes persists despite the prominence in many policy statements and initiatives of aims concerning social inclusion and integration. Why is the system failing to achieve its aims in this most important social project?

In addressing disadvantage, considerable confidence is invested in the potential of early intervention in overcoming barriers of background or special need. The DEIS action plan (2005), for instance, was grounded in the belief that:

- Every child and young person deserves an equal chance to access, participate in and benefit from education.
 - Each person should have the opportunity to reach her/his full potential for personal, social and economic reasons.
 - Education is a critical factor in promoting social inclusion and economic development.
- (p19)

The goals of integration and inclusiveness recur persistently in almost all official pronouncements on Irish education. This is true of all sectors of education but is very pronounced with regard to early life education. As expressed in the OECD Project *Overcoming School Failure*, "the priorities for primary and post-primary education over the coming years will be to promote quality, relevance and inclusiveness by supporting schools in developing an inclusive environment for all learners, targeting interventions to address educational disadvantage, raising educational attainment, meeting the needs of pupils with special education needs, providing support for immigrant children, enhancing teacher education and professional development, promoting ongoing curriculum development, school evaluation and quality improvement and providing high quality school accommodation together with administrative and financial supports." (p6, 2011c)

The past two decades are noteworthy for the range of system-wide initiatives undertaken towards tackling educational disadvantage and early school underachievement.

Such key system-wide initiatives have included inter alia:

- DEIS (Delivering Equality in Schools Programme-comprehending both primary and second level)
- EPSEN Act (2004) (Education for People with Special Needs)
- Education Welfare Act (2000), which established the National Education Welfare Board (2000)

While initiatives such as the Free Preschool Year were not primarily about tackling disadvantage, it was a major consideration in its launch.

While these initiatives were mostly built on earlier provisions (e.g. National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), School Completion Programme and Early Start), they were distinctive in that they frequently embodied a legislative “rights based” dimension; a focus on disadvantaged schools; a focus on additional supports to particularly marginalised groups such as traveller children and on children for whom English or Gaeilge was not their first language; an ongoing focus on curricular reform and quality improvement, especially with the establishment of a national framework of qualifications and a focus on intervention at the earliest ages possible, recognising that the most efficient educational strategies for government in tackling educational disadvantage involves such early life interventions.

More recently (2012) the OECD reasserted the value of early intervention arguing that, “to be effective in the long run, improvements in education needed to enable all students to have access to quality education early, to stay in the system until at least the end of upper secondary education and to obtain the skills and knowledge they will need for effective social and labour market integration.” (p2) Its Spotlight Report on Ireland notes that while the country has made “a significant effort to build a high quality and equitable education system...there is still room for improvement.” (p6) Citing the PISA returns for 2009, this report notes that, “students from low socio-economic backgrounds are 2.40 times more likely to be low performers than their peers with high socioeconomic status..(and those) whose parents have low educational attainment have twice a higher risk of low performance...” (p6)

As has been shown earlier with reference to the Barnardo’s study, this link between socioeconomic background and school achievement carries forward to the Leaving Certificate. Bearing this in mind, In its report concerning school failure (2011), the OECD suggests that the priorities for primary and post primary education over the coming years will be to promote quality, relevance and inclusiveness by supporting schools in developing an inclusive environment for all learners, targeting interventions to address educational disadvantage, raising educational attainment, meeting the needs of pupils with special education needs, providing support for immigrant children, enhancing teacher education and professional development, promoting ongoing curriculum development, school evaluation and quality improvement and providing high quality school accommodation together with administrative or financial supports.” (p6)

Mainstreaming of programmes concerning inclusion and integration in schools has been a prominent policy priority in Irish education over the past decade. This is enshrined in legislation concerning the education of children with special needs. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) lists six principles informing its advice to the Minister, the first of which is that, “all children, irrespective of special educational need, are welcome and able to enrol in their local schools.” (p3, 2013) With regard to Traveller children, the Traveller Education Strategy, while noting that, “many of the views expressed in this report could be directly related to other minority groups, such as people with disabilities” (p6, 2006), endorses “the inclusion of Travellers in the mainstream education system, in a way that respects Travellers cultural identity including nomadism.” (p9) The report goes on to state that, “inclusion is a core principle and a central theme of this report. It is recommended that all educational provision for travellers be integrated, in a phased manner, in an enhanced mainstream provision that will result in an inclusive model of educational provision.” (p10)

Notwithstanding such a generalised preoccupation with integration and inclusiveness, it could be suggested, however, that other philosophical and policy priorities work to frustrate the integration goal. Of particular significance here is the pre-eminence of parental choice in school selection and the associated commitment to diversity in school patronage.

School patronage and frustrating Integration

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Report of the Forum’s Advisory Group (2012) shows how the ambitions of Stanley in establishing a state-supported primary school system, uniting the children of different denominations, were bitterly resisted by the churches. It states that while the system remained *de jure* a mixed system, it became *de facto* a denominational one.

The report draws attention to the significance of the Papal Encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* (On the Christian Education of Youth) published in 1929, which “clearly sets out the subsidiary nature of the State’s role in education vis a vis the family and the church.” (p12) It notes how this subsidiary role became institutionalised in the Irish Constitution of 1937, where the State “acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide according to their means the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.” (Article 42.1)

So, laudable aspirations for an integrated school system in the early 1830’s were truly frustrated by the main churches on the island such that by the mid-1960’s in the Preface of *The Rules for National Schools* it was stated that, the “State provides for free primary education for children in national schools and gives explicit recognition to the denominational character of these schools.” As the Forum report points out, this was the first time in the 134 years of the national school system that the schools were formally recognised as denominational. (p14)

This subversion of the State's aims for integration was made possible by the primacy accorded the parental position in the education of children and by the State's readiness to fund patron groups that had evolved along sectarian lines. Any attempt by the State to leverage an integrated solution was either too weak or simply never arose in the first place.

Currently about 96% of the State's primary schools maintain a denominational ethos and patronage structure. Two other patronage groups have emerged in recent decades - An Foras Patrunach for Irish medium Gaelscoileanna and Educate Together. With regard to Gaelscoileanna, the issue has a further significance considering that Irish is the first official language of the State. As noted in the Forum's report, "it is State policy to promote bilingualism across Irish society and the State is committed to supporting the rights of parents who seek an Irish medium education for their children. Strong parental demand has been expressed for all Irish medium schools and the patronage groups representing such parents are pressing for greater provision of such schools." (p2)

It is arguable, however, that the State's commitment to diversity in patronage, the cultural centrality of parental choice and the ongoing subsidiary nature of the State's relationship to patron bodies together replicate the structural and cultural conditions which historically allowed for the evolution of a school system segregated on denominational lines.

In a more abstract sense the issue calls attention to the difference between an emphasis on inclusion and integration on the one hand and one on equity on the other. There is a clear policy commitment in Ireland on integration and inclusiveness but this tends to gain expression in remedial or compensatory programmes targeted on those in need. However, while the rising tide may lift all boats, the bigger boats do not become any smaller!

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to identify the various aims that underpin Irish education policy; to show where there is synergy and alignment in these aims and to establish what, if any, tensions or disjunctions are to be found between these aims. It has demonstrated that the field of educational policy in Ireland is a very active one where the last two decades have witnessed major developments throughout the entirety of the education system. It is certainly timely that the collective impact of these initiatives is reviewed, and the degree of consistency between them is established.

And so to return to the questions posed at the outset of the paper, namely, is there a generally shared, even if not explicitly articulated, framework of aims underpinning the totality of Irish education policy? If there is such a framework, what are its main elements? What is the relative priority of each component of the framework and is there a consonance and synergy between these components?

The review has highlighted a number of broad strategic national priorities, both within the field of education and outside of it, which recur frequently in policy statements- and which together approximate to such a framework. In terms of aims for the education system as well as aims of the system these include a

- commitment to lifelong learning - both for its intrinsic and instrumental value
- wide level of agreement that investment in education both supports and is essential to personal growth and agency, to social cohesion, cultural enrichment and economic development
- national drive to widen access and participation, especially in higher education
- concern to enhance the quality and currency of Irish education
- conviction on the need for an integrative, inclusive schooling experience
- recognition of the role of the parent as the 'primary educator.'

The paper has shown that there is a wide degree of commonality in the stated aims between the different programmes and policy initiatives.

While most programmes are silent on the relative priority of their respective aims, in practice some key priorities emerge, suggesting that real aims may sometimes be unstated and unstated aims may sometimes be real. Notwithstanding the silence on priorities the paper has identified a number of key dilemmas and areas of disjunction that arise, both within and between programmes in the pursuit of diverse aims. These include, in particular, the challenge of

- maintaining a coherence and synergy within and between the different education stages as the learner progresses through the system
- redressing the increasingly restrictive focus of the schooling experience, mediated primarily through the two State examinations in second level
- managing multiple and diverse aims of the system as these relate to personal growth, social and cultural enrichment and economic development
- maintaining the quality and currency of Irish educational qualifications while increasing participation and widening access, especially in higher education
- driving for integration and inclusiveness in education while allowing for diversity in school patronage and according pre-eminence to parental choice in school selection.

It would of course be unrealistic to expect a perfectly aligned set of aims and objectives for a sector as complex and as diverse as that of education. Public policy in a democracy will always be marked by tensions between objectives, by contestation on aims and by imperfect implementation.

Against this background, the paper has called attention to the facilitative - as opposed to prescriptive - role of the State in its relationship to education providers and the cultural and institutional centrality of parental choice. Together these factors combine to offset the many other attempts by the State to address educational disadvantage and to reduce the impact of social background on educational attainment.

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