



Terms and Conditions of Use of Digitised Theses from Trinity College Library Dublin

Copyright statement

All material supplied by Trinity College Library is protected by copyright (under the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 as amended) and other relevant Intellectual Property Rights. By accessing and using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you acknowledge that all Intellectual Property Rights in any Works supplied are the sole and exclusive property of the copyright and/or other IPR holder. Specific copyright holders may not be explicitly identified. Use of materials from other sources within a thesis should not be construed as a claim over them.

A non-exclusive, non-transferable licence is hereby granted to those using or reproducing, in whole or in part, the material for valid purposes, providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. Where specific permission to use material is required, this is identified and such permission must be sought from the copyright holder or agency cited.

Liability statement

By using a Digitised Thesis, I accept that Trinity College Dublin bears no legal responsibility for the accuracy, legality or comprehensiveness of materials contained within the thesis, and that Trinity College Dublin accepts no liability for indirect, consequential, or incidental, damages or losses arising from use of the thesis for whatever reason. Information located in a thesis may be subject to specific use constraints, details of which may not be explicitly described. It is the responsibility of potential and actual users to be aware of such constraints and to abide by them. By making use of material from a digitised thesis, you accept these copyright and disclaimer provisions. Where it is brought to the attention of Trinity College Library that there may be a breach of copyright or other restraint, it is the policy to withdraw or take down access to a thesis while the issue is being resolved.

Access Agreement

By using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you are bound by the following Terms & Conditions. Please read them carefully.

I have read and I understand the following statement: All material supplied via a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of a thesis is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

Trinity College Library
Dublin



University of Dublin

**THIS THESIS MAY BE READ ONLY IN THE
LIBRARY**

Bound By:
THE
THESIS CENTRE
65 Camden St. Lwr.,
Dublin 2. Ph: 475 3616
www.thesiscentre.com

THE POLITICS OF EXPANSION
A STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY
IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND
(1957-1971)

Ph.D thesis

Department of History

Trinity College Dublin

2006

John Walsh

THE POLITICAL EXPANSION
A STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY
IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND
(1957-1971)



THESIS
787

2005

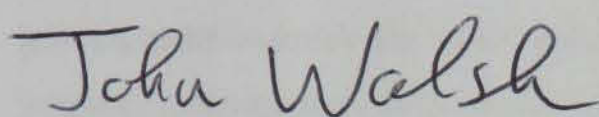
John Walsh

DECLARATIONS

I declare that this dissertation 'The Politics of Expansion: A study of educational policy in the Republic of Ireland 1957-1971' has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other University.

I affirm that this dissertation is entirely my own work.

I agree that the Library may lend or copy the dissertation on request.


John Walsh

The Politics of Expansion
A study of educational policy in the Republic of Ireland
1957-1971

SUMMARY

This project set out to investigate the far-reaching transformation in the state's educational policy, which took place within the space of a single decade, between the late 1950s and the early 1970s. A wide variety of significant changes in the educational system were initiated in this period, but the transformation in the state's policy approach, which provided the essential context for these changes, has not received detailed historical analysis.

The Irish state's policy towards education up to the 1950s was dominated by a conservative consensus, which demanded a cautious and tentative approach by successive governments towards the development of the educational system. The first indications that a younger generation of politicians were seeking to promote a more active approach by the state became apparent in the late 1950s, but progress was very limited until Seán Lemass' intervention in 1959. Lemass' policy statement on the extension of the school leaving age in October 1959 marked the emergence of a viable government policy for the expansion of the educational system. The transformation of the educational system was driven by a series of reforming initiatives undertaken by the state in the 1960s. The reforms initiated by Dr. Patrick Hillery, as Minister for Education between 1959 and 1965, involved significant policy changes, which were no less important than the more dramatic measures announced by his successors. The new policy ideas adopted by leading politicians and officials were heavily influenced by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), which encouraged the policy changes in various ways. The most important initiative proposed by the OECD in this period was a pilot study of long-term needs for educational resources, which was undertaken by an Irish survey team under the auspices of the international organisation and the Department of Education between 1962 and 1965. The report of the survey team, *Investment in Education*, provided the context and rationale for many of the reforms of the period. The confident and pro-active approach taken by the Department of Education under successive ministers in the 1960s owed much to the critical analysis of the Irish educational sector provided by the report. The department, which had previously been distinguished by its hesitant and conservative approach to educational problems, acted decisively to initiate reforms in almost every segment of the educational system.

Donogh O'Malley's dramatic initiative for the introduction of free post-primary education was an important landmark in the rapid expansion of second-level education. But the transformation of the educational system was not simply the product of free post-primary education: it was an evolving process, which began in the late 1950s and continued throughout

the following decade. The expansion of higher technical education in this period was also a key development, which extended educational opportunity and upgraded the status of technical education within the third-level sector. The transformation of the Irish educational system was shaped by persistent and far-reaching intervention on the part of the state. The almost bewildering scope and pace of educational reform cannot be attributed solely to the efforts of reforming ministers or officials within the Department of Education. Lemass played a central part in initiating and directing the radical reform and expansion of Irish education during his term as Taoiseach. The Department of Finance also gave a higher priority to education in this period than in the previous decade, although the scale of the increase in educational expenditure increasingly alarmed its senior officials by 1970. The pro-active policy approach adopted by the state in this period contrasted sharply with the traditional conservative practice of the previous generation.

This study is based principally on archival material, which was not previously available or was not fully exploited with regard to education. My study draws on the files of the Department of Education, which are not yet publicly available. The files of the Department of the Taoiseach for the 1960s also contain very considerable material on education, which has not been fully examined in this context. The McQuaid Papers in the Dublin Diocesan Archives provided an invaluable source of information on relations between the Catholic Hierarchy and the Department of Education. The proceedings of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and the reports of the Secondary Education Committee, which was established by the Protestant churches in 1965, gave a valuable insight into the approach followed by the Protestant educational authorities in this period. My study has also drawn upon the proceedings of the Public Accounts Committee, which have not previously been used in a study of educational policy. A wide range of other archival and library material has also been consulted, including the records of the Association of Secondary Teachers' Ireland, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the Teachers' Union of Ireland. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the transformation of the state's educational policy in the 1960s, based upon original archival research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to record my thanks first and foremost to my supervisor, Professor Eunan O'Halpin, for his invaluable advice and assistance. I am also grateful to Professor Jane Ohlmeyer, Head of the Department of Modern History, Trinity College Dublin, for her support and encouragement. Thanks are also due to the administrative staff in the department, Jill Northridge and Jennifer Scholtz and to my fellow postgraduate students.

I wish to thank the directors and staff of the following libraries and archives for their assistance and co-operation: Trinity College Library, the National Library of Ireland, the National Archives, Church of Ireland Library, Braemor Park and UCD Archives Department. I wish to record my gratitude particularly to Dr. David Sheehy, Dublin Diocesan Archives, Dr. Liz Mullins, Irish Jesuit Archives, Karen Johnson, Christian Brothers' Archives, St. Mary's Province and Michelle Cooney, Christian Brothers' Archives, St. Helen's Province. The officers and staff of all three teaching unions were consistently helpful in providing available records and papers. I am particularly indebted to John MacGabhann, Education Officer with the TUI, Maura Leydon, Assistant General Secretary of the ASTI, and Ann McConnell and Aoife Doyle in the INTO. I wish to express my gratitude to Bernadette Kinsella and Gráinne O'Neill of the Secretariat of Secondary Schools for making available the records of the CMCSS and other private managerial bodies. I am also grateful for the assistance of the officials of the Records Management section of the Department of Education, including Andrea Hudson and Noeleen Edmonds.

Professor John Coolahan, Professor Áine Hyland and Dr. Séamus Ó Buachalla shared their valuable insights concerning the development of Irish education in the 1960s: Professor Hyland also supplied me with important documentation relating to educational policy which was not available within the Department of Education. I wish to thank all the former elected representatives and officials, who gave generously of their time either through interviews or correspondence, including Dr. Patrick Hillery, Mr. Barry Desmond, Professor Martin O'Donoghue, Mr. Tony Ó Dálaigh and Mr. Thomas Leahy. I am particularly grateful to the late Mr. James Dukes, who was always helpful and responded to requests for information with unfailing courtesy and consideration.

I wish to thank Mr. Jim Cooke, Mr. Patrick Wall and Dr. Daithí Ó Corráin for providing information on specific topics or facilitating access to relevant archival materials. I greatly appreciate the invaluable technical assistance provided by Mairéad de Róiste, of the Department of Geography, TCD, who gave generously of her time and expertise on various issues at short notice. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Dr. Shane Martin for reading various drafts of this study. Finally I wish to record my thanks especially to my parents, Maura and John Walsh, whose consistent help and support has been essential to the successful completion of this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>List of Tables and Figures</u>		(iii)
<u>Introduction</u>		1
<u>Chapter 1</u>	A conservative consensus and the origins of reform: 1957-59	7
	Primary education	15
	Post-primary education	28
	Higher education	36
	Conclusion	43
<u>Chapter 2</u>	Developing a policy for expansion: 1959-61	45
	Primary education	47
	The Irish language	50
	Post-primary education	55
	Higher education	63
	Conclusion	71
<u>Chapter 3</u>	Educational reform and the origins of planning: 1961-65	73
	The OECD pilot study	73
	Primary education	86
	Special education	90
	Post-primary education	90
	Higher education	131
	The Irish language	133
	Conclusion	136
<u>Chapter 4</u>	Educational planning and the impact of	
	<i>Investment in Education: 1965-66</i>	138
	The influence of <i>Investment in Education</i>	143
	The re-organisation of primary education	149
	Post-primary education: the policy of integration	168
	Higher education	192
	Developing special education	194

	The Irish language	196
	Lemass and educational expansion	198
	Conclusion	199
<u>Chapter 5</u>	The politics of transformation	
	- primary and post-primary education: 1966-68	201
	Primary education: policy changes	204
	Post-primary education: rationalisation and resistance	212
	Initiating free post-primary education	221
	Conclusion	268
<u>Chapter 6</u>	The transformation of technical education and the state's policy for higher education: 1966-68	270
	The expansion of higher technical education	270
	O'Malley's plan for university merger	282
	Conclusion	296
<u>Chapter 7</u>	The limits of reform: 1968-71	298
	Reforming primary education: the new national curriculum	298
	Restructuring post-primary education	305
	Integrating the teaching profession	329
	Raising the school leaving age	341
	Higher education	348
	Conclusion	362
<u>Conclusion</u>		364
	Drivers of educational reform	368
	Underlying patterns in the reshaping of Irish education	376
<u>Appendix 1</u>	Educational expenditure by the state: 1957-71	
	(Tables 1-5 and Figure 1)	381
<u>Appendix 2</u>	Regional inequalities at post-primary level	
	(Figure 2)	385
<u>Bibliography</u>		386

LIST OF TABLES

- Table 1:** Net current expenditure by the Exchequer on primary, post-primary and higher education in the 1950s (selected years). 381
- Table 2:** Net current expenditure by the Exchequer on primary, post-primary and higher education: 1960-72. 381
- Table 3:** The Expansion of the Primary School Building Programme, from 1956-57 to 1964-65 382
- Table 4:** Educational Expenditure as a proportion of overall government expenditure: 1961-62 to 1971-72 382
- Table 5:** Educational expenditure as a proportion of Gross National Product (GNP) over a ten-year period: 1961-62 to 1971-72 383

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1:** The expansion of educational expenditure by the state as a percentage of GNP between 1961 and 1974. 384
- Figure 2:** The regional inequalities in educational participation at post-primary level, which were illustrated by *Investment in Education* 385

The Politics of Expansion
A study of educational policy in the Republic of Ireland
1957-1971

Introduction

The transformation of the Irish educational system, which was initiated in the 1960s, was the outcome of deliberate policy decisions taken by leading politicians and officials. A wide variety of significant changes in the educational system were initiated in this period, but the transformation in the state's policy approach, which provided the essential context for these changes, has not received detailed historical analysis. The dramatic expansion of the educational sector in the 1960s cannot be fully explained without considering the rapid and sweeping changes in education policy. The present study seeks to explore the far-reaching policy changes adopted by the state in this period and to investigate the impact of these changes on the Irish educational sector. The transformation of the educational system was inextricably linked to the gradual evolution of the state's policy for educational expansion. This study seeks to investigate the origins and development of the profound changes in educational policy adopted by politicians and officials between the late 1950s and early 1970s.

There is no doubt that the educational policy of the Irish state was transformed between the late 1950s and the early 1970s. The state's timid and tentative approach to education in the 1950s was based on a conservative consensus, which was shared by politicians, senior officials and educational authorities. The Department of Education was perceived by many contemporaries as a barrier to educational reform. Professor John J. O'Meara of University College Dublin was by no means alone in his scathing critique of the department in March 1958:

'Hardly more than a ripple or two has come to disturb that stagnant pond which is the Department of Education since the State was founded - and it would seem that hardly a ripple ever will - for that department seems to share some of the qualities of the natural law: it seems to be immutable.'¹

While conservative attitudes on the part of many stakeholders within the system persisted throughout the 1960s, leading politicians and officials developed a pro-active and interventionist policy for educational expansion. Indeed by the late 1960s the Department of Education was regarded by the secondary school managerial authorities as

¹ John J. O'Meara, *Reform in Education*, p.6 (Mount Salus Press, Dublin, 1958)

an aggressive and insensitive force for change in the educational sector.² Sr. Eileen Randles summarised the views of many secondary school managers when she argued in 1975 that the 'intemperate zeal of the Department of Education officials' aroused considerable resentment among the secondary school authorities in the previous decade.³ These critical but strikingly divergent views of the department's approach underlined the fundamental transformation of the state's policy within the space of a single decade.

The evolution of a pro-active, reforming approach by the state towards the educational sector began in the late 1950s. The government's adoption of a programme of economic expansion in 1958 certainly encouraged the development of a more positive appreciation of the potential benefits of education for national economic development. The election of Seán Lemass as Taoiseach created a favourable political climate for the formulation of a coherent reforming policy in education. The appointment by Lemass of a succession of dynamic ministers, drawn from Fianna Fáil's younger generation, to head the Department of Education also enhanced the status of the department and heightened the profile of education as a political issue.⁴ Domestic political and economic changes did not provide the sole impetus for educational advances. The international context for the policy changes should not be discounted, not least the Irish state's involvement in the Organisation for Co-operation and Development in Europe (OECD). The OECD's zealous promotion of scientific education and technological development among its members exerted an important influence on the state's educational policy.

The government's educational policy initially evolved in a cautious and measured fashion under the direction of Dr. Patrick Hillery, Minister for Education between 1959 and 1965. Séamus Ó Buachalla indeed suggested that 'Hillery's main role was precursorial, preparing public and political opinion for the policy changes which were still in preparation'.⁵ This view suggests that Hillery's term of office was important largely because it prepared the way for key policy changes made by others. But it can also be argued that the reforms initiated by Hillery involved significant policy changes, which were no less important than the more dramatic measures announced by his successors. The announcement by Hillery of the government's plan for post-primary education and the development of regional technological colleges on 20 May 1963

² E. Randles, *Post-Primary Education in Ireland 1957-70*, pp.322-323 (Dublin, 1975)

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ S. Ó Buachalla, 'Investment in Education: Context, Content and Impact' *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), p.10-20

⁵ S. Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland*, p.290 (Dublin, 1988)

underlined that the transformation of the state's policy approach was already well advanced in the early 1960s. The steady advance in the role and influence of the state within the educational sector was reflected in the wide range of reforming initiatives undertaken by the department under Hillery. While Lemass' influence on the evolution of the state's policy was certainly significant, Hillery's own role in launching the process of educational reform may well have been underestimated. Hillery's contribution to the reform and expansion of the Irish educational sector in this period deserves a detailed re-appraisal.

The increasing importance attached to education as a key element in economic development was reflected in the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part II*, which gave considerable attention to the economic and social advantages of educational expansion.⁶ Indeed it was alleged by various stakeholders within the educational system that the government's policy for educational reform was driven by economic considerations. It would be foolish to argue that the government's willingness to invest in education had nothing to do with its concern to sustain economic progress. But the commitment made by successive ministers to equality of educational opportunity in the 1960s is also relevant to any analysis of the various elements, which influenced the state's policy. The pro-active policy approach adopted by the state in this period was not developed solely by ministers or senior officials. It is widely recognised that *Investment in Education*, the report compiled by an Irish survey team between 1962 and 1965 under the auspices of the OECD and the Department of Education, greatly influenced the development of coherent educational planning by the department. The survey team's comprehensive analysis of the Irish educational system provided essential statistical data for educational planning and shaped the policies adopted by George Colley, who served as Minister for Education from April 1965 until July 1966.

Donogh O'Malley, who was the third reforming minister appointed by Lemass, secured political immortality with his dramatic announcement of the introduction of free post-primary education in September 1966. An assessment of the initiative for free post-primary education has to consider not only O'Malley's undoubted personal commitment to the initiative, but also the influence of *Investment in Education*, the preparations within the Department of Education for some form of free education by 1970 and the role of

⁶ *The Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part II, laid by the Government before each House of the Oireachtas, July 1964*, p.193 (Stationery Office, Dublin, 1964)

Lemass in facilitating educational reform. O'Malley's influence has to be considered in terms of his overall contribution to the transformation of the educational system, not simply on the basis of his dramatic initiative for free second-level education. O'Malley's role in the expansion of higher technical education in the late 1960s has perhaps been obscured by the greater public drama of his announcement on free education. Moreover the Minister's achievements should be seen in the context of Lemass' commitment to give priority to educational expansion in the allocation of scarce national resources.

Education in Ireland has attracted considerable academic interest, but there has been no detailed historical analysis of the transformation of educational policy in the 1960s. Dr. Séamus Ó Buachalla has provided a detailed examination of the policy process in his work *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1988).⁷ This work deals with the process of policy formulation and implementation in the first eight decades of twentieth century and by its nature gives relatively little attention to the development of educational policy in the 1960s. Professor John Coolahan also gives an overview of educational change between 1960 and 1980 in his work, *Irish education: its history and structure* (IPA, Dublin, 1981).⁸ This is an informative commentary on the extent of the educational changes after 1960, which is not intended to deal in detail with the development of the state's policy for educational expansion. A more recent work by Dr. Eileen Doyle, *Leading the Way: Managing Voluntary Schools* (Secretariat of Secondary Schools, 2000), focuses primarily on the development of the managerial bodies in secondary education.⁹ All of these works provide valuable insights concerning the evolution of the Irish educational system in the twentieth century. There is a need, however, for a comprehensive historical analysis of the far-reaching changes in the educational sector in the 1960s.

This study is based principally on archival material, which was not previously available for research purposes or was not fully exploited with regard to education. My study draws on the records of the Department of Education, which are not yet publicly available. No policy files from the Department of Education after 1932 are available in the National Archives, but I was fortunate to gain access to the records held by the department itself. While all of the relevant material was not available within the department, the available material was extensive, particularly with regard to primary and

⁷ S. Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1988)

⁸ J. Coolahan, *Irish Education: its history and structure*, pp.131-140 (IPA, Dublin, 1981)

⁹ E. Doyle, *Leading the Way: Managing Voluntary Secondary Schools* (Secretariat of Secondary Schools, 2000)

post-primary education. The files of the Department of the Taoiseach in the National Archives also provided very full documentation on education, including extensive records of the Department of Education, which were unavailable elsewhere. The records of the Department of the Taoiseach had not been fully examined in this context previously and yielded much valuable information especially concerning the interaction between Lemass and successive Ministers for Education. The records of the Department of Finance, especially its Economic Development Branch, also contained substantial material on education and on the Irish's state interaction with the OECD in the early 1960s. My study has also drawn upon the proceedings of the Public Accounts Committee, which have not previously been used in a study of educational policy.

The McQuaid Papers in the Dublin Diocesan Archives provided an invaluable source of information on relations between the Catholic Hierarchy and the Department of Education in this period. The archive of the Secretariat of Secondary Schools was a rich source for the papers of most of the Catholic managerial bodies, including the Conference of Convent Secondary Schools, the Council of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools and the Catholic Headmasters' Association. My study has also drawn upon the records of the Irish Christian Brothers and the Irish Jesuit Archives: the records of the Jesuit order contain papers and correspondence which have not previously been used in a study of education in this period. I also consulted the proceedings of the Journal of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and the reports of the Secondary Education Committee (SEC), which illustrated the views of the Protestant churches and educational authorities to the process of educational expansion.

A wide range of additional archival and library material has also been consulted, including the records of all three teaching unions and the Irish Vocational Education Association. The back issues of national and local newspapers in the National Library, which have not been fully exploited with regard to education, proved a valuable source for ministerial announcements and public reaction to educational initiatives. Personal papers are unfortunately not available for several prominent public figures in this period, including Seán Lemass, Jack Lynch, George Colley and Donogh O'Malley. My study has drawn upon the papers of other public figures, including General Richard Mulcahy and Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, which are available in the Archives Department of University College Dublin. I have also undertaken a number of interviews with retired public figures, including politicians, officials of the Department of Education and academics who participated in the policy decisions of the period.

This study focuses on the expansion and development of the Irish educational system from primary to third-level education. The thesis does not attempt to evaluate developments relating to the reformatory and industrial schools, which came formally under the remit of the Department of Education, although the policy issues affecting reformatory education and juvenile detention also involved the Departments of Justice and Health. The area of reformatory education is not explored by this study as it remains a matter of contemporary controversy and much of the essential primary source material is still inaccessible. The study therefore seeks to evaluate the influence exerted by the policy changes in this period on the development of primary, post-primary and higher education.



General Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Education in the first Fianna Fáil government between 1948 and 1951, clearly favoured the new state educational system in his memoirs in 1964 on 29 July 1951. The system was characterised by the professional of private interests, notably the Catholic and Protestant churches, especially at post-primary level. The Minister's statement was widely criticised and only with the prevailing opinion of the Department of Education that the dominant political opinion considered the state's role in the development of the educational system. Certainly Mulcahy's private 1964 memoirs that I quote here do indicate that the Minister's role of the state in managing or directing the educational system caused him some concern. Indeed he strongly defended the educational achievements of the Irish system in June 1953, claiming that 'persistent criticisms' made by left-wing politicians and educationalists, which reflected the opposition of Irish education abroad, 'the public's public reaction against the right to the government's removal of discretionary government, the new Minister's willingness to pursue incremental reforms, especially in primary education, 1948-51, was not due to any study to involve conflict with state's educational interests.

The educational policy approach favoured by the state was accurately reflected in the memoirs by Mulcahy, who served as Minister for Education between 1948-51 and 1954-57, on 29 July 1951 (Mulcahy's memoirs) in recognition of the role of the Minister and the Department of Education, which had the management and direction of the educational system rested with private interests and the churches, with unopposed legal

Chapter 1
The Conservative Consensus and the Origins of Reform
1957-59

‘You have your teachers, your managers and your churches and I regard the position as Minister in the Department of Education as that of a kind of dungaree man, the plumber who will make satisfactory communications and streamline the forces and potentialities of the educational workers and educational management in this country. He will take the knock out of the pipes and will link up everything. I would be blind to my responsibility if I insisted on pontificating or lapsed into an easy acceptance of an imagined duty to philosophise here on educational matters.’¹

General Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Education in two inter-party governments between 1948 and 1957, clearly expressed his view of the Irish educational system in his statement to the Dáil on 19 July 1956. The system was characterised by the predominance of private interests, notably the Catholic and Protestant churches, especially at post-primary level. The Minister’s statement was entirely consistent not only with the prevailing practice of the Department of Education but with the dominant political consensus concerning the state’s limited role in the development of the educational system. Certainly Mulcahy’s Fianna Fáil successor Jack Lynch gave no indication that the limited role of the state in managing or directing the educational system caused him any concern. Indeed he strongly defended the educational achievements of the Irish system in June 1958, claiming that ‘misleading statements’ made by left-wing politicians and critical commentators would undermine the reputation of Irish education abroad.² But while Lynch’s public pronouncements paid homage to the conservative consensus of the previous generation, the new Minister proved willing to initiate incremental reforms, especially in primary education where his actions were least likely to involve conflict with established private interests.

The traditional policy approach followed by the state was accurately reflected in the statement by Mulcahy, who served as Minister for Education between 1948-51 and 1954-57, on 19 July 1956. Mulcahy’s minimalist conception of the role of the Minister and the Department of Education assumed that the management and direction of the educational system rested with private managers and the churches, with unspecified input

¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 159, col.1494, 19 July 1956

² *Ibid.*, 1489-1503

from the teachers.³ He had effectively disclaimed all responsibility for the formulation of educational policy and indicated that the only viable role for the Minister was to facilitate the work of the private interests, which controlled the educational system. Mulcahy was a staunch defender of the educational system, which had evolved in the independent Irish state. Mulcahy's highly restrictive definition of the state's role in education was a reflection of the consensus of the era. Seán O'Connor, who was appointed as a Principal Officer in the department in 1956 and was personally appalled by Mulcahy's statement, commented that: 'The sentiments he expressed, however, were in full accord with the senior officials of the Department.'⁴ Similarly, James Dukes, who served as Private Secretary to Mulcahy, Jack Lynch and Patrick Hillery, believed that the senior officials regarded Education, with some reason, as a junior department, under-staffed, under-resourced and unable to take on any additional responsibilities: 'they were up to their ears with work and it was very tight where money was concerned.'⁵ Mulcahy had expressed openly the accepted position of the department.

The financial constraints imposed by the Department of Finance, especially pressure for cuts in the Education Estimates between 1955 and 1957, also reinforced the prevailing official reluctance to take a pro-active approach to the formulation of education policy.⁶ Dukes recalled: 'We were completely under the thumb of Finance'.⁷ The Department of Education informed the Public Accounts Committee that no vacancies for the positions of school inspectors could be filled without seeking the permission of the Department of Finance.⁸ Moreover the Secretary was not allowed to take any measures to fill a vacancy until an actual retirement had occurred and even then vacancies could not be filled as they arose, as the department was obliged to wait until a number of vacancies could be filled en bloc.⁹ Moreover efforts were made by the Department of Finance to curtail national school building, teacher salaries and schemes for the promotion of the Irish language during Mulcahy's second term as Minister. The Minister for Finance, Gerry Sweetman, proposed a series of stringent restrictions on educational expenditure in August 1954, including a reduction of future capital

³ *Ibid.*, Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, p.274

⁴ S. O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky: Reflections on the Irish Educational Scene 1957-68*, p. 2 (Dublin, 1986)

⁵ Interview with James Dukes, 28 April 2003

⁶ Interview with James Dukes, 4 December 2000

⁷ Interview with James Dukes, 4 December 2000

⁸ *Report of the Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1948-49*, p.65 (Dublin, 1951)

⁹ *Ibid.*

investment in vocational education.¹⁰ Mulcahy firmly defended his departmental estimates and succeeded in blocking most of the cuts sought by the Department of Finance at the outset of his second term, although he was obliged to accept reductions in expenditure for secondary and vocational education in 1956.¹¹ Mulcahy had, however, little inclination to promote new policy initiatives. While Education, like other government departments, endured financial constraints in this period, it also appears that Mulcahy and his senior officials did not seriously attempt to challenge the prevailing financial orthodoxy or expand the role of their department. Mulcahy himself was perceived by his officials as a decent and conscientious public figure but not a forceful or innovative minister.¹² He was not associated with any significant policy initiative during his second term as Minister for Education between 1954 and 1957. Mulcahy was deeply committed to the revival of the Irish language, but this commitment was expressed in his implementation of existing departmental policy. The programmes organised by the department to promote the Irish language, including special courses for teachers and funding for Irish publications, were maintained under Mulcahy's stewardship in the face of demands for severe reductions in such programmes by the Department of Finance.¹³ Mulcahy's approach fully reflected the existing minimalist approach of the Irish state in education, which was based upon the assumption that the policy initiative rested primarily with private, mainly clerical, interests.¹⁴ The Department of Education did not challenge the predominant position held by clerical managers or religious orders within primary and secondary education until the 1960s.¹⁵

Moreover a key feature of the Irish educational system up to the 1950s was the underdevelopment and neglect of vocational and technical education. Comprehensive assurances had been given by John Marcus O'Sullivan, Minister for Education, to the Catholic Hierarchy in October 1930 that the vocational schools would provide continuation and technical education of a strictly practical character under the terms of the Vocational Education Act 1930: they would not provide general education, which

¹⁰ Archives Department, University College Dublin (UCDA), *The Mulcahy Papers*, P7/C/154, G. Sweetman to R. Mulcahy, 18 August 1954

¹¹ *The Mulcahy Papers*, P7/C/154, Mulcahy to Sweetman, 30 September 1954, T. Ó Raifeartaigh to the Secretary, Department of Finance, 6 October 1954

¹² Interview with James Dukes, 4 December 2000, Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, p.275

¹³ UCDA, *The Mulcahy Papers*, P7/C/154, G. Sweetman to R. Mulcahy, 18 August 1954

¹⁴ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, pp.11-12

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

would continue to be given in primary and secondary schools.¹⁶ O'Sullivan specifically assured the Bishops that a more universal system of post-primary education would not be achieved through the extension of the vocational system.¹⁷ Successive governments since 1930 had maintained the vocational character of the sector, which was guaranteed by the Vocational Education Act and the Minister's assurances to the Hierarchy.¹⁸ Vocational school students were denied access to the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations and restricted to a two-year second level course for the Group Certificate. The restrictions imposed by the state helped to ensure that the status of the vocational system was always inferior to the prestige enjoyed by the private secondary schools.¹⁹

The deliberations of the Council of Education illustrated the conservative attitudes towards education and the role of the state, which prevailed among the educational authorities in this period. Mulcahy established the Council in April 1950 to undertake a review of the functions of primary, secondary and vocational education.²⁰ The Council was intended to advise the Minister 'upon such matters relating to educational theory and practice as it might think fit and upon any educational questions and problems referred to them by him.'²¹ The Council was entirely dominated by established educational interests, especially clerical representatives of various denominations. The membership of the Council was drawn largely from the ranks of the educational authorities, excluding the teaching associations or formal representation by parents.²² Indeed twenty-six of the twenty-nine members appointed by Mulcahy were professional educators and no less than eleven of the nominees were clergy of various denominations: the Council was chaired by two Catholic clergymen, first by Canon Denis O'Keeffe and then by Monsignor Martin Brenan.²³ The narrowly based membership of the Council underlined its status as a forum for powerful established interests, which had the largest stake in the existing structures of the educational sector.

The Council made its report on primary education to Mulcahy in September 1954. The report was generally conservative in its approach to educational problems. The

¹⁶ Letter from J.M. O'Sullivan TD, Minister for Education, to Dr. D. Keane, Bishop of Limerick, on the Vocational Education Act 1930, 31 October 1930, A. Hyland and K. Milne (eds.), *Irish Educational Documents 2*, pp.219-222 (Dublin, 1992)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, A. Hyland, 'The Curriculum of Vocational Education 1930-1966', in J. Logan (ed.), *Teachers' Union: The TUI and its Forerunners in Irish Education 1899-1994*, pp.133-134 (Dublin, 1999)

¹⁸ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, pp.28-29

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.27

²⁰ Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, pp.273-274

²¹ *Report of the Council of Education (2), The Curriculum of the Secondary School*, iv-v (Dublin, 1962)

²² Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, pp.67-68

²³ *Report of the Council of Education (2), The Curriculum of the Secondary School*, ii (Dublin, 1962)

Council clearly rejected the idea of a higher statutory school leaving age and saw no necessity to indicate any precise age for the end of primary education.²⁴ The report also strongly defended small one-teacher schools and regarded the transport of children to a central school, instead of keeping an existing school open, as 'an expedient of last resort'.²⁵ The Council's conclusions on the management of national schools reflected its hostility to state involvement in the educational system: the report expressed the fear that an unhealthy perception of state control could be created by the term 'National School' and recommended that the designation of 'Primary School' should be used instead, to indicate that the Irish schools were not in fact state schools.²⁶ It is difficult to dispute the dismissive verdict of Seán O'Connor, who described the report as 'that lacklustre and most conservative document'.²⁷

The second report of the Council, which dealt with the secondary school programme, was even more dismissive of proposals for reform in second-level education. The Council's deliberations were informed by no great sense of urgency: it started its analysis of the secondary school programme in 1954 and completed its report only in November 1960.²⁸ The report presented a deeply conservative analysis, which gave considerable emphasis to defending the distinctive character of secondary education in Ireland. The Council started from the premise that the central purpose of secondary schools was the inculcation of religious values: 'The ultimate purpose of secondary schools in Ireland is, in short, to prepare their pupils to be God-fearing and responsible citizens.'²⁹ The report drew a sharp distinction between secondary and vocational education, emphasizing that the liberal education, involving the all-round formation of the individual, was the immediate object of the secondary school.³⁰ The Council proceeded to warn against the danger of giving excessive importance to science in secondary education at the expense of general moral and intellectual development: they argued that 'demands are being made which would subordinate the general education of

²⁴ *Report of the Council of Education (1) The Function of the Primary School (2) The Curriculum to be Pursued in the Primary School*, pp.266-268 (Dublin, 1954)

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.290

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.37

²⁸ *Ibid.*, *Report of the Council of Education (2), The Curriculum of the Secondary School*, p.282 (Dublin, 1962)

²⁹ *Report of the Council of Education (2), The Curriculum of the Secondary School*, p.256 (Dublin, 1962)

³⁰ *Ibid.*

the secondary school to specialised study and sacrifice the formation of the man in the interests of scientific progress.³¹

The Council also showed a considerable suspicion of innovations, which might involve increased state intervention in secondary education. The report noted with approval that the involvement of the state in secondary education was limited and defended the existing system, praising the co-operation between the department and the private school authorities.³² The Council emphatically opposed the idea of a formal system of vocational guidance operated by the state or indeed any public authority.³³ They also categorically rejected any general scheme of 'secondary education for all' on financial and educational grounds.³⁴ The Council considered the idea of free post-primary education although it was not directly relevant to its terms of reference and dismissed it as 'utopian', as the state could not sustain the financial burden.³⁵ Moreover they considered a universal scheme of free secondary education to be objectionable on the basis that it would reduce incentives for pupils and cause standards to fall. The Council instead argued that private initiative, which should be supported by increased state grants and scholarships, provided the best means of extending the facilities for secondary education.³⁶ The predominant attitude of the Council was not simply conservative and hostile to state intervention, but also elitist in its conception of secondary education. The report indicated that the managerial authorities represented on the Council were broadly satisfied with the key features of the existing system and were reluctant to contemplate significant changes.³⁷ The deeply conservative approach favoured by the Council ensured that its influence on educational policy was virtually non-existent. The failure of the Council of Education to make any impact underlined the strength of the conservative consensus, which dominated the approach of the educational authorities in this period. The hostility of powerful educational interests to any significant policy changes provided much of the rationale for the timid and tentative approach towards educational policy pursued by the state in the 1950s.

The replacement of General Mulcahy by Jack Lynch on 20 March 1957, following the election of a Fianna Fáil government led by Eamon de Valera, did not bring

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.184

³² *Ibid.*, p.280

³³ *Ibid.*, p.256

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.282

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.252

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.252

³⁷ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.69, Hyland, 'The Curriculum', in Logan (ed.), *Teachers' Union*, p.149

any immediate change in the state's minimalist approach to education. Lynch maintained cuts originally imposed by Mulcahy in secondary and vocational education, when he announced his first Estimates as Minister on 1 May 1957.³⁸ The Education Estimates, which had been prepared by officials before Mulcahy's departure from office, were approved by Lynch without substantial amendment.³⁹ Mulcahy, in 1956, had imposed a cut of 10% in the capitation grants paid to secondary schools and a reduction of 6% in the annual state grants paid to the Vocational Education Committees (VECs).⁴⁰ Lynch indicated that both cuts would be applied again in 1957-58 due to severe budgetary problems, although he promised to review the reductions and expressed particular regret that the cut affecting vocational education could not be reversed immediately.⁴¹ Perhaps more significant than Lynch's endorsement of his predecessor's Estimates was the new Minister's commentary on the educational system in his speech on the Estimates. He emphasized the importance of education, arguing that proper moral and social education was required to inculcate civic virtues and discourage emigration by young people.⁴² He criticised unnecessary emigration, which was caused as much as by 'a moral sickness' afflicting many Irish people as by material conditions: he regarded education as an essential means of overcoming this spiritual malaise and inculcating a strong national spirit.⁴³ The Minister argued too that Ireland enjoyed a sound educational system, which was not appreciated by critics of the system who propagated a misguided view of the role of the state. While it was acknowledged that education in Ireland was faced with many problems, Lynch emphasized that such problems were not solely a matter for the state. The educational system was influenced by important private interests and the state could not simply take control of the educational structures to enforce drastic changes. He warned that a policy involving state control of education, which was, in his view, the desired objective of such critics as the left-wing socialist TD, Dr. Noel Browne, would require financial penalties to compel the participation of schools in a state system and would infringe parental rights.⁴⁴ In his first major parliamentary contribution as Minister, Lynch said little that was inconsistent with Mulcahy's approach and endorsed the traditional deference shown by the department to the private, clerical interests which

³⁸ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, pp.22-23

³⁹ *Dáil Debates* vol.161, col.494, 1 May 1957

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.17

⁴¹ *Dáil Debates* vol.161, col.494-503, 1 May 1957

⁴² *Ibid.*, Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, pp.22-23

⁴³ *Dáil Debates*, vol.161, col.494-503, 1 May 1957

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

dominated the educational system. The new Minister had at least indicated that the department shared responsibility with private educational interests for the formulation of future policy, suggesting that the Irish educational structure was a co-operative system in which the state was obliged to work closely with the relevant educational interests.⁴⁵ Lynch's statement, however, was cautious and conventional, rejecting criticism of educational provision as an unwarranted attempt to undermine the private managerial system.

Lynch again enunciated his view of the Irish educational system in the Dáil on 10 June 1958. The Minister argued, in his reply to the debate on the Education Estimates, 'our system is fundamentally sound, that perhaps within the system there are defects, but within the structure we can still cure many of these defects.'⁴⁶ There was little sign that Lynch saw any necessity for significant change in the state's traditionally minimalist approach to education. The Minister, however, gave a more reliable indication of his intentions when he looked forward to the amelioration of educational problems by working within the existing structure. Lynch's general reference to unspecified defects in the system, which were open to improvement, was consistent with his approach as a cautious incremental reformer.

Despite the conventional tone of his rhetoric, Lynch gave indications that he was ready to contemplate policy changes where reforms did not bring him into conflict with established educational interests. He initiated a proposal for an oral Irish component within the Leaving Certificate examination, announcing in his first Estimates speech on 1 May 1957 that he intended to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of such an oral test.⁴⁷ Lynch took a traditional approach in defending the established policy of reviving the Irish language, praising the effort made to revive Irish in the schools and criticising Fine Gael TD Patrick O'Donnell on 10 June 1958 for adopting a 'defeatist view', in arguing that the language would fail unless priority was given to the Gaeltacht.⁴⁸ The Minister pointed that language revival was not simply a matter for the Department of Education, as de Valera had announced the establishment of a Commission on the restoration of the Irish language, which was to examine various means of achieving the revival of Irish.⁴⁹ The Taoiseach took the leading role in determining the terms of

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol.168, col.1503, 10 June 1958

⁴⁷ *Dáil Debates* vol.161, col.494-503, 1 May 1957, Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, p.277

⁴⁸ *Dáil Debates* vol.168, col.1510, 10 June 1958

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, CAB 2/18, G.C. 8/75, Cabinet Minutes, 24 January 1958, pp.1-2

reference for the Commission, which was established in July 1958.⁵⁰ Lynch was, however, strongly committed to the introduction of an oral Irish test, believing that it would be greatly beneficial for the teaching of Irish.⁵¹ Following the completion of a favourable evaluation of the idea, the Secondary Education Branch indicated in a progress report for the first quarter of 1958, that it had been decided to introduce the oral test in Irish for the Leaving Certificate Examination in 1960.⁵² Lynch announced the introduction of the oral test in the Dáil on 22 May 1958, acknowledging that the administration of the test would prove a difficult undertaking but expressing confidence that the difficulties would be overcome by using not only Secondary inspectors but national school inspectors also as examiners for the test.⁵³ He strongly defended the decision to introduce the oral test for the Leaving Certificate rather than the Intermediate Certificate, arguing that the Leaving Certificate was the end-point of the Secondary school course and oral Irish would therefore feature on the entire Secondary course from the beginning.⁵⁴ Lynch's initiative was a significant curriculum innovation in the teaching of Irish, especially in the context of the public emphasis given by successive governments to the revival of the Irish language as a national objective.

Primary Education

The new Minister signalled another, more significant policy change very early in his term. When Lynch replied to the debate on the Education Estimates for 1957-58, he pledged to review the ban on the employment of married women teachers in national schools.⁵⁵ Rule 72(1), which required women teachers to retire on marriage, had been maintained by the department since 1933 despite the vociferous opposition of the INTO.⁵⁶ Lynch described the ban on 1 May 1957 as 'a great waste of teaching power'.⁵⁷ While he made no commitment to change the rule, he had clearly demonstrated his disagreement with the marriage ban maintained by the department for over twenty-five years. Although his rhetoric remained cautious, the new Minister indicated early in his

⁵⁰ CAB 2/18, G.C. 8/97, Cabinet Minutes, 22 April 1958, p.2

⁵¹ *Dáil Debates* vol.168, col.644-645, 22 May 1958

⁵² W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (ii), *Progress Report for the Quarter Ended 31 March 1958*, Department of Education

⁵³ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 168, col. 644-645, 22 May 1958

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Dáil Debates* vol.161, col. 696-707, 1 May 1957

⁵⁶ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.33

⁵⁷ *Dáil Debates* vol.161, col. 696-707, 1 May 1957

term of office that he was willing to reform traditional practices or policies, which were outmoded or even detrimental to educational development.

The reforms initiated by Lynch, with the important exception of the oral Irish test, involved primary education, the branch of the system in which the department exerted the greatest influence. The Minister soon acted upon his commitment to review the marriage ban, appointing a committee of six senior officials to examine the growing problem of untrained teachers in national schools. The department had introduced the rule from 1 October 1934, in the context of the world economic depression, a declining population and a surplus of teachers.⁵⁸ The situation was very different by the late 1950s, as the number of pupils in the national schools was steadily increasing, growing from an average enrolment of 472,536 in 1953-54 to 490,700 in 1957-58.⁵⁹ The gradual increase in the national school population meant that the output of trained teachers was insufficient to deal with the increased demand, although the teacher training colleges were fully subscribed.⁶⁰ As the Department recognised a category of untrained teachers, known as Junior Assistant Mistress, the marriage ban encouraged the employment of untrained teachers, although national school managers also tended to employ married women teachers on a temporary basis – no less than 235 married women teachers had been given temporary appointments by 1957-58.⁶¹ But the shortage of trained teachers was a severe problem for the national schools. 3,018 untrained teachers, out of a total of 13,262 serving teachers, were working in primary education in 1955-56; approximately 22% of all national school teachers were untrained in 1957-58.⁶² The marriage ban was therefore a liability which was actively detrimental to the further development of primary education. Lynch had clearly recognised a compelling case for the removal of the marriage ban as early as May 1957, when he had told the Dáil that the ban was a waste of teaching power.⁶³ The committee of senior officials also favoured a re-appraisal of the policy in the light of the educational loss involved in the compulsory retirement of trained teachers and of the shortage of trained teachers in the national schools. They

⁵⁸ NA D/T 6231C, *Memorandum to the Government, Untrained and Unqualified Teachers in National Schools, Removal of Ban on Married Women*, pp.1-3, 28 April 1958

⁵⁹ *Tuarascáil, An Roinn Oideachais, 1957-58*, p.57 (Dublin, 1959)

⁶⁰ NA D/T 6231C, *Memorandum to the Government, Untrained and Unqualified Teachers in National Schools, Removal of Ban on Married Women*, p.1, 28 April 1958, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.33

⁶¹ *Dáil Debates* vol.168, col.638-640, 22 May 1958

⁶² O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.33, J. Coolahan, 'Educational Policy for National Schools 1960-1985' in D.G. Mulcahy and D. O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy: Process and Substance*, p.28 (Dublin, 1989)

⁶³ *Dáil Debates* vol.161, col. 696-707, 1 May 1957

expressed grave concern at the employment of a substantial number of untrained teachers: over 2,000 lay women teachers serving in national schools on 30 June 1957 were untrained.⁶⁴ The departmental committee also took into account ‘present-day trends in relation to the employment of married women’, acknowledging that the employment of married women was becoming part of ‘the pattern of life in many countries.’⁶⁵ Moreover a continuation of the rule meant that expenditure on training colleges for women teachers was increasingly unproductive, while the withdrawal of the ban allowed the department to reclaim the marriage gratuity from married women teachers who returned to the recognised teaching service and phase out payment of the gratuity for the future.⁶⁶ The senior officials of the department therefore perceived significant advantages in the abolition of the rule: James Dukes recalled that ‘they finally said, let’s get rid of the ban, save money and placate the Department of Finance, and provide trained teachers.’⁶⁷

The review announced by Lynch led rapidly to the removal of the marriage ban. The Minister proposed the abolition of the rule to the government on 28 April 1958, emphasizing that the policy change was dictated by the necessity ‘to alleviate the present untenable position in regard to untrained and unqualified women teachers serving in national schools’.⁶⁸ The Cabinet approved the removal of the marriage ban on 20 May.⁶⁹ The Secretary issued a circular to the national schools in June 1958, which provided for its abolition. Rule 72(1) was revoked with effect from 1 July 1958.⁷⁰ All women teachers who had retired under the rule became eligible for permanent employment in the national schools. Married women teachers who held temporary appointments were recognised in a permanent and pensionable capacity from 1 July.⁷¹ The conditions laid down by the department provided for the restoration of such teachers to the point on the salary scale which they had reached before their involuntary retirement: married women teachers were obliged to refund their marriage gratuity to obtain credit in respect of previous

⁶⁴ NA D/T 6231C, *Memorandum to the Government, Untrained and Unqualified Teachers in National Schools, Removal of Ban on Married Women*, p.1, 28 April 1958

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, *Appendix A*, p.1, 28 April 1958

⁶⁶ NA D/T 6231C, *Memorandum to the Government, Untrained and Unqualified Teachers in National Schools, Removal of Ban on Married Women*, pp.2-3, 28 April 1958, Interview with James Dukes, 13 November 2002

⁶⁷ Interview with James Dukes, 13 November 2002

⁶⁸ NA D/T 6231C, *Memorandum to the Government, Untrained and Unqualified Teachers in National Schools, Removal of Ban on Married Women*, p.3, 28 April 1958

⁶⁹ CAB 2/18, G.C. 8/104, Cabinet Minutes, 20 May 1958, pp.2-3

⁷⁰ Circular 11/58, Department of Education, June 1958

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, *Dáil Debates* vol.168, col.1498-1502, 11 June 1958

service for the purpose of pension and retirement benefits.⁷² The circular also confirmed that no credit for any purpose would be given to teachers for the period between their retirement on marriage and their re-appointment as recognised national school teachers.⁷³ Finally the department indicated that no women teachers appointed after the removal of the marriage ban would be eligible for a marriage gratuity; only teachers serving in a substantive capacity before 30 June 1958 were eligible for the payment.⁷⁴ The senior officials had accepted the case for revoking the marriage ban ostensibly to expand the supply of trained teachers. The department's progress report for the second quarter of 1958 expressed the hope that the removal of the Rule would 'help to relieve to some extent the current shortage of trained teachers.'⁷⁵ The conditions laid down for the re-entry of the married women teachers to recognised employment, however, indicated that the department also hoped to make savings in the short-term on the basis of the rule change.⁷⁶ The rapid progress of the initiative to revoke the rule can be explained by official recognition that it was financially prudent as well as educationally desirable to allow married women teachers back into the permanent teaching service.

Lynch made the educational case for the decision when he announced the removal of the marriage ban in the Dáil on 22 May 1958 in the course of the debate on the Estimates for 1958-59. He noted with disapproval that a substantial proportion of the teachers in national schools were untrained, while at least 85 trained women teachers were being lost annually due to Rule 72(1).⁷⁷ He criticised the educational effects of the ban, arguing that married women teachers were being forced to retire from recognised teaching posts by the time they had reached an effective standard of teaching.⁷⁸ The Minister declared that there was 'no reasonable alternative' to the removal of the ban, which would potentially provide between 400 and 500 married women teachers for permanent service in the national schools, including the trained temporary teachers already re-employed in the system.⁷⁹ The department had also estimated that approximately 85 additional teachers would be available annually for primary education

⁷² Circular 11/58, Department of Education, June 1958

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (ii), *Progress Report for the Quarter Ended 30 June 1958*, Department of Education, p.1

⁷⁶ NA D/T 6231C, *Memorandum to the Government, Untrained and Unqualified Teachers in National Schools, Removal of Ban on Married Women*, p.3, 28 April 1958

⁷⁷ *Dáil Debates* vol.168, col.638-640, 22 May 1958

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

as a consequence of the abolition of the ban.⁸⁰ Lynch emphasized that the initiative would significantly expand the supply of trained teachers in the national schools and would facilitate an improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio.⁸¹ The Minister placed the greatest emphasis on the genuine educational considerations, which demanded the removal of the marriage ban.

Lynch continued to defend the initiative as an essential reform dictated by educational considerations on 11 June 1958, when he outlined the specific terms of the decision to the Dáil. When Mulcahy questioned the social grounds for the decision, Lynch replied that the marriage ban was 'educationally indefensible' and reiterated that it represented a severe loss to the state of effective teaching capacity.⁸² He asserted too that greater security of tenure for women teachers would encourage more effective and dedicated teaching. The Minister did not ignore social arguments which might support the decision, arguing that the provision of more married teachers was socially desirable, as emigration from both rural and urban areas could be reduced by encouraging married teachers to settle in their communities on a long-term basis. He bluntly dismissed Mulcahy's concern about the propriety of mothers returning to the teaching force, arguing that 'a mother has the necessary poise and maturity' to deal with children.⁸³ But on the whole Lynch made the case that the initiative was based on unassailable educational grounds, informing Deputies that it was his duty to provide 'the highest form of education for all our children'.⁸⁴ Lynch's central contention that the marriage ban was educationally wrong and damaging to primary education was not seriously challenged by opposition politicians. While Mulcahy expressed reservations about the reversal of a policy maintained by all parties for a quarter of a century, he did not vigorously oppose it, indicating that he did not wish to make it a matter of partisan controversy.⁸⁵ Brendan Corish TD, speaking for the Labour Party, argued that only improved conditions for teachers, not the removal of the marriage ban, would relieve the scarcity of trained teachers and regarded the removal of the rule as a bad precedent in the absence of any debate on the employment of female public servants in general.⁸⁶ But Corish referred only briefly to the ban and did not offer any suggestion that the Minister's proposal

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Dáil Debates* vol.168, col.1498-1502, 11 June 1958

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

should be rejected. The Minister's initiative was also accepted without serious controversy by the most influential educational interests. The initiative satisfied a long-term demand of the INTO, which had strongly advocated the withdrawal of the rule since its introduction: the policy change marked a significant success for the national teachers' union.⁸⁷ More importantly, the most powerful clerical interest in the educational system, the Catholic Hierarchy, was essentially neutral towards the policy change. A memorandum from the Minister, indicating his reasons for removing the marriage ban, was simply noted without any further comment, by the general meeting of the Irish Hierarchy on 24 June 1958.⁸⁸ The department had introduced the rule and neither the Hierarchy nor the clerical managers showed any desire to defend it if the state now wished to reverse its own long-term policy. The removal of the marriage ban was an initiative, which commanded widespread acquiescence or even active support among influential forces in Irish education.

The return of married women teachers to permanent employment in the national schools allowed the department to reduce its dependence on untrained teachers. The removal of the ban was followed by the Minister's decision to end the formal recruitment of untrained teachers.⁸⁹ Lynch announced on 8 April 1959 that the competition for the category of Junior Assistant Mistress was being discontinued.⁹⁰ The indefinite suspension of recruitment for the position of Junior Assistant Mistress was facilitated by the return of approximately 250 married women teachers to the recognised teaching service in September 1958. Lynch estimated in April 1959 that the end of the marriage ban provided about 330 additional trained teachers in 1958-59.⁹¹ The decision to stop the recruitment of Junior Assistant Mistresses did not end the practice of employing untrained teachers but it ensured that such appointments would be temporary and indicated a new commitment by the department to achieve a fully trained teaching service.⁹² The removal of the marriage ban brought an end to the department's policy of recruiting a recognised category of untrained teachers. The rule change also paved the way for a modest improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio, which was announced by the

⁸⁷ T.J. O'Connell, *A History of the INTO 1868-1968*, p.284 (INTO, Dublin, 1968)

⁸⁸ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/04, *Papers of John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin*, Minutes of the Irish Hierarchy, 24 June 1958

⁸⁹ Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.28

⁹⁰ *Dáil Debates* vol.174, col.57-58, 8 April 1959, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.35

⁹¹ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (ii), *Progress Report for the Quarter Ended 30 September 1958*, Department of Education, *Dáil Debates* vol.174, col.57-58, 8 April 1959

⁹² O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.35

Minister in April 1959. The unit figures, which governed the appointment of assistant teachers, were reduced in national schools from 1 July 1959 to allow the appointment of a second assistant teacher on the basis of lower average ratios.⁹³ While the improvement was marginal, it established a new element in educational policy. Lynch's improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio would be expanded by his successors.⁹⁴ The government made a definite commitment for the first time to achieve a gradual improvement of the pupil-teacher ratio in primary education. The removal of the marriage ban was not only an important policy change in its own right, but also paved the way for new efforts by the state to minimise the dependence upon untrained teachers and to improve the pupil-teacher ratio in national schools. The policy change also underlined a new willingness on the part of the Minister and the senior officials of the department to reform traditional policies, which were damaging to the educational system and detrimental to the prospects for educational expansion.

The removal of Rule 72 (1) was the most significant policy change introduced by Lynch. The decision was the most important element in a process of incremental reform at primary level, which revised the established framework for the appointment, training and inspection of national teachers. Lynch announced the revision of the procedures for the recruitment of lay teachers to the teacher training colleges on 22 May 1958.⁹⁵ The competition for lay candidates, who were not students of the Preparatory Colleges, was based on the results of the Leaving Certificate examination along with the outcome of oral and practical tests held during Easter week.⁹⁶ The students from the Preparatory Colleges received access to the training colleges on a preferential basis: 25% of all the places in the training colleges were reserved for them and such students were also allowed entry to the training colleges without further competition, provided they fulfilled the minimum Leaving Certificate requirements for entry.⁹⁷ The Minister did not alter the preferential allocation of places to students of the Preparatory Colleges, but reformed the process of recruitment for all lay applicants. The 'Easter orals' were ended from 1959 and instead an order of merit based on the Leaving Certificate results, was introduced.⁹⁸ The highest placed candidates on this list were required to undergo an oral test and an

⁹³ *Dáil Debates* vol.174, col.57-58, 8 April 1959, Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.31

⁹⁴ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.34

⁹⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.168, col.640-641, 22 May 1958

⁹⁶ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.29

⁹⁷ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.29

⁹⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.168, col.640-641, 22 May 1958

interview, conducted by a board drawn equally from departmental inspectors and representatives of the training colleges.⁹⁹ The introduction of the interview for all candidates enabled the department and the college authorities to evaluate candidates on their suitability for the teaching profession, not on their examination results alone and also gave the college authorities a voice in the selection of the entrants for the first time.¹⁰⁰ The effect of the revision of the admission procedures was relatively modest. Although candidates could now be assessed by the interview boards, departmental officials recognised that the most effective evaluation was still provided by the training course itself.¹⁰¹ The reform of the admission procedures for the training colleges was perhaps most significant as an indication of the department's readiness to modify a traditional system of recruitment and seek a more realistic assessment of the suitability of candidates for primary teaching.

The reform of the system of national school inspection was a more controversial policy change, which was vigorously promoted by Lynch and the Secretary of the department, Dr. Tarlach Ó Raifeartaigh, with the support of Dr. John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin. Lynch indicated on 22 May 1958, in the course of the debate on the Estimates for 1958-59, that he had initiated a review of the system of inspection for national school teachers.¹⁰² The review had been initiated at the request of the INTO; the national teachers' union was vocally critical of the system of inspection, which its leaders had described as oppressive and dominated by the use of threats against national teachers.¹⁰³ The INTO particularly objected to the form of the inspector's report, which awarded 'merit marks' in each subject giving marks ranging from 'Very Satisfactory' to 'Not Satisfactory'.¹⁰⁴ Previous efforts by the INTO to achieve a revision of the inspection regime had been frustrated by the opposition of the school managers and the Catholic Hierarchy. The Catholic bishops and the managers of all denominations had only reluctantly accepted the previous reform of the inspection system in 1949, which had involved the abolition of the 'Highly Efficient' rating for national schoolteachers.¹⁰⁵ The INTO officers had made further proposals for reform, which were considered by a

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.29

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Dáil Debates* vol.168, col.641, 22 May 1958

¹⁰³ O'Connell, *History of the INTO*, pp.422-425

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.35

¹⁰⁵ DDA, AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers, Memorandum on School Inspection System by the Department of Education*, 24 November 1955

conference on national school inspection composed of representatives of the managers, the Catholic Hierarchy, the department and the teachers on 31 January and 1 February 1956.¹⁰⁶ The INTO proposals, including the termination of formal general inspection and the removal of the 'merit mark' were opposed by the Catholic school managers and the Hierarchy's representative, Dr. McQuaid, although the Protestant school managers were willing to consider the proposals.¹⁰⁷

The INTO were by no means deterred by the Hierarchy's rejection of their proposals, seeking a further conference to review the question again in 1957.¹⁰⁸ Lynch and the senior officials were sympathetic to the national teachers' case and hoped to achieve reform of the system of inspection. The position of the Minister was clearly illustrated in correspondence between Ó Raifeartaigh and Dr. James Fergus, Bishop of Achonry and joint secretary to the Hierarchy.¹⁰⁹ Ó Raifeartaigh brought Lynch's views to the attention of the Hierarchy in a letter addressed to Fergus on 12 June 1957.¹¹⁰ The Minister proposed to end annual inspections except for teachers on probation and teachers rated 'Not Satisfactory'.¹¹¹ The Observation Book would be discontinued as a record of the inspector's comments on individual teachers; the inspector would in future record only the date and duration of his visit, the number of pupils present and the nature of his business.¹¹² Most significantly, the Secretary sought clarification on Lynch's behalf of the Hierarchy's view on the 'merit mark'.¹¹³ Ó Raifeartaigh indicated that the Minister was sympathetic to the INTO argument that the 'merit mark' could not adequately reflect the complexity of a teacher's work: moreover the senior inspectors themselves had advised that the replacement of the 'merit mark' by a continuous narrative, outlining the work of the teacher, was educationally sound at least for satisfactory teachers. The Minister had also been advised by the officials that the replacement of the 'merit mark' would promote 'fuller co-operation and harmony' between the relevant educational interests.¹¹⁴ The Secretary informed Fergus that Lynch proposed to discontinue the 'merit mark' for all teachers except those on probation or teachers considered 'Not Satisfactory'. Similarly the 'merit mark' would no longer be used to assess any schools

¹⁰⁶ O'Connell, *History of the INTO*, pp.422-425

¹⁰⁷ DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, T. O Raifeartaigh to Dr. McQuaid, 11 January 1958

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, Ó Raifeartaigh to Fergus, 12 June 1957

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

except for newly established capitation schools or schools rated 'Not Satisfactory'. The Minister was seeking the Hierarchy's views before coming to a final decision, but Ó Raifeartaigh clearly indicated that Lynch favoured the replacement of the 'merit mark' and a wide-ranging reform of the inspection system.¹¹⁵

Lynch certainly hoped to improve relations between the department and the national teachers through a comprehensive reform of the system of inspection, which would remove a deeply held grievance repeatedly raised by the INTO over the previous decade. It was a sensible move in political terms to conciliate the vocal and increasingly powerful INTO. But it is evident that Lynch and his senior advisers were also influenced by educational considerations. Senior officials of the department no longer regarded the traditional inspection regime, which retained features of the system introduced by the British administration in Ireland at the beginning of the twentieth century, as reasonable or even viable in the circumstances of the late 1950s. Seán O'Connor, who served as a Principal Officer in the Primary Education Branch between 1956 and 1965, described the inspection system as 'intolerable to any professional body' because of the level of power given to the inspectors.¹¹⁶ The Department had little to gain by maintaining a system which was causing increasing tension between teachers and inspectors and so the Secretary, Ó Raifeartaigh, took the lead in the negotiations with the INTO and the Catholic Hierarchy concerning the removal of the controversial 'merit mark'.¹¹⁷

While Lynch and the senior officials had resolved to achieve a comprehensive reform of the inspection system, they were obliged to seek the agreement of the school managers and the Catholic Bishops, who exerted the greatest influence over the Catholic managers. The agreement of the Hierarchy was not easily secured. The Catholic Bishops considered the Secretary's proposal at the general meeting of the Hierarchy on 25 June 1957 and agreed that they would consent to the abolition of the 'merit mark' only on condition that the 'Highly Efficient' rating for national teachers was restored.¹¹⁸ The Hierarchy's response was in effect a definite rejection of the department's proposal on inspection. Dr. James Staunton, Bishop of Ferns, who was willing to accept the Department's proposal, accurately summarised the position reached by the majority of the Hierarchy: "They approved a statement, which, though not absolutely insisting on the

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.35

¹¹⁷ DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, Ó Raifeartaigh to Fergus, 12 June 1957, Ó Raifeartaigh to McQuaid, 11 January 1958

¹¹⁸ DDA AB8/XV/b/03, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes, General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, 25 June 1957

retention of the 'merit mark', in its general tone did so insist."¹¹⁹ The opposition of the Hierarchy presented a formidable obstacle to the Minister's proposal. The Catholic national school managers took their lead from the Bishops and were in any event unenthusiastic about the removal of the 'merit mark'.¹²⁰ Lynch sought to overcome the Hierarchy's opposition by initiating negotiations directly with McQuaid, who had expressed willingness to consider a modification of the inspection system in correspondence with Labhrás Ó Muirthe, the previous Secretary, in June 1956.¹²¹ Ó Raifeartaigh addressed a detailed communication to McQuaid on 11 January 1958, arguing on behalf of the Minister in favour of the replacement of the 'merit mark'.¹²² The Secretary made two key arguments in favour of the proposal. Firstly he noted that Lynch wished to replace the 'merit mark' on educational grounds, in accordance with the views of the senior inspectors. The Secretary also reiterated the more pragmatic rationale cited in his previous correspondence; McQuaid was informed that the Minister placed great importance on the achievement of greater harmony between the various educational interests, which could be secured by the abolition of the 'merit mark'.¹²³ Ó Raifeartaigh sought McQuaid's assistance in raising the issue with the Bishops once more. The Archbishop was requested to propose the replacement of the 'merit mark' with a continuous narrative 'in the trust that their Lordships will on further consideration see their way to modify their view in the matter.'¹²⁴ The Secretary had asked McQuaid, politely but clearly, to induce the Hierarchy to change their mind and support the Minister's proposal.

McQuaid responded favourably to the Secretary's overture, minuting a handwritten comment on Ó Raifeartaigh's letter, which indicated his agreement to the proposal on condition that the continuous narrative gave an evaluation of the teacher's work equivalent to the 'merit mark'.¹²⁵ Moreover he immediately agreed to communicate the views of the Minister to the Bishops at the meeting of the Hierarchy's Standing Committee on 14 January 1958.¹²⁶ McQuaid's intervention transformed the position of the Hierarchy. Following a discussion by the Standing Committee, the Bishops agreed, at

¹¹⁹ DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, Dr. J. Staunton to McQuaid, 21 January 1958

¹²⁰ O'Connell, *History of the INTO*, pp.422-425

¹²¹ DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, McQuaid to L. Murray, 8 June 1956

¹²² DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, Ó Raifeartaigh to McQuaid, 11 January 1958

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, McQuaid to Ó Raifeartaigh, 11 January 1958

their general meeting on 24 June 1958, to the proposal for the replacement of the ‘merit mark’ by a narrative report, ‘in deference to the wishes of the Minister for Education’.¹²⁷ They stipulated that the new narrative report should make an assessment on the teacher’s work which would fulfil a similar function to the previous procedure: not surprisingly this condition, set by McQuaid, was accepted by the Minister and incorporated within the reformed system of inspection.¹²⁸ The importance of McQuaid’s intervention was acknowledged by Lynch himself. Following the Hierarchy’s formal acceptance of the reform, Lynch warmly thanked McQuaid for his intervention in a letter addressed to the archbishop on 3 July 1958.¹²⁹ The Minister acknowledged that he had been greatly concerned to win the agreement of the Bishops for the reform of the inspection system and he believed that the Hierarchy’s decision had been made at McQuaid’s instigation.¹³⁰ While the Hierarchy had claimed to be acting in deference to the wishes of the Minister, their change of course was taken more in deference to the Archbishop of Dublin. The interaction between the department and the Hierarchy concerning the abolition of the ‘merit mark’ underlined Lynch’s tenacity in pursuing the reform of the inspection system despite the initial opposition of the Bishops. The episode also illustrated the continuing power of the Catholic Hierarchy in the Irish educational system. The Minister was able to proceed rapidly once the agreement of the Catholic Bishops had been achieved. The revised directives for national inspection were announced in a letter to the INTO and the school managers by Ó Raifeartaigh on 23 July 1958.¹³¹ The main features of the reform included the replacement of the ‘merit mark’ with a continuous narrative on the work of the teacher, for all teachers except those on probation or with the rating ‘Not Satisfactory’ and the abandonment of obligatory general inspections every year for all teachers except those in the same categories.¹³² The Observation Book, which had been used to record the inspector’s comments on teachers, was discontinued.¹³³ The Minister also clarified the regulations on the teaching of oral Irish, indicating that a satisfactory rating could be provided for teachers even when oral Irish was weak, unless the weakness was caused by negligence.¹³⁴ The reform of the inspection system was welcomed by the INTO General

¹²⁷ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/04, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes, General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, 24 June 1958

¹²⁸ Minutes, General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, 14 October 1958

¹²⁹ DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, Lynch to McQuaid, 3 July 1958

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Circular 16/59, Department of Education, July 1959, O’Connell, *History of the INTO*, pp.422-425

¹³² Circular 16/59, Department of Education, pp.1-4, July 1959

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.6, *Dáil Debates* vol.174, col.58, 8 April 1959

¹³⁴ Circular 16/59, Department of Education, p.3, July 1959

Secretary, D.J. Kelleher: the union's former General Secretary T.J. O'Connell commented, 'A new and enlightened system of inspection had come into being.'¹³⁵ Certainly the reformed system was much more acceptable to the primary teachers, who were no longer subject to close and critical assessment by the inspectors as a result of the changes in the regulations.¹³⁶ The Minister, advised by the senior officials, had done much to eliminate long-term grievances pursued by the INTO over the previous two decades. The reforms introduced by Lynch between 1957 and 1959 established a revised framework for the employment, inspection and training of national school teachers. The reforms were primarily rule changes which, with the exception of the removal of the marriage ban, were by no means radical in character. But the incremental reforms implemented in this period reflected Lynch's desire to adopt a more active approach than his predecessors in confronting educational problems at primary level.

The department, however, remained cautious in dealing with issues which might cause conflict with powerful educational interests, even in primary education where its influence was strongest. When the INTO pressed for the abolition of the compulsory Primary Certificate Examination in 1958, Lynch's response was sympathetic but non-committal. He informed the officers of the INTO on 9 January 1959 that he intended to seek the opinions of all relevant educational interests about the examination.¹³⁷ He assured the INTO that he was impressed by their case against the Primary Certificate, but acted to placate school managers, who had made strong representations to the department in favour of the compulsory examination, by indicating that any official action would be preceded by consultation with the managers.¹³⁸ The Catholic Hierarchy and most school managers were vehemently opposed to any undermining of the Primary Certificate. Following a decision by the Standing Committee to make representations to the Department, Dr. Fergus communicated to the Minister the collective position of the Bishops on 27 January 1959.¹³⁹ Fergus indicated that the Bishops were strongly opposed to the abolition of the Primary Certificate and warned the Minister that the abolition of the examination in the face of pressure from the INTO 'would be a great blow to the prestige of the Bishops and Managers.'¹⁴⁰ The Hierarchy's statement of adamant

¹³⁵ O'Connell, *History of the INTO*, pp.422-425

¹³⁶ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.36

¹³⁷ O'Connell, *History of the INTO*, pp.422-425

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ DDA AB/B/XV/b/04, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes, Standing Committee of the Irish Hierarchy, 13 January 1959

¹⁴⁰ DDA AB/B/XV/b/04, *McQuaid Papers*, Fergus to Lynch, 27 January 1959

opposition to the undermining of the examination made any ministerial initiative on the Primary Certificate hazardous and probably futile. Moreover the outcome of the department's consultation process with the various educational interests also evoked a hostile response to the abolition of the examination. All the clerical managers, with the sole exception of the Presbyterian managers, and all the religious teaching orders favoured some form of examination.¹⁴¹ Lynch therefore took no further initiative concerning the examination and the Primary Certificate was retained until 1968. The Minister's readiness to undertake incremental reforms in primary education did not extend to the Primary Certificate, largely because any initiative threatened to provoke conflict with most clerical managers and the Catholic Bishops. But the initiation of moderate reforming measures under Lynch not only brought constructive advances in primary education but also helped to pave the way for more radical initiatives by his successors, as Lynch's more active approach began to undermine the traditional pattern of ministerial inertia in education.

Post-Primary Education

Shortly after taking up office, Lynch had expressed his view that state investment in the Irish educational system was inadequate. He had argued in presenting the first Estimates for his term on 1 May 1957 that Irish education suffered especially from the allocation of insufficient resources.¹⁴² The Minister did not, however, have the resources available to him to initiate major changes in the educational system.¹⁴³ There was little evidence of increased investment in education for most of Lynch's term. The government's spending on primary, post-primary and higher education in 1958-59 revealed only a very modest increase from the previous year: indeed the state's expenditure on the secondary sector even showed a marginal decline (Table 1). Lynch indicated on 22 May 1958 that he was unable to restore the cut in the capitation grants to secondary schools and gave no timeframe for the reversal of the cut.¹⁴⁴ The retention of the 10% cut in the capitation grants underlined that secondary education continued to suffer a decline in state support in real terms. The vocational sector fared better than secondary education. Lynch secured the approval of the Cabinet on 17 December 1957

¹⁴¹ O'Connell, *History of the INTO*, pp.422-425

¹⁴² *Dáil Debates* vol.161, col.503, 1 May 1957

¹⁴³ *Dáil Debates*, vol.168, col.649, 22 May 1958, Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, p.279

¹⁴⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.168, col.643-644, 22 May 1958; Table 1, p.372

for the restoration of the 6% cut in the annual grants to the VECs for 1958-59.¹⁴⁵ But with the exception of the restoration of the cut affecting vocational education, the financial stringency imposed upon the Department of Education during Mulcahy's second term was largely retained. The Department of Finance successfully opposed the withdrawal of the cut in the capitation grants for 1958-59.¹⁴⁶ The Department of Education submitted the question to the government on 7 December 1957, but Lynch failed to get the agreement of the government to reverse the cut. The Minister and his officials tried again on 15 November 1958, when they resubmitted their case for the withdrawal of the cut in the capitation grants to the Department of Finance.¹⁴⁷ On this occasion the Department of Finance proved more amenable and the restoration of the cut was agreed by the government on 1 April 1959.¹⁴⁸ The cuts which Lynch was obliged to impose in 1957, due to the pressure of the Department of Finance in an unfavourable economic climate, were therefore not fully removed until April 1959, only three months before the end of his term.¹⁴⁹ Lynch's freedom of action was severely limited by financial constraints for most of his term as Minister for Education.

The undoubted financial constraints may have contributed to Lynch's caution in discussing the government's education policy, which remained ill defined especially with regard to post-primary education. Indeed while Lynch's initiatives brought modest practical advances in primary education, the Minister remained wary of articulating a definite policy approach that went beyond piecemeal improvements. He certainly emphasized the importance of improving the pupil-teacher ratio and increasing the supply of trained teachers, but he did not articulate a clear vision of the future for Irish education. He was criticised on 8 April 1959 by various opposition TDs, including Mulcahy and Dr. Noel Browne, for failing to outline a definite policy in the debate on the Education Estimates.¹⁵⁰ Lynch acknowledged that he had made minimal general reference to educational policy and the future educational programme of the government in presenting the Estimates: 'I did not prognosticate on what would happen in the future.'¹⁵¹ He drew attention instead to practical improvements introduced during his

¹⁴⁵ CAB 2/18, G.C.8/67, Cabinet Minutes, pp.2-3, 17 December 1957

¹⁴⁶ M 300/2, *Memorandum, 10% Cut in Capitation and Bilingual Grants*, Secondary Education Branch, Department of Education, 16 December 1966

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Dáil Debates* vol.174, col.73-84, 8 April 1959, Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.34

¹⁵¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.174, col.210-222, 8 April 1959

term, including the removal of the marriage ban and the modest reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio in the national schools.¹⁵² While these initiatives were clearly beneficial, Lynch's piecemeal reforms almost exclusively benefited primary education. The Minister was particularly wary of outlining a definite policy approach for the expansion of post-primary education. Certainly he restored the cut in funding for vocational education. But no attempt was made to mitigate the disadvantages imposed by the state, in agreement with the Catholic church, upon vocational education.¹⁵³ Lynch recognised the widespread perception that vocational schools offered only second-class education. When he announced the restoration of the cut in the grants to the VECs on 22 May 1958, the Minister praised the work of the vocational schools and suggested that the public had not yet fully appreciated the advantages of vocational education.¹⁵⁴ His statement was scathingly described by O'Connor as 'an effort to blame the parents for the failure of the system to attract pupils to its schools despite the energy and drive of its administrators and teachers and the enthusiasms of politicians.'¹⁵⁵ Certainly Lynch offered no indication of any constructive move by the government to enhance the status of vocational education. While the Minister was concerned that parents were not using the vocational system in sufficient numbers, he did not propose to take any action to remove the restrictions imposed by the state upon the vocational schools. Any such initiative would risk incurring the hostility of the Hierarchy, by undermining O'Sullivan's assurances that vocational schools would never interfere with the provision of general education, especially by the secondary schools.¹⁵⁶ Lynch was content in 1958 to restore the cut in the annual VEC grants, showing no inclination to propose measures which might raise the status of vocational education.

The Minister's statements, however, underlined an increasing official concern with the development of vocational education. On 8 April 1959 Lynch again emphasized the importance of vocational education in the Dáil, arguing that many vocational courses provided for the well being of the country.¹⁵⁷ Likewise *Economic Development*, composed by T.K. Whitaker and other officials of the Department of Finance, which was

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.37

¹⁵⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.168, col.649, 22 May 1958

¹⁵⁵ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, pp.28-29

¹⁵⁶ Letter from J.M. O'Sullivan TD, Minister for Education, to Dr. D. Keane, Bishop of Limerick, on the Vocational Education Act 1930, 31 October 1930, Hyland and Milne, *Irish Educational Documents* 2, pp.219-222

¹⁵⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.174, col.67, 8 April 1959

published in November 1958, drew attention to the potential of vocational education to contribute to national development.¹⁵⁸ The report, which formed the basis of the first programme for economic expansion, envisaged that rural vocational schools could play a significant part in agricultural training, due to the flexibility of the vocational system and the enthusiasm of the vocational teachers.¹⁵⁹ The growing emphasis among politicians and senior officials on the development of vocational education was reflected in the increased spending allocation for the vocational sector. The department made available additional funding for vocational school building: Lynch announced that it had been decided to initiate the building of 16 new vocational schools in 1959-60 at a cost of £480,000, while £155,000 would be spent on improvements to 15 existing schools.¹⁶⁰ The Minister also indicated that he favoured an amendment to the Vocational Education Act 1930 to increase the maximum liability of the local authority for vocational education beyond 15d in the pound. The department would match the greater contribution from the rates by a corresponding increase in the state contribution.¹⁶¹ Lynch increased the state funding available for the capital development of the vocational sector and proposed to facilitate the expansion of vocational education by amending legislation, which would allow the VECs to receive additional funding from the local authorities and the state. Lynch and the senior officials of his department regarded the expansion of vocational education as an important objective. But the Minister made no attempt to remove the disadvantages previously imposed by the state on vocational education, which restricted the development of the vocational system and greatly limited the potential contribution of the vocational schools to a general expansion of post-primary education.

The Minister also avoided any real intervention at all in the secondary school system. Indeed Sr. Eileen Randles, who later served as a member of the executive of the CCSS, recorded a contemporary view that 'he virtually ignored Secondary Education'.¹⁶² Lynch followed the example of his predecessors in pursuing a minimalist approach, as the department had traditionally acknowledged the managerial autonomy of the private secondary schools, subject to the department's control of the curriculum.¹⁶³ Moreover the Council of Education was still considering the curriculum of the secondary school. As the Council's report was submitted only to Lynch's successor, Patrick Hillery, the Minister

¹⁵⁸ T.K. Whitaker, *Economic Development*, pp.112-113 (Dublin, 1958)

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.112

¹⁶⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.174, col.62, 8 April 1959

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.24

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

could undertake initiatives at secondary level only by pre-empting its views.¹⁶⁴ It is evident also that the Minister and senior officials identified other priorities, which could be pursued with less risk of conflict with powerful educational interests.¹⁶⁵ It was clearly more pragmatic for Lynch to initiate reforms in primary education, where the role of the department was most clearly established and even to encourage the development of vocational education within traditional constraints, than to risk confrontation with the private educational interests, which controlled the secondary schools. The progress reports of the Department of Education, which were undertaken on a quarterly basis for submission to the Department of the Taoiseach, illustrated the low priority given to secondary education between 1957 and 1959.¹⁶⁶ The Secondary Education Branch submitted no substantive entry at all for five of the twelve progress reports compiled by the department between January 1957 and December 1959.¹⁶⁷ In response to requests from the department's Headquarters Section for relevant material relating to the quarter ended on 31 December 1958 and to the quarter ended on 30 June 1959, N. Ó Loingseacháin of the Secondary Education Branch replied: 'Níl aon rud le tuairisciú', indicating that there was nothing to report.¹⁶⁸ The same reply was given for the quarter ended on 31 December 1959.¹⁶⁹ Likewise the Branch submitted no material for the department's quarterly reports covering the final quarter of 1957 and the second quarter of 1958. When the Branch did submit material for the progress reports, the entry for secondary education usually consisted only of the number of schools which had applied for recognition from the department, the number of new schools accorded recognition and sometimes a summary of the training courses provided by the department for teachers.¹⁷⁰ The only other decisions on secondary education recorded by the progress reports related to improvements in the pay and conditions of secondary school teachers. The Minister authorised improved scales of incremental salary for secondary teachers and increased allowances for teachers holding an Honours degree in May 1957, in accordance

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.37

¹⁶⁶ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (ii), *Progress Reports 1957-65*, Department of Education

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ W26/30, M80/1, M. Ó Flathartaigh to L. Ó Laidhin, October 1958, W26/30, M80/1, *Tuairisc ar dhul chun cinn na Roinne don ráithe dár chríoch 30 Meitheamh 1959*, Secondary Education Branch, Department of Education, 4 July 1959

¹⁶⁹ W26/30, M80/1, *Tuairisc ar dhul chun cinn na Roinne don ráithe dár chríoch 31 Nollaig 1959*, Secondary Education Branch, Department of Education

¹⁷⁰ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (ii), *Progress Reports 1957-65*, Department of Education

with a commitment inherited by Fianna Fáil from the previous government.¹⁷¹ No ministerial or departmental initiative at all affecting secondary education was recorded in the progress reports between 1957 and 1959. The Secondary Education Branch was largely left to its own devices in this period, without any substantial ministerial intervention. The minimalist approach maintained by the department with regard to secondary education is best explained by the absence of any coherent state policy for the development of post-primary education.

The lack of a clearly defined government policy on post-primary education was underlined by Lynch's response to demands by opposition TDs for an extension of the statutory school leaving age. Dr. Noel Browne asked a parliamentary question on 19 February 1958, inquiring whether the Minister intended to raise the compulsory school leaving age from fourteen to fifteen or sixteen years.¹⁷² Lynch responded that he did not propose to consider an extension of the school leaving age, arguing that the number of pupils was currently increasing in conjunction with increased facilities.¹⁷³ The Minister made no commitment to the provision of increased educational facilities, but instead sought repeatedly to refute arguments made by Browne in the Dáil and by educational commentators in the national newspapers, that a large majority of Irish children received no education at all after the age of fourteen. Lynch urged TDs on 10 June 1958 to reject ill-informed criticism of the Irish educational system, arguing that almost two-thirds of Irish children between the ages of fourteen and sixteen received full-time education, as 78,000 children out of a total of 125,000 in the relevant age category were attending full-time school courses in 1956-57.¹⁷⁴ These statistics, however, included 18,000 pupils who were still attending primary schools, including schoolchildren in the Secondary Tops attached to national schools. This meant that approximately 60,000 children, out of a total of 125,000, were receiving full-time education in recognised post-primary schools.¹⁷⁵ It is evident that about half of the cohort aged between fourteen and sixteen did not receive full-time post-primary education in the secondary or vocational sector. Browne had overstated his case, but Lynch's defence was equally dubious and the scale of the challenge facing the government if its members wished to promote wider participation in post-primary education was clear.

¹⁷¹ W26/30, M80/1, *Tuairisc ar dhul chun cinn na Roinne don ráithe dár chríoch 30 Meitheamh 1957*, Secondary Education Branch, Department of Education, 9 July 1957

¹⁷² *Dáil Debates*, vol.165, col.372-373, 19 February 1958

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.168, col.1512-1513, 10 June 1958

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Lynch did not clarify the intentions of the government with regard to post-primary education. He indicated, in response to parliamentary questions by Declan Costello TD on 25 November 1958, that he was not convinced that the extension of the school leaving age was appropriate: he argued instead that it appeared to be 'rather a matter of providing increased educational facilities' than of raising the age for compulsory attendance.¹⁷⁶ Lynch gave essentially the same response to a Dáil question by Liam Cosgrave TD on 27 January 1959: 'the necessity appeared to me to be one of increasing the school facilities rather than of extending the school leaving age.'¹⁷⁷ But in these responses, Lynch indicated his own view of the course which future policy should take, rather than making any definite statement of government policy. The Minister indeed indicated that the government had not made any assessment of the implications of extending the school leaving age or about what form of education would be appropriate if pupils were required to attend full-time courses for a longer period.¹⁷⁸ The necessity for the provision of additional facilities to expand participation was acknowledged, but no indication was given of the appropriate methods to achieve this end. The government's approach concerning post-primary education therefore remained shrouded in ambiguity.

The Minister and the senior officials of the department had no clear idea in the late 1950s of how to manage and facilitate the expansion of post-primary education. The secondary system was enjoying a steady expansion in this period, absorbing an annual increase of approximately 3,000 students. The department received applications for recognition from 40 new schools between 30 September 1957 and 30 September 1959: 21 new secondary schools were accorded recognition between 1 January 1958 and 31 March 1959.¹⁷⁹ Private secondary education was, however, beyond the means of a majority of Irish parents.¹⁸⁰ Moreover while the Minister hoped to see a greater development of vocational education, the vocational system laboured under restrictions concerning the provision of general education imposed by the state itself. The dilemma that faced the Minister and the department in the late 1950s was neatly summarised by O'Connor: 'Nobody doubted the need for additional facilities: the question was where to site them'.¹⁸¹ Both the secondary schools and the vocational system in different ways presented significant obstacles to a serious effort by the state to promote the expansion of

¹⁷⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol.171, col.800-801, 25 November 1958

¹⁷⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.172, col.1034, 27 January 1959

¹⁷⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.168, col.1512-1513, 10 June 1958

¹⁷⁹ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (ii), *Progress Reports 1957-65*, Department of Education

¹⁸⁰ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.25

¹⁸¹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.34

post-primary education. The extension of the school leaving age posed intractable problems, due to the divided structure of post-primary education in the Republic, to which the Minister and senior officials had as yet no clear answers.¹⁸² Moreover Eamon de Valera, in his final term as Taoiseach, made no attempt to encourage a pro-active approach by the state to the development of the educational sector. De Valera displayed no inclination to encourage the Minister to take potentially risky or controversial policy initiatives, which might provoke conflict with established educational interests. Lynch's decision to avoid any commitment to raising the statutory school leaving age reflected the realities of the educational system and the absence of any definite government policy to overcome traditional divisions in post-primary education.

The lack of a coherent government policy on post-primary education did not prevent the allocation of greater resources to the educational system. The Estimates for 1959-60, which were proposed by Lynch on 8 April 1959, provided an early indication of the growing importance attached to education by politicians and senior officials. The state's net expenditure on primary education increased substantially in 1959-60 by about 12% from the previous year (Table 1).¹⁸³ The enhanced spending allocations gave a new impetus to the primary school building programme. The allocation for primary school building provided by the Office of Public Works was increased by over £250,000 in 1959-60 (Table 3).¹⁸⁴ Secondary education was by no means neglected, as Lynch secured the necessary resources to reverse the 10% cut in the capitation grants to secondary schools. Moreover the Exchequer's spending on vocational education showed a significant increase of almost 10% (Table 1).¹⁸⁵ While Lynch particularly praised the work of the VECs, the educational system as a whole benefited from a higher level of state expenditure. Significantly Lynch, in his presentation of the Estimates, argued that vocational education brought important benefits to the nation, underlining that education could make a major contribution to national progress.¹⁸⁶ This acknowledgement that education could contribute to the social and economic development of the nation provided the first real indication of changing official attitudes towards education and a

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1959-60, Summary*, p.100 (Dublin, 1962); Table 1, p.372

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 55, *Tuarascáil, Táblaí Staitistic, An Roinn Oideachais*, 1964-65 (Dublin, 1966); Table 3, p.373

¹⁸⁵ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1959-60, Summary*, p.100 (Dublin, 1962); Table 1, p.372

¹⁸⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol.174, col.62, 8 April 1959

new commitment by the government to allocate greater resources to the expansion of the educational system. The development of a coherent policy, which would ensure the effective use of the increasing resources available to the Minister for Education was, however, a challenge inherited by Lynch's successor, Dr. Patrick Hillery.

Higher Education

If the government's policy approach towards education was generally ill defined in the late 1950s, it was almost non-existent with regard to third-level education. Higher education presented a special category in many respects, not least because the Universities and Colleges had been under the jurisdiction of the Department of Finance until 1957 and were not at all part of the traditional remit of the Department of Education. The responsibility for universities and colleges was transferred to the Department of Education in 1957, at the instigation of T.K. Whitaker.¹⁸⁷ The reaction to the transfer within the Department of Education itself was initially unfavourable. James Dukes, who was given a share of responsibility for the third-level sector as a newly appointed Assistant Principal Officer in 1960, believed that he was one of the few officials willing to have anything to do with third-level education.¹⁸⁸ Certainly the financial constraints on the department in the late 1950s did not encourage the senior officials to welcome any new responsibilities, especially as the Department of Finance agreed to give Education only a single additional staff post – the position of Assistant Principal Officer filled by James Dukes - to deal with the new responsibility.¹⁸⁹ Dukes himself recalled: 'Mine was the only job we got out of taking over the Universities. It was typical of Finance – they gave us one post – one post!'¹⁹⁰ Dukes' acerbic view of Finance's actions was undoubtedly shared by the senior officials, who were obliged to assume responsibility for the third-level sector with only a very modest increase in available staff resources.¹⁹¹

The department also assumed responsibility for Universities and Colleges at a time when the third-level sector was struggling with a severe accommodation crisis. The number of students in the National University of Ireland (NUI) had approximately

¹⁸⁷ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1956-57*, p.5 (Dublin, 1958), Interview with James Dukes, 28 April 2003

¹⁸⁸ Interview with James Dukes, 28 April 2003

¹⁸⁹ *Thom's Directory of Ireland 1961*, pp.17-19 (Dublin, 1961)

¹⁹⁰ Interview with James Dukes, 28 April 2003

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

doubled from 2,684 in 1930-31 to 5,980 in 1957-58.¹⁹² While this represented a very limited expansion in the proportion of the population involved in third-level education, the increase had occurred over three decades in which there had no significant capital development at all in the university sector.¹⁹³ The colleges were therefore heavily overcrowded, unable to cope with any further expansion and facing arrears of building work, which they lacked the funding to undertake.¹⁹⁴ De Valera responded to an appeal for assistance from the authorities of the National University by proposing the establishment of a Commission to consider the accommodation needs of the NUI.¹⁹⁵ The Cabinet approved on 20 August 1957 the establishment of the Commission, which was intended to ‘inquire into the accommodation needs of the Constituent Colleges of the National University and to advise as to how in the present circumstances these needs could best be met.’¹⁹⁶ The Commission was chaired by Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, a judge of the Supreme Court: its membership included J.J. Davy, Seamus Fitzgerald, J.E. Hanna, George Lee, Seán MacGiollarnaith, Stephen O’Mara, Joseph Wrenne and Aodhógán O’Rahilly, with Seamus Ó Cathail of the Department of Finance acting as secretary to the Commission.¹⁹⁷ Lynch addressed the first meeting of the Commission on 15 October 1957. He urged the members to examine the urgent accommodation problems in the three colleges of the National University and to relate these problems to ‘the national need’.¹⁹⁸ The government had delegated to the Commission the responsibility for an evaluation of the accommodation and development requirements of the largest segment of the third-level sector, encouraging the members to make a case for state investment in the colleges in terms of its value to national development.

The universities received only a brief discussion in Lynch’s presentation of the Estimates for 1958-59, as he was awaiting the report of the Commission. He indicated that he lacked the necessary information to make any definite provision for third-level accommodation requirements and announced that state funding for the third-level colleges would be marginally reduced (Table 1).¹⁹⁹ Lynch’s brief presentation underlined that the government had formulated no definite policy at all towards higher education in

¹⁹² *Report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs of the Constituent Colleges of the National University of Ireland*, p.128 (Dublin, 1959)

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1

¹⁹⁶ CAB 2/18, G.C. 8/38, Cabinet Minutes, pp.2-3, 20 August 1957

¹⁹⁷ NA D/T S.16289, *The Irish Press*, ‘Commission on NUI named’, 28 September 1957

¹⁹⁸ *Report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs*, p.1

¹⁹⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.168, col.659-662, 22 May 1958; Table 1, p.372

1958 and had delegated much of the planning required for the development of the university sector to the Commission. Trinity College Dublin was not included in the terms of reference of the Commission, as the government was responding primarily to representations from the authorities of the NUI to resolve its accommodation problems and was not seeking to initiate any wide-ranging review of third-level education. The authorities in University College Dublin (UCD) were particularly concerned to secure the endorsement of the government for the transfer of the college from Earlsfort Terrace to a new site at Belfield.²⁰⁰ The college authorities had secured ownership of a unified site of 252 acres on the Stillorgan Road through a gradual process of purchase by 1957. The transfer of the entire college to the new site was vigorously promoted by the President of UCD, Dr. Michael Tierney, and had been supported by the governing body of the college since November 1951.²⁰¹ The proposed transfer of UCD to Belfield was highly contentious even among the college's academic staff. A form of amalgamation between the two universities in Dublin was proposed by John J. O'Meara, Professor of Classical Languages at UCD, in a lecture entitled 'Reform in Education', delivered under the auspices of the Research and Information Centre of Fine Gael on 27 March 1958.²⁰² He argued that 'Dublin would have one of the greatest universities in the English-speaking world, if to the old and great tradition of Trinity College were joined the traditions of Newman's Catholic University,' as some form of union would bring both financial and political benefits to both institutions.²⁰³ O'Meara urged a close association between UCD and Trinity College, involving a pooling of resources and a joint approach in acquiring funding and property from the government and private sources.²⁰⁴ While O'Meara did not regard a full merger between the two colleges as practical in the short-term, his call for a considerable measure of amalgamation between Trinity and UCD underlined that the academic staff of UCD were not fully united in favour of the transfer to Belfield.

Aodhógán O'Rahilly, who strongly advocated the integration of Trinity College with UCD, soon sought to have option of amalgamation considered by the Commission. Ó Dálaigh therefore asked Lynch on 5 March 1958 to clarify whether the Commission was permitted to make a recommendation concerning the integration of the two

²⁰⁰ NA D/T S.16289, M. Tierney to Eamon de Valera, 13 April 1959,

²⁰¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.939, 23 March 1960, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.46

²⁰² J.J. O'Meara, *Reform in Education*, pp.18-19 (Mount Salus Press Ltd., Dublin, 1958)

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, NA D/T S.16448, *The Irish Times*, '“Some Union” between TCD and UCD Urged: Welding of Tradition', 28 March 1958

²⁰⁴ *The Irish Times*, 'The NUI: Outline of a New Approach', 5 December 1958, *The Irish Independent*, 'Why not combine Dublin's two universities', 30 July 1959

institutions.²⁰⁵ The government rapidly closed off this option, resolving on 14 March that the terms of reference for the Commission could not be interpreted in this way and that they would not be amended to allow for a recommendation on amalgamation.²⁰⁶ O’Rahilly threatened to resign from the Commission when it became obvious that integration was not a practical option in the short-term, but was persuaded to remain a member by the Taoiseach.²⁰⁷ De Valera, who maintained regular contact with Dr. Tierney, was concerned to facilitate the plans for expansion on the new site made by the college authorities.²⁰⁸ It was therefore not surprising that the Commission was constrained by the restrictive terms of reference approved by the government.

Lynch had expressed the hope, in appointing the Commission, that the group would make their report as soon as possible.²⁰⁹ The Commission did indeed complete their work rapidly. The group produced interim reports on the accommodation needs of UCD by 14 June 1958 and on the building requirements of University College, Cork (UCC) by 18 October 1958. The final report, incorporating a section on University College, Galway (UCG) and general considerations for future university development, was completed by 1 May 1959.²¹⁰ The Commission made a compelling case for investment by the state in higher education, arguing that ‘The well-being of university education and of the country are closely linked.’²¹¹ The report indicated that accommodation problems were already so severe in all the colleges that ‘break-down point has almost been reached’ and recommended an ambitious building programme, which would cost £8 million over a ten year period.²¹² The Commission laid down general principles for university development, which underpinned their conclusions, including the maintenance of the physical unity of each institution, the accommodation of the sciences in new buildings, the importance of flexible site planning and the provision of accommodation which was open to adaptation.²¹³ These general considerations had a clear relevance not only for the NUI Colleges but also for all future developments in

²⁰⁵ NA D/T S.16289, C. Ó Dálaigh to J. Lynch, 5 March 1958

²⁰⁶ NA D/T S.16289, Decision slip, *Cruinniú Rialtais, Commission on Accommodation Needs of University Colleges: Terms of Reference*, 14 March 1958

²⁰⁷ NA D/T S.16289, A. O’Rahilly to de Valera, 13 March 1958

²⁰⁸ NA D/T S.16289, Tierney to de Valera, 13 April 1959, *Note by official of the Department of the Taoiseach concerning meeting between Eamon de Valera and Michael Tierney*, 16 May 1959

²⁰⁹ *Report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs*, p.1

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.124

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.128

²¹² *Ibid.*, p.128

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p.127

third-level institutions. The Commission's analysis also drew attention to the consequences for university education of state underfunding for over three decades.

The Commission made specific recommendations for each of the three colleges of the NUI. They endorsed the view of the authorities in UCD that the accommodation available to the college in Earlsfort Terrace was completely inadequate and recommended the transfer of the entire college to a new site at an estimated cost to the state of £6,700,000. The Commission concluded that the site on the Stillorgan Road would deliver 'a final and satisfactory solution to the College's accommodation problems.'²¹⁴ This definite endorsement of the transfer of UCD to a new site was made by the majority of the Commission, despite a vigorous dissent by O'Rahilly, who argued for the amalgamation of UCD and Trinity College.²¹⁵ The Commission's recommendation proved highly influential. Lynch proposed on 23 April 1959 that the government should give its approval in principle to the transfer of the entire college to the new site.²¹⁶ The Minister also sought the establishment of an inter-departmental committee to consider whether it was feasible to initiate the immediate construction of a building to accommodate certain Science departments at Belfield in advance of any comprehensive site planning.²¹⁷ The Minister and senior officials of his department had accepted the Commission's recommendations concerning UCD even before they received its final report. The proposal did not command universal support within the government. The Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Seán MacEntee, strongly objected to the proposed transfer and argued that the government should consider the amalgamation of the two universities in Dublin. MacEntee firmly endorsed O'Rahilly's dissenting opinion, warning that the transfer of UCD could only be accomplished 'at an enormous capital cost'.²¹⁸ The Department of Education rejected the arguments of MacEntee and O'Rahilly. A submission by the department to the government on 20 May ruled out amalgamation on the basis that it would contravene the ban on the attendance of Catholics at Trinity College maintained by the Hierarchy and deny Catholics their

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.44

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.47-48

²¹⁶ NA D/T S.16289, C.O.911, *Memorandum for the Government, Interim Reports of the Commission on Accommodation Needs of the Constituent Colleges of the National University of Ireland, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.1-4, 23 April 1959

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ NA D/T S.16289, C.O.911, *Memorandum for the Government, Report of the Commission on the Accommodation Needs of the Constituent Colleges of the National University of Ireland, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.11-13, 20 May 1959

legitimate right to denominational education at university level.²¹⁹ This argument was given additional force by an intervention in the debate on the part of Cardinal John D'Alton, Archbishop of Armagh. D'Alton issued a public warning against any merger of the existing universities on 23 June 1958, at a prize-giving ceremony in Maynooth: he hoped that there would not be 'any ill-considered experiment in the education field' and described a merger between Trinity College and UCD as 'a union of incompatibles'.²²⁰ The Cardinal's statement underlined that any proposal for amalgamation carried the risk of serious conflict with the Catholic Hierarchy. Moreover the Department of Education's proposal enjoyed the crucial support of the Taoiseach. De Valera fully agreed with the proposed transfer of UCD to the new site. He stipulated only that such a decision in principle should be subject to the approval of the Dáil and that an appropriate motion should be put down by the Minister to secure parliamentary approval for the proposal as soon as possible.²²¹ The government soon adopted de Valera's approach. The Cabinet approved in principle the transfer of UCD to the Belfield site, subject to the agreement of the Dáil, on 26 May 1959. They agreed that a supplementary estimate for a token amount would be presented to the Dáil at an early stage to secure parliamentary approval for the proposal.²²² The government also approved the establishment of an inter-departmental committee to assess whether the provision of a new Science building at Belfield was feasible and desirable in the short-term.²²³ Although the Dáil did not consider the transfer of UCD until March 1960, the government's decision marked a decisive commitment by the state to the development of the new campus at Belfield.

The Commission also indicated that the existing accommodation for UCC and UCG was inadequate. While their accommodation needs could be met on the main college sites, it was recommended that open ground adjoining the institutions should be reserved for third-level development, if necessary by legislation. The report concluded that the necessary building projects for the two colleges should be funded by the state, at a cost of £495,000 for UCC and £597,750 for UCG.²²⁴ A University Development Committee was proposed not only to supervise the extensive building programme recommended by the Commission but to serve as a liaison mechanism between the

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.14-15

²²⁰ *The Irish Press*, 'Cardinal's warning on education: Should not merge universities', 24 June 1958

²²¹ NA D/T S.16289, M. Moynihan to T. Ó Raifeartaigh, 29 April 1959

²²² CAB 2/19, G.C.8/191, Cabinet Minutes, p.2, 26 May 1959, *Statement by the Government Information Bureau on behalf of the Department of Education*, 2 June 1959

²²³ CAB 2/19, G.C.8/191, Cabinet Minutes, pp.2-3

²²⁴ *Report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs*, p.125

Colleges and the government and perhaps also to advise on long-term plans for development.²²⁵ While the government did not immediately implement this recommendation, the establishment of the Higher Education Authority in 1968 created an institution which fulfilled many of the functions proposed by the Commission. The report of the Commission not only provided a comprehensive building programme for the colleges of the National University, but also made an eloquent appeal for public investment in third-level education as a national priority.

The Commission's report was completed shortly before the end of Lynch's term of office. While the department had not received the final report before the Estimates for 1959-60 were prepared, the enhanced allocation for higher education provided a definite indication that Lynch appreciated the message of the Commission. The net expenditure for Universities and Colleges in 1959-60 amounted to £948,560, which marked an increase of 37% from the previous year.²²⁶ The improved level of state support represented a more substantial advance in a single year than the total net increase enjoyed by higher education between 1954-55 and 1958-59 (Table 1).²²⁷ Lynch indicated in his comments on the Estimates that the university sector had taken on great importance, especially in the teaching of the sciences.²²⁸ He acknowledged that Irish universities had lacked sufficient funding to compete with third-level colleges in other European states and stated that the government was now acting to increase the grants to each institution. This additional funding was designed to meet the current spending of each institution, which was estimated on the basis of various elements, including the colleges' income, the number of students in each institution and the staff-student ratio. Lynch noted that the final report of the Commission was expected soon and indicated that increased capital grants would be provided in the meantime to fulfil the most urgent accommodation requirements of the universities.²²⁹ The compelling case made by the Commission exerted some influence even before its final report was presented to the Minister. Lynch was already aware of the interim reports on UCD and UCC and could not have been ignorant of the likely conclusions of the Commission. Certainly Lynch's Estimates speech gave a clear indication that the development of higher education had become a priority for the government. A new commitment had been made by the Minister to capital

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.128

²²⁶ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1959-60*, p.100 (Dublin, 1962)

²²⁷ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1950-51*, p.33 (Dublin, 1953), *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1958-59*, p.88 (Dublin, 1961); Table 1, p.372

²²⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.174, col.72-73, 8 April 1959

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

investment in third-level education. While the state had not formulated any definite policy for the development of higher education, the government had accepted the principle that the universities should receive significantly greater state support, especially in terms of capital development.

Conclusion

Lynch's term drew to a close less than three months after the approval by the Dáil of the Estimates for 1959-60, which gave an early indication of the changing attitudes towards education by politicians and senior officials at the end of the 1950s. Following the election of Eamon de Valera as President of Ireland in June 1959, the new Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, appointed Lynch as Minister for Industry and Commerce.²³⁰ Dr. Patrick Hillery, who was appointed to the government for the first time by Lemass, succeeded Lynch as Minister for Education.

Educational policy in the 1950s was dominated by a conservative consensus, shaped by deference to private, mainly clerical educational interests and by financial constraints, which limited the activity of the Department of Education. Lynch's term of office saw the first tentative indications of policy change with regard to education. The new Minister adopted a cautious reforming approach, which reflected his lack of sympathy with the traditional conception of the role of the state in Irish education. Lynch undertook reforming initiatives in primary education, including the removal of the marriage ban and the first tentative measures to improve the pupil-teacher ratio in national schools. The revision of the system of national school inspection illustrated Lynch's approach as an incremental reformer who worked effectively within the traditional constraints of the educational system. The Minister adopted a more active approach to the resolution of educational problems than his predecessors, especially in primary education, while taking care to avoid conflict with established educational interests. He promoted piecemeal reforms of considerable importance but avoided any new general statement of educational policy. Post-primary education enjoyed increased spending allocations under Lynch, but the policy of the government concerning the expansion of post-primary education remained uncertain and indeed incoherent. Lynch restored the cut in funding for vocational education, but took no initiative to raise the status of vocational education or remove the restrictions imposed by the state in the

²³⁰ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.37

previous generation. While the restoration of the cut in the capitation grant to secondary schools was achieved under Lynch, the department maintained the existing tradition of minimal intervention in secondary education. Although de Valera took an active interest in the development of higher education, he did not attempt to formulate a coherent policy for educational expansion or encourage his Minister to undertake any pro-active measures to facilitate the growing expansion of post-primary education. But despite the continuing incoherence of the state's policy especially at post-primary level, it was in the late 1950s that the first indications appeared of a new conviction among politicians and senior officials that education could play an important part in the social and economic development of the nation. The changing official attitude towards education was underlined by the substantial increase in education expenditure in 1959-60. The new commitment by the government to give a higher priority to education was also illustrated by the establishment of the Commission on accommodation needs in the colleges of the NUI and by the Minister's endorsement of greater public investment to develop third-level education. While Lynch's initiatives were by no means radical, the Minister's cautious reforming approach marked a significant break with the past. The first hesitant indications of the state's policy of educational expansion in the 1960s can be found in Lynch's term of office between 1957 and 1959.

Chapter 2

Developing a policy for Educational Expansion 1959-1961

The importance of initiatives taken by the state at an early stage of the process of educational expansion has perhaps been underestimated. Dr. Patrick Hillery was characterised by Ó Buachalla as a conscientious Minister who was cautious and tentative in formulating and expressing his policy objectives, although he delivered desirable practical improvements in the educational system.¹ This interpretation was shared by influential contemporaries especially with regard to Hillery's first term as Minister between June 1959 and September 1961. Sr. Eileen Randles regarded the Minister on the basis of his early pronouncements as 'an ardent champion of the existing educational system'.² Seán O'Connor, who served as a Principal Officer in the Department of Education throughout Hillery's term, believed that he showed 'no evidence of any intention to exert change' in his first two years as a Minister.³ While this interpretation of Hillery's approach is by no means entirely inaccurate, it does not adequately consider the importance of the initiatives promoted by the Minister and senior officials of the department during Hillery's first term.

Hillery was initially cautious in pursuing policy changes and generally tended to avoid announcing his policy approach through public speeches or press conferences early on in his ministerial career. But even as a new Minister, Hillery initiated important incremental advances in primary and post-primary education. He undertook also a general re-appraisal of the traditional approach employed by the department to promote the revival of the Irish language through the educational system. An activist approach by the state to educational problems was gradually developed by Hillery, although the government still remained wary of conflict with established private interests. The department under Hillery began to implement a definite policy for the expansion of post-primary education for the first time. While the state allocated greater resources to the development of the universities, a Commission on Higher Education was established to chart the future development of third-level education. The Department of Education under Hillery began to intervene more effectively and consistently to address long-term problems within the educational system.

¹ Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, pp.277-285

² Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.39

³ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.60

Hillery and Lemass clarified the policy of the government towards education in October 1959, in a debate on a motion proposed by Dr. Noel Browne and Jack McQuillan, the two members of the left-wing National Progressive Democrat party (NPD), calling for the extension of the statutory school leaving age to at least fifteen years. Hillery defended the educational system against criticisms by Browne: in the course of the debate on the motion he declared that there was nothing to prevent 'expansion or adjustments to allow our system to cater for all our needs and it is on that basis that I would approach the motion.'⁴ But the new Minister also indicated that it was his 'earnest wish' to enable all children to continue in post-primary education at least up to the age of fifteen, arguing that the most effective way to achieve this objective was to accelerate the rate of increase of the necessary facilities for post-primary education.⁵ Hillery also promised to extend the scholarships scheme to create wider opportunities of post-primary and university education for talented pupils.⁶ He had given the first real indication of a definite policy approach by the state for the gradual expansion of post-primary education.

The new policy was clarified and given the full support of the government through a statement made by the new Taoiseach. Lemass intervened personally on 28 October 1959 in the debate on the Dáil motion put forward by Browne and McQuillan.⁷ Lemass made a commitment that 'The aim of Government policy is to bring about a situation in which all children will continue their schooling until they are at least fifteen years of age.'⁸ The Taoiseach informed the Dáil that the government fully agreed with the aim of the motion, but disagreed with the method proposed by the Opposition TDs, namely the extension of statutory compulsory attendance at schools up to the age of fifteen years.⁹ Lemass pledged to achieve this objective as soon as possible, without extending compulsory attendance on a statutory basis up to fifteen years of age.¹⁰ He summarised the government policy as a commitment to the gradual extension of both secondary and whole time technical educational facilities, combined with the expansion of scholarship

⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.177, col.200, 21 October 1959

⁵ *Ibid.*, col.202

⁶ *Ibid.*, col.202

⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 177, col.470, 28 October 1959

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, p.73

¹⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 177, col.470, 28 October 1959

schemes.¹¹ The government's approach was based on the assumption that the expansion of the facilities for post-primary education would deliver their objective within a reasonable timeframe.¹² Lemass and Hillery had outlined a policy based on a measured expansion of post-primary facilities and scholarships. It was not at all the radical approach sought by Browne, which involved the provision of free education by the state up to the age of fifteen; but Lemass' policy statement provided a definite gradualist approach by the state for the expansion of post-primary education.¹³ Moreover the Taoiseach's intervention in the debate, only four months after his election, underlined his interest in education and the increasing priority which would be accorded to education by the government under his leadership. Lemass' statement not only established clearly a new policy commitment by the Government to educational expansion, but also indicated that the new Taoiseach would not hesitate to intervene directly to clarify or promote a policy for which one of his younger Ministers had responsibility. Hillery reiterated the Government's policy on 24 May 1960 in the Dáil. He argued that the key issue was the provision of opportunity for children to attend school for a longer period and that his immediate objective was to provide the facilities, which would make this opportunity available.¹⁴ Lemass and Hillery had established in October 1959 a cautious but definite policy approach by the state, which was designed to achieve a gradual expansion of the educational system, while avoiding any short-term commitment to the extension of the statutory school leaving age.

Primary Education

This gradualist approach to educational expansion provided for important practical improvements in the primary school system. The department under Hillery maintained and extended the incremental reforming approach in the primary sector, which had been initiated by Lynch. The programme for primary school building was accelerated, due to a substantially increased state investment in the programme by 1961-62. While the department sanctioned grants of £1,499,999 under the Public Works budget for national school building projects in 1959-60, state grants amounting to no less than £3,146,320

¹¹ *Ibid.*, col.471

¹² *Ibid.*, col.471

¹³ Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, p.307

¹⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.182, col.77-79, 24 May 1960

were allocated to this programme in 1961-62.¹⁵ The allocation for the primary school building programme almost doubled in this period. Although the Commissioners of Public Works proved capable of spending only £1,900,000 in the financial year up to 31 March 1962, the state had made a firm commitment to increased capital investment in primary education (Table 3).¹⁶ The enhanced allocation for primary school building reflected the government's concern to expand the physical capacity of the system. Hillery also introduced new state grants for national schools and acted to improve the pupil-teacher ratio. The Minister announced on 24 May 1961 a new scheme providing funding for the painting and decoration of national schools.¹⁷ The scheme made state grants available from 1 April 1962 towards the cost of painting national schools externally every four years and for internal decoration every eight years.¹⁸ While the maintenance of the schools remained a local responsibility, the department usually provided a grant of two-thirds of the expenditure incurred on painting the building. Hillery and Ó Raifeartaigh believed that regular painting of the buildings would reduce the number of national schools which required replacement: the Secretary urged school managers to co-operate with the scheme to avoid the 'premature reconstruction' of national schools.¹⁹ While the scheme was a relatively modest improvement based partly on pragmatic official calculations designed to save money in the long-term, it was the first state programme which directly funded the decoration and upkeep of national schools. Hillery also extended the modest improvement made by Lynch in the pupil-teacher ratio in primary schools. The Minister sanctioned revised pupil averages of enrolment and attendance for the appointment and retention of assistant teachers in national schools from 1 July 1960.²⁰ The quotas for the appointment and retention of the third, fourth, fifth and sixth teachers in a national school were reduced by ten units in each case.²¹ The improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio was by no means dramatic: but the second revision of the pupil quotas in two years reflected the department's concern to expand the teaching resources available to the primary schools. The department under Hillery promoted a range of reforming measures to deal with the most obvious flaws in the system.

¹⁵ *Tuarascáil, An Roinn Oideachais, 1959-60*, p.70, (Dublin, 1961), *Tuarascáil, An Roinn Oideachais, 1961-62*, p.88 (Dublin, 1964), T.J. McElligott, *Education in Ireland*, p.50 (Dublin, 1966)

¹⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 195, col.1376, 23 May 1962; Table 3, p.373

¹⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 189, col. 842, 24 May 1961

¹⁸ Circular 22/61, Department of Education, October 1961

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Circular 22/60, Department of Education, June 1960

²¹ *Ibid.*

The department was concerned to improve staffing levels in the capitation schools, which were convent or monastery schools controlled by the religious orders and often had limited opportunities for lay teachers. Hillery sanctioned the creation of special posts from 1 April 1961 for lay teachers in capitation national schools.²² The new post of Special Lay Assistant in the capitation schools was to be filled on the condition that at least four lay assistants were already serving on the recognised staff of such schools.²³ The conditions for recognition set by the department created increased opportunities for lay teachers and helped to raise the staffing levels. Additional posts were authorised for the Capitation schools from 1 July 1961 to improve the pupil-teacher ratio and bring the staffing level for these schools up to the same level authorised for other national schools.²⁴ The Minister sanctioned the creation of a new teaching category of Extra Assistant and the cost of the extra appointments, which amounted to approximately £250,000, was funded by the department.²⁵ Lay national schoolteachers also benefited from efforts by the department to improve promotional opportunities for primary teachers. The Minister announced on 24 May 1961 the creation of special posts of responsibility for national teachers.²⁶ Lay national teachers were also allowed to have teaching service in underdeveloped countries taken into account for credit on the incremental salary scale from September 1961.²⁷ The efforts by the department to improve staffing levels in national schools increasingly benefited lay teachers, as it became clear to the officials that the expanding needs of the educational system could not be met primarily through the traditional sources of the religious orders and diocesan clergy.²⁸ The Minister also authorised a building and renovation programme for St. Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra, to secure more space for teacher training.²⁹ The department under Hillary pursued a strategy of gradual expansion in primary education, based upon a wide range of modest incremental changes, which were generally designed to increase the physical capacity and teaching resources of the educational system.

²² Circular 16/61, Department of Education, April 1961

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Circular 19/61, Department of Education, May 1961, W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for the Quarter ended on 30 June 1961, Department of Education*, 21 July 1961

²⁵ W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for the Quarter ended on 30 June 1961, Department of Education*, 21 July 1961

²⁶ *Dáil Debates* vol. 189, col.842, 24 May 1961

²⁷ Circular 21/61, Department of Education, September 1961

²⁸ Interview with James Dukes, 4 December 2000

²⁹ *Dáil Debates* vol. 195, col. 1377-78, 23 May 1962

The Irish Language

The practical reforming measures taken in this period were not limited to an expansion of the physical capacity of the system. Hillery's department also promoted significant developments in the primary and secondary school curriculum. The first major curriculum reform introduced during Hillery's term was the oral test in Irish. The oral test had been initiated by Lynch and was implemented for the first time as part of the Leaving Certificate examination in 1960.³⁰ The new Minister introduced the oral test without any detailed consultation with the associations of school managers, provoking a protest from the Catholic Headmasters' Association (CHA).³¹ While this initiative was inherited from Lynch, Hillery did not hesitate to introduce significant policy changes in the department's traditional approach to the revival of the Irish language. He approved Circular 11/60 on the teaching of Irish, which was issued to the primary school authorities by Ó Raifeartaigh in January 1960.³² The managers and principal teachers of national schools were informed that inspectors would in future give greater importance to oral Irish than written Irish in assessing the work of teachers. Moreover teachers were allowed to change 'the emphasis from teaching through Irish to the teaching of Irish Conversation' in junior classes, where teaching through the medium of Irish had previously been regarded as the norm, if they considered that greater progress would be made in oral Irish.³³ While the circular appeared to give greater freedom to teachers to determine their teaching methods only on the basis that the standard of oral Irish would improve, the department had effectively abandoned the traditional policy of teaching through the medium of Irish in national schools.³⁴ Circular 11/60 marked a subtle but significant policy shift by the Minister for Education. The change of emphasis from teaching through Irish to the teaching of oral Irish was consistent with the introduction of the oral Irish test in the same year, but it formed part of a more general reassessment of the language policy in education by the department.

The official re-appraisal of the traditional approach to the revival of Irish was most evident in the reform of national teacher training announced by Hillery in 1960. The

³⁰ W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for the Quarter ended on 30 June 1960, Department of Education*, 13 July 1960, *Dáil Debates* vol.182, col.75, 24 May 1960

³¹ W26/13, M94/4, *Minutes of meeting between the Catholic Headmasters' Association and the Minister for Education*, 2 March 1962

³² Circular 11/60, Department of Education, January 1960

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.44

Minister secured the closure of the Preparatory Colleges serving Catholic pupils in 1960 and replaced them with an extended scholarship scheme for students from the Gaeltacht.³⁵ The Colleges were state secondary schools, which provided education through Irish for candidates who intended to enter the teaching profession.³⁶ The five Preparatory Colleges for Catholic students included Coláiste Íde in Dingle, Co. Kerry, Coláiste Éinde in Galway, Coláiste Iosagain, Ballyvourney, Co. Cork, Coláiste Bríde in Falcarragh, Co. Donegal and Coláiste Muire, Tourmakeady, Co. Mayo: Coláiste Moibhí, in Shankill, Dublin, was the sole Protestant Preparatory College.³⁷ The Preparatory Colleges had been established between 1926 and 1929 by the newly independent Irish state to ensure that a significant proportion of native Irish speakers from the Gaeltacht became national teachers and that other young people who were candidates for the training colleges received a thorough grounding in Irish.³⁸ The system was intended to promote the revival of the Irish language in the national schools at a time when the state faced difficulties in obtaining candidates for the teaching profession with the required knowledge of Irish. The colleges had been criticised by the INTO and by the Catholic Bishops.³⁹ The Hierarchy on 23 June 1959 agreed to recommend to the Minister that all the places in the Preparatory Colleges should be allocated on a competitive basis, ending the policy of reserving places for inhabitants of the Gaeltacht.⁴⁰ The senior officials of the department itself increasingly regarded the system as a liability: it was costly to run six state secondary schools and the academic standard of the colleges was difficult to defend as the standard of the Preparatory College students at the Leaving Certificate was lower than the standard reached by successful candidates in the open competition for the training colleges.⁴¹ Hillery put a proposal to the Cabinet on 9 November 1959 for the closure of the Preparatory Colleges and the establishment of an extended scholarship scheme for Gaeltacht students.⁴² The memorandum submitted to the government made a strong case for abolition of the colleges, arguing that they were no longer necessary and

³⁵ W26/2, M2001/5, *Memorandum to the Government*, Department of Education, 9 November 1959, Ó'Buachalla, *Education Policy*, pp.278-285

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1960-61*, p.84 (Dublin, 1962)

³⁸ W26/2, M2001/5, *Memorandum to the Government*, Department of Education, November 1959

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/04, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes of the General Meeting of the Hierarchy, 23 June 1959

⁴¹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, pp.52-54

⁴² W26/2, M2001/5, *Memorandum to the Government*, Department of Education, 9 November 1959

that there were 'fundamental objections' to the system.⁴³ The most important objections identified by Hillery and the senior officials were the undesirable segregation of future teachers from other students, the unfair pressure placed on pupils aged only thirteen to decide their future careers at such an early age and not least the considerable expenditure of state funds in achieving objectives which could be attained by other means at less cost. The department's memorandum also indicated that it was undesirable for the state to own and govern secondary schools.⁴⁴ Hillery argued that an extended scheme of scholarships for Gaeltacht pupils would provide a more satisfactory means of advancing the cause of Irish, by giving greater impetus to the oral Irish scheme in secondary schools and would also deliver greater educational opportunities for native Irish speakers. The Minister therefore proposed to close the five colleges serving Catholic pupils, while allowing the sole Protestant college to continue in operation, as the department considered that the Protestant secondary schools were still unable to provide candidates for the teaching profession with a sufficient knowledge of Irish.⁴⁵ The Cabinet approved Hillery's initiative in principle on 13 November 1959 and confirmed its agreement to the detailed proposal on 15 December.⁴⁶ The Minister then consulted with the bishops of the relevant dioceses, proposing that the clergy or religious orders, which had conducted the colleges, would take over the buildings for use as Class A secondary schools, in which the courses would be given entirely through Irish.⁴⁷ Arrangements were made for the sale of four of the five colleges to the relevant diocesan clergy or religious communities, while Coláiste Bríde in Falcarragh was transferred to the Board of Public Works.⁴⁸ Hillery announced the abolition of the Preparatory College system as a means of recruitment for Catholic national teachers in the Dáil on 24 May 1960.⁴⁹ Although Coláiste Móibhí continued to operate, the courses in the other five colleges were discontinued at the end of the school year on 31 July 1961.⁵⁰

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, V. Jones, 'Coláiste Moibhí - The Last Preparatory College', *Irish Educational Studies*, vol.15, 1996, p.109

⁴⁶ CAB 2/20, G.C.9 9/28, Cabinet Minutes, pp.3-4, 13 November 1959, CAB 2/20, G.C. 9/36, Cabinet Minutes, pp.3-4, 15 December 1959

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, DDA AB8/XV/b/04, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes of the General Meeting of the Hierarchy, 21 June 1960

⁴⁸ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1961-62*, p.55 (Dublin, 1963)

⁴⁹ *Dáil Debates* vol.182, col.72-73, 24 May 1960

⁵⁰ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1961-62*, p.55 (Dublin, 1963)

The department announced a revised scheme of scholarships for Gaeltacht pupils to replace the Preparatory Colleges in accordance with Hillery's proposal to the government.⁵¹ The extended scholarships' scheme provided for an increase in the number of secondary school scholarships awarded annually to Gaeltacht pupils by the department from eighteen to eighty.⁵² Similarly, the number of university scholarships for Gaeltacht students increased from five to fifteen and a total of six places instead of two were reserved for holders of the Gaeltacht scholarships in the department's Training Colleges of Domestic Science.⁵³ As an average of fifty Gaeltacht students had secured places in the Preparatory Colleges between 1957 and 1959, while the department had awarded eighteen scholarships on the basis of a competitive examination, the extended scheme of scholarships was a moderate improvement in the educational opportunities offered by the state to native speakers of Irish.⁵⁴ The introduction of a revised scholarships' scheme as an alternative for the Preparatory Colleges reflected Hillery's emphasis on the extension of scholarships as an essential means towards the expansion of educational opportunity.

The abolition of the state secondary schools for Catholic pupils transformed the system of recruitment for primary teachers, which was now based upon open competition for entry to the training colleges. The initiative was also a significant revision of the state's policy for the revival of the Irish language. Hillery's announcement had removed an important element of the Irish language policy in the national schools. The traditional language revival methods employed in the schools required a regular supply of teachers using Irish as their vernacular: the abolition of the Preparatory Colleges terminated the sole official process for supplying such teachers.⁵⁵ Hillery's willingness to modify the traditional language policy was underlined by the abolition of the Teastas Dhá-Theangach in 1961. The bilingual certificate, which testified to the ability of primary teachers to teach through the medium of Irish as well as English, was a required qualification for all teachers since the late 1920s.⁵⁶ Hillery announced the abolition of the Teastas Dhá-Theangach on 24 May 1961, replacing it with an oral Irish test and

⁵¹ Circular M19/60, Department of Education, November 1960

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for the Quarter ended on 30 June 1960, Department of Education*, 13 July 1960, W26/30, M2001/5, *Memorandum, Additional Gaeltacht Scholarships to be made available*, 15 July 1960

⁵⁴ W26/30, M2001/5, *Memorandum, Additional Gaeltacht Scholarships to be made available*, 15 July 1960

⁵⁵ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.54

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.56-57

providing grants of £15 to training college students to assist them in learning Irish.⁵⁷ The Minister had abandoned or modified the most important elements of the traditional language policy for the revival of Irish in primary education. It was a policy change of considerable importance, achieved with little opposition or even public attention. Seán O'Connor, who disagreed with the abolition of the Preparatory Colleges system, believed that: 'By the issuing of the January Circular on the teaching of Irish and the closing of the Preparatory Colleges, Dr. Hillery ensured the disestablishment of the Irish language.'⁵⁸ O'Connor's sweeping assertion exaggerated the extent of the policy change. The requirements for Irish to be taken as a compulsory subject at the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations remained in place. Moreover O'Connor himself acknowledged that there was no deliberate attempt by the Minister to dismantle the Irish language revival in the schools.⁵⁹ But Hillery certainly abandoned the mechanisms employed by the department to implement the revival of Irish in primary education for the previous generation. The Minister sought instead to promote the teaching of oral Irish in the national schools, while the traditional approach which had underpinned the language policy in primary education - teaching through the medium of Irish - was quietly dropped. The senior officials of the department believed with considerable justice that the methods employed to achieve language revival in the schools had proved ineffective and therefore they moved to replace the traditional methods, which had been used to promote the revival of Irish.⁶⁰ But the reappraisal of the language policy early in Hillery's term also reflected a significant change in the approach of the Department of Education, which had been closely associated with the national objective of language revival since the 1920s. Hillery himself remarked that: 'It was important that the revival of the Irish language was not the purpose of the Department of Education primarily'.⁶¹ The Minister was clearly sceptical of the traditional policy approach of restoring the Irish language through the schools and was concerned that his department should not be treated primarily as the agency for language revival.⁶² James Dukes, who was Hillery's first private secretary in 1959, commented that 'He tried to bring a bit of sense into it',

⁵⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.189, col.842, 24 May 1961

⁵⁸ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.54

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.54-55

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.55

⁶¹ Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

⁶² Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

with regard to the Irish language policy.⁶³ Hillery curtailed the initiatives which gave precedence to Irish in national schools and preferential treatment to native Irish speakers in the recruitment of national teachers. While the established policy objective of language revival was maintained, the traditional policy of primacy for Irish in primary education was substantially modified and diluted by the department under Hillery.

Post-Primary Education

While Hillery's freedom of action in post-primary education was much more limited, especially with the regard to the private secondary schools, he proved capable of delivering incremental advances, especially in vocational education. One of the earliest initiatives taken by the department under Hillery was designed to extend the system of vocational education and enable vocational schools in rural areas to contribute to the development of the agricultural sector. Recommendations for additional educational facilities for those working in agriculture and closer collaboration between the vocational authorities and the Department of Agriculture had been made by *Economic Development*.⁶⁴ In accordance with recommendations made by the report, an inter-departmental committee consisting of four senior officials from the departments of Education and Agriculture was established on 13 February 1959 to co-ordinate the activity of the rural vocational schools and the Agricultural Advisory Service.⁶⁵ The inter-departmental group set out to establish a joint programme involving a part-time agricultural course in the vocational schools. The main product of the inter-departmental collaboration was the Winter Farm Schools Scheme, which was launched in November 1959.⁶⁶ The scheme involved part-time education during the winter months for young farmers aged between eighteen and twenty-five.⁶⁷ The scheme, which was organised by the VECs in co-operation with the two departments, saw the establishment of thirty-seven part-time courses throughout the country in the winter of 1959.⁶⁸ The reaction to the scheme was not, however, universally positive. Dr. McQuaid reported to the Hierarchy in October 1959 about 'an objectionable feature' of the original scheme, namely the

⁶³ Interview with James Dukes, 28 April 2003

⁶⁴ T.K. Whitaker, *Economic Development*, p.113 (Dublin, 1958)

⁶⁵ NA D/T S12891C, *Memorandum by the Department of Agriculture*, 9 March 1959

⁶⁶ W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for the Quarter ended on 30 September 1959*, Department of Education, 14 October 1959

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, pp.30-31

⁶⁸ W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for the Quarter ended on 30 September 1959*, Department of Education, 14 October 1959

suggestion that the officials of the department were to select suitable candidates to lecture on Social Ethics.⁶⁹ The Archbishop's concerns were met when it was arranged for local clergy to conduct the relevant course of lectures.⁷⁰ The collaborative venture between the VECs and the departments of Education and Agriculture was highly successful, drawing an attendance of over eight hundred young farmers to the part-time courses in 1959-60.⁷¹ The successful implementation of the joint initiative was a product of the growing concern on the part of politicians and senior officials to exploit the potential contribution of vocational education to economic development.

The official conviction of the importance of education in preparing qualified workers for employment was also underlined by the reform of the regulations for apprenticeship. A new national Board responsible for the regulation of apprenticeship, An Chéard Chomhairle, was established on 11 April 1960, under the terms of the Apprenticeship Act 1958.⁷² The new legislation, which was piloted through the Oireachtas by Jack Lynch as Minister for Industry and Commerce in 1959, replaced the Apprenticeship Act of 1931.⁷³ The existing Act was clearly inadequate as a regulatory measure, as it had applied only to craft trades which voluntarily put themselves within the scope of the legislation.⁷⁴ The new legislation provided for the establishment of An Chéard Chomhairle, which was empowered to set down the minimum age for apprenticeship and the educational qualifications necessary for apprentices.⁷⁵ The new Board also enjoyed the power to regulate the education and examination of apprentices, in conjunction with the Department of Education.⁷⁶ The new initiative was strongly influenced by trade union and employer interests. Indeed a joint committee representing the trade unions and employers had recommended the establishment of An Chéard Chomhairle and its membership included five nominees of the employers and five union representatives as well as three nominees of the VECs.⁷⁷ The new apprenticeship Board

⁶⁹ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/04, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes of the General Meeting of the Hierarchy, p.2, 13 October 1959

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.51

⁷² NA D/T S.16808, *The Apprenticeship Act 1958, as passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas*, 9 December 1959, p.4 (Dublin, 1959), Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.42

⁷³ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 177, col.77, 21 October 1959, *Dáil Debates*, vol. 177, col. 377, 28 October 1959

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ NA D/T S.16808, *The Apprenticeship Act 1958, as passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas*, 9 December 1959, p.12 (Dublin, 1959)

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.12-13, *Dáil Debates*, vol. 177, col.77-130, 21 October 1959

⁷⁷ NA D/T S.16808, *The Apprenticeship Act 1958, as passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas*, 9 December 1959, p.5, (Dublin, 1959)

was intended to establish effective regulation of the conditions for apprenticeship and to prevent abuses, such as the use of apprentices as cheap labour by employers who failed to provide opportunities for training.⁷⁸ The new approach had immediate implications for technical education, as apprenticeship committees established by An Chéard Chomhairle were empowered to require the attendance of apprentices at technical courses and to compel employers to release apprentices to attend such courses without loss of earnings. The establishment of An Chéard Chomhairle led to the creation of a new regulatory framework for the recruitment, education and certification of apprentices.⁷⁹

This new approach to the regulation of apprenticeship required close co-operation between An Chéard Chomhairle, the Department of Education and vocational education interests. The new Board placed considerable emphasis on the achievement of proper educational qualifications by candidates for apprenticeship and required the collaboration of the Department of Education to establish the new regulatory framework for apprenticeship. The Board established a minimum age for entry into apprenticeship of fifteen years and required minimum educational qualifications for all potential apprentices after 1 September 1963.⁸⁰ The new minimum qualifications laid down by An Chéard Chomhairle required young people seeking an apprenticeship to secure a pass in specified subjects in either the Day Group Certificate Examination for vocational schools or the Intermediate Certificate Examination: an equivalent educational qualification was also acceptable. John Agnew, Chairman of An Chéard Chomhairle, outlined the new minimum qualifications in March 1961: a public letter addressed by Agnew to the parents of national school pupils in the sixth standard was circulated by the Department of Education to all national schools.⁸¹ Agnew advised parents to ensure that children seeking apprenticeship in craft trades were enrolled in the appropriate vocational or secondary school courses in September 1961, so that they would have the opportunity to secure the minimum educational qualifications.⁸² The Department of Education fully supported the new initiative. Ó Raifeartaigh issued a circular to the national school managers, indicating that Hillery was concerned to have the letter from An Chéard

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.3, *Dáil Debates*, vol. 177, col.77-130, 21 October 1959

⁷⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 177, col.77-130, 21 October 1959, Hyland and Milne, *Irish Educational Documents 2*, pp.238-239

⁸⁰ Circular 12/61, Department of Education, March 1961

⁸¹ DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, Letter by J. Agnew to all National School parents, March 1961

⁸² *Ibid.*

Chomhairle circulated to all parents or guardians of boys in the sixth standard.⁸³ The impetus for the effective regulation of conditions of apprenticeship did not come from the Department of Education, but the Minister supported the initiative when it was launched by the new national apprenticeship board. An Chéard Chomhairle broke new ground in requiring minimum educational standards for apprenticeship. Certainly the regulations established by the new national apprenticeship board were designed to prevent the exploitation of apprentices by unscrupulous employers. But it was evident too that post-primary educational qualifications, in either vocational or secondary school courses, were now considered the appropriate gateway to apprenticeship in craft trades. The new regulations indicated that the representatives of the employers and the trade unions, along with senior officials of the Department of Education and other relevant departments, shared a consensus that education was an essential prerequisite to productive employment.

The Department of Education had traditionally given considerable attention to vocational education, while secondary education was essentially controlled and run by private, mainly clerical interests with minimal intervention by the officials.⁸⁴ The department was, however, certainly more active between 1959 and 1961 than previously in initiating new schemes for secondary education, even if its initiatives were usually small-scale. A new scheme was introduced providing a non-pensionable allowance of £200 annually from 1 August 1961 for probationer teachers, namely teachers who had secured the necessary academic qualifications and were undertaking the teaching service required for registration.⁸⁵ Another new scheme enabled lay secondary school teachers to accrue credit on the incremental salary scale with regard to teaching service in underdeveloped countries in Africa.⁸⁶ Secondary education was expanding rapidly at the beginning of the 1960s. The department gave recognition to sixteen new secondary schools in the school year 1959-1960 and to fifteen new secondary schools in 1960-61.⁸⁷ Recognition was an act of practical significance, which facilitated the expansion of

⁸³ Circular 12/61, Department of Education, March 1961

⁸⁴ W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Reports 1957-1959*, Department of Education, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.21

⁸⁵ W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for the Quarter ended 30 June 1961*, Department of Education, 21 July 1961

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for the Quarter ended 31 March 1960*, Department of Education, 13 April 1960, W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for the Quarter ended 31 March 1961*, Department of Education, 18 April 1961

secondary education, as the department paid the incremental salary of secondary teachers in recognised schools. The Minister made no attempt to direct the expansion of the secondary schools, which remained dominated by private interests. But while the powers of the Minister of Education with regard to the secondary schools remained limited to the regulation of teachers' salary and the revision of the curriculum, the department began to use its established powers to promote new policies.

The traditional functions of the Minister with regard to teachers' salaries and curriculum development were employed to encourage new academic practices in secondary schools. The department took an active approach in promoting a broader school programme in secondary education, placing an increasing emphasis on the promotion of the teaching of foreign languages and Science. Ó Raifeartaigh issued a circular to secondary school managers in June 1961, which allowed recognised teachers of modern continental languages who had given service in schools on the Continent, to receive appropriate incremental credit on the salary scales for such service.⁸⁸ Additional allowances for foreign language teachers in second-level education were provided in the Estimates for 1962-63.⁸⁹ Hillery also initiated measures to facilitate Science teaching in secondary schools. He announced a new scheme on 24 May 1961 to provide grants for Science equipment to new schools, schools in which Science was not previously available and schools in which additional provision for Science teaching was required.⁹⁰ The scheme, which was introduced from August 1961, was designed to finance the cost of equipping and furnishing Science laboratories.⁹¹ These measures to encourage the teaching of Science subjects and modern continental languages in the secondary schools reflected a recognition on the part of Hillery and the officials of inadequacies in the Irish school curriculum. The senior officials were clearly well aware of the low priority frequently given to Science subjects and foreign languages in secondary education, which was subsequently illustrated by the *Investment in Education* report.⁹² The department was beginning by 1961 to take initiatives to remedy the situation, although the measures introduced were still relatively small-scale. It is evident that Hillery sought consistently

⁸⁸ Circular M17/61, Department of Education, June 1961

⁸⁹ *Dáil Debates* vol.195, col.1383, 23 May 1962

⁹⁰ *Dáil Debates* vol. 189, col. 846, 24 May 1961

⁹¹ W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for the Quarter ended on 30 June 1961*, Department of Education, 21 July 1961

⁹² *Investment in Education, Report of the Survey Team appointed by the Minister for Education in October 1962, Part 1*, pp.278-281 (Dublin, 1965)

to promote incremental reforms designed to alleviate obvious shortcomings in the educational system, including not only its limited physical capacity and teaching resources, but also academic inadequacies in the secondary school programme.

Few shortcomings in the Irish educational system were more evident than the inadequacy of the Local Authorities Scholarships Scheme. Local authorities throughout the state awarded only 582 scholarships for post-primary schools in 1958.⁹³ This total increased hardly at all in the following years: 600 scholarships were awarded at post-primary level in 1959 and 619 in 1960.⁹⁴ The level of provision for university scholarships was even more limited. Local authorities awarded only 117 university scholarships on a national basis in 1958.⁹⁵ The level of provision for university scholarships actually declined over the next two years, dropping marginally to 107 in 1960: it was only in 1961 that the provision of such scholarships showed a modest increase and even then the local authorities were awarding only 155 university scholarships throughout the state.⁹⁶ The overall provision for the scheme on a national basis was minimal, not least because there was no contribution from the Exchequer.⁹⁷ While the Department of Education provided scholarship schemes for pupils from the Gaeltacht and third-level students who were willing to pursue their university courses through Irish, the local authorities provided the only general scheme of scholarships.

The level of access to the educational system was expanded as a result of a measure introduced by Hillery, which transformed the post-primary and university scholarships scheme. The Local Authorities Scholarships (Amendment) Bill, which was introduced to the Dáil on 4 July 1961, was designed to establish a greatly expanded scholarship scheme.⁹⁸ Hillery outlined the terms of the Bill on 25 July 1961, describing the minimal provision for scholarships awarded by the local authorities as 'a serious defect' in the educational system.⁹⁹ The new measure was intended not to provide direct state scholarships on a general basis but to increase and supplement the funding provided by the local authorities. The purpose of the Bill was to provide state funding of

⁹³ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.517-520, 11 July 1961

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ W26/4, M2014/58, *University Scholarships Awarded By County Or County Borough Councils 1958-59*, Department of Education

⁹⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.521-524, 11 July 1961

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, col.517-520

⁹⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.15, 4 July 1961, J. Coolahan, *Irish Education: its history and structure*, p.139 (Dublin, 1981)

⁹⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.1683, 25 July 1961

approximately £300,000 for the local authority scholarships over a period of four years.¹⁰⁰ The new legislation was also designed to encourage local councils to increase their contribution to the scholarship scheme by raising additional funding on the rates. The Minister aimed to secure an increase of £90,000 in the overall contribution made by the local authorities.¹⁰¹ Hillery told the Dáil that the state contribution would amount to the equivalent of 5d in the £1 levied on the rates, if each local authority levied a rate of 4d in the £1 on its own.¹⁰² The state contribution was intended to increase steadily in proportion to the funding raised by the local authority to achieve a five to four ratio between state and local contributions after four years.¹⁰³ It was envisaged that four years after the establishment of the new scheme the total provision for scholarships would roughly be quadrupled, rising from £150,000 provided by the local authorities alone in 1960-61 to £540,000 under the new scheme by 1965-1966. Hillery indicated that the scholarships would be awarded on the basis of a competitive examination at a national level set by the department: up to a quarter of the scholarships would be awarded on merit alone without any means test. The new legislation was shaped by the principle of greater educational opportunity for the talented child. The Minister argued on 25 July 1961 that the individual talent of the Irish people was an invaluable resource and that the aim of the Bill was 'to bring forward for the benefit of the nation as a whole, the country's best talent, wherever it is to be found.'¹⁰⁴ He summarised his objective in expanding the provision for scholarships in the Dáil on 1 August 1961: 'The principle is that if there are brains in the country, we should get them through the full course of education as far as we can afford to do so and that they should earn their way on merit.'¹⁰⁵ Hillery emphasized the necessity to enable talented children from all social categories to progress up the educational ladder, presenting the extension of scholarships as a social and educational necessity.¹⁰⁶

The highest priority under the new scheme was given to the provision of post-primary scholarships. The new legislation stipulated that two-thirds of the total scholarship funding was to be allocated to post-primary education, while one-third was

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.2410-2420, 2 August 1961

¹⁰³ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.1737-1744, 25 July 1961

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, col.1684-1686

¹⁰⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.2342, 1 August 1961

¹⁰⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.1687, 25 July 1961

reserved for university education.¹⁰⁷ Hillery was clearly most concerned to channel greater state funding to post-primary education. He strongly defended the priority given to the post-primary scholarships, which was criticised by Mulcahy on the basis that it penalised county councils offering more generous schemes for university scholarships. Hillery told the Dáil that the ratio for the new scholarships' scheme was necessary to prevent an inequitable distribution of funding by local authorities, which favoured university scholarships.¹⁰⁸ The most significant innovation of the Scholarships Bill, however, was the provision of direct payments by the national government towards the cost of local authority scholarships. While the department already provided limited scholarship programmes, mainly for the promotion of the Irish language, the legislation heralded a new approach by the state, which provided funding for a general scheme of scholarships for the first time.¹⁰⁹ The legislation also enabled the Minister to sanction the terms of the local authority schemes, giving the department a significant influence over the terms and value of the scholarships.¹¹⁰ The Bill established a new framework for the award of scholarships by the local authorities and transformed the financial provision for post-primary and university scholarships.

The obvious advantages of the legislation guaranteed it an easy passage through the Dáil, despite some criticism of its terms by opposition TDs. Mulcahy complained about the terms relating to university scholarships, while Dr. Noel Browne attacked the Bill as a pre-election manoeuvre by the Government.¹¹¹ The Bill was, however, approved without a division at any stage on 2 August 1961, within a month of its introduction.¹¹² As the Dáil was dissolved on 1 September 1961 for a general election, Browne's suspicions about the timing of the Bill were not entirely unfounded, but the importance of the new legislation transcended pre-election politics. The new legislation not only provided funding by the national government for the first time for a general scheme of scholarships, but also marked the first real attempt by the state to widen educational opportunity, especially with regard to post-primary education.

The new Scholarships Act immediately contributed to a major increase in the number of scholarship candidates. 5,622 candidates took the post-primary scholarship

¹⁰⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.2325-2340, 1 August 1961

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, col. 2354-60

¹⁰⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col. 1683, 25 July 1961

¹¹⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.2342-2349, 1 August 1961

¹¹¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.1688-1709, 25 July 1961

¹¹² *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.2423-2425, 2 August 1961

examinations in 1962, compared to only 3,122 in 1961. The Department of Education was providing £60,000 in a single year towards the cost of local authority scholarships by 1963-64.¹¹³ Hillery had urged local authorities in July 1961 to secure the increased level of funding by taking advantage of the terms of the Act.¹¹⁴ It appears that the local authorities required little encouragement. The number of scholarships for post-primary schools more than doubled between 1961 and 1962, rising from 831 to 1927. Likewise the number of university scholarships increased from 155 in 1961 to 254 in 1962.¹¹⁵ The revised legislation delivering direct state support for scholarships initiated a rapid expansion in the scholarship scheme especially at post-primary level. The incremental reforming approach pursued by Hillery and the department proved capable of delivering advances in post-primary education by dealing effectively with persistent educational problems, which had been largely neglected by previous governments, such as the minimal provision for the local authority scholarships. This incremental approach was firmly based on the government's gradualist policy, which gave priority to the expansion of educational facilities and scholarships in the first instance. This approach certainly had substantial limitations and was only beginning to have some impact with regard to post-primary education by 1961. But Lemass and Hillery had initiated the implementation of a viable policy for the expansion of post-primary education.

Higher Education

But if the state was beginning to implement a workable policy for the expansion of post-primary education during Hillery's first term as Minister for Education, its approach to the development of higher education remained ill defined. Hillery inherited the report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs of the Constituent Colleges of the National University, which had been completed by 1 May 1959.¹¹⁶ The government had accepted the Commission's recommendation for the transfer of UCD from Earlsfort Terrace to the new site at Belfield shortly before Hillery's appointment.¹¹⁷ The department under Hillery vigorously promoted the transfer of UCD to the new site. Mairtín Ó Flathartaigh of the Department of Education chaired an inter-departmental committee, including

¹¹³ *Dáil Debates*, vol.206, col.1083-1086, 11 December 1963

¹¹⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.191, col.1688, 25 July 1961

¹¹⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.203, col.384, 29 May 1963

¹¹⁶ *Report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs*, p.124

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.44

representatives of the Department of Finance and the Commissioners of Public Works, which was established by the Cabinet in May 1959 to examine the urgent accommodation needs of the college's Science Faculty.¹¹⁸ The committee endorsed the immediate development of Science facilities on the new site in November 1959. This verdict was not entirely unanimous, as John Mooney, the representative of the Department of Finance, signed its report 'with some misgivings', expressing serious reservations about the college's plans for the development of the site at Belfield.¹¹⁹ Hillery and the officials of his department did not share such reservations. The Minister presented a proposal to the government on 22 February 1960, advocating the immediate provision of accommodation for the college's Science departments at Belfield.¹²⁰ The Cabinet agreed on 1 March 1960 to provide state funding for the construction of a new Science building at Belfield, which would accommodate the senior classes and research sections of the Physics and Chemistry departments by October 1961.¹²¹ Hillery then proposed a supplementary Estimate in the Dáil on 23 March 1960, which provided for a token allocation of £10.¹²² The token Vote was designed to secure the approval in principle of the Dáil for the transfer of the college to Belfield. While the full allocation of approximately £6,700,000 for the development of the new site would not be authorised in the short-term, Hillery announced the government's decision to provide immediately for a new Science building on the Belfield site, at a cost of £250,000. As the college authorities were able to raise £100,000 for the new building, the state would provide the remainder of the funding as soon as possible after the token Estimate was approved. The Minister commented that the transfer of the college as a whole could well require a period of twenty years.¹²³ While only the funding for the new Science building was being provided initially, it was evident that the government had made a long-term commitment to the establishment of a new campus at Belfield, without formulating a definite approach for the development of higher education as a whole.

¹¹⁸ NA D/T S.16803A, *Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Accommodation for the Faculty of Science, University College Dublin*, p.1, 13 November 1959

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.11-12, *Reservation by Mr. J. Mooney*, pp.13-14

¹²⁰ NA D/T S16803A, C.O.911, *Memorandum for the Government, Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Accommodation for the Faculty of Science, University College Dublin, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.1-10, 22 February 1960

¹²¹ CAB 2/20, G.C.9/52, *Cabinet Minutes*, pp.2-3, 1 March 1960

¹²² *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.926-927, 23 March 1960

¹²³ *Ibid.*, col.945-948

The Minister's opening speech to the debate made the case for the transfer of UCD, relying heavily on the conclusions of the Commission on Accommodation Needs. The Commission had concluded that Earlsfort Terrace was hopelessly overcrowded and that any attempt to extend it would be inadequate and impractical.¹²⁴ Hillery therefore emphasized the unsuitable nature of the Earlsfort Terrace site and ruled out any high-rise development to expand the accommodation.¹²⁵ The option of redeveloping Earlsfort Terrace through extensive use of compulsory acquisition was rejected both by the Commission and by the Minister, who argued that the property rights of householders and institutions in the area deserved respect.¹²⁶ He also emphasized that the cost of compulsory acquisition in the centre of Dublin could prove greater than the cost of funding the new campus, referring to the Commission's assessment that the redevelopment of Earlsfort Terrace could require an allocation of almost £8,000,000.¹²⁷ Hillery and the senior officials had accepted without reservation the conclusions of the Commission on the redevelopment of Earlsfort Terrace. James Dukes, who shared responsibility for the building programme in the universities as an Assistant Principal Officer, commented on the attitude of the senior officials to the Belfield development: 'They were convinced that you couldn't stay in Earlsfort Terrace, it was too small'.¹²⁸ Moreover the Minister was clearly concerned to avoid the expense and possible conflict with private interests involved in a process of compulsory acquisition.

Another alternative to the development of the site at Belfield, namely the amalgamation of UCD with Trinity College Dublin, had been strongly advocated by Aodhógán O'Rahilly in a Reservation to the report of the Commission and by academics within UCD such as Professor O'Meara.¹²⁹ But with the exception of the dissenting voice of O'Rahilly, the Commission had not given any consideration to the possibility of merger, in part because their terms of reference excluded Trinity College.¹³⁰ Moreover merger did not appear a practical proposition to the Commission due to the ban on the attendance of Catholics at Trinity College maintained by the Hierarchy. Hillery too rejected the possibility of amalgamation on 23 March, largely on the basis that such a

¹²⁴ *Report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs*, p.44

¹²⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.943, 23 March 1960

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, col.944, *Report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs*, p.44

¹²⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.944, 23 March 1960, *Report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs*, p.44

¹²⁸ Interview with James Dukes, 28 April 2003

¹²⁹ *Report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs*, pp.47-48

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.44-45

solution would undermine the fundamental rights of parents to guarantee the denominational education of their children.¹³¹ He noted that Article 42 of the Constitution required the state to respect the lawful preference of parents not to send their children to any educational institution designated by the state in violation of their conscience. Hillery argued that he was obliged to respect the consciences of all Irish citizens, Catholic or Protestant, in considering the question of university amalgamation. He asserted that the basic principle of 'the non-forcing of conscience' would be the decisive factor in considering any redistribution or amalgamation of faculties at university level.¹³² Hillery not only rejected the idea of merger between Trinity College and UCD but also asserted that any combination of courses or faculties had to be acceptable to parents of each denomination. But the Minister's statement had less to do with the rights of parents than with the established position of the Catholic Bishops. The Hierarchy regarded the colleges of the NUI as acceptable institutions for the education of Catholics, but was deeply hostile to Trinity College not only on the basis of its Protestant tradition but because it was considered to be a repository of anti-Catholic or even non-religious influences.¹³³ Hillery emphasized that all four universities, including Trinity College, had their own part to play in educational development and national life.¹³⁴ But his statement implied that the religious acceptability of proposals for reform in higher education, as defined by the Catholic Hierarchy, would have to be the guiding principle in any debate on university integration.

Hillery's statement on higher education was heavily influenced by his senior officials, especially Ó Raifeartaigh. Hillery was then still an inexperienced Minister who had held office for less than a year and relied heavily on the senior officials of the department.¹³⁵ Significantly McQuaid wrote to both the Minister and the Secretary of the department on 24 March 1960, to offer his congratulations on Hillery's statement in the Dáil.¹³⁶ The Archbishop, who vehemently opposed any suggestion of merger between Trinity College and UCD, thanked Hillery for his courage in guaranteeing Catholics a

¹³¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.940, 23 March 1960

¹³² *Ibid.*, col.940-941

¹³³ MFS 8223, L10.4, Department of Education, *Minutes, Commission on Higher Education*, pp.141-161, 26 May 1961

¹³⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.940-941, 23 March 1960

¹³⁵ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.91

¹³⁶ DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, McQuaid to Dr. P. Hillery, 24 March 1960; McQuaid to Ó Raifeartaigh, 24 March 1960

right to their own university education.¹³⁷ McQuaid, however, also warmly praised Ó Raifeartaigh for the excellence of the Minister's speech and commented: 'For your share in securing our right to Catholic education, I am very grateful'.¹³⁸ The Secretary replied on the same day in terms which left no doubt of his influential role in drafting the Minister's speech. He assured McQuaid that it was an extraordinary privilege for him to play a part in securing the future of Catholic higher education: as a result of the Minister's statement, he believed that the right of Catholics to university education had now been fully recognised.¹³⁹ Ó Raifeartaigh argued that although the Belfield proposal was important, it was incidental compared to the Minister's general statement on higher education. Indeed he considered Hillery's statement 'to be of such fundamental importance that I was nervous up to the last moment that something untoward would occur.'¹⁴⁰ The Secretary, in a revealing passage, also thanked McQuaid for his 'inspiration and guidance throughout'.¹⁴¹ The Minister's enunciation of the principle of denominational higher education in such definite terms owed much to Ó Raifeartaigh, his most senior adviser, who was concerned up to the last moment that his advice might be disregarded. The Secretary had engaged in close consultation with McQuaid on the future development of higher education, including the proposal to transfer UCD to Belfield. There is little doubt that such consultation with the Archbishop occurred with Hillery's full approval. The Minister's affirmation that any reform of university education had to be acceptable to all religious denominations underlined not only the influence of Ó Raifeartaigh, but also Hillery's determination to avoid any conflict with the Catholic Bishops over the future of UCD.

The Minister's commitment to the development of the Belfield site cannot, however, be attributed solely to the influence of the Department of Education or even the Archbishop of Dublin. The project for a new campus had acquired considerable momentum by the late 1950s, not least due to the determination of the UCD authorities to bring about the transfer.¹⁴² Seán O'Connor believed that it was too late to stop the move to Belfield by 1957.¹⁴³ Certainly the options available to the government were severely

¹³⁷ DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, McQuaid to Hillery, 24 March 1960

¹³⁸ *McQuaid Papers*, McQuaid to Ó Raifeartaigh, 24 March 1960

¹³⁹ *McQuaid Papers*, Ó Raifeartaigh to McQuaid, 24 March 1960

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.45

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

restricted by 1960. The Commission on Accommodation Needs had rejected an extensive redevelopment of the Earlsfort Terrace site. Any attempt to promote amalgamation between the two Dublin universities would certainly have involved the Minister in conflict with the Catholic Hierarchy as well as the UCD authorities. The development of the Belfield site represented a satisfactory solution for a government which had no desire for conflict with the educational or ecclesiastical authorities. The debate in the Dáil on Hillery's token Estimate underlined that Fine Gael's parliamentary party was solidly supportive of the proposal. The leader of Fine Gael James Dillon and former Finance Minister Patrick McGilligan both warmly endorsed Hillery's approach.¹⁴⁴ Patrick O'Donnell, who concluded the debate on behalf of the main opposition party, assured the Minister of Fine Gael's collective support for the proposal to establish a new campus for UCD.¹⁴⁵ Fianna Fáil's parliamentary party was much more divided on the proposal. Several Fianna Fáil TDs, including former Justice Minister Gerry Boland and backbench Deputy Lionel Booth, expressed strong reservations about the transfer of UCD.¹⁴⁶ But a majority of the Fianna Fáil contributors to the debate either agreed with Hillery's proposal or argued that the Minister had no real alternative. Donogh O'Malley, who had advocated an amalgamation between Trinity College and UCD subject to the provision of appropriate religious guarantees, argued that the Minister had no alternative but to act on the basis of the Commission's recommendations at this stage.¹⁴⁷ The strongest case against the proposal was made by Noel Browne and Jack McQuillan of the NPD. Browne attacked the transfer as 'the decision of old men' who lacked appreciation of the needs of the modern world and called for some form of amalgamation as an alternative to the removal of UCD from the centre of the city.¹⁴⁸ The two NPD members sought a free vote on the token Estimate, hoping to exploit Fianna Fáil's divisions on the issue.¹⁴⁹ But Hillery won approval of the proposal without difficulty. There was no vote at all, although Browne recorded his dissent from the transfer of the University College to Belfield: the Estimate was passed by the Dáil without a division on 31 March 1960.¹⁵⁰ The relative ease with which Hillery secured the agreement of the Dáil to the

¹⁴⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.955-1172, 23 March 1960

¹⁴⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.1502-1504, 31 March 1960

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, col.1479-1500

¹⁴⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.966-978, 23 March 1960

¹⁴⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.1260-1268, col.1360-1385, 31 March 1960

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, col.1474-1479

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, col.1507

development of the new campus at Belfield illustrated the pragmatic case for the government's decision. Certainly any attempt to promote university amalgamation would have encountered much fiercer resistance. The government's commitment to the new campus was a pragmatic response to the prevailing political and educational realities.

The debate on the token Vote for Belfield offered the first indications of the Minister's approach to the development of third-level education. Hillery announced his intention in his opening statement to establish a new Commission of Inquiry on Higher Education.¹⁵¹ While the government would continue to provide capital funding to deal with the accommodation problems of the Universities, the new Commission would evaluate a wide variety of issues related to the long-term development of higher education.¹⁵² Hillery did not outline fully the terms of reference for the new group, but indicated that the method of allocation for annual grants to the colleges and the demand made by the Limerick Project Committee for a new university would certainly fall within the remit of the Commission.¹⁵³ The Minister also intended the Commission to recommend ways of avoiding 'needless duplication' between professional courses in universities and courses in higher technical schools which both received state funding.¹⁵⁴ Hillery gave further information about the Commission on 28 April 1960, informing the Dáil that the process for university appointments would also be included in the remit for the Commission.¹⁵⁵ This commitment was made following a critical report issued by the Board of Visitors, which had investigated appointments made by the governing body of UCD. The Board of Visitors was established by the government in November 1959 to conduct an investigation following the submission of a petition by John Kenny, an assistant in the Law Faculty, questioning the validity of appointments made to the posts of College Lecturer and Assistant Lecturer by the governing body.¹⁵⁶ The Visitors concluded in February 1960 that the governing body had no authority to make the disputed appointments, which could be made only by the Senate of the National University of Ireland.¹⁵⁷ Hillery responded by securing the Cabinet's approval for special legislation to validate the disputed appointments: he also obtained the government's

¹⁵¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.952-953, 23 March 1960

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.180, col.1505, 31 March 1960

¹⁵⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.181, col.299, 28 April 1960

¹⁵⁶ NA D/T 16644, J. Kenny to M. Moynihan, 29 May 1959, M. Moynihan to J. Dukes, 11 August 1959

¹⁵⁷ NA D/T 16644, *Report of the Board of Visitors, University College Dublin*, pp.4-8, February 1960

agreement for his proposal to include university appointments in the terms of reference for the new Commission.¹⁵⁸ The Minister recommended the University College Dublin Bill, which validated the existing appointments and allowed the governing body to continue its previous practice for a limited period, pending the report of the Commission on Higher Education, to the Dáil on 28 April 1960.¹⁵⁹ The Second Reading of the UCD Bill was approved, with the support of Fine Gael, by sixty-three votes to five on 11 May and the legislation was approved without a further division on 19 May.¹⁶⁰ The new legislation validated as an interim measure the UCD appointments policy, which had been condemned by the Board of Visitors. The result of the Dáil debate on the special legislation indicated that both the government and Fine Gael wished to resolve the problem as expeditiously as possible without confrontation with the UCD authorities.¹⁶¹ The appointments legislation also underlined, however, that the Minister was dealing with the problems of university education through short-term measures intended to resolve a crisis or avoid trouble with important educational interests, without the benefit of an overall policy approach by the government.

The establishment of a new Commission was an implicit acknowledgement by Hillery of the necessity for a comprehensive long-term approach to the development of higher education. The Minister provided wide-ranging terms of reference for the new Commission, which was formally established on 4 October 1960. Hillery requested the Commission to inquire into and make recommendations in relation to university, professional, technological and higher education generally.¹⁶² The Commission was requested to give special attention to the general organisation of education, the nature and extent of the provision to be made for such education and the machinery for making academic and administrative appointments in the universities. The new group was also asked to examine the provision of courses of higher education through Irish.¹⁶³ The Commission was given a broad remit which encompassed all third-level institutions. The comprehensive terms of reference provided by Hillery underlined that the Commission on Higher Education was intended to conduct a wide-ranging review of the third-level

¹⁵⁸ NA D/T 16644, C.O. 762(vi), *Memorandum for the Government, Proposed legislation in connection with certain appointments in University College Dublin, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.1-3, 1 April 1960; CAB 2/20, G.C. 9/61, Cabinet Minutes, pp.1-3, 5 April 1960

¹⁵⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.181, col.301, 28 April 1960

¹⁶⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.181, col.1164, 11 May 1960; *Dáil Debates*, vol.181, col.1620-1623, 19 May 1960

¹⁶¹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.60

¹⁶² CAB 2/20, G.C.9/90, Cabinet Minutes, pp.3-4, 16 August 1960

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

sector and make recommendations for the future organisation of third-level education in the Irish state. The only restriction imposed on the new group by Hillery initially was that its recommendations had to conform to the Minister's interpretation of Article 42 of the Constitution, expressed in his statement to the Dáil on 23 March 1960.¹⁶⁴ The Minister subsequently informed the Commission that the transfer of UCD to Belfield did not come within its terms of reference, as the government and the Dáil had approved the proposal for the transfer of the College to the new site.¹⁶⁵ The government appointed Justice Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, who had previously headed the Commission on Accommodation Needs, as chairman of the Commission on Higher Education: its membership included eminent academics from the universities, Catholic and Protestant clergy and representatives of business and the public service.¹⁶⁶ The Commission was the first committee of inquiry appointed by an independent Irish government on higher education.¹⁶⁷ The Commission's deliberations proved lengthy and its report was not submitted until 1967, considerably later than Hillery had hoped and over two years after the end of his term as Minister for Education.¹⁶⁸ The establishment of the first Commission on Higher Education since the foundation of an independent Irish state was, however, clearly an initiative which was rich in potential. Moreover the decision by the Minister to appoint a Commission with a wide remit and comprehensive terms of reference reflected Hillery's recognition that coherent educational planning was required for the future development of higher education.

Conclusion

The gradual approach to educational expansion enunciated by Lemass and pursued by Hillery showed a realistic political caution, but was not tentative or hesitant at least with regard to the development of primary and post-primary education. Hillery pursued tenaciously the newly adopted policy, which gave priority to an expansion of the physical facilities of the educational system, combined with an extension of the scholarships scheme. It was by no means a radical reforming approach, but Lemass and Hillery developed a workable policy for the expansion of post-primary education. The

¹⁶⁴ *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Higher Education 1960-67, vol. 1: Presentation and Summary of report*, p.1 (Dublin, 1967)

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2

¹⁶⁶ CAB 2/20, G.C.9/94, Cabinet Minutes, pp.3-4, 13 September 1960

¹⁶⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.210, col.286, 27 May 1964

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

department under Hillery initiated a range of measures in primary education, which were intended to expand the physical capacity and teaching resources of the system. The modification of the Irish language policy in education, illustrated by the closure of the Catholic Preparatory Colleges, was a significant policy change, which modified and diluted the primacy traditionally given to Irish in the national schools. The extent of the incremental changes announced by Hillery testified to a more active and assertive approach by the Department of Education. The Winter Farm Schools initiative underlined the increasing importance given to vocational education in promoting economic development, especially with regard to agriculture. An Chéard Chomhairle, in collaboration with the Department of Education, established education as a necessary prerequisite for apprenticeship. Although many of the initiatives taken by the department in secondary education, such as the schemes to encourage foreign language teaching, were certainly small-scale, such changes were still significant as indicators of new policy thinking. Moreover certain reforms introduced by Hillery in the early 1960s, especially the extension of the scholarship schemes due to direct state funding, were important innovations, which rapidly benefited the educational sector. The reforming initiatives introduced by Hillery in primary and post-primary education marked the cautious beginning of a sustained process of state intervention in education. The beginning of the 1960s also saw an increased commitment by the state to capital funding for the universities. The government's decision to finance the development of the Belfield campus for UCD was an important long-term commitment by the state, which was made in advance of any attempt to plan the future development of higher education as a whole. Hillery was most cautious in dealing with university institutions, relying on his senior officials and taking care to avoid conflict with the established educational interests, notably the UCD authorities and the Catholic Hierarchy. The establishment of a new Commission on Higher Education marked the first real attempt by the state to promote a comprehensive review of higher education and initiate a process of educational planning. Hillery emerged as a tenacious incremental reformer in his first term as Minister for Education. He pursued a cautious but definite policy for educational expansion, which had been given the full support of the government by Lemass. Perhaps the most significant legacy of Hillery's first period as Minister for Education was not any particular initiative but the evolution of a viable policy by the state for a gradual expansion of the educational system.

Chapter 3

Educational Reform and the Origins of Planning 1961-1965

‘To do what is possible is my job and not to have the whole matter upset because of some supposed principle or ideal.’¹ Dr. Patrick Hillery’s pragmatic defence of his policy approach as Minister for Education on 11 June 1963 appeared to identify him as a cautious piecemeal reformer, who was wary of radical innovation. Certainly Hillery steadfastly refused to endorse the ideal of free post-primary education and rarely enunciated an overall vision for the future of Irish education. But Hillery’s second term as Minister for Education between 1961 and 1965 saw the introduction of a wide variety of reforms in most segments of the educational system. It was even more significant that Hillery’s term of office brought the initiation of coherent educational planning by the state for the first time. A survey of the state’s long-term educational needs, to be conducted in conjunction with the OECD, was announced by Hillery in June 1962. The department under Hillery also took important measures to address long-term problems in primary education. The Minister significantly enhanced the financial resources available to vocational education and introduced reforms designed to alleviate traditional shortcomings in the secondary system, especially by promoting the teaching of Science and modern languages. The state also greatly extended its financial support for the capital development of the universities. While Hillery consistently enunciated a policy of gradual expansion, the Minister’s policy approach evolved with time and came to include important policy initiatives, including the comprehensive schools proposal in May 1963. Education was, moreover, explicitly recognised by the government as a vital national priority, which required an increasing investment of national resources in an era of economic expansion.

The OECD pilot study and the planning of educational needs

Perhaps the most influential initiative of Hillery’s tenure as Minister for Education was taken early in his second term. Hillery and the senior officials of the Department of Education were increasingly influenced by policy ideas promoted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), especially its advocacy of coherent planning of educational needs. The international organisation, which began its official

¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.203, col.684, 11 June 1963

existence as the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation in 1948, expanded its membership to include the United States of America and Canada in 1961, when it was restructured as the OECD.² The Governing Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel, which had been established within the international organisation in 1958, identified the development of education and scientific research as an essential element in the achievement of economic growth.³ The Committee's programme for 1961-62 emphasized that education and science should be treated as priority areas for the allocation of resources by its member states. The organisation's approach was profoundly influenced by the international rivalry between the West and the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War. The OEEC programme envisaged that the success of the competing systems in achieving social progress and economic development 'will undoubtedly affect their respective influence in the world at large and particularly in the underdeveloped countries.'⁴ The Committee considered that educational and scientific investment could play a significant part in 'the world competition' between the OEEC states and the Communist bloc.⁵

The newly reconstituted OECD, which formally came into existence on 30 September 1961, vigorously promoted the Governing Committee's position that education should be regarded as a key factor in economic development. The OECD's first major event was a policy conference on 'Economic Growth and Investment in Education', which was initiated by the Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel and was held in Washington between 16 and 20 October 1961.⁶ The Conference was attended by two Irish representatives, Seán MacGearailt, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education and John F. McInerney, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Department of Finance.⁷ The Directorate of Scientific Affairs of the OECD proposed to the Conference the establishment of pilot studies on long-term educational needs in

² NA D/FIN 2001/3/546, D500/2/62, *OECD Press Statement*, 5 October 1961

³ NA D/FIN 2001/3/546, D500/2/62, Governing Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel, *STP/GC (61) 1, Outline Programme For Scientific And Technical Personnel 1961-62*, pp.3-4, 30 January 1961 (OEEC, 1961)

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁶ NA D/FIN 2001/3/546, D500/2/62, Governing Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel, *STP/GC (61) 13, Policy Conference on Economic Growth and the Role of Investment in Education and Science: Project STP-24*, pp.1-3, 22 February 1961 (OEEC, 1961); *OECD Press Statement*, p.1, 5 October 1961

⁷ NA D/FIN 2001/3/546, D500/2/62, S. MacGearailt to M. Breathnach, 15 August 1961

developed countries.⁸ The Directorate asserted that the provision of skilled technical workers was widely acknowledged as an essential requirement for economic growth in most member states, while an increasing policy emphasis on the achievement of 'social aims' also demanded the expansion of educational facilities.⁹ The OECD proposal placed great emphasis on state investment in human resources, on the basis that the full development of individual potential brought substantial benefits to society: 'Both economic and non-economic aims therefore point to the conclusion that increased investment in human resources must play a vital role in national politics in the 1960s'.¹⁰ The OECD believed that investment in education was increasingly accepted as one of the main instruments in the achievement of social and economic progress.

The Directorate of Scientific Affairs played the leading role in the establishment of the Mediterranean Regional Project, which involved six southern European states, including Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Yugoslavia and Turkey, in the early 1960s: in the course of the project the OECD assisted national teams in undertaking studies on the long-term requirements for skilled labour and needs for educational resources in each state.¹¹ The Directorate's proposal in October 1961 involved the initiation of similar pilot studies by European states with more developed economies. The Washington Conference agreed an international initiative, the *Education Investment and Planning Programme* (EIPP), which was based on the Directorate's proposal.¹² Keill Eide, Principal Administrator of the Directorate of Scientific Affairs, then made an approach to the Irish representatives, suggesting that they should advise the Irish government to undertake the proposed pilot study.¹³ The Irish officials immediately agreed to recommend co-operation with the pilot study to the relevant Ministers.¹⁴ The delegations of Ireland and Austria were the initial volunteers for co-operation with the project, although the EIPP was subsequently joined by other European states.¹⁵ The willing acceptance of the OECD

⁸ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, Governing Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel, *STP 62 (1)*, *Pilot Studies on Long-Term Needs for Educational Resources in Economically Developed Countries*, p.1, 12 October 1961

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.2

¹² *Ibid.*, pp.2-3, S. Ó Buachalla, 'Investment in Education: Context, Content and Impact', *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), pp.10-20

¹³ NA D/Finance 2001/3/546, D500/2/62, John F. McInerney, Note of meeting, p.1, 31 October 1961

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, S. Ó Buachalla, 'Investment in Education: Context, Content and Impact', *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), pp.10-20, Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.78

¹⁵ S. Ó Buachalla, 'Investment in Education: Context, Content and Impact', *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), pp.10-20

initiative by McInerney and MacGearailt, which was subsequently approved by Hillery, proved a decision with the most profound implications for Irish education.

Leading officials in the departments of Education and Finance favoured the initiation of the OECD study. The project was discussed at a meeting on 31 October 1961 involving the two Irish representatives to the conference, as well as Dr. Ó Raifeartaigh and T.K. Whitaker.¹⁶ McInerney, who was a strong proponent of the study from the outset, found general agreement among the officials that the OECD initiative offered a valuable opportunity.¹⁷ Ó Raifeartaigh raised the OECD proposal, indicating that his department favoured the project. Whitaker agreed that such a pilot survey was necessary to allow the state to plan for an adequate supply of scientific and technical manpower to sustain economic expansion. He also considered that the project would help to ascertain the measures that should be undertaken concerning education in the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*. Whitaker commented that the guidance of the OECD would be helpful in conducting the project.¹⁸ The officials agreed that Ó Raifeartaigh would write formally to Whitaker, who would then take up the proposed project with other relevant departments.¹⁹ Ó Raifeartaigh proceeded to outline the case for the study to Whitaker on 8 November 1961. Ó Raifeartaigh indicated that his department agreed in principle that such a study would enable them to ascertain the educational requirements and targets, which would form part of economic planning for the next five years.²⁰ He pointed out that ‘the emphasis everywhere at present appears to be on investment in education as a necessary prerequisite for economic growth.’²¹ The Irish officials at the Washington Conference reported that long-term planning in education, especially with regard to the importance of education to economic development, was already being undertaken by other developed states and the Secretary acknowledged that Ireland was joining ‘an international consensus’ on the need for coherent planning of educational provision.²² Ó Raifeartaigh sought a firm decision on the project at an early date and asked Whitaker to arrange for consultation with other relevant departments.²³ Whitaker lost no time in seeking agreement for the proposal from the Departments of Industry and Commerce,

¹⁶ NA D/Finance 2001/3/546, D500/2/62, John F. McInerney, Note of meeting, p.1, 31 October 1961

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2

¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp.1-2

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.2

²⁰ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, T. Ó Raifeartaigh to T.K. Whitaker, p.1, 8 November 1961

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.4

²² *Ibid.*, p.4

²³ *Ibid.*, p.4

Agriculture and Foreign Affairs, as well as the Central Statistics Office.²⁴ He also informed Nioclás Ó Nualláin, Secretary to the government, that the Department of Finance favoured the adoption of the proposal for the pilot study.²⁵ Whitaker secured general agreement from the relevant departments for the proposed study by December 1961, telling Ó Raifeartaigh on 15 December that they should now proceed with the project.²⁶ The Department of Education made a formal application to participate in the OECD programme in February 1962 and the Council of the OECD approved the Irish application on 21 June.²⁷ The rapid official decision in favour of the proposed study meant that Ireland became the first OECD member state to volunteer for participation in the project.²⁸

The OECD's initiative was taken up with enthusiasm by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Education. The political context was very favourable for the initiation of the pilot study. The government, which was beginning the preparation of the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, regarded a survey of long-term educational needs as an appropriate element in a process of national economic planning. Lemass informed Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, chair of the Commission on Higher Education, on 21 June 1962 that the government was undertaking the pilot study in part because the OECD approach heavily emphasised economic planning. Moreover the Taoiseach cited Ireland's application to join the European Economic Community (EEC) as another important element influencing the government's support for the study. He considered that the government's acceptance of the OECD initiative 'could have a very important bearing on our future relations with the European Economic Community.'²⁹ Hillery announced the initiation of the pilot study, which was to be implemented by a national survey team in conjunction with the OECD, on 22 June 1962 at a Labour/Management Conference on 'Employment in Productivity' in Shannon Airport.³⁰ The OECD undertook to cover 50%

²⁴ NA D/FIN 2001/3/775, D500/8/63, Whitaker to J.C. Nagle, 9 November 1961, Whitaker to J.C.B. McCarthy, 9 November 1961, Whitaker to C. Cremin, 9 November 1961

²⁵ NA D/FIN 2001/3/775, D500/8/63, Whitaker to N.S. Ó Nualláin, 20 November 1961

²⁶ Whitaker to Ó Raifeartaigh, 15 December 1961

²⁷ Ó Raifeartaigh to Whitaker, 30 April 1962, Whitaker to M. Cullen, the Ford Foundation, 4 July 1962

²⁸ Ó Raifeartaigh to Whitaker, 30 April 1962

²⁹ NA D/T 97/6/437, S.17913, N.S. Ó Nualláin to C. Ó Dálaigh, Chief Justice, 21 June 1962

³⁰ NA D/T 97/6/437, S.17913, *Address by Dr. P.J. Hillery TD, Minister for Education, on the occasion of his opening the Labour/Management Conference at Shannon Airport*, pp.1-6, 22 June 1962

of the running costs of the educational survey over a period of two years.³¹ The survey team, which was appointed by Hillery on 29 July 1962, was headed by Patrick Lynch, Professor of Economics at UCD: the national team also included W.J. Hyland of the United Nations Statistics Office, Padraig Ó'Nualláin, Inspector of Secondary Schools and Martin O'Donoghue, Lecturer in Economics at Trinity College Dublin, while Cathal Mac Gabhann of the Department of Education acted as secretary to the group.³² The work of the survey team was overseen by a National Steering Committee appointed by the Minister, which was chaired by Seán MacGearailt, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education.³³ Hillery secured the approval of the government for the appointment of a broad-based Committee, which included representatives of the departments of Education, Finance, Agriculture and Industry and Commerce, the Economic Research Institute and the Central Statistics Office, as well as the universities, agricultural interests, employers and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.³⁴ The broad-based character of the Steering Committee contrasted sharply with the composition of previous committees of enquiry relating to education, especially the Council of Education which had been dominated by clergy and professional educators. The inclusion of representatives of the trade unions and employers on the Committee marked an important break with the past and underlined the government's concern to link education with wider economic development.³⁵

The terms of reference for the survey team were announced by Hillery in the Dáil on 3 July 1962.³⁶ The survey team was asked to undertake a comprehensive survey of the state's long-term needs for educational resources. The terms of reference for the pilot study included:

- (a) An evaluation of the existing position in relation to skilled manpower.
- (b) The framing of educational targets, including provision for research, in relation to the assessments to be made of overall needs for skilled manpower according to field of study and level of skill, for the next 10-15 years. Alternative estimates, made according to

³¹ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, Governing Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel, *STP 62 (1), Terms of Reference, Pilot Studies on Long-term Needs for Educational Resources in Developed Country*, p.6, 12 October 1961

³² NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, *The Irish Press*, 'Long-Term Educational Needs will be investigated', 30 July 1962

³³ NA D/T 97/6/437, S.17913, *Note of Government meeting*, 26 June 1962

³⁴ *Ibid.*, S. Ó Buachalla, 'Investment in Education: Context, Content and Impact', *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), pp.10-20

³⁵ S. Ó Buachalla, 'Investment in Education: Context, Content and Impact', *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), pp.10-20

³⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol.196, col.1303-1304, 3 July 1962

different basic assumptions, were intended to take into account trends in economic and demographic factors, and also the experience of other countries.

(c) The assessment, on the basis of alternative estimates, of future essential demand for educational facilities at different levels based on present trends and international experience

(d) Estimates of future enrolments at different levels of education, and by subject of specialisation, based on the alternative assumptions devised by the survey team.

(e) The interpretation of estimated enrolment figures in terms of the expansion of educational resources, namely the teachers, buildings and equipment required by future educational expansion.

(f) Evaluations of the expenditure entailed by the various alternatives for the expansion of educational resources - the evaluations were to be expressed in relation to macro-economic data, such as GNP and volume of investment.

(g) Consideration of arrangements necessary to ensure the review of educational needs at regular intervals, with particular regard to the nature and extent of the additional statistical data concerning current activities which should be collected and the methods and frequency of such collections.

(h) An evaluation of the extent to which the assessments of the survey might be influenced by the provision of educational facilities in Ireland for students from other countries and of educational aid in the form of teachers and other trained personnel for service in developing countries.³⁷

The department drew the terms of reference almost entirely from the proposal for the pilot studies in developed countries issued by the Directorate of Scientific Affairs on 12 October 1961.³⁸ The sole element not derived directly from the OECD proposal was the requirement to evaluate the extent to which the team's conclusions might be influenced by the provision of educational aid to developing countries.³⁹ While the OECD had raised the possibility of the provision of educational facilities in Ireland to students from other countries, the inclusion of aid to developing countries in the survey team's terms of reference reflected the Irish tradition of missionary and educational work

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, Governing Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel, *STP 62 (1), Terms of Reference, Pilot Studies on Long-term Needs for Educational Resources in Developed Country*, pp.4-5, 12 October 1961

³⁹ *Ibid.*, *Dáil Debates*, vol.196, col.1303-1304, 3 July 1962

in Africa, especially by the religious orders.⁴⁰ While the Directorate for Scientific Affairs affirmed that the responsibility for the pilot survey rested with teams appointed by the national authorities, the OECD exerted a pervasive influence over the objectives and parameters of the new study. The Minister and his senior officials were content to adopt the OECD blueprint for the pilot study almost without amendment. The terms of reference for the study were definite and specific, requiring the team to evaluate the educational system in the context of existing policies and to undertake a detailed assessment of the workings of the system on the basis of relevant statistical data.⁴¹ While specific policy recommendations were not envisaged by the terms of reference, the survey team was asked to undertake a full evaluation of long-term educational needs, particularly with regard to the future requirements of the economy for skilled manpower. The team was required also to assess the implications of future levels of enrolment for the expansion of educational resources and the level of state expenditure in education.⁴² The new study was intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of future educational needs and a coherent approach for the effective allocation of resources to education.

The Taoiseach underlined the importance of the study of long-term educational needs even before the survey team had started its work. Lemass drew attention to the new project on 8 July 1962 in a speech given to the Marist Brothers' Centenary celebrations in Sligo.⁴³ The Taoiseach indicated that his government was well aware of the many inadequacies in the educational system and was seeking to plan for the future. Lemass declared that the new study was designed 'to frame a development programme and set the educational targets which must be realised if our facilities are to be kept in proper relation to our requirements as a progressive national community.'⁴⁴ The survey team would produce long-term objectives which would facilitate a comprehensive programme of development.⁴⁵ He also drew attention to the importance of education in supplying the country's growing need for qualified scientific and technical personnel, arguing that 'It is in the growth and improvement of our education system that the foundations of our future

⁴⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.196, col.1303-1304, 3 July 1962

⁴¹ S. Ó Buachalla, 'Investment in Education: Context, Content and Impact', *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), p.10-20

⁴² *Dáil Debates*, vol.196, col.1303-1304, 3 July 1962

⁴³ NA D/T S.12892D/1/62, *Speech by Seán Lemass TD, Taoiseach, at the Marist Brothers' Centenary celebrations*, p.1, 8 July 1962

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

prosperity must be firmly based.’⁴⁶ Lemass firmly asserted the government’s commitment to the expansion of the educational system, not least because education would contribute to the economic development of the state. The Taoiseach had underlined the importance which he attached to the work of the survey team in establishing targets for the educational system, which conformed with the state’s future economic and social requirements. He was careful to assure his Marist audience that Irish educational aims should not be restricted to the production of a steady supply of technicians and scientists; he commented that the most important educational aim of all was to turn out well-rounded individuals who were fully prepared to cope with the pressures of a materialistic world.⁴⁷ But Lemass’ concern to relate the planning of future educational developments to wider economic and social needs was evident.

Lemass’ portrayal of educational expansion as a factor in economic prosperity was reiterated by Hillery, when he addressed the inaugural meeting of the Steering Committee in October 1962. The Minister argued that the role of education in promoting economic development had been given inadequate attention in the past. But he affirmed that ‘Education is now accepted as an investment of national resources’: it was recognised as a major factor in economic development.⁴⁸ His comments underlined that the government had fully accepted the OECD’s analysis of the importance of investment in education. Hillery, like the Taoiseach, stressed that the needs of the economy did not provide the sole imperative for the study, asserting that the survey team would take account of the wider aims of education. Indeed there should be no conflict between the educational needs of society and the educational aspirations of individuals: investment by the state in education both facilitated the ambitions of individuals and served the social and economic needs of the country.⁴⁹ Hillery asserted that economic expansion and the full development of the potential of individual citizens both depended on the provision of the necessary educational resources: he commented that: ‘A country that allows its “human capital” to lie fallow will, if I may mix my metaphors, be left behind culturally as well as economically’.⁵⁰ The new study was designed to evaluate the educational needs of an expanding economy, but also the economic implications of the increasing demand for

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2

⁴⁸ *Speech by Dr. Hillery to the inaugural meeting of the Steering Committee for the OECD pilot survey, October 1962*, Hyland and Milne, *Irish Educational Documents*, vol. 2, pp.30-31

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

education.⁵¹ Hillery rapidly adopted the ideas and rhetoric of the OECD, which had made a compelling case for investment in education by its member states.

The launch of the study of long-term educational needs in June 1962 reflected a definite policy commitment by the Irish government to coherent planning of educational needs, in the wider context of economic and social development. While the report was presented to Hillery's successor, George Colley, Hillery referred frequently to the work of the survey team as a means of achieving proper planning of educational provision. He declared in the Dáil on 27 May 1964 that future state provision for educational needs would be based upon the assessment of the survey team, especially their estimates of manpower needs in the skilled manual occupational category. Hillery believed correctly that the survey of the educational problems to be provided by the survey team would demand vastly increased expenditure, but emphasized that 'it will be expenditure on a studied plan and not just the lashing out of money in a haphazard fashion.'⁵² He not only advocated proper educational planning but also emphasized his commitment to the adaptation of the educational system to provide for the social and economic needs of the time.⁵³ The activity of the survey team marked the first real attempt by the Irish state to undertake a comprehensive review of the educational system. The work of the national team paved the way for coherent educational planning based upon accurate statistical information. Hillery's appointment of the survey team was a decision of the greatest importance for Irish education. The establishment of the *Investment in Education* study marked the first explicit acknowledgement by the Irish state of the need for a comprehensive re-appraisal of the educational system, which would go far beyond the incremental reforms already initiated by the Minister for Education.

The launch of the OECD project, along with the statements by Lemass and Hillery, indicated that the government was willing to allocate significantly increased resources to education, on the basis of rational planning of educational requirements. The launch of the pilot study coincided with the preparations for the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, which led the Department of Education to produce a general outline of its priorities for the following five years. The outline, entitled *Forecast of Developments in Educational Services During The 5-Year Period 1963-68*, was produced in response to a request from the Department of Finance for material concerning education policy for the

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Dáil Debates* vol.210, col.287, 27 May 1964

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Second Programme.⁵⁴ The *Forecast*, which was sent by Ó Raifeartaigh to the Department of Finance on 6 January 1962, was not an attempt to set educational targets on a coherent basis but was a wide-ranging summary of the projects and initiatives, which the department aimed to undertake in the course of the Second Programme. The *Forecast* provided a concise outline of the department's priorities, as perceived by the senior officials, over the following five years. The summary was most detailed and ambitious in its discussion of primary and vocational education. The department sought an investment of between £1.5 and £2 million annually by the state in the primary school building programme, which was regarded by officials as essential to sustain an adequate rate of replacement of unsatisfactory school buildings. The *Forecast* emphasized the need to improve the pupil-teacher ratio in national schools by providing 900 additional teaching posts between 1963 and 1968. The department also aimed to improve teaching methods and to provide grants for the establishment of school libraries.⁵⁵ The *Forecast's* assessment of the necessary measures to provide for better schools and better teaching in primary education clearly demanded substantial investment by the state.

The department showed greater ambition, however, in proposing an extensive restructuring of vocational education. The *Forecast* put forward several initiatives which involved important reforms of the vocational system. It was proposed to extend the two-year day course in vocational schools, which culminated in the Day Group Certificate, through the addition of a third year of the existing course. The department also hoped to introduce new courses in technical education leading to a Technical Schools Leaving Certificate.⁵⁶ The addition of this additional element to the system was intended to create 'the missing rung in our educational ladder', by enabling vocational school students to proceed to a further educational level and achieve a comparable educational standard to secondary school pupils taking Leaving Certificate courses.⁵⁷ The department noted that the establishment by An Chéard Chomhairle of new minimum educational standards for apprenticeship had brought a substantial increase in the enrolment of boys in day courses provided by the vocational schools: this would entail considerable expenditure to provide for additional teachers and accommodation, although no estimate of the cost could yet be

⁵⁴ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, *Forecast of Developments In Educational Services During The 5-Year Period 1963-68*, pp.1-9, 6 January 1962

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.5

⁵⁷ *Forecast of Developments, Appendix A*, Department of Education, p.1, 6 January 1962

made.⁵⁸ The *Forecast* therefore referred to the necessity for improved liaison between the VECs and state agencies responsible for economic development, although the department also included a firm reminder that vocational schools were educational institutions and should never become 'mere appendages to industry.'⁵⁹ The department's plans for vocational education were wide-ranging and innovative, even if they did not yet amount to a fully formulated or costed reform programme. The senior officials clearly believed that vocational education offered considerable scope for reform and expansion of the educational system at post-primary level.

The *Forecast* was more tentative in its discussion of secondary education, although key priorities for educational policy were identified, especially with regard to the extension of the teaching of Science and modern languages. The department looked forward to a re-appraisal of the secondary programme, following the report of the Council of Education, which had been submitted to the government in 1960.⁶⁰ The *Forecast* emphasized the importance of curriculum reform to modernise the programmes in Maths and Science, drawing attention also to the need for appropriate state schemes to alleviate the shortage of qualified teachers in these subjects. The extension of the teaching of modern languages in secondary schools was also identified as a priority by the *Forecast*.⁶¹ The department expressed particular concern to ensure that secondary schools in future would provide a wider curriculum, which gave adequate attention to the teaching of Science and modern continental languages. The officials intended to examine whether it was feasible to provide grants for the establishment of larger school units, which would cover a wider curriculum, as it was considered that a wider academic programme could be achieved only in larger secondary schools.⁶²

Significantly the *Forecast* raised the possibility of providing comprehensive schools, delivering such a broad curriculum, in rural areas where existing provision for secondary education was non-existent or limited in the scope of its curriculum.⁶³ The department tentatively floated the idea of comprehensive schools as a solution to the problem of educational provision in remote rural areas, but gave no firm details

⁵⁸ *Forecast of Developments*, Department of Education, p.6, 6 January 1962

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.2, *Report of the Council of Education (2), The Curriculum of the Secondary School* (Dublin, 1962)

⁶¹ *Forecast of Developments*, Department of Education, p.2, 6 January 1962

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp.3-4

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.4

concerning the character of the comprehensive school or the possible costs of such a proposal. It was proposed only to initiate consultation with the appropriate authorities, which in practical terms meant the Catholic Bishops.⁶⁴ The vagueness of the *Forecast* was understandable, as no coherent plan had been formulated concerning comprehensive or post-primary education by January 1962. The department, however, had given a tentative endorsement to the idea of comprehensive schools. Moreover the *Forecast* also argued for the introduction of a subsidised system of transport for pupils attending larger secondary schools, on the basis that such a system would facilitate 'some degree of planning of the steps to be taken to bring about an adequate system of secondary education over the country as a whole'⁶⁵ The senior officials accepted the necessity by early 1962 for coherent planning of educational expansion and aimed to intervene directly in shaping the development of the secondary system, which had traditionally been the preserve of private interests. While the department's plans remained largely tentative and cautious, the policy ideas proposed by the *Forecast* underlined a new willingness on the part of the Minister and senior officials to consider innovative and potentially radical reforms in post-primary education.

The *Forecast*, however, made no policy proposals with regard to university education. The department merely noted that as the Commission on Higher Education was continuing its deliberations no definite forecast could be made concerning the long-term development of university education.⁶⁶ It was acknowledged that the state was committed to funding extensive building programmes for the universities, especially the transfer of UCD to Belfield, but otherwise the *Forecast* had little to say about higher education. The *Forecast* as a whole was a mixture of incremental initiatives, similar to the measures taken by Hillery between 1959 and 1961, and tentative proposals for more radical change in primary and post-primary education. The *Forecast* not only indicated the key priorities which shaped educational policy under Hillery, but also reflected the department's commitment to more wide-ranging and effective intervention by the state in expanding the educational system by the early 1960s.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.7

Primary Education

The *Forecast* certainly provided an accurate outline of the department's initiatives in primary education between 1962 and 1965. The state's approach to the expansion of primary education showed considerable continuity with the incremental measures adopted since 1959 to increase the physical capacity of the system. The Minister sought mainly to extend the primary school building programme and to improve the pupil-teacher ratio. The grants allocated to the Commissioners of Public Works for primary school building increased substantially so that the primary school building programme expanded steadily in this period (Table 3).⁶⁷ The steady annual expansion in the primary school building programme underlined the high priority given by the department under Hillery to the replacement of unsuitable school buildings and the upgrading of the physical resources of the system. The Minister placed considerable emphasis on the improvement of the pupil-teacher ratio. Dr. Ó Raifeartaigh announced in June 1962 a reduction in the average enrolment ratio, which governed the appointment and retention of assistant teachers: the ratio determining the employment of a third and seventh assistant teacher in a national school was reduced by 10 units from 1 July 1962.⁶⁸ The Minister sanctioned a more significant reduction of the enrolment ratios for teachers in June 1964: the revision, which took effect from 1 October 1964, provided for a minimum reduction of ten in the appointment averages for all schools employing between five and eleven teachers.⁶⁹ Hillery also sought to increase the supply of trained teachers to the national schools. He informed the Dáil on 23 May 1962 that the Department of Education was training over 100 new teachers a year more than previously.⁷⁰ Indeed the department was paying the salaries of 14,218 national teachers on 30 June 1963, which marked an increase of 664 from 13,554 national teachers on 30 June 1958.⁷¹ The Minister authorised state funding for the reconstruction and extension of St. Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra, to provide accommodation for more than 300 students overall, allowing the college to train approximately 100 additional students as national schoolteachers.⁷² The

⁶⁷ *Tuarascáil, An Roinn Oideachais, 1961-62*, p.88 (Dublin, 1964), *Tuarascáil, Táblaí Staitistic, An Roinn Oideachais, 1964-65*, p.8 (Dublin, 1966); Table 3, p.373

⁶⁸ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 30 September 1962*, Department of Education, p.1, 13 October 1962, Circular 20/62, Department of Education, June 1962

⁶⁹ Circular 20/64, Department of Education, p.1, June 1964, W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 30 September 1964*, Department of Education, p.1, 30 October 1964

⁷⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.195, col.1376-1378, 23 May 1962

⁷¹ *Dáil Debates* vol. 209, col. 1565, 14 May 1964

⁷² NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, *Forecast of Developments*, p.1, 6 January 1962

department secured a bank loan of £750,000 for the college, which was to be repaid annually by the Minister over a period of 35 years. The remainder of the cost, which was initially estimated at £2,500,000, was provided directly by the state in capital grants.⁷³ But despite the department's efforts to provide an increased supply of trained teachers, the pupil-teacher ratio remained stubbornly high, especially in Dublin where 737 primary school classes in 1964 contained at least 50 pupils.⁷⁴

A survey of national schools in the Dublin area was undertaken by the department in 1964, with the objective of reducing large classes to a more manageable size. The department sought to reduce class sizes firstly by the reorganisation of existing classes, but where this proved impractical the Minister resorted to the provision of prefabricated classrooms and the appointment of additional teachers.⁷⁵ The utilisation of prefabricated structures was recommended to Hillery and Lemass as early as 1962 by Donogh O'Malley, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance. O'Malley arranged for an inspection of modern building methods in Britain by a fact-finding group including the Chief Schools Architect, Basil Boyd-Barrett, G.A. Ó Suilleabháin of the Department of Education, T. Ó Conghalaigh of the Department of Finance, Fr. Joseph O'Connor, a nominee of the Archbishop of Dublin and Niall O'Kelly, a Chartered Quantity Surveyor. The delegation submitted a report to O'Malley on 28 April 1962, which supported the use of prefabricated building methods.⁷⁶ O'Malley forwarded the report to Lemass on 31 May 1962, enclosing a detailed memorandum composed by O'Kelly, who advised that the adoption of prefabricated building methods would reduce costs and add momentum to the national school building programme.⁷⁷ O'Malley himself strongly recommended the use of prefabricated structures to Lemass and Hillery, arguing that such an approach would nearly double the annual output of school buildings and deliver substantial savings.⁷⁸ The Taoiseach showed considerable interest in the proposal, agreeing with O'Malley that building costs were high and that the building programme had to be

⁷³ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1962-63*, pp.100-106 (Dublin, 1964), *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1965-66*, p.117 (Dublin, 1967)

⁷⁴ *Dáil Debates* vol.210, col.333, 14 May 1964

⁷⁵ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 30 September 1964*, Department of Education, p.1, 30 October 1964

⁷⁶ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, *Prefabricated Construction for Primary School Buildings*, pp.1-5, 28 April 1962

⁷⁷ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, D. O'Malley to S. Lemass, 31 May 1962, Niall O'Kelly, *National School Building: Examination of the Cost and Economics of the Use of Prefabricated Components*, May 1962

⁷⁸ O'Malley to Lemass, 31 May 1962

rapidly expanded.⁷⁹ O'Malley's initiative was also endorsed by Hillery and the provision of prefabricated structures became an important element of his department's strategy to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in national schools. The Minister announced on 14 May 1964 the provision of at least 90-100 prefabricated classrooms to relieve overcrowding for primary schools in the Dublin area.⁸⁰ Official approval was given for the supply of 112 prefabricated classrooms and the appointment of 104 additional teachers in the Dublin area between June and September 1964.⁸¹ These measures reflected both the scale of the overcrowding problem in urban primary schools and the recognition by the department that effective short-term remedies were urgently required. Hillery reinforced the practical measures to reduce class sizes by requiring all national schools in Dublin to establish a maximum class size of 50 pupils in all infants' classes from 1 July 1964. Circular 16/64, issued by Ó Raifeartaigh, required the national school managers to limit the admission of new infant pupils to a maximum of 50 per class.⁸² Hillery promoted a range of reforming measures to deal with the most obvious flaws in the system.

The Minister's efforts to enhance the physical and academic resources of the primary education system were not restricted to the increased supply of accommodation and teachers. The *Forecast* had anticipated the introduction of a scheme to establish reference libraries in national schools. Hillery initiated the scheme in November 1963, making grants available for the provision of school libraries in five counties initially, namely Laois, Leitrim, Monaghan, Limerick and Waterford (excluding the boroughs of Limerick and Waterford).⁸³ The department arranged to supply reference works to all national schools in these areas, at a cost of £20,000, between January and March 1964.⁸⁴ Hillery indicated that the scheme was being introduced on a phased basis and that the department would support the establishment of reference libraries in all national schools at a cost of £150,000.⁸⁵ The scheme was gradually extended to the entire country between 1964 and 1968.⁸⁶ The new scheme was the first public initiative to provide for permanent

⁷⁹ Lemass to O'Malley, 31 May 1962

⁸⁰ *Dáil Debates* vol.210, col. 333, 14 May 1964

⁸¹ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 30 September 1964*, Department of Education, p.1, 30 October 1964

⁸² Circular 16/64, Department of Education, May 1964

⁸³ Circular 21/63, Department of Education, November 1963

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 31st March 1964*, Department of Education, p.1, 14 April 1964

⁸⁶ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1965-66*, p.118 (Dublin, 1967)

reference libraries in national schools and marked a significant advance in the academic resources provided by the state for national schools.

The department also improved existing grants paid to primary schools. The Secretary announced in May 1964 a revised scheme of grants for the heating and cleaning of national schools.⁸⁷ All the grants were increased and a new rate of grant was introduced for schools which employed cleaners on a day-to day basis, at an estimated cost of £237,000, which amounted to an increase of approximately £100,000 in the allocation for the relevant grants.⁸⁸ The scheme for the painting of national schools was also revised in March 1965, when the department increased the maximum grants payable to the schools by 12½% for external painting and 20% for internal painting.⁸⁹ The scheme was achieving the desired effect in improving the maintenance of school buildings: no less than 710 national schools undertook work funded by the state under the scheme in 1964-65.⁹⁰ The department also took measures to provide an adequate number of teachers to remote areas with a small population. A special initiative was taken in February 1964 to encourage more national schoolteachers to take up teaching posts in schools on islands off the coast of Ireland. The scheme provided for the payment of an allowance of £60 to trained teachers and £45 to untrained teachers on condition that they gave teaching service in an island national school for at least one year.⁹¹ The department under Hillery took a series of incremental initiatives to upgrade the physical capacity and academic resources of the national school system. While these measures revealed a certain continuity with Hillery's incremental approach in his first term, the initiatives taken by the Minister between 1961 and 1965 were much more effective and wide-ranging than the previous cautious measures of improvement. The advances were certainly due in part to increased state investment in education. But the department also took a more pro-active and innovative approach in reducing class sizes and providing reference libraries on a national basis for the first time. The Minister and senior officials intervened effectively and with increasing confidence in this period to direct the process of expansion in primary education.

⁸⁷ Circular 14/64, Department of Education, May 1964

⁸⁸ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704 (3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 31st March 1964*, Department of Education, p.1, 14 April 1964

⁸⁹ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1964-65*, p.87 (Dublin, 1966)

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Circular 8/64, Department of Education, February 1964

Special education

The department under Hillery also took an innovative approach to the development of special education. Although primary schools for blind and deaf pupils had existed since the nineteenth century, the department gave formal recognition to special education as a distinctive sector for the first time in the early 1960s. Special training for teachers of pupils with disabilities was provided for the first time in 1961, when a training course for such teachers was initiated in St. Patrick's Training College.⁹² Schools for blind or partially sighted children became special schools in a real sense in 1962, when the department authorised a special teacher-pupil ratio of 1:15 and a grant for specialised equipment for such schools.⁹³ This initiative, which was followed by special staffing measures for schools for deaf pupils, marked the first official recognition by the state of the necessity for special education.⁹⁴ The department also recognised special schools for pupils suffering from moderate mental disabilities and behavioural problems by 1963. Hillery's term saw the first meaningful attempt by the Irish government to develop an area which had been previously been neglected by the state.⁹⁵ The department's initiatives represented only a modest beginning in the area of special education but reflected its pro-active, reforming approach in dealing with various educational problems by the early 1960s.

Post-primary education: incremental reform

Hillery also influenced the development of post-primary education more effectively than his predecessors, seeking particularly to facilitate the expansion of vocational education. The state considerably extended the vocational school building programme in this period. The number of permanent vocational and technical schools increased rapidly from 289 in 1960-61 to 328 in 1964-65: the establishment of 39 new vocational schools underlined the rapid expansion of vocational education.⁹⁶ Additional state investment in vocational education was facilitated by new legislation, which was initiated by Hillery to

⁹² *Investment in Education Part 2: Annexes and Appendices to the Report of the Survey Team appointed by the Minister for Education in October, 1962*, pp.35-36 (Dublin, 1965); T. Ó Ceallaigh, *St. Patrick's College: Centenary Booklet*, p.37 (Dublin, 1975)

⁹³ T.A. Ó Cuilleánáin, 'Special Education In Ireland', *Oideas*, no.1 (Autumn 1968), pp.5-17

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ J. Coolahan, 'Dr. P.J. Hillery - Minister for Education: 1959-1965', pp.15-19, *Journal of the ASTI Convention*, Easter 1990

⁹⁶ *Tuarascáil, An Roinn Oideachais, 1960-61*, p.93 (Dublin, 1963), *Tuarascáil, An Roinn Oideachais, 1964-65*, p.3 (Dublin, 1966)

raise the legal ceiling for the grants made by the local authorities to the VECs. The existing maximum local rate, which could be raised for vocational education, was fixed by the Vocational Education Acts at 15d in the pound for most authorities and 17d or 18d for a small number of urban councils, including the city of Dublin.⁹⁷ The contribution from the maximum local rate had already been taken up by a number of Committees by 1961-62: indeed at least ten of the committees showed a substantial deficit and faced future insolvency without further state aid.⁹⁸ The legislation also limited the annual increase in the local rate, which could be secured on demand by the VECs from the local authority to 1d in the pound, while up to 2d in the pound might be raised with the express prior agreement of the local authority.⁹⁹ Hillery submitted a memorandum to the government on 7 February 1962, proposing amending legislation to establish a new maximum local rate of 24d in the pound for all VECs. He also sought approval for an extension of the maximum ceilings of annual increase in the local rate for vocational education to 2d in the pound on demand by the VEC and up to 4d by prior agreement of the local authority.¹⁰⁰ The memorandum from the Department of Education noted that the existing maximum limits of income for the VECs had become inadequate and made a strong case for more generous ceilings of potential income for vocational education from the local authorities. Hillery argued that a substantial proportion of the cost of vocational education should be contributed from the rates, as it was essentially a local service. He emphasized that the limits for annual rate increases had not been revised since 1953, while the development of vocational education had accelerated in the meantime.¹⁰¹ The department took into account the implications for vocational education of the implementation by An Chéard Chomhairle of the Apprenticeship Act 1959. The memorandum acknowledged that the establishment by An Chéard Chomhairle of minimum educational standards for entry to apprenticeship had significantly increased the demand for vocational training, while it was expected too that economic expansion would promote a greater public awareness of the benefits of vocational education.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ NA D/T S.17238/62, *Summary of Memorandum to the Government, Proposal for a Bill to amend the Vocational Education Acts 1930 to 1953, Appendix*, 7 February 1962

⁹⁸ NA D/T S.17238/62, *Summary of Memorandum to the Government, Proposal for a Bill to amend the Vocational Education Acts 1930 to 1953*, p.9, 7 February 1962

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp.6-7

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p.5

Hillery's proposal was supported by the national apprenticeship board and by the Department of Industry and Commerce, which endorsed comments on vocational education made to the department by An Chéard Chomhairle. The national apprenticeship board argued strongly for the extension of the limits of annual increase in the local rate 'in the interests of expansion in facilities and long-term planning'.¹⁰³ Indeed An Chéard Chomhairle went further than Hillery, warning that the growing demand for technical education facilities, together with the implementation of the Apprenticeship Act, might well require a further revision of the maximum rate within a few years.¹⁰⁴ The proposal for legislative change was supported in a more conditional fashion by the Department of Finance, on the basis that the new maximum rate of 24d should be sufficient to meet the cost of any anticipated developments for at least three to five years. The Department of Finance had influenced the proposal before it was submitted to the Cabinet, by insisting on the inclusion of a provision to raise the ceilings for annual increase in the local rate, which could be sought by the VECs.¹⁰⁵ The broadly favourable response to Hillery's proposal by the departments most directly concerned with economic expansion underlined the importance which they attached to vocational education in promoting the economic development of the state.

The proposal did not, however, secure universal support within the government. The Department of Local Government vehemently objected to the proposed legislation and made a lengthy submission arguing against any increase in the local rate for vocational education.¹⁰⁶ Despite the opposition of Neil Blaney, Minister for Local Government, the Cabinet authorised Hillery on 13 February 1962 to draft a Bill, which would raise the maximum local rate for vocational education to 24d in the pound for all areas.¹⁰⁷ But the reservations of Blaney and his officials had a considerable impact on the Cabinet's deliberations, as the original proposal was amended to specify that a VEC should not be allowed to secure any increase in the rate on demand from the local authority. Moreover the annual increase, which could be given to the VEC subject to the prior agreement of the local authority, was set at a maximum of 3d in the pound, an increase of only 1d.¹⁰⁸ Hillery was dissatisfied with this outcome and within two months

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.11

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.11

¹⁰⁷ NA CAB 2/22, G.C. 10/20, Cabinet Minutes, pp.1-2, 13th February 1962

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

he requested the government to reconsider its decision. The Department of Education submitted another memorandum to the government on 7 April 1962, which urged the Cabinet to reverse its decision and adopt the original proposal. The department urged that the VECs should be allowed to obtain an increase of up to 2d on demand from the local authority on the basis of a statutory certificate signed by the Minister for Education.¹⁰⁹ Hillery expressed concern that the abolition of the provision allowing the committees to secure an annual increase on demand might simply encourage the local authorities to refuse any increase at all.¹¹⁰

Hillery's renewed effort to secure the agreement of the Cabinet to his original proposal was vigorously contested by the Department of Local Government. Blaney's department argued that it would weaken the already limited control of local authorities over the cost of vocational education. Moreover the officials of the Department of Local Government contended that education should be a national service: 'local authorities do not have to pay for primary, secondary or university education and it is anomalous that they should be saddled with vocational education.'¹¹¹ Hillery and the senior officials of the Department of Education profoundly disagreed with this approach. The original proposal for revised legislation had asserted that the entire cost of necessary development in the vocational system could not be covered by the national government: the Department of Education argued that the development of vocational education was 'essential to the realisation of the country's full potential in agriculture, industry and general economic progress.'¹¹² Hillery indicated that investment in vocational education by the taxpayer and ratepayer would yield 'enhanced dividends' in the future.¹¹³ But Blaney and the officials of his department opposed further increases in the rates and regarded vocational education as the responsibility of the national government. The Cabinet adjudicated the fundamental disagreement between the two Ministers, agreeing a compromise on 13 April 1962. Hillery secured authorisation to proceed with the Bill on the basis of his original proposal, but the revised limits on annual increase in the local rate for vocational education were set at 1d in the pound which could be secured on

¹⁰⁹ NA D/T 17238/62, G.O. 1/62, *Memorandum to the Government to amend the Vocational Education Acts 1930-53*, Office of the Minister for Education, p.4, 7 April 1962

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2

¹¹¹ NA D/T 17238/62, *Vocational Education Amendment Bill 1962*, Department of Local Government, p.1, 13 April 1962

¹¹² NA D/T S.17238/62, *Summary of Memorandum to the Government, Proposal for a Bill to amend the Vocational Education Acts 1930 to 1953*, p.14, 7 February 1962

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

demand by the VEC and 3d in the pound subject to prior agreement by the local authority.¹¹⁴ While the revised ceilings were lower than Hillery had wished, the Cabinet restored the provision allowing a vocational committee to secure an annual increase in its contribution from the rates and the draft Bill contained most of the terms originally sought by the Department of Education. The Bill provided for the extension of the ceiling of the maximum local rate for vocational education to 24d in the pound for all areas, in accordance with Hillery's proposal.¹¹⁵ The draft legislation also clarified that the value of a rate of 1d in the pound was determined on the basis of the rateable value of properties within a local authority area under the Valuation Acts, not by an assessment of the value of the rate which could be collected: this provision removed a loophole in the original legislation which allowed local authorities to reduce their contribution to the VECs. Hillery urged the government to proceed quickly with the Bill, as the legislation was urgently required to provide assistance in 1963-64 to a number of VECs, which were threatened with insolvency.¹¹⁶ The Cabinet approved the text of the Vocational Education (Amendment) Bill in response to Hillery's concerns on 22 June 1962 and the Minister introduced the legislation to the Dáil on 26 June.¹¹⁷

Hillery opened the debate on the Bill in the Dáil on 30 October 1962, indicating that the aim of the legislation was to increase substantially the financial provision for vocational education.¹¹⁸ The Bill was designed not only to increase the income secured by the VECs from the local rates but also to provide greater state funding for vocational education. The Bill would result in a significant increase in the grants paid to the VECs by the Exchequer, as these grants were determined in relation to the committees' income from the local rates.¹¹⁹ The local councils were permitted to provide up to an extra 3d per pound for the VECs from the rates annually; the department then provided a grant, which matched or doubled the amount contributed by the local authorities.¹²⁰ The opposition parties did not contest the principle of increased state aid for vocational education,

¹¹⁴ CAB 2/22, G.C.10/31, Cabinet Minutes, pp.2-3, 13 April 1962, NA D/T S.17238/62, Decision slip, *Cruinniú Rialtais, Vocational Education Acts 1930-53: Amendment*, 13 Aibreáin 1962

¹¹⁵ NA D/T S.17238/62, G.O. 1/62, *Office of the Minister for Education, Memorandum for the Government, Vocational Education (Amendment) Bill*, p.1, 21 June 1962

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ CAB 2/22, G.C.10/43, Cabinet Minutes, p.2, 22 June 1962, Dáil Debates, vol.196, col.667, 26 June 1962

¹¹⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.197, col.146-150, 30 October 1962

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1960-61*, p.84 (Dublin, 1962), *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1967-68*, p.123 (Dublin, 1969)

although Fine Gael criticised the increase in the local contribution from the rates. The Party's spokesman on education, Patrick O'Donnell, welcomed the increased resources for vocational education but argued that the additional funding should be provided by the taxpayers through the Central fund.¹²¹ Seán Treacy TD of the Labour Party endorsed the Bill fully, describing the development of vocational education as 'the most urgent educational task before the nation'.¹²² The Labour TD welcomed the increase in the local contribution and denounced 'anti-progressive people' who were concerned only with opposing increases in the rates.¹²³ Hillery secured approval for the legislation without difficulty, despite the reservations about the increase in the rates expressed by Fine Gael deputies. O'Donnell urged Hillery to amend Section 2 of the Bill, to ease the burden on ratepayers, but did not press for a division at any stage.¹²⁴ The Bill was approved by the Dáil without a vote on 8 November and was enacted into law by 21 November 1962.¹²⁵

The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act, 1962, significantly improved the level of state funding for vocational education, although the VECs still frequently required supplementary grants from the state to maintain solvency.¹²⁶ The Minister had already allocated special grants to the County VECs for Donegal and Leitrim in 1960-61 and 1961-62.¹²⁷ As the new legislation came into effect only in the financial year 1963-64, Hillery secured the agreement of the Department of Finance to make special grants to the sixteen committees, which were showing a substantial deficit by 1962-63.¹²⁸ The special grants to the VECs were maintained and extended by the department, even after the new legislation came into effect. Seán MacGearailt indeed informed the Public Accounts Committee on 6 March 1969 that all the VECs received special state grants to maintain their solvency by 1967-68.¹²⁹ The allocation of special grants to all the VECs by 1968 reflected the steady expansion in the central state funding for vocational education throughout the 1960s. The enforcement by An Chéard Chomhairle of minimum educational standards for apprenticeship certainly increased the demand for

¹²¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.197, col.150-153, 30 October 1962

¹²² *Ibid.*, col.187-191

¹²³ *Ibid.*, col.187-191

¹²⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.197, col.770-771, 8 November 1962

¹²⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.197, col.800, 8 November 1962, NA D/T S.17238/62, N.S. Ó Nualláin to T. Leahy, 21 November 1962

¹²⁶ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1967-68*, p.123 (Dublin, 1969)

¹²⁷ NA D/T S.17238/62, *Memorandum to the Government, Proposals for a Bill to amend the Vocational Education Acts 1930 to 1953*, p.5, 7 February 1962

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.9

¹²⁹ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1967-68*, p.123 (Dublin, 1969)

vocational training and contributed to the expansion of vocational education.¹³⁰ It is evident, however, that the development of the vocational system was underpinned by enhanced state investment in vocational education, initiated primarily by Hillery and the Department of Education.

The state faced a more complex challenge in secondary education, which was traditionally dominated by private educational interests, especially the churches. The department under Hillery, however, initiated practical reforming measures to overcome the limitations of the curriculum in many secondary schools, which restricted the teaching of Science and modern continental languages. The Minister acted to promote more general and effective teaching of Science by introducing curriculum reforms and special subsidies for schools.¹³¹ Revised courses for the Leaving Certificate in Physics and Chemistry were introduced from the beginning of the academic year 1962-63.¹³² Likewise the Mathematics curriculum was revised and notified to school managers in 1964, on the basis that the Leaving Certificate examination in 1966 would follow the revised courses, while new courses on other Science subjects were implemented from 1965.¹³³ The department arranged evening courses in Trinity College Dublin and the NUI for Science and Mathematics teachers on modern teaching methods in 1963-64.¹³⁴ Hillery also introduced a new scheme in 1964 for secondary schools which included Science on their curriculum. The scheme involved the payment of an additional grant of £150 annually to schools for every qualified teacher, who held a university degree in Science and was teaching Science on a weekly basis.¹³⁵ The new Science grant was designed to promote the recruitment of highly qualified Science teachers and to expand the teaching of Science subjects in the secondary schools.¹³⁶ The high priority given by the department to the promotion of Science and Mathematics in the secondary schools led directly to the introduction of an educational television service subsidised by the state for

¹³⁰ NA D/T S.17238/62, *Memorandum to the Government, Proposal for a Bill to amend the Vocational Education Acts 1930 to 1953*, p.5, 7 February 1962

¹³¹ Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, p.281

¹³² Circular M22/62, Department of Education, August 1962, W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704(3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 7 September 1963*, Department of Education, p.1

¹³³ Circular M3/65, Department of Education, January 1965, W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for Quarter ended 31 December 1964*, Department of Education, p.1, 29 January 1965

¹³⁴ Circular M28/63, Department of Education, September 1963, Circular M30/63, Department of Education, October 1963, Circular M6/64, Department of Education, February 1964

¹³⁵ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704(3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 7 September 1963*, Department of Education, p.1

¹³⁶ M.E.1, *Scheme in aid of the Employment of Graduate Science Teachers*, Department of Education, July 1963

the first time. The department initiated a pilot scheme in February 1964, in conjunction with RTE, to provide school television programmes on Physics courses to selected schools over two school terms.¹³⁷ A full scheme was then introduced to enable secondary schools to use the new service 'Telefís Scoile', which showed programmes for Science and Mathematics.¹³⁸ The state covered up to 75% of the cost incurred by schools in purchasing television sets to deliver the new service for an experimental period of two years.¹³⁹ Hillery showed a considerable readiness to introduce imaginative reforming measures during this period to overcome the academic limitations of the traditional secondary school system.

Hillery also introduced new initiatives to promote the teaching of modern continental languages. The Minister arranged the establishment in 1964 of a new language centre for teachers in the Franciscan College, Gormanston, in co-operation with Fr. Colmán Ó hUallacháin O.F.M, who acted as the department's adviser on language teaching.¹⁴⁰ The new centre was employed by the department for research on teaching methods and for training teachers in the latest audio-visual techniques for language teaching.¹⁴¹ Hillery also introduced a scheme for the payment of grants towards the cost of equipment to assist modern language teaching for the school year 1964-65.¹⁴² The department sought to supplement curriculum reform with grants and allowances, which provided a financial inducement to schools to broaden their curriculum. These initiatives enjoyed increasing success in achieving the state's objectives. The proportion of secondary schools, which included Science on their curriculum, increased from 67% in 1961-62 to 73% in 1964-65.¹⁴³ This moderate advance was soon followed by a more dramatic expansion of Science teaching, as the number of Science classes increased from 2,500 in 1964-65 to 2,900 in 1965-66.¹⁴⁴ The department achieved more rapid success in

¹³⁷ W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704(3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 31 March 1964*, Department of Education, p.2, 14 April 1964

¹³⁸ NA D/FIN 2001/3/1073, D2/14/65, *First Progress report on the Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Department of Education, 7 April 1965, p.3

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, W26/30, M80/1, *Progress Report for Quarter ended 30 September 1964*, Department of Education, p.1, 30 October 1964

¹⁴⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.209, col.1570, 14 May 1964

¹⁴¹ NA D/FIN 2001/3/1073, D2/14/65, *First Progress report on the Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Department of Education, 7 April 1965, p.4

¹⁴² W26/30, M80/1, C.O. 704(3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 30 June 1964*, Department of Education, p.1, 31 July 1964

¹⁴³ NA D/FIN 2001/3/1073, D2/14/65, Ó Raifeartaigh to Whitaker, 11 February 1965, *Draft of First Progress report for the Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Department of Education, p.3

¹⁴⁴ NA D/FIN 2001/3/1073, D2/14/65, Ó Raifeartaigh to C.H. Murray, 9 February 1966, *Progress report on education for the Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Department of Education, p.4

its efforts to promote modern language teaching. The number of pupils studying French showed a substantial increase from 32,000 in 1958-59 to 52,000 in 1963-64.¹⁴⁵ The extension of the restricted curriculum in many secondary schools to include Science and modern languages was a key policy priority for the department, which pursued its objectives vigorously and with considerable success. Hillery readily embraced reforms designed to alleviate traditional shortcomings in the secondary system, especially academic limitations with the potential to curtail the education of the workers of the future.

The Minister, however, was wary of offering a definitive statement of the government's policy or a full-scale critique of the flaws of the educational system. Hillery was criticised especially by opposition politicians for failing to offer a coherent programme of reform for the system as a whole. On 23 May 1962 the leader of Fine Gael, James Dillon, attacked Hillery's failure to offer 'a comprehensive review' of the system and a plan for the future.¹⁴⁶ In the same Dáil debate Noel Browne criticised the Minister for failing to deliver fundamental reform of an unequal and inefficient system; indeed he denounced Hillery as 'a sort of political castrate in charge of this tremendously important Department'.¹⁴⁷ Hillery responded by strongly defending the government's policy of gradual expansion, especially in a Dáil debate on the Education Estimates on 6 June 1962. He referred to the underdeveloped and underfunded system which he had inherited, bluntly criticising certain aspects of the system: 'we had a 50 year backlog of bad schools'.¹⁴⁸ The Minister made such comments, however, to underline the extent of the problems, which confronted him and justify his measured approach. He hoped that his speech 'will explain to Deputies why my statements are sober. We have to wait not only for the finance but also for the time.'¹⁴⁹ He strongly advocated the need for a gradual and orderly approach to educational expansion. He pointed with some justice to the 'silent progress' of his own term.¹⁵⁰ But while Hillery defended the gradualist policy of the government, he also pledged to bring forward a major new initiative for post-primary education. His rhetoric remained cautious, containing vague assurances concerning his

¹⁴⁵ NA D/FIN 2001/3/1073, D2/14/65, *First Progress report on the Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Department of Education, 7 April 1965, p.4

¹⁴⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 195, col.1471-1493, 23 May 1962

¹⁴⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 195, col.1493-1514, 23 May 1962

¹⁴⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 195, col. 2184-2203, 23 May 1962

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

‘well advanced’ plans which would be disclosed to the Dáil in the near future.¹⁵¹ But Hillery’s commitment to a significant initiative for the expansion of post-primary education foreshadowed the launch of the groundbreaking proposal for comprehensive schools in 1963.

Developing a new policy: the initiative for comprehensive schools

The development of the Minister’s initiative was encouraged by public criticism of the existing educational system, which was expressed by activist groups within civil society as well as by opposition parties. The case for educational reform was made most forcefully by Tuairim, a political research society founded in 1954 to provide a platform for members of the post-Treaty generation. The London Branch of Tuairim discussed a paper on the Irish educational system in April 1961, which was issued as a pamphlet entitled *Irish Education* in October 1962.¹⁵² The pamphlet presented a scathing critique of the traditional educational structures. The Tuairim research group argued that Irish educational attitudes were Victorian and criticised the ‘political paralysis’, which had traditionally permeated the Department of Education.¹⁵³ The pamphlet made various constructive recommendations for improving the educational system, not least the granting by the state of recognition in terms of incremental salary for teaching service in Britain.¹⁵⁴ The study group also argued that the proliferation of small schools at all levels of the educational system was educationally and economically unsound. Tuairim proposed the integration of educational facilities and the establishment of a national scheme of subsidised school transport.¹⁵⁵ The research group asserted that ‘public money should be spent only on schools open to all’, seeking the establishment of free ‘middle schools’, which would provide four-year courses on a non-selective basis.¹⁵⁶ The ideas of the research group were too radical to secure acceptance in 1962, but the proposals foreshadowed policies adopted by the Irish state a few years later.¹⁵⁷ The Tuairim pamphlet made a public case for the first time for the rationalisation of educational facilities, which was to become the official policy of the state within four years.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Tuairim, *Irish Education*, p.1 (London Research Group, Tuairim, 1962)

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp.2-5

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.12

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.16-18

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.19-20

¹⁵⁷ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.67

Tuairim also played an important role in stimulating public debate on education. The Dublin Branch of Tuairim held a study weekend in Greystones in November 1961, which considered a paper produced by the Branch entitled *Educating Towards A United Europe*.¹⁵⁸ The Tuairim pamphlet argued that the prospect of Ireland's accession to the EEC demanded 'fundamental adjustments' in a stagnant educational system if the Irish people were to make an effective contribution to the development of a united Europe.¹⁵⁹ The study weekend involved a wide-ranging discussion of weaknesses in Irish education, which included contributions by a prominent trade unionist, Charles McCarthy, general secretary of the Vocational Teachers' Association (VTA) and a leading educator, Thomas Kilroy, principal of Stratford College, Rathgar.¹⁶⁰ Tuairim provided a forum for critical discussion of the numerous deficiencies in the educational system and persistently drew public attention to the case for policy changes. The activity of the research group encouraged greater public interest in education and helped to place educational reform firmly on the political agenda.

The government also faced increasing political pressure for educational reform from its opponents. The Labour Party issued a policy document, entitled *Challenge and Change in Education*, in March 1963, which called for far-reaching changes in Irish educational structures.¹⁶¹ The Labour policy document, which was composed mainly by Barry Desmond and Catherine McGuinness, was a manifesto for a comprehensive reform of the educational system. The Labour Party endorsed the raising of the school leaving age, initially to fifteen but later to sixteen and sought the establishment of a National Planning Branch within the department to implement rational planning of educational needs.¹⁶² They demanded the introduction of free post-primary education for all children as 'a social and economic necessity of the first importance'.¹⁶³ The Labour policy also envisaged a radical restructuring of secondary education to provide larger central schools, which would be served by a central transport scheme funded by the state.¹⁶⁴ *Challenge and Change* identified the extension and development of vocational education as an

¹⁵⁸ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, *Hibernia*, 'Educating Towards A United Europe', February 1962

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Tuairim, *Educating Towards a United Europe*, p.6 (Dublin Branch, Tuairim and the European Teachers' Association, 1961)

¹⁶⁰ NA D/T S.12891D/1/61, *The Irish Press*, 'Headmaster Lists Weaknesses in Irish education', 27 November 1961

¹⁶¹ The Labour Party, *Challenge and Change in Education*, March 1963 (The Labour Party, 1963)

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp.2-3

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.10

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11-12

urgent educational necessity, emphasizing that economic progress would require a highly educated and adaptable labour force. The policy document also envisaged the development of one vocational school in each region into a regional college, which would provide for technician training and establish an avenue to higher education for vocational pupils.¹⁶⁵ The publication of *Challenge and Change* underlined that the Labour Party was making the case for educational reform as an economic and social necessity. Their reforming approach mirrored many of the sentiments expressed by Hillery and Lemass, although Labour advocated more rapid and far-reaching changes than the government was willing to endorse in 1963. The launch of Labour's education policy also intensified the political pressure on Hillery to bring forward his own initiative. Ó Raifeartaigh privately informed the Catholic Bishops in February 1963 that the Minister wished to make a public statement on his plans for education in the short-term, as the Labour Party was about to publish its policy document and 'he wants to forestall them.'¹⁶⁶ While Hillery was already considering a new initiative for post-primary education before the publication of the Labour policy, he was certainly concerned to limit the political impact of *Challenge and Change*. The launch of Labour's policy may well have influenced the timing of Hillery's policy initiative in May 1963 and certainly provided an additional incentive for the early announcement of the Minister's plans for post-primary education.

The *Forecast* drafted by the department in January 1962 had raised the possibility of establishing comprehensive schools in areas not well served by traditional post-primary education.¹⁶⁷ Hillery made an initial proposal for a new type of post-primary school in a memorandum to the Department of the Taoiseach on 7 July 1962, following the report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Problems of Small Western Farms.¹⁶⁸ As his department had not been represented on the Committee, Hillery wished to comment on the educational problems affecting the relevant areas. The memorandum noted that post-primary education was often not available at all in the western small farm areas, while even where post-primary schools were within reach of pupils the facilities were completely inadequate. Hillery proposed the establishment of a number of new

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.15-18

¹⁶⁶ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes of the Irish Hierarchy, Fergus to McQuaid, 20 February 1963

¹⁶⁷ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, *Forecast of Developments*, pp.3-4, 6 January 1962

¹⁶⁸ NA D/T S.12891D/2/62, *Memorandum from the Minister for Education concerning the Small Farms report, 'Post-Primary Education in the Areas Concerned'*, p.1, 7 July 1962

post-primary schools, offering a comprehensive course of three years for pupils aged 12-15: the curriculum of these schools should be broad-based but maintain 'a very definite practical bias'¹⁶⁹ The proposal suggested the development of schools which would be sufficiently large to provide a broad-based three year course and a subsequent course of two years involving specialisation.¹⁷⁰ This concept envisaged central schools serving a wide area, which would require transport services to bring in all pupils outside a three mile radius of the school. The department proposed that the capital cost of providing the school buildings should be met by the state, while two-thirds of the cost of the transport service would also be subsidised by the state.¹⁷¹ Hillery sought to secure the agreement of the Cabinet Committee dealing with the report on small farm areas for the principle that the state should provide a new type of post-primary school: if the principle was acceptable, then the Department of Education would prepare a definite proposal for the implementation of a pilot scheme, involving the establishment of about six schools in the areas with the most pressing educational needs. He suggested that a pilot scheme could potentially be implemented in Connaught, the Ulster counties of the Republic and Clare, Kerry and West Cork.¹⁷²

Tadhg Ó Cearbhaill, Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Taoiseach, forwarded this preliminary proposal to extend post-primary education to all the relevant Ministers on 9 July 1962.¹⁷³ The Taoiseach also intervened to support Hillery's initiative. Lemass asked the Ministers to indicate whether they would agree to the inclusion of a reference to such an educational initiative in the Taoiseach's forthcoming public statement, on the implementation of the Report by the Government.¹⁷⁴ Hillery's predecessor, Jack Lynch, Minister for Industry and Commerce, supported the initiative, although he expressed concerns about the control and staffing of the proposed schools. Erskine Childers, Minister for Transport and Power and Kevin Boland, Minister for Social Welfare, also assented immediately without any comment on the proposal.¹⁷⁵ The initiative was, however, strongly opposed by the Department of Finance. Whitaker

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.2

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.2

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p.3

¹⁷³ NA D/T S.12891D/2/62, T. Ó Cearbhaill to Private Secretaries of Ministers of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Problems of Small Western Farms, 9 July 1962

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ NA D/T S.12891D/2/62, Private Secretary to E. Childers to Ó Cearbhaill, 11 July 1962, Private Secretary to K. Boland to T. Ó Cearbhaill, 13 July 1962, Private Secretary to J. Lynch to T. Ó Cearbhaill, 14 July 1962

criticised the proposal in a lengthy reply to Nioclás Ó Nualláin on 18 July 1962.¹⁷⁶ He drew attention to the extensive costs involved in the proposed initiative and sought a thorough review of its financial implications. He argued that the memorandum failed to consider fully the possibility of developing existing educational facilities, but instead proposed the introduction of many new features into the educational system. Full consultation with educational interests, including the churches, school managers and teaching unions, would therefore be necessary concerning the proposal before any commitment was made by the government. Moreover Whitaker issued a clear warning on behalf of the Minister for Finance, Dr. Jim Ryan: ‘In the circumstances the Minister is strongly of the opinion that any announcement made at this stage in connection with these proposals should be limited to a general statement to the effect that special attention is being given to the question of improving post-primary educational facilities in the western rural areas.’¹⁷⁷ Whitaker not only expressed strong reservations about the proposed initiative but categorically rejected Hillery’s attempt to secure agreement in principle for the proposal from the relevant Ministers.

Ryan reiterated Whitaker’s views in an official reply to Ó Cearbhaill’s note, which was sent on 23 July 1962 by the Minister’s private secretary. The Minister expressed ‘no objection in principle’ to the proposed pilot scheme but asserted that any public reference to it by the Taoiseach should consist only of a general indication of the government’s intention to improve post-primary facilities in the relevant areas.¹⁷⁸ Ryan indicated that no commitment should be made to the principle of the proposal before the scheme was fully evaluated in terms of the cost, mode of implementation and implications for existing educational services.¹⁷⁹ While the tone of the Minister’s response was more emollient than Whitaker’s comments, the message conveyed to other departments was identical. The Department of Finance was entirely opposed to any endorsement of the proposal at least until the financial and educational implications of the scheme received a detailed evaluation. Moreover it was evident that Whitaker had grave reservations about the proposed initiative on financial and educational grounds.

Hillery, however, was not deterred by the Department of Finance’s negative response. The Minister and senior officials of the Department of Education gave no

¹⁷⁶ NA D/T S.12891D/2/62, Whitaker to N.S. Ó Nualláin, 18 July 1962

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ NA D/T S.12891D/2/62, M. Ó Sealbhaigh to Ó Cearbhaill, 23 July 1962

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

ground in their response to Whitaker's criticisms, which was issued by Hillery's private secretary, Thomas Leahy, to Ó Cearbhaill on 26 July 1962.¹⁸⁰ The Minister's response dismissed Whitaker's concern about consultation with the religious authorities and other educational interests, with a pointed reminder that such consultation was appropriately left to the Department of Education, which would initiate the necessary discussion at the proper time. Leahy argued, on Hillery's behalf, that a general reference to a potential extension of existing facilities in the Taoiseach's statement would 'in many ways be worse than making no reference at all to education in any statement that may be issued.'¹⁸¹ The Minister pointed out that private interests had not already provided secondary education in the western small farm areas and were most unlikely to do so in the future: the relevant areas were too thinly populated to make the running of a secondary school a viable proposition. The Department of Education also argued that nothing had been proposed in its original memorandum, which had not already been adopted by other European states which took a progressive approach to education.¹⁸² Hillery believed that any reference to education in Lemass' statement should not only acknowledge the special problems concerning the provision of post-primary education in the western small farm areas but should also contain 'a firm statement of intention to take special measures in order to cater for them.'¹⁸³ The Minister issued an uncompromising defence of his original proposal, strongly refuting the criticisms made by the Department of Finance.

Lemass acted to resolve the clear disagreement between the Ministers for Finance and Education. He received a handwritten note from Ó Cearbhaill on 26 July, bringing the correspondence to his attention: the Assistant Secretary told the Taoiseach that the Department of Education was anxious to secure a positive reference to its proposal in Lemass' public statement on the report of the Inter-Departmental Committee.¹⁸⁴ The Taoiseach essentially resolved the dispute in favour of the Minister for Education. Lemass included a short but positive reference to the Minister's proposal in his public statement on the report at Muintir na Tíre Rural Week, which was delivered on his behalf by Charles Haughey, Minister for Justice, on 14 August 1962.¹⁸⁵ The Taoiseach's

¹⁸⁰ NA D/T S.12891D/2/62, T. Leahy to Ó Cearbhaill, pp.1-2, 26 July 1962

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ NA D/T S.12891D/2/62, Ó Cearbhaill to Lemass, 26 July 1962

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.107

statement acknowledged that special problems existed with regard to post-primary education in the western small farm areas and indicated that Hillery was preparing proposals to remedy these deficiencies.¹⁸⁶ Significantly Lemass' statement also announced that 'the Minister's ideas, which have not yet been fully developed, envisage a new type of post-primary school with a curriculum which, although broad-based, would also have a definite practical bias.'¹⁸⁷ While Lemass avoided giving a definite commitment to these ideas, which had not yet been finalised by Hillery, his statement was firmly based on the Department of Education's original proposal. The Taoiseach gave a firm indication that special measures were being considered by the government to overcome problems in the provision of post-primary education in specific areas.¹⁸⁸ Lemass also publicly introduced the idea of a new type of post-primary school, provided by the state, as a solution to the under-development of post-primary education in thinly populated rural areas. The section of Lemass' statement on education attracted little public attention in August 1962.¹⁸⁹ The Taoiseach had, however, signalled a new departure in educational policy, indicating that the government was considering an important initiative for the expansion of post-primary education.

An important impetus to reform in vocational and technical education was given, shortly after Lemass' address, by a review of technician training in Ireland, conducted by examiners operating under the auspices of the Department of Education and the OECD. The OECD examiners were invited by the department to undertake a review of technical education in the context of economic development, with special emphasis on the position of the technician.¹⁹⁰ The examiners, Professor Alan Peacock and Dr. Werner Rasmussen, undertook a visit to Ireland in September 1962, accompanied by Dr. Petr Ter-Davtian of the OECD Directorate of Scientific Affairs.¹⁹¹ They identified a number of deficiencies in technical education in Ireland, including the absence of an adequate preparatory course for potential entrants to the Colleges of Technology.¹⁹² The examiners drew attention to the 'strong classical and linguistic bias' of the secondary schools, which gave inadequate

¹⁸⁶ NA D/T S.12891D/2/62, *Outline of Statement of Government Policy on Suggestions in Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Problems of Small Western Farms*, p.8, 1 August 1962

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.107

¹⁹⁰ OECD, *Training of Technicians in Ireland, OECD Reviews of National Policies For Science and Education*, p.81 (OECD, Paris, 1964)

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.88-89

attention to Science and Mathematics. They also commented on a general lack of flexibility in the Irish educational system, which was particularly evident in the lack of any educational ladder from the vocational school to university education.¹⁹³

The report of the examiners was considered at a 'confrontation' meeting organised by the OECD in Paris on 29 January 1963, which was attended by Hillery, Dr. Ó Raifeartaigh, Patrick Lynch, Michael O'Flanagan, Chief Inspector of the department's Technical Instruction Branch and Prof. J.P. O'Donnell, of the Chemical Engineering Department in University College Dublin.¹⁹⁴ The examiners, especially Dr. Rasmussen, raised the concern that there seemed to be a lack of awareness in Ireland of the general need for scientific and technician education. They recommended that expenditure on education should be regarded as one of the most productive forms of long-term national investment and that broadly designed courses of technical education were required to provide training relevant to all modern economic activities.¹⁹⁵ In response to the examiners' comments, Hillery affirmed that 'it is our Government's policy to make a substantial investment in education.'¹⁹⁶ He assured the OECD experts that his department was committed to making changes in the educational system and would welcome advice on the form that such changes might take.¹⁹⁷ The Minister's response acknowledged that the state's approach to the development of higher technical education was still tentative and welcomed input from the OECD on future policy measures.

The expert advisers made several recommendations which were endorsed by the Irish delegation. The examiners recommended the provision of regional technical education in southern and western areas of the country, which lacked access to post-primary or higher technical education. They emphasized the need for adequate regional provision for post-primary technical courses, which could serve as a ladder to higher technical education. Michael O'Flanagan agreed that such technical courses were desirable and indicated that the department was considering plans for the development of technical education, for students around the age of sixteen, in urban areas in western and southern Ireland.¹⁹⁸ The proposal by the examiners for a preparatory technical course leading to a technical schools Leaving Certificate was endorsed by the department, which

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.88-89

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.95

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.101

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.102

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.102

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.106

had raised a similar idea in its *Forecast* in January 1962.¹⁹⁹ A recommendation by the OECD experts for the establishment of a permanent statistical and development unit in the Department of Education was also accepted by the Irish delegation.²⁰⁰ The report of the examiners drew renewed attention to existing deficiencies in vocational and technical education, placing greater pressure on the Minister to act on some of the reforming ideas which were under consideration by the department. The experts proposed specific improvements, which were generally accepted as desirable by the Irish delegation. Hillery did not, however, attempt to implement specific reforms pinpointed by the OECD in isolation from the wider problems of post-primary education. The ideas of the OECD experts concerning technical education were instead included by the Minister in the initiative for the reform of post-primary education, which had been under consideration by the department since the summer of 1962.

The first detailed proposal concerning the expansion of post-primary education was drafted by the officials of the department, on the basis of an outline submitted by Hillery.²⁰¹ A committee had been established in June 1962 by Ó Raifeartaigh, to advise the Minister on future educational needs in post-primary education.²⁰² The committee, which was chaired by Dr. Maurice Duggan, also included Dr. Finbar O'Callaghan, Tomás Ó Floinn, Liam Ó Maolchatha and Micheál Ó Suilleabhain.²⁰³ The committee produced an interim report on 8 December 1962, which argued that a minimum period of post-primary education was a national necessity: the committee recommended free and compulsory post-primary education for all children up to the age of 15.²⁰⁴ The report also rejected the idea of comprehensive schools modelled on the English system as impractical and proposed instead a comprehensive post-primary course for junior cycle pupils in secondary and vocational schools.²⁰⁵ Hillery and the senior officials did not, however, use the report as the basis for a detailed proposal to the government. The department's proposal, entitled *Proposal for Comprehensive Post-Primary Education: Pilot Scheme related to Small Farm Areas*, used certain elements of the report by

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.108

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.105-106

²⁰¹ Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

²⁰² *Tuarascáil Shealadach ón Choiste a Cuireadh I mbun Scrúdú a Dheánamh ar Oideachas Iarbhunscoile*, p.1, Department of Education, December 1962

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, I. Bonel-Elliott, 'The role of the Duggan report (1962) in the reform of the Irish education system', *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), pp. 42-60

²⁰⁴ *Tuarascáil*, pp.5-6, December 1962

²⁰⁵ *Tuarascáil*, pp.10-12, December 1962

Duggan's committee, such as its arguments for a common post-primary course for all pupils aged 12 to 15.²⁰⁶ But the official proposal also included a definite recommendation for several comprehensive schools of between 150 and 400 pupils and entirely ignored the committee's suggestion of free post-primary education for all children up to the age of 15.²⁰⁷ Hillery had no intention of proposing free education as part of the new scheme. He believed indeed that the opposition generated by such a proposal would wreck the initiative: 'It wasn't about free education. The whole thing would have collapsed due to the opposition'.²⁰⁸ Dr. Bonel-Elliott suggested that the report by Duggan's committee was an important element in the formulation of the major reforms in post-primary education in the 1960s.²⁰⁹ But the report, which was not distributed within the department, had little influence on Hillery's proposals for reform. The department had already formulated initial proposals in its *Forecast of Developments in Educational Services* for the extension of the vocational school programme and for the introduction of comprehensive education.²¹⁰ The report by Duggan's committee was significant mainly as an indication of new thinking about educational policy among the officials of the department.

The department's proposal clearly identified key problems in post-primary education. Most importantly the provision of secondary education depended entirely on private initiative, implying that more remote regions were unlikely ever to have a secondary school as no incentive existed for the private sector to build a school for very few pupils. The most striking defect of the system was summarised bluntly: a large residue of pupils would never receive post-primary education 'under the present system of private enterprise'.²¹¹ Moreover the department's paper identified further problems flowing from this 'fundamental structural defect' in the educational system.²¹² Many rural secondary schools were too small, employing inadequate numbers of staff and therefore providing only a limited curriculum with little provision for continental

²⁰⁶ NA D/T 17405 C/63, *Pilot Scheme related to Small Farm Areas, Department of Education, Proposal for Comprehensive Post-Primary Education*, 9 January 1963

²⁰⁷ NA D/T 17405 C/63, *Pilot Scheme related to Small Farm Areas, Department of Education, Proposal for Comprehensive Post-Primary Education*, 9 January 1963

²⁰⁸ Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

²⁰⁹ I. Bonel-Elliott, 'The role of the Duggan report (1962) in the reform of the Irish education system', *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), p. 43

²¹⁰ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, *Forecast of Developments*, pp.1-9, 6 January 1962

²¹¹ NA D/T 17405 C/63, *Pilot Scheme related to Small Farm Areas, Department of Education, Proposal for Comprehensive Post-Primary Education*, 9 January 1963

²¹² *Ibid.*

languages or Science.²¹³ The departmental proposal also described private schools under one-man management as 'inherently unstable'.²¹⁴ This was a revealing comment which gives some indication of dissatisfaction among senior departmental officials with the tight control of schools by individual clergy. The paper also expressed grave concern at the rigid separation between secondary and vocational education, noting that the two strands of the post-primary system operated in 'separate watertight compartments'.²¹⁵ The solution recommended in the department's proposal was the provision by the state of comprehensive post-primary schools, which were initially described as 'Junior Secondary Schools'.²¹⁶ This proposal formed the basis of the policy announcement made by Hillery in May 1963.

The department's proposal made relatively rapid progress through the administrative and political obstacles which could have blocked its path, due to Hillery's effective advocacy and to the support of the Taoiseach. The proposal was first submitted to the Department of Finance and was rejected.²¹⁷ Hillery then appealed directly to the Taoiseach, submitting a covering letter to Lemass on 9 January 1963 making the case for comprehensive schools along with the draft proposal.²¹⁸ The Minister made a strong argument for a pilot scheme involving comprehensive schools in the western Small Farm areas. Hillery noted that private interests had failed in the relevant areas to provide for education and so could not credibly object to state action. He hoped that the pilot scheme would provide a model of post-primary education, which could with time be extended to the whole country.²¹⁹ Hillery acknowledged both the considerable expense of the plan and the possible opposition of private interests, including the Catholic Hierarchy, but urged that it was necessary and probably inevitable. The Minister even argued that the comprehensive schools plan might well prove to be the only opportunity to introduce a 'really satisfactory system of post-primary education'.²²⁰

Only four months elapsed before the Department of Education proposal became, in a modified form, the publicly acknowledged policy of the government. Lemass played a

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ NA D/T S.12891D/2/62, Whitaker to Ó Nualláin, 18 July 1962, Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

²¹⁸ NA D/T 17405 C/63, Hillery to Lemass, 9 January 1963

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

crucial role in the rapid evolution of government policy on education. Hillery had suggested that his department's proposal should be forwarded to the Cabinet Committee on Small Farms.²²¹ The Taoiseach found a more effective means of promoting Hillery's initiative. Lemass withheld the proposal from the Cabinet Committee, instead arranging a conference involving only Hillery, the Taoiseach himself and Jim Ryan.²²² Hillery then elaborated on his department's proposal in a further letter to Lemass on 12 January 1963, indicating that he hoped to achieve 'one system of post-primary education which would have a number of streams'.²²³ The Minister emphasised his determination to achieve equality of opportunity for all according to talent.²²⁴ This missive secured a rapid and positive response from Lemass. The Taoiseach explicitly endorsed the new policy departure in his response on 14 January 1963, although he also noted his own lack of knowledge about the cost of the plan and other practical problems.²²⁵ He warned the Minister that public confusion about the government's policy would persist until Hillery's plan was announced. Lemass gave Hillery clear directions on the procedure to be followed in the meeting with the Minister for Finance. Indeed the Taoiseach warned Hillery to 'come to this meeting with the nature of the decisions you desire very clear in your mind' and even sought in advance a draft of the decisions as Hillery wished to have them recorded.²²⁶ Lemass also indicated that Ryan could not be expected to give full approval to the proposal at the first meeting.²²⁷ But the Taoiseach's commitment to Hillery's proposal and his determination to fast track it through the normal procedures of the government were evident.

The summary of the relevant decisions requested by Lemass was drafted by Hillery's officials and contained three main elements.²²⁸ The draft summary envisaged a new system of post-primary education based on comprehensive courses and where necessary comprehensive schools: as a first step in this direction a pilot scheme would be introduced in more remote rural areas.²²⁹ The Minister also sought authorisation to consult with the Catholic Bishop in each relevant area to give effect to the proposal, as it

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² NA D/T 17405 C/63, Lemass to Hillery, 11 January 1963,

²²³ NA D/T 17405 C/63, Hillery to Lemass, 12 January 1963,

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ NA D/T 17405 C/63, Lemass to Hillery, 14 January 1963,

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ NA D/T 17405 C/63, *Memorandum from the Department of Education, Proposals relating to comprehensive post-primary education*, January 1963

²²⁹ Ibid.

was envisaged that the pilot scheme would involve only Catholic schools.²³⁰ Hillery secured agreement from the Minister for Finance to proceed with the proposal by following the procedure recommended by Lemass, despite some delay caused by the Department of Finance.²³¹ On 8 March 1963 Ó Cearbhaill composed a handwritten memorandum noting that Seán MacGearailt was pressing for an early decision on the comprehensive schools proposal, which was then still being considered by the Department of Finance.²³² The memorandum was intended for the attention of the Taoiseach and the Department of Finance. Lemass' reaction is not recorded but Hillery soon secured the agreement of Dr. Ryan for the comprehensive schools initiative.²³³ The Taoiseach then told Hillery to launch the scheme publicly without bringing it back to the Cabinet for formal approval, telling the Minister bluntly; 'You'll never get it through the Government.'²³⁴ The scheme for comprehensive schools was therefore launched by Hillery at a press conference on 20 May 1963.²³⁵ Lemass had not only played a crucial role in steering the proposal successfully past the procedural obstacles which might have frustrated it, he had also given Hillery the authority to go ahead with the scheme without formal Cabinet approval.

Hillery's policy announcement on 20 May identified major weaknesses in the existing post-primary system which provided the rationale for the comprehensive schools proposal. These flaws included the failure of the system to provide post-primary education for a substantial segment of the population and the complete absence of coordination between secondary and vocational schools.²³⁶ Hillery declared that a third of Irish children received no post-primary education: these children were 'today's Third Estate, whose voice amid the babel of competing claims from the more privileged, has hitherto scarcely been heard.'²³⁷ The Minister clearly endorsed the concept of equality of opportunity as a guiding principle of state policy.²³⁸ He announced that the state would take the initiative in resolving these problems by providing a number of new post-

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

²³² NA D/T17405 C/63, *Proposals relating to comprehensive post-primary education*, 8 March 1963

²³³ Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

²³⁴ Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002, J. Horgan, *Seán Lemass: The Enigmatic Patriot*, p.295 (Dublin, 1997)

²³⁵ NA D/T17405 C/63, *Statement by Dr. P.J. Hillery T.D., Minister for Education, in relation to Post-Primary Education*, 20 May 1963

²³⁶ Ibid., p.6

²³⁷ Ibid., p.5

²³⁸ Ibid., p.5

primary schools catering in the first instance for specific regions. Hillery proposed a comprehensive post-primary day school, providing a three year course which would lead to the Intermediate Certificate Examination.²³⁹ The new comprehensive school would provide for at least 150 students and would be open to all within a ten mile radius of the school: pupils would enter the comprehensive school after the sixth standard in primary school.²⁴⁰ Hillery pledged both in his announcement and subsequently in the Dáil that a comprehensive school would offer a wide range of subjects to pupils, including all those available in the secondary and vocational schools.²⁴¹ He specifically rejected selection at an early age, ruling out any system similar to the 11-plus examination prevalent in Britain, and instead aimed to provide a comprehensive curriculum for children in the 12-16 age group.²⁴² The Minister indicated that the school buildings would be financed largely by the state, while the running costs would be funded through annual grants from the department and the VECs. The salaries of the teachers would be paid as usual by the department.²⁴³ Hillery's announcement marked a fundamental policy change from the practice of successive governments since the foundation of the Irish state. The national government had made a commitment to provide directly for post-primary school buildings for the first time.²⁴⁴

While Hillery explained the concept of the comprehensive school with clarity, considerable ambiguity surrounded certain aspects of the proposal, especially concerning school fees. The Minister stated that there would be 'a reasonable school fee' which could be reduced in cases of hardship.²⁴⁵ On 29 May 1963 Hillery responded ambiguously to a Dáil question by Noel Browne who asked if the government was opposed to the extension of free education to the new comprehensive schools. The Minister indicated that the government was determined to provide some post-primary education for all, which would involve free education in some cases.²⁴⁶ He envisaged that the fee would be a nominal sum for lower-income students. He defended this hybrid approach on the basis that he was dealing with a real problem in a practical way and not

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.7-8

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.8-10

²⁴¹ *Dáil Debates* vol. 210, col.289, 27 May 1964

²⁴² NA D/T17405 C/63, *Statement by Dr. P.J. Hillery T.D., Minister for Education, in relation to Post-Primary Education*, p.7, 20 May 1963,

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.9-10

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.7

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.7

²⁴⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol.203, col.381-384, 29 May 1963

with reference to 'any doctrinaire principle'.²⁴⁷ His reluctance to give any endorsement to the ideal of free post-primary education reflected the gradualist approach maintained by the government in the early years of the process of expansion.

Despite the ambiguity of his proposal in some respects, Hillery offered a clear vision in his policy announcement for the role of comprehensive schools and their place in the educational system. He considered that a degree of specialisation was appropriate following the three-year comprehensive course.²⁴⁸ His proposal envisaged that pupils of the comprehensive schools would move into secondary or technical education at the age of 15 or 16. Hillery hoped that the local technical schools would function as a 'senior storey' of the comprehensive school or as a separate repository for comprehensive students.²⁴⁹ More significantly, the Minister proposed a radical new departure in technical education to accommodate pupils who did not intend to proceed with academic education after the age of 15. Hillery announced his intention to establish Regional Technological Colleges, in conjunction with the VECs; the Regional Colleges would provide courses for a new public examination, the Technical Schools Leaving Certificate.²⁵⁰ The objective of the new examination was to enable technical students to achieve a standard of education comparable in status with the academic standard delivered by the secondary schools. The Technical Schools Leaving Certificate was intended to qualify students for entry to third-level education or employment training for skilled technical and junior management positions.²⁵¹ The regional colleges were designed to accommodate not only pupils from the new comprehensive schools but any students who displayed 'practical aptitudes'.²⁵² The existing vocational schools were clearly intended to provide many of the recruits for the new colleges. The regional technological colleges were effectively designed as a bridge to third-level education or skilled technical employment for students with technical aptitudes.

The proposal marked the beginning of a dramatic development of higher technical education, which would lead to the foundation of the first regional technical colleges

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ NA D/T17405 C/63, *Statement by Dr. P.J. Hillery T.D., Minister for Education, in relation to Post-Primary Education*, pp.8-9, 20 May 1963

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.11

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp.12-13

²⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.12-13

(RTCs) as an element of the third-level sector in 1969.²⁵³ Hillery's proposal was a serious attempt to widen educational opportunity for students with technical aptitudes and to enhance the status of the technical sector. The wide-ranging proposal for reform also sought to improve coordination between the secondary school system and the vocational schools by introducing a common standard of evaluation.²⁵⁴ Hillery announced the extension of the two-year day course in vocational schools to make it a three-year course.²⁵⁵ This paved the way for vocational students to take the Intermediate Certificate examination in a number of subjects by 1966. The Minister announced the revision of the Intermediate Certificate to provide a broadly common examination for students from the secondary and vocational sectors.²⁵⁶ Hillery claimed with considerable justice that the measure, which was intended to achieve parity of standard and evaluation between the different sectors, was an important educational reform.²⁵⁷

Hillery's policy initiative of 20 May 1963 aimed to promote equality of educational opportunity and to improve the coordination between the very different strands of the educational system. The initiative deserves to be evaluated not only with regard to its specific achievements but also in the context of the Irish educational system in the early 1960s. The department established an internal building committee, headed by Seán O'Connor to select the most suitable areas for the pilot project: but the committee made only slow progress due in part to the prolonged consultation required with local educational interests.²⁵⁸ The comprehensive schools proposal was initially implemented as a pilot project involving only three schools, in Cootehill, Co. Cavan, Shannon, Co. Clare and Carraroe, Co. Galway, which opened in September 1966.²⁵⁹ But Hillery's announcement marked the first major initiative by the Irish state to provide for post-primary education, outside the specific ambit of technical instruction. The direct intervention of the national government to establish a new form of post-primary school was unprecedented. Hillery's proposal was significant too because it owed much to

²⁵³ Coolahan, *Irish Education*, p.139, *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1967-68*, p.122 (Dublin, 1969)

²⁵⁴ NA D/T17405 C/63, *Statement by Dr. P.J. Hillery T.D., Minister for Education, in relation to Post-Primary Education*, p.13, 20 May 1963

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.14

²⁵⁸ W26/30, M80/1, *Draft Progress report on secondary education for the Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Department of Education, February 1965, pp.1-2, Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

²⁵⁹ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1965-66*, pp.117-118 (Dublin, 1967)

economic imperatives as well as social and educational demands. He himself hoped that the reforms would 'give the country a systematic supply of youth with a sufficient technical education' to meet the needs of the economy.²⁶⁰ The proposed regional technological colleges were clearly intended to provide a supply of skilled technical workers to meet the demands of an expanding economy. It was, however, the educational potential of the regional colleges which made this innovation one of the most radical of the reforming measures announced by Hillery. While the first regional technical colleges were not established until 1969, the RTCs became an integral part of the third-level system in the following decade.²⁶¹ Certainly the RTCs performed very different functions from the role initially envisaged by Hillery, not least because the proposal for separate second-level courses leading to a Technical Schools' Leaving Certificate was shelved by Hillery's successors. But the foundation of the regional colleges was clearly a significant extension of educational opportunity, even if the initiative was rich in potential rather than achievement during Hillery's term. The policy announcement marked the first real attempt by the state to deliver post-primary education for the children of all its citizens.

The Minister's initiative involved a serious attempt by the state to raise the quality and status of technical education, which was reflected not only in the plan for the regional colleges but also in the proposed reform of the examination system to guarantee parity of standards and assessment between the widely diverging sectors.²⁶² Although the Technical Schools Leaving Certificate was not implemented, Hillery did initiate the revision of the Intermediate Certificate examination to provide a common system of assessment for all post-primary schools in the junior cycle.²⁶³ A curriculum committee was established within the department, chaired by Tomás Ó Floinn, which drafted the revised programme for the Intermediate Certificate and drew up the curriculum for the comprehensive schools.²⁶⁴ The Minister's hope that the common examination at Intermediate Certificate level would ensure a similar standard of work in all post-primary

²⁶⁰ NA D/T17405 C/63, *Statement by Dr. P.J. Hillery T.D., Minister for Education, in relation to Post-Primary Education*, p.14, 20 May 1963

²⁶¹ Coolahan, *Irish Education*, p.139

²⁶² NA D/T17405 C/63, *Statement by Dr. P.J. Hillery T.D., Minister for Education, in relation to Post-Primary Education*, p.14, 20 May 1963

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ W26/30, M80/1, *Draft Progress report on secondary education for the Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Department of Education, February 1965, p.1

schools was, however, certainly too optimistic.²⁶⁵ It was always unlikely that the deeply entrenched division between technical and secondary education could be overcome by a common examination or curriculum reform. But the revised state examination at least provided a greater degree of coordination between two systems, which had previously operated on an entirely separate basis. Certainly the revised examination system marked the first real effort by the state to coordinate the activity of the vocational sector and the private secondary schools. Hillery's policy announcement on 20 May 1963 was an impressive reforming initiative, displaying considerable radicalism in many of its proposals. The initiative was indeed the first of the major reforming measures which transformed the Irish educational system in the era of expansion.

The opposition parties did not contest the principle of Hillery's plan. Patrick O'Donnell of Fine Gael raised questions about the implementation of the comprehensive schools scheme while taking a broadly supportive line. He questioned Hillery especially on a matter of local concern in his constituency – the timing of the establishment of the comprehensive school in Glenties, Co. Donegal.²⁶⁶ Seán Treacy condemned only the delay in implementing the proposals.²⁶⁷ Even the most prominent left-wing critics of the Government's approach to educational expansion, Browne and McQuillan, sought to clarify Hillery's intentions rather than denouncing the proposal. The two left-wing Deputies sought on 29 May 1963 to secure information about the implementation of the plan and to place pressure on Hillery to concede free education for the new schools.²⁶⁸ Hillery indicated that detailed surveys of facilities were being undertaken in the relevant areas to determine the scale of the financial provision, which would not be known until the surveys were completed. He also declined to give any commitment to free education.²⁶⁹ The exchanges reflected a constructive approach even by the strongest opponents of the government's policy and underlined also that Hillery's planning still remained tentative about important details of the proposal. But while the questioning of the opposition Deputies revealed frustration about the lack of specific detail in the Minister's replies, the comprehensive schools plan itself was not seriously challenged. Hillery certainly adopted a cautious and low-key approach in reporting to the Dáil about

²⁶⁵ NA D/T17405 C/63, *Statement by Dr. P.J. Hillery T.D., Minister for Education, in relation to Post-Primary Education*, p.14, 20 May 1963

²⁶⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol.213, col. 919-920, 16 December 1964

²⁶⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.210, col. 287-288, 27 May 1964

²⁶⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.203, col.381-384, 29 May 1963

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the plan. He indicated on 29 May 1963 that he would not publish a White Paper on the proposal; he had already made the nature of his proposals clear and much of the detail would have to await the completion of the surveys commissioned by the Department of Education.²⁷⁰ While much of the detail concerning the comprehensive schools proposal was not fully formulated in 1963, Hillery firmly defended his gradualist approach. He told the Dáil on 11 June 1963 that it was vital 'to make facilities available first. This could be obstructed because of seeking to establish some principle'.²⁷¹ He was therefore determined to deliver expanded educational services and facilities without making any commitment on the principle of free education; the question of fees for comprehensive schools students would be dealt with on an individual basis. He reiterated his view that educational development should not be 'upset because of some supposed principle or ideal.'²⁷² The comprehensive schools initiative was promoted by Hillery as an integral part of the government's gradualist policy of educational expansion.

The proposals unveiled by Hillery were generally welcomed by the media and to a lesser extent by various educational interests. *The Irish Press* gave a highly favourable response to the announcement, describing the plan on 22 May 1963 as 'revolutionary' and 'a welcome move to streamline the system and bring into line with modern needs.'²⁷³ Such a response was perhaps not surprising, in the context of the newspaper's long-standing connections with Fianna Fáil. But *The Irish Times* was almost equally effusive: an editorial on 21 May 1963 welcomed Hillery's plan and praised the comprehensive model adopted by the Minister.²⁷⁴ The initiative received a less positive response from the teaching unions, as the union representatives were angered by the lack of any consultation by the Minister before the policy announcement. The INTO joined with the associations representing secondary and vocational teachers, the ASTI and the VTA, to issue a joint statement on 25 May protesting at the lack of ministerial consultation.²⁷⁵ But the teaching unions broadly welcomed many of the specific proposals announced by Hillery. The INTO Treasurer, Senator Seán Brosnahan, welcomed the Minister's

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.203, col.683-684, 11 June 1963

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *The Irish Press*, 'Dr. Hillery Plan is Hailed', 22 May 1963, 'New Deal in Education', *The Irish Press*, 22 May 1963

²⁷⁴ *The Irish Times*, Editorial, 21 May 1963

²⁷⁵ *The Irish Times*, 'Teachers' Organisation Not Consulted on New Plans', 21 May 1963, I. Bonel-Elliott, *La Politique de l'enseignement du second degre in république d'Irlande 1963-93*, p.311, Ph.D thesis (Sorbonne, 1994)

rejection of the 11-plus method of selection, while calling for the early raising of the school leaving age.²⁷⁶ Charles McCarthy welcomed the extension of the vocational school courses and the announcement of the regional technological colleges, although he also expressed great disappointment at the Minister's failure to consult vocational teachers.²⁷⁷ There was little public reaction, however, from the church authorities, especially the Catholic Hierarchy, which made no immediate response to the initiative.

The implications of Hillery's proposals for the churches were not clear at the outset. Hillery did not define the desired management structure during his press conference on 20 May, as agreement had not been reached with the Catholic Hierarchy at that stage.²⁷⁸ While the pilot scheme consisted entirely of Catholic schools, the Minister indicated that the Department would welcome a future proposal for a Protestant comprehensive school by the appropriate educational authorities.²⁷⁹ Hillery's cautious rhetoric on the management structure reflected the sensitive nature of church-state relations on education. Hillery informally consulted the Hierarchy on the proposal at an early stage, discussing the idea with Dr. William Conway, Archbishop of Armagh, without reaching agreement.²⁸⁰ The initial reaction of the Hierarchy to the proposal was hostile. The Bishops agreed to oppose any attempt to establish state secondary schools at their general meeting on 1 October 1962.²⁸¹ The Bishop of Elphin, Dr. Vincent Hanly, who called personally to the department on 12 December 1962 to seek information about the initiative, was told by Seán MacGearailt and Peadar MacEoin, the Assistant Secretaries of the department, that the scheme would in due course apply to the entire country.²⁸² This information heightened the fears of several Bishops, including Hanly himself and McQuaid. McQuaid told Hanly on 5 January 1963 that the proposed scheme was gravely objectionable, as the department was proposing to establish state secondary schools, which would be non-denominational and co-educational.²⁸³ The Standing Committee of the Hierarchy on 8 January 1963 instructed Hanly and Fergus to ensure

²⁷⁶ *The Irish Press*, 'Dr. Hillery Plan is Hailed', 22 May 1963

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

²⁷⁹ *The Irish Press*, 'Dr. Hillery Plan is Hailed', 22 May 1963, 'New Deal in Education', *The Irish Press*, 22 May 1963

²⁸⁰ Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

²⁸¹ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes, General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, p.1, 1 October 1962

²⁸² DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes, General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, Dr. V. Hanly to McQuaid, 31 December 1962

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, McQuaid to Hanly, 5 January 1963

that no scheme was published before the Bishops had the opportunity to approve the proposal.²⁸⁴

The Secretary of the department attempted unsuccessfully to reassure the Bishops, briefing Hanly and Fergus in February 1963, at the Bishop of Achonry's house in Ballaghadereen, on the key elements of the Minister's policy announcement. Ó Raifeartaigh assured the two Bishops that the new schools would be vested in trustees appointed by the local Bishop. He also informed them that Hillery's public announcement on the scheme would not be definitive, as no final scheme would be published until it was agreed with the Bishops.²⁸⁵ While the Bishops did not object to a general statement by the Minister on post-primary education, they were concerned that no detailed announcement should be made in the short-term and expressed particular opposition to the proposal allowing vocational school students to undertake the Intermediate Certificate course.²⁸⁶ The Hierarchy's representatives were seriously alarmed by the specific content of the initiative. Hillery later accurately commented that 'The Hierarchy were totally against it'²⁸⁷ Hanly warned Fergus and McQuaid that 'Since our meeting with Dr. Ó Raifeartaigh on Friday I cannot help feeling that we are on the edge of an educational crisis.'²⁸⁸ He believed that the comprehensive schools plan would cause the conversion of vocational schools into state secondary schools, which would compete successfully with the voluntary secondary schools.²⁸⁹ McQuaid then took up the Bishops' concerns about the plan with the Secretary of the department. Ó Raifeartaigh gave assurances to the Archbishop that the comprehensive schools would be clearly denominational and under the management of the parish clergy. Following his discussions with the Secretary, McQuaid assured Fergus on 2 March 1963 that the church's voluntary secondary schools had nothing to fear from the department's initiative. He commented that parents would continue to see 'a certain social distinction' between the secondary schools and either comprehensive or vocational schools.²⁹⁰ McQuaid told Fergus that 'We cannot change the heart of man,' asserting that the social prestige of the secondary schools would maintain their attraction to parents even if the

²⁸⁴ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes, Standing Committee of the Irish Hierarchy, p.1, 8 January 1963

²⁸⁵ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Fergus to McQuaid, 20 February 1963

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

²⁸⁸ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Hanly to Fergus, 18 February 1963

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, McQuaid to Fergus, p.1, 2 March 1963

comprehensive schools offered virtually free education.²⁹¹ McQuaid was now willing to accept a scheme for comprehensive schools, if the Minister ruled out co-education and gave guarantees concerning the denominational character and management of the schools.²⁹² McQuaid's pragmatic assessment of the limited consequences of the initiative for secondary education contrasted with Hanly's continuing suspicion that Hillery aimed to undermine private denominational education.

Hanly's suspicion was certainly unfounded. Hillery pledged at the press conference on 20 May that the comprehensive schools would be denominational and under the control of boards of management that would safeguard Catholic interests.²⁹³ The Hierarchy as a whole remained suspicious, however, of the state's intervention in post-primary education. The Bishops agreed at their general meeting on 25 June 1963 that the initiative was 'a revolutionary step', as the Minister would be allowed to establish post-primary schools, while vocational education would be transformed.²⁹⁴ The Hierarchy delegated Hanly and Fergus to seek clarification from the department concerning the management of the new schools, the implications for existing secondary schools and co-education. The Bishops were particularly concerned that a clerical Manager, appointed by the local Bishop, would control any new school with the power to appoint staff and determine the curriculum in accordance with Catholic teaching. They also sought assurances that there would be no co-education and that the new schools would not adversely affect existing secondary schools.²⁹⁵ Significantly the Hierarchy did not reject the scheme in principle, but sought to reshape the proposal to meet their concerns.

Hillery, accompanied by Ó Raifeartaigh and MacGearailt, began the negotiations with the Bishops by meeting Hanly and Fergus to discuss the new scheme on 28 June 1963.²⁹⁶ The Hierarchy's representatives firstly requested that the Bishops should be able to view the scheme in its final form before it was publicised: Hillery responded that he did not envisage any further publication of the scheme, but intended to consult Bishops of the relevant dioceses where the schools would be located. The Bishops expressed their

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ NA D/T17405 C/63, *Statement by Dr. P.J. Hillery T.D., Minister for Education, in relation to Post-Primary Education*, p.7, 20 May 1963

²⁹⁴ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes, General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, p.3, 25 June 1963

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, *First Memorandum by the Bishops of Elphin and Achonry, The New Post-Primary Schools Scheme*, 28 June 1963

conviction that the entry of the state into the field of academic post-primary education was a revolutionary measure: they indicated their dissatisfaction also with the proposed reform of vocational schools and the lack of any clarity in Hillery's statement concerning the possibility of co-education. Hillery replied that his press statement 'was not intended as a blue-print but a pointer', acknowledging the ambiguity of his proposal on various aspects of the new scheme.²⁹⁷ But he also emphasized that private education had failed to provide for certain regions of the country and therefore intervention by the state was necessary.²⁹⁸ The meeting was inconclusive and revealed considerable differences between the department and the Hierarchy on the management of the new schools. The department proposed boards of management for the comprehensive schools which included a nominee of the local bishop acting as chair, a nominee of the Minister and the Chief Executive Officer of the local VEC.²⁹⁹ The Hierarchy's representatives asserted that the Bishop's nominee, as chair of the board, should be entitled to appoint the teaching staff and initially considered that Hillery had accepted this arrangement on 28 June.³⁰⁰ But the senior officials firmly rejected this interpretation, which the Bishops incorporated in a memorandum to the Secretary as a record of the meeting. Seán MacGearailt forcefully refuted the Bishops' interpretation of the discussion on the management structure in a letter to Hanly and Fergus on 26 July 1963.³⁰¹ The Assistant Secretary indicated that he wished to clarify the record of the meeting on behalf of the Minister. MacGearailt stated bluntly that all appointments in the comprehensive schools were subject to the approval of the Minister. The Chairman of the board of management would be entitled to refuse to propose any candidate for appointment on religious or moral grounds but the ultimate power of appointment remained with the Minister.³⁰² The two Bishops described MacGearailt's intervention as 'slightly tendentious' in their report to the Hierarchy but conceded that it represented the position of the Minister.³⁰³ The dispute reflected the difficulties which confronted the state in establishing a new form of post-primary education in co-operation with established vested interests.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ NA D/T17405 C/63, *Proposal for Comprehensive Post-Primary Education, Department of Education*, 9 January 1963

³⁰⁰ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers, First Memorandum by the Bishops of Elphin and Achonry, The New Post-Primary Schools Scheme*, 28 June 1963

³⁰¹ *Second Memorandum by the Bishops of Elphin and Achonry, The New Post-Primary Schools Scheme*, 26 July 1963

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

The lack of progress in the negotiations was underlined when the Hierarchy decided to request further clarification from the department on most aspects of the scheme. The Hierarchy established an ad hoc committee including Dr. Henry Murphy, Bishop of Limerick and Dr. John Ahern, Bishop of Cloyne, as well as Hanly and Fergus, to develop their definitive response to the scheme on 3 October 1963.³⁰⁴ A report from this group was considered by the Hierarchy at a special meeting on 27 October in Rome, where the Bishops were attending the Second Vatican Council. Fergus communicated the continuing reservations of the Hierarchy to the Minister on 29 October, warning Hillery initially that, due to a principle of Canon Law, individual Bishops were precluded from accepting the proposal until the Irish Bishops had made a collective decision.³⁰⁵ The secretary to the Hierarchy sought clarification on a range of issues related to the new scheme, including the functions of the board of management and the provision for the teaching of religion in the new schools: he also requested definite assurances that the department was not proposing co-educational schools.³⁰⁶ Fergus reiterated the Hierarchy's fear that the reform of the vocational system would place private secondary schools at a financial disadvantage, as they would be obliged to compete with state-funded vocational schools, which would now offer a similar type of education. The Hierarchy therefore strongly urged the Minister to provide substantial financial assistance to secondary schools to cover their capital costs.³⁰⁷ The Bishops argued too that as the character of the vocational schools would be transformed by the new initiative, the provision for the teaching of religion in secondary schools should be extended to the vocational system.³⁰⁸ The Hierarchy took an uncompromising position in defending denominational education and the voluntary secondary schools, while they were also determined to prevent co-education in the new comprehensive schools.

Hillery replied in a conciliatory fashion to the Hierarchy's letter. He clarified that the board of management would operate in a similar way to the national school managers: appointments would be made by the board of management subject to the approval of the Minister.³⁰⁹ He promised the Hierarchy that he would gladly facilitate an arrangement which provided training in the teaching of religion to all teachers and

³⁰⁴ Minutes, General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, pp.2-3, 3 October 1963

³⁰⁵ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Fergus to Hillery, p.1, 29 October 1963

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2

³⁰⁹ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Hillery to Fergus, November 1963, p.1

endorsed the Bishops' view of the need for systematic religious instruction in the vocational schools. Hillery also indicated that single-sex comprehensive schools were envisaged, although he carefully did not rule out mixed schools in areas with a widely dispersed population. He made no commitment to capital grants for secondary education, but pledged that the government was considering an increase in the existing grants to the secondary schools.³¹⁰ While the Minister's assurances did not fully overcome their reservations about the scheme, the Bishops were now more concerned to secure specific concessions than to dispute the principle of the scheme. Hillery received another episcopal deputation on 5 December 1963, led by William Conway, the new Archbishop of Armagh, who was accompanied by Hanly and Fergus.³¹¹ The Bishops were most concerned on this occasion to obtain assurances concerning financial aid to existing secondary schools, the teaching of religion in post-primary education and arrangements for the Deeds of Trust for comprehensive schools.³¹² Hillery, who was supported by Ó Raifeartaigh and MacGearailt, sought to accommodate fully the concerns of the Bishops. He reiterated that Christian Doctrine would be taught as part of the syllabus in all post-primary schools. The Minister was also flexible on the terms for the Deed of Trust, readily accepting input from the Bishops: indeed Hillery was willing to allow the local Bishop to nominate all three Trustees for the comprehensive schools.³¹³ The Minister and the officials were also sympathetic to the case for increased state aid to secondary schools, although they declined to give any commitment to the introduction of direct capital grants to such schools. But Hillery assured the episcopal delegation on a confidential basis that he hoped to implement an alternative plan of annual grants, which would provide the financial support required by the secondary schools.³¹⁴ It was not surprising that the Bishops were asked to keep this information in confidence, as no new approach for grants to secondary schools had yet been formulated by the department. The Bishops were nevertheless satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations. The Standing Committee of the Hierarchy agreed on 7 January 1964 that, in view of the assurances given by the Minister and his officials, the relevant Bishops should be authorised to initiate discussions with the department for the establishment of comprehensive

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2

³¹¹ *McQuaid Papers, Memorandum 'The Hillery Scheme', 5 December 1963*

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

schools.³¹⁵ Hillery had secured the Hierarchy's agreement, in general terms, to the comprehensive schools scheme. While further disputes subsequently arose between the department and the Bishops, especially concerning co-education, the Hierarchy reluctantly accepted the principle of comprehensive education. It was evident too that the Hierarchy had implicitly accepted the direct intervention of the state to provide post-primary education, which had been denounced as revolutionary in June 1963.

Hillery's negotiations with the Hierarchy on the comprehensive schools plan helped to create a greater urgency in the department's efforts to facilitate the expansion of secondary education. The private secondary school system was expanding rapidly in the early 1960s. The total number of pupils enrolled in secondary schools increased from 80,400 in 1961-62 to 92,989 in 1964-65: the secondary school population was expanding by over 3,500 annually in this period.³¹⁶ The rapid expansion of secondary education fuelled an increasing demand for state assistance by the secondary school managers, who were obliged to finance extensive building programmes. The Catholic Bishops left Hillery in no doubt that they saw an urgent need for the extension of state assistance to meet the building costs of secondary schools. Fergus informed the Minister on 29 October 1963 that 'in the context of the present proposed re-organisation of post-primary education, the Bishops attach the utmost importance to this matter.'³¹⁷ Moreover Hillery was concerned by persistent criticisms of post-primary education recently made by Fine Gael. Declan Costello called for 'urgent and immediate reform' of the educational system in the Dáil on 12 December 1963, drawing attention to the lack of state building grants for secondary schools.³¹⁸ Hillery therefore recommended to the Taoiseach on 4 February 1964 that a scheme of building grants should be established to provide state assistance in financing the secondary school building programme.³¹⁹ Hillery enclosed for Lemass' attention a highly critical article entitled 'Eire's educational plight', which appeared in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 17 January 1964. The article made a scathing analysis of education in the Republic, which was described as antiquated, underfunded and inefficient: the absence of state aid in building or maintaining secondary schools was one of the many flaws identified in the Republic's educational system.³²⁰ Hillery pointedly

³¹⁵ *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes, Standing Committee of the Irish Hierarchy, p.1, 7 January 1964

³¹⁶ *Tuarascáil, An Roinn Oideachais*, 1961-62, p.87 (Dublin, 1964)

³¹⁷ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Fergus to Hillery, p.2, 29 October 1963

³¹⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.206, col.1186, 12 December 1963

³¹⁹ NA D/T S.17592/95, Hillery to Lemass, p.1, 4 February 1964

³²⁰ NA D/T S.17592/95, *Belfast Telegraph*, 'Eire's educational plight', 17 January 1964

commented to Lemass: 'The tragedy about this article is that we could not attempt to refute it, because we lag so far behind the Six Counties in provision for education.'³²¹ The Minister also summarised to Lemass the case for building grants made by the deputation of Bishops on 5 December 1963, noting their view that they were 'at the end of their tether' in raising capital for the secondary school building programmes.³²² The Bishops also drew attention to the more favourable treatment accorded to voluntary secondary schools in Northern Ireland where 65% of the capital costs were covered by the state.³²³ The proposed introduction of capital grants was designed to satisfy the Hierarchy, whose co-operation was required by the Minister in establishing the comprehensive schools. The new measure was also desirable to discredit Fine Gael's criticism of the government's educational policy. Hillery warned the Taoiseach that the government would be damaged if the opposition appeared to take the initiative on educational matters. He advised that the government could no longer avoid introducing building grants and it would be political folly to delay the measure.³²⁴ Hillery urged that the new initiative should be taken immediately and requested Lemass to arrange an urgent meeting with the Minister for Finance to discuss the proposal.

Lemass fully supported Hillery's initiative. The Taoiseach indicated to Jim Ryan on 5 February 1964 that Hillery had outlined the necessity for a system of grants for the building and reconstruction of secondary schools.³²⁵ Lemass arranged a meeting to discuss the issue on 10 February 1964, which was attended by Hillery, Ryan and the Taoiseach himself. The principle of the scheme was agreed by the Taoiseach and the two Ministers at this meeting.³²⁶ Lemass was determined to arrange for the announcement of the new initiative as quickly as possible, although the details of the scheme had not yet been formulated. Lemass' urgency was explained largely by the imminence of two by-elections, to be held on 19 February in Kildare and Cork, which would determine the government's ability to retain power without calling a general election.³²⁷ It was not surprising that Lemass announced the new initiative on 13 February 1964, only nine days after it had first been proposed by Hillery. The Taoiseach made the announcement that

³²¹ NA D/T S.17592/95, Hillery to Lemass, p.1, 4 February 1964

³²² *Ibid.*, DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers, Memorandum, The Hillery Scheme*, 5 December 1963

³²³ NA D/T S.17592/95, Hillery to Lemass, p.1, 4 February 1964

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2

³²⁵ NA D/T S.17592/95, Lemass to Dr. J. Ryan, Minister for Finance, 5 February 1964

³²⁶ NA D/T S.17592/95, *Internal memorandum, Department of the Taoiseach*, 10 February 1964

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.145

the government would initiate 'a new departure' for secondary education in the course of his response to a lecture given by Dr. John Vaizey, lecturer in Economics at Oxford, on 'The Economics of Education' at St. Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra.³²⁸ Lemass indicated that Hillery would soon introduce a scheme of direct building grants to secondary schools, which would enable them to play their part in the government's plans for the expansion of post-primary education.³²⁹ The Taoiseach made only a brief announcement concerning the new scheme and its timing was clearly dictated by the forthcoming by-elections. The announcement was, however, welcomed by William Conway, who congratulated Lemass and Hillery on the scheme, which would help to relieve the financial burdens shouldered by clerical schools and religious congregations.³³⁰ The initiative was a significant measure by the government to facilitate the expansion of secondary education. The *Irish Independent* correctly commented upon 'a quite historic announcement' by the Taoiseach, which was also 'almost historic in its brevity.'³³¹ Lemass' announcement on 13 February 1964 certainly marked a significant policy departure from the traditional approach followed by the Irish state, which had left capital provision for secondary education entirely to private interests.

The Department of Education publicised the details of the new scheme for capital grants to the secondary schools in April 1964.³³² The scheme, which came into effect from May 1964, provided for grants to the secondary school authorities which would cover up to 60% of the costs incurred in building or extending eligible secondary schools.³³³ The scheme, which usually applied only to secondary schools providing for at least 150 pupils, operated on the basis that the authorities raised the necessary capital for the building programmes while the state financed up to 60% of the annual debt service charges incurred by the schools.³³⁴ The secondary school authorities were deeply dissatisfied with the conditions imposed on the scheme, especially the imposition of a reduction amounting to 5% of the building grant, in the capitation grant for all schools

³²⁸ NA D/T S.12891E/95, *Speech by Seán Lemass TD, Taoiseach, following address by John Vaizey on 'The Economics of Education', St. Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra, p.2, 13 February 1964*

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ NA D/T S.17592/95, W. Conway, Archbishop of Armagh, to Lemass, 17 February 1964

³³¹ NA D/T S.17592/95, *The Irish Independent*, 'Grant for Schools', 14 February 1964

³³² Circular M15/64, Department of Education, April 1964

³³³ *Dáil Debates*, vol.209, col.1569, 14 May 1964

³³⁴ Circular M15/64, Department of Education, April 1964, D/FIN 2001/3/1073, D2/14/65, *First Progress report on the Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Department of Education, p.2, April 1965

receiving the capital grant.³³⁵ But the building grants were rapidly taken up by the secondary school managers, as 65 schools applied for assistance under the scheme by the end of 1964.³³⁶ Hillery also announced in the Dáil on 20 February 1964 that the capitation grant to secondary schools would be increased by 20% with effect from the current school year.³³⁷ The government acted in early 1964 to retain the political initiative on education, which was the object of increasing policy competition involving all political parties. But although the measure was certainly dictated by political expediency, the scheme of building grants introduced direct state aid in the provision of secondary schools for the first time.

Lemass' speech on 13 February 1964 drew public attention primarily due to the announcement of the forthcoming scheme of building grants. But the implications for educational policy of the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* provided the major theme of the Taoiseach's address. The *Second Programme (Part I)*, which was published by the government in August 1963, indicated that 'special attention' would be given to education, training and other forms of human investment.³³⁸ The *Second Programme* identified educational expansion as a key national priority, asserting that better education and training would support and stimulate continued economic expansion. Indeed the government's programme for economic development confidently asserted that 'Even the economic returns from investment in education are likely to be as high in the long-run as those from investment in physical capital.'³³⁹ Lemass' address on 13 February 1964 fully reflected the approach to educational expansion outlined by the *Second Programme*, expressing with great clarity the government's rationale for investment in education. He commented that education was 'both a cause of economic growth and a product of such growth': education enhanced the general earning power of the nation, while increased production would provide the resources for educational advance.³⁴⁰ Lemass echoed the language of the *Second Programme*, reiterating that the development of physical capital without corresponding investment in education would 'a

³³⁵ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.149

³³⁶ D/FIN 2001/3/1073, D2/14/65, *First Progress report on the Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Department of Education, p.2, April 1965

³³⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.207, col.1379, 20 February 1964, W26/30, M80/3, *Progress Report for Quarter ended 30 September 1964*, Department of Education, p.2, 30 October 1964

³³⁸ *The Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part I, laid by the Government before each House of the Oireachtas, August 1963*, p.17 (Dublin, 1963)

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.13

³⁴⁰ NA D/T S.12891E/95, *Speech by Seán Lemass TD, Taoiseach, following address by John Vaizey on 'The Economics of Education', St. Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra*, pp.1-2, 13 February 1964

futile undertaking, perhaps even an impossible one'.³⁴¹ He affirmed that education should be provided as an end in itself because it developed human potential, but educational policy also had far-reaching social and economic implications. The Taoiseach emphasized that the government aimed to formulate a long-term educational policy on the basis of the reports of the *Investment in Education* survey team and of the Commission on Higher Education. Lemass indicated that economic planning made no sense unless it was accompanied with educational planning: the government had therefore decided, in the *Second Programme*, that improvements in social services, including education, 'must go hand in hand with economic progress'.³⁴² He hoped that by the end of the decade education would become 'a growth industry' in Ireland.³⁴³ Lemass' speech illustrated the extent to which economic progress and educational expansion had become inextricably linked in the government's approach to national development. The Taoiseach's address underlined the importance which he attached to an innovative educational policy in creating the conditions for continued economic and social progress.

The government's educational policy was, however, still not fully formulated in some respects. The *Second Programme* indeed acknowledged that official proposals for the further expansion of education were incomplete, pending the completion of the study on long-term educational needs and the report of the Commission on Higher Education.³⁴⁴ The first part of the *Second Programme* looked forward to the extension of the statutory school leaving age to fifteen years by 1970, but it remained a cautious aspiration rather than a commitment. The government merely noted that increased investment in school building and teacher training programmes should allow the raising of the school leaving age before the end of the decade.³⁴⁵ A detailed overview of the state's objectives and initiatives in education was, however, provided by the *Second Programme, Part II*, which was issued by the government in July 1964 to elaborate on the principles outlined by the earlier document. The second part of the programme, which included a chapter on education, emphasized that social and economic considerations reinforced the case for the allocation of 'an increasing share of expanding national

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.2

³⁴² *Ibid.*, p.3, *Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part I*, p.15

³⁴³ NA D/T S.17592/95, *Speech by Seán Lemass TD, Taoiseach, following address by John Vaizey on 'The Economics of Education', St. Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra*, pp.1-2, 13 February 1964

³⁴⁴ *Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part I*, p.14

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

resources to education.³⁴⁶ The government reiterated that expenditure on education was an investment which would deliver increasing returns in terms of economic progress: moreover the expansion of educational facilities helped to 'equalise opportunities' by enabling a greater proportion of the population to secure a higher standard of living.³⁴⁷ The *Second Programme, Part II*, also established several definite and ambitious objectives for the future development of Irish education. The programme set annual targets for national school building, which included the completion of 100 new schools and 50 major enlargement schemes each year. The staffing recommendations of the Council of Education, which envisaged the recruitment of about 2,000 additional teachers in primary schools, were rejected: instead it was proposed to increase the number of trained teachers in national schools by about 1,000 between 1965 and 1970.³⁴⁸ The programme emphasized the importance of educational research. The state made a commitment to support the establishment of an educational research unit, which would undertake research on teaching methods and other educational issues, in St. Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra.³⁴⁹

The government's plans for post-primary education included the comprehensive schools scheme announced by Hillery and a major expansion of secondary school accommodation, to provide for the extension of the school leaving age.³⁵⁰ Significantly, the government indicated that the school leaving age would be raised to fifteen years before the end of the Second Programme, describing the statutory extension as an outcome of economic expansion and 'a pre-condition of further progress'.³⁵¹ The government made a definite commitment to proceed with the extension of the school leaving age, on the basis that it was an essential reform which would promote future economic progress, although the time frame for the decision depended on continuing prosperity. It was anticipated that the state would contribute a substantial proportion of the capital expenditure required for the necessary expansion of secondary school accommodation, through the new scheme of building grants. Considerable capital investment in the vocational school building programme, amounting to approximately £5

³⁴⁶ *The Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part II, laid by the Government before each House of the Oireachtas, July 1964*, p.193 (Dublin, 1964)

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.194-196

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.196

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.200-202

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.198

million between 1964 and 1968, was also envisaged. The government aimed to provide technical education to meet the demands of industry through new second-level technical courses and the proposed regional technical colleges.³⁵² The programme also envisaged appropriate use of the vocational schools by employers to develop a skilled labour force. The concern of the Department of Education about inadequate liaison between employers and the VECs was noted by the government, which urged closer co-operation between employers and vocational education authorities through An Chéard Chomhairle.³⁵³ The *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* clearly established or re-affirmed publicly a variety of ambitious objectives for the expansion of the educational system.

The development of more definite policy objectives in the programme formed part of an ongoing evolution of the state's educational policy. Hillery made a comprehensive policy statement on post-primary education on 18 February 1965 in the course of a Dáil debate on the government's financial strategy.³⁵⁴ The Minister defended his measured approach, warning that educational progress demanded substantial investment over a considerable period of time: 'It is not just a matter of saying, "We will raise the school leaving age". These slogans are meaningless'.³⁵⁵ He affirmed, however, the government's intention to raise the school leaving age to fifteen years by 1970, on the basis of a gradual expansion of the facilities and teaching resources of the educational system. The Minister's comments reflected the priorities set out by the *Second Programme*, which emphasized that the raising of the school leaving age demanded long-term planning for the provision of the additional school accommodation and teachers by 1970.³⁵⁶ Hillery's approach placed considerable emphasis on the development of vocational education. He envisaged some form of selection process prior to educational specialisation, involving the assessment of the aptitudes of pupils and the establishment of procedures directing students to suitable courses, which might well be vocational rather than secondary courses.³⁵⁷ While this proposal was not pursued by his successors, it underlined Hillery's consistent concern to ensure a full development of the potential of vocational education. Hillery also dismissed the possibility of free post-primary education, claiming:

³⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.203-205

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.205

³⁵⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.214, col.710-721, 18 February 1965

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ *Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part II*, p.198

³⁵⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.214, col.710-721, 18 February 1965

'Exaggerated slogans such as "Free Education For All" are not possible.'³⁵⁸ He clearly expressed his conviction that free education was impractical, while arguing that it was essential to achieve greater educational opportunity by providing some post-primary education to all children.³⁵⁹ Hillery's statement that the government's central priority was the provision of some level of post-primary education for all certainly implied a large-scale expansion of post-primary education. While Hillery defended his pragmatic approach, it was evident that the government was pursuing definite and increasingly ambitious policy objectives for the expansion of post-primary education by 1965.

Higher Education

The government's policy in higher education, however, remained incomplete and ill defined in this period. The *Second Programme* noted that all detailed policy decisions on higher education would have to await the report of the Commission on Higher Education.³⁶⁰ But the government provided substantial funding to deal with the severe accommodation problems faced by the universities. The number of full-time students in Irish universities increased from 7,601 in 1952-53 to 13,017 in 1962-63, causing serious overcrowding in most Colleges, but especially in UCD.³⁶¹ The transfer of UCD to the Belfield site was regarded by the Department of Education as the most urgent priority in university education in the 1960s. The department's *Forecast* proclaimed that: 'The university project of transcending importance in relation to economic development in the 1963-68 period will be the provision of the new Science Block in University College Dublin.'³⁶² The contract for the construction of the new Science building at Belfield was signed by the department on 18 April 1962 at a cost to the state of £1,940,195: it was completed and formally opened in September 1964.³⁶³ The Department of Education gave a high priority to the provision of facilities for Science teaching and research in higher education. The *Forecast* indicated in January 1962 that a new Science building was required in University College, Cork, while the officials also proposed to finance a

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

³⁶⁰ *Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part II*, p.198

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, *Forecast of Developments*, Department of Education, p.7, 6 January 1962

³⁶³ W26/30, M80/1, C.O.704 (3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 30th June 1962*, Department of Education, p.2, 13 July 1962, W26/30, M80/1, C.O.704 (3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 30th September 1964*, Department of Education, p.3, 30 October 1964

new Chemistry building for University College, Galway.³⁶⁴ Hillery sought approval from the government in May 1962 for the recommendations made by the Commission on the accommodation needs of the NUI, which proposed substantial state investment in the two colleges. The Cabinet approved in principle the recommendations concerning UCC and UCG, on 22 May 1962, subject to an examination of the development plans by the Commissioners of Public Works.³⁶⁵ A more specific proposal for the construction of a new Science building in UCC, at an estimated cost of £900,000, was put by Hillery to the Cabinet on 25 February 1964.³⁶⁶ The Cabinet approved the proposal, which provided accommodation for the departments of Chemistry, Physics and Mathematical Sciences as well as a new Science library for the college.³⁶⁷ The Minister was particularly concerned to provide adequately for scientific research and training in higher education. The department considered that the provision of the new accommodation in the colleges of the NUI, along with the existing Science facilities in Trinity College, would meet the most pressing needs for high-level Science research and teaching for several years.³⁶⁸

The state's capital investment in higher education was not wholly restricted to the provision of enhanced Science facilities. The government also agreed on 22 March 1963 to provide funding for an Arts and Administration block for UCD at Belfield, in accordance with the commitment made by the state in 1960 to finance the transfer of the college to the new site.³⁶⁹ The department also undertook to provide half of the necessary funding for the extension of the Library in Trinity College Dublin, up to a total cost of £736,000.³⁷⁰ The government undertook large-scale capital investment in higher education in this period, which was designed to meet the immediate accommodation needs of the universities. The state's capital funding of higher education was primarily but not exclusively devoted to the provision of adequate facilities for scientific education.

This state intervention to facilitate the increasingly rapid expansion of university education occurred despite the absence of any definite long-term policy for the development of higher education. The department declined to give any firm forecast of the long-term development of university education in January 1962 when its officials

³⁶⁴ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, *Forecast of Developments*, Department of Education, p.7, 6 January 1962

³⁶⁵ CAB 2/22, G.C. 10/37, Cabinet Minutes, p.7, 22 May 1962

³⁶⁶ CAB 2/22, G.C. 10/143, Cabinet Minutes, pp.2-3, 25 February 1964

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, W26/30, M80/1, C.O.704(3), *Progress Report for Quarter ended 31st March 1964*, Department of Education, p.2, 14 April 1964

³⁶⁸ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, *Forecast of Developments*, Department of Education, p.7, 6 January 1962

³⁶⁹ CAB 2/22, G.C. 10/89, Cabinet Minutes, pp.3-4, 22 March 1964

³⁷⁰ *Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part II*, p.206

were preparing relevant material for the *Second Programme*, on the basis that such policy development formed part of the remit of the Commission on Higher Education.³⁷¹ As the Commission did not complete its study of higher education until 1967, the department's officials simply pressed ahead with the capital development of university education in a pragmatic fashion, paying little attention to long-term policy development. The government operated on the basis that interim measures were being taken to relieve the immediate accommodation problems in the universities, pending the completion of the Commission's report.³⁷² James Dukes, the official who held responsibility for the universities between 1960 and 1963, commented on the frustrations caused by the situation for the department itself and for Seamus Ó Cathail, the secretary to the Commission: 'The Commission didn't help us very much. Poor old Jim Cahill was there, he was meant to produce a report. Every time he picked up a paper, we {the department} were doing something else.'³⁷³ The department's activism in providing the necessary resources for the expansion of higher education was driven by the urgency of the universities' accommodation needs and their inability to finance the necessary development on their own. James Dukes recalled: 'I said to Jim {Cahill}, we have to do it, otherwise it won't be done'.³⁷⁴ The department's practical support for the university building programmes exerted a much more profound influence on the development of higher education in the 1960s than the prolonged deliberations of the Commission. The extensive capital investment by the state, provided at the instigation of the Department of Education, provided the financial basis for the expansion of university education. The state provided the resources to sustain the expanding system of university education between 1961 and 1965, while the deliberations of the Commission remained marginal to the ongoing development of higher education.

The Irish Language

The department under Hillery did not initiate any further policy changes in its approach to the teaching of Irish after 1961, but the Minister took care to avoid any new commitments to the revival of Irish through the schools, which were sought by the Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language. The final report of the

³⁷¹ NA D/T S.12891D/1/62, *Forecast of Developments*, Department of Education, p.7, 6 January 1962

³⁷² *Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part II*, p.206

³⁷³ Interview with James Dukes, 28 April 2003

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Commission, which was published in January 1964, devoted considerable attention to education, recommending that the state should maintain and extend its initiatives for the revival of Irish within the educational system.³⁷⁵ The government set out its decisions on the recommendations of the Commission in the *White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish Language*, which was published in January 1965. The *White Paper* affirmed that 'the national aim is to restore the Irish language as a general medium of communication'.³⁷⁶ While the policy document acknowledged that all sections of the community had to play their part in the realisation of this aim, the government also emphasized that the 'special position' of Irish in the schools should be maintained and indeed reinforced.³⁷⁷ The Department of Education, which drafted the section of the *White Paper* dealing with education, generally endorsed the Commission's approach, but argued that many of its specific recommendations concerning the teaching of Irish were already being implemented.³⁷⁸ Moreover Hillery rejected several important recommendations made by the Commission. The Minister agreed that Irish should continue to be used as a medium of instruction in primary schools: but he rejected the Commission's proposal for the publication of a general plan of action to secure the teaching of some subjects through Irish in all primary schools. Hillery considered that further investigation of the effects of teaching through a language other than the home language of the child was required before any attempt was made to extend the use of Irish as a teaching medium.³⁷⁹ Hillery and the senior officials were already sceptical of the benefits of the use of Irish as a teaching medium even before the Commission's report was published. The officials were well aware that a study conducted by Dr. John Macnamara, a lecturer in St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, in March 1961, had identified negative educational consequences arising directly from the policy of language revival in the schools.³⁸⁰ Macnamara's study, which was published in 1966, found that the general policy of giving precedence to Irish in primary schools had a significant negative impact on attainment in English among native-speakers of English in Ireland,

³⁷⁵ *Final Report of the Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language*, pp.416-432 (Dublin, 1964)

³⁷⁶ *White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish Language, laid by the Government before each House of the Oireachtas, January 1965*, p.4 (Dublin, 1965)

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.98

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.100-108

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.106, *Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, Final Report*, p.417

³⁸⁰ J. Macnamara, *Bilingualism and primary education: A study of the Irish experience*, p.134 (Edinburgh, 1966), O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.89

namely the vast majority of national school children.³⁸¹ While the officials certainly did not accept many of Macnamara's conclusions, they had no intention of endorsing the further extension of a policy, which already appeared distinctly problematic in terms of its impact on other subjects.

The Minister also refused to accept the Commission's recommendation for an extension of the two-year training period for national teachers to provide courses in modern methods of language teaching.³⁸² The department favoured the extension of the training course, but considered that it would have to be extended by one year anyway to accommodate the existing workload imposed on the students.³⁸³ The *White Paper* rejected too the proposal that all Irish candidates should be obliged to pass a new formal examination in written and oral Irish, rather than an oral test, as a condition for registration as a secondary teacher.³⁸⁴ The Commission exerted relatively little influence on the policy pursued by the department under Hillery, who promoted a dilution of the traditional policy rather than an intensification of efforts to revive the language. O'Connor recalled that the recommendations endorsed by the Minister were essentially exhortations by the Commission, while 'those with any real bite were not accepted'.³⁸⁵ The evolution of the Irish language policy was certainly influenced by the increasing public criticism of the traditional approach, which helped to shape the government's cautious defence of the policy for language revival in this period. Fine Gael made the radical revision of the traditional policy an important plank of its programme in successive general elections in 1961 and 1965, when the party pledged to end 'compulsory Irish' in the schools if elected to office.³⁸⁶ Moreover other opponents of the compulsory elements of the state's policy towards the teaching of Irish became more organised and vocal by the middle of the decade: the Language Freedom Movement was established in the autumn of 1965, as a pressure group seeking the abolition of compulsory instruction in Irish.³⁸⁷ There was therefore a sound political rationale for the Minister's position that he was taking all reasonable measures that could be expected to revive the Irish language: O'Connor acknowledged that 'There were many who said that

³⁸¹ Macnamara, *Bilingualism and primary education*, pp.135-138

³⁸² *White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish Language*, p.100

³⁸³ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.89

³⁸⁴ *White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish Language*, p.118, *Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, Final Report*, pp.422-423

³⁸⁵ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.89

³⁸⁶ Horgan, *Seán Lemass*, pp.304-309

³⁸⁷ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.106

he was doing much more than he ought.³⁸⁸ But the Minister's sceptical response to the initiatives proposed by the Commission was not simply dictated by external political pressure. Hillery did not accept that the language could be revived solely through the schools and he rejected any recommendations, which appeared to follow this approach.³⁸⁹ Hillery's reaction to the report of the Commission reflected not simply an understandable political caution, but a realistic appraisal that the traditional policy of reviving the Irish language through the schools was flawed and unworkable.

Conclusion

The Department of Education under Hillery played an influential and pro-active role in promoting a gradual expansion of the educational system between 1961 and 1965. The measured approach to expansion pursued by Lemass and Hillery was initially cautious, but it evolved during Hillery's second term to include important educational initiatives. The appointment of the survey team under the auspices of the Department of Education and the OECD in 1962 underlined the government's commitment to state intervention in the educational sector on a planned and coherent basis. Lemass and Hillery rapidly adopted the policy ideas of the OECD concerning the value of education as an investment in human resources. The department intervened effectively to manage and extend the process of expansion in primary education. Hillery made an invaluable contribution to the development of special education: his department's initiatives, which accorded official recognition to special programmes for children with various disabilities for the first time, marked the beginning of a new era in special education. The Minister also gave a high priority to the expansion of vocational education, securing the passage of the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act, 1962, in the face of significant opposition within the government. The department under Hillery introduced practical reforms designed to alleviate traditional limitations in the secondary school curriculum, especially by promoting the teaching of Science and modern languages. The announcement of the comprehensive schools pilot project and the regional technological colleges on 20 May 1963 initiated the first of the reforming measures, which transformed the Irish educational system. Hillery's policy announcement was a landmark in an increasingly rapid process of educational expansion and reflected a new commitment by the Irish state

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.89

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.89

to the provision of broad-based post-primary education. Hillery took a conciliatory approach in negotiations with the Catholic Hierarchy, facilitating the reluctant acceptance by the Hierarchy of the state's initiative. The *Second Programme* identified educational progress as a key national priority, which was essential to future economic development. While long-term policy decisions on third-level education were deferred pending the report of the Commission on Higher Education, large-scale capital investment by the state underpinned the expansion of university education. Although the state's approach remained pragmatic in avoiding radical policy initiatives such as the introduction of free post-primary education, the government was pursuing definite and ambitious educational objectives by the end of Hillery's term.

The opposition parties also exerted some influence on the pace and scope of educational reform. The launch of the Labour Party's policy document, *Challenge and Change in Education*, intensified the political pressure on the government and encouraged the rapid announcement of Hillery's initiative on comprehensive schools. Likewise Fine Gael's criticism of state support for secondary education influenced Lemass' decision to sanction building grants for secondary schools. The development of more intense political competition on education policy between the government and opposition certainly tended to accelerate the pace of educational reform. But the activism shown by the state at all levels of the educational system is best explained in the context of Lemass' interest in education. The successful launch of the comprehensive schools initiative owed much to Lemass' skilful promotion of the plan within the government, while he also played a crucial part in the initiation of capital grants to the secondary schools. The Department of Education under Hillery, with the essential support of the Taoiseach, pursued effectively a gradualist policy of reform, which began the transformation of the Irish educational system. Hillery's advocacy of educational planning, improved coordination between the different branches of the system and equality of opportunity all implied further government action to extend educational provision. Hillery's term of office brought the development of sustained and pro-active intervention by the state in the educational system as a whole, as well as the initiation of policy themes which would be pursued by his immediate successors. Hillery did not simply prepare the way for the more dramatic and far-reaching initiatives promoted by his successors: his pro-active reforming approach made a substantial contribution to the transformation of the state's educational policy.

Chapter 4

Educational planning and the impact of *Investment in Education: 1965-66*

‘There were no real ideas until the OECD project’: this was Dr. Hillery’s verdict on the policy implications of the study conducted by the Irish survey team under the auspices of the OECD and the Department of Education.¹ While the department certainly adopted new policy ideas before the completion of the project, the pilot study profoundly influenced the state’s policy for educational reform and expansion in the second half of the decade. The report of the survey team, appropriately entitled *Investment in Education*, contributed greatly to the transformation of the Irish educational system. The completion of the pilot study coincided with George Colley’s appointment as Minister for Education. Colley’s approach to educational expansion was greatly influenced by *Investment* and he acted to introduce wide-ranging reforms based on the conclusions of the report. The initiation by Colley of the amalgamation of small national schools was a radical reform with profound long-term implications for primary education. The Minister also promoted a new approach for the expansion of post-primary education, based on co-operation and the pooling of resources between secondary and vocational schools. Colley, who enjoyed the firm support of the Taoiseach, significantly revised the government’s educational policy, giving greater urgency and a firm direction to the state’s efforts to expand and reform the educational system. Colley also firmly established long-term educational planning as an integral part of the government’s policy of expansion.

George Colley had displayed considerable interest in education long before his elevation to ministerial office. He was a regular contributor to Dáil debates on education as a backbench TD.² Moreover Colley enjoyed friendly connections with senior officials of the Department of Education, notably Seán O’Connor, before his appointment as a Minister.³ Following the General Election in April 1965, Colley, who had previously served as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Lands, was given his first Cabinet portfolio as Minister for Education on 21 April 1965. The Taoiseach’s decision to appoint another young and ambitious politician to the education portfolio underlined the increasing political status of the Department of Education, which had been regarded as a relatively junior department at least until the late 1950s.⁴ Education had become an

¹ Interview with Dr. Patrick Hillery, 25 February 2002

² O’Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.94

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ S. Ó Buachalla, ‘*Investment In Education: Context, Content and Impact*’, *Administration*, vol.44. No.3 (Autumn 1996), 10-20

important first stage in the ministerial careers of younger Fianna Fáil politicians under the leadership of Lemass. Colley's two predecessors were also promoted by the Taoiseach in April 1965: Jack Lynch became Minister for Finance, while Patrick Hillery was appointed as Minister for Industry and Commerce.⁵ Moreover Lemass was determined to give a high priority to educational expansion. The central importance attached by the Taoiseach to educational expansion as a key element of national development was underlined by his comments to the monthly periodical *Open* on 29 January 1965: 'The day of the unskilled worker, at any social level, is passing and with the development of modern science and technology, the future belongs to those who have trained themselves to meet its specific requirements in knowledge and skill.'⁶ Lemass re-affirmed his view that educational expansion was an indispensable element in the long-term economic development of the nation. Lemass' commitment to the expansion of the educational system provided a favourable political context for the reforms initiated by Colley.

The new Minister introduced the first Estimates of his term to the Dáil on 16 June 1965. The overall allocation for education announced by Colley for 1965-66 amounted to over £30 million, which was an increase in a single year of over 6%.⁷ Colley's term saw a further substantial increase in educational expenditure, which had been growing rapidly throughout Hillery's second term: current spending on primary education alone in 1965-66 exceeded the total current expenditure by the Exchequer on education in 1961-62, while capital expenditure roughly trebled in the same period (Table 4).⁸ The rapid increase in state expenditure on education underlined the considerable cost of the incremental reforms already undertaken by the government. The additional expenditure announced by Colley was due in part to the implementation of measures introduced by Hillery, including the expansion of the scholarships' scheme, which was fully implemented by 1965-66. Colley also inherited a range of reforming proposals, which had been initiated by Hillery but not yet implemented, notably the plan for comprehensive schools. The new Minister was committed to the implementation of the plans for comprehensive schools and a common Intermediate Certificate for secondary and vocational schools.⁹ He announced an initial allocation of £70,000 for the building of the first four comprehensive schools, which would be initiated in 1965-66. Colley

⁵ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.94

⁶ NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, Interview by Seán Lemass with *Open*, 29 January 1965

⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.216, col.954, 16 June 1965

⁸ National Economic and Social Council, *Educational Expenditure in Ireland*, p.38 (NESC, 1975); Table 4, p.373

⁹ *Ibid.*, col.958, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.96

confirmed that the new courses for the common Intermediate Certificate would be introduced in September 1966.¹⁰ He also re-affirmed the government's intention to proceed with the establishment of eight new Regional Technical Colleges. The department was drawing up plans for new colleges in Athlone, Carlow, Cork and Limerick, while sites were being acquired for the other colleges, to be located in Dundalk, Galway, Sligo and Waterford.¹¹ Colley's opening speech on the Estimates displayed considerable continuity with the policy approach pursued by Hillery and Lemass since 1959.

Colley, however, did not simply recite increased financial allocations or affirm his commitment to existing policies on 16 June. The new Minister also outlined his priorities in a wide-ranging address to the Dáil. He identified the raising of the statutory school leaving age as a key reform to be implemented by the government. It was, however, a reform which involved almost every kind of educational problem, from the provision of adequate accommodation and sufficient teachers to the revision of courses and the assessment of pupils' aptitudes. But despite these difficulties, Colley declared that the reform had to be implemented in the short-term, as intended by the government, to ensure equality of educational opportunity for all Irish children.¹² He emphasized the necessity for the initiation of detailed educational planning immediately, if the objective of raising the school leaving age was to be achieved by the end of the decade: 'By 1970 there will be few European countries in which the school leaving age will be less than fifteen. If we are to achieve that position with the rest, the time to start planning for it is not 1969, but now.'¹³ The raising of the school leaving age entailed a wide range of educational changes. Colley placed great emphasis on the need for close co-operation between the Minister and the private educational interests in achieving necessary reforms. He proposed to invite members of all the organisations involved in education to form a Consultative Council, which would bring together all the educational interest groups.¹⁴ The Minister told representatives of the ASTI on 24 May 1965 that he 'was concerned at the length of time taken in deciding on educational questions due to the large number of organisations involved and the slowness in obtaining views from them.'¹⁵ He hoped that the creation of the Consultative Council would enable the Minister to secure a definitive

¹⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.216, col.964, 16 June 1965

¹¹ *Ibid.*, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.96

¹² *Dáil Debates*, vol.216, col.978, 16 June 1965

¹³ National Economic and Social Council, *Educational Expenditure in Ireland*, p.38 (NESC, 1975)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, col.968

¹⁵ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.2, 5 June 1965

opinion from educational interests as a whole on the principle of any proposed change in the educational system: 'What I envisage therefore is an integrated medium of authoritative educational opinion on which the state could draw for ideas and counsel.'¹⁶

Colley's hopes for the proposed Council were not to be realised. He sought the agreement of all the managerial associations and teaching unions to participate in the Council. But by February 1966 he had still not received definite replies from all the managerial bodies, although the ASTI and the INTO both indicated their willingness to participate in an advisory council.¹⁷ Colley proved unable to establish the proposed Council before his term as Minister for Education ended in July 1966 and the idea of an advisory body was then quietly dropped by subsequent Ministers.¹⁸ The proposal itself fell victim to the cumbersome process of consultation, which Colley was seeking to change by establishing such a council. The Minister did establish an advisory council for post-primary education in the Dublin region in May 1966, which provided a consultative process between representatives of the post-primary school authorities and the department concerning school building plans.¹⁹ Although the proposed national Council never became a reality, the initiative underlined the new Minister's concern to promote more effective collaboration between the state and the private educational associations. Colley's inclusive approach represented a departure from the practice of his predecessor, Dr. Hillery, who had sought to achieve important advances through piecemeal consultation with the most powerful educational interests, namely the churches. Colley aimed not only to improve communication between the department and private interests but also to secure broad support for important educational changes and to involve the private interests constructively in the implementation of the state's reforming objectives.

Colley's appeal for co-operation between the state and the private educational authorities was motivated at least in part by his concern to secure support for the various initiatives announced or contemplated by the government. He indicated on 16 June that the department was considering a re-organisation of primary education. The Minister told the Dáil that he wished to change the pattern of primary school building to ensure the establishment of larger national schools in future.²⁰ While no policy decision had yet been reached, Colley commented that he was most concerned to achieve a solution,

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, col.968

¹⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.220, col.1794-1795, 17 February 1966, Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.3, 11-18 September 1965

¹⁸ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.178

¹⁹ Minutes, Standing Committee, Conference of Convent Secondary Schools, 14 June 1966

²⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.216, col.969, 16 June 1965

which made the best possible use of teachers for the benefit of all pupils.²¹ He evidently regarded the continued building of small schools in general as an inefficient and wasteful use of educational resources. Colley gave an early indication on 16 June that he was considering the introduction of a new policy involving the amalgamation of small national schools.

The Minister also sought to clarify the government's policy towards post-primary education in his speech on 16 June. He discussed the role of the comprehensive schools, noting that various fears had been expressed by private school managers about the new initiative.²² Colley assured TDs that comprehensive schools were never intended to replace secondary and vocational schools. The new scheme was designed to extend post-primary education, by establishing comprehensive schools in areas which previously lacked adequate educational provision.²³ But it was not the sole purpose of the new scheme simply to fill gaps in educational facilities. Colley hoped that the comprehensive schools would act as 'a kind of pace-setter in post-primary education generally'.²⁴ The Minister and the senior officials envisaged that the comprehensive schools would give direction and leadership in post-primary education by providing a comprehensive curriculum, which would link the secondary schools and the vocational system.²⁵ A system of vocational guidance would also be introduced for the first time in the new schools. Colley indicated that pupils would take aptitude tests, which would be given by the teaching staff, in conjunction with the department's new psychological service. He announced that four psychologists were being appointed within the department to provide the necessary expertise to undertake aptitude tests on an organised basis. The new Minister believed that the comprehensive schools would serve as an example to established educational interests of the benefits of a broad curriculum, which provided a combination of academic and vocational education. Colley also advocated close collaboration between secondary and vocational schools, including the sharing of resources between the two separate systems. He urged the school authorities to consider the sharing of educational facilities and suggested the inter-change of teachers between secondary and vocational schools.²⁶ Colley's comments foreshadowed his sustained attempt in the following year to promote a co-operative approach between the secondary

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, col.970

²⁴ *Ibid.*, col.970, Randles, *Post-Primary Education in Ireland*, p.178

²⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.216, col.970, 16 June 1965

²⁶ *Ibid.*

school authorities and the VECs, with the intention of reducing duplication in the use of educational resources.

Colley's wide-ranging address on 16 June, which set out his key priorities as Minister for Education, was itself a new departure. Most previous Ministers had avoided any detailed policy statements, which might cause conflict with powerful educational interests. Even Hillery, who certainly risked conflict with established private interests by extending state intervention in post-primary education, was generally reluctant to outline an overall policy approach. Hillery came closest to providing a definitive statement of the government's education policy to the Dáil only in February 1965, shortly before the end of his term as Minister for Education. Colley, however, had no hesitation in enunciating his vision of the future for the Irish educational system. The new Minister delivered a detailed policy statement within two months of his appointment. Moreover he provided an early indication of important policy changes, which were to be implemented or initiated during his term of office.

The influence of *Investment in Education*

The new Minister anticipated the publication in the short-term of the *Investment in Education* study in the course of his address, drawing attention to its importance in guiding future educational planning.²⁷ The report was available to Colley when he took office, although it was not formally submitted to the Minister by the survey team until November 1965.²⁸ The Minister was certainly aware of the general conclusions of the report well in advance of its publication as Seán MacGearailt chaired the Steering Committee, which supervised the work of the survey team. *Investment* made only one formal recommendation, the creation of a development unit in the Department of Education: the new unit was intended to take responsibility for the collection of educational statistics and to undertake long-term planning for future educational needs.²⁹ The survey team recommended that the new development unit should be headed by an Assistant Secretary and staffed by professional personnel, including a statistician, a sociologist and a full-time economist.³⁰ The national team generally avoided formal recommendations, as they might be vulnerable to criticism by established interests.

²⁷ *Ibid.* col.977

²⁸ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.95

²⁹ *Investment in Education Part 1, Report of the Survey Team appointed by the Minister for Education in October 1962*, p.387 (Dublin, 1965)

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.252-254

Martin O'Donoghue recalled that 'specific recommendations might be shot down; you could get the wrong minister and the Department of Education might then lapse back into inaction.'³¹ But while the report made only a single formal recommendation, the general conclusions of the pilot study made an impressive case for far-reaching educational reform. The survey team presented a wide-ranging and highly critical analysis of the educational system, based on the accumulation for the first time of comprehensive statistical data about education in the Irish state. The study identified severe deficiencies in the educational system. The report's analysis revealed a substantial gap between the projected output of qualified school-leavers and the requirements of the economy for qualified manpower.³² It was estimated that a shortfall of 76,000 would arise between the labour force demand for employees with a junior post-primary certificate by 1971 and the actual supply of school-leavers with such a qualification.³³ The report considered that the educational system was failing to meet the minimum needs of the Irish economy for an increased flow of well-educated employees.

The conclusions of *Investment* were not, however, restricted to the economic implications of educational inadequacies. The survey team also drew attention to 'significant disparities' in educational participation, which involved considerable inequalities between different socio-economic categories and regional groups.³⁴ The report noted that 11,000 pupils, approximately one-fifth of the all the children who finished primary education each year, left full-time education without securing any educational qualification, including even the Primary Certificate.³⁵ The study identified 'a marked association between participation and social group', drawing attention to the low rate of participation in post-primary education by pupils drawn from the unskilled and semi-skilled occupational categories, as well as the unemployed.³⁶ A commentary on *Investment* by the National Industrial Economic Council (NIEC) in January 1966 noted that the participation rate in post-primary education, among individuals aged fifteen to nineteen in 1961, was four to five times greater for pupils drawn from the higher salaried and farming categories than for the children of unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers.³⁷ *Investment* also illustrated a massive disparity in participation between social

³¹ Interview with Professor Martin O'Donoghue, 10 January 2005

³² *Investment in Education Part I*, p.391

³³ *Ibid.*, p.201

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.391

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.141

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.160-161

³⁷ National Industrial Economic Council, *Comments on Investment in Education*, p.12 (Dublin, 1966)

groups at university level, where the survey team found that ‘the strong association between university entrance and social group is unmistakable.’³⁸ Indeed 65% of university entrants who undertook the Leaving Certificate in 1963 were the children of professionals, employers and higher white-collar employees: only 2% of university students were drawn from the unskilled and semi-skilled manual category, while 4% were the children of the unemployed or widows.³⁹ The report also highlighted wide regional variations in educational participation at post-primary level. While several counties in Munster showed a high level of participation in second-level education, all three Ulster counties in the Republic fared relatively badly in terms of educational participation, as did three Leinster counties, Laois, Meath and Kildare (Figure 2).⁴⁰ The survey team warned of the need for public policy ‘to concern itself with these anomalies.’⁴¹

Perhaps the most influential element of the report’s analysis was its assessment of the efficiency of the educational system. The survey team identified significant efficiency gaps in the use of existing educational resources, caused by an unplanned and haphazard pattern of historical development.⁴² The report noted that there were 736 one-teacher national schools in 1962-63. 76% of all national schools taught less than 100 pupils.⁴³ The small schools incurred greater costs per pupil than larger schools and certainly provided no greater educational benefit to pupils.⁴⁴ Indeed the report produced substantial evidence that pupils in small schools were at a disadvantage relative to their compatriots in large schools. The smaller national schools offered a more restricted curriculum than their larger counterparts, as optional subjects were more likely to be curtailed. These restrictions were explained in part by the inferior facilities provided by small schools: 65% of one-teacher schools were based in nineteenth century buildings, while many small schools were poorly equipped with regard to educational facilities.⁴⁵ Most one to three-teacher schools lacked central heating, while over 2,000 small schools did not have drinking water. *Investment* concluded that the physical facilities of smaller schools were ‘very much inferior’ to the facilities provided by larger schools.⁴⁶ Moreover the report

³⁸ *Investment in Education Part 1*, p.12

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.172

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.157; Figure 2, p.376

⁴¹ *Investment in Education Part 1*, p.389

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.392

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.228-229

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.252

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.247-249

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.248-249

suggested that small schools, which were defined as one to three-teacher schools, had a higher incidence of pupils whose progress through the classes was delayed by two or more years.⁴⁷ The survey team's analysis provided a damning indictment of the haphazard distribution of educational resources in primary education. The small national schools were not only expensive to maintain, but were relatively high users of teaching resources. The small schools contained 50.4% of all national schoolteachers but only 38% of all pupils.⁴⁸ The pupil-teacher ratios were much higher in larger schools, which experienced significant problems due to high class sizes. This imbalance in the distribution of teachers helped to create a situation in which 84% of the pupils in large schools were to be found in classes of forty or more.⁴⁹ The survey team therefore questioned whether 'the present distribution of schools is the most suitable, satisfactory or economical method of providing primary education.'⁵⁰ The report advised the department to consider an alternative approach, which might achieve the same ends more efficiently.⁵¹ *Investment* concluded that the department should examine the possibility of reducing the number of very small schools, by introducing appropriate transport services: a reduction in the number of small schools would produce considerable savings and secure important benefits through the provision of better educational services.⁵² The survey team's analysis provided a compelling rationale for the re-organisation of primary education, which was to be rapidly taken up by Colley.

The report indicated that the efficiency gaps in the educational system as a whole were widespread enough to prevent any solution to the problem of manpower shortages or inequality in educational participation. The team highlighted the inefficient and haphazard organisation of resources in primary and post-primary education, due largely to the lack of co-ordination in the historical development of the Irish educational system. The survey team argued that an unplanned expansion of primary and post-primary education would 'merely multiply the existing structure' and rapidly exhaust available resources.⁵³ The report suggested the adoption of an alternative strategy, based on coherent planning of educational needs, which might achieve the same ends more efficiently than the traditional haphazard approach to the distribution of educational

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.242

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.262-263

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.233

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.264

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.264

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.392

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.392

resources.⁵⁴ The report's conclusions not only illuminated the failures of educational policy in the past, but also charted a way forward for constructive development. *Investment* was a devastating analysis of the Irish educational system, which made a compelling case for reform to secure an improved allocation of resources in the educational sector.

The report of the survey team was a landmark of the greatest importance in the transformation of the Irish educational system. The importance of the report was widely recognised by contemporaries, not least the senior officials of the department. O'Connor commented that, 'The importance of the report to the Department of Education cannot be overemphasised. The public were now aware of the deficiencies and inequalities of the system and remedial action could no longer be postponed.'⁵⁵ The department's officials were well aware of the faults of the system by 1965, but they had traditionally taken a cautious, low-key approach, which was ineffective in resolving long-standing educational problems. Such caution was no longer a practical option following the comprehensive and scathing analysis of the educational system provided by *Investment*. O'Connor later argued that the publication of an independent report of such range and quality left the Minister with a stark choice: 'to devise policies consistent with the facts produced by the report or to do nothing at all. It was reasonable to presume that the Minister would not adopt the second option'⁵⁶ *Investment* illustrated the deficiencies of the educational system in such a definitive fashion that the department was obliged to acknowledge fully the fundamental problems which plagued Irish education. The report also provided the statistical data and the policy analysis to support and underpin state action, which could address the problems fully chronicled by the survey team. *Investment* provided an invaluable rationale and blueprint for the transformation of the Irish educational system.

The conclusions of the report received a favourable response from ministers and senior officials at least in part due to the official conviction that education was an important element in economic expansion. The analysis presented by the survey team was greatly influenced by the assumption that education was an important factor in economic development, even if it was difficult to measure its impact on economic growth. The report asserted: 'It is not necessary to be able to measure precisely the contribution of education to economic growth in order to recognise the significance of

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.392

⁵⁵ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.120

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.110

education to economic development'⁵⁷ The survey team's analysis emphasized that educational planning had to be related to economic planning: this approach had been promoted by Lemass since 1962 and was included in the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*.⁵⁸ The Taoiseach placed considerable public emphasis on the evaluation of the national economic requirements for skilled labour, which was undertaken by the survey team. He commented to *Open* in January 1965 that a key objective of future policy would be 'to relate the output of professional and technically trained personnel to estimated national requirements.'⁵⁹ Lemass fully recognised the importance of *Investment* and had no hesitation in publicising its critical analysis of the educational system. He strongly encouraged Colley to publicise the report and act on its conclusions. The Taoiseach wrote to Colley immediately after receiving the report on 27 November 1965, noting the Minister's view that *Investment* would be difficult to summarise effectively. Lemass told Colley that an effort had to be made to summarise the report and urged him to publish an official commentary on *Investment*, to underline the key points of the report.⁶⁰ Colley immediately assured the Taoiseach that he would arrange the publication of a commentary summarising the conclusions of the report.⁶¹ The report was published on 23 December 1965, along with a detailed press release drafted by the department, which highlighted the report's conclusions concerning the deficiencies of the educational system.⁶² Lemass clearly perceived the potential for significant change in the survey team's critical evaluation of Irish education and was determined that the government would take up the issues raised by the report in a proactive fashion.

The report's critical analysis of educational realities became an integral part of government policy even before it was published. The department implemented the recommendation for the creation of a development unit before the report was presented to the Minister in November 1965. Colley announced the formation of a new Development Branch within the Department of Education in his address on 16 June.⁶³ The Development Branch would take responsibility for the collection of educational statistics

⁵⁷ *Investment in Education Part I*, p.12

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.353, *Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part I, laid by the Government before each House of the Oireachtas, August 1963*, p.13 (Stationery Office, Dublin, 1963)

⁵⁹ NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891, *Open*, 29 January 1965

⁶⁰ NA D/T 97/6/437, S.17913, Lemass to George Colley, Minister for Education, 27 November 1965

⁶¹ NA D/T 97/6/437, S.17913, Colley to Lemass, 30 November 1965

⁶² NA D/T 97/6/437, S.17913, *Press Release, Investment in Education: Irish-OECD Survey of Needs and Costs of Irish Education*, pp.1-10, 23 December 1965

⁶³ *Dáil Debates*, vol.216, col.977-978, 16 June 1965

and would undertake long-term planning for educational expansion. Colley indicated that the Branch would aim 'to plan, consult, stimulate, set out a programme of measures and see to the implementation of educational improvements and reform.'⁶⁴ Hillery had initiated the establishment of the Development Branch early in 1965, but it was Colley who publicly announced the formation of the new unit, indicating that he envisaged a central role for the Branch in the future re-organisation of Irish education.⁶⁵ A third position of Assistant Secretary was created within the department, which was filled by Seán O'Connor as head of the Development Branch.⁶⁶ The Minister also appointed William Hyland of the OECD survey team as the Senior Statistician in the new Branch, although the department lacked the funding to provide for the full staffing of the unit initially. The new Branch undertook, as one of its first duties, a comprehensive survey of available post-primary educational facilities and of future requirements for post-primary education.⁶⁷ The Minister and senior officials acted to initiate coherent planning of educational needs even before the report was published. Lemass and Colley fully accepted the survey team's conclusion that effective long-term planning was essential to overcome the substantial deficiencies of the educational system.

The re-organisation of primary education

The Minister for Education rapidly adopted the report's proposal for a comprehensive re-organisation of the distribution of national schools. Colley announced a radical new initiative in educational policy, which was largely inspired by *Investment in Education*, in July 1965. Colley informed the Dáil on 21 July 1965 that he intended, where feasible, to replace small one-teacher and two-teacher national schools with larger central schools, served by school transport schemes financed by the state.⁶⁸ He told the Dáil that 'It seems quite clear to me that we have to take a very firm decision on this matter of small schools.'⁶⁹ Colley argued, on the basis of the analysis made by *Investment in Education*, that educational attainment on the part of pupils in small national schools was significantly inferior to the level reached by pupils in larger schools: school facilities and teaching aids were also far inferior in small schools. He believed that one-teacher schools were particularly problematic, as a single teacher could not effectively cover all

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.95

⁶⁶ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.95

⁶⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.217, col.1960-68, 21 July 1965

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the classes in a school.⁷⁰ Colley indicated that when the question of replacing a teacher in a small school or providing a new building for such a school arose, the department would investigate whether the establishment of a new central school was feasible.⁷¹ He promised that each case would be examined on its merits and that the amalgamation of small national schools would be combined with the provision of a school transport service, which would be fully funded by the state. Colley appealed to the opposition parties to support the new policy of amalgamation, urging opposition politicians not to lend support to local agitation against the new approach.⁷² It appeared that Colley's hopes for cross-party support were well founded, as amalgamation initially commanded considerable support among leading opposition politicians. James Tully TD of the Labour Party fully agreed with Colley on 21 July about the deficiencies of one-teacher schools and the Labour Party was generally supportive of amalgamation during the subsequent controversy. Moreover, influential Fine Gael figures also favoured the re-organisation of primary education. James Dillon, who had recently retired as leader of Fine Gael, was an advocate of larger national schools while Patrick O'Donnell, who served as the Party's spokesman on education until April 1965, strongly supported the new policy. O'Donnell indeed told Colley in the Dáil on 21 July that amalgamation had been demanded previously by Fine Gael: 'This is what Fine Gael have advocated on many occasions, as the Minister has pointed out'.⁷³ Significantly Denis Jones TD, who had succeeded O'Donnell as Fine Gael's spokesman on education, did not endorse the new initiative, although he did not indicate any opposition to amalgamation on 21 July.⁷⁴ Colley's announcement of the new policy approach, which involved a radical re-organisation of primary education, met with virtually no initial opposition in the Dáil.

The new initiative was, however, strongly opposed by local interests in many areas and by several Catholic Bishops, especially Dr. Michael Browne, Bishop of Galway. Browne vehemently attacked amalgamation on 2 September 1965 at the opening of a new two-teacher school at St. Brigid's Well, Liscannor, Co. Clare.⁷⁵ He asserted that the policy would cause great damage to rural Ireland and condemned the decision to close two-teacher schools, demanding: 'Are they all to be abolished and merged just as it

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, col.1968-69

⁷² *Ibid.*, col.1969

⁷³ *Ibid.*, col.1970

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, col.1970

⁷⁵ NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, *The Irish Press*, 13 September 1965

is proposed to merge the small farms?’⁷⁶ The Minister replied forcefully to Browne’s criticisms of amalgamation, in his address to the annual dinner of Cumann na nInnealtoirí in Galway on 11 September. Colley described Browne’s comments as ‘distressingly inaccurate and intemperate’, asserting that the Bishop’s views did not represent the unanimous opinion of the Catholic Hierarchy.⁷⁷ Colley had not formally sought the opinion of the Catholic Hierarchy on the new policy, but he privately consulted Cardinal Conway about the initiative, receiving a favourable response. Indeed Colley reported to Lemass on 24 September that Conway ‘agreed in principle with the policy’ and had even suggested an area of his archdiocese where an amalgamation might be viable.⁷⁸ The Minister’s suggestion that the Catholic Bishops were not united in their approach to amalgamation was essentially correct, although the Hierarchy did not formally discuss the new initiative until October 1965.

Following the beginning of public controversy about the initiative, Colley outlined a comprehensive rationale for the policy of amalgamation to Lemass on 24 September 1965.⁷⁹ The Minister told Lemass that there were about 730 one-teacher schools, frequently staffed by untrained teachers, who were obliged to cope with all classes in such schools.⁸⁰ Many of these schools were left without any teacher for considerable periods each year, in part because it was extremely difficult for one-teacher schools to attract and retain teachers. Colley made the case for amalgamation by referring to the conclusions of *Investment in Education*. He told Lemass that a general survey of pupils in one-teacher schools had disclosed that ‘they are educationally about two years behind pupils being taught in larger schools’.⁸¹ The same considerations applied to two-teacher schools, although the disadvantages were not as great as those experienced by one-teacher schools. Colley indicated that the department had initiated an assessment of all proposals for new two-teacher schools, with the intention of amalgamating such schools to create central schools, which would enjoy an increased number of teachers.⁸² The Minister believed that the re-organisation of primary education was essential on educational and social grounds. He considered that efforts should be made to have one teacher for each class in any school, although this objective was not always attainable. He

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, Colley to Lemass, 24 September 1965

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Colley to Lemass, *Memorandum*, p.1, 24 September 1965

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

also emphasized the social benefits of amalgamation for rural communities, arguing that parents would no longer be willing to live in areas which failed to provide adequate educational opportunity for their children.⁸³ Colley outlined a compelling rationale for the policy of amalgamation, ensuring that the Taoiseach was fully informed of the case for the new policy. The Minister was clearly concerned to maintain Lemass' support for an initiative which was already highly controversial.

Lemass replied immediately to Colley's memorandum on 25 September 1965, fully supporting the case for amalgamation. He assured Colley that 'I think the arguments in favour of your policy in this regard, as set out in the Memorandum, will be seen to be very convincing by all reasonable people'.⁸⁴ But Lemass also told the Minister that the case for larger central schools had not yet been 'sufficiently publicised', warning Colley to make a series of speeches in the near future to promote public understanding of the new policy.⁸⁵ Lemass was evidently concerned to promote public support for a radical and controversial educational reform. Colley readily agreed on 27 September that it was vital to publicise the case for amalgamation, indicating that he intended to make speeches promoting the new policy in the short-term.⁸⁶ The Minister outlined to the Taoiseach his strategy for the implementation of the policy: he had considered it essential to communicate the new approach in the first instance to the educational authorities and other interests closely involved with the administration of the national schools. Colley therefore concentrated initially on communicating the new policy to the Board of Works, the parish priests who served as national school managers and Cardinal Conway. The Minister had also maintained close contact with Fianna Fáil TDs representing constituencies in which local protests against the policy had occurred.⁸⁷ Colley's comments on his initial efforts to implement the new initiative illustrated the political sensitivity of the issue. The Minister was not only concerned to communicate his new approach to the relevant authorities and agencies, but to contain and fore-stall opposition to amalgamation by persuading the government's backbenchers and the clerical managers, as well as Cardinal Conway, of the merits of the initiative.

The Minister's initial efforts to secure the co-operation of the school managers in the process of amalgamation had a mixed outcome. The Catholic Clerical Managers'

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Lemass to Colley, 25 September 1965

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Colley to Lemass, 27 September 1965,

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Association did not openly oppose the Minister's policy, but privately expressed severe reservations to the department about the closure of two-teacher schools and the introduction of transport services to new central schools, especially for younger children.⁸⁸ Moreover Colley complained to the Taoiseach on 27 September that Catholic clerical managers in some dioceses were willing to consider new arrangements for school transport but then 'got orders from their Bishop not to agree to the arrangements'.⁸⁹ While the Minister believed that such local problems would be overcome in due course, he conceded that there could be 'some awkward situations arising in the meantime'.⁹⁰ Colley was well aware of the considerable strength of local and in some cases episcopal opposition to the policy but was determined to press ahead with amalgamation. The Minister's private consultation with Cardinal Conway underlined his concern to avoid a full-scale conflict with the Catholic Bishops, which might well obstruct the implementation of the new policy. The Hierarchy considered the Minister's initiative at its general meeting on 12 October 1965 largely on the basis of newspaper reports, as Colley made no formal attempt to ascertain the opinion of the Bishops.⁹¹ The Bishops expressed 'their deep concern and anxiety, as Trustees and Patrons of primary schools, that a general policy of such far-reaching consequences should be suddenly introduced'.⁹² The Hierarchy was seriously dissatisfied by Colley's rapid and decisive announcement of such an important policy change, in the absence of formal consultation with established educational interests. The Bishops also expressed reservations about the policy of amalgamation, arguing that educationalists were divided in their views on the quality of small schools. But they also acknowledged that the closure of small schools might well be unavoidable in certain cases.⁹³ The Bishops informed the Minister on 17 October that it was 'the unanimous opinion of the Hierarchy' that the case of each school should be decided on its merits, following full consultation with the parents and the managerial authorities.⁹⁴ The Hierarchy did not express opposition in principle to the policy of amalgamation. While the collective opinion of the Bishops was evidently critical of the Minister's approach, the Hierarchy did not endorse Browne's categorical opposition to

⁸⁸ Annual Report of the Central Executive Committee 1965-66, INTO, pp.25-27 (INTO, Dublin, 1966)

⁸⁹ NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, Colley to Lemass, 27 September 1965

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes of the General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, 12 October 1965, p.3

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Fergus to Colley, 17 October 1965

amalgamation. It appears that Colley's private communication with Cardinal Conway helped to influence the initial response of the Bishops to the initiative.

A conflict between the state and the Catholic Bishops concerning the policy change was avoided largely because Colley was willing to accommodate the specific concerns of the Hierarchy while steadfastly maintaining the essential principle of amalgamation. Colley, accompanied by Dr. Ó Raifeartaigh, MacGearailt and O'Connor, met the Episcopal Commission for Primary Education on 10 January 1966 to discuss the concerns of the Bishops.⁹⁵ He emphasized his determination to proceed with the amalgamation of one-teacher and two-teacher schools on the basis of the educational advantages delivered by larger schools. He politely acknowledged an argument made by the Bishops that social considerations were also relevant but clarified that he had no intention of changing his approach.⁹⁶ The Minister guaranteed, however, that the department would fully consult the managers and if possible the relevant parents in each case. He also assured the Bishops that no parish would be left without a primary school as a result of amalgamation and that the parish would be maintained, insofar as possible, as a local educational unit. The Bishops were most concerned about the proposed transport scheme, raising 'many difficulties concerning the whole matter of transport'.⁹⁷ Colley and the officials indicated that the department would take full responsibility for the cost of the transport service if necessary, although the manager would be able to make a nominal voluntary contribution. The officials asserted that the organisation of the transport scheme could be undertaken without serious difficulties.⁹⁸ Colley also commented pointedly that many managers were willing to collaborate with the new policy, but would not agree any arrangements with the department, as they believed that the Bishops were opposed to amalgamation.⁹⁹ The discussion certainly underlined the Hierarchy's considerable reservations about the new policy, especially concerning the establishment of the transport service. The Bishops were sufficiently concerned to seek legal advice on the powers of the Minister to close state-aided schools vested in private Trustees. The Standing Committee of the Hierarchy, which considered the report of the deputation to the Minister on 11 January 1966, recommended that each Bishop should

⁹⁵ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers, Report by Dr. D. Herlihy, Bishop of Ferns, Meeting of the Episcopal Commission on Primary Education with Mr. Colley, Minister for Education, 10 January 1966*, pp. 1-2

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

instruct the school managers in his diocese to report upon any proposed amalgamation and to ensure that the parents were fully consulted in all cases.¹⁰⁰ While the Standing Committee emphasized the need for full consultation with parents by the Department of Education, the Hierarchy did not offer support to local groups opposed to amalgamation. The department proved willing to consult with the local Bishop and school managers concerning proposals for amalgamation, which satisfied the Hierarchy's concern to avoid the imposition of changes in the educational structure of the relevant parishes without the involvement of the Bishop.¹⁰¹

The Bishops as a whole were much more concerned by early 1966 with the implications of the proposed transport service than with the principle of amalgamation. The Standing Committee insisted on 11 January that the responsibility for the administration of the transport service should rest entirely with the state.¹⁰² The Hierarchy also expressed various reservations about the provision of a new transport service to central schools at their general meeting in June 1966. The Bishops were concerned that the managers should not have to bear the financial cost of the service or risk assuming liability for accidents involving pupils. They also perceived a danger to the moral welfare of schoolchildren if they were to avail of the transport service without adequate supervision.¹⁰³ The Hierarchy was determined that the managers should not take responsibility in any way for the provision of a school transport service. But the Bishops also recommended that the managers could agree to co-operate with the department in running a transport service provided by the state, provided that a satisfactory form of agreement was concluded between the department and the managers. The Hierarchy advised the managers to ensure that their role with regard to the transport service was as limited as possible: the agreement with the department should maintain only a formal role to the manager in approving the contract for the transport service, with the department itself taking full responsibility for the cost and administration of the service.¹⁰⁴ Despite their grave reservations about the creation of the new transport service, the Bishops agreed to allow the managers to work out appropriate arrangements for school transport with the department, on the basis that any agreement would be referred to the Hierarchy

¹⁰⁰ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes of the Standing Committee of the Irish Hierarchy, 11 January 1966, p.2

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes of the General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, 21-22 June 1966, p.7

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

before it was finalised.¹⁰⁵ Colley's conviction that the Bishops determined the approach of the managers towards amalgamation was essentially correct. Significantly, however, the Hierarchy proved willing to allow the clerical managers to co-operate with the state's policy, on the condition that the school transport service was fully administered and financed by the department. This approach did not present a great obstacle to the government's policy, as Colley had consistently promised a free transport service funded by the state for central schools. While the Bishops clearly had considerable reservations about the new policy approach, especially the school transport service, they did not oppose amalgamation in principle or make any collective attempt to obstruct the state's policy. Although the Minister could not avert clashes with individual Bishops, Colley and the senior officials certainly succeeded in avoiding a conflict between the state and the Hierarchy as a whole concerning the re-organisation of primary education.

The Minister also acted decisively to reassure the INTO that amalgamation would not undermine the employment and conditions of primary teachers. Colley discussed the new policy with representatives of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the INTO on 10 September 1965.¹⁰⁶ The INTO representatives asked the Minister to explain the reasons for the policy change and expressed concern about the implications of amalgamation for the employment of primary teachers in small schools. Colley outlined the rationale for the policy, referring to the evidence of *Investment* to support his case that children in small schools were placed at an educational disadvantage.¹⁰⁷ He also gave the INTO delegation a categorical assurance concerning the employment of the primary teachers affected by the change: 'No teacher serving in a permanent capacity would lose his position as a result of this policy of amalgamation.'¹⁰⁸ The INTO representatives initially indicated that they had 'no fixed policy' on amalgamation until they secured more detailed information and investigated the consequences of the abolition of small schools.¹⁰⁹ Colley publicised his assurances to the INTO in the Dáil on 17 February 1966, informing TDs that any national schoolteachers affected by the plan would not only remain in employment but would retain their full salary and allowances.¹¹⁰

The CEC was concerned about the impact of amalgamation not only on the employment of their members, but also on the prospects for promotion for primary

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Annual Report of the CEC 1965-66, INTO, pp.20-21 (Dublin, 1966)

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.21

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.24

¹¹⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.220, col.1790, 17 February 1966

teachers, as the closure of small schools would extinguish the posts of principal teacher in such schools. But the INTO executive expressed no objection in principle to amalgamation, seeking instead to secure specific guarantees from the Minister to protect the position of the teachers concerned.¹¹¹ The CEC representatives raised a series of concerns with Colley at a further meeting on 24 February 1966. The INTO delegates emphasized that schools should not be amalgamated 'without due consideration of all the local factors', seeking close consultation by the officials with the local teachers.¹¹² They also sought assurances that there would be no loss of employment and argued that amalgamation was causing a suspension of essential maintenance work in old schools, forcing teachers to work under appalling conditions. Finally the CEC representatives made the case for compensation to the primary teaching profession, through the creation of new avenues for promotion, to offset the posts due to be eliminated as a result of amalgamation. Colley dealt with the INTO's concerns in a conciliatory fashion. He readily agreed to supply the INTO with prior information concerning the small schools which were to be surveyed by the department's officials. He fully accepted the union's position that local factors should be considered and indicated that the department was willing to include the teachers concerned in discussions on the future of their schools. Moreover the Minister again gave a firm assurance to the delegation that the teachers affected by the policy would be employed in an amalgamated school.¹¹³ He also undertook to resolve the problems concerning the maintenance of old schools, pledging that any necessary temporary repairs would be authorised immediately and that he would seek to expedite the process to avoid lengthy delays.¹¹⁴ Colley gave a more cautious response to the INTO's proposals with regard to promotion. He did not endorse the options suggested by the CEC, which included the granting of an increment for long service, the creation of new posts of responsibility and the lowering of the average enrolment figure required for the appointment of a vice-principal.¹¹⁵ But the Minister was careful not to reject the INTO's proposals, agreeing to consider a detailed memorandum from the union on promotion. While Colley avoided any commitment to the INTO's proposals for financial compensation, he had provided definite assurances which satisfied the union's core concerns on most aspects of amalgamation.

¹¹¹ Annual Report of the CEC 1965-66, INTO, pp.21-22

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., *Dáil Debates*, vol.220, col.1790, 17 February 1966

¹¹⁴ Annual Report of the CEC 1965-66, INTO, pp.21-22

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

The Minister's assurances proved sufficient to satisfy the CEC, which adopted a cautiously favourable approach to amalgamation. The CEC indeed recommended acceptance of amalgamation in principle, on a conditional basis, to the annual Congress of the INTO in April 1966. The CEC identified adequate local discussion on amalgamation, no loss of employment for the relevant teachers and compensation to the teaching profession for the loss of promotional opportunities, as the union's key requirements if the policy was to be accepted.¹¹⁶ The INTO Congress on 12-15 April broadly supported the CEC's position, passing a motion which approved in principle of the policy of amalgamation and mandated the CEC to deliver several conditions which protected the position of primary teachers.¹¹⁷ The Congress endorsed most of the requirements laid down by the CEC and also demanded that no rural school should be amalgamated with an urban school: the motion stipulated too that 'under no circumstances should any lay school be amalgamated with a school run by a religious order.'¹¹⁸ The final demand was of considerable importance to the INTO, which had previously engaged in a bitter dispute with the Marist order over the transfer of a primary school in Ballina to the control of the order. Colley had already indicated his willingness to accept most of the INTO's conditions. Significantly, he assured the INTO as early as September 1965 that he did not wish, in general, to promote the amalgamation of lay and religious schools. The Minister also informed the union that he did not envisage any amalgamations between urban and rural schools.¹¹⁹ Despite Colley's conciliatory approach, the membership of the INTO was by no means unanimous in its acceptance of amalgamation. Several branches of the organisation sought unsuccessfully to review its decision on amalgamation at the INTO Congress in March 1967.¹²⁰ The CEC, however, took a constructive approach to the Minister's policy, accepting the re-organisation of primary education in principle but securing specific concessions to protect the position of teachers affected by amalgamation. Colley consulted the primary teachers' union extensively and sought with considerable success to meet the concerns of the INTO leadership about amalgamation. The Minister's conciliatory approach proved effective in winning the conditional support of the INTO for the new policy approach.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ *Official Programme of the 98th Annual Congress of the INTO*, 12th -15th April 1966, pp.34-35

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Annual Report of the CEC 1965-66, INTO, pp.21-25

¹²⁰ *Official Programme of the 99th Annual Congress of the INTO*, 28th -31st March 1967, pp.32-33

Colley concentrated initially on private negotiations with the INTO, the managers and the Hierarchy, seeking to secure the support of important stakeholders in the educational system for amalgamation. But he soon followed Lemass' advice to make a strong public case for the new policy. Colley vigorously promoted the amalgamation of small national schools in a speech delivered at Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, on 11 November 1965.¹²¹ He pointed out that one and two-teacher schools did not provide the educational facilities offered by larger schools, while the proposed central schools would offer a more extensive syllabus with a greater emphasis on subjects relevant to pupils in rural areas.¹²² Colley presented amalgamation as an important element in resolving the perennial problem of rural depopulation. He argued that larger central schools would encourage parents to remain in their native parish and would reduce emigration.¹²³ Colley also emphasized the educational and social benefits of the new policy in the Dáil, when parliamentary critics of the policy argued that amalgamation would devastate rural communities. When Oliver J. Flanagan, the Fine Gael TD for Laois-Offaly, challenged Colley to clarify the details of the initiative on 21 October 1965, the Minister provided a definitive statement of the government's policy.¹²⁴ Colley reiterated that one and two-teacher schools would be gradually replaced by larger central schools, served by school transport schemes provided by the state. He asserted that the re-organisation of primary education was essential on educational and social grounds. Colley drew attention particularly to the wasteful and inefficient use of teachers which had been identified by *Investment*, warning the Dáil that the existing distribution of national schools wasted scarce teaching resources: 'A proliferation of small schools means that in relation to the instruction he can give the teacher is serving in conditions where his services are least effective.'¹²⁵ The Minister also assured TDs that there was 'no blanket decision' to abolish all two-teacher schools: decisions to amalgamate such schools were taken only on the merits of each case.¹²⁶ Colley's firm defence of the policy did not deter Flanagan, who criticised amalgamation on the basis that the small school was a centre of community activity in a rural area. Flanagan warned the Minister to defer the implementation of the new approach and take account of the opposition to amalgamation:

¹²¹ NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, *Speech by George Colley TD, Minister for Education, Rural Week, Ballinrobe*, 11 November 1965

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.218, col.433, 21 October 1965

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, col.434

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, col.436

'The Minister should not go too far on it. I beg of him not to go too far.'¹²⁷ The colourful Fine Gael Deputy soon emerged as the most vociferous opponent of amalgamation in the Dáil. He sought to publicise the concerns of the Catholic Bishops about amalgamation, asking a parliamentary question on 1 December 1965, which sought information from Colley about the Hierarchy's letter to the Minister on 17 October.¹²⁸ Colley avoided embarrassment by deftly evading the question. He informed the Dáil that he could not make any comment on Flanagan's question, in accordance with normal procedure in dealing with the Hierarchy and as a courtesy to the Bishops.¹²⁹ Flanagan was by no means alone in opposing the policy. Fine Gael's spokesman on education, Denis Jones, was also critical of the closure of two-teacher schools, although he had not challenged the Minister's approach when the policy was first announced.¹³⁰ Jones announced on 15 February 1966 Fine Gael's opposition to the closure of any two-teacher schools without a local public inquiry.¹³¹ Fine Gael moved to a firmly sceptical position on the amalgamation of small schools by early 1966. Colley's vigorous defence of the policy underlined, however, that the opposition of Flanagan and other Fine Gael TDs had little influence on the government's approach. Colley and Lemass were convinced of the long-term educational and social benefits of the policy, which outweighed the short-term discontent with the government caused by amalgamation in some rural areas.

It was not the parliamentary critics of amalgamation who presented the most severe challenge to the Minister's policy. Although the Hierarchy did not oppose amalgamation in principle, Dr. Browne soon emerged as the principal spokesman of the opposition to the new policy. Colley's efforts to promote the policy change ignited a storm of controversy, which culminated in a public clash between the Minister and Browne in February 1966. Colley addressed the graduates of the National University of Ireland in Galway on 5 February 1966, defending the right of the Minister for Education to make and implement educational policy.¹³² While the Minister emphasized the importance of consultation and co-operation between the department and private educational interests, he firmly asserted the predominant role of the Minister in the formulation of educational policy: 'this was where a Minister stood apart, and alone'.¹³³

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, col.436

¹²⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.219, col.731, 1 December 1965

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.220, col.1514, 15 February 1966

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, *The Irish Press*, 'Mr. Colley's Lecture', 7 February 1966

¹³³ *Ibid.*

Colley did not deal in detail with amalgamation, but commented that the primary school system showed plenty of scope for practical improvements, especially with regard to the replacement of national schools and the revision of the curriculum.¹³⁴ Following Colley's address, Browne immediately replied to the Minister's speech and roundly denounced the new policy as 'a catastrophe - a major calamity for our Irish countryside'.¹³⁵ He argued that the Minister meant to close half the primary schools in the state: Colley's policy would intensify rural depopulation and inflict a disastrous blow on rural Ireland. The Bishop declared that the Minister's attempt to close small national schools was 'illegal and unconstitutional'.¹³⁶ Browne claimed that the closure of small schools was a violation of the constitutional rights of parents to freedom of education and an unwarranted attempt by the state to undermine the authority of the clerical managers. He considered that the state's intervention was illegal, as national schools were vested in clerical Trustees and the Minister was unilaterally breaching the Deeds of Trust which had been agreed by the department with the clerical Trustees: 'National schools are not State property, like police barracks'.¹³⁷ The Bishop was attacking not only the amalgamation of small schools but also the intervention of the state in the organisation of primary education. He accused Colley of undermining the liberties achieved by the sacrifices of previous generations, invoking the memory of Pearse and the leaders of the 1916 Rising: Browne declared that Pearse had died for national freedom, not to enable a Minister 'to impose autocracy or dictatorship on the people of Ireland and especially not in education - for he was a teacher, founder of a secondary school'.¹³⁸ The Bishop denounced Colley as an urban politician who knew nothing of rural education and was enforcing his policy in a dictatorial fashion: 'There is one role that does not belong to a Minister for Education in this country: it is the role of a dictator'.¹³⁹ Browne's vitriolic response to Colley's address on 5 February was certainly the most dramatic moment of the agitation against the policy of amalgamation. But Browne's speech was much more than a denunciation of amalgamation. The Bishop not only made a fierce attack on the Minister's policy for the re-organisation of primary education but also directly challenged the legitimacy of effective state intervention to reform the educational system.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, *The Irish Press*, 'School closures unconstitutional, says Dr. Browne', 7 February 1966

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

The Minister took up Browne's challenge without hesitation. Tony Ó Dálaigh, the Minister's Private Secretary, commented that 'he was straight and direct on amalgamation: he was not a man to run from Bishops.'¹⁴⁰ Colley responded forcefully to the Bishop's onslaught, seeking to rebut Browne's criticisms and defending the right of the Minister for Education to initiate policy reform.¹⁴¹ Browne left the meeting abruptly immediately after delivering his criticisms of the Minister and Colley then made a detailed reply to the Bishop's speech.¹⁴² The Minister strongly disputed Browne's allegation that amalgamation was disastrous for rural Ireland, arguing that it was inadequate educational provision which would cause greater emigration and rural depopulation: 'I think if we do not give our children a chance of a decent education, they will fly faster from the country.'¹⁴³ He challenged the Bishop's assertion that the policy was unconstitutional, questioning why Browne had not tested his claim through the courts if he was convinced of the unconstitutionality of amalgamation. Colley pointed out that the policy would not lead to the amalgamation of all two-teacher schools and would produce more three-teacher schools, instead of bringing the closure of all small schools, as the Bishop had suggested. The Minister also noted correctly that the Catholic Bishops collectively did not oppose the policy of amalgamation.¹⁴⁴ Colley categorically rejected Browne's denunciation of the increasing power of the state and particularly the Minister for Education. He emphasized that the Minister was accountable to the Dáil and that his power had clear limits. Colley, however, bluntly re-asserted his conviction that the Minister was primarily responsible for the initiation and management of educational reform: 'the only one who was in a position to achieve educational advance on a nationwide scale was the Minister for Education.'¹⁴⁵ He acknowledged that the Minister required goodwill and co-operation to achieve policy objectives but warned that a few individuals would not be allowed to obstruct necessary educational reforms by withholding such co-operation.¹⁴⁶ Browne had issued an unusually direct and public challenge to the Minister for Education. Colley not only strongly rejected the Bishop's

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Tony Ó Dálaigh, 3 May 2002

¹⁴¹ NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, *The Irish Press*, 'Minister replies to Bishop's criticisms', 7 February 1966

¹⁴² *The Irish Press*, 'No Further Comment - Dr. Browne', 8 February 1966

¹⁴³ *The Irish Press*, 'Minister replies to Bishop's criticisms', 7 February 1966

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *The Irish Press*, 'Mr. Colley on Galway meeting', 8 February 1966

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

criticisms but also forcefully asserted the central role of the Minister in delivering necessary educational reforms.

Colley followed up his initial reply to Browne by issuing a letter to *The Irish Press* on 8 February 1966, which gave a more comprehensive and elaborate rebuttal of the Bishop's criticisms.¹⁴⁷ *The Irish Press* provided extensive coverage on 7 and 8 February of Colley's response and also gave considerable attention to Browne's abrupt departure from the meeting.¹⁴⁸ O'Connor, who believed that the Bishop did not stage a deliberate 'walk-out' but left the meeting to keep a later appointment, commented that Browne might well have secured greater public support for his case, if he had not added to the public sensation by leaving the meeting so abruptly: 'While the points he made were extensively quoted in the news press, so also, was the fact that he had walked out.'¹⁴⁹ Browne refused to explain the apparent 'walk-out' and indeed declined to give any further comment on the matter to the media, leaving the Minister greater scope to present his case.¹⁵⁰ Colley was able to use the public clash to promote the policy of amalgamation through the national media, especially the sympathetic *Irish Press*.

The public controversy generated by Browne's clash with the Minister was not, however, entirely favourable to Colley. *The Irish Independent*, which devoted an editorial entitled 'Clash at Galway' to the dispute on 7 February, argued that Browne's tactics and his 'occasionally militant language' were not the most important aspects of the debate.¹⁵¹ The editorial asserted that Browne's argument on the social value of small primary schools deserved consideration and that the future shape of rural education should be decided only after all relevant interests had been fully taken into account.¹⁵² The editorial position of *The Irish Independent* was broadly the same as the approach adopted by Fine Gael immediately after the clash between Colley and Browne. While Colley succeeded in promoting his policy effectively following the Bishop's criticisms, the public dispute also reinforced the parliamentary opposition to amalgamation in the short-term. The Minister took care to reassure the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party concerning the viability of the policy following his public dispute with Browne. He told a meeting of the parliamentary

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, *The Irish Press*, 'Minister replies to Bishop's criticisms', 7 February 1966, 'Mr. Colley on Galway meeting', 8 February 1966, 'No Further Comment - Dr. Browne', 8 February 1966

¹⁴⁹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.127

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, *The Irish Press*, 'No Further Comment - Dr. Browne', 8 February 1966

¹⁵¹ NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, *The Irish Independent*, 'Clash at Galway', 7 February 1966

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

party on 9 February that Browne's views were not shared by the majority of the Bishops or even by many clerical managers in his own diocese.¹⁵³ While several backbench TDs raised concerns about amalgamation, there was no serious challenge to the Minister's approach within his own party.¹⁵⁴ But Browne's intervention certainly encouraged Fine Gael to take a definite stand against amalgamation. When the Minister introduced a supplementary estimate to the Dáil on 15 February 1966, Denis Jones announced Fine Gael's opposition to any early amalgamation of small national schools.¹⁵⁵ Jones delivered a wide-ranging critique of the proposed re-organisation of primary education and demanded that no further action be taken to close small schools without a local public inquiry.¹⁵⁶ The Fine Gael spokesman regretted the Minister's failure to undertake such an inquiry before embarking on the closure of one-teacher schools: but he emphasized especially Fine Gael's opposition to the amalgamation of any two-teacher school, in the absence of a full local public inquiry involving parents and all other educational interests.¹⁵⁷ Jones argued that the Minister was proceeding with amalgamation too quickly: 'I feel that the Minister has moved too far, too fast.'¹⁵⁸ The Fine Gael proposal envisaged the indefinite suspension of the policy of amalgamation pending the completion of local public inquiries. Moreover Jones attacked not only the process of amalgamation but also the influence of *Investment* on the government's policy. The Fine Gael spokesman, who noted correctly that Colley's approach was based on the analysis of *Investment*, criticised the economic orientation of the OECD study. He argued that the survey team had failed to take into account that 'education is a social service', which could not be measured simply in economic terms.¹⁵⁹ He warned that economic factors, derived from the report, were taking precedence over social and community needs.¹⁶⁰

Jones' criticisms of the Minister's policy were supported by several other Fine Gael TDs, including Oliver J. Flanagan, who went considerably further than most of his party in attacking amalgamation. He denounced Colley's policy as the first step towards the abolition of the managerial system and the establishment of centralised state control over education.¹⁶¹ Flanagan welcomed Browne's intervention in the debate and called on

¹⁵³ UCDA, *Fianna Fáil Papers*, P.176/448, Minutes of the Parliamentary Party, 9 February 1966

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.220, col.1504, 15 February 1966

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, col.1546-1547

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, col.1513

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, col.1505-1506

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, col.1547

¹⁶¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.220, col.1711-1721, 16 February 1966

the Hierarchy to advise the government that the state was acting beyond its legitimate authority. He even raised the dreaded spectre of Communism as a result of excessive state intervention: 'Most certainly this is what we would expect as a Communist step.'¹⁶² Flanagan's extravagant denunciation of the policy of amalgamation and his wild allegations against Colley were not endorsed by other Fine Gael representatives. Jones, however, firmly established Fine Gael's opposition to the radical re-organisation of primary education, in his critique of the government's policy approach and the influence of *Investment*. Despite O'Donnell's initial support for amalgamation in July 1965, Fine Gael was seeking the indefinite deferral of the policy by February 1966.

The opposition parties were divided on the initiative, as the Labour Party proved more consistent than Fine Gael in its approach to amalgamation. The Labour spokesperson on education, Eileen Desmond TD, indicated on 15 February 1966 that the Party generally agreed with the Minister's policy.¹⁶³ Desmond noted indeed that the Labour Party's policy document *Challenge and Change in Education* advocated the amalgamation of small primary schools.¹⁶⁴ She commented that the Party saw a strong case for the closure of a significant number of small schools, although she also urged the Minister to examine each case on its merits. Desmond sought clarification only that free transport would be provided by the state for all pupils affected by amalgamation: Colley immediately intervened in the debate to confirm that the transport service would not involve any charge for pupils affected by the policy.¹⁶⁵ The Labour spokesperson showed no enthusiasm for Fine Gael's alternative proposal of a special public inquiry.¹⁶⁶ The Labour Party's general endorsement of amalgamation underlined that the initiative commanded the support of a substantial majority in the Dáil and facilitated the Minister's efforts to present Fine Gael's opposition to the policy as short-term political opportunism.

Colley gave no ground to critics of amalgamation in his detailed reply to the debate on 16-17 February 1966. He firstly denounced Flanagan's attack on the policy as 'mischievous, of evil intent and utterly irresponsible.'¹⁶⁷ The Minister dismissed contemptuously the Fine Gael TD's allegation that the government was seeking insidiously to undermine the managerial system. Colley also made a scathing attack on Fine Gael, accusing the largest opposition party of changing course on amalgamation in

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, col.1729-1731

¹⁶³ *Dáil Debates*, vol.220, col.1548-1550, 15 February 1966

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, col.1548-1550

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, col.1548-1550

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, col.1548-1550

¹⁶⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.220, col.1749, 16 February 1966

response to pressure from reactionary local interests. He derided Jones' proposal of a local public inquiry for each case of amalgamation as 'a gimmick', which underlined that Fine Gael did not deserve the confidence of the public.¹⁶⁸ He reiterated the case for amalgamation, emphasizing that the prevalence of small national schools caused an indefensible waste of teaching power.¹⁶⁹ Colley assured the Dáil that the policy implied no criticism of teachers in small schools, who had performed well in difficult conditions. But the Minister would not countenance the continued proliferation of small schools, which placed pupils at a relative educational disadvantage: 'This would condemn many more generations of our children to an education which we believe is not as good as what we can give them. I could not feel justified in condemning generations of our children to that.'¹⁷⁰ Colley was unequivocal in his defence of amalgamation, which he regarded as an essential prerequisite for the effective allocation of teaching resources and the achievement of a high standard of education for all pupils. He sharply dismissed suggestions that the policy should be postponed or implemented only on a pilot basis in specific areas. Colley maintained his position that amalgamation had to be implemented as a matter of urgency to provide adequate educational opportunity for all, as appropriate educational opportunities were not available to pupils in small schools: 'I am not prepared to condemn these children to these conditions in order to pacify the most reactionary elements of the community.'¹⁷¹ He also sought to rebut the social arguments used by most critics of his policy, emphasizing that the provision of adequate educational services in rural areas was socially desirable: while the policy was also economically sensible, this was merely 'a subsidiary reason' for amalgamation.¹⁷² The Minister asserted that the case for amalgamation was clearly established and it remained for him to implement the policy as a matter of urgency.¹⁷³ Colley's uncompromising re-affirmation of the policy underlined that the re-organisation of primary education would be pursued by the state even in the face of considerable public and parliamentary opposition.

Colley also strongly defended *Investment* against criticisms that it was dominated by economic considerations. He pointed out that the report provided a detailed analysis of the slower rate of progression achieved by pupils in smaller schools, as well as a description of the severe deficiencies in facilities, which characterised such schools.

¹⁶⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.220, col.1807, 17 February 1966

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, col.1783

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, col.1780-81

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, col.1795-1796

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, col.1783-1784

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, col.1795

While the survey team's terms of reference were certainly derived from economics, the study had ranged far beyond economic considerations in its rigorous analysis of the Irish educational system.¹⁷⁴ Colley's re-affirmation of the policy on amalgamation reflected the influence exerted by *Investment* on the Minister's approach. Colley's firm defence of the radical re-organisation of primary education was explicitly based on the analysis and data provided by the report. Opponents of amalgamation criticised the report because they correctly perceived its importance in underpinning the new approach, while the Minister made sure to defend the report, which provided the rationale for his policy. Although Colley's fervent personal commitment to the controversial initiative was evident, *Investment* provided the essential basis for the policy of amalgamation.

The government remained firmly committed to the re-organisation of primary education, despite the storm of controversy which followed the initiation of amalgamation. It was the Minister who took the leading role in establishing and promoting the new policy approach in the face of substantial opposition. Colley vigorously defended the policy against influential critics of amalgamation within the Catholic Hierarchy and Fine Gael. He was entirely committed to the implementation of the controversial initiative, which he regarded as an indispensable means of achieving equal educational opportunity for all primary school pupils. The policy of amalgamation could not have been implemented without the full support of the Taoiseach for Colley's reforming approach. Lemass fully endorsed the Minister's initiative and correctly advised Colley to secure wider public support for the policy as a matter of urgency. The amalgamation of small national schools proceeded rapidly under Colley's successors. The department closed over 900 small schools as part of the ongoing policy of amalgamation by 1972.¹⁷⁵ The effective implementation of the policy ensured that between 1966 and 1973 the number of one-teacher and two-teacher schools was reduced by about 1,100, or over a third of the original total.¹⁷⁶ The policy of amalgamation delivered a radical re-organisation of primary education within a decade of its introduction.

The initiation of the policy of amalgamation and the public clash between the Minister and the Bishop of Galway illustrated the extent of the transformation in the state's approach to education within a single decade. The Minister not only successfully

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, col.1795

¹⁷⁵ NA DFA 2003/17/383, Talk by Tomás Ó Floinn, *Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education, Recent Developments in Education in Ireland*, June 1972

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Coolahan, 'National Schools', Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.42

promoted a radical re-organisation of primary education but also proved willing to confront influential opponents of amalgamation publicly to secure the implementation of the policy. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the public dispute was that it happened at all. Such a clash between the Minister for Education and a senior Catholic prelate would have been inconceivable even a decade previously. The dispute was not the prelude to a full-scale conflict between the state and the most powerful stakeholder in the educational system, the Catholic Church, as the Hierarchy did not adopt Browne's position of intransigent opposition to the state's policy. But the clash at Galway marked the first open conflict between the Minister for Education and a Catholic Bishop concerning the reform and expansion of the educational system. Moreover the public dispute on the state's educational policy underlined the contrast between Colley's definite and authoritative approach to policy formulation and the timid, conservative practice followed by successive Ministers until the late 1950s.

Post-primary education: the policy of integration

Colley and the senior officials of the department envisaged a central role for the state in planning and co-ordinating the expansion of post-primary education. The Minister sought to achieve greater collaboration between the secondary school authorities and the VECs to facilitate the expansion of post-primary education. Colley clarified the government's approach to the expansion of post-primary education in his address to mark the opening of Clonmel Vocational School on 7 October 1965.¹⁷⁷ He aimed to ensure that the secondary and vocational schools would no longer operate separately in 'watertight compartments': it was envisaged that each system would provide courses traditionally associated with the other.¹⁷⁸ This sentiment very much echoed Hillery's policy announcement in May 1963. Colley's address, however, went considerably further than previous ministerial statements and signalled a significant development of the government's policy towards post-primary education. The Minister identified the achievement of equality of educational opportunity for all as his most important objective; 'my ideal is for all our children, whatever type of school they attend, to have equality of educational opportunity'.¹⁷⁹ He believed that the achievement of parity of standard and 'parity of esteem' between the two diverse strands of post-primary

¹⁷⁷ *The Clonmel Nationalist and Munster Advertiser*, 'Intermediate Certificate for Vocational Pupils, Minister's Clonmel Announcement', 9 October 1965

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

education was the first step towards equality of educational opportunity. Colley considered that such parity between the two systems was best achieved by ensuring that all pupils shared the same public examination. He therefore indicated that the provision of a three-year course of post-primary education for all children, involving a common post-primary course leading to a common Intermediate Certificate examination, was an integral part of the government's policy.¹⁸⁰ Significantly he drew attention to recent economic development, which provided the context for the government's approach. Colley commented that an increasing proportion of available employment in Ireland was of a type 'which demands a higher level of education than is possible of attainment in a two years post-primary course'.¹⁸¹ *Investment* underlined that economic expansion had produced a greater demand for a skilled and educated work force. The Minister's address indicated that the government regarded the expansion of post-primary education as an essential advance, which would provide an increased supply of skilled employees for the economy as well as a desirable extension of educational opportunity.

Colley acknowledged at Clonmel that the introduction of three-year course at post-primary level would present significant problems, especially in providing adequate accommodation and sufficient teachers.¹⁸² The scale of the challenge demanded close collaboration between the secondary and vocational school authorities. Colley appealed to the school authorities to consider post-primary education as a single unit:

'all post-primary school authorities should see our education system as a unit, as one system rather than two, and should accordingly, collaborate and co-operate as far as they can in the provision of the necessary facilities in connection with the Intermediate Certificate course'.¹⁸³

The achievement of a high level of collaboration between the two separate post-primary systems was an essential part of the Minister's approach. He confirmed that the state would act, in accordance with Hillery's policy announcement in May 1963, to overturn the limitations imposed on vocational education by agreement between the Minister and the Catholic Bishops in 1930. Colley was, however, not setting out simply to implement the policies outlined by his predecessor. His address at Clonmel provided a more definite and urgent agenda for reform than the ambitious but frequently ill-defined policies set out by Hillery in 1963. Colley aimed not only to provide 'parity of esteem' for vocational

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

education but also to break down the traditional barriers between academic and vocational education.¹⁸⁴ He also affirmed that equality of educational opportunity for all would be a key objective of the state's policy and indicated that the government regarded the provision of a three-year post-primary course for all pupils as an urgent economic and social necessity.

The Minister clarified his policy approach in public speeches and meetings with educational interest groups during the final three months of 1965. Colley informed the officers of the ASTI on 8 October 1965 that it was essential to make the best possible use of all available resources, including post-primary school buildings and teachers.¹⁸⁵ He commented bluntly that 'no new schools would be built haphazardly but {they} would be sited having regard to the information which would be made available from the investigation now proceeding regarding the future demand for post-primary education'.¹⁸⁶ The future development of post-primary education would be undertaken on the basis of coherent national planning. The survey of current post-primary facilities and future requirements, undertaken by the Development Branch, was designed to provide for rational planning of the future expansion of post-primary education.¹⁸⁷ Colley was unwilling to sanction the building of new schools in the traditional haphazard fashion. He imposed short-term restrictions on the building of post-primary schools in October 1965, suspending any action by the department to sanction the construction of new post-primary schools until the survey of educational needs in each area was completed.¹⁸⁸ Colley was not simply relying on ministerial exhortation to achieve his objectives, but was willing to assert the authority of the state over the development of post-primary education to secure effective long-term planning.

The Minister's approach was designed to ensure that the expansion of post-primary education was based on effective co-ordination of available resources and rational planning for educational needs. Colley defended the new approach in the Dáil against allegations by opposition TDs that he was simply cutting costs. Mark Clinton of Fine Gael led the attack on Colley's temporary restriction of post-primary school building, criticising particularly the lengthy delay in providing a vocational school at Clondalkin in

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, 29 October 1965, p.3

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.95

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.104

his own constituency.¹⁸⁹ The County Dublin VEC had recently secured approval in principle from the department to proceed with the construction of the school, seven years after purchasing a suitable site.¹⁹⁰ But the VEC was then informed on 15 October 1965 that sanction for the building of the new school was being withheld indefinitely: the department indicated that all proposals for additional post-primary facilities had to be considered in conjunction with the Development Branch's survey of future needs for post-primary education.¹⁹¹ Colley assured the Dáil on 21 October 1965 that the delay was not due to any financial short-fall, but was a consequence of the department's new approach, which was intended to guarantee proper educational planning.¹⁹² Clinton, who was a member of the VEC, raised the issue in the Adjournment Debate on 27 October 1965. Clinton made a reasonable case that the vocational school in Clondalkin should not be further delayed, but he also claimed that the department's response was 'nothing more than a delaying tactic and a brake on expenditure'.¹⁹³ Colley took the opportunity to outline the new official approach to the development of post-primary education. He dismissed Clinton's claim that cutbacks in capital expenditure dictated the department's approach. Colley informed the Dáil that he would have given the same answer to the VEC even if the department enjoyed unlimited resources for vocational school building.¹⁹⁴ The department's position on the provision of a vocational school in Clondalkin was part of an overall plan and not at all an attempt to curtail capital expenditure. He acknowledged that his new approach had not yet been fully communicated to the Dáil or the school authorities and pledged to issue a letter to all VECs and secondary school managers, which would explain the government's policy.¹⁹⁵ Colley re-affirmed that the government intended to provide some post-primary education for all but warned that its objective could not be achieved if existing educational facilities at post-primary level were not being fully utilised. 'One aim is to provide post-primary education for all children. To do that, or to have any hope of doing it and to have any sense of responsibility to the tax-payers in doing it, we must ensure that all our existing facilities are used to the full.'¹⁹⁶ Colley presented rational planning for educational

¹⁸⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 218, col.620, 27 October 1965

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 218, col.443, 21 October 1965

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, col.443

¹⁹³ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 218, col. 619, 27 October 1965

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, col.620

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, col.620-626

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, col.624

expansion as an essential prerequisite for the achievement of equality of educational opportunity. He emphasized that only effective planning could ensure the full use of the resources allocated to education: the government was seeking to develop post-primary education 'on a planned national basis' and was willing to accept the short-term drawbacks of the policy.¹⁹⁷ While Clondalkin's application for a vocational school had been delayed excessively, the Minister was determined not to concede ground to the first public challenge faced by his new approach.¹⁹⁸ Colley used the occasion provided by the debate to outline the new policy approach, which was based on detailed planning by the department for a more structured expansion of post-primary education.

The Minister's concern to achieve a planned expansion of educational facilities clearly demanded extensive intervention by the state to co-ordinate the separate systems of post-primary education. Colley made the case for effective co-ordination by the state of the development of post-primary education, in his address on 'Changes in Irish Education', to the Cork Branch of Tuairim on 19 November 1965.¹⁹⁹ He argued that the traditional haphazard approach to the building of post-primary schools was acceptable in the past, as there was plenty of room for expansion: but as the state now contained approximately 900 post-primary schools, the educational facilities currently available could provide almost enough accommodation to give some post-primary education to all children.²⁰⁰ He indicated that state intervention was essential to co-ordinate the provision of post-primary educational facilities, as the haphazard building of secondary and vocational schools could not continue indefinitely. Colley asserted that the Minister for Education alone had the necessary authority to direct the expansion of post-primary education, as neither the secondary school managers nor the VECs could be expected to stop the unplanned expansion: 'The point has arrived accordingly where the only existing central administrative authority, the State, must step in'.²⁰¹ Colley clarified the rationale for his decision to restrict further unplanned development of secondary and vocational education and established that the state would take the central role in directing educational expansion. The Minister firmly asserted that a central policy-making and administrative authority was required to achieve changes in post-primary education, due to the fragmented nature of the post-primary sector in Ireland. He correctly identified an

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, col.624-626

¹⁹⁸ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.105

¹⁹⁹ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, *Address by George Colley TD, Minister for Education, on Changes in Irish Education to the Cork Branch of Tuairim*, 19 November 1965

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, *The Irish Press*, 'Discussion Needed on Education', 20 November 1965

institutional fragmentation in post-primary education, which was caused by the division between the secondary schools and the vocational system, combined with the considerable autonomy enjoyed by the private secondary schools themselves. Colley was convinced that the Minister and the Department of Education provided the only central authority, which could direct the necessary changes in post-primary education.²⁰² It was Colley who established in unequivocal terms the central role of the Minister for Education in formulating and implementing policy changes at post-primary level. While Hillery had certainly established the right of the Minister to initiate important policy changes by 1963, he had acted in a cautious and understated fashion, seeking to avoid public clashes with private educational interests. Colley, however, zealously promoted the state's reforming approach through frequent public speeches and articles in the national media. He had done much to clarify and develop the government's policy for the expansion of post-primary education, in a series of parliamentary statements and public speeches, since his appointment in April 1965.²⁰³

The Minister's efforts to achieve rational planning of post-primary educational needs underlined the influence of *Investment* on the government's policy. The survey team suggested that the projected shortfall in qualified employees and the inequalities in educational participation might well be largely resolved within the constraints of available resources, if new organisational approaches were adopted.²⁰⁴ The report concluded that 'This will be the specific and urgent concern of any future planning programme for Irish education.'²⁰⁵ The Minister and senior officials were developing a policy for post-primary education, which was very much based on the conclusions of *Investment*. Colley echoed the survey team in drawing attention to the necessity to end the haphazard pattern of expansion and plan the further development of post-primary education. The department's efforts to evolve a planning programme, through the surveys undertaken by the Development Branch, clearly owed much to the report. Moreover Colley's conviction that only the effective co-ordination of the secondary and vocational systems offered the prospect of post-primary education for all was shaped by the survey team's conclusion that social inequalities in participation would not be overcome, without achieving a more efficient use of educational resources.²⁰⁶

²⁰² *The Irish Press*, 'Discussion Needed on Education', 20 November 1965

²⁰³ Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, pp.277-283

²⁰⁴ *Investment in Education, Part 1*, p.392

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Colley aimed to achieve a more effective use of resources in post-primary education by securing greater co-operation between the secondary school authorities and the VECs. Colley's policy for the expansion of post-primary education was outlined most fully in his letter to the secondary school managers and the Chief Executive Officers of the VECs on 4 January 1966.²⁰⁷ He reiterated that the government's primary objective was the achievement of equality of educational opportunity for all: in practical terms this involved the provision of post-primary education for all the children of the state. Colley also confirmed the government's intention to raise the statutory school leaving age to fifteen by 1970.²⁰⁸ These ambitious policy objectives, particularly the raising of the school leaving age, created a significant challenge for the Department of Education in terms of the provision of the necessary facilities and teaching resources by 1970. Colley emphasized that immediate action was required to prepare for the raising of the school leaving age: while the data secured by the Development Branch's national survey of post-primary facilities would be invaluable for future planning, the survey had not been fully completed by the Branch in January 1966 and the Minister wished to take immediate measures to bring about the full use of existing post-primary facilities. Colley therefore appealed to the school authorities to ensure that the secondary schools and the vocational system became a single educational unit. He urged that the institutional barriers between the two systems should be overcome, not least because the rigidity of the division denied many pupils an education which reflected their aptitudes. Significantly he also stressed the necessity for greater collaboration in post-primary education to promote national economic development. Colley argued that the effective use of all available educational resources, to achieve greater educational opportunity, would contribute to national economic salvation: 'our national survival demands the full use of all the talents of our citizens.'²⁰⁹ The Minister made a compelling case that the elimination of traditional barriers in post-primary education was not only essential on educational grounds but was an economic and social imperative.

Colley proposed the pooling of available resources between secondary and vocational schools, which should retain their distinctive character but would collaborate closely together to provide a common curriculum. 'What I have in mind is that there

²⁰⁷ Letter by George Colley, Minister for Education, *To the Authorities of Secondary and Vocational Schools*, 4 January 1966, *Official Programme, 44th Annual Convention, ASTI, 13th - 14th April 1966*, pp.26-29

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

should be a pooling of forces so that the shortcoming of one will be met from the resources of the other, thus making available to the student in either school the post-primary education best suited to him.²¹⁰ Colley recommended an extensive sharing of facilities and an inter-change of teachers between secondary and vocational schools. The department envisaged that vocational schools might provide facilities for the teaching of Woodwork in secondary schools, while the secondary school authorities might make available resources for the teaching of Science to vocational school pupils. The pooling of resources was designed to facilitate the delivery of a broad curriculum by both secondary and vocational schools. The revised Intermediate Certificate course was intended by the department to establish a common standard for all post-primary schools. Colley informed the school authorities that the common Intermediate Certificate examination would be taken by both vocational and secondary school pupils for the first time in 1969, following the revision of the junior cycle courses initiated by the department under Hillery. The department also intended to retain the Day Group Certificate examination, which would continue to be available to pupils who wished to take up apprenticeship training before completing the Intermediate Certificate course.²¹¹ The establishment of the common Intermediate Certificate examination, which was designed to create a broad post-primary curriculum, provided much of the rationale for the intensive pooling of resources proposed by the Minister. Colley and the senior officials were well aware that a broad curriculum, including academic and vocational elements, could be achieved only through collaboration between the secondary and vocational systems.

The Minister's concern to bring the separate systems together within a single educational unit was underlined by his comments on the role of comprehensive schools. Hillery had announced in May 1963 that the comprehensive schools were intended to provide post-primary education in local areas, which had previously lacked adequate educational facilities.²¹² Colley referred to this rationale for the establishment of the new schools in his letter, but he also drew attention to the importance of the comprehensive schools as a model for an integrated post-primary system: 'Apart from their local importance these schools are of general significance because they will signpost the way

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² NA D/T17405 C/63, *Statement by Dr. P.J. Hillery T.D., Minister for Education, in relation to Post-Primary Education*, p.7, 20 May 1963

to an integrated post-primary system of education.²¹³ Colley told the school authorities that the number of public comprehensive schools would not be very considerable. He aimed instead to secure the establishment of a comprehensive system in each region, which would be achieved by the exchange of facilities and other forms of collaboration between secondary and vocational schools. It was envisaged that such institutional collaboration would gradually make a comprehensive curriculum available to all post-primary pupils and would lay the foundations of an integrated post-primary system.²¹⁴

Colley did not simply outline his policy approach, but proposed specific measures to achieve the pooling of resources sought by the department. The Minister requested the secondary school authorities and representatives of the vocational system to formulate, through mutual consultation, proposals for the full use of existing facilities and the provision of additional facilities where necessary.²¹⁵ The school authorities were informed that meetings should be convened in each county, which would be attended by the secondary and vocational school authorities, as well as an inspector of the department. The inspector would assist the post-primary school authorities in considering the issues raised by the Minister and would transmit any proposed arrangements for collaboration to the department.²¹⁶ Colley envisaged that a pooling of resources would be achieved through the local meetings, which would consider the results of the national survey of post-primary education undertaken by the Development Branch.²¹⁷ A constructive process of local consultation was a vital element in Colley's approach to educational planning. The Minister provided a comprehensive list of issues, which were to be considered by each local conference. He asked the conferences in the first instance to assess if existing facilities were not being fully utilised in any school: if so, the authorities were told to examine the potential for students from other schools to use the relevant facilities.²¹⁸ The department wished to ascertain whether temporary arrangements could be made between secondary and vocational schools to provide additional accommodation. Colley requested the conferences to give a detailed opinion

²¹³ Letter by George Colley, Minister for Education, *To the Authorities of Secondary and Vocational Schools*, 4 January 1966, *Official Programme, 44th Annual Convention, ASTI, 13-14 April 1966*, pp.26-29

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 220, col.1753-1754, 16 February 1966

²¹⁸ Letter by George Colley, Minister for Education, *To the Authorities of Secondary and Vocational Schools*, 4 January 1966, *Official Programme, 44th Annual Convention, ASTI, 13-14 April 1966*, pp.26-29

on the need for additional facilities in each area and the way in which such facilities could be provided most effectively. The Minister also sought to promote the exchange of teachers between secondary and vocational schools. He asked the school authorities to explore the possibility of an inter-change of teachers, which could facilitate the introduction of subjects to schools where they had not previously been taught and promote the establishment of a comprehensive curriculum. The conferences were requested to evaluate whether the teaching resources in their area were being utilised most effectively: if additional teaching resources were required, the authorities were asked to give their opinion on the appointment of additional teachers to serve all the post-primary schools in their area.²¹⁹ Colley also raised the possibility of an inter-change of pupils between secondary and vocational schools: he suggested the formation of common classes, composed of pupils from both systems, for subjects which would not otherwise be provided due to lack of sufficient demand in the secondary or vocational schools. Finally the conferences were asked to consider how obstacles to the pooling of resources should be overcome. Colley sought effective co-operation between the post-primary school authorities on the basis that such collaboration offered the best prospect of providing increased educational opportunity for all post-primary pupils.²²⁰

Although Colley's appeal for general collaboration between the secondary and vocational school authorities appeared sensible and uncontroversial, his initiative marked a radical policy departure in the context of the rigidly segregated pattern of post-primary education in 1966. The Minister was seeking to break down traditional institutional barriers in post-primary education, which had been firmly established for a generation. Moreover Colley demanded not simply a new co-operative approach by the school authorities, but the effective co-ordination of educational resources at post-primary level to overcome the efficiency gaps in the system identified by *Investment*. The Minister's approach required substantial organisational and curriculum changes on the part of secondary and vocational schools to provide for the establishment of a comprehensive system. The pooling of resources sought by Colley was an essential element in the gradual integration of post-primary education, which was a key objective of the department. While Colley emphasized that secondary and vocational schools would retain their distinctive character, he clearly proposed the integration in practical terms of

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

the secondary and vocational systems.²²¹ Colley's initiative on 4 January 1966 envisaged nothing less than a sweeping reform and re-organisation of post-primary education. The Minister's letter to the school authorities was as much an unequivocal statement of the government's policy as an appeal for collaboration. Colley's proposal for wide-ranging collaboration between the secondary and vocational schools was one of the most radical initiatives undertaken by any Minister to achieve educational reform since the foundation of the state.

Colley sought to build support for a comprehensive system of post-primary education by publicising his approach through the national media. He contributed an article to *The Sunday Press*, entitled 'Our Future in Education: the comprehensive school' on 9 January 1966.²²² He reiterated that the new schools were intended to serve two key objectives of the government's policy. The most obvious purpose of a comprehensive school was to supply a broad post-primary education to children in specific rural areas. But Colley also placed considerable emphasis on the role of the comprehensive school as a model for the proposed re-organisation of post-primary education: 'but over and above that they are intended to serve as demonstration centres and so to encourage school authorities to take up the comprehensive programme.'²²³ The Minister passionately advocated the creation of a comprehensive system of post-primary education, which would be based on effective collaboration between the secondary and vocational schools. He regarded the comprehensive system as an indispensable prerequisite for the achievement of equality of educational opportunity: 'Equality of educational opportunity is inherent in such a system. That is why the comprehensive school appeals to me so much.'²²⁴ He looked forward to the adoption of a comprehensive programme by secondary and vocational schools. Colley also emphasized the importance of the extension of educational opportunity for national economic development: 'Our prosperity as a nation depends on the abilities of our people and it is therefore of paramount importance that we seek out and develop the talents not just of the few who are intellectually gifted but of all our children.'²²⁵ The Minister reiterated the familiar assertion that education made an invaluable contribution to economic development. He also argued that equality of educational opportunity would allow for the fullest

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *The Sunday Press*, 'Our Future in Education: the comprehensive school', 9 January 1966

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

development of the nation's human resources. Moreover this essential extension of educational opportunity could be achieved only through the integration of the divided strands of post-primary education. Colley presented the establishment of a comprehensive system of post-primary education as an essential objective, which would pave the way for the achievement of equality of educational opportunity and a fuller development of the nation's economic potential.

Colley's initiative initially secured a mildly positive response from most school authorities. The Minister's intention to extend educational opportunity was supported in principle by the VECs and the religious orders involved in post-primary education.²²⁶ But the department soon discovered that the existence of general goodwill towards the Minister's objectives did not necessarily translate into co-operation with the state's policy. Colley told the Dáil on 16 February 1966 that he was 'very heartened' by the positive reaction of secondary school managers and the VECs to his letter.²²⁷ He expressed confidence that there was a genuine desire for co-operation at local level by the post-primary school authorities. Colley was, however, much too optimistic about the prospects for collaboration in the short-term.²²⁸ Vocational school authorities and teachers were willing to contemplate various forms of co-operation, as the sharing of teachers and facilities would help them to provide the common Intermediate Certificate course in vocational schools from September 1966. The Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA), which represented the interests of the VECs, broadly supported Colley's policy. The IVEA's President, Canon John McCarthy, declared in June 1966 that the VECs fully endorsed many aspects of the government's approach, including the extension of the school leaving age and the establishment of technical colleges.²²⁹ He pledged that the IVEA would respond constructively to Colley's proposals, as the VECs wished to co-operate fully with the upgrading of the post-primary educational system.²³⁰ The VTA gave the most enthusiastic response to the Minister's approach. Charles McCarthy commented in January 1966 that Colley's initiative was 'extraordinarily significant'.²³¹ McCarthy fully endorsed co-operation between the secondary and vocational authorities at local level and urged the Minister to promote 'a partnership of

²²⁶ Irish Vocational Education Association, Congress Report 1966, pp.28-36 (Dublin, 1966)

Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.96

²²⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.220, col.1755, 16 February 1966

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.129

²²⁹ IVEA, Congress Report 1966, pp.28-36 (Dublin, 1966)

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.31-32

²³¹ *The Sunday Press*, 'Our Future in Education: the role of vocational schools', 16 January 1966

institutions' between primary, secondary and vocational schools.²³² But Colley's vision of an integrated post-primary system received a generally cautious response from established educational interests at secondary level. Secondary school managers who enjoyed considerable autonomy tended to be sceptical of the Minister's initiative.²³³ The Standing Committee of the CCSS agreed on 18 February 1966 that the principle of co-operation was excellent but identified 'enormous difficulties to be cleared before what the Minister seems to envisage can be a reality'.²³⁴ Likewise the Education Committee of the Teaching Brothers' Association (TBA), which represented the male teaching orders, welcomed Colley's initiative in principle on 29 January, but warned the Minister that the sharing of facilities at post-primary level involved grave managerial and administrative problems.²³⁵ Colley's inclusive approach did not secure the acceptance by most managerial authorities of educational planning. The school authorities in many areas took a tentative approach to the initiation of the local meetings and Colley soon appointed inspectors of the department to convene the meetings.²³⁶ The department faced considerable difficulties in achieving collaboration between secondary and vocational school authorities, not least the reservations of the Catholic Hierarchy, which maintained close connections with the Catholic managerial bodies.

The Standing Committee of the Hierarchy expressed considerable disquiet at the implications of Colley's policy for post-primary education as early as 11 January 1966. The Bishops did not oppose the policy of collaboration, recommending that Catholic secondary schools should agree to co-operate with the Minister's request 'insofar as it was feasible'.²³⁷ The Standing Committee advised each Bishop to instruct the Headmasters of the secondary schools in his diocese to initiate informal consultation with local vocational authorities concerning possible forms of co-operation. But the Bishops emphasized that such consultation would involve no formal commitment by the secondary schools to specific measures and should be undertaken primarily to forestall the intervention of the department in the re-organisation of post-primary education: 'This consultation should take place before any Inspector of the Department arrived to take a

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.200

²³⁴ Minutes, Standing Committee, CCSS, 18 February 1966

²³⁵ Irish Christian Brothers' Archives, St. Mary's Province, TBA, Br. P.J. Walsh and Br. F.B. Donovan to Colley, 20 February 1966

²³⁶ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.199

²³⁷ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes, Standing Committee of the Irish Hierarchy, p.1, 11 January 1966

hand in the matter'.²³⁸ The Standing Committee also instructed the Episcopal Commission on Post-Primary Education to consider the Minister's policy as a whole and seek clarification from Colley on any specific aspects of concern, which were identified by the Commission.²³⁹ While the Bishops did not object to some collaboration between secondary and vocational schools, they advised the Catholic school managers to cooperate with the Minister's policy only as far the authorities considered his approach to be feasible. Moreover the Hierarchy was seriously alarmed by the prospect of extensive state intervention in the organisation of secondary education. The cautious approach recommended by the Bishops to the Catholic managers underlined that the participation of the secondary school authorities in the process of consultation gave no guarantee of a constructive attitude on their part to educational planning.

The Protestant educational authorities took a very different approach to the proposed integration of post-primary education. The General Synod of the Church of Ireland indeed decided to seek the re-organisation of secondary education well before Colley's appeal to the school authorities. The General Synod established in May 1962 an Advisory Committee on Secondary Education in the Republic of Ireland, chaired by Dr. R.G. Perdue, Bishop of Cork. Dr. Kenneth Milne, the secretary of the Church of Ireland Board of Education from February 1963, also served as secretary to the new Committee.²⁴⁰ The Advisory Committee undertook a detailed analysis of Protestant secondary schools in the Republic and made its report to the General Synod in May 1965.²⁴¹ The Committee, which made use of the information supplied by Protestant schools to the OECD survey team, recommended that educational standards could be maintained and improved only through the creation of fewer and larger schools. The report of the Advisory Committee was a blueprint for the radical reform of Protestant secondary education. The report advised that the establishment of a smaller number of large schools for the Protestant community was necessary to ensure the provision of adequate facilities and staffing resources for the secondary schools.²⁴² The Advisory Committee made a strong case for a root-and-branch re-organisation of Protestant

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., p.2

²⁴⁰ *Journal of the 1st Session of the 31st General Synod of the Church of Ireland, 15-17 May 1962*, ed. J.L.B. Deane, pp.119-120 (Dublin, 1962)

²⁴¹ *Report of the Advisory Committee on Secondary Education in the Republic of Ireland, Journal of the 2nd Session of the 32nd General Synod of the Church of Ireland, 11-13 May 1965*, ed. J.L.B. Deane, p.140 (Dublin, 1965)

²⁴² Ibid., pp.140-143

secondary education: 'We therefore consider that there must be a substantial planned reduction in the number of schools.'²⁴³ The General Synod on 11-13 May 1965 accepted the basic principles of the report and adopted the Committee's proposal for the creation of a new group, composed of representatives of all the Protestant denominations, which would formulate a common policy for Protestant secondary education in the Republic.²⁴⁴ The Secondary Education Committee (SEC), which was established in 1965, consisted of representatives of the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church and the Religious Society of Friends. The SEC was authorised to develop a common approach for the reform of Protestant secondary education in the Republic and to undertake negotiations with the Minister and other authorities for the implementation of this policy.²⁴⁵

The new Committee's priorities closely complemented the policy objectives of the Minister for Education. The SEC agreed that its most vital task was 'to secure that the best possible educational opportunity is available to every child'.²⁴⁶ The Committee set out to impress upon the Protestant school authorities the necessity to plan effectively for the future in accordance with changing educational requirements and drew attention to the importance of co-operation between Protestant schools. The SEC's commitment to improved educational opportunity for Protestant pupils and its concern to achieve a radical re-organisation of Protestant secondary education, on the basis of effective planning, dovetailed neatly with the state's policy. Certainly the SEC's approach was entirely consistent with Colley's appeal to the post-primary school authorities for effective collaboration to ensure the coherent planning of educational needs. The first report of the Committee, which was accepted by the General Synod in May 1966, explicitly acknowledged the common ground shared by the Minister and the SEC: 'We are in sympathy with the general thinking of the Minister for Education, Mr. George Colley, and his predecessor, Dr. Hillery, as regards the development of post-primary education.'²⁴⁷ The SEC not only endorsed Colley's general approach to the expansion of post-primary education but also looked forward to the initiation of specific mergers and

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.143

²⁴⁴ *Journal of the 2nd Session of the 32nd General Synod of the Church of Ireland*, 11-13 May 1965, ed. J.L.B. Deane, lxxxiii, (Dublin, 1965)

²⁴⁵ *Journal of the 3rd Session of the 32nd General Synod of the Church of Ireland*, 10-12 May 1966, ed. J.L.B. Deane, pp.86-87 (Dublin, 1965)

²⁴⁶ *SEC Report, 1966, Journal of the 3rd Session of the 32nd General Synod of the Church of Ireland*, 10-12 May 1966, ed. J.L.B. Deane, pp.133-135 (Dublin, 1966)

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

amalgamations by Protestant secondary schools in the short-term.²⁴⁸ The Protestant educational authorities took a pro-active approach to educational reform, initiating the re-organisation of their secondary schools for the benefit of the Protestant community. The Protestant churches, especially the authorities of the Church of Ireland, indeed made a definite commitment to the re-organisation of post-primary education in the Republic, even before the Department of Education itself.

The more numerous and influential Catholic educational authorities, however, showed little inclination to support a wide-ranging reform of post-primary education. The managers of the Catholic secondary schools were willing to participate in the meetings organised by the department, but often used the process as a forum to express their concerns about the Minister's policy. The TBA urged Colley on 20 February 1966 to adopt 'a go-slow policy' towards collaboration, warning that any attempt to proceed rapidly with the initiative would be counter-productive: 'Over hastiness, we fear, may only lead to greater confusion and dissatisfaction'.²⁴⁹ The CCSS, the largest Catholic managerial body, feared that the department was seeking to undermine the autonomy of the private secondary schools.²⁵⁰ The conclusions of *Investment*, especially its criticism of duplication of educational resources and the haphazard building of small schools, disturbed the Catholic managerial bodies, who feared the extent of the report's influence on the department's approach.²⁵¹ The planning meetings, which were initiated following Colley's letter, generally proved unproductive as a result of practical and political problems which obstructed collaboration. Certainly practical difficulties, such as the distance between vocational and secondary schools in many areas, impeded the development of the pooling of resources proposed by the Minister.²⁵² But secondary school managers, who were accustomed to administrative freedom and autonomy from the state, were willing to use practical problems as a means of delaying any significant changes. Sr. Randles, who was familiar with the attitudes of the Catholic managerial bodies as a member of the CCSS, commented: 'There was an unspoken feeling that if it could be shown that the Minister's proposals were not feasible on practical grounds, the alarming prospect of great changes in the educational structures would recede.'²⁵³ The

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Irish Christian Brothers' Archive, St. Mary's Province, TBA Papers, Br. P.J. Walsh and Br. F.B. Donovan to Colley, 20 February 1966

²⁵⁰ Minutes, Central Executive Committee, CCSS, 6 October 1966

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, E. Doyle, *Leading the Way: Managing Voluntary Secondary Schools*, p.42 (Dublin, 2000)

²⁵² Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, pp.200-201

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

ASTI was also suspicious of the implications of the state's policy, not least because the Association was not initially given representation at the planning meetings. The ASTI Convention on 13-14 April 1966 passed a resolution demanding that the Association should 'guard zealously the rights of secondary teachers and of secondary education in general in view of the Minister's policy of integration.'²⁵⁴ The Association's leadership was mandated to oppose any arrangement, which would compel a secondary teacher to teach in a different type of school. The ASTI also pledged to oppose any other arrangement sought by the department 'which might later be used to undermine the secondary teachers' independence of state control.'²⁵⁵ The ASTI delegates in April 1966 were concerned to protect secondary teachers against compulsory redeployment. The ASTI, however, also aimed to preserve an exclusive status for secondary teaching in relation to other segments of the teaching profession and to retain the autonomy from state control traditionally enjoyed by secondary schools. The Association later secured representation at the rationalisation meetings, which considered the department's plans for post-primary education, but remained hostile to the state's efforts to create an integrated system of post-primary education.²⁵⁶ The ASTI clearly shared the reluctance of the Catholic secondary school authorities to co-operate with the reshaping of post-primary education proposed by the Minister.

Colley's initiative therefore made little progress in the short-term, due to real practical difficulties and to the reluctance of most established educational interests in the secondary system to promote the extensive collaboration sought by the department. Colley himself conceded to the Dáil on 16 February that co-operation between secondary and vocational schools was 'at a preliminary stage', noting that further local meetings would be necessary.²⁵⁷ The achievement of the local collaboration sought by the Minister proved highly problematic. The managerial authorities were reluctant to make any definite decisions at the initial meetings on the pooling of educational resources.²⁵⁸ Indeed when the ASTI sought information from the managerial bodies on the local meetings, the Association was effectively told by the CHA that there was nothing to report. The CHA informed the ASTI officers in May 1966 that secondary school managers had engaged in consultation with vocational school representatives at local

²⁵⁴ *Official Programme, 45th Annual Convention of the ASTI, 1967*, p.24

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Official Programme, 45th Annual Convention of the ASTI, 1967*, Report of Deputation to the Minister for Education, pp.65-67

²⁵⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 220, col. 1755, 16 February 1966

²⁵⁸ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, pp.200-201

level, but that ‘nothing positive has so far emerged.’²⁵⁹ It was a revealing admission by the influential Catholic association that no tangible progress towards collaboration had so far been achieved. Senior officials of the department echoed this judgment. Seán O’Connor gave a pessimistic assessment of the situation to the Minister in May 1966, advising Colley that the initiative would fail unless the department acted immediately to finance specialist facilities in areas where co-operation was attainable.²⁶⁰ O’Connor was pessimistic about the prospects for the policy of co-operation in the short-term, even if the department secured additional funding to support co-operative local initiatives: ‘The difficulties were daunting and the advantages doubtful’.²⁶¹ The scepticism of the powerful Catholic managerial bodies and the Catholic Hierarchy presented a formidable challenge to Colley’s initiative. The Catholic secondary school associations did not openly oppose the Minister’s policy, but they were reluctant to collaborate with the integration of the educational system, which would curtail their traditional autonomy. It was not surprising that the Minister’s unprecedented initiative did not succeed, in the short-term, in achieving a general pooling of resources between secondary and vocational schools. But his initiative made the integration of the divided systems of post-primary education a core element of the state’s educational policy. The objective of collaboration would not be abandoned by his successors, although different methods of achieving similar results would be necessary. While the practical results of his policy were very limited in the short-term, Colley brought collaboration between the secondary and vocational systems to the forefront of the government’s agenda in education.

Colley was more successful in pursuing other key elements of the state’s policy to achieve an integrated system of post-primary education. He acted decisively to complete the revision of the junior cycle post-primary curriculum, which was designed to ensure the introduction of the common Intermediate Certificate courses for all post-primary pupils in September 1966. While the department had drafted revised courses for the Intermediate Certificate examination by 1965, there had been minimal consultation with the managerial bodies and teaching unions on the new curriculum.²⁶² Colley was determined to involve the educational interest groups fully in the process of curriculum reform. The department convened a preliminary meeting between the managerial bodies, the ASTI and departmental officials concerning the revised Intermediate Certificate in

²⁵⁹ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, pp.1-3, 21 May 1966

²⁶⁰ O’Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.129

²⁶¹ O’Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.130

²⁶² Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.1, 15 May 1965

May 1965, shortly after Colley's appointment as Minister for Education.²⁶³ A joint meeting between the department's officials and all the secondary educational associations was held on 3 June 1965: the officials sought mainly to reassure the managers that the revised Intermediate Certificate would not adversely affect the secondary schools.²⁶⁴ All the post-primary educational associations were invited to participate fully in the revision of the Intermediate Certificate courses. The department informed the managerial authorities and the teaching associations on 24 September 1965 that a series of subject committees would be convened to discuss the proposed syllabuses for the common examination. The Minister decided that each subject committee would include representatives of the secondary managerial bodies, the VECs, the ASTI and the VTA, as well as the relevant inspectors of the department.²⁶⁵ The introduction of subject committees including representatives of all the educational associations was a significant innovation, which facilitated the participation of the private stake-holders in the reform of the curriculum. The department established fourteen subject committees to finalise the revised courses, which included not only the traditional academic subjects for the Intermediate Certificate, but also practical courses such as Manual Training: Civics was also included on the post-primary school programme for the first time.²⁶⁶ The department ensured that the managerial bodies and teaching associations were involved in the creation of a comprehensive curriculum for post-primary education.

The consideration of the revised syllabuses by the subject committees began in December 1965 and was completed by May 1966, although the approval of certain courses was delayed due to disagreement between officials and representatives of the associations on the course content. The ASTI and the secondary managerial authorities argued strongly for the introduction of separate courses in History and Geography, which were combined as a single course for the Intermediate Certificate, but the officials rejected a proposal to separate the two subjects.²⁶⁷ The officials later accepted a compromise, which provided for the introduction of three new joint courses in History and Geography, allowing pupils to take each subject as a major or minor element of a joint syllabus.²⁶⁸ The department concluded the consultative process by arranging a general meeting with the school associations to agree the revised courses on 1 April

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.2, 5 June 1965

²⁶⁵ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, pp.2-3, 2 October 1965

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, pp.2-3, 11 December 1965

²⁶⁸ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.4, 7 May 1966

1966.²⁶⁹ Although the meeting did not resolve all the outstanding issues, most of the revised courses received general agreement by May.²⁷⁰ The department, which was concerned to bring the revised courses into effect by September 1966, brushed aside any remaining reservations on the part of the school associations. The ASTI expressed its opposition to the format of the revised Higher Course in English on 24 June 1966, but the department dismissed the association's objections and brought the course into effect.²⁷¹ The Minister had provided for extensive consultation with the post-primary associations, but had no intention of abdicating the department's power to set the curriculum.

The department succeeded in establishing a broad-based post-primary curriculum from September 1966. Ó Raifeartaigh issued Circular M.27/66, which provided for the introduction of the common Intermediate Certificate examination, to the school authorities in June 1966.²⁷² The Secretary announced that the scope and content of the Intermediate Certificate courses had been revised, in the context of Hillery's policy announcement on 20 May 1963, which envisaged a common public examination for all pupils undertaking post-primary education. He indicated that the revised curriculum would come into effect in September 1966, opening the way for the implementation of the common examination in 1969. The department provided a revised list of no less than twenty-five possible examination subjects, which included all the academic subjects taught in secondary schools and vocational courses in Woodwork, Metalwork and Mechanical Drawing.²⁷³ Civics was included for the first time as a compulsory subject in secondary schools, although it was not to be examined for the Intermediate Certificate.²⁷⁴ The department outlined the new syllabuses for most subjects and established revised conditions for the common examination. The Secretary indicated that recognised pupils in all post-primary schools and approved secondary tops of national schools would be eligible to take the examination.²⁷⁵ The pupils were required, in accordance with Colley's commitment to provide a minimum course of post-primary education for all pupils, to follow the Intermediate Certificate course set by the department for three years. The department's officials were concerned to maintain the academic standard of the

²⁶⁹ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.3, 26 March 1966

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.4, 7 May 1966

²⁷¹ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.1, 24 June 1966

²⁷² Circular M.27/66, Department of Education, June 1966

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.1

²⁷⁴ Circular M.54/66, Department of Education, December 1966

²⁷⁵ Circular M.27/66, Section B, Intermediate Certificate Examination, p.1, Department of Education, June 1966

examination and to meet the concerns expressed by several secondary school associations, including the CCSS and the ASTI, that the new common examination would cause a decline in the standard of the Certificate.²⁷⁶ The Minister decided to discontinue the award of a separate Honours Intermediate Certificate, but stipulated that Honours would still be awarded in various subjects. The senior officials considered that an increase in the standard for Honours was desirable for the common examination but argued that raising the minimum standard to 70% was excessive due to the number of pupils undertaking the course for the first time.²⁷⁷ Colley accepted the advice of the officials and the circular provided for an increase in the Honours standard in any subject from 60% to 65%.²⁷⁸ The Minister adopted a balanced approach, seeking to ensure that the standard of the examination was maintained, without placing an excessive burden on vocational school pupils who would be undertaking the examination for the first time. Circular M.27/66 ushered in the common Intermediate Certificate examination and provided the basis for a comprehensive curriculum embracing all post-primary schools. The wide range of the revised courses undermined the previously rigid separation between the academic curriculum of the secondary schools and the practical approach of the vocational system. The revised Intermediate Certificate programme offered secondary and vocational schools an opportunity to provide a comprehensive curriculum for their pupils. The department under Colley secured the implementation of a wide-ranging reform of the Intermediate Certificate curriculum, which effectively promoted the government's objective of a comprehensive post-primary system.

Colley also took effective measures to establish the first group of comprehensive schools. Colley was fully committed to the early opening of the first three comprehensive schools, at Cootehill, Carraroe and Shannon.²⁷⁹ The department initiated the construction of the first group of comprehensive schools in 1965. The Minister secured an additional allocation of £90,000 for the new schools, as part of the supplementary Estimate approved by the Dáil on 17 February 1966, because the construction process was proceeding more rapidly than the senior officials had initially anticipated.²⁸⁰ The Minister, however, faced greater difficulties in establishing the new

²⁷⁶ Minutes, Standing Committee, CCSS, 30 September 1965, Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.3, 26 March 1966

²⁷⁷ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.3, 26 March 1966

²⁷⁸ Circular M.27/66, Section B, Intermediate Certificate Examination, Department of Education, June 1966

²⁷⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.216, col.972-973, 16 June 1966

²⁸⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.220, col.1501-1502, 15 February 1966

schools than he was willing to acknowledge publicly. The Catholic Hierarchy, which had reluctantly accepted the introduction of comprehensive education in 1964, raised renewed objections in 1966 concerning the arrangements for the management and ownership of the new schools. The Standing Committee of the Hierarchy expressed dissatisfaction on 11 January 1966 with a list of draft regulations issued by Colley for the management of the comprehensive schools.²⁸¹ The Bishops complained that Colley's regulations differed significantly from Hillery's assurances to the Hierarchy in June 1963. They were dissatisfied that the regulations provided for the appointment of the board of management by the Minister and made no provision for the appointment of Trustees for the schools. The Bishops had hoped that the department would allow clerical Trustees to purchase the school sites so that the new schools would not be owned directly by the state. The Standing Committee also objected to the clause giving the board of management the power to appoint teachers, arguing that the Bishop's nominee, as chair of the board, should have the right to appoint the teachers, subject to approval by the Minister.²⁸² The Standing Committee instructed the three Bishops concerned to withhold their acceptance of the regulations and postpone the nomination of an episcopal representative to the board of management of each school, until the Hierarchy secured satisfactory clarification from the Minister concerning the regulations.²⁸³ The revival of the Hierarchy's reservations about the management of the new schools was potentially a serious obstacle to the implementation of the government's policy.

Colley acted to overcome the objections of the Bishops by providing assurances concerning the composition of the boards of management and the conditions governing the appointment of teachers.²⁸⁴ The Minister confirmed that the local Bishop would appoint the chair of the board of management for the comprehensive school. The regulations gave the Bishop's nominee the right to veto any candidate for appointment on grounds of faith and morals and the Minister did not concede any additional powers to the episcopal nominee over the appointment of teachers.²⁸⁵ Colley, however, provided the Bishops with a draft of the Form of Agreement, which would govern the relationship between the board and the teachers. He also proposed that the school premises should be

²⁸¹ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes, Standing Committee of the Irish Hierarchy, p.1, 11 January 1966

²⁸² *Ibid.*, *Observations on regulations for Comprehensive Schools*, January 1966

²⁸³ Minutes, Standing Committee of the Irish Hierarchy, p.1, 11 January 1966

²⁸⁴ Minutes, General meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, p.7, 21-22 June 1966

²⁸⁵ Minutes, Standing Committee of the Irish Hierarchy, p.1, 11 January 1966, *Regulations for Comprehensive Schools*

vested in Trustees appointed by the local Bishop, although the role of the Trustees would be essentially nominal, as they would have no other function than holding the premises. The Bishops were 'reasonably satisfied' with the Minister's assurances concerning the management and staffing arrangements for the comprehensive schools, which were considered at the general meeting of the Hierarchy on 21-22 June 1966.²⁸⁶ The Hierarchy expressed scepticism about the nominal role of the Trustees, asking Dr. Henry Murphy, Bishop of Limerick, to clarify certain points concerning the ownership of the schools with the department. Murphy made this query on 24 June 1966, but did not receive a full reply until 24 April 1967, as the officials decided to seek legal advice on the Deed of Trust.²⁸⁷ The department then argued that the Bishops' concerns about the ownership of the schools were largely irrelevant, as the Minister, who owned the property, was willing to grant a lease of 999 years to the school Trustees. The department declined, however, to allow the Trustees to purchase the sites for the schools as the Hierarchy wished.²⁸⁸ While the Bishops' complaint about the Deed of Trust was not fully resolved, the Hierarchy was satisfied enough with the Minister's assurances that no further obstacles were placed in the way of the new scheme.²⁸⁹ The first group of the new schools, St. Aidan's Comprehensive school in Cootehill, Scoil Chuimsitheach Naomh Ciarán, Carraroe and St. Patrick's Comprehensive school in Shannon Airport, opened their doors to pupils in September 1966.²⁹⁰ While the facilities for the first comprehensive schools were not completed by 1966, the department proceeded with the opening of the new schools, aiming to complete the necessary building work by 1968.²⁹¹ Although Colley was no longer the Minister for Education in September 1966, he had given an essential impetus to the implementation of the pilot scheme. While Hillery made the initial policy announcement, Colley publicly identified the introduction of comprehensive education as an essential priority for the government and secured the funding for the scheme. The Minister and senior officials deftly avoided a serious conflict with the Hierarchy, which would have delayed or perhaps even derailed the implementation of the scheme. Colley

²⁸⁶ Minutes, General meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, p.7, 21-22 June 1966

²⁸⁷ *McQuaid Papers*, H. Murphy to S. O'Connor, 24 June 1966, S. Ó Mathuna to H. Murphy, 24 April 1967

²⁸⁸ *McQuaid Papers*, Ó Mathuna to Murphy, 24 April 1967

²⁸⁹ Minutes, General meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, p.7, 21-22 June 1966

²⁹⁰ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, *List of the Schools Providing Free Post-Primary Education for day pupils from September 1967*

²⁹¹ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1966-67*, pp.117-118 (Dublin, 1966)

played the leading role in ensuring that the comprehensive schools' pilot project was implemented as quickly as possible.

The establishment of the first three comprehensive schools in September 1966 saw the creation of a new hybrid element within the Irish educational system. The introduction of comprehensive education, which combined the academic and vocational streams for the first time, underlined that the traditional division between secondary and vocational education was being effectively undermined by the state. It is true that the state's initiative led to the establishment of only a relatively small number of comprehensive schools. Indeed only fifteen comprehensive schools had been established in the Republic by 1977 and the building of comprehensive schools gradually ceased with the emergence of community schools in the 1970s.²⁹² But the department under Colley's direction implemented the first tangible measures to erode the traditional barriers between secondary and vocational education since 1922. Moreover the establishment of comprehensive schools, even on a pilot basis, made direct intervention by the state in the provision of post-primary education a reality for the first time.

Colley enjoyed considerable success in converting the reforming ideals announced by his predecessor into reality. He was sometimes less successful in implementing innovative proposals of his own, not least because he was the Minister for Education for barely fifteen months. But Colley did not simply implement policy ideas inherited from Hillery or manage the government's reforming policies. O'Connor was essentially correct when he commented that Colley 'was determined to refashion second-level education in its structures and in its content.'²⁹³ He sought to apply the analysis of *Investment* to the expansion of the post-primary sector and proposed a radical reform of post-primary education, which was designed to co-ordinate the use of available resources in secondary and vocational education. The Minister gave a central role to the Development Branch in planning and regulating the future expansion of post-primary education. The adoption of long-term educational planning by the department under Colley brought extensive intervention by the state in directing educational expansion. While he did not achieve his most ambitious objectives, Colley certainly established coherent planning for educational needs as an integral part of the government's policy for the development of post-primary education.

²⁹² I. Bonel-Elliott, Ph.D thesis *La Politique de l'enseignement du second degré en république d'Irlande 1963-93*, p.325 (Paris, 1994), L. O'Flaherty, *Management and Control in Irish Education*, p.40 (Dublin, 1992)

²⁹³ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.135

Higher education

Colley's commitment to long-term planning of educational needs did not produce any great change in the state's approach towards higher education. The formulation of a definitive policy for the development of higher education had been deferred by the government since 1960, pending the completion of the report of the Commission on Higher Education. The Commission continued its lengthy deliberations throughout Colley's term. The Minister was obliged to defend the slow pace of the Commission's work in the Dáil on 21 October 1965, in response to a critical query from Patrick O'Donnell. Colley assured the House that there was 'no avoidable delay' in the presentation of the report: the Commission was drafting its recommendations as quickly as possible and he expected that the report would be completed within six months.²⁹⁴ Colley's optimism proved sadly misplaced. The Commission did not present its report to the government until February 1967, over seven months after Colley ceased to be Minister for Education. The Minister made no attempt to clarify the state's approach to the development of higher education in the meantime, maintaining the position adopted by Hillery that the government was obliged to consider the report of the Commission before articulating a more definite policy approach.

The lack of a well-defined policy approach towards higher education did not prevent the allocation of substantial public funding to meet the urgent accommodation needs of the universities. The estimates introduced by Colley on 16 June 1965 showed a marginal reduction in the allocation for Universities and Colleges: the estimated expenditure for 1965-66 amounted to £2,889,300, which involved a decline of £92,000 from the previous allocation.²⁹⁵ But the modest decline in the estimate was due entirely to a substantial once-off reduction in the capital funding allocated to UCD, which occurred only because the construction of the new Science Block at the Belfield site was largely completed in 1964-65. The Minister announced increased state funding for all the other universities and the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies. The department allocated increased resources to most colleges primarily for the provision of additional staff, which would allow the universities to cope with the considerable increase in the number of students securing higher education.²⁹⁶ The Minister also secured additional capital investment by the state in higher education, at a time when the government was moving

²⁹⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.218, col. 431-432, 21 October 1965

²⁹⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.216, col. 960, 16 June 1965

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

to restrict capital expenditure. The Cabinet on 3 December 1965 instructed Ministers to achieve reductions in capital expenditure for 1965-66, which were required by the White Paper on Capital Expenditure. Moreover it was decided that expenditure on the Public Capital Programme for 1966-67 would have to remain within limits specified by the Cabinet, at the instigation of Jack Lynch, the Minister for Finance.²⁹⁷ The concern of the Department of Finance to limit capital spending did not prevent the allocation of additional resources to the university building programmes. Colley gained the agreement of the government on 13 July 1965 for additional state investment in the building programme for UCC. The Cabinet approved a proposal drafted by the Department of Education, which provided for an increase from £900,000 to £1,143,000 in the estimated cost of the new Science building for UCC.²⁹⁸ Colley successfully made the case that the initial provision for the new facilities should be increased to provide a larger Science building. The government's readiness to authorise further capital expenditure for higher education brought even greater benefits for UCD. The Minister submitted a proposal to the Cabinet on 27 August 1965, which recommended that the college authorities should be authorised to proceed with the construction of a new Arts and Administration block at Belfield, at an estimated cost of £2,500,000.²⁹⁹ Colley obtained the approval of the Cabinet for the proposal in principle on 7 September 1965, on the basis that the UCD authorities would not be informed of the decision without the agreement of the Minister for Finance.³⁰⁰ The UCD authorities were subsequently authorised to proceed with the new project, which was funded by the state.³⁰¹ The department under Colley enjoyed considerable success in securing additional capital funding for the university building programme, despite the concerns of the Minister for Finance to limit capital spending. The government maintained the commitment, enunciated by the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, to provide the necessary funding to deal with the severe accommodation requirements of the universities.³⁰² The state took effective short-term measures to support the expansion of the universities, especially the construction of UCD's new campus at Belfield. The government fulfilled its specific short-term commitment to assist the universities in overcoming pressing accommodation problems, but did not attempt to outline a more general policy for the development of higher

²⁹⁷ NA 97/5/1, G.C.11/39, Cabinet Minutes, p.2, 3 December 1965

²⁹⁸ NA 97/5/1, G.C.11/14, Cabinet Minutes, p.3, 13 July 1965

²⁹⁹ NA 97/5/1, G.C.11/23, Cabinet Minutes, p.2, 7 September 1965

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid., Interview with James Dukes, 28 April 2003

³⁰² *Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part II*, p.206

education. The government's limited approach and the failure of the Commission on Higher Education to report more promptly ensured that the state lacked any coherent policy for the long-term development of higher education for most of the decade. But the extensive capital funding provided by the state to support the expansion of higher education underlined the importance attached to educational expansion at all levels by the government under Lemass.

Developing special education

The department under Colley and his successor, Donogh O'Malley, also played a significant part in developing the state's policy for the expansion of special education, which had started to receive effective assistance from the government only in the early 1960s. The report of the Commission on Mental Handicap, which was completed in March 1965, exerted considerable influence on the state's approach to the education of disabled or backward children.³⁰³ Colley welcomed the Commission's report on 16 June 1965 and indicated that an inter-departmental committee, which included officials from the Departments of Education and Health, was examining the implementation of its recommendations.³⁰⁴ Colley's department soon accepted the Commission's recommendation that the education of mildly mentally handicapped pupils, who were generally unable to benefit from education in ordinary classes, should be entirely separate from facilities provided for pupils with a more serious intellectual disability. The senior officials also agreed with the Commission's view that the term 'mental handicap' should not be used in the official designation of special schools serving pupils with a mild mental disability.³⁰⁵ The department sought to provide additional opportunities for the education of such pupils in accordance with the recommendations of the Commission, by giving official recognition and financial support to new special primary schools.³⁰⁶ The additional educational facilities for such pupils were provided almost entirely through the establishment of special day schools.³⁰⁷ New day schools for mildly mentally handicapped pupils were established with the assistance of voluntary committees in Castlebar, Navan and Kilkenny between 1966 and 1968.³⁰⁸ The department under Colley

³⁰³ *Report of Commission of Inquiry on Mental Handicap* (Dublin, 1965)

³⁰⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol.216, col.976-977, 16 June 1965

³⁰⁵ *Commission on Mental Handicap, Report*, xv-xvi, T.A. Ó Cuilleánáin, 'Special Education In Ireland', *Oideas*, no.1 (Autumn 1968), pp.5-17

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ T.A. Ó Cuilleánáin, 'Special Education In Ireland', *Oideas*, no.1 (Autumn 1968), pp.5-17

³⁰⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.232, col.462, 6 February 1968

and O'Malley achieved considerable success in developing improved facilities for pupils with a mental disability. The overall number of special schools for such pupils expanded rapidly from twelve in 1962 to thirty-two in 1967, with an increase in the total enrolment from 880 to 2,637.³⁰⁹ The department made real progress in expanding the very limited educational opportunities available to pupils suffering from a mental disability, although its success was restricted to primary education, as most of these pupils left school at the age of fourteen. T.A Ó Cuilleanáin, the inspector of the Primary Branch who held responsibility for special education in the late 1960s, acknowledged in the department's own educational journal, *Oideas*, in 1968 that: 'The initial steps have been taken to tackle this problem but a great deal remains to be done'.³¹⁰

Ó Cuilleanáin's conclusion applied with much greater force to the state's efforts in other areas of special education. Educational facilities for children suffering from a severe physical disability were provided mainly by schools organised by the authorities in various hospitals and the department gave little consideration to extending such services in the 1960s. Ó Cuilleanáin commented in *Oideas* that the department was beginning to investigate the problem of providing a suitable education for such children by 1968.³¹¹ But it is evident that the provision of improved educational opportunities for children with physical disabilities received little attention from the state for most of the decade. The department in the late 1960s gave greater attention to the development of special education for children with impaired hearing, although the progress made by the state in providing the necessary facilities was still very limited. O'Malley established a committee in May 1967 'to review the provision made for the education of deaf and partially deaf children and to make recommendations'.³¹² The final report of the committee, which was chaired by Ó Cuilleanáin, was completed only in February 1972.³¹³ The report contained a series of recommendations to the government, covering in a comprehensive fashion the problems of providing adequate educational services to children with impaired hearing. The committee emphasized the importance of early identification and assessment of children with impaired hearing: they advised that facilities should be provided to enable a high proportion of such children to be educated

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² NA D/T 2003/16/556, S.18579, Ref.113013, *Memorandum for the Government, Report of Committee on the Education of Children who are handicapped by impaired hearing, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.1, 19 June 1972

³¹³ *Ibid.*, Hyland and Milne (eds.), *Irish Educational Documents*, vol.2, pp.473-476

in ordinary schools.³¹⁴ The committee also recommended the development by the state of existing special educational facilities in Dublin and Cork, rather than the establishment of new residential schools at other centres, to provide for children whose hearing was severely impaired.³¹⁵ The committee presented a detailed blueprint for the expansion and re-organisation of educational services for children with impaired hearing to the government. The report also underlined the limited progress made by the department in developing proper facilities for several forms of special education in the 1960s. Ó Cuilleanáin himself acknowledged in 1968 that while some progress had been made in improving educational facilities for deaf pupils, 'much more, however, remains to be done'.³¹⁶ This assessment by the department's senior expert on special provision for children with disabilities was a fair commentary on the state's efforts in the whole area of special education in the 1960s. The department under Colley and his successors established a firm commitment by the state to the expansion of special education and began to implement new initiatives to provide specialised facilities for pupils with various forms of disability. But the department was only beginning to address the difficult task of delivering adequate educational services to disabled pupils. The problem of designing and implementing adequate programmes of special education remained a formidable challenge for the state in the 1970s.

The Irish Language

Colley's term of office brought no significant policy change in the state's approach to the revival of the Irish language, which was very much the concern of the government as a whole and not simply the Department of Education by 1965. The Minister pledged on 16 June 1965 to implement the government's decisions on the promotion of the Irish language in the schools, which had been outlined by the *White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish Language*.³¹⁷ Colley, who was fluent in Irish, shared with senior officials of the department a strong commitment to the revival of the language.³¹⁸ He emphasized to the Cork Branch of Tuairim on 19 November 1965 that the special position given to Irish as a subject in the schools was based on patriotic rather than utilitarian considerations: 'In fact its right to a place in an Irish school is the intrinsic

³¹⁴ *Education of Children who are handicapped by impaired hearing, Report of a Committee appointed by the Minister for Education*, pp.146-147 (Stationery Office, Dublin, 1972)

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.148

³¹⁶ T.A. Ó Cuilleanáin, 'Special Education in Ireland', *Oideas*, no.1 (Autumn 1968), pp.5-17

³¹⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.216, col.975, 16 June 1965

³¹⁸ Interview with Tony Ó Dálaigh, 3 May 2002, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.132

one that it is not French, German, Italian or Spanish, but Irish.³¹⁹ Colley believed that the schools should make an important contribution to the restoration of Irish and that the adoption of more effective teaching methods would allow them to play their part in achieving the national objective of language revival. The Minister was particularly concerned to improve the methods for teaching oral Irish and to promote Irish as a spoken language, in accordance with the government's policy.

The *White Paper* endorsed the recommendation made by the Commission on the Restoration of the Irish language for a linguistic analysis of Irish as a spoken language, with the objective of devising a graded course of instruction in the language.³²⁰ The linguistic research, which was conducted by Fr. Colmán Ó hUallacháin of the Franciscan order in collaboration with the department, was completed during Colley's term. The findings were published in June 1966, in the form of a report entitled *Buntús Gaeilge*.³²¹ Colley established committees, composed of departmental officials and teachers, to prepare graded courses for primary and post-primary schools on the basis of this research into spoken Irish. The effects of the new initiative were felt first at primary level. The department initiated experimental Irish language courses based on the new research in twelve national schools in 1965-66.³²² The courses were intended to apply the new methods of language teaching on a trial basis and to assist in the production of the graded courses in their final form. The Minister extended the pilot project for the following school year, introducing experimental courses based on *Buntús Gaeilge* in 150 primary schools in 1966-67: a separate experimental course designed for infants' classes was also introduced in 50 schools.³²³ Colley sought to modify the state's approach to the language revival in the schools, by promoting Irish as a spoken language and initiating a revision of Irish language courses at primary and post-primary level. The department under Colley's direction initiated a process of experimentation in the teaching of oral Irish, which led before the end of the decade to the introduction in all primary schools of new Irish language courses based on *Buntús Gaeilge*.³²⁴ But the Minister's commitment

³¹⁹ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, *Address by George Colley TD, Minister for Education, on Changes in Irish Education to the Cork Branch of Tuairim*, 19 November 1965, Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, p.283

³²⁰ *White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish Language*, p.102, *Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, Final Report*, p. 417

³²¹ *Progress Report for the period ended 31 March 1966, White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish Language*, November 1966, p.24 (Dublin, 1966)

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ Hyland and Milne (eds.), *Irish Educational Documents*, vol.2, pp.534-535

to the introduction of new methods of language teaching was coupled with firm support for the traditional national objective of restoring the Irish language. Colley initiated changes in the state's approach to the teaching of Irish as a means of giving renewed strength to the established policy of language revival. His approach reflected both his personal commitment to the revival of Irish and the overall policy of the government, as expressed in the *White Paper*. Colley undertook a limited and incremental reform of the traditional approach to the revival of Irish in the schools, which contrasted with Hillery's more sceptical approach to the state's attempts to revive the language through the educational system.

Lemass and educational expansion

The effective reforming approach pursued by the department under Colley, especially in dealing with the challenges of educational expansion at primary and post-primary level, owed much to the critical analysis of *Investment*. But Colley could hardly have initiated controversial educational reforms without the full support of the Taoiseach. Lemass' vigorous support for long-term educational planning and the importance which he attached to the expansion of the Irish educational system shaped the political context for the initiatives undertaken by Colley. The Taoiseach elaborated on the government's commitment to educational expansion, in the course of a general policy statement, which he delivered to the Dáil on 7 July 1966, shortly before the end of Colley's term as Minister for Education. Lemass argued that the state had to compensate for its limited resources by 'the fullest and most economical use of the resources which are available'.³²⁵ This objective required the concentration of the available resources on the development of educational and technical training arrangements to utilise 'our main assets, the intelligence and adaptability of our people'.³²⁶ The Taoiseach also noted that the recent commentary on *Investment* by the NIEC emphasised the need for a substantial increase in the financial allocation devoted to educational development.³²⁷ This meant either the acceptance of further taxation to fund such development or giving priority to educational expansion in the allocation of public funds over other desirable objectives. As he considered that further tax increases would unduly restrict economic expansion, Lemass pledged that the government would give educational development 'the priority it

³²⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.223, col.2194, 7 July 1966

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, NIEC, *Comments on Investment in Education*, p.21 (Dublin, 1966)

deserves' in the future allocation of public funds.³²⁸ He reiterated his consistent belief that the future economic development of the country would depend on enhancing the level of education and training secured by the Irish work force for professional, industrial and agricultural employment. Lemass commented that:

'To an ever-increasing degree the policy of the Government will be directed to this end and we will have to endure the political criticisms which it may evoke from the unthinking as other desirable developments are necessarily slowed down to enable this essential educational programme to be fulfilled.'³²⁹

The Taoiseach's statement firmly established that the government would give precedence to education in the allocation of public expenditure. Lemass' commitment to give priority to education in the allocation of scarce national resources reflected the importance attached by the Irish state to educational expansion by 1966, which marked a fundamental change from the state's traditional policy approach. It was to be Colley's successor, O'Malley, who benefited most dramatically from the Taoiseach's decision to give the highest priority to the expansion of the educational system.

Conclusion

Colley served as Minister for Education for barely fifteen months, from 21 April 1965 until 13 July 1966, but his relatively brief term left an enduring legacy in Irish education. He broke with the cautious precedent followed by previous Ministers, outlining a wide-ranging agenda of educational reform in June 1965. The critical analysis of the Irish educational system provided by *Investment* shaped Colley's reforming approach. The initiation by Colley of the amalgamation of small national schools brought about a radical re-organisation of primary education, which was based on the conclusions of the report. The Minister also revised and developed more fully the state's policy for the expansion of post-primary education. Colley identified the achievement of equality of educational opportunity and the raising of the statutory school leaving age by 1970 as definite and urgent policy objectives. He sought to break down the traditional barriers between the divided systems of post-primary education to facilitate the achievement of these key objectives. The Minister's attempt to establish a comprehensive post-primary system, on the basis of a pooling of resources between secondary and vocational schools, was one of the most ambitious initiatives undertaken by the state in education since 1922.

³²⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.223, col.2194-2195, 7 July 1966

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, col.2195

The department had little initial success in achieving voluntary collaboration between the two systems, but Colley made the creation of an integrated post-primary system a key element of the state's policy. The introduction of the common Intermediate Certificate examination was an important achievement of Colley's term: he also supervised the rapid implementation of the comprehensive schools' scheme. Perhaps most significantly, Colley adopted long-term planning of educational needs as an indispensable element of the government's policy for the development of post-primary education. But the department's insistence on effective planning did not yet extend to higher education, where long-term policy decisions were deferred pending the completion of the report of the Commission on Higher Education. Colley also sought to promote the expansion of special education with mixed results. The department was relatively successful in developing educational facilities for pupils with mental disabilities, but special education remained underdeveloped in other respects, notably provision for the education of physically disabled pupils and pupils with impaired hearing. The Minister maintained the state's established policy on the Irish language, seeking to reinvigorate the language revival in the schools through the revision of teaching methods. Colley's reforming approach proved most successful when it was supported by the analysis of *Investment*: in policy areas where the influence of the pilot study was not apparent, such as special education or the development of the universities, the state's approach was less clearly defined and frequently less effective.

The pilot study paved the way for policy changes which the state had not previously contemplated. The department under Colley's direction acted decisively to initiate radical reforms in primary and post-primary education, which were inspired largely by the analysis of *Investment*. Colley firmly established the central role of the state in the initiation and development of educational policy. The Taoiseach played a crucial part in sustaining the Minister's reforming approach. Lemass not merely endorsed significant policy changes but advised Colley on how to promote controversial initiatives. The Taoiseach also affirmed unequivocally that educational expansion would be given the highest priority by the state in the allocation of available resources. Colley and Lemass revised the government's policy approach to incorporate radical reforming initiatives based on the report of the survey team. The policy initiatives taken by Colley, with the active support of Lemass, greatly accelerated the process of educational reform and made the expansion of the educational system a key policy priority for the Irish state.

Chapter 5
The politics of transformation - primary and post-primary education
1966-68

‘A man deserves to be remembered for the positive things he did, and his single sweeping reform of second-level education, more than any other of his actions, has made Donogh O’Malley a folk-hero.’¹ This assessment of Donogh O’Malley’s career by one of the officials who worked most closely with him, Seán O’Connor, accurately illustrated the popular perception of O’Malley’s impact as Minister for Education. O’Malley is certainly best remembered for the introduction of the scheme for free post-primary education in September 1967. Many scholars regard the initiative launched by O’Malley as the key development in the transformation of the Irish educational system. Seamus Ó Buachalla commented that: ‘His early death in 1968 cut short a political career which in a short period had transformed the system.’² The introduction of free post-primary education at O’Malley’s instigation was certainly a landmark of great importance in the history of Irish education. But for all its undoubted importance, the initiative should not obscure the significant implications of other reforms initiated by the state in this period, not least other measures implemented by O’Malley himself.

Following George Colley’s appointment as Minister for Industry and Commerce in a reshuffle of the government in July 1966, Lemass maintained his consistent practice of appointing dynamic and ambitious members of Fianna Fáil’s younger generation to head the Department of Education. Donogh O’Malley was appointed as Minister for Education on 13 July 1966. He owed his advancement to Lemass, who had appointed O’Malley as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance in October 1961 and elevated him to the Cabinet as Minister for Health in April 1965.³ O’Malley had displayed an interest in education, especially the development of higher education, as a backbench TD.⁴ He also took a leading role, as Parliamentary Secretary to Dr. Jim Ryan, in promoting the use of prefabricated building structures to reduce the backlog in the national school building programme.⁵ O’Malley was regarded by parliamentary colleagues and officials as a forceful, impetuous and unconventional figure.⁶ Seán O’Connor, the Assistant Secretary with responsibility for the Development Branch, who

¹ O’Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.192

² Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, pp.284-285

³ Horgan, *Seán Lemass*, p.297

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ NA D/T 96/6/355, S.12891E, O’Malley to Lemass, 8 January 1965 (cf. chapter 3, pp.86-87)

⁶ O’Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.139, Interview with Tony Ó Dálaigh, 3 May 2002

worked closely with the new Minister on the initiative for free post-primary education, summarised the general reaction of the department's officials after O'Malley's appointment: 'From O'Malley, we expected fast and furious action';⁷ the new Minister did not disappoint the expectations of his officials.

O'Malley lost no time in outlining his priorities to the Taoiseach, in a letter addressed to Lemass on 29 July 1966, within a month of his appointment. The new Minister told Lemass that as he was going away on holidays he wished to inform the Taoiseach of his proposals for education and 'to refer in some detail to the major new educational services I propose to introduce, and to the existing services I wish extended.'⁸ O'Malley emphasized firstly the importance of the new comprehensive schools. While the first three schools were ready for occupation by September 1966, the building programme was incomplete, as sufficient funding was not available: the provision of various facilities had been deferred. The Minister described this approach as 'an unacceptable procedure', which was undesirable, costly and inefficient.⁹ He aimed to arrange for the rapid completion of the three schools at Carraroe, Cootehill and Shannon and to proceed with the construction of a fourth comprehensive school at Glenties, Co. Donegal: he envisaged too the establishment of new comprehensive schools in other areas.¹⁰ O'Malley also made a case to the Taoiseach for a significant change in the financing of vocational education. He proposed that the current levy on the rates for education should be frozen at its present level, while the state directly provided additional funding for vocational and technical education.¹¹ O'Malley's conviction that the local contribution to educational services should be fixed at its current level later influenced various reforming proposals made by the department, including the legislation for the higher education grants scheme in 1968.

The new Minister identified the expansion of technical education as a key priority for the government. He told Lemass that it was necessary to build the proposed Regional Technical Colleges as quickly as possible. The Minister had set a target of three years for the completion of the colleges. He notified the Taoiseach of his intention to establish a Steering Committee, which would make recommendations on the educational functions to be fulfilled by the new Regional Colleges and on the requirements of industry for

⁷ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.139

⁸ NA D/T 97/6/437, S.17913, O'Malley to Lemass, p.1, 29 July 1966

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.4

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.1

technical workers.¹² O'Malley acknowledged that the capital cost of the RTCs would be high but warned that 'their importance to the economic life of the nation is such that we cannot brook delay.'¹³ He drew attention to the comments of the NIEC on *Investment*, which emphasized the close relationship between educational expansion and economic progress.¹⁴ O'Malley warned of the need to develop vocational and technical education, as an essential means of sustaining the economic progress of the state.

O'Malley also argued for the introduction of a variety of new services, including a national transport scheme for post-primary pupils subsidised by the state, a school meals service at post-primary level and a scheme of grants for the provision of audio-visual teaching aids. He made a strong case to Lemass for the introduction of a national scheme for school transport at primary and post-primary level. The Minister considered that a post-primary school transport service subsidised by the state should be introduced as soon as possible. He regarded such a national scheme as an essential reform in the context of the government's commitment to raise the school leaving age to fifteen and the policy of providing three years of post-primary education for all children.¹⁵ O'Malley freely admitted that he had presented an extensive programme of new initiatives and educational improvements to Lemass in his first month as Minister for Education:

'This is an imposing list of new and extended services but, in my short period as Minister for Education, it has become abundantly clear that we shall have to introduce them quickly if we want to make any progress in education.'¹⁶

The new Minister's letter indicated the wide-ranging - and expensive - character of his proposals. He made no secret of his belief that it would be costly to develop education properly, but emphasized that adequate support for expensive new initiatives was vital to sustain educational expansion. O'Malley identified the development of the comprehensive schools, the establishment of the Regional Technical Colleges and the initiation of a national transport scheme at post-primary level as his initial priorities. He warned the Taoiseach that immediate and decisive action was required to overcome severe educational problems. 'If we do not now proceed as I suggest, a serious position, already apparent, will become more aggravated.'¹⁷ The new Minister implicitly challenged the Taoiseach to support further substantial investment in education. The key

¹² Ibid., pp.1-2

¹³ Ibid., p.1

¹⁴ Ibid., p.2; NIEC, *Comments on Investment in Education*, p.6, January 1966

¹⁵ NA D/T 97/6/437, S.17913, O'Malley to Lemass, p.2, 29 July 1966

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.4

priorities outlined by O'Malley on 29 July, especially the development of the comprehensive schools and regional technical colleges, displayed considerable continuity with the policies pursued by his predecessors. But the wide variety of the new or expanded services demanded by O'Malley underlined the new Minister's impatience with spending constraints and his determination to achieve rapid and far-reaching changes in the educational system. O'Malley's letter to the Taoiseach provided an early indication of his reforming zeal and his intention to implement a wide range of new educational initiatives as a matter of urgency.

Primary education: policy changes

Although primary education did not receive great attention in O'Malley's letter to Lemass, the new Minister soon proved willing to maintain and extend the reforming initiatives undertaken by his immediate predecessors. The amalgamation of small schools was firmly defended by O'Malley, who told the Dáil on 6 February 1968 that larger schools not only ensured a more rational use of teaching personnel but also delivered better education for primary school pupils.¹⁸ The implementation of the policy of amalgamation facilitated the department's efforts to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in large urban schools. O'Malley announced in February 1968 that his department's approach was designed to achieve a maximum class size of thirty-five pupils in all national schools.¹⁹ The department sought to improve the pupil-teacher ratio by making more effective use of the available teaching personnel through the implementation of amalgamation and by increasing the supply of trained teachers. The target of a maximum of thirty-five pupils in each class proved elusive, but the department's approach delivered a gradual improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio.²⁰ The department amended the regulations governing the appointment of teachers in July 1966, allowing national schools to appoint additional teachers on the basis of smaller enrolment figures.²¹ The Minister announced in February 1968 a further reduction in the pupil enrolment required for the appointment of additional teachers: the modification allowed the appointment of a third teacher by national schools on the basis of an average enrolment of eighty rather

¹⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.232, col.460, 6 February 1968

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, pp.34-36

²¹ Circular 12/66, Department of Education, July 1966

than ninety pupils.²² The improvements were clearly incremental rather than dramatic, but it was significant that the department's solution to the familiar challenge of high pupil-teacher ratios in urban schools was now inextricably linked to the new policy of amalgamation and the resulting redistribution of the teaching force.²³

The amalgamation of small national schools was combined with a greater commitment by the state to the improvement of conditions in existing schools. The Minister's approach was heavily influenced by the INTO, which launched a campaign in 1967 to remedy the appalling conditions in many national schools. The General Secretary of the INTO, Senator Seán Brosnahan, made a public statement in the Senate on 9 February 1967, drawing attention to the unsatisfactory level of maintenance in many national schools.²⁴ Brosnahan proceeded to inform the department, the Clerical Managers' Association and the Office of Public Works on 27 February 1967 that the union considered the conditions in many schools to be 'sub-standard and in some cases uncivilised.'²⁵ Brosnahan warned that the union would investigate any serious complaint about sub-standard conditions in national schools and would withdraw its members from such schools if any complaints were substantiated.²⁶ The INTO's case was not disputed by the Minister or senior officials. O'Malley freely admitted in the Senate on 9 February 1967 that 'there are thousands of schools which can only be classified, I am sorry to admit, as hovels.'²⁷ He convened a meeting of all the relevant organisations to consider the conditions in national schools on 7 July, which was chaired by the Deputy Secretary of the Department, Seán MacGearailt and attended by representatives of the INTO, the managers and the Office of Public Works.²⁸ Following this meeting MacGearailt issued a circular to the managers in September 1967, which outlined new guidelines for the maintenance of national schools.²⁹ The Deputy Secretary instructed the school managers to seek three tenders for essential maintenance work and to initiate the process immediately, wherever the provision of heating and sanitary facilities was an urgent necessity. He stated that it was the Minister's policy to ensure the provision of adequate

²² *Dáil Debates*, vol.232, col.460, 6 February 1968

²³ Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.33

²⁴ *Seanad Debates*, vol.62, col.1062-63, 9 February 1967

²⁵ Report of the CEC 1966-67, INTO, S. Brosnahan to Secretary, Department of Education, Secretaries, Clerical Managers' Association, Secretary, Office of Public Works, p.19 (Dublin, 1967)

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.20

²⁷ *Seanad Debates*, vol.62, col.1083, 9 February 1967

²⁸ O'Connell, *History of the INTO*, p.448

²⁹ Circular 22/67, Department of Education, September 1967

heating and sanitation in all schools lacking such amenities, which would remain in operation over the next five years. MacGearailt confirmed that a state grant amounting to at least two-thirds of the cost of renovation work would be provided, while a higher grant was available if necessary.³⁰ The department's revised guidelines were designed to speed up renovation work in schools that lacked adequate heating and sanitation and to ensure that the managers fulfilled their responsibility to undertake essential maintenance work in the schools.³¹

The department's initiative certainly facilitated the improvement of conditions in the schools, but the INTO also played a key role in expediting necessary maintenance work at primary level as a result of a protest organised by the union in Ardfert, Co. Kerry. The INTO withdrew its members from five schools in Ardfert between 16 January 1967 and 5 February 1968, until maintenance work to remedy defective facilities in the schools was completed.³² The success of the INTO action, which generated considerable publicity, encouraged managers to expedite maintenance work in schools throughout the country.³³ The INTO exerted a considerable influence on the department's approach to the improved maintenance of national schools. The Minister's intervention to expedite the necessary renovation of national schools was undertaken in the context of the INTO campaign and especially the union's threat of industrial action. The undoubted influence exerted by the INTO on the state's approach was due not only to the effective action initiated by the union's leadership, but also to the Minister's concern to maintain constructive relations with the organisation, which supported key elements of the government's policy, notably the amalgamation of small schools. The preservation of amicable relations with the INTO was important especially because the state was taking a much more pro-active and interventionist approach in primary education in the second half of the 1960s than at any time previously.

The department under O'Malley broke new ground in educational policy at primary level, promoting a range of reforming initiatives. The senior officials of the department showed by 1966 a new confidence in their ability to reform and re-organise primary education. The department took effective action to ensure the regular progression of pupils through the national school. *Investment* illustrated the delayed progression of

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.42

³² O'Connell, *History of the INTO*, pp.448-449

³³ Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.42

pupils through the standards: the report indicated that in 1963 30% of all national school pupils in fifth standard were delayed by one year, while 13.5% were delayed by two or more years. *Investment* also underlined that the percentage of 'delayed' pupils rose steadily with progression through the standards.³⁴ The department acted to break this traditional pattern in 1967. Ó Raifeartaigh issued a circular to the school authorities in March 1967, which established firm principles for the regular promotion of pupils in national schools. The Secretary stipulated that 'The normal procedure should be that a pupil is promoted to a higher standard at the end of each school year.'³⁵ The circular warned that pupils should be held back only on an exceptional basis, as such cases should be 'minimal'.³⁶ Moreover pupils should not be held back for more than one year throughout their time in the national school.³⁷ The circular gave a clear message that regular progression for most pupils through the national school should be the norm. The department moved to ensure regular promotion of pupils without any consultation with the INTO or school staff, who had previously determined the rate of progression.³⁸ The initiative exerted a significant influence on the age of completion for primary education. The official circular, combined with the introduction of free education in most post-primary schools from September 1967, helped to establish twelve as the normal age for completing the national school course. There were 37,173 primary school pupils aged thirteen years or over in 1964, while only 6,091 pupils from this age group were undertaking primary education in 1980.³⁹ The department's intervention encouraged the transfer of national school pupils to post-primary education at an earlier age.

The reforming approach of the department under O'Malley also brought significant changes in the state's policy towards the assessment of primary school pupils. The Minister's decision to abolish the Primary Certificate was perhaps the most obvious policy change in primary education. The INTO had consistently sought the removal of the Primary Certificate since it became compulsory in 1943, but their efforts had previously been frustrated by the opposition of most managerial associations, who supported the concept of an examination at primary level.⁴⁰ The officers of the INTO

³⁴ *Investment in Education, Part 1*, p.241

³⁵ Circular 10/67, Department of Education, March 1967

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.33

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.34-43

⁴⁰ O'Connell, *History of the INTO*, pp.422-425

made a renewed appeal for the abolition of the Primary Certificate directly to O'Malley on 20 January 1967.⁴¹ The union's representatives made their case to the Minister and Seán MacGearailt for the replacement of the examination with a system of record cards. Significantly O'Malley did not defend the Primary Certificate, but told the INTO representatives to submit a memorandum outlining their alternative. O'Malley commented that he had already expressed objections to the present examination but could not act unilaterally to abolish it, as other educational interests wished to retain the Certificate. Instead he undertook to call a conference of all the interested parties to consider the case for the abolition of the Primary Certificate.⁴² While the Minister avoided precipitate action to abolish the Certificate, he made no secret of his opposition to the examination. O'Malley told the Senate on 9 February 1967 that he wished to express 'utter disgust at this form of examination'.⁴³ O'Malley's public criticism of the examination made clear that the Primary Certificate's days were numbered, although a viable alternative had yet to be devised.

The conference convened by O'Malley, which brought together representatives of the INTO, the Catholic and Protestant managers and the department itself, was held on 30 June 1967.⁴⁴ MacGearailt, who presided over the conference on the Minister's behalf, set out to secure a generally acceptable alternative to the examination. The Deputy Secretary's opening statement to the conference clarified the department's approach. He told the representatives that 'fundamental changes were taking place in Irish education' and these changes had to be taken into account at the primary stage.⁴⁵ MacGearailt noted that the government's policy of providing three years of post-primary education for all children and the provision of free post-primary education from September 1967 meant that formal education would no longer end at primary level: these policy changes appeared to call into question the need for a primary Certificate examination. Moreover he argued that the limited written examination had tended to dominate educational practice in the national schools, narrowing the work of the senior classes.⁴⁶ While MacGearailt emphasized that he sought only to initiate the discussion, his statement underlined that the officials were seeking an alternative to the Primary Certificate. The

⁴¹ Report of the CEC 1966-67, INTO, pp.24-25

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *Seanad Debates*, vol.62, col.1078, 9 February 1967

⁴⁴ NA D/T 98/6/143, S.12935B, *Memorandum for the information of the Government, Primary Certificate Examination, Office of the Minister for Education, Appendix B*, 26 July 1967

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2

INTO delegation presented their proposed alternative, arguing for the replacement of the examination by a system of record cards for each pupil, which would be made available to post-primary schools.⁴⁷ The union's representatives asserted that the examination was damaging in its effect on the work of the primary school and detrimental to the welfare of pupils who failed the examination. They also considered that the Certificate served no useful purpose, as post-primary education was being made available to all. The INTO representatives argued that their alternative, the record card, would provide an objective assessment of each pupil's aptitudes and abilities.⁴⁸ The managerial authorities were by no means fully reconciled to the abolition of the examination. Monsignor Martin Brenan of the Catholic Managers' Association warned that 'everything would not be rosy if the Primary Certificate were abolished here'.⁴⁹ Most managerial representatives agreed that the Primary Certificate was flawed but considered that some form of objective test was required at primary level. The Catholic managers proposed a revised test conducted by an external authority, which was entirely unacceptable to the INTO.⁵⁰ MacGearailt instead proposed that an assessment of pupil attainment for the record card should be carried out by the teachers, subject to evaluation by the department's inspectors.⁵¹ This formula secured general support from the conference. The managerial representatives were willing to accept the introduction of a system of record cards and internal tests, on the basis suggested by MacGearailt.⁵² The Deputy Secretary, who had deftly guided the deliberations of the conference, was able to present an agreed solution for the abolition of the Primary Certificate to the Minister.

O'Malley submitted the revised arrangements for the assessment of primary school pupils to the government on 26 July 1967.⁵³ The Minister's proposal, which was based on the conclusions of the conference, provided for the replacement of the Primary Certificate examination by a system of record cards for all pupils in the fifth and sixth standards. The record card was intended to include the results of an intelligence test, to be undertaken by all pupils, as well as information concerning the achievements of pupils in each subject.⁵⁴ The proposal envisaged that the attainment of the pupils would be

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.3-5

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.3-5

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.8

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.10-14

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.15

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.15

⁵³ NA D/T 98/6/143, S.12935B, *Memorandum for the information of the Government, Primary Certificate Examination, Office of the Minister for Education, 26 July 1967*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Appendix A

assessed on the basis of tests carried out by the teachers, subject to evaluation by the inspectors: school reports would also be circulated to the parents of each pupil.⁵⁵ The Minister's initiative did not prove controversial within the government. The Cabinet approved O'Malley's proposal for the abolition of the Primary Certificate on 12 September 1967.⁵⁶ The replacement of the state examination by a system of record cards and internal school tests was a significant policy change. While the INTO's persistent lobbying for the abolition of the Certificate examination was certainly influential, it was O'Malley who took the decision, which had been avoided by his predecessors, to replace the examination with an alternative form of assessment. The senior officials, who no longer wished to defend the Primary Certificate, rapidly implemented the policy change: MacGearailt played a crucial part in persuading the managerial authorities to accept a viable alternative. The abolition of the Primary Certificate was clearly influenced by the expansion of post-primary education and by the planned introduction of the initiative for free post-primary education.⁵⁷ The department recognised that the purpose of the state examination was increasingly undermined, as it ceased to be a final examination for most pupils: MacGearailt saw the abolition of the Primary Certificate as a logical consequence of fundamental changes in post-primary education.⁵⁸ The policy of educational expansion encouraged a far-reaching re-appraisal by the senior officials of the state's approach to the assessment of primary school pupils.

The replacement of the Primary Certificate by a more flexible form of assessment was also related to the emergence of new thinking within the Department of Education about the national school curriculum. Seán O'Connor was certainly more outspoken than any of his colleagues when he discussed curriculum reform in the Jesuit periodical *Studies* in 1968. 'We have buried without regret the Primary Certificate examination. Let us now bury, again without regret, the present National School Curriculum.'⁵⁹ While O'Connor's colleagues among the senior officials were much more reticent in their public comments, they did not greatly dissent from his sentiments. Initial proposals to revise the primary school curriculum emerged within the department in 1967, even before

⁵⁵ NA D/T 98/6/143, S.12935B, *Memorandum for the information of the Government, Primary Certificate Examination, Office of the Minister for Education*, 26 July 1967

⁵⁶ NA 99/5/1, G.C.12/60, Cabinet Minutes, p.3, 12 September 1967

⁵⁷ Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.63

⁵⁸ NA D/T 98/6/143, S.12935B, *Memorandum for the information of the Government, Primary Certificate Examination, Office of the Minister for Education, Appendix B*, p.2, 26 July 1967

⁵⁹ S. O'Connor, 'Post-Primary Education: Now and in the Future', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.233-249

the abolition of the state examination, which had exerted a restrictive influence on the teaching of the existing programme. The Development Branch began preparations in 1966 for the publication of a White Paper on education and a steering committee, composed mainly of primary school inspectors, was established in December 1966 to advise the Minister on the primary education aspects of such a White Paper.⁶⁰ O'Malley did not proceed with the publication of a White Paper, giving priority to other issues which he considered more urgent.⁶¹ But the abortive project gave an important impetus to curriculum reform in primary education. The steering committee concluded by March 1967 that a new curriculum was required for primary schools.⁶² They recommended a fundamental revision of the national school programme, which they considered rigid, inflexible and insensitive to the diversity offered by any group of children.⁶³ The committee, which was influenced by the ideas of Jean Piaget and by the Plowden Report published in England in 1966, presented a definite rationale for a flexible and child-centred curriculum.⁶⁴ The principle of introducing a new curriculum, which was firmly advocated by the steering committee, was soon accepted by the senior officials. The first definite indication that the department was committed to a fundamental reform of the curriculum came in December 1967, when a subcommittee, composed of primary school inspectors, was established to develop detailed plans for a new curriculum.⁶⁵ The draft proposals prepared by the subcommittee formed the basis of the new curriculum, which was introduced in September 1971.⁶⁶ O'Malley himself did not give a high priority to the reform of the national school programme, although the revision of the curriculum began during his term of office. The senior officials and primary school inspectors favoured the introduction of a new curriculum and initiated the revision of the primary school programme. While the new curriculum did not take effect in most national schools until 1971, the department was committed to the achievement of far-reaching reform at primary level by December 1967.

⁶⁰ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.192, Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.48

⁶¹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.192

⁶² Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.49

⁶³ S. De Buitléar, 'Curaclam Nua le hAghaidh na Bunscoile', *Oideas*, no.3 (Autumn 1969), pp.4-12

⁶⁴ Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.49, *Children and their Primary Schools: A report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)*, vol.1, pp.189-202 (London, 1966)

⁶⁵ Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, pp.49-50

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, S. De Buitléar, 'Curaclam Nua le hAghaidh na Bunscoile', *Oideas*, no.3 (Autumn 1969), pp.4-12

The Minister and the officials of his department did not have a comprehensive or fully worked out programme of reform for primary education, but the various reforming initiatives undertaken under O'Malley and his predecessors transformed the state's policy approach at primary level. Coolahan points out that while no overall plan for reform existed, the measures taken by the state after about 1960 amounted to a far-reaching shift in policy on primary education.⁶⁷ The significant changes in the state's policy toward primary education, which were initiated by the department especially under Colley and O'Malley, were heavily influenced by the government's commitment to expand educational provision and deliver some post-primary education for all. The need to encourage an orderly and regular transfer of pupils to post-primary education in advance of the raising of the school leaving age shaped the context for the reforms at primary level. The reforming initiatives undertaken at primary level by the department under O'Malley formed an integral part of the Minister's overall approach, which involved extensive and far-reaching intervention to direct the expansion of the educational system.

Post-primary education: rationalisation and resistance

The department under Colley's direction had sought, with little initial success, to promote a pooling of resources between secondary and vocational schools. The Development Branch clarified and extended the policy of rationalisation at post-primary level following O'Malley's appointment. O'Malley himself identified the development of new comprehensive schools as an important priority in his letter to Lemass on 29 July 1966.⁶⁸ But despite the new Minister's initial views, the department initiated the building of only a limited number of comprehensive schools. The first three new schools were fully completed by 1968. The department placed the contract for the fourth comprehensive school in Glenties, Co. Donegal during O'Malley's term and the new school was opened in 1968.⁶⁹ O'Malley also facilitated the creation of the first Protestant comprehensive school in East Donegal, which was based on the amalgamation of two Protestant schools in Raphoe and Lifford. The Minister agreed to finance the building of the new school, which was established at Raphoe in 1971.⁷⁰ The department sanctioned a distinctive management structure for the Protestant comprehensive schools, which

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.62-63

⁶⁸ NA D/T 97/6/437, S.17913, O'Malley to Lemass, pp.1-4, 29 July 1966

⁶⁹ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1967-68*, p.122 (Dublin, 1969)

⁷⁰ *Journal of the Thirty-third General Synod of the Church of Ireland 1968*, ed. J.L.B. Deane, p.99 (Dublin, 1968)

allowed the church authorities to have three nominees on a board of five members.⁷¹ The Protestant church authorities secured more favourable terms from the state for the management of the new schools than the Catholic Bishops. The Minister was willing to agree favourable terms with the Protestant educational authorities mainly because their desire to provide comprehensive education was a welcome development for the department. The department sanctioned the same managerial arrangements for the Jesuit order, which transformed an existing secondary school in Limerick into a comprehensive school in 1971.⁷² The Deed of Trust for Crescent Comprehensive School allowed the Provincial of the order to nominate three of the five members of the board of management.⁷³ O'Malley encouraged the initiative by the Jesuit order, hoping that their participation would lend prestige to comprehensive education and help to make the new schools acceptable to parents.⁷⁴ But despite the willingness of the Protestant church authorities and the Jesuit order to participate in comprehensive education, the state still confronted considerable difficulties in establishing comprehensive schools, which were underlined when the Minister sought to extend comprehensive education in Dublin.

O'Malley's concern to establish comprehensive schools in the capital for the first time caused considerable tension between the Department of Education and Dr. McQuaid. The Archbishop clashed with MacGearailt over the proposal, which was raised by the Deputy Secretary with McQuaid in July 1967. McQuaid's secretary, Fr. Liam Martin, unwisely warned MacGearailt on 26 July that the Archbishop had already made ample provision for post-primary education in Ballymun, in consultation with religious orders and the City of Dublin VEC.⁷⁵ MacGearailt bluntly told McQuaid on 1 August that the Minister was determined to establish comprehensive schools to serve the new Ballymun development and did not expect the Archbishop to assess the educational needs of the area: 'He would have felt that it would be recognised that he had functions in the matter'.⁷⁶ McQuaid took serious exception to this pointed reminder that the Minister was responsible for educational policy, complaining directly to O'Malley that MacGearailt's comments were 'gravely erroneous' and sought a meeting with the Minister to clarify his

⁷¹ L. O'Flaherty, *Management and Control in Irish Education: the post-primary experience*, p.36 (Dublin, 1992)

⁷² I. Bonel-Elliott, *La Politique de l'enseignement du second degré en république d'Irlande 1963-93*, pp.324-325, Ph.D thesis (Sorbonne, 1994)

⁷³ O'Flaherty, *Irish Education*, p.167

⁷⁴ I. Bonel-Elliott, *La Politique de l'enseignement du second degré en république d'Irlande 1963-93*, p.318, Ph.D thesis (Sorbonne, 1994)

⁷⁵ DDA, AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, Fr. L. Martin to S. MacGearailt, 26 July 1967

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, MacGearailt to McQuaid, 1 August 1967

position.⁷⁷ O'Malley maintained his insistence on the provision of comprehensive schools in Ballymun, sending McQuaid a memorandum on post-primary education in the city of Dublin, which made a strong case for comprehensive education, with a practical bias, in the Ballymun area.⁷⁸ The dispute was resolved following a meeting between O'Malley and McQuaid on 5 October 1967, when the Archbishop claimed that MacGearailt had misrepresented his position. McQuaid was willing to accept comprehensive schools in Ballymun, provided that local religious orders played an important role in the provision of comprehensive education, in conjunction with the VEC.⁷⁹ This pragmatic position was not fundamentally opposed to the Minister's approach and O'Malley was able to proceed with the project. The Minister announced on 20 December 1967 that two comprehensive schools would be established in Ballymun. He envisaged two single-sex schools accommodating about 750 pupils, one for boys and the other for girls, on the basis that one co-educational school would be too large.⁸⁰ It is likely, however, that O'Malley chose to proceed with single-sex schools in Dublin at least in part to avert an open clash with the Catholic Bishops, who were firmly opposed to co-education in general. The Minister's decision to propose single-sex schools was a prudent measure in the context of the tension between McQuaid and the department, as the introduction of co-education would certainly have inflamed the dispute between the Archbishop and the Minister in 1967. The two new comprehensive schools in Ballymun were established by 1970. But the creation of a network of comprehensive schools for the entire country was not a practical proposition due to financial and political constraints. The foundation of comprehensive schools was not only a substantial financial commitment by the state but also required difficult negotiations with the Catholic Bishops, who continued to regard state post-primary schools with considerable suspicion. MacGearailt told the Public Accounts Committee on 6 March 1969 that the department had initiated the establishment of only four new comprehensive schools after the implementation of the initial pilot project by 1968.⁸¹ O'Malley, like his predecessor, soon accepted that the ambitious restructuring of the post-primary sector which he sought could not be achieved mainly through the comprehensive schools. The department sought instead to secure the

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, McQuaid to O'Malley, 19 August 1967

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, O'Malley to McQuaid, 20 September 1967, Memorandum, *Post-Primary Education in Dublin County Borough*, 1967

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, McQuaid to O'Malley, 5 October 1967

⁸⁰ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.282

⁸¹ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1967-68*, p.122 (Dublin, 1969)

provision of comprehensive education through a far-reaching rationalisation of post-primary schools.

The new Development Branch played the central part in the implementation of the policy of collaboration and rationalisation at post-primary level. The Development Branch undertook in 1966 surveys of the educational facilities in every county, which were intended to provide the necessary statistical data to implement the policy of collaboration initiated by Colley. The surveys gave detailed information on the number of pupils who required post-primary education in each area and on the extent of the local facilities available for secondary or vocational education.⁸² The Development Branch issued county reports on the basis of the surveys, making wide-ranging proposals for the re-organisation of post-primary education in each county. The planning work undertaken by the Branch was designed to ensure that facilities for comprehensive education were provided in every local area and that educational resources were used as economically as possible in accordance with the conclusions of *Investment*.⁸³ The Development Branch considered that as the comprehensive schools would be few in number, comprehensive education could only be achieved through a process of collaboration between existing schools.⁸⁴ The Branch outlined common general principles in each county report for the development of post-primary centres. These principles laid down that each post-primary centre should offer both academic and vocational subjects, so that all pupils would have the opportunity of choosing the subjects best suited to their aptitudes: it was envisaged that most counties would have three or four post-primary centres.⁸⁵ The Development Branch set out minimum requirements for such centres, which would serve the junior and senior cycle. A junior centre would consist of about 150 pupils and would provide education to the Intermediate Certificate level only: for the senior cycle pupils would be transported to a major post-primary centre, which would provide accommodation for up to 400 pupils. The general principles drafted by the officials envisaged that areas, which could not provide a total school enrolment of 150 pupils, would be best served by the provision of transport for local pupils to post-primary centres: in the long-term small schools which were not viable on this basis should be closed, although they would be

⁸² *Dáil Debates*, vol. 220, col. 1753-1754, 16 February 1966

⁸³ NA D/FIN 2001/3/1073, D2/14/65, Ó Raifeartaigh to Murray, 9 February 1966, *Draft of Second Progress Report on the Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, Department of Education, pp.1-4

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Projected Organisation for Post-Primary Education: General Principles, County Report for Co. Cavan*, p.1, Department of Education, 1966

retained in the short-term.⁸⁶ The Development Branch aimed, therefore, to work towards the creation of 'an organisation on comprehensive lines through a close working association, amalgamation or integration of the current types of post primary school'.⁸⁷ The department's proposals envisaged the expansion and re-organisation of post-primary education on the basis of minimum school units for the junior and senior cycle.⁸⁸ The officials emphasized that they were merely presenting the results of the surveys and suggesting possible solutions to the problems identified by the findings, leaving the decisions to the school authorities.⁸⁹ It was evident, however, that the Development Branch was proposing a far-reaching re-organisation of post-primary education, which had the potential to transform the traditional pattern of the second-level sector.

The county reports were considered at a series of local meetings throughout the country, which were initiated by the department in December 1966.⁹⁰ The secondary school authorities and representatives of the VECs were invited to the meetings, which were chaired by O'Connor or his colleague Seán Ó Mathúna, Principal Officer in the Development Branch.⁹¹ O'Malley also agreed to allow the ASTI and VTA to nominate representatives to the meetings.⁹² The meetings were intended to secure agreement between the school authorities on the plans for the local co-ordination of educational resources, in accordance with the policy announced by Colley in January 1966. But it soon became obvious that collaboration would not be easily achieved. O'Connor, who was responsible for the organisation of the meetings as head of the Development Branch, described the first meeting which he convened as a complete failure: 'Neither of the two sectors of the post-primary system wanted anything from the other sector and could not spare any part of its services for the other side'.⁹³ The Minister soon decided to publicise the process of consultation. He ensured that the meetings were open to the general public and the Development Branch gave notice of them in the local newspapers.⁹⁴ This approach at least ensured that parents were able to participate in the consultative process. But the meetings largely failed to produce any positive results. O'Connor acknowledged

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Notes on the Organisation of Secondary Education in a Sample Rural Area*, p.1, Department of Education, 1966

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.159

⁹⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.226, col.104, 6 December 1966

⁹¹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.159

⁹² *Official Programme, 45th Annual Convention of the ASTI*, Report of Deputation to Minister for Education, 3 February 1967, pp.65-67 (Dublin, 1967)

⁹³ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.159

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

that the Development Branch achieved minimal progress in promoting educational planning at a local level through the public meetings: 'But though discussion was more open, the meetings achieved very little'.⁹⁵

The local meetings proved unproductive largely because the department's rationalisation proposals were received with widespread suspicion, especially on the part of the secondary school managers and teachers. Fr. John Hughes of the CHA told McQuaid in January 1967 that it was 'not humanly possible' for the schools to implement both the re-organisation of post-primary education and the introduction of the scheme for free education in 1967: the Minister should be asked to choose which initiative he wished to implement in the short-term.⁹⁶ The leadership of the CCSS was also seriously alarmed by the activity of the Development Branch, considering that its efforts to promote collaboration were often unrealistic and damaging to secondary schools. Sr. M. Jordana Roche, President of the CCSS, warned the Conference's Executive Committee on 6 October 1966 that the actions of the officials threatened to undermine the independence of the voluntary secondary schools: 'What kind of system of education have we? Is it no longer private?'⁹⁷ The scepticism of the most influential Catholic managerial bodies was fully matched by the hostility of the secondary teachers. The Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the ASTI insisted on 4 January 1967 that 'no existing secondary teacher be obliged to teach in other than a secondary school' and demanded compensation for any teachers facing redeployment as a result of the rationalisation plans.⁹⁸ The ASTI criticised the proposal for post-primary centres on the basis that the creation of two distinct types of school was undesirable and harmful to the junior cycle school. The union found common ground with the managerial authorities in their shared reservations about the policy of rationalisation.⁹⁹ An ASTI delegation discussed the policy with the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) on 30 May 1967 and the JMB undertook to protect the interests of the lay secondary teachers.¹⁰⁰ The ASTI and the managerial authorities developed a joint approach to the process of rationalisation. The JMB assisted the secondary teachers' association in establishing contact with county committees of

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ DDA, AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers*, Note by Fr. L. Martin of meeting with Fr. J. Hughes, 9 January 1967

⁹⁷ Minutes, Central Executive Committee, CCSS, 6 October 1966

⁹⁸ Minutes, Central Executive Committee, ASTI, p.2, 4 January 1967

⁹⁹ D. Barry, *The Involvement and Impact of a Professional Interest Group*, in D.G. Mulcahy and D. O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, pp.140-143 (Dublin, 1989)

¹⁰⁰ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.1, 4 July 1967

secondary school headmasters or headmistresses in each area and the ASTI asked all its representatives at the rationalisation meetings to co-operate fully with local managerial committees.¹⁰¹ The co-ordination between the managerial representatives and the ASTI was based on their common suspicion of the department's approach and their shared opposition to a radical reshaping of secondary education.

The suspicious response of the secondary school associations was influenced by the rapid transformation of the department's approach to the implementation of educational policy. The confident and pro-active approach adopted by the Development Branch in promoting the re-organisation of post-primary education contrasted sharply with the low profile and tentative practice of the department for the previous generation. The department's willingness to promote new policy ideas in a public setting was unexpected and not necessarily welcome to the secondary school authorities and teachers. Charles McCarthy considered that the relatively sudden transformation in the department's approach also inspired scepticism: 'if a tiger changing its spots is never very credible, neither is a central bureaucracy coming down from heaven and asking advice.'¹⁰² It was evident, however, that the entrenched divisions between the different systems of second-level education and the considerable suspicion of the department's policy proposals on the part of most secondary school associations presented the most formidable obstacles to the creation of an integrated post-primary system.

The department enjoyed greater success in its efforts to promote inter-group mobility between the three categories of teachers. Circular M.44/66, which was issued by the Secretary in October 1966, allowed credit on the incremental salary scales for secondary teachers, in respect of satisfactory service given by teachers in national or vocational schools.¹⁰³ The circular ensured that trained national teachers and vocational teachers, who held the necessary qualifications for secondary teaching, would be able to transfer to the secondary teaching service.¹⁰⁴ Circular M.44/66 also established that in calculating the minimum number of hours to be served by secondary teachers, all teaching hours to post-primary classes following approved courses would be taken into account by the department, including teaching hours in secondary tops and vocational

¹⁰¹ *Official Programme for 47th Annual Convention*, ASTI, CEC Report 1968-69, p.77 (Dublin, 1969)

¹⁰² C. McCarthy, *The Decade of Upheaval: Irish Trade Unions in the 1960s*, p.206 (IPA, Dublin, 1973)

¹⁰³ Circular M.44/66, Department of Education, October 1966

¹⁰⁴ W26/30, M194/20, Note for the Minister, Rules as per Circular M.44/66, Department of Education, February 1967

schools.¹⁰⁵ The circular was designed to encourage mobility between the three groups of teachers and to facilitate a more efficient distribution of the teaching force throughout the educational system. The initiative was also intended to promote the rationalisation of post-primary education, as an inter-change of teachers between the primary, secondary and vocational sectors would facilitate the introduction of the comprehensive curriculum. The senior officials were determined to use fully the services of primary or vocational teachers with specific qualifications for which there was a demand in secondary schools. The removal of obstacles, which prevented the employment of such teachers at secondary level, was both educationally desirable and made the best use of scarce resources.¹⁰⁶

The Minister brought the terms of the circular into operation retrospectively from 1 August 1966, provoking a strong protest from the ASTI. A deputation from the secondary teachers' association complained to O'Malley and his officials on 3 February 1967 that the changes had been introduced abruptly, without prior notice to secondary teachers.¹⁰⁷ More significantly, the ASTI representatives protested that full incremental credit should not be given to a lower teaching service, questioning particularly the recognition accorded to all national teachers. The officials replied that a scheme of reduced credit for primary teachers would be unfair and impracticable, re-affirming that it was the department's intention to facilitate the maximum degree of mobility among teachers.¹⁰⁸ O'Malley refused to modify the new regulations and rejected further representations by the ASTI to change the terms of the circular in June 1967 and January 1968.¹⁰⁹ The fundamental differences between the department and the ASTI on the terms of the circular were underlined when the union adopted a resolution denouncing the official approach on 4 January 1968: 'That the Central Executive Committee of the ASTI strongly deplores the uncompromising and grossly unjust stand of the Minister for Education and officials of his Department in retaining the Department's regulations specified in M.44/66.'¹¹⁰ The senior officials had little sympathy for the ASTI's attempts to maintain an exclusive status for secondary teachers. O'Malley was advised that the ASTI's objections could be satisfied only by reducing the amount of credit given for

¹⁰⁵ Circular M.44/66, Department of Education, October 1966

¹⁰⁶ W26/30, M194/20, Note for the Minister, Rules as per Circular M.44/66, Department of Education, February 1967

¹⁰⁷ *Official Programme for the 45th Annual Convention*, ASTI, Report of Deputation to Minister for Education, 3 February 1967, pp.65-67 (Dublin, 1967)

¹⁰⁸ W26/13, M194/20, Deputation from the ASTI to the Minister for Education, 3 February 1967

¹⁰⁹ W26/13, M194/20, Notes for the Minister, Incremental credit for service as a National teacher, Department of Education, 3 January 1968

¹¹⁰ Minutes, CEC, ASTI, p.5, 4 January 1968

service as a national teacher. The officials considered such a reduction to be indefensible, as the credit was being given for actual teaching service: moreover they strongly opposed any attempt 'to downgrade one type of teaching service as against another'.¹¹¹ It was not surprising therefore that O'Malley rejected the ASTI's case and proceeded with the implementation of the regulations. The initiative had some success in facilitating the transfer of primary teachers to the secondary teaching service, although the level of the transfer was not very large: about 80 national teachers transferred from primary to secondary teaching in the first fifteen months of the scheme, out of a total of 650 teachers who were eligible to do so.¹¹² While the number of primary teachers who proved willing to undertake secondary teaching was not negligible, it was certainly not the dramatic upsurge feared by the ASTI. The new scheme was, however, a significant move by the department to break down the traditional barriers between the different segments of the educational system. The circular encouraged a greater level of inter-group mobility among teachers and marked an incremental advance towards the development of a unified teaching profession. The initiative also underlined the department's determination to ensure a full utilisation of all the available resources, not least all suitably qualified teachers, in an expanding educational system.

The rationalisation of post-primary education sought by the Minister and senior officials made only limited progress between 1966 and 1968. But the pro-active reforming approach adopted by the Development Branch was in itself a significant advance, which underlined the extent of the change from the department's previous tentative and conservative practice with regard to post-primary education. Moreover the new Branch's pro-active approach underlined its considerable potential as a force for reform in second-level education. The department effectively promoted inter-group mobility in the teaching profession and initiated the first difficult steps towards the creation of a single post-primary system staffed by a unified teaching service. The reluctance of established educational interests to collaborate with the department's plans certainly curtailed the prospects for the far-reaching re-organisation of post-primary education sought by the officials. But O'Malley himself did not give the process of rationalisation the same emphasis as his predecessor George Colley, who had initiated the

¹¹¹ W26/13, M194/20, Notes for the Minister, Incremental credit for service as a National teacher, Department of Education, 3 January 1968

¹¹² W26/13, M194/20, Note for the Minister, Circular M.44/66 - Credit for Service as a National Teacher or Vocational Teacher, Department of Education, 21 December 1967

policy of collaboration. O'Malley's key priority in the area of second-level instruction was not rationalisation but the introduction of free education for post-primary pupils.

Initiating free post-primary education

The Minister raised the possibility of introducing a scheme of free education at post-primary level with O'Connor shortly after his appointment in July 1966.¹¹³ The head of the Development Branch advised O'Malley that it would be best to wait until 1970 to begin the introduction of such a scheme in accordance with plans for raising the school leaving age, which were under consideration by the department.¹¹⁴ The initiation of some form of free post-primary education was being considered by the department well before O'Malley's appointment as Minister for Education. The interim report of the internal departmental committee on post-primary education in December 1962 had recommended a period of free and compulsory post-primary education for all children aged between twelve and fifteen.¹¹⁵ Although Hillery declined to adopt this recommendation, the report highlighted the support of leading officials for educational reform. Moreover *Investment* had illuminated the severe social disparities in educational participation at post-primary level, identifying a 'very marked association' between social group and participation in full-time education, which grew more evident as pupils progressed to higher levels.¹¹⁶ The conclusions of the survey team underlined the extent of the inequalities in the educational system and reinforced the case for a far-reaching reform of post-primary education. The government's policy of raising the statutory school leaving age to fifteen by 1970 also created the prospect of free education at least for pupils undertaking junior cycle post-primary courses. Colley and the senior officials of the department intended to combine the raising of the school leaving age in 1970 with the introduction of free education for all pupils in compulsory attendance at post-primary schools.¹¹⁷ This approach was intended to give time for the development of greater collaboration between secondary and vocational schools, which was essential to facilitate a comprehensive curriculum. Certain officials, including O'Connor, believed that the delay until 1970 was also necessary to enable vocational education to fulfil its potential following the recent removal of the restrictions, which had prevented vocational schools from pursuing the

¹¹³ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.141

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Tuarascáil Shealadach ón Choiste A Chuireadh I mBun Scrúdú A Dhéanamh Ar Oideachas Iarbhunscoile*, p.9, 8 December 1962

¹¹⁶ *Investment in Education, Part 1*, p.150

¹¹⁷ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.141

Intermediate and Leaving Certificate courses. As the vocational schools were preparing pupils for the common Intermediate Certificate only from September 1966, the officials considered that the vocational sector would require some years to adapt successfully to the new arrangements.¹¹⁸ O'Malley therefore inherited an established policy approach, which implicitly involved the introduction of some form of free post-primary education by 1970. The principle of free education had not been publicly endorsed by previous Ministers nor had the government adopted the time-scale envisaged by the senior officials of the department. But the government's policy of raising the compulsory school leaving age to fifteen by the end of the decade provided a clear rationale for the introduction of free post-primary education at least for junior cycle pupils. O'Malley's initiative to introduce a scheme of free education did not mean a sudden and complete break with the past, but in many respects marked the culmination of a gradual transformation of the state's policy approach since 1959.

The new Minister was, however, entirely responsible for the scope and timing of the initiative. O'Malley rejected the time frame favoured by the officials. Despite the advice given by the senior officials to wait until the raising of the school leaving age before taking any action, the Minister soon made clear his intention to introduce a scheme of free post-primary education as soon as possible. He requested the Development Branch to prepare a scheme, which was drafted in its original form by O'Connor and two other officials, Seán Ó Mathúna and William Hyland, the senior statistician of the Branch.¹¹⁹ The officials produced two possible options for consideration by the Minister, Scheme A and Scheme B. Scheme A provided for free education up to the Intermediate Certificate level for all pupils in vocational and comprehensive schools, as well as all day pupils in secondary schools which charged an annual fee of no more than £20.¹²⁰ The scheme envisaged a state grant of £15 for each secondary school pupil on condition that each school, which entered the scheme, would provide free education for all day pupils following the Intermediate Certificate course.¹²¹ The first option was based on the assumption that the state had no obligation to provide free education for pupils undertaking the Leaving Certificate course. Scheme A therefore proposed that financial assistance from the state at this level should be confined to pupils

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, *Memorandum to An Taoiseach on the necessity for improvement in full-time attendance at school at secondary level, Department of Education, Scheme A*, p.2, 7 September 1966

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.3

whose families enjoyed incomes under £12 a week.¹²² The second option prepared by the officials differed significantly from the first. Scheme B was a more wide-ranging proposal, which offered fee relief up to the Leaving Certificate level without prescribing any means test.¹²³ The second option also envisaged a grant for each pupil to all secondary schools charging fees of no more than £20 in 1965-66, as well as the remission of vocational and comprehensive school fees. The scheme provided for free education for all pupils within this fee limit up to the Leaving Certificate.¹²⁴ The department also referred in each option to the need for a scheme of scholarships to enable poorer students to proceed to higher education.¹²⁵ O'Malley rejected the inclusion of a means test for access to free post-primary education and decided to proceed on the basis of Scheme B, which offered the prospect of free tuition for most pupils up to the end of second-level education.¹²⁶ As it was very much an outline of the basic elements required by a potential scheme, rather than a detailed proposal, many of the initial ideas contained in Scheme B were later amended, but the Minister adopted the core elements of the outline. O'Malley's exclusion of any means test for free post-primary education at an early stage underlined his crucial role in determining the scope and cost of the proposed scheme.

The Minister was, however, well aware that he faced a formidable challenge in securing the government's agreement for such a radical and costly reform. He first sought to win Lemass' support for the initiative, proposing the introduction of some form of free post-primary education at a meeting with the Taoiseach on 7 September 1966.¹²⁷ He addressed a letter to Lemass, marked 'Personal - By Hand', immediately in advance of the meeting, enclosing a memorandum 'in connection with an approach to free education'.¹²⁸ O'Malley told Lemass that he hoped, in a forthcoming speech, 'to make a general reference - without going into details - to some of the matters referred to in this Memorandum, should you so approve.'¹²⁹ The Minister warned Lemass that Fine Gael was about to launch its plan for education: 'They are evidently panicking at the fact that

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.4

¹²³ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, *Memorandum to An Taoiseach on the necessity for improvement in full-time attendance at school at secondary level, Department of Education, Scheme B*, p.1, 7 September 1966

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, *Memorandum to An Taoiseach on the necessity for improvement in full-time attendance at school at secondary level, Department of Education*, 7 September 1966

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.142

¹²⁷ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, O'Malley to Lemass, 7 September 1966, Horgan, *Seán Lemass*, p.298

¹²⁸ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, O'Malley to Lemass, 7 September 1966

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

in their publication *The Just Society*, they have no proposals whatsoever on education.¹³⁰ He emphasised the importance of pre-empting the largest opposition party with a policy announcement by the government. The memorandum presented by O'Malley made a strong case for the introduction of free post-primary education. He relied heavily on the analysis of *Investment* to support his argument, drawing attention to the social disparities in educational participation revealed by the pilot study. The memorandum noted the report's conclusion that 17,459 pupils, 31% of the relevant age group, dropped out of full-time education on leaving the national schools.¹³¹ The study also underlined that a relatively high proportion of pupils who entered post-primary schools left full-time education early without securing any post-primary certificate. The early drop-out rate was particularly high in vocational schools, as about 7,000 pupils left annually without undertaking the Day Group Certificate. This drop-out rate was regarded by the survey team as 'strikingly high' for a two-year course with an entry cohort of 16,000.¹³² The rate of early school-leaving in secondary schools was also considerable, as approximately 6,500 pupils, out of a total cohort of 25,000, dropped out of secondary education without undertaking the Intermediate Certificate examination.¹³³ The report identified the considerable drop-out rate in post-primary education in the junior cycle as a key area in which improvement in participation might be sought.¹³⁴ The analysis of *Investment* provided a firm foundation for the Minister's case, underlining that over half of the cohort aged between 14 and 16 in the early 1960s dropped out of full-time education without receiving any post-primary qualification.

The Minister argued that the high drop-out rate up to Intermediate Certificate level and the social disparities in participation were explained largely by the inability of parents to pay school fees and other educational costs. O'Malley made the case to Lemass that the presence of tuition fees was often 'the decisive influence' in the decision of many parents to withdraw their children from full-time education at the age of 14 or 15.¹³⁵ The Minister emphasized the need to overcome the financial barriers to participation on social and economic grounds. He drew attention to the apparent social

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Investment in Education, Part 1*, pp.139-141, NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, *Memorandum to An Taoiseach on the necessity for improvement in full-time attendance at school at secondary level*, Department of Education, pp.1-3, 7 September 1966

¹³² *Investment in Education, Part 1*, pp.135-136

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.118

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.176

¹³⁵ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, *Memorandum to An Taoiseach on the necessity for improvement in full-time attendance at school at secondary level*, Department of Education, pp.1-2, 7 September 1966

inequalities within the existing educational system: 'It must be acknowledged that the picture presented above discloses a state of serious social injustice'.¹³⁶ O'Malley did not neglect the economic implications of the substantial drop-out rate at post-primary level, commenting that the situation entailed 'a serious drawback to the country's economic progress.'¹³⁷ The Minister deliberately linked the achievement of equality of educational opportunity with the economic imperative to secure an adequate supply of well-qualified school-leavers, who could provide the necessary technical expertise and skills to sustain economic progress. O'Malley's case for free post-primary education was clearly influenced by the analysis of *Investment* and showed similar concerns about the negative social and economic consequences of educational problems to the NIEC commentary on the report.¹³⁸ But the Minister did not agree with the potentially controversial position taken by the survey team and the NIEC on the system of capitation grants for all pupils in aided secondary schools. The report commented that 'the present system of capitation grants is in effect a scholarship awarded to every pupil, without regard to ability and without any assessment of his needs.'¹³⁹ The NIEC proposed that the capitation grants to secondary schools should be abolished and replaced by a system of income-related scholarships designed to benefit poorer pupils.¹⁴⁰

This solution, which involved the creation of a new system of state funding for secondary education, did not find favour with the Minister. The department considered that the secondary schools would simply move to recoup the money by levying higher fees on well-off pupils.¹⁴¹ O'Malley firmly rejected the NIEC proposal in the memorandum to the Taoiseach: 'It is greatly to be feared that such a levy would raise a hornet's nest of untold dimension. In any case a means test to such an extent would appear to be quite impracticable.'¹⁴² The proposal involved a means test for secondary school pupils, which O'Malley was determined to avoid in principle; but he was equally concerned by the hostile reaction to such a reform, which he anticipated from well-off social groups. While O'Malley categorically rejected the NIEC recommendation, he was much less definite about the details of his own proposals. The Minister's memorandum

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2

¹³⁸ NIEC, *Comments on Investment in Education*, p.13, January 1966

¹³⁹ *Investment in Education Part 1*, p.343

¹⁴⁰ NIEC, *Comments on Investment in Education*, p.24, January 1966

¹⁴¹ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, *Memorandum to An Taoiseach on the necessity for improvement in full-time attendance at school at secondary level*, Department of Education, p.2, 7 September 1966

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

outlined the two options formulated by the officials, Scheme A and Scheme B, for the introduction of free post-primary education.¹⁴³ The options submitted by O'Malley to Lemass on 7 September did not amount to a definitive proposal for free post-primary education. The schemes were marked 'Preliminary' by the department and contained only an outline of the necessary elements which would be required to deliver free education: indeed Scheme B, which was the option favoured by O'Malley, consisted only of a single page summary of the department's ideas.¹⁴⁴ Moreover any costings or assessments of student numbers given by the preliminary schemes were approximate and not necessarily reliable. O'Connor warned the Minister that the officials 'would simply have to guess the number of additional students that might be attracted by free education'.¹⁴⁵ O'Malley certainly made a strong case to the Taoiseach for the early introduction of free post-primary education, but as the department's planning for the initiative was still at an early stage, he did not present a definite scheme for free post-primary education to Lemass. The Minister's proposal left many details of the proposed scheme unclear and indicated no definite time-scale for its introduction. Lemass' immediate response to O'Malley's approach was not recorded, perhaps because any formal response was overtaken by events. But the Minister's determination to secure the implementation of his initiative had the most profound repercussions for Irish education.

The new Minister chose with deliberation the timing and circumstances for the most sensational policy announcement of his term and arguably of the decade. O'Malley made his first major speech since his appointment as Minister for Education at a weekend seminar of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), in Dún Laoghaire on Saturday, 10 September 1966.¹⁴⁶ The timing of his speech and the composition of the audience guaranteed extensive media coverage of any significant policy statement by O'Malley, especially in the print media in both the Sunday and Monday editions. The Minister was clearly concerned to communicate his message effectively to the media: indeed he told his audience that he was pleased to be making his maiden speech as Minister before a body composed mainly of journalists. He explicitly recognised the powerful influence exerted by the print and broadcast media in an era of mass communication and hoped that the media 'will support in every way possible the new plans which I shall be unfolding

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.1-3

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, *Scheme B*, 7 September 1966

¹⁴⁵ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.141

¹⁴⁶ Press Statement, *Speech by Donogh O'Malley, Minister for Education, to the National Union of Journalists at the Royal Marine Hotel, Dún Laoghaire, on Saturday, 10th September 1966*

for our developing educational services.’¹⁴⁷ He then drew attention to Lemass’ statement in July 1966 that education was to receive priority in the allocation of scarce financial resources and affirmed his own determination to ensure that priority was given to education.¹⁴⁸ O’Malley identified the inability of lower-income families to keep their children in education, due to financial and social barriers to participation, as the fundamental flaw of the educational system. He emphasized that the inequalities in educational participation had a severe impact on the economic and cultural development of the state: ‘I think it is one of the great tragedies of our history since independence that we have not found the means to check this terrible loss to the national potential for economic and cultural advancement’.¹⁴⁹ He pointed out that approximately 17,000 primary school pupils, almost one-third of the total age cohort, left school without receiving any post-primary education and were permanently relegated to an inferior economic and social status:

‘This is a dark stain on the national conscience. For it means that some one-third of our people have been condemned - the great majority through no fault of their own - to be part-educated unskilled labour, always the weaker who go to the wall of unemployment or emigration.’¹⁵⁰

The new Minister passionately condemned the inequalities entrenched in the post-primary educational system. His solution was sweeping and dramatic:

‘I am glad to be able to announce that I am drawing up a scheme under which, in future, no boy or girl in this State will be deprived of full educational opportunity - from primary to university level - by reason of the fact that the parents cannot afford to pay for it.’¹⁵¹

This sweeping commitment to full educational opportunity for all was a dramatic advance in the state’s approach to education, which on its own would have commanded favourable headlines. O’Malley, however, proceeded to make a definite commitment to the introduction of free post-primary education from the beginning of the next school year. The Minister announced that he would introduce a scheme, beginning from September 1967, which would make the opportunity for free post-primary education

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.1

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4

¹⁴⁹ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, *The Irish Times*, ‘State Plans Free Education For All Children’, 12 September 1966

¹⁵⁰ *The Irish Times*, ‘State Plans Free Education For All Children’, 12 September 1966, *The Sunday Press*, ‘Free education: Highlights of O’Malley’s plan’, 11 September 1966

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

available to all families up to the end of the Intermediate Certificate course.¹⁵² He left his audience in no doubt about his intention to abolish tuition fees in most post-primary schools: he concluded that even modest school fees were quite beyond the means of many parents. O'Malley indicated that the proposed scheme of free education would include all the vocational and comprehensive schools, while it would be available 'in the general run of secondary schools'.¹⁵³ The high-fee secondary schools were not expected to adopt the scheme and parents would be free to send their children to high-fee schools if they wished to do so.¹⁵⁴

O'Malley also outlined the other key elements of his proposals to guarantee 'full educational opportunity' for all children.¹⁵⁵ He pledged to make appropriate provision to ensure that no pupil was prevented by lack of means from proceeding to the end of the Leaving Certificate course. While he made no commitment to the extension of free education to the senior cycle, there is no doubt that O'Malley was contemplating such an approach, as he had already rejected the introduction of means-tested assistance for Leaving Certificate students.¹⁵⁶ The Minister announced that the state would provide financial aid towards the cost of schoolbooks and accessories to students who experienced hardship in attempting to meet such costs.¹⁵⁷ He indicated too that consideration would be given to the introduction of financial assistance for pupils who could receive post-primary education only by attending a boarding school.¹⁵⁸ O'Malley was marginally more circumspect in his comments on higher education, because the Commission on Higher Education had not completed its report. He disclaimed any intention to cut across the recommendations of the Commission but announced that the state was obliged to come to the assistance of able pupils who were unable to proceed to higher education due to the inability of their families to pay the necessary costs: he proposed to initiate a scheme to assist such pupils in the short-term.¹⁵⁹ The Minister's proposals were outlined only in general terms, as the department had not yet completed the formulation of the necessary schemes. O'Malley told the NUJ that he hoped to be

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *The Irish Times*, 'State Plans Free Education For All Children', 12 September 1966, *The Sunday Independent*, 'Schools To Be Free', 11 September 1966

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *The Irish Times*, 'State Plans Free Education For All Children', 12 September 1966

¹⁵⁶ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.142

¹⁵⁷ *The Irish Times*, 'State Plans Free Education For All Children', 12 September 1966, *The Sunday Press*, 'Free education: Highlights of O'Malley's plan', 11 September 1966

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

able to give the Dáil the full details of the proposals, when he introduced the Estimate for his department, sometime before Christmas.¹⁶⁰ While O'Malley presented his proposals in a general fashion, his commitment to the achievement of a radical advance in educational participation at post-primary level was expressed in definite and categorical terms. O'Malley's policy announcement clearly set out a wide-ranging programme of reform for post-primary education, which gave the state a central role in the transformation of the educational system. The statement implicitly rejected any piecemeal effort to reduce social disparities in educational participation and proposed a comprehensive reform seeking to deal with all the various elements, which contributed to the high drop-out rate from post-primary education. The Minister made a firm commitment that the state would act to overcome traditional barriers to educational participation, from the primary schools to the universities.

The Minister sought in his statement to reinforce the case for a far-reaching reform of post-primary education, by emphasizing the importance of free education in providing a supply of well-qualified school-leavers for the developing economy. He argued that the need to secure an increased supply of 'better-educated young people' to sustain economic progress made the introduction of free education at post-primary level even more urgent.¹⁶¹ The consensus among leading politicians and officials that investment in education contributed significantly to economic development certainly formed part of the context for O'Malley's initiative. The Minister aimed to place his initiative firmly within this political consensus and to portray free education as an economic imperative as well as a social advance. But this skilful portrayal of the policy announcement by O'Malley did not mean that the early introduction of free post-primary education was in any sense part of a national consensus in September 1966. O'Malley himself told the NUJ seminar that it would take some time to implement 'such a revolutionary change in our approach to the provision of education for our people.'¹⁶² O'Malley's decision to make a definite commitment to the introduction of a scheme of free post-primary education from September 1967 certainly marked a significant change in the state's policy for educational expansion. O'Malley made the rapid achievement of free post-primary education a central objective of the department, which had previously

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Press Statement, *Speech by Donogh O'Malley, Minister for Education, to the National Union of Journalists at the Royal Marine Hotel, Dún Laoghaire, on Saturday, 10th September 1966, The Irish Times*, 'State Plans Free Education For All Children', 12 September 1966

¹⁶² *The Irish Times*, 'State Plans Free Education For All Children', 12 September 1966

been preoccupied with the gradual development and reform of post-primary education to facilitate the raising of the school leaving age. The announcement, however, by no means marked a fundamental re-appraisal of the state's policy objectives. The raising of the school leaving age and the provision of three years of post-primary education for all remained key objectives of the government, while Lemass had sought to encourage the reform and expansion of the educational system long before O'Malley's appointment. But the means employed by the state to achieve these objectives faced radical revision as a result of O'Malley's initiative. The department under his immediate predecessors sought to facilitate educational expansion in a measured way through detailed planning of educational needs and the establishment of an integrated post-primary system. O'Malley's policy announcement held out the prospect of a much more rapid expansion of post-primary education, underpinned by the early availability of free education in the secondary and vocational schools. O'Malley's dramatic announcement also set a fixed time-scale for the introduction of free education and publicly outlined ambitious and far-reaching proposals, which would transform the character of the existing post-primary system. The Minister's initiative made free post-primary education a likely prospect in the short-term, rather than a possible option for the future. It was in this sense that O'Malley's announcement marked a dramatic new departure in the state's policy.

O'Malley arranged the timing of his policy announcement to secure the maximum effect, not least in terms of favourable publicity by the media.¹⁶³ The impact of the announcement certainly did not disappoint the Minister: his speech was widely portrayed by the media as a sensational advance, although there was also some scepticism about the arrangements for financing the proposals. The initiative was the subject of leading articles in *The Sunday Press* and *The Sunday Independent* on 11 September.¹⁶⁴ Likewise the announcement received coverage in leading stories in all three major daily newspapers on 12 September.¹⁶⁵ *The Irish Press* welcomed the Minister's approach with great enthusiasm in an editorial on 12 September. The editorial argued that O'Malley's announcement was 'a vote of confidence by the Government in the people who instructed

¹⁶³ Horgan, *Seán Lemass*, p.298

¹⁶⁴ *The Sunday Press*, 'Free education: Highlights of O'Malley's plan', 11 September 1966, *The Sunday Independent*, 'Schools To Be Free', 11 September 1966

¹⁶⁵ *The Irish Times*, 'Sketch Plan for Free Schooling: Surprise at Breadth of Scheme', 12 September 1966, *The Irish Press*, 'Teachers Hail New Education Proposals', 12 September 1966, *The Irish Independent*, 'Doubts on plan for free education: Guarded reaction to schooling scheme', 12 September 1966

them to govern and more particularly in the unproven children of those people'.¹⁶⁶ *The Irish Press* emphasized that investment in education was an investment in the potential of the Irish people, while educational expansion was an inescapable necessity to fulfil the national demand for skilled manpower. The editorial acknowledged that O'Malley had given only an outline of his plans, but argued that there was no reason for pessimism on this account, especially as the initiative would help to lift poorer children out of 'the serfdom of ignorance'.¹⁶⁷ The whole-hearted endorsement of the initiative by *The Irish Press* was perhaps not surprising, considering the newspaper's long-standing connections with Fianna Fáil. But *The Irish Times* also firmly supported O'Malley's initiative. The newspaper's editorial of the same date noted that scepticism might well be regarded as a legitimate reaction to O'Malley's announcement, due to the startling content of his statement and the lack of detailed information about the proposals.¹⁶⁸ But *The Irish Times* considered that the initiative should be welcomed and concerns about its potential cost should be balanced by an appreciation of the value of education: 'The scheme will cost us dear, but a sense of proportion will remind us that if we can pay £15 a head subsidy for a heifer or a calf, we can afford to think in generous terms for the education of a child'.¹⁶⁹ The Minister's initiative received a more cautious response from *The Irish Independent*, although its editorial noted that O'Malley had effectively caught the attention of the country.¹⁷⁰ The editorial sought clarification of the Minister's approach, expressing scepticism about his purpose in announcing a future policy without providing details concerning his plans. But *The Irish Independent* recognised that O'Malley had initiated a new departure in Irish education, acknowledging the important implications of his statement and the favourable public impression generated by the announcement.¹⁷¹ O'Malley's well-calculated manoeuvre produced an avalanche of generally favourable publicity for his initiative in the national press.

O'Malley also achieved the short-term political objective which he had outlined to Lemass on 7 September - namely to seize the political initiative on education and to outflank Fine Gael, which was preparing to launch its policy on educational reform. Fine Gael's initial reaction to the announcement was tentative and uncertain. Mark Clinton, Fine Gael TD for Dublin South-West, unwisely attacked O'Malley's statement as an

¹⁶⁶ *The Irish Press*, 'Investment in People', 12 September 1966

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *The Irish Times*, 'On the Double', 12 September 1966

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *The Irish Independent*, 'Opening Shot', 12 September 1966

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

opportunistic manoeuvre, which the government would never implement: it was 'a long-term shot delivered for political reasons.'¹⁷² The leader of Fine Gael, Liam Cosgrave, was more cautious, declining to make any comment on the initiative until he had studied the plans more closely and discussed it with his parliamentary colleagues.¹⁷³ The Labour Party made a more definite response, giving a qualified endorsement of the Minister's approach. Brendan Corish, the Party leader, commented that he would be 'very pleased' if the Minister succeeded in implementing his initiative, as it was consistent with the Labour Party's policy.¹⁷⁴ Corish, however, argued that the government was adopting only part of Labour's policy, as the Party favoured free post-primary education for all, not a scheme which was apparently limited to junior cycle pupils. He also expressed scepticism about O'Malley's ability to secure the necessary funding for the initiative.¹⁷⁵ Barry Desmond, co-author of the Labour policy document, *Challenge and Change in Education*, took a similar line. He hoped that O'Malley's good intentions would be fulfilled, but emphasized that the Minister's plan would involve only a partial implementation of Labour's comprehensive programme for educational reform.¹⁷⁶ The scepticism expressed by representatives of the two main opposition parties about the initiative itself or the government's willingness to provide resources for it certainly appeared reasonable in September 1966. But the scepticism of the opposition increased the pressure on the government to deliver increased resources to implement O'Malley's initiative, by underlining the political cost to Fianna Fáil if the scheme did not materialise. Moreover O'Malley's policy announcement was designed to appeal strongly to a substantial section of the public, who were likely to benefit from the implementation of his plans.¹⁷⁷ The Education Correspondent of *The Irish Times* on 12 September 1966 noted the favourable impact made by the Minister's statement on public opinion and provided a perceptive analysis of O'Malley's tactics in publicising the initiative: 'With this public opinion behind him, Mr. O'Malley evidently is confident that he has set a ball rolling which will be difficult to halt, whatever opposition it encounters.'¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² *The Irish Times*, 'Sketch Plan for Free Schooling: Surprise at Breadth of Scheme', 12 September 1966

¹⁷³ *The Irish Independent*, 'Doubts on plan for free education: Guarded reaction to schooling scheme', 12 September 1966

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *The Irish Times*, 'Sketch Plan for Free Schooling: Surprise at Breadth of Scheme', 12 September 1966

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

The Minister succeeded in securing a generally favourable response to his initiative from the national media and effectively outmanoeuvred the opposition parties. It is equally evident that O'Malley acted deliberately to pre-empt critical consideration by the government of his far-reaching proposals. O'Malley's initiative was publicly announced without any consultation with the Department of Finance or the government as a whole: indeed Jack Lynch, the Minister for Finance, was attending a conference in Athens and knew nothing at all about O'Malley's intentions.¹⁷⁹ T.K. Whitaker responded furiously to the announcement, complaining directly to Lemass on 12 September about O'Malley's disregard for official procedures: 'It is astonishing that a major change in educational policy should be announced by the Minister for Education at a weekend seminar of the National Union of Journalists.'¹⁸⁰ Whitaker pointed out that 'this "free schooling" policy' had not been examined by the Department of Finance or approved by the government: he commented that it 'therefore, should have received no advance publicity, particularly of the specific and definite type involved in Mr. O'Malley's statement'.¹⁸¹ The Secretary also drew attention to the financial difficulties facing the government, even in funding existing services from current revenue. He commented scathingly that O'Malley should have had all the more reason for caution since he had recently left the Department of Health 'gravely insolvent'.¹⁸² Whitaker asserted that such unauthorised announcements by Ministers would cause 'the negation of planning' and would make the development of national programmes 'increasingly futile'.¹⁸³ The Minister had also acted without the approval of the Taoiseach for his proposals, although O'Malley subsequently claimed to have secured Lemass' support for his initiative at the meeting on 7 September.¹⁸⁴ This contention is clearly implausible. The Minister had presented only preliminary options, not a specific and definitive proposal for approval, to the Taoiseach on 7 September. Moreover O'Malley's announcement that the state would introduce a wide-ranging scheme of free post-primary education in the following school year was clearly a definite commitment with a specific time frame, which had not been presented to the Taoiseach in the Minister's memorandum. Lemass was certainly willing to consider the introduction of some form of free education at post-primary level: the

¹⁷⁹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.146, Interview with Tony Ó Dálaigh, 3 May 2002

¹⁸⁰ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, Whitaker to Lemass, 12 September 1966

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, O'Malley to Lemass, 14 September 1966, *The Irish Times*, 'Education review: the day O'Malley jumped the gun', 9 November 1971

government's policy of raising the school leaving age to fifteen by 1970 implied the availability of free education for pupils obliged to attend post-primary schools on a compulsory basis. But there is no indication that the Taoiseach cleared O'Malley's definite commitment to introduce free post-primary education within a single year.

Lemass certainly issued a rebuke to O'Malley on 12 September, bluntly warning the Minister that his announcement did not constitute a policy commitment by the government to any scheme advanced by O'Malley or to the provision of additional funding for education. The Minister's plans would have to be considered by the government in accordance with normal procedures and would be subjected to 'meticulous examination' by the Department of Finance.¹⁸⁵ Lemass pointedly observed that 'if other Ministers, in respect of their own work, were to seek to commit the Government, by making speeches about their intentions in advance of Government approval of their plans, everything would become chaotic'.¹⁸⁶ Lemass' warning did not deter O'Malley, who replied on 14 September, forcefully defending his initiative and assuring the Taoiseach that he intended to submit detailed proposals to the government in due course. The Minister argued that it would have been 'disastrous' if Fine Gael was allowed to take the initiative on education, following Lemass' clear-cut statement establishing priority for education in the allocation of national resources.¹⁸⁷ O'Malley also commented on the 'unprecedented' favourable response by the public to his initiative, making the plausible claim that there was widespread support for the proposals.¹⁸⁸ The Minister not only defended his statement but also suggested that he was simply following Lemass' own practice in proposing new policies, which caught the imagination of the public and mobilised popular demand for new initiatives.¹⁸⁹ He claimed that the policy announcement was made on the basis of his discussion with Lemass on 7 September and sought the Taoiseach's support in getting the proposals approved by the government:

'If I was under a misapprehension in believing that I had your support for my announcement, I must apologise. I would hope, however, that what I have said will persuade you that I was right in making it and that you will give me your full support in getting my plans approved by the Government.'¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, Lemass to O'Malley, 12 September 1966

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, O'Malley to Lemass, 14 September 1966

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

O'Malley's steadfast defence of his policy approach underlined the Minister's determination to secure the approval of the proposed initiative by the government. Lemass was, however, also receiving alarmed representations from the Minister for Finance about the potential cost of the proposal. Lynch raised O'Malley's announcement with Lemass on 21 September, expressing his 'grave concern' about the financial implications of the proposed scheme.¹⁹¹ The Taoiseach addressed another warning letter to O'Malley on the following day, conveying Lynch's serious reservations about the initiative. Lemass informed O'Malley that the government's policy of giving priority to education was not the same as the abdication of fiscal responsibility, warning that 'any new proposals, even in the field of education, must be framed with strict regard to financial possibilities and in such a way as to provide for their gradual implementation so as to avoid a considerable addition to the Estimate total in any one year.'¹⁹² He told the Minister to develop his ideas in detail without delay and submit his proposals for consideration by the government, 'before any further public statement is made about them'.¹⁹³ Lemass was not opposed to the proposal for free post-primary education, but was concerned at the potential cost of the initiative and aimed to ensure that any new scheme was phased in by the state on a gradual basis, to avoid an excessive burden on the Exchequer in a single year. The Taoiseach was also determined to ensure that O'Malley adhered closely to normal government procedures in future.

Lemass was sufficiently concerned by O'Malley's readiness to circumvent official procedures that he insisted on approving replies by the Minister to Dáil questions about free post-primary education.¹⁹⁴ The Taoiseach changed draft replies prepared by the Minister's office, to parliamentary questions by Corish and Gerry L'Estrange of Fine Gael, to make the references to the proposed scheme less definite.¹⁹⁵ Lemass instructed O'Malley to avoid being definite about the date of operation for the scheme or the time frame required for the government's consideration of the proposals. Lemass privately told the Minister that it should be feasible for the government to complete its deliberations on the proposals in time for O'Malley to make a full statement when the Education Estimate came before the Dáil, but he prevented O'Malley from making any

¹⁹¹ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, Lemass to O'Malley, 22 September 1966

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, Lemass to O'Malley, 26 September 1966

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Horgan, *Seán Lemass*, p.298

definite commitment to that effect in his reply.¹⁹⁶ The Taoiseach was willing to have proposals for free post-primary education approved by the government in the short-term, but stopped the Minister from setting either a deadline for the government's decision or a definite time-scale for the introduction of the scheme.

O'Malley submitted the first detailed proposals for free education prepared by his department to the government on 14 October 1966.¹⁹⁷ The Minister proposed an ambitious and sweeping scheme for free post-primary education. The first key element of the memorandum proposed 'to make free tuition in post-primary schools available to all.'¹⁹⁸ The plan envisaged the payment of a state grant of £30 for each day pupil, for those secondary schools, which agreed to make free education available to all pupils. The state would provide free education for all full-time students in vocational schools, while the fees in secondary tops and comprehensive schools would be abolished.¹⁹⁹ The Minister proposed free post-primary education for most day pupils up to the end of the Leaving Certificate course. The proposals included a scheme of financial assistance to poor children for the purchase of schoolbooks. O'Malley also sought the introduction of a scheme of state grants to enable pupils from low-income families to proceed to higher education.²⁰⁰ The department estimated that the cost of the proposals would amount to over £3 million on an annual basis.²⁰¹ The Minister sought the approval of the government for the introduction of the new schemes by the beginning of the next school year.²⁰² O'Malley's proposals were breathtakingly ambitious, justifying the worst fears of the Department of Finance. The irrepressible Minister requested the government to approve the memorandum as a matter of urgency by 18 October 1966. He attached an urgency certificate to the memorandum which stipulated that 'the Minister requires decision before the television debate on Education scheduled for Friday 21 Deireadh Fomhair.'²⁰³ But the Department of Finance was firmly opposed to various aspects of the proposals and Lynch was expected to oppose the memorandum at the Cabinet meeting.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁶ NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, Lemass to O'Malley, 26 September 1966

¹⁹⁷ NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, F.111668, *Memorandum to the Government, Provision of Free Post-Primary Education, Office of the Minister for Education, 14 October 1966*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.1

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.1-3

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.2

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp.3-8

²⁰³ NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, *Form A, Submission to the Government, Provision of Free Post-Primary Education, Office of the Minister for Education, 14 October 1966*

²⁰⁴ NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, *Form B, Submission to the Government, Provision of Free Post-Primary Education, Office of the Minister for Education, 14 October 1966*

There was no prospect of achieving a favourable decision from the government in such a restricted time frame.

Lemass intervened to guarantee a more measured consideration of O'Malley's plans by the government. The Taoiseach told officials of his department to hold the memorandum without circulating it to the Cabinet.²⁰⁵ He then wrote to O'Malley on 17 October, informing him that it would be unreasonable to expect the government to consider his proposals without following the full Cabinet procedure, including a detailed assessment of the scheme by the Department of Finance: it was also 'very improbable' that other Ministers would readily agree to the proposals, which involved additional expenditure of £3 million on education in 1967-68.²⁰⁶ Lemass advised O'Malley that 'You should therefore consider what it may be possible to achieve in the next few years in the post-primary education sphere at a lower cost.'²⁰⁷ He noted that O'Malley proposed a tuition grant of £30 per pupil, although the Minister had previously discussed figures of £15 or £20 with Lemass in a preliminary way.²⁰⁸ The Taoiseach was clearly concerned about the potential cost of O'Malley's plans, as well as the Minister's penchant for short-circuiting normal government procedures. Lemass' intervention ensured that the Cabinet's decision on the initiative was postponed until November. Lemass acted to block O'Malley's attempt to secure approval of a far-reaching and controversial reform, within a week of its submission to the government. But the Taoiseach's intervention was ultimately beneficial to O'Malley. The postponement of the government's deliberations gave the Department of Education time to formulate a more acceptable and comprehensive plan for free post-primary education. The delay also allowed time for further consultation with the Department of Finance. O'Malley met Lynch to discuss the proposal, along with officials from both departments. While the two Ministers did not reach agreement on the terms of the initiative, the more ambitious elements of O'Malley's plan were revised by his department to take some account of the reservations of the Department of Finance. The revised proposals were circulated to the government on 11 November 1966, the day after Lemass' retirement as Taoiseach.²⁰⁹

The officials of the Development Branch used their time well. The revised plan maintained the principal features of O'Malley's previous proposals, but scaled back the

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, Lemass to O'Malley, 17 October 1966

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, F.111668, *Memorandum to the Government, Provision of Free Post-Primary Education, Office of the Minister for Education, 11 November 1966*

more ambitious elements of the initiative, producing more conservative costings. The proposal for the free tuition scheme on this occasion set the more modest target of 'making free tuition available in certain post-primary schools'.²¹⁰ The revised plan firmly maintained the principle that there should be no means test for free education at post-primary level. The officials devised the alternative of a special state grant in lieu of fees to secondary schools in certain fee ranges, on condition that they would discontinue the charging of school fees.²¹¹ The scheme envisaged the payment of a supplemental grant, which would vary between a minimum of £15 and a maximum of £25 to accommodate different fee ranges, for each day pupil attending secondary schools, which fully adopted free education. The state would act to abolish fees in vocational schools and secondary tops, by providing a grant of £4 per pupil to the relevant authorities on the basis that the pupils would receive free education: the comprehensive schools would also provide free tuition.²¹² The introduction of a differential in the rate of the grant to secondary schools was a significant modification of O'Malley's initial proposal. The department considered that the payment of the proposed grant would deliver free education for approximately 75% of the day pupils in secondary schools.²¹³ The proposal envisaged a state grant to cover the tuition element of the boarding school fee, up to the maximum limit of £25, for all pupils who were prevented by the location of their homes from attending day schools.²¹⁴ The revised proposals also made special provision for Protestant secondary education. O'Malley proposed a separate scheme for Protestant secondary schools: he aimed to give the equivalent of £25 per pupil to about 75% of Protestant day pupils, with the intention of delivering the same level of state support which would be available to Catholic students.²¹⁵ Despite the special provision for Protestant secondary schools, the estimated cost of the free tuition scheme amounted to only £481,000 in 1967-68 and £1,442,000 annually, showing a reduction of about £1 million from the proposal submitted on 14 October.²¹⁶ While this estimate later proved entirely inadequate, the department had succeeded in crafting a free tuition scheme, which appeared more limited and reasonable than O'Malley's initial proposal.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.7

²¹² *Ibid.*, p.1

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p.8

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.1

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.12

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.32

The Minister's memorandum emphasized that free tuition was not enough to secure greater participation in post-primary education by low-income social groups. O'Malley envisaged the provision of financial assistance towards the cost of books and accessories for low-income families, as defined by the Health Acts.²¹⁷ He proposed that the state should provide free books to eligible pupils, at a cost of £16 per pupil over the Intermediate Certificate course and £14 per pupil over the Leaving Certificate course. The provision of free books was to be limited to 25% of all pupils receiving free education: but the Minister would be able to allocate a higher proportion of grants to schools with a high percentage of low-income pupils.²¹⁸ The department proposed the introduction of a maintenance allowance of £40 per annum for 'very poor pupils', namely the children of families receiving social welfare or other means-tested assistance from the state, who continued in full-time education after the compulsory school-leaving age.²¹⁹ The Minister also sought to make special provision for low-income pupils, who could secure post-primary education only by attending boarding schools: it was suggested that the state should pay the full boarding school fee up to a maximum of £100 for such pupils.²²⁰ The proposals for special assistance for pupils from low-income families underlined O'Malley's concern to increase educational participation in low-income social categories and maximise the number of pupils continuing in full-time education after the compulsory school leaving age was raised to fifteen.

The revised proposals submitted by O'Malley re-affirmed the need for the introduction of a scheme of higher education grants for the first time. The Minister proposed to provide financial assistance to students who had reached a high standard in the Leaving Certificate examination, but could not proceed to higher education, due to the inability of their parents to pay the costs of the course.²²¹ The proposed scheme for assistance in higher education was based firstly on attainment and also involved a means test. The department envisaged full assistance for a family with one child, earning less than £1,200 per annum, while the income threshold would be adjusted upwards with reference to the number of children in the family. The Minister aimed to discontinue the

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.16, *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1967-68*, pp.116-117 (Dublin, 1969)

²¹⁸ NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, F.111668, *Memorandum to the Government, Provision of Free Post-Primary Education*, Office of the Minister for Education, p.20, 11 November 1966

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.21

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p.22

scheme of post-primary and university scholarships operated by the local authorities and divert the funding made available to meet the cost of the new scheme.²²²

The final key element in the revised proposals was a nation-wide scheme for school transport, to be subsidised by the state. O'Malley recognised that the plan for free post-primary education was incomplete unless it made appropriate provision for general access to school transport. The introduction of free education would not take effect fully without a national transport scheme, as greater participation at post-primary level in rural areas required the alleviation of the heavy transport costs faced by parents.²²³ O'Malley emphasized that the rationalisation of post-primary education could not be implemented in the absence of a viable transport service: the department's policy of refusing to sanction small post-primary schools would be 'impossible to maintain' unless transport was provided to larger post-primary centres.²²⁴ The department could not hope to secure agreement on proposals for rationalisation of school facilities without offering state assistance towards the cost of school transport.²²⁵ The Minister also made the case that a national transport scheme was essential to achieve equality of educational opportunity. 'The underlying factor behind the proposal to establish a State supported transport scheme is to remove inequalities based on geographical location'.²²⁶ The free transport scheme was designed to overcome the severe regional disparities in educational participation, which had been identified by *Investment*.²²⁷ The Minister proposed that the state should pay the full cost of transport for pupils living more than three miles from a post-primary school, on the basis that a free transport service would be initiated in any area with a minimum of seven eligible children.²²⁸ The free transport scheme was the most significant addition made by the Minister to the original proposals for free education. The prevalence of the geographical inequalities identified by *Investment* established a convincing rationale for state aid for school transport.²²⁹ Moreover the government's policy of rationalisation implicitly conceded the case for a transport scheme subsidised by the state. It was therefore virtually impossible for the government

²²² *Ibid.*, pp.23-27

²²³ *Ibid.*, p.28

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.28

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.30

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.29

²²⁷ *Investment in Education, Part 1*, p.157

²²⁸ NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, F.111668, *Memorandum to the Government, Provision of Free Post-Primary Education, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.31, 11 November 1966

²²⁹ *Investment in Education, Part 1*, p.157

to oppose a nation-wide state transport scheme, although the proposal of free transport for all was not to be so easily accepted.

The revised proposals submitted by the Minister on 11 November 1966 formed a comprehensive and viable blueprint for the introduction of free post-primary education. The core principles of O'Malley's initial submission in October were maintained and even extended, but the revised plan made a much more detailed and plausible case for free education. The officials significantly modified the proposed free tuition scheme to reduce the estimated costs, especially in the first year of its operation. The estimated cost of the proposals remained high, amounting to £3,002,000 on an annual basis.²³⁰ But the revised plan provided for the gradual implementation of the free tuition and free transport schemes, so that the total cost in the first year came to just over £1,000,000.²³¹ The department crafted a more workable and cautious plan for the implementation of free post-primary education, which enjoyed a greater prospect of acceptance by the government than the original submission. Lemass' intervention, which compelled O'Malley to defer the initial proposals, worked in his favour by ensuring the development of a more viable and politically acceptable plan for free education. The initiative presented by O'Malley to the Cabinet in November 1966 was, however, still remarkably ambitious. The proposals envisaged a radical reform of the existing system of post-primary education. The initiative involved not a single scheme for free tuition, but several interdependent elements, which were designed to provide free post-primary education and widen significantly the rate of participation by low-income social groups in second-level and higher education. The wide-ranging implications of the proposals were not lost on the Department of Finance, which firmly opposed key elements of the Minister's initiative.

Following Jack Lynch's election as Taoiseach on 10 November 1966, the new Minister for Finance, Charles Haughey, submitted a memorandum to the government on 17 November, which raised a series of reservations about O'Malley's proposals.²³² The submission, which reflected the concerns of the senior officials of the Department of Finance, correctly pointed out that the net direct cost of about £3,000,000 in a full year was by no means a complete estimate of the expenditure required by the plan. The

²³⁰ NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, F.111668, *Memorandum to the Government, Provision of Free Post-Primary Education, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.32, 11 November 1966,

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, S.18/13/66, *Memorandum to the Government, Provision of Free Post-Primary Education, Office of the Minister for Finance*, 17 November 1966

increased pupil numbers generated by the initiative would create the need for further expenditure to provide additional accommodation and teachers.²³³ The Department of Finance's submission initially urged the government to defer the proposals at least in the short-term, advising against the acceptance of an initiative involving such extensive financial commitments: 'The Minister for Finance must ask the Government to view very critically proposals which will add so substantially to public expenditure.'²³⁴ Haughey and the senior officials of his Department recognised, however, that the Cabinet might consider some initiative on the basis of O'Malley's plan to be essential. The Minister for Finance therefore proposed a series of amendments to the plan if the initiative was to be approved in some form.²³⁵

The Department of Finance's submission gave a critical commentary on the plan for free post-primary education and was particularly dismissive of the free tuition scheme:

'To describe this scheme as "free" is misleading. The scheme really means that many parents at present paying moderate school fees voluntarily will have to pay an equal or greater amount compulsorily in the form of additional taxation.'²³⁶

The Department of Finance argued that free education should be restricted to the Intermediate Certificate level and introduced even at this level only on a phased basis: the separate scheme for Protestant schools should be deferred indefinitely.²³⁷ The department also considered that while the transport scheme was acceptable in principle, school transport should not be entirely free: instead a state transport scheme should be undertaken only on the basis of a local contribution of at least half of the cost in each case.²³⁸ The submission acknowledged the need for the provision of free books to poor pupils, but objected to the proposed maintenance allowance to 'very poor' children. The Department of Finance was also firmly opposed to the implementation of the scheme for financial assistance to university students, as it was not only very expensive but would pre-empt the recommendations of the Commission on Higher Education.²³⁹ The Department of Finance formulated a series of specific objections to O'Malley's proposals, which would have nullified or greatly restricted the effect of the initiative.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p.1

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.3-4

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.6

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.5

Finally the submission requested that if the government approved the proposals, its approval should be given only subject to the modifications demanded by the Department of Finance: moreover O'Malley should be allowed to implement the plan only on a phased basis with the prior agreement of the Minister for Finance to each element of the initiative.²⁴⁰ While Haughey acknowledged that the government might wish to approve the proposals in general, his department's submission was clearly designed to prevent or delay the implementation of key elements of the initiative. O'Malley's proposals would have been watered down and altered beyond recognition if the government had accepted all of the Department of Finance's amendments.

As O'Malley had no intention of accepting the fundamental revision of his proposals, Lynch was obliged to adjudicate the conflict between O'Malley and the Department of Finance in his first month as Taoiseach. Officials of the Department of Education considered that O'Malley, who had enjoyed a friendly working relationship with Lemass, was less sure of himself in dealing with the new Taoiseach.²⁴¹ Certainly O'Malley had sidelined Lynch in making his policy announcement on free education and Lynch had complained to Lemass about the cost of the initiative.²⁴² But the new Taoiseach, who had previously served as Minister for Education, did not depart from Lemass' approach of giving priority to education in the allocation of national resources. While Lynch certainly shared Lemass' caution about the scope and timing of O'Malley's proposals, he showed no inclination to obstruct the introduction of free post-primary education. The political circumstances favoured O'Malley's initiative. The Minister's public announcement had created a public and media expectation that free education would be introduced. A withdrawal from O'Malley's dramatic statement was fraught with political difficulties for the government. It was even more difficult for a newly elected Taoiseach, who faced early by-elections in December 1966, to withdraw from the definite statement of intent made by O'Malley. Moreover the launch of Fine Gael's policy document on education in November 1966 reinforced the political case for an ambitious initiative by the government. The Fine Gael document, which was composed mainly by Senator Garret FitzGerald, proposed a complex scheme which would allow most secondary schools to offer free education at least to a minimum proportion of their

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.6

²⁴¹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.162, Interview with Tony Ó Dálaigh, 3 May 2002

²⁴² NA D/T 96/6/356, S.12891F, Lemass to O'Malley, 22 September 1966, Horgan, *Seán Lemass*, p.298

pupils.²⁴³ Fine Gael proposed that the state should offer a substantial increase in the capitation grants to all secondary schools, which agreed to offer free education. The proposal envisaged that all pupils would receive free education in schools where the increased capitation grant exceeded the income previously derived from fees.²⁴⁴ Fine Gael proposed that high-fee schools, where the increased grant would not fully cover the income received from fees, would offer a proportion of free places, amounting to at least one-third of all places in a day school.²⁴⁵ Fine Gael's plan also provided for a free transport scheme, subject to a means test and maintenance grants for low-income pupils at Leaving Certificate level.²⁴⁶ The plan was perhaps too complex and technical to win popular support and was in any event overshadowed by O'Malley's initiative. The Fine Gael policy document underlined, however, the development of a political consensus in favour of some form of free post-primary education. Fine Gael's initiative made the swift approval of O'Malley's proposals by the government even more likely. O'Connor considered that 'the issue of the Fine Gael policy document silenced any opposition to the proposals within the Government.'²⁴⁷ Fine Gael's initiative certainly reinforced the political imperative for the government to finalise a wide-ranging plan for free second-level education. Fianna Fáil could not allow the largest opposition party to seize the initiative with regard to education policy, especially on the eve of two by-elections. The launch of Fine Gael's policy strengthened O'Malley's hand, in his efforts to secure the government's approval for his proposals.

The Cabinet considered the proposals on 29 November 1966, devoting a full meeting to the discussion on the Minister's initiative.²⁴⁸ The Cabinet approved the proposed free tuition scheme up to the Leaving Certificate level in accordance with O'Malley's intentions: it was decided that the initial level of the supplemental grant paid by the state per pupil in secondary schools and any subsequent change in the grant would be fixed by agreement between the Ministers for Education and Finance. O'Malley succeeded in preventing a fundamental revision of the scheme, gaining the agreement of the government that the differential in the supplemental grant for each day pupil would

²⁴³ *Fine Gael, Policy for a Just Society 3, Education*, pp.32-33 (Fine Gael, Dublin, 1966)

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.33

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.33-34

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.36-37

²⁴⁷ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.146

²⁴⁸ NA 99/5/1, G.C. 12/2, Cabinet Minutes, pp.1-2, 29th November 1966

vary from £15 to £25.²⁴⁹ The government agreed that special consideration should be given to pupils, who could only secure post-primary education through attendance at boarding schools, as they were living in remote areas outside the range of a school transport scheme.²⁵⁰ The principle of a remoteness grant for such pupils, who lived mainly on islands off the coast, was approved and a maintenance grant of £50 per pupil was introduced in 1967, with an exceptional provision of £95 for poor pupils attending boarding schools.²⁵¹ The Minister also succeeded in securing the Cabinet's agreement for the nation-wide free transport scheme, which was to be introduced on a gradual basis from 1 April 1967. The government decided that the scheme would involve only the transport of pupils, who lived not less than three miles from the nearest post-primary school at which free education was available.²⁵² O'Malley's proposal for the introduction of a scheme for the provision of free books to pupils from low-income families was also approved, although the terms of the scheme were to be settled between O'Malley and Haughey.²⁵³ Most of the specific amendments sought by the Department of Finance in their counter-memo were ignored or rejected by the Cabinet, especially with the regard to the free tuition and free transport schemes. Lynch's government accepted most core elements of the plan for free post-primary education and sought to ensure that the initiative was introduced on a phased basis to spread the costs over a number of years.

O'Malley did not, however, secure unqualified support for his radical initiative. Certain elements of the Minister's plan were deferred or sidelined by the government, in accordance with recommendations of the Department of Finance. The Cabinet deferred the proposal for a maintenance allowance to subsidise 'very poor' pupils, which was designed to encourage the children of welfare recipients to remain in full-time education.²⁵⁴ It was agreed that the terms of the allowance were to be settled through further consultation between the two relevant Ministers; but in fact the proposal was deferred indefinitely and was never implemented by the government.²⁵⁵ The Cabinet also decided not to proceed in the short-term with O'Malley's proposal for state aid to third-

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2, NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, F.111668, *Memorandum to the Government, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.1, 26 January 1967

²⁵⁰ NA 99/5/1, G.C. 12/2, Cabinet Minutes, p.2, 29th November 1966

²⁵¹ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1967-68*, p.116 (Dublin, 1969)

²⁵² NA 99/5/1, G.C. 12/2, Cabinet Minutes, p.2, 29th November 1966

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Horgan, *Seán Lemass*, p.298

level students: it was agreed that the government's decision should make no reference to Part C of the proposals, which related to higher education.²⁵⁶

The Minister's proposal for a new system of higher education grants was not approved until 1968. O'Malley secured Haughey's agreement to a scheme of grants based on the original proposal following protracted negotiations between their departments. The scheme, which was submitted to the government on 20 February 1968, was means-tested and based on a relatively high standard of attainment: the minimum standard for the award of assistance was four Honours in university matriculation subjects at the Leaving Certificate examination, with a requirement for 70% in one of these subjects.²⁵⁷ The proposal required all local authorities to provide for the grants annually an equivalent amount to their existing provision for university scholarships: the additional funding required to meet the cost of the scheme would be provided directly by the state.²⁵⁸ Despite the opposition of the Department of Local Government, the Cabinet authorised O'Malley on 27 February 1968 to draft a Bill providing for the introduction of higher education grants.²⁵⁹ The Local Authorities (Higher Education Grants) Bill was approved by the Cabinet on 2 April 1968, less than a month after O'Malley's sudden death.²⁶⁰ His successor, Brian Lenihan, piloted the Bill through the Dáil by July and the legislation came into effect for the beginning of the next college year in 1968-69.²⁶¹ The new legislation initially affected only first year students and was ultimately intended to assist only about 14% of the total cohort receiving higher education. But the initiative was a significant advance on the collection of local authority scholarship schemes which it replaced. The new scheme offered grants to about 800 students annually, compared to the previous provision of only 275 university scholarships by the local authorities.²⁶² The scheme marked the first serious attempt by the state to reduce the traditional barriers restricting access to higher education for low-income students. The legislation delivered a restructuring and extension of the limited provision for state assistance at university level, although the extent of the improvement was restricted by financial constraints.

²⁵⁶ NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, Decision slip, *Cruinniú Rialtais, Item 3, Post-Primary Education*, 29 November 1966

²⁵⁷ NA D/T 99/1/332, S.16890, *Memorandum to the Government, Scheme of Grants for Higher Education, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.1-3, 20 February 1968

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.1, *General scheme of Bill*, p.1, Department of Education

²⁵⁹ NA 99/5/1, G.C.12/91, Cabinet Minutes, 27 February 1968, p.2

²⁶⁰ NA 99/5/2, G.C.12/99, Cabinet Minutes, 2 April 1968, p.2

²⁶¹ NA D/T 99/1/332, S.16890, N.S. Ó Nualláin to M. Ó Flathartaigh, Secretary to the President, 10 July 1968, Ó Flathartaigh to Ó Nualláin, 15 July 1968

²⁶² *Memorandum to the Government, Scheme of Grants for Higher Education, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.3, 20 February 1968

Despite its limitations the plan for free post-primary education was undeniably a landmark reform in Irish education. The Cabinet's decision to approve most key elements of O'Malley's far-reaching initiative was the single most influential policy decision of the period of educational expansion. Certainly the proposals approved by the government were less obviously ambitious than the initial plan submitted by O'Malley in October. But various financial conditions built into the revised plan as a result of pressure from the Department of Finance, especially the differential rate governing the grant to secondary schools, proved temporary due to representations by influential educational authorities for increased state funding of secondary education. While the cautious safeguards secured by the Department of Finance proved transitory, the government's decision to approve proposals for free post-primary education was an irrevocable policy commitment. The government adopted for the first time a definite and far-reaching plan to increase educational participation by low-income social groups. The initiative marked a decisive intervention by the state to transform educational participation at the post-primary level. O'Malley's dramatic announcement on 10 September 1966 and the Cabinet's decision to honour his unauthorised initiative marked a firm policy commitment by the state to the democratisation of the post-primary educational system.

The Minister lost no time in publicising the proposals agreed by the government, outlining the main elements of the initiative to the Dáil on 30 November 1966, the day after the Cabinet's decision.²⁶³ The Minister anticipated that the scheme would make free education available to about 75% of day pupils in Catholic schools. He aimed to provide equality of treatment for Protestant schools through the separate scheme of assistance, which would be centrally administered by the Protestant educational authorities.²⁶⁴ O'Malley also summarised the terms of the scheme for the provision of free books, which would be operated through the headmasters of the schools: he considered this approach to be 'the one most socially acceptable', as it would avoid a means test.²⁶⁵ The Minister acknowledged that very poor families would still experience great difficulty in keeping their children at school even after the implementation of free education: he told the Dáil that he would consider the possibility of special provision for such families after the scheme had been implemented.²⁶⁶ O'Malley's comments underlined his disappointment that his proposed solution, the payment of a maintenance allowance to pupils from low-

²⁶³ *Dáil Debates*, vol.225, col.1872, 30 November 1966

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, col.1885-1888

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, col.1889-1890

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, col.1890

income families, had been shelved by the Cabinet. The Minister also argued that the new free transport scheme facilitated the rationalisation of post-primary education: free transport would ensure that savings would be achieved in the long-term by avoiding the construction of a substantial number of new schools. O'Malley acknowledged, however, that his initiative would certainly require additional expenditure to provide increased accommodation and more teachers at post-primary level. He did not attempt to minimise the cost or scale of his proposals, telling the Dáil that he was not placing 'any Utopian scheme' before the House.²⁶⁷ He assured the Dáil that the scheme of free post-primary education would be delivered in a responsible way. Indeed O'Malley commented that the educational advances envisaged by his proposals would probably have to be financed through additional taxation, which would fall on the well-off section of Irish society:

'Every worthwhile development in the social and economic advancement of any nation calls for some sacrifice on the part of those best able to bear it - that is what we will be asking our people to accept in the implementation of these proposals.'²⁶⁸

The successful implementation of O'Malley's initiative required the collaboration of the influential private stakeholders in the secondary school system. The initial reaction of the private school authorities to O'Malley's policy announcement on 10 September 1966 tended to be mildly positive, but cautious and non-committal. Fr. John Hughes, chairman of the Catholic Managerial Committee, welcomed the principle of free education, but did not wish to make any further comment until he had examined the detail of the scheme.²⁶⁹ O'Malley's initiative was also welcomed in general terms by Dr. R.W. Reynolds, secretary of the Irish Schoolmasters' Association (ISA), the representative body for Protestant headmasters.²⁷⁰ The representatives of the Catholic and Protestant managerial authorities were understandably cautious in their initial response to the announcement, awaiting the full details of the Minister's scheme. The Protestant educational authorities, however, soon took a markedly more positive approach to the initiative than the Catholic managers and religious orders, in part because the representatives of the Protestant authorities secured much greater influence over the final form of the proposals than their Catholic counterparts.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, col.1893-1894

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, col.1893-1894

²⁶⁹ *The Irish Press*, 'Teachers Hail New Education Proposals', 12 September 1966

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

The Secondary Education Committee (SEC), which represented the interests of the Protestant churches in post-primary education, took a pro-active approach following O'Malley's announcement, making representations to the department to secure special arrangements for the Protestant secondary schools.²⁷¹ O'Malley readily accepted the SEC case that an alternative scheme of assistance was required for Protestant children. The department calculated that only 7.5% of Protestant pupils would benefit from the free tuition scheme, which was intended to include 75% of Catholic day pupils.²⁷² This discrepancy was explained in part by the higher cost of education in Protestant schools, as the Protestant community lacked the service of the religious orders, which heavily subsidised Catholic secondary education. Moreover 40% of all Protestant pupils could only receive denominational education by attending boarding schools, due to the lack of suitable Protestant day schools. O'Malley's proposal to the government on 11 November 1966 therefore accepted the case for special provision for Protestant secondary education: 'The Protestant schools are a special problem and it is submitted, require special assistance.'²⁷³ The SEC was deeply involved in the formulation of the separate scheme of assistance for Protestant schools, as the Minister sought their advice on the details of the scheme and SEC members held a series of discussions with the officials. The scheme provided for the payment by the state of a block grant of £70,000 for day pupils to the Protestant educational authorities, for distribution by the SEC to the Protestant schools.²⁷⁴ The Minister, however, made only limited provision initially for Protestant boarding pupils, allocating a block grant of £10,000 to the Protestant educational authorities.²⁷⁵ The SEC soon lobbied successfully for an increased allocation for Protestant boarding pupils. O'Malley presented a proposal to the Cabinet on 27 June 1967, seeking its authorisation to pay the tuition element of the boarding fee, up to a maximum of £25, for all Protestant boarding pupils from 1967-68.²⁷⁶ The Cabinet approved the proposal, which involved the payment of a block grant of £60,000 to the SEC for 1967-68, on 4

²⁷¹ *Report of the SEC, 1967, Journal of the 1st Session of the 33rd General Synod of the Church of Ireland 1967*, ed. J.L.B. Deane, pp.112-113 (Dublin, 1967)

²⁷² NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, F.111668, *Memorandum to the Government, Provision of Free Post-Primary Education, Office of the Minister for Education*, 11 November 1966, pp.10-11

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp.11-12

²⁷⁴ *Report of the SEC, 1967, Journal of the 1st Session of the 33rd General Synod of the Church of Ireland 1967*, ed. J.L.B. Deane, pp.112-113 (Dublin, 1967), Doyle, *Leading the Way*, p.79

²⁷⁵ NA D/T 97/6/638, S.12891F, F.111668, *Memorandum to the Government, Provision of Free Post-Primary Education, Office of the Minister for Education*, 11 November 1966, p.12

²⁷⁶ NA D/T 98/5/951, S.16890, F.113233, *Memorandum to the Government, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.12-13, 27 June 1967

August 1967.²⁷⁷ The SEC's lobbying efforts were successful in securing a highly favourable scheme of assistance, which did much to meet the special requirements of the Protestant schools. O'Malley and the senior officials took great care to accommodate the concerns of the Protestant educational authorities. The SEC's report to the General Synod of the Church of Ireland in 1967 expressed its appreciation of O'Malley's willingness to deliver an alternative scheme for Protestant children.²⁷⁸ The special arrangements authorised by the Minister gave the benefits of his initiative to the Protestant secondary schools and allowed considerable flexibility to the Protestant authorities in the implementation of the scheme. It was not surprising that the SEC paid a warm tribute to O'Malley shortly after his death in 1968, declaring that he 'had laboured unceasingly and with vision to implement an enlightened policy'.²⁷⁹

The Minister received few tributes, however, from the Catholic managerial authorities during the prolonged negotiations, which paved the way for the implementation of the initiative in September 1967. O'Malley calculated correctly that the support of the Catholic Hierarchy for his proposals would be crucial in securing the collaboration of the Catholic managers and teaching orders. He initiated preliminary discussions with the Bishops on the initiative even before it was approved by the government. O'Malley, who was accompanied by Ó Raifeartaigh, O'Connor and MacGearailt, met leading representatives of the Hierarchy, including Cardinal Conway and Dr. McQuaid, in Maynooth on 3 October 1966.²⁸⁰ The Minister outlined the proposals for free education in general terms, acknowledging that the details had not yet been worked out. The officials clarified that the scheme for free tuition was based on the principle that free post-primary schools should be available to all: it was not proposed simply to give free education in any school to its poorer pupils and the special grants would therefore be paid only to schools giving free education to all their pupils.²⁸¹ Cardinal Conway objected strongly to the proposal to vary the rate of the state's grant to secondary schools from £15 to £25 for day pupils: he argued that a standard rate for all schools would be preferable to avoid injustice to low-fee schools.²⁸² The Hierarchy's

²⁷⁷ NA 99/5/1, G.C.12/55, Cabinet Minutes, pp.1-2, 4 August 1967

²⁷⁸ *Report of the SEC, 1967, Journal of the 1st Session of the 33rd General Synod of the Church of Ireland 1967*, ed. J.L.B. Deane, pp.112-113 (Dublin, 1967)

²⁷⁹ *Report of the SEC, 1968, Journal of the 2nd Session of the 33rd General Synod of the Church of Ireland 1968*, ed. J.L.B. Deane, p.131 (Dublin, 1968)

²⁸⁰ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes of the Irish Hierarchy, Meeting of the Minister for Education with the Hierarchy at Maynooth on 3rd October 1966, p.1

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p.2

representatives also sought clarification on the provision to be made for secondary boarding schools. The Minister indicated that assistance to boarding pupils would be undertaken in some way, but did not clarify the scope or level of this assistance. Ó Raifeartaigh promised that special provision would be made by the state for the Catholic Diocesan Colleges, which prepared candidates for the priesthood, but the Bishops expressed concern about the position of low-fee boarding schools provided by the religious orders.²⁸³ The discussion at Maynooth was largely inconclusive. The Bishops expressed no objection to the initiative for free education, but raised serious reservations about the arrangements for implementing the Minister's plans in the voluntary secondary schools. O'Malley's meeting with the Catholic Bishops on 3 October 1966 was only the beginning of a lengthy process of negotiation between the state and the Hierarchy.

Ó Raifeartaigh and MacGearailt conducted the negotiations initially. The two officials arranged to meet Fergus and Henry Murphy, Bishop of Limerick, in Ballaghaderreen on 10 December 1966 to discuss the initiative.²⁸⁴ They assured the Bishops that O'Malley intended to offer a grant of £25 for all day and boarding pupils in the Diocesan Colleges, on the basis that such pupils formed an exceptional category due to their religious vocation.²⁸⁵ The two Bishops expressed disquiet at the exclusion of boarding schools in general from the initiative, urging that low-fee boarding schools should be enabled to participate in the scheme. But they reserved their strongest objection for the differential in the rate of the state grant to secondary schools. Fergus summarised the concerns of the Hierarchy in a letter to Ó Raifeartaigh on 14 December, outlining the Bishops' objections to the differential in no uncertain terms: 'We have serious misgivings about the application of the sliding scale in respect to any school. We feel that it is not a good or fair method.'²⁸⁶ Fergus described the differentiated grant as a 'discriminatory' provision, which would condemn low-fee schools to 'a perpetual position of inferiority'.²⁸⁷ The Secretary replied to Fergus on 17 December, informing the Bishop that O'Malley also wished to secure a flat grant of £25 for all day pupils within the scheme. Ó Raifeartaigh assured Fergus that O'Malley would continue to lobby for an appropriate fixed grant for all day pupils: 'His ultimate intention is to have an adequate

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.2

²⁸⁴ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, *The Minister's Scheme for Free Education*, p.4

²⁸⁵ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, Ó Raifeartaigh to Fergus, 17 December 1966

²⁸⁶ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, Fergus to Ó Raifeartaigh, 14 December 1966

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

flat rate for all day pupils and he hopes to achieve this sooner rather than later.²⁸⁸ The Minister had himself first proposed a fixed grant of £30 per pupil and was certainly willing to take up the Hierarchy's objection with the government.

O'Malley also received vehement complaints from the Teaching Brothers' Association (TBA), which represented the male teaching orders, concerning the differential in the state grant. The Provincials of the six teaching orders submitted a memorandum to O'Malley and Lynch on 6 December 1966, which made the case that the differentiated grant discriminated against low-fee schools.²⁸⁹ The Provincials refused to accept the scheme in its present form and declined to participate in it unless the same grant was offered to all secondary schools.²⁹⁰ Indeed Brother Moynihan, one of the two Provincials of the Irish Christian Brothers, appealed to the Taoiseach to help the religious orders in securing a fixed grant. Moynihan told Lynch on 6 December that the teaching orders sought a standard grant of £30 per pupil for all schools within the scheme.²⁹¹ O'Malley swiftly arranged a meeting with the Provincials on 9 December and bluntly challenged them to participate in the scheme. This provoked an acrimonious encounter, which failed to produce any agreement at all between the Minister and the male teaching orders.²⁹² The disagreement was temporary, however, as O'Malley had considerable sympathy with the concerns of the TBA and was well aware that he required their collaboration if the initiative was to be successfully implemented.²⁹³

The Minister soon acted decisively to eliminate the differential in the grant to day pupils. He submitted a proposal to the government on 26 January 1967, seeking the removal of the differential on a phased basis.²⁹⁴ O'Malley informed the Cabinet that the Hierarchy, the clerical managers and the teaching orders were all implacably opposed to the differential. He agreed with their case that the payment of a minimum grant of only £15 per pupil to low-fee schools effectively penalised those schools for providing low-

²⁸⁸ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, Ó Raifeartaigh to Fergus, 17 December 1966

²⁸⁹ The Irish Christian Brothers' Archives, St. Helen's Province, A4 R2.11, *Memorandum presented to An Taoiseach and An tAire Oideachais on Points arising from the Proposed Scheme for Free Post-Primary Education as presented to Dáil Eireann on 30th November 1966*, 6 December 1966

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ The Irish Christian Brothers' Archives, St. Helen's Province, A4 R2.10, Br. T.G. Moynihan to J. Lynch, An Taoiseach, 6 December 1966, A4 R2.09, Br. Moynihan to O'Malley, 6 December 1966

²⁹² The Irish Christian Brothers' Archives, St. Helen's Province, A4 R2.07, *Note of meeting with the Minister*, 9 December 1966

²⁹³ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, *The Minister's Scheme for Free Education*, p.3, Doyle, *Leading the Way*, p.131

²⁹⁴ *Memorandum to the Government, Provision of a grant in lieu of school fees to Secondary Schools opting for the Minister's scheme*, Office of the Minister for Education, 26 January 1967

cost education.²⁹⁵ He proposed the payment of a fixed grant of £25 for each day pupil to all schools within the scheme by September 1969. The revised scheme provided for a sliding scale of £15 to £25 only in 1967-68: the minimum grant would then be increased to £20 in 1968-69 and a flat rate of £25 per pupil would be paid to all secondary schools within the scheme by September 1969.²⁹⁶ The Cabinet rapidly approved O'Malley's revised scheme on 31 January 1967, not least because he had secured Haughey's agreement to the proposal.²⁹⁷ While the demand for a fixed grant of £30 was not conceded, O'Malley had secured a significant improvement in the terms of the free tuition scheme, which satisfied a key concern of the Hierarchy. The Minister employed the objections of the Bishops and the religious orders to good effect in winning the government's approval for an important modification of the scheme, which brought the terms more closely in line with his original intentions.

The amendment did not, however, secure the support of the Catholic Bishops or managerial authorities for the initiative. The Hierarchy still maintained reservations about the exclusion of low-fee boarding schools from the scheme. O'Malley's offer to pay the tuition fees of all boarding pupils in the Diocesan Colleges and religious juniorates on an exceptional basis did not find favour with the Bishops. The Standing Committee of the Hierarchy on 10 January 1967 recommended that the Bishops should reject the offer of preferential treatment for the Diocesan Colleges.²⁹⁸ Fergus told Ó Raifeartaigh on 17 January that acceptance of the offer would lay the Bishops open 'to the accusation of having made a bargain favourable to themselves without concern for the interests of the other low fee boarding schools.'²⁹⁹ The Standing Committee advised the Minister instead to extend the tuition grant to boarders in all low fee schools.³⁰⁰ The Secretary responded on 30 January by urging the Bishops to reconsider their position on O'Malley's offer to the Diocesan Colleges. Ó Raifeartaigh emphasized that the Minister's initiative for free post-primary education was never intended to deliver free education in boarding schools.³⁰¹ He warned Fergus that there was no immediate prospect of the introduction of grants to cover the tuition fee for boarding school pupils generally. The Secretary outlined the key features of the revised scheme, listing the recent concessions made by

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.1-3

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.3, NA 99/5/1, G.C.12/15, Cabinet Minutes, pp.2-3, 31 January 1967

²⁹⁸ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes of the Standing Committee, p.2, 10 January 1967

²⁹⁹ *McQuaid Papers*, Fergus to Ó Raifeartaigh, 17 January 1967

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, Ó Raifeartaigh to Fergus, 30 January 1967

the Minister, due in part to the representations of the Hierarchy. Ó Raifeartaigh informed Fergus of the phased elimination of the differential in the state grant to day pupils by September 1969.³⁰² Fergus welcomed the elimination of the differential, but gave no indication that the Bishops would reconsider their position concerning the Minister's offer.³⁰³ While the Hierarchy retained reservations about the lack of provision for low-fee boarding schools, the Catholic managerial authorities raised more fundamental objections to O'Malley's approach early in 1967.

The Catholic Managerial Committee, which included representatives of the CHA, TBA and the CCSS, objected strongly to key elements of the scheme. They regarded even a temporary differential as unjust and considered that the maximum rate of £25 per pupil was inadequate.³⁰⁴ The Catholic managerial representatives considered that O'Malley had wrongly excluded schools catering for 25% of the secondary school population from the scheme.³⁰⁵ When the Minister met the representatives of the managerial bodies for the first time on 16 December 1966, they argued that he should facilitate the entry of all secondary schools into the scheme.³⁰⁶ The phased introduction of a fixed rate of £25 per pupil by 1969-70 therefore did not satisfy the concerns of the Catholic managerial associations. The Catholic managers instead began to explore an alternative to the Minister's scheme. The Major Superiors of the archdiocese of Dublin empowered Fr. Hughes and Mother Jordana to draft an alternative to O'Malley's scheme in January 1967.³⁰⁷ Hughes suggested an alternative proposal to O'Malley in general terms on 27 January 1967, seeking 'an unofficial meeting' with the Minister to discuss the situation further.³⁰⁸ The Jesuit headmaster told O'Malley that the clerical and religious authorities were supportive of free education, but disagreed fundamentally with the mechanism proposed by the Minister to achieve it - the supplemental grant to schools opting for the scheme. He stated bluntly that even a temporary differential in the grant was unacceptable: 'there is not the slightest hope that a differential of £15 to £25 would be acceptable to anyone.'³⁰⁹ Hughes proposed that as an interim solution the government

³⁰² Ibid., Ó Raifeartaigh to Fergus, 17 December 1966

³⁰³ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, Fergus to Ó Raifeartaigh, 2 February 1967

³⁰⁴ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers, Memorandum from the Catholic Managerial Committee to the Episcopal Commission for Post-Primary Education*, p.1, 12 February 1967

³⁰⁵ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, *The Minister's Scheme for Free Education*, p.5

³⁰⁶ Ibid., CCSS, *Meeting of Managerial Associations with An tAire on 16/12/1966*, p.1

³⁰⁷ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers, Note by Fr. L. Martin of meeting with Fr. J. Hughes*, 9 January 1967

³⁰⁸ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, Fr. Hughes to O'Malley, 27 January 1967

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

should increase the capitation grant to all secondary schools on the condition that the schools would lower their fees by a corresponding amount: this approach would make free places available wherever the reduction eliminated fees entirely. Moreover he indicated that the Catholic managers were seeking an Act of the Oireachtas to clarify the future relations between the state and the secondary schools.³¹⁰

The proposed alternative presented by Hughes, on behalf of the Catholic managerial authorities, was a serious challenge to the basic principle which underpinned the Minister's scheme for free education. The free tuition scheme drafted by the Department of Education was designed to ensure that a large majority of secondary schools offered free education to all their pupils, not to provide free places on a piecemeal basis. O'Malley quickly dismissed the proposed alternative. He outlined the government's approach to the managerial authorities in a definitive fashion on 31 January 1967.³¹¹ O'Malley delivered an uncompromising message in separate meetings with the Provincials of the TBA and the representatives of the other managerial bodies. When Hughes proposed the alternative approach favoured by the Catholic managers, O'Malley firmly rejected the idea, on the basis that it would reduce considerably the number of pupils within the free education scheme.³¹² The Minister urged the managerial representatives to accept his scheme, pointing out that he had secured the removal of the differential in the state grant for day pupils by 1969-70. He also confirmed that the state would pay the tuition fee for boarding school pupils, who lived in remote areas outside the effective range of a school transport service, in schools charging fees of no more than £120 per annum. The managerial representatives welcomed the removal of the differential but told the Minister that they could not endorse the scheme without consulting their members. O'Malley emphasized that the initiative was being presented to the managerial bodies as a definitive offer on this occasion, brushing aside any attempts to amend the scheme further.³¹³ The Minister was sufficiently emphatic in promoting his initiative that the Catholic Managerial Committee concluded that the Minister had presented them with 'his final offer - and equivalently, with an ultimatum'.³¹⁴ Hughes reported to McQuaid on 2 February 1967 that O'Malley wanted the secondary schools to

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers, Summary of points made by the Minister to the Joint Managerial Committee*, 31 January 1967

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers, Memorandum by the Catholic Managerial Committee to the Hierarchy*, 12 February 1967

enter the scheme on his terms. The chairman of the CHA clearly expressed the disquiet and resentment of the Catholic managerial authorities at O'Malley's approach: 'On the whole, I was, and still am, depressed and bewildered. We are dealing with a very clever man, who can, of course, be charming, but whose political career comes first - the rest, nowhere.'³¹⁵ The meetings on 31 January ended in deadlock, as the Catholic managerial authorities declined to endorse the Minister's scheme and O'Malley flatly refused to contemplate any alternative approach.

O'Malley and the senior officials sought to overcome the objections of the Catholic managerial authorities through direct negotiations with the Hierarchy. Ó Raifeartaigh, who enjoyed close and friendly connections with McQuaid, undertook private discussions with the Archbishop on the scheme. McQuaid was seriously dissatisfied with the financial arrangements proposed by O'Malley for the voluntary secondary schools. He considered that the proposed state grant to the secondary schools was completely inadequate and could cause the disappearance of schools run by the religious orders.³¹⁶ The Archbishop told Hughes on 3 February 1967 that O'Malley's initiative marked a crisis for the secondary schools: 'It is on the result of this crisis that we shall be required to live for very many years to come'.³¹⁷ But McQuaid also advised the Catholic Major Superiors in his archdiocese to accept the scheme in principle, insisting that the church could not oppose an initiative, which promised to deliver free post-primary education for all.³¹⁸ He informed Ó Raifeartaigh that he had discussed the initiative with the Major Superiors and the Catholic managerial representatives on 26 January 1967: 'I succeeded well, I thought. But am I right?'³¹⁹ This remarkably opaque comment suggested that McQuaid was seeking to persuade the Catholic educators to accept the scheme, but the Archbishop's approach at this stage was more complex and ambiguous. McQuaid maintained close contact with Hughes and allowed him to proceed with the formulation of an alternative approach to O'Malley's scheme, although the Archbishop did not officially sanction the initiative.³²⁰ Moreover McQuaid informed O'Malley on 2 February 1967 that all the Catholic managerial bodies and the Major

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Fr. Hughes to McQuaid, 2 February 1967

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, McQuaid to Fergus, 21 February 1967

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, McQuaid to Fr. Hughes, 3 February 1967

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, McQuaid to Fergus, 21 February 1967

³¹⁹ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, McQuaid to Ó Raifeartaigh, 27 January 1967

³²⁰ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Note by Fr. Martin, Meetings of Fr. Hughes and Mother Jordana with the Christian Brothers' Major Superiors and the Major Superiors of the other Brothers' Institutes, 26 January 1967

Superiors in his archdiocese were 'profoundly disturbed' by the Minister's approach. The Archbishop endorsed their view that the scheme did not provide a satisfactory basis for the provision of free education.³²¹ When O'Malley demanded to know the grounds for their dissatisfaction, McQuaid responded that he could not add anything to the comments already made by the managerial bodies.³²² This did not necessarily imply the rejection of the Minister's initiative, but underlined that McQuaid was determined to extract more concessions from the state for the Catholic secondary schools. O'Malley subsequently told Cardinal Conway that he understood McQuaid's letter to indicate the rejection of the plan for free post-primary education by the Catholic educational authorities.³²³ But the Archbishop was adopting a hard-line approach to promote a revision of the scheme, not to block the introduction of free post-primary education.

The Minister, however, was seriously alarmed by the tone of McQuaid's communication and by the scepticism of the Catholic managerial representatives towards the scheme. O'Malley was also angered by the criticisms of the initiative, which were made by various headmasters of secondary schools at public or school functions.³²⁴ He made an impassioned defence of his policy in the Senate on 9 February 1967, in the course of a debate on *Investment in Education*. O'Malley commented on the large volume of supportive messages which he had received from parents and then launched into a scathing denunciation of his critics. He claimed that vested interests were attempting to sabotage the initiative so as to maintain exclusive secondary schools.³²⁵ O'Malley assured the Senate that critics of the policy would not prevail:

'I know I am up against opposition and serious organised opposition but they are not going to defeat me on this. I shall tell you further that I shall expose them and I shall expose their tactics on every available occasion whoever they are'.³²⁶

O'Malley's denunciation of his critics was a thinly veiled attack on the secondary school authorities and religious orders who were sceptical about his scheme. O'Connor, who disapproved of the Minister's vehemence, commented that the onslaught was 'uncalled for, was foolishly undiplomatic and was never forgiven'.³²⁷ Certainly O'Malley's fierce

³²¹ *Ibid.*, McQuaid to O'Malley, 2 February 1967

³²² *Ibid.*, O'Malley to McQuaid, 7 February 1967, McQuaid to O'Malley, 8 February 1967

³²³ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, Note of discussion between the Minister, Mr. Donogh O'Malley, and His Eminence Cardinal Conway at Dundalk on 15th February 1967, p.2

³²⁴ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, *The Minister's Scheme for Free Education*, Memorandum by the Department of Education, p.7, February 1967

³²⁵ *Seanad Debates*, vol.62, col.1074-1111, 9 February 1967

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, col.1090

³²⁷ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.155

attack on critics of the scheme dismayed and alienated secondary school managers and teachers.³²⁸ But the Minister's onslaught did not impede the successful conclusion of the negotiations with the Hierarchy. Ó Raifeartaigh resumed private negotiations with McQuaid and the Archbishop assured O'Malley on 11 February that the clerical and religious Major Superiors had not rejected his scheme, but were merely seeking to revise the terms to secure the future of the secondary schools.³²⁹ Moreover within a week of his speech in the Senate, the Minister reached agreement with Cardinal Conway on most key aspects of the initiative for free education.

O'Malley and Ó Raifeartaigh arranged to meet the Cardinal privately in Dundalk on 15 February 1967 to discuss the initiative. Conway took a positive approach to the free tuition scheme, rejecting the assertion by Hughes on 27 January that any differential in the state grant to the secondary schools would be unacceptable.³³⁰ He expressed satisfaction with the phased elimination of the differential in the grant and assured O'Malley that the schools whose fees came within range of the scheme would participate in it. The Minister defended his remarks in the Senate, complaining that the managerial authorities had ignored the important concession made by the government in abolishing the differential. Conway told O'Malley that the male teaching orders would now be willing to opt for the scheme, following the removal of the differential.³³¹ The Cardinal effectively disassociated the Hierarchy from the position on the scheme recently taken by the Catholic managerial representatives: 'He added that the managerial bodies on whose behalf Fr. Hughes was writing had no authority from the church to seek an Act which would regulate the relations between their schools and the State.'³³² Conway assured the Minister that Hughes' approach did not represent the position of the clerical and religious authorities. The Cardinal was confident that the Hierarchy would formally approve the plan at its next meeting.³³³ Conway's broadly positive approach towards the initiative illustrated a significant divergence between the Catholic managerial representatives and the Hierarchy. This did not mean that the Cardinal was entirely satisfied with the terms of the scheme. He reiterated that the Bishops could not accept the Minister's offer of special

³²⁸ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.261, T. O'Dea, Editorial, *The Secondary Teacher*, vol.2, no.5, May 1967, p.5

³²⁹ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, McQuaid to O'Malley, 11 February 1967

³³⁰ NA D/T 98/6/144, S.12891F, T. Ó Raifeartaigh, Note of discussion between the Minister, Mr. Donogh O'Malley, and His Eminence Cardinal Conway at Dundalk on 15th February 1967, p.1

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p.3

³³² *Ibid.*, p.1

³³³ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2

grants for the Diocesan Colleges, arguing instead for a state subsidy for all pupils in low-fee boarding schools. O'Malley replied that the government could not currently afford to subsidise boarding pupils in general, but that tuition grants for all boarding pupils could be provided in the future.³³⁴ He hinted at the prospect of a future state grant, which would cover the tuition element of the boarding school fee. Conway assured O'Malley that the Diocesan Colleges would certainly participate in the scheme so far as their day pupils were concerned.³³⁵ The Cardinal's positive and conciliatory approach underlined that the continuing episcopal reservations about the position of the low-fee boarding schools would not prevent the acceptance of the scheme by the Hierarchy.

The influence of the Catholic Bishops proved decisive in securing the general acceptance of O'Malley's scheme by the managerial authorities. The differences between the Hierarchy and the leading Catholic managerial representatives became evident in February 1967. The Catholic Managerial Committee submitted a memorandum to the Episcopal Commission for Post-Primary Education on 12 February 1967, outlining their reservations about the scheme.³³⁶ The clerical and religious managerial representatives endorsed the principle of free education but considered that the Minister's scheme was unacceptable. The Committee saw 'a basic objection' to a scheme which made the secondary schools completely dependent on the state for their income: economic dependence without any legal guarantees could not be accepted by the school managers.³³⁷ They feared that the autonomy of the secondary schools would be decisively undermined; 'under the O'Malley Plan, without legal guarantees, the situation of the schools could be intolerable'.³³⁸ The Committee concluded that while the managers could not reject free education, they dared not accept the Minister's scheme without the inclusion of stringent legal conditions. They therefore proposed that the Hierarchy and the Major Superiors should seek the Minister's agreement to a fixed grant of £25 per pupil from 1967-68 as an interim solution: the Bishops should then negotiate legal guarantees for the voluntary secondary schools, which would be enshrined in a new statute.³³⁹ The Hierarchy rejected the Committee's approach. A delegation from the Episcopal Commission, including Fergus, Murphy and Dr. John Ahern, Bishop of

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.3

³³⁶ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers, Memorandum from the Catholic Managerial Committee to the Episcopal Commission for Post-Primary Education*, 12 February 1967

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2

Cloyne, met Fr. Hughes and Mother Jordana on 16 February to clarify the church's response to the Minister's initiative.³⁴⁰ The Hierarchy's representatives ruled out any official intervention by the Bishops on behalf of the managers. The three Bishops instead instructed the Catholic Managerial Committee to recommend acceptance of the free tuition scheme to the relevant secondary schools in their associations:

'The Episcopal Commission for post-primary education met the Joint Committee of the Catholic Managerial Bodies, at the latter's request, in Dublin, on 16th February 1967 and strongly advised that, in the interests of religion and to forestall the misrepresentation of which the Church in Ireland was bound to be made the victim, it was imperative (a) that they should recommend the acceptance of the scheme, whatever its defects, to the schools for which it was envisaged and (b) that this should be done and made known to have been done, with the least possible delay'.³⁴¹

The Hierarchy acted to protect the reputation of the Catholic Church and prevent accusations that the church was obstructing the introduction of free education, by directing the Catholic managerial representatives to endorse the initiative. The three Bishops told the Committee that efforts could be made to resolve the defects in the scheme at a later stage.³⁴² They directed Fr. Hughes to issue a letter to the Minister on behalf of the Catholic Managerial Committee indicating that the managerial representatives were recommending the acceptance of the scheme. The Bishops avoided any official intervention in the negotiations, instead directing the joint managerial committee to issue the recommendation in favour of the initiative.³⁴³ But the reality was that the Hierarchy had issued a direct instruction to the managerial representatives, which left no room for ambiguity. The directive issued by the Bishops on 16 February 1967 secured the reluctant acceptance of O'Malley's scheme by the most influential Catholic managerial bodies.

Hughes informed O'Malley on 24 February 1967 that the Catholic Managerial Committee had decided to recommend acceptance of the free education scheme, to all the schools in their associations, which came within the scheme announced by the Minister on 30 November 1966. The Committee still maintained that there were serious defects in

³⁴⁰ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Fr. Hughes to McQuaid, 17 February 1967

³⁴¹ *McQuaid Papers, The O'Malley Scheme, Note for the information of the Bishops*, February 1967

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ *McQuaid Papers*, Fr. Hughes to the Clerical Major Superiors, 17 February 1967, Doyle, *Leading the Way*, p.133

the scheme and Hughes told the Minister that the managerial representatives would seek further negotiations with him in the short-term to overcome these flaws.³⁴⁴ The chairman of the Catholic Managerial Committee also informed the clerical Major Superiors and Provincials of the teaching orders throughout the state of the Committee's recommendation to accept the free tuition scheme.³⁴⁵ The final decision concerning the initiative for most secondary schools rested with the relevant clerical authorities and religious orders. But the Hierarchy's intervention broke the deadlock in the negotiations between the state and the managerial bodies, securing the endorsement of the Catholic managerial authorities for the Minister's initiative. The private negotiations conducted by O'Malley and his officials with the Hierarchy successfully circumvented the objections of the most influential Catholic managerial representatives, who were obliged to accept the free education scheme essentially on the Minister's terms. The concern of the Bishops that the church should not even appear to oppose free post-primary education contributed significantly to the outcome, as McQuaid acknowledged to Fergus on 21 February 1967: 'From the outset I have urged that as Catholic educators we must not even seem to oppose a scheme that would make available post-primary education for all children.'³⁴⁶ The Hierarchy's representatives openly expressed their concern to protect the prestige of the church on 16 February 1967, when they instructed the Catholic managerial representatives to accept the scheme.³⁴⁷ O'Malley's explosive outburst in the Senate may well have hastened the Hierarchy's intervention in favour of the initiative. While the Minister did not criticise the Bishops, his statement opened up the prospect of a divisive public debate on free education, which might well damage the prestige of the church. It is evident that the Hierarchy was determined to avoid any public confrontation between the Minister and the Catholic school authorities over free education. The Bishops acted to forestall such an appalling prospect by instructing the Catholic managerial representatives to accept the free tuition scheme.

The Catholic and Protestant managers generally accepted the Minister's initiative by the autumn of 1967. Ó Raifeartaigh issued Circular M15/67, which outlined the detailed terms of the free tuition scheme and the grants for the provision of free books, in February 1967.³⁴⁸ The department set a deadline of 16 May 1967 for the acceptance of

³⁴⁴ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Fr. Hughes to O'Malley, 24 February 1967

³⁴⁵ Fr. Hughes to the Clerical Major Superiors, 17 February 1967

³⁴⁶ McQuaid to Fergus, 21 February 1967

³⁴⁷ Fergus to McQuaid, 20 February 1967

³⁴⁸ Circular M.15/67, Department of Education, February 1967

the initiative by secondary schools.³⁴⁹ The influence of individual Bishops, especially McQuaid, proved important in securing the acceptance of the scheme by most Catholic secondary schools. McQuaid told Fergus on 21 February 1967 that he intended to advise the Major Superiors of his archdiocese to accept the scheme wherever it was financially feasible for schools to do so. He was advising them to accept the scheme 'under protest' as it was launched without consultation with the managers and the Minister had failed to show sufficient consideration for the financial position of the schools provided by the religious orders.³⁵⁰ Despite his dissatisfaction with O'Malley's tactics, McQuaid played a crucial part in ensuring that the secondary school authorities in Dublin accepted the Minister's initiative. McQuaid's collaboration proved an invaluable asset to O'Malley, who was concerned that the success of the initiative would be compromised if a substantial number of higher-fee secondary schools in Dublin failed to join the scheme. The officials of O'Malley's department considered that McQuaid's influence proved decisive in bringing many higher-fee Convent schools in Dublin within the free education scheme.³⁵¹ The Minister was not satisfied with the original estimate by the department that 75% of day pupils would be included and sought to bring the maximum number of secondary schools within the scope of his initiative.³⁵² O'Malley emphasized that his initiative was intended to guarantee the right of access to post-primary education for all children at a public meeting organised by a Fianna Fáil cumann in Clontarf on 16 February.³⁵³ O'Malley's success in attaining his objectives exceeded the original expectations of his officials. The vast majority of secondary schools entered the free tuition scheme by September 1967. A total of 485 secondary schools out of 551 schools catering for day pupils opted to enter the scheme for 1967-68: only 26 Catholic day schools did not participate in the initiative.³⁵⁴ The department informed the Public Accounts Committee that 92% of all day pupils in secondary schools were covered by the scheme in 1967-68.³⁵⁵ The general acceptance of the initiative by the educational authorities far exceeded the expectations of the Department of Education.

³⁴⁹ Circular M.32/67, Department of Education, May 1967

³⁵⁰ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, McQuaid to Fergus, 21 February 1967

³⁵¹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, pp.152-155

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p.152

³⁵³ *The Irish Times*, 'O'Malley - Don't Expect Miracles: Handling of Free Education', 17 February 1967

³⁵⁴ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.276, Doyle, *Leading the Way*, p.134

³⁵⁵ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1967-68*, p.118 (Dublin, 1969)

O'Malley also succeeded in expanding the scope of the scheme well beyond the original intentions of the government. Following persistent representations by the Hierarchy, the Minister secured the extension of the scheme to cover the tuition element of the fee for boarding pupils in low-fee Catholic schools. The Bishops had consistently made the case to O'Malley that such secondary schools had made great sacrifices to provide low-cost education for the children of poor families.³⁵⁶ O'Malley brought the Hierarchy's concerns to Haughey's attention in June 1967, securing his agreement to the extension of the scheme. The revised scheme provided for the payment of a state grant of £25 for each boarding pupil in low-fee schools, which charged an annual fee of no more than £120, from 1969-70.³⁵⁷ The latest modification of the scheme also involved the payment by the state of the tuition fee for boarding pupils in the Diocesan Colleges from 1967-68.³⁵⁸ The extension of the free tuition scheme meant that the pupils in the low-fee boarding schools were subsidised at least in part by the state from 1969-70. The revision of the scheme met to some extent the concerns of the Bishops about the future viability of low-fee schools provided by the religious orders.³⁵⁹ The gradual expansion of the scope of the initiative meant that the scheme became even more comprehensive and far-reaching than the proposals originally approved by the government.

The impact of the initiative on post-primary education was not fully anticipated even by O'Malley himself. O'Malley and the officials of his department greatly underestimated the likely rate of increase in educational participation at post-primary level as a result of the scheme. The department estimated that an additional 7,000 students might well seek admission to post-primary schools in September 1967, although its officials recognised that accurate prediction of the additional enrolment was problematic.³⁶⁰ O'Malley himself expressed scepticism about the possibility of a massive influx of pupils into post-primary education in 1967-68. He told the Senate on 9 February 1967 that the state confronted a formidable challenge in persuading low-income families of the value of education beyond the compulsory phase. He believed that the environmental background of underprivileged children was still a vital barrier to

³⁵⁶ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes, General Meeting of the Hierarchy, p.5, 20-21 June 1967

³⁵⁷ NA D/T 98/6/95, S.16890, F.113233, *Memorandum to the Government, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.10-12, 27 June 1967

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/05, *McQuaid Papers*, O'Malley to Fergus, 16 June 1967

³⁶⁰ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.141, Doyle, *Leading the Way*, p.134

educational participation, even with the provision of free post-primary education.³⁶¹ The Minister and his officials did not anticipate the dramatic advance in educational participation, which was a direct consequence of the new initiative. The total pupil enrolment in secondary schools surged from 103,588 in September 1966 to 118,807 in September 1967, marking an extraordinary increase of over 15,000 in a single year.³⁶² The vocational system experienced a less dramatic but still considerable increase of about 5,000 in the number of day pupils undertaking full-time continuation courses in the same period: indeed the total enrolment in full-time vocational courses expanded significantly from 37,965 in 1966-67 to 42,986 in 1967-68.³⁶³ This advance was deceptive in some respects due to the high drop-out rate in continuation courses: the total number of day pupils undertaking continuation courses by February 1968 showed an increase of about 4,000 from the previous year.³⁶⁴ The post-primary schools were certainly enjoying a considerable expansion in pupil enrolment before the advent of free education, but the gradual flow of pupils into post-primary education became an avalanche following the implementation of O'Malley's initiative. The increased rate of expansion was particularly evident in the secondary schools. The secondary system enjoyed an additional influx of approximately 5,000 pupils annually immediately before the introduction of the new scheme.³⁶⁵ The impact of the initiative roughly trebled the annual intake of pupils to the secondary schools. The accelerated rate of expansion was sustained for the remainder of the decade: the secondary school system experienced a further dramatic increase in the following two years, so that a total of 144,246 pupils were undertaking secondary school courses by 1969-70, the third school year in which free education was available.³⁶⁶ The secondary school population expanded by no less than 39% between September 1966 and September 1969. The total pupil enrolment in post-primary education increased by 34% between 1966-67 and 1969-70.³⁶⁷ The initiative for free post-primary education succeeded, beyond the expectations even of O'Malley himself, in achieving a rapid and dramatic expansion of educational participation at post-primary level.

³⁶¹ *Seanad Debates*, vol.62, col.1108, 9 February 1967

³⁶² *Tuarascáil, Tablaí Staitistic, An Roinn Oideachais*, 1966-67, p.36, (Dublin, 1968), *Tuarascáil, Tablaí Staitistic, An Roinn Oideachais*, 1967-68, p.3 (Dublin, 1969)

³⁶³ *Tuarascáil, Tablaí Staitistic, An Roinn Oideachais*, 1966-67, p.65, (Dublin, 1968), *Tuarascáil, Tablaí Staitistic, An Roinn Oideachais*, 1967-68, p.73 (Dublin, 1969)

³⁶⁴ *Tuarascáil, Tablaí Staitistic, An Roinn Oideachais*, 1967-68, p.4 (Dublin, 1969)

³⁶⁵ *Tuarascáil, Tablaí Staitistic, An Roinn Oideachais*, 1965-66, p. 3, (Dublin, 1967), *Tuarascáil, Tablaí Staitistic, An Roinn Oideachais*, 1966-67, p.36 (Dublin, 1968)

³⁶⁶ *Tuarascáil, Tablaí Staitistic, An Roinn Oideachais*, 1968/69 - 1971/72, p.26 (Dublin, 1974)

³⁶⁷ DFA 2003/17/383, Talk by Tomás Ó Floinn, *Recent Developments in Education in Ireland*, June 1972

Several scholars have suggested, however, that the initiative changed the balance of advantage between secondary and vocational schools and had the effect of sidelining vocational education once again.³⁶⁸ The concerns of the senior officials, who had advised O'Malley to defer his initiative on the basis that vocational schools would not benefit fully from free education, certainly proved well founded. The timing of the reform worked against the vocational schools, not least because they were generally unable to offer courses for the Leaving Certificate until 1969.³⁶⁹ The Minister's initiative reinforced the existing pattern of post-primary education, in which the large majority of pupils attended secondary rather than vocational schools. But the initiative did not undermine the position of vocational education. The inferior status of technical education was a legacy of the state's policy from 1930 until the late 1950s. The department under successive ministers had overturned the traditional policy, but the profoundly negative influence of the traditional consensus could not be eliminated overnight. It required more than simply the removal of traditional restrictions on the vocational sector to change the obvious preferences of many parents, which favoured secondary education. The greater rate of expansion in the secondary system was dictated at least as much by the established pattern of second-level education as by the timing of the Minister's initiative. Moreover O'Connor later acknowledged that a delay in the introduction of free second-level education until 1970 might well have ensured that it was never implemented at all, in the very different political and economic climate of the following decade.³⁷⁰ O'Malley's initiative offered a practical means of expanding access to post-primary education, which took account of the realities of the Irish educational system in the 1960s.

The unexpected and dramatic impact of the initiative made most of the department's original estimates redundant. O'Malley acknowledged in the Dáil on 6 February 1968 that the cost of the free tuition scheme and the provision for free books would exceed the original estimates by over £150,000.³⁷¹ The initial success of the free transport scheme also surpassed the expectations of the department. The Minister entrusted the organisation of the nation-wide transport scheme to CIE, appointing the Chief Executive Officers of the relevant VECs as the transport liaison officers between

³⁶⁸ Horgan, Seán Lemass, pp.300-301, T. Garvin, *Preventing the Future: Why was Ireland so poor for so long*, p.158 (Dublin, 2004)

³⁶⁹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.141, Horgan, Seán Lemass, pp.300-301

³⁷⁰ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.141

³⁷¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.232, col.464, 6 February 1968

the educational authorities and the company.³⁷² Ó Raifeartaigh informed the school authorities in February 1967 that the free transport service would be organised on the basis of catchment areas for about 350 post-primary centres throughout the country: pupils living at least three miles from the nearest post-primary school providing free education would be entitled to free transport.³⁷³ The department envisaged that the free transport arrangements would be phased in by CIE over two to three years from April 1967. But the scheme was successfully introduced for most eligible pupils between April 1967 and February 1968. CIE took over the administration of 120 existing school transport services organised by the school authorities, parents' associations and Roinn na Gaeltachta in 1967.³⁷⁴ O'Malley informed the Dáil on 6 February 1968 that free transport had been provided to 52,500 of the 55,000 children who were eligible for the service. The cost of the scheme in the first year of its operation amounted to £840,000, which was almost three times the original estimate of £300,000.³⁷⁵ The rapid implementation of the scheme was a considerable logistical achievement, which placed a considerable strain on CIE's resources. The company required additional financial aid from the state to run the scheme. O'Malley secured an additional allocation of £1 million for CIE to provide for the cost of suitable school buses.³⁷⁶ The substantial cost of the free transport service underlined that the scheme was a central element of the initiative for free post-primary education. The rapid implementation of the free transport scheme made an indispensable contribution to the dramatic expansion of post-primary education.

The implementation of the initiative for free post-primary education in 1967-68 involved the largest increase in the Exchequer's spending on post-primary education since the foundation of the state. The net expenditure for secondary education increased spectacularly by over £3.5 million in a single year (Table 2). While the Minister's initiative brought unprecedented state support for secondary education, the vocational system was by no means neglected. The government provided additional funding of almost £1 million for vocational education in 1967-68 (Table 2).³⁷⁷ The massive increase in state expenditure was explained primarily by the three new schemes for free tuition,

³⁷² Circular M1/67, Department of Education, pp.1-2, February 1967

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, Memorandum, *Organisation of Post-Primary Transport Scheme*, Department of Education, pp.1-2, February 1967

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.5, Circular M2/67, *Post-Primary Transport Scheme*, Department of Education, p.5, June 1968

³⁷⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol.232, col.468, 6 February 1968

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1966-67*, p.156 (Dublin, 1968), *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1967-68*, p. 266 (Dublin, 1969); Table 2, p.373

free transport and grants towards the provision of free books.³⁷⁸ O'Malley also secured a revision of the scheme for building grants to secondary schools in 1967, to finance the extensive programme of school building, which was essential following the introduction of free education.³⁷⁹ The revised scheme enabled the department to advance the necessary funding to cover the full cost of the building programmes to the secondary schools. The state's contribution consisted of a free grant of 70% of the cost, while the remaining 30% was advanced to the school authorities as a loan, which was repayable over fifteen years.³⁸⁰ The capital funding was channelled to the school authorities through the Department of Education. The revised scheme, which offered much more generous terms to the schools than the original procedures, soon proved very effective in supporting secondary school building programmes: free grants of £1,682,691 were made to 107 schools under the extended scheme in 1967-68.³⁸¹ The revision of the scheme was a direct result of the introduction of free post-primary education. The introduction of free education involved an unprecedented increase in the level of state funding for post-primary education, especially secondary education. Lemass' assessment that O'Malley's initiative would add £3 million to the estimates in a single year proved entirely justified.

The eventual outcome was certainly a tribute to O'Malley's political skill: few other Ministers would have shown the daring and the tenacity required to persuade the government to introduce such a far-reaching scheme of free second-level education in the first place. Moreover the Minister dealt skilfully with the complex process of negotiation, which was needed to ensure the implementation of the initiative. He made sufficient concessions to secure the collaboration of the Catholic Hierarchy and effectively outmanoeuvred the most influential clerical and religious managerial bodies. Ó Raifeartaigh played an important part in smoothing the way for the introduction of O'Malley's initiative by acting as an intermediary with various members of the Catholic Hierarchy. The success of the initiative also had something to do with the reality that neither the department nor the government as a whole had a clear understanding in 1966 of the eventual scale of the plan. O'Malley's task would have been much more difficult had his ministerial colleagues realised in advance the full cost of the initiative, which vastly exceeded the Minister's estimates. But the dramatic increase in the allocation of state expenditure to education also reflected the settled policy of the government. It was

³⁷⁸ *Dáil Debates*, vol.232, col.463-464, 6 February 1968

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, col.465, Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.277

³⁸⁰ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1967-68*, p. 121 (Dublin, 1969)

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Lemass, more than any other political figure, who created the conditions necessary for the achievement of free post-primary education. O'Malley's initiative made rapid progress at least in part because education had already been identified as the most urgent national priority in the allocation of scarce resources by Lemass himself. Educational expansion had become a central priority for the state and this policy approach provided the essential context for the introduction of free second-level education.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that O'Malley's initiative for free post-primary education made a greater impression on contemporaries than any other educational reform introduced then or later. But O'Malley's term saw the introduction or development of a series of reforms in primary and post-primary education, which were designed to facilitate the expansion of the educational system and fulfil the social and economic objectives of the government. The Minister himself made a key contribution to a wide variety of reforming measures, from the improvement of sub-standard conditions in national schools to the introduction of free post-primary education. But the influence exerted by leading officials of the department, especially Ó Raifeartaigh, MacGearailt, O'Connor and the other members of the Development Branch, should not be underestimated. It was MacGearailt who skilfully secured wide agreement from the educational interest groups for a workable alternative to the Primary Certificate: other officials quietly initiated the revision of the national school curriculum. The Development Branch began a far-reaching programme of rationalisation at post-primary level: although their efforts were not crowned with success in the short-term, the pro-active approach taken by the officials laid the groundwork for further educational reforms under O'Malley's successors. The dramatic public initiatives undertaken by the Minister should not obscure the pervasive influence exerted by the officials on the transformation of the educational system.

It is evident, however, that O'Malley himself dictated the sweeping and ambitious nature of the initiative for free second-level education. O'Malley's endorsement of the principle of free education was not a fundamental policy change by 1966, as the government's policy of raising the school leaving age demanded the introduction of some form of free education at post-primary level. But he exerted a decisive influence on the content and timing of the initiative, so that the reform proved much more radical and far-reaching than the government had previously envisaged. The introduction of the schemes for free tuition and free transport brought an immediate and dramatic expansion in the

level of participation in post-primary education. But the transformation of the educational system did not begin or end with free post-primary education: it was an evolving process, which began in the late 1950s under O'Malley's predecessors and continued after his death in 1968. While Lemass did not authorise the Minister's sensational announcement, O'Malley's initiative was undertaken in the context of the policy of educational expansion pursued by the Taoiseach since 1959. O'Malley ensured that free second-level education became a reality and not merely a pious aspiration; but his daring initiative was possible only because Lemass had firmly established education as a key national priority throughout his term as Taoiseach.

Chapter 6
**The transformation of technical education and the state's policy for
higher education: 1966-68**

O'Malley's term of office and indeed the whole process of educational expansion in the 1960s has been inextricably linked with the initiative for free post-primary education, but it was by no means the sole policy advance promoted by the Minister. The most striking aspect of O'Malley's term was not any single educational advance but the wide range of initiatives undertaken by the state in almost every segment of the educational system. The expansion of higher technical education was an equally enduring and influential legacy of O'Malley's term as Minister for Education, although it was largely overshadowed by the introduction of free education. O'Malley also made a determined attempt to reshape the structure of university education. He sidelined the long-awaited report of the Commission on Higher Education and vigorously promoted a merger between Trinity College and University College, Dublin. While the Minister's dramatic initiative for university merger did not transform the landscape of university education as he had hoped, O'Malley played a crucial part in achieving a quieter but much more radical transformation in higher technical education.

The expansion of higher technical education

O'Malley identified the foundation of the Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs) as a key priority in his letter to Lemass on 29 July 1966.¹ The establishment of the RTCs had been a policy objective of the government since Hillery's policy announcement in May 1963 and O'Malley played a leading role in making the proposal a reality. He appointed a special consortium of architects, engineers and quantity surveyors to supervise the construction of the colleges shortly after taking up office. O'Malley requested the consortium, Building Design Associates, to design the proposed colleges in Waterford, Galway, Sligo and Dundalk, while they were also requested to act as consultants to the architects appointed by the local VECs at the other centres.² The appointment of the consortium was intended to reduce the costs to the state and the time required to build the colleges. O'Malley told Lynch on 24 February 1967 that the work of the consortium would reduce the estimated building time for the RTCs by 20%, while the adoption of a common building system for the whole project would bring a saving of

¹ NA D/T 97/6/437, S.17913, O'Malley to Lemass, pp.1-2, 29 July 1966

² NA D/T 98/6/831, S.18047A, O'Malley to J. Lynch, 24 February 1967

about 10% in the building costs.³ O'Malley also appointed a Steering Committee on Technical Education to formulate a definite plan for the development of the colleges, dealing with the educational requirements, courses and organisation of the new institutions. The Minister established the Steering Committee on 20 September 1966, to advise him on technical education generally but primarily to provide the building consortium with a detailed educational brief for the establishment of the RTCs.⁴ The Committee, which was chaired by Noel Mulcahy, senior management specialist at the Irish Management Institute (IMI), was composed of members drawn from the business community, the trade union movement and universities, as well as officials from various departments.⁵ The Minister selected a broad-based committee, which included members who could be expected to bring a business or managerial perspective to the examination of technical education.

The Steering Committee was given the considerable responsibility of producing an educational brief for the Regional Colleges, which would take into account all relevant considerations and would, insofar as possible, harmonise with any future thinking on third level technical education.⁶ They were informed that the Minister had decided to build eight RTCs and were asked to advise on the need for a ninth college in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. This substantial undertaking had to be completed in the short-term, as the consortium was awaiting an educational brief for the colleges.⁷ The Minister's decision to appoint the consortium almost simultaneously with the establishment of the Steering Committee placed considerable pressure on the Committee to produce its report as quickly as possible.⁸ The Steering Committee submitted a Preliminary Brief to the department in January 1967, which outlined the accommodation requirements of the colleges on the basis of a projection of the target population of students in each regional centre. The Committee's final report, which was completed in April 1967, dealt more fully with the role of the Regional Colleges and the expansion of the limited facilities for higher technical education.⁹

³ *Ibid.*, O'Malley to Lynch, 20 June 1967

⁴ *Steering Committee on Technical Education, Report to the Minister for Education on Regional Technical Colleges 1967*, p.5 (Dublin, 1969)

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.5

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.5

⁸ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.140

⁹ *Steering Committee on Technical Education, Report*, pp.32-33

The final report emphasized that the availability of increased technical knowledge and skill at all levels was a necessary condition for further economic growth and the promotion of enterprise among the people. The Committee asserted that the Irish state had generally failed to give its people the opportunity to become technically skilled, due at least in part to the established academic bias in the educational system: 'Ireland has largely failed to provide this resource'.¹⁰ They considered that the RTCs would help to fulfil the national need for a greater supply of skilled technical personnel, which was an essential requirement if the national economy was to adapt successfully to free trade with Britain and the likely accession of the state to the European Economic Community.¹¹ They envisaged that the new colleges would be most immediately concerned with filling gaps in the supply of industrial manpower, particularly in the technician area: the main long-term function of the new institutions, however, would be to provide education for trade and industry over a wide range of occupations, especially in engineering and science but also in business, languages and other subjects.¹² The Committee emphasized that planning for the colleges should take account of the economic and social needs of developing regions, where investment in education was a necessary element in industrial development.¹³ The Committee's analysis underlined the significant role, which they expected the new colleges to play in technical education and economic development in the future. Their conclusions reflected the prevailing consensus that investment in technical education was an indispensable prerequisite for economic progress and underlined that O'Malley was not alone in regarding the provision of the Regional Technical Colleges as an urgent necessity.

The Committee envisaged the provision of a wide variety of courses for different age cohorts within the colleges. The RTCs were intended to provide senior cycle post-primary courses leading to the Leaving Certificate, with a bias towards science and technical subjects.¹⁴ Significantly, the original purpose of the new colleges had altered considerably since May 1963, when Hillery had envisaged that the Technical Schools' Leaving Certificate would be provided for students in the 'Regional Technological Colleges'.¹⁵ Hillery's proposal had been quietly dropped: neither the Committee nor

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.7

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.7

¹² *Ibid.*, p.11

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.8

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.12

¹⁵ NA DFA 2003/17/383, Talk by Tomás Ó Floinn, *Recent Developments in Education in Ireland*, p.13, June 1972

Hillery's successors favoured the idea of a separate public examination for technical subjects. The Committee envisaged the provision by the new colleges of apprenticeship training and courses for Technician qualifications at various levels. They also considered that the colleges would provide third-level courses leading to higher technician or professional qualifications, as well as adult education courses.¹⁶ The wide range of technical courses envisaged by the Committee reflected their concern that the new institutions should not only meet the short-term demand for more technicians but also expand the limited provision for higher technical education.

The Steering Committee's recommendations gave a powerful impetus to the rapid development of the RTCs. They advised the Minister to proceed with all eight of the colleges, which had already been announced, as soon as possible.¹⁷ The department was encouraged to investigate the possibility of phasing the construction programme at each college to ensure a reasonable rate of capital expenditure and allow for a review of the requirements outlined by the Committee. The Committee did not favour a delay in providing any of the colleges, but recommended that if part of the project was to be deferred, then the colleges in Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Galway should have priority and should proceed without delay.¹⁸ The Minister was advised to designate the college in Galway as the main centre for hotel and catering courses outside Dublin: it was envisaged that the brief for the college would include facilities for a special unit, supervised by the Council for Education, Recruitment and Training for the Hotel Industry (CERT), to accommodate about 600 students.¹⁹ The Committee also recommended that a Local Technical College, providing mainly for Leaving Certificate courses and apprentice training, should be established at Letterkenny. They considered that it was not necessary to provide the full range of courses appropriate to a Regional College in Donegal initially, but that the site for the institution should be large enough to accommodate its expansion to full RTC status at a later stage.²⁰ The Steering Committee emphasized that the colleges must be allowed to adapt to social, economic and technological changes: 'we do not foresee any final fixed pattern of courses in the Colleges'.²¹ They also warned that the progress of the RTCs should not be restricted by 'any artificial limitation of either the scope or the level of their educational

¹⁶ *Steering Committee on Technical Education, Report*, p.12

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.39

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.36-39

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.20

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.38-39

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.11

achievements'²² The Committee recommended the provision of a wide range of specific courses in the RTCs, but declined to set any limit to the future development of the new institutions.

The Minister generally accepted the recommendations of the Steering Committee. He fully endorsed the recommendation in favour of proceeding immediately with the construction of the eight colleges, whose location had already been fixed, in a submission to the government on 15 June 1967.²³ The Minister proposed to phase the building work over a longer period to enable the capital cost to be spread over five to six years.²⁴ The adoption of a phased process of construction for the RTCs closely followed the advice of the Committee. Moreover O'Malley shared the Committee's conviction that the development of technical education and technician training was an economic imperative. He told the government that 'The availability and demand for technical education are of the essence in relation to our future industrial progress.'²⁵ One of the few differences between O'Malley and the Steering Committee concerned the provision of a ninth college in Letterkenny. While the Committee initially decided in December 1966 to recommend the establishment of a Regional College in Co. Donegal, the members changed their position in formulating their final report, advising the Minister that a Local Technical College would be a satisfactory solution in the short-term.²⁶ O'Malley, however, had already decided to propose a Regional College for Donegal well before the Committee completed its deliberations. He informed Lemass on 8 November 1966 that he intended to seek the government's approval for an additional college in Letterkenny.²⁷ The establishment of an additional RTC in Donegal was, however, the only significant issue where the Minister paid little attention to the views of the Steering Committee concerning the establishment of the new colleges.

The report was influential in shaping the state's approach not only to the establishment of the RTCs but also to the wider development of technical education. The Committee asserted that the need for skilled technical education was sufficiently great that the state should act to stimulate demand for the new institutions if necessary, by

²² *Ibid.*, p.11, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.176

²³ NA D/T 98/6/831, S.18047A, G.O. F.39/1/31, *Memorandum to the Government, Regional Technical Colleges, Office of the Minister for Education*, 15 June 1967

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.6

²⁶ NA D/T 98/6/831, S. 18047A, *Minister's Steering Committee on Technical Education, Document No.1, Proposed Regional Technical College at Letterkenny*, pp.1-3, January 1967

²⁷ NA D/T 97/5/510, S.18047A, O'Malley to Lemass, 8 November 1966

giving appropriate recognition to the various awards conferred by the new colleges.²⁸ They recommended the establishment of a national Council for Educational Awards, which would set the standards for admission to and qualification from courses in technical education. The proposed Council was intended to approve examination syllabuses and courses in the Regional Colleges and technical schools, awarding certificates and diplomas to those successful in the approved examinations.²⁹ This recommendation proved influential, although it was not implemented immediately as legislation was required to establish the Council on a statutory basis. The Department of Education also wished to consult the new Higher Education Authority (HEA) on the proposal. The Authority soon endorsed the Steering Committee's case for formal recognition of technical courses and qualifications. The HEA's first report to the government in March 1969 recommended the establishment of a national Council with the power to award qualifications for the successful completion of courses undertaken at third-level institutions other than the universities.³⁰ The government agreed on 9 March 1971 that the department should proceed to draft legislation for the creation of the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA).³¹ The NCEA was established on an ad hoc basis in April 1972, as the relevant legislation faced a lengthy delay before its enactment.³² The foundation of the NCEA provided an institutional framework for the recognition of technical courses and qualifications at a national level for the first time.

The Committee also proposed a radical restructuring of the educational system on a regional basis. They recommended the establishment of Regional Education Councils, which would absorb the local VECs and take responsibility for all strands of education in each region.³³ It was envisaged that the Regional Councils would include representatives of the Minister, the ecclesiastical authorities, trade unions, employers, local councillors and all the educational interests.³⁴ This proposal, which would have involved the creation

²⁸ *Steering Committee on Technical Education, Report*, p.8

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, *Memorandum A, Initial Recommendation by the HEA on the question of establishing a Body which would award national qualifications at technician and technological levels*, p.2, 20 March 1969

³¹ NA D/T 2002/8/449, S. 18592A, C.O.1253, *Summary of Memorandum for the Government, Heads of a Bill for the establishment of a Council for National Awards*, Office of the Minister for Education, 29 January 1971, pp.1-2; D/T1/2002/6/1, G.C.13/104, Cabinet Minutes, pp.1-2, 9 March 1971

³² NA D/T 2003/16/448, S.18592A, C.O, 1253, *Memorandum for the Government, Establishment of a temporary ad hoc National Council for Educational Awards*, Office of the Minister for Education, 11 February 1972; National Council for Educational Awards, *First Annual Report 1972-73*, p.7 (NCEA, 1973)

³³ *Steering Committee on Technical Education, Report*, p.40

³⁴ *Ibid.*

of a common institutional framework on a regional basis for the entire educational system, proved too radical even for O'Malley. Most officials of the department did not support a regional re-organisation of the educational system and the proposal was ignored.³⁵ But the report of the Steering Committee exerted considerable influence on the rapid expansion of higher technical education. The Committee had provided a wide-ranging educational brief for the foundation of the colleges within a remarkably short period of time.³⁶ The efficiency of the Committee ensured that the construction of the RTCs proceeded with minimal delay, while its report provided an essential basis for the planning of the educational facilities to be provided by the new colleges. The recommendations of the Steering Committee reinforced the state's commitment to the expansion and development of the traditionally neglected area of technical education.

O'Malley initially proposed that the state should finance the building and operation of the new colleges even before the Committee completed its report, but failed to secure the approval of the Cabinet for his plans. He first raised the need for the state to finance fully the costs of the RTCs as early as October 1966, but his initial proposal was withdrawn due to the opposition of the Department of Finance.³⁷ O'Malley submitted a more detailed proposal to the government on 2 December 1966: he argued that the capital cost of building the colleges and the current cost of administration should be financed entirely by the state.³⁸ He also made the case to his colleagues for the establishment of a ninth college in Co. Donegal.³⁹ The Minister for Finance, Charles Haughey, agreed in principle that the capital cost of the RTCs should be covered by the state, but rejected any suggestion that the operational costs of the new colleges should also be met from the Exchequer. Haughey strongly opposed the provision of an additional college for Donegal, on the basis that the state faced a 'critical financial position' and could not afford a ninth RTC when it was already proposed to establish such a college in Sligo.⁴⁰ O'Malley submitted another memorandum on 6 January 1967 which reiterated the case for a college in Donegal, but the Department of Finance remained implacably opposed to the

³⁵ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.176

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.177

³⁷ NA D/T 97/6/510, S.18047A, G.O. F.39/1/31, *Memorandum to the Government, Regional Technical Colleges, Office of the Minister for Education*, 28 October 1966

³⁸ NA D/T 97/6/510, S.18047A, G.O. F.39/1/31, *Memorandum to the Government, Regional Technical Colleges, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.3, 2 December 1966

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.9

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.5

establishment of an additional college.⁴¹ O'Malley therefore withdrew his proposals from the Cabinet agenda on 10 January 1967.⁴² He failed to make any progress with his colleagues concerning the financing of higher technical education before the Steering Committee completed its report.

The Minister for Education's next submission to the government on 15 June 1967 drew heavily on the analysis of the Steering Committee. O'Malley's proposal echoed the terms of the report in arguing that it was necessary not simply to satisfy the existing demand for technical education, but to stimulate 'a swing towards technical education and technician training in all its aspects'.⁴³ He noted that the detailed study carried out by the Committee indicated that the number of students and variety of courses in the colleges would far exceed those originally visualised by the department: it was estimated that the RTCs would serve over 11,000 students outside Dublin by 1975. The revised estimate of student numbers demanded more extensive accommodation than the department had anticipated, increasing the estimated building costs from an initial total of £5,550,000 in December 1966 to £7,131,000 in June 1967.⁴⁴ But O'Malley asserted that as a result of the analysis undertaken by the Committee, in consultation with the department, the floor areas of the colleges were being kept to the minimum level necessary for the projected student numbers: moreover the work of the consortium was reducing the unit building costs. He argued therefore that, in view of the extensive scope of the colleges, they represented good value for money.⁴⁵ O'Malley sought the approval of the government to proceed with the establishment of nine RTCs, including an additional college in Donegal. He again proposed that the state should finance the capital costs of building all the colleges, as well as their annual operational costs.⁴⁶

This ambitious proposal met with the firm opposition of the Minister for Finance. Haughey argued that the operational costs of the colleges should be met by the relevant VECs in each region: he was also alarmed at the escalation in the building costs for the colleges and warned that they should not be planned 'on an over-ambitious scale'.⁴⁷ He argued that only four RTCs should be established initially, at Cork, Limerick, Galway

⁴¹ NA D/T 97/6/510, S.18047A, G.O. F.39/1/31, *Memorandum to the Government, Regional Technical Colleges, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.1-2, 6 January 1967

⁴² NA D/T 97/6/510, S.18047A, Ó Nualláin to Ó Dálaigh, 10 January 1967

⁴³ NA D/T 98/6/831, S.18047A, G.O. F.39/1/31, *Memorandum to the Government, Regional Technical Colleges, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.5, 15 June 1967

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.8

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4

and Waterford.⁴⁸ O'Malley firmly rejected the proposal that the government should proceed with only four colleges immediately. He argued that the state had to make a firm commitment to the development of technical education and any retreat from the provision of all the colleges in the short-term would 'cast considerable doubt on the Government's confidence in the entire project'.⁴⁹ The Cabinet did not make a definite decision between the opposing positions taken by the two Ministers at its meeting on 4 July 1967, instead seeking more detailed information from O'Malley on the capital costs of the colleges and the possibility of phasing the construction work over several years.⁵⁰

The officials wasted no time in compiling the supplementary information: O'Malley submitted a further proposal to the government on 7 July.⁵¹ On this occasion the department outlined not only a detailed breakdown of capital costs for each College but also a definite time-scale for phasing the programme of building work for the RTCs. It was proposed that building works on the six smaller colleges would start in the spring of 1968, while the work on the colleges in Cork, Limerick and Galway would not begin until 1969. The department envisaged that the RTCs would become operational on a phased basis from September 1969, anticipating that the building process would be completed by September 1972.⁵² It is evident that O'Malley and the senior officials tenaciously lobbied the government to secure an early decision on the foundation of the RTCs and to maximise the level of direct state support for the new colleges. Leading departmental officials, including MacGearailt and O'Connor, strongly promoted the RTCs in discussions with the Department of Finance.⁵³ The persistent efforts of the Minister and key officials were rewarded with success on 11 July 1967, when the Cabinet agreed that the state should finance the building costs of the eight colleges, whose location had already been announced. The Cabinet approved the proposal for the capital financing of eight RTCs by the Exchequer, subject to further consultation by O'Malley with the Minister for Finance on the date for the commencement of building works at the three larger colleges in Cork, Limerick and Galway.⁵⁴ The Cabinet did not finalise the provision for a training unit in Galway for the hotel and catering industry and Lynch

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.5

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.6

⁵⁰ NA D/T 98/6/831, S.18047A, Ó Nualláin to Ó Dálaigh, 4 July 1967

⁵¹ NA D/T 98/6/831, S.18047A, *Memorandum to the Government, Regional Technical Colleges, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.1-4, 7 July 1967

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Interview with Tony Ó Dálaigh, 3 May 2002

⁵⁴ NA 99/5/1, G.C. 12/46, Cabinet Minutes, pp.4-5, 11 July 1967

confirmed the location of the unit under the auspices of CERT in Galway RTC only in April 1968, when he served briefly as acting Minister for Education after O'Malley's death.⁵⁵ Despite the provisos to the Cabinet decision, O'Malley secured a definite commitment by the government to proceed with eight new colleges in the short-term. The Cabinet approved the approach favoured by O'Malley and the Steering Committee, authorising the building of all these colleges on a phased basis, over the recommendation of the Department of Finance to proceed with only four RTCs initially.

The Minister was, however, not entirely successful in his lobbying of his colleagues. The Cabinet on 11 July postponed any decision on the funding of the operational costs for the RTCs and on the proposal for a ninth college for Donegal.⁵⁶ O'Malley's determination to secure an additional RTC in Letterkenny soon became another bone of contention with the Minister for Finance. When O'Malley again sought the government's approval for a new college in Donegal on 8 September, Haughey firmly opposed the establishment of an additional college. He argued that the RTCs were meant to serve regional rather than local needs and that the provision of such facilities for a single county would create an unwelcome precedent, which would encourage demands for the establishment of further colleges in other local areas.⁵⁷ Moreover Haughey commented that 'a convincing case has not been made for this College', especially as Donegal lacked the industrial base which was essential to the success of such colleges.⁵⁸ O'Malley, however, made a plausible case for the establishment of an additional college in Letterkenny. He considered that Donegal should be treated as a Regional College area in its own right, on the basis of the size of the county and of the geographical reality that at most only part of Donegal could be directly served by an outside centre for technical education.⁵⁹ His proposal also drew attention to the extensive development of vocational education in the county, which indicated the strong potential demand for senior cycle technical courses and apprentice training in Donegal. Finally O'Malley argued that the establishment of a centre of technical education would provide the necessary trained personnel for local economic progress and would help to stimulate industrial development in the county.⁶⁰ The report of the Steering Committee had emphasized the

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, NA D/T 99/1/481, S.18047B, Lynch to E. Childers, 17 April 1968

⁵⁶ NA D/T 98/6/831, S.18047A, Ó Nualláin to Ó Dálaigh, 11 July 1967

⁵⁷ NA D/T 98/6/831, S.18047A, *Memorandum to the Government, Regional Technical Colleges, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.3-4, 8 September 1967

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.2

positive impact of a Regional Technical College on the economic and social development of its catchment area.⁶¹ O'Malley's proposal made explicit a key consideration which influenced the government's support for the new colleges - namely the conviction that the RTCs would directly promote economic development in the regions.

The Minister for Education enjoyed the support of some powerful allies in his efforts to secure a college for Donegal, including Neil Blaney, Minister for Agriculture and Dr. Anthony MacFeely, Bishop of Raphoe. Blaney had unsuccessfully lobbied Hillery in February 1965 for the establishment of a regional college in Donegal: as a TD representing a Donegal constituency, Blaney was a reliable supporter of O'Malley's proposal within the Cabinet.⁶² MacFeely provided another influential voice in favour of the idea. He appealed directly to Lemass on 23 August 1966, urging the Taoiseach to ensure that Donegal did not become 'the Cinderella of the country' due to its geographical isolation and the lack of adequate facilities for technical education in the county.⁶³ Lemass, who favoured special arrangements for technical education in Donegal, left office before the issue was resolved.⁶⁴ But MacFeely lost no time in renewing his representations to the new Taoiseach, appealing to Lynch on 15 December 1966 to consider favourably the establishment of a third-level college in Letterkenny.⁶⁵ O'Malley made sure to inform the Cabinet of the Bishop's representations, enclosing a copy of MacFeely's appeal to Lemass with the Department of Education's proposal on 8 September.⁶⁶ The Minister's lobbying for the additional college, which was reinforced by powerful supporters inside and outside the government, carried the day despite the objections of the Department of Finance. The Cabinet agreed on 17 October 1967 that a Regional Technical College should be provided in Co. Donegal.⁶⁷ There is no doubt that O'Malley's persistent advocacy for an additional college made a crucial difference to the outcome. He made the decision to propose the establishment of a Regional Technical College in Donegal despite the Steering Committee's eventual recommendation against it and he submitted at least four separate proposals for a ninth RTC to the government before a favourable decision was secured.

⁶¹ *Steering Committee on Technical Education, Report*, p.8

⁶² NA D/T 97/6/510, S.18047A, N. Blaney to Hillery, 5 February 1965, Blaney to Lemass, 22 March 1965

⁶³ A. MacFeely to Lemass, 23 August 1966

⁶⁴ Lemass to Hillery, 6 January 1965

⁶⁵ MacFeely to Lynch, 15 December 1966

⁶⁶ NA D/T 98/6/831, S.18047A, *Memorandum to the Government, Regional Technical Colleges, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.1, 8 September 1967

⁶⁷ NA 99/5/1, G.C. 12/65, Cabinet Minutes, p.3, 17 October 1967

O'Malley did not, however, secure the government's approval for the payment of the operational costs of the RTCs by the Exchequer during his term of office. The Cabinet again deferred the issue on 17 October 1967.⁶⁸ The question of the financing of the operational costs by the state was constantly deferred over the next year and was not considered by the government again during O'Malley's term. It was not until July 1968 that O'Malley's successor, Lenihan, submitted a revised proposal to the government, which reiterated that the current costs of the RTCs should be met directly by the state. The Department of Finance remained opposed to this approach and the proposal was deferred once again.⁶⁹ Although the arrangements for funding the RTCs remained ill defined until the new colleges were actually in operation, the state soon took responsibility for financing the operational costs of the colleges through the VECs. The Department of Education made grants to the VECs from 1970-71 to meet the running costs of the colleges, on the basis of estimates submitted by the committees.⁷⁰ While the arrangement for financing the RTCs were not finalised during his term, O'Malley and the senior officials of his department secured the government's approval for key policy decisions, which ensured the establishment of new technical colleges in most regions of the country.

The policy decisions initiated by O'Malley in 1967, largely but not entirely on the basis of the recommendations of the Steering Committee on Technical Education, exerted a profound influence on the future development of technical education in the Republic. The decision by the state to finance the establishment of a network of Regional Technical Colleges opened the way for a rapid expansion of higher technical education and the creation of a new sector in higher education during the following decade. The first five colleges, in Athlone, Carlow, Dundalk, Sligo and Waterford opened their doors to students for the first time in September 1969, while a sixth RTC was founded in Letterkenny in 1971.⁷¹ The remaining colleges were established on a phased basis by 1975, with the exception of the proposed RTC in Limerick where the department did not proceed with the plans for a regional college in the early 1970s, following the government's decision to establish a National Institute of Higher Education in

⁶⁸ NA D/T 98/6/831, S.18047A, Ó Nualláin to Ó Dálaigh, 17 October 1967

⁶⁹ NA D/T 99/1/481, S.18047B, *Memorandum to the Government, Financing of annual operational costs of Regional Technical Colleges, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.2, 26 July 1968

⁷⁰ *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1969-70*, pp.53-54 (Dublin, 1974)

⁷¹ NA DFA 2003/17/383, Talk by Tomás Ó Floinn, *Recent Developments in Education in Ireland*, p.14, 1972

Limerick.⁷² The foundation of the RTCs transformed the educational opportunities available to vocational pupils, who had previously been denied any real avenue to higher education especially in rural areas. The pro-active approach taken by O'Malley and officials of his department made an invaluable contribution to the development of higher technical education. O'Malley acted decisively to implement key recommendations of the Steering Committee, although his approach was not simply dictated by the Committee. Following the Minister's death, Seán Cooney, President of the VTA, paid a warm tribute to O'Malley, giving his key role in planning the development of the RTCs the same weight as the introduction of free post-primary education: 'Free post-primary education, the free transport scheme and his plans for the development of regional colleges will remain everlasting monuments to him.'⁷³ The VTA at least fully recognised the high priority given by O'Malley to the foundation of the RTCs and his considerable influence on the expansion of higher technical education. The importance attached to the rapid establishment of the RTCs by O'Malley himself, the Steering Committee and the government as a whole reflected the transformation in the state's approach to technical education within the space of a single decade. The government now promoted the expansion of technical education, which had been neglected and even restricted by the state and the Catholic Hierarchy until the late 1950s, as an indispensable element in the economic development of the nation.

O'Malley's plan for university merger

The Minister also sought to achieve a radical reshaping of university education. The department under O'Malley formulated a definite overall policy for the development of university education for the first time. The state's newly developed policy approach owed more to O'Malley's zealous promotion of a merger between Trinity College and University College, Dublin than to the report of the Commission on Higher Education. The report of the Commission, which had been awaited with increasing impatience by the government, was completed in February 1967.⁷⁴ The Cabinet agreed to publish the summary of the report on 7 March 1967.⁷⁵ But the lengthy delay in the deliberations of

⁷² NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, Decision slip, *Cruinniú Rialtais*, 6 December 1968, O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.176

⁷³ VTA, General Secretary's Report 1967-68, Annual Congress 1968, p.1, (Dublin, 1968)

⁷⁴ *Report of the Commission on Higher Education 1960-67, Summary*, p.14 (Dublin, 1967); UCD Archives Department, *Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh Papers*, P51/39 (12-15), M. Carty to C. Ó Dálaigh, 2 December 1966

⁷⁵ NA 99/5/1, G.C.12/22, Cabinet Minutes, pp.2-3, 7 March 1967

the Commission greatly reduced the impact of its recommendations. James Dukes, who later became the first secretary of the Higher Education Authority, even commented that 'they had no impact that I can recall'.⁷⁶ While Dukes overstated the case, there is no doubt that by 1966 the Minister and senior officials were no longer willing to wait for the Commission's report before formulating plans for the future development of higher education. Although O'Malley avoided any policy statement on university education until he received the report, he first submitted proposals for the merger of Trinity College and UCD to the Cabinet on 15 December 1966.⁷⁷ The Minister's memorandum, which was entitled '*The Problem of Trinity College Dublin*', emphasized that Trinity College was seeking extensive capital investment by the state in the short-term, at a time when the college still contained a substantial proportion of non-Irish students, who were drawn especially from Britain.⁷⁸ O'Malley argued that 'the State should not have to shoulder the enormous expense of duplication that will be involved' in financing the expansion of two rival universities in Dublin, especially as the additional funding for one of those colleges represented a commitment to the education of non-Irish students.⁷⁹ The Minister's proposals envisaged the establishment of a single University of Dublin with Trinity College and University College as its two constituent colleges 'and with each complementary to the other'.⁸⁰ The government deferred any decision on O'Malley's plan until it received the report of the Commission, which decided against a formal association between Trinity College and UCD and recommended instead close collaboration and joint development in some areas between the two colleges.⁸¹ The Minister was convinced, however, that it was essential 'to rationalise the university position in Dublin' through the establishment of a formal relationship between the two Dublin colleges.⁸² O'Malley had already privately ruled out a key recommendation of the Commission even before he received its report.

The Commission produced an immensely detailed and comprehensive report, which dealt with all areas of higher education and contained thirty-seven principal

⁷⁶ Interview with James Dukes, 28 April 2003

⁷⁷ NA D/T 98/6/195, S.13962C, C.O.686/4, *Summary, Memorandum for the Government, The Problem of Trinity College Dublin, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.1-3, 15 December 1966

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2

⁸⁰ C.O.686/4, *Memorandum for the Government, The Problem of Trinity College Dublin, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.23, 15 December 1966

⁸¹ NA D/T 98/6/195, S.13962C, Ó Nualláin to Ó Dálaigh, 20 December 1966, *Report of the Commission on Higher Education 1960-67, Summary*, pp.47-51 (Dublin, 1967)

⁸² *The Irish Times*, 'TCD and UCD to be United, O'Malley announces wedding plans', 19 April 1967

recommendations. The report favoured the absorption of the increasing demand for third-level education by new institutions and a more limited expansion of university education, which would protect high academic standards. The Commission asserted that it was the responsibility of the universities to match student numbers with available resources of staff, accommodation and equipment: 'It is essential that the present inadequate staff/student ratio be amended and overcrowding eliminated before further expansion is undertaken.'⁸³ They recommended that no additional university should be established. Instead the report proposed the creation of a new type of institution, the New College, to meet part of the expanding demand for higher education. The new institutions, which were to be established initially in Dublin and Limerick, would award a pass degree for three-year courses and diplomas for shorter courses.⁸⁴ The recommendation for New Colleges proved to be one of the most controversial proposals made by the Commission: it was criticised by educationalists and officials of the Department of Education for setting a ceiling to the aspirations of students within the proposed institutions.⁸⁵ The Commission also considered that technical training and research should be undertaken outside the universities under the auspices of a Technological Authority, which would incorporate the work of the Institute of Industrial Research and Standards: they suggested that the training of technicians should be a primary function of the vocational education system.⁸⁶ They recommended, however, that new research developments should usually be accommodated in the universities or the existing research institutes.⁸⁷ The Commission was concerned to protect the interests of the universities and feared that excessive student numbers would damage the quality of university education. The report was emphatic in its conclusion that the universities had to safeguard academic standards at a time of unprecedented demand for higher education: 'If the universities should falter, they must inevitably be swamped by the flood of undergraduates; and the consequent lowering of standards will be transmitted throughout the entire educational system, with grave consequences in every department of the nation's activities.'⁸⁸

The Commission proposed various institutional modifications in the university system but did not favour far-reaching changes in the existing pattern of higher education. They acknowledged that the system of academic appointments in the National

⁸³ *Report of the Commission on Higher Education 1960-67, Summary*, p.95 (Dublin, 1967)

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.167

⁸⁶ *Report of the Commission on Higher Education 1960-67, Summary*, pp.95-96 (Dublin, 1967)

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.98

University of Ireland was unsatisfactory and recommended that permanent academic appointments in all universities should be made by the governing authority on the basis of nominations by expert committees.⁸⁹ The Commission opposed any formal amalgamation between Trinity College and UCD and recommended that the constitution of Trinity College should be re-affirmed by an Act of the Oireachtas. The report proposed that the National University should be dissolved so that its three constituent colleges, UCD, UCC and UCG, could be reconstituted as separate universities: it was envisaged that the Catholic ecclesiastical authorities would decide the future of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth.⁹⁰ This recommendation certainly envisaged an important alteration of the formal relationship between the three colleges, but it did not involve a dramatic change in the workings of university education on a practical level. The Commission itself acknowledged that the NUI worked 'rather as a loose aggregation of colleges than as an integrated system'.⁹¹ They recommended its abolition on the basis that its organisation was inadequate and that the colleges had in practice assumed university functions with regard to courses and examinations.⁹² The Commission's recommendation in favour of three independent universities was an attempt to formalise an existing pattern of university development rather than an initiative to reshape fundamentally the structures of higher education.

The Commission endorsed the principle of institutional autonomy for the universities, although they acknowledged that such autonomy should be subject to some limitations, as the institutions depended heavily on state funding.⁹³ The report therefore proposed the establishment by statute of a permanent Commission for Higher Education, consisting of nine part-time members appointed by the government and drawn from outside the institutions of higher education. Significantly it was envisaged that the new Commission would report directly to the Taoiseach, not the Minister for Education. The report envisaged that the permanent Commission would be responsible for the distribution of state funding to the institutions and would undertake a continual review of the development of higher education.⁹⁴ The Commission also favoured the establishment by the Oireachtas of a Council of Irish Universities, which would have the power to set minimum requirements on various issues, including entry and degree standards, the

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.64

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.48-49

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.47

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.47

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.54

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.54

transfer of students and the exchange of information between institutions.⁹⁵ The proposed Council, which would be composed of members from each college, was intended to provide for formalised co-operation between the institutions of higher education without impairing their autonomy.

The Commission's report received a sceptical response from the Minister for Education. O'Malley thanked the Commission for their work and commented that they had 'served the nation truly and well', at the same press conference where he explicitly rejected their recommendation for the retention of Trinity College and UCD as independent institutions.⁹⁶ The Minister acted decisively following the submission of the report, seeking the approval of the Cabinet for a formal merger between the two colleges on 9 March 1967, shortly after the summary of the report was presented to the government.⁹⁷ O'Malley argued that the state had to address the anomalous position of Trinity College, which stood apart 'from the main stream of the nation'.⁹⁸ He commented that 'the Commission has to all intents and purposes shied away from the problem'.⁹⁹ The Cabinet agreed on 31 March that O'Malley should approach the university authorities with a proposal for the creation of a single University of Dublin, which would incorporate the two existing colleges on a complementary basis.¹⁰⁰ The Minister quickly publicised the government's decision, making his policy announcement on higher education at a press conference on 18 April 1967. O'Malley announced his initiative well before the main body of the report was published: it was not until 1 August 1967 that the first volume of the report was presented to the Cabinet prior to publication.¹⁰¹ Moreover he informed the authorities of the two colleges of the content of his statement only on the morning of the press conference.¹⁰² O'Malley launched the initiative for the merger of Trinity College and UCD publicly in advance of any serious consultation with the university authorities, clearly intending that negotiations on the proposal would be undertaken after the announcement in an atmosphere of public approval for the idea.

The Minister told an audience of educational and political journalists that the government aimed in the public interest to establish a formal relationship between the

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.53

⁹⁶ *The Irish Times*, 'TCD and UCD to be United, O'Malley announces wedding plans', 19 April 1967

⁹⁷ NA D/T 98/6/195, S.13962C, C.O. 686/4, *Memorandum for the Government, The Problem of Trinity College Dublin, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.1, 9 March 1967

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ NA 99/5/1, G.C.12/22, *Cabinet Minutes*, pp.3-4, 31 March 1967

¹⁰¹ NA D/T 98/6/747, S.17744, Ó Nualláin to Ó Dálaigh, 1 August 1967

¹⁰² *The Irish Times*, 'TCD and UCD to be United, O'Malley announces wedding plans', 19 April 1967

two Dublin colleges, despite the contrary views of the Commission.¹⁰³ O'Malley proposed the creation of a single university authority, established on a statutory basis, with a subsidiary authority for each constituent college: the powers and composition of each governing body had yet to be decided. Although O'Malley had not worked out the constitutional structure of the new university in any great detail, he commented that the government had taken the basic policy decision and expressed confidence that a viable solution would be found provided that the necessary goodwill was forthcoming.¹⁰⁴ *The Irish Times* accurately commented that the Minister had assumed 'a cheerful, confident, shoot-first-and-ask-questions-afterwards mood'.¹⁰⁵ While he presented the terms of the initiative only in general terms, O'Malley made a detailed case for the proposed merger. He emphasized that the pattern of university education in Dublin was profoundly unsatisfactory, presenting a compelling rationale for change on economic, political and educational grounds.¹⁰⁶ The Minister gave the greatest attention to the economic case for a formal co-ordination of activity between the two institutions. He warned that the state could not be expected to subsidise 'avoidable duplication' of university services due to the competing claims of the two colleges.¹⁰⁷ The prospect of a substantial increase in student numbers and the considerable commitment of the state to the university building programmes meant that the government had to insist upon 'a joining of forces with a view to obviating all unnecessary duplication.'¹⁰⁸ He suggested the merger of certain faculties within the new university, arguing that the Veterinary Faculties of the two colleges could sensibly be merged into a single institution: it would make economic sense too for all Science students to be taught under a single roof. While these suggestions were examples of the opportunities offered by a merger rather than final proposals, the Minister's intent to end unnecessary duplication of services and resources was unmistakable. O'Malley emphasized that 'the whole thing cries out for some kind of complementary allocation'.¹⁰⁹ Economic and financial considerations certainly loomed large in the Minister's proposal for the university merger.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, *The Irish Press*, 'UCD and TCD to merge: Opening of new era in our higher education', 19 April 1967

¹⁰⁴ *The Irish Times*, 'TCD and UCD to be United, O'Malley announces wedding plans', 19 April 1967, *The Irish Independent*, 'UCD and TCD to merge: Minister outlines university plan', 19 April 1967

¹⁰⁵ *The Irish Times*, 'TCD and UCD to be United, O'Malley announces wedding plans', 19 April 1967

¹⁰⁶ D. O'Malley, 'University Education in Dublin: Statement of Minister for Education - 18 April 1967', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), pp.113-121

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

O'Malley, however, was concerned to point out that the initiative was not driven solely by economic necessity. He argued that in this instance 'what makes economic sense makes educational sense too.'¹¹⁰ He believed that the new University of Dublin would be able to provide education of a higher quality than the colleges under existing conditions: the institutional collaboration produced by merger would help to alleviate high staff/student ratios and to raise academic standards.¹¹¹ O'Malley also combined appeals to history and national tradition with his analysis of economic realities, arguing that the existing situation was not only financially intolerable but culturally and politically undesirable. He asserted that the government aimed to end 'a most insidious form of partition on our doorstep', the traditional division between Trinity College, once the bastion of the Protestant ruling class, and UCD, which had been deliberately founded as part of a Catholic University.¹¹² The Commission had declined to make any substantive comment on the regulation maintained by the Catholic Hierarchy, which banned the attendance of Catholic students at Trinity College.¹¹³ O'Malley had not sought the agreement of the Catholic Hierarchy for the removal of the ban, but aimed to make the regulation redundant through the merger. The Minister was lyrical in his evocation of the cultural and political benefits of merger for the nation in general and Trinity College in particular: 'Trinity is not going to pass away. It will be merely taking the final step across the threshold of that mansion to which it properly belongs, the Irish nation.'¹¹⁴ O'Malley did not openly challenge the Bishops' position, but clearly intended that the merger would circumvent the ban. He asserted that the new University of Dublin would not be 'neutral' but would be multi-denominational, giving full respect and recognition to all denominations of students.¹¹⁵ He firmly opposed any form of religious segregation within the new university, hoping that his statement would open the way for a multi-denominational university institution in Dublin. O'Malley expressed confidence that his initiative would evoke the necessary goodwill among the university authorities and staff to achieve the merger, declaring that 'we are at the opening of a new era in higher education'.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *The Irish Times*, 'TCD and UCD to be United, O'Malley announces wedding plans', 19 April 1967

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Report of the Commission on Higher Education 1960-67, Summary*, p.51 (Dublin, 1967)

¹¹⁴ D. O'Malley, 'University Education in Dublin: Statement of Minister for Education - 18 April 1967', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), pp.113-121

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Hyland and Milne, *Irish Educational Documents*, vol.2, pp.418-420

¹¹⁶ *The Irish Times*, 'TCD and UCD to be United, O'Malley announces wedding plans', 19 April 1967

O'Malley's statement on 18 April 1967 was the most dramatic and significant attempt by any Irish government to transform the structures of higher education since the foundation of the state. While the state's policy towards higher education in general was not yet fully clarified, the Minister's announcement had the potential to reshape the pattern of university education in Dublin. The policy statement identified the merger of Trinity College and UCD as the government's most urgent priority in the development of higher education. The Minister's statement received an almost universally positive response across the political spectrum. Fine Gael issued a statement welcoming the proposed university merger, although they criticised O'Malley's failure to outline fully his proposed university structure. Likewise Brendan Corish welcomed the Minister's proposal, expressing the hope that it would lead to a process of closer integration between the two colleges.¹¹⁷ The initiative also drew praise from the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, George Otto Simms and from the Catholic Bishop of Cork, Cornelius Lucey, although the Catholic Hierarchy as a whole made no comment on the proposed merger.¹¹⁸ The favourable response given by leading politicians and churchmen to the principle of merger underlined that the announcement was a public relations triumph for O'Malley. But the implementation of the policy itself was fraught with difficulties and the Minister's strategy of announcing a policy decision in advance of serious negotiations with the relevant stakeholders proved much less effective on this occasion than it had in securing the introduction of free second-level education. O'Malley's confident rhetoric did not reflect the reality of the situation. The Minister had easily brushed aside the views of the Commission on Higher Education, but he faced far greater obstacles in securing the agreement of the two universities to a mutually acceptable form of merger.

The very different reactions of the Provost of Trinity College and the authorities of UCD to O'Malley's statement underlined the deep divergence between the two colleges. The Provost, Dr. A.J. McConnell, issued a personal statement welcoming O'Malley's initiative. McConnell expressed confidence that Trinity College would 'look at the Minister's plans with the utmost sympathy' and he looked forward to the development of a single university on the basis of the Minister's proposals.¹¹⁹ The governing body of UCD, which met on 18 April, also immediately announced their

¹¹⁷ *The Irish Times*, 'O'Malley Describes New University', 19 April 1967

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *The Irish Press*, 'UCD calls for new foundation', 19 April 1967

¹¹⁹ *The Irish Times*, 'Statements by Provost and UCD governors', 19 April 1967

support for the initiative in principle, endorsing O'Malley's criticism of wasteful duplication within the university sector in Dublin. But the governing body disagreed with the Minister's approach to merger, arguing instead that the benefits sought by O'Malley would best be achieved by 'a complete unification of the two institutions'.¹²⁰ The UCD authorities urged that the new University of Dublin should combine all the material and intellectual resources of the two colleges under a single unitary authority.¹²¹ This statement immediately set the scene for confrontation between the Minister and the authorities of UCD, as O'Malley told the press conference on 18 April that a complete fusion of the two institutions would be 'an appallingly bad decision', which would threaten the distinctive identity of the colleges.¹²² Moreover the emergence of a crucial divergence concerning the nature of the merger between the authorities of the two colleges immediately after the Minister's statement did not augur well for the success of his initiative.

The fundamental differences between the official position of UCD and the approach favoured by most staff within Trinity College were fully exposed by a symposium on the university merger in *Studies*. J.P. MacHale, Secretary and Bursar of UCD, argued strongly for a full unification of the two institutions.¹²³ MacHale considered that a unitary structure would create a fully integrated university and would minimise avoidable duplication of scarce resources: such an institution would be able to maintain its autonomy, while the Senate of a two-college institution would be dominated by nominees of the government and external bodies. He claimed that the governing body of UCD was willing to sacrifice the traditional identity of the college to create a new university: 'That a university institution should agree to liquidate itself as a separate entity in order that a new and better university structure should rise, phoenix-like, from the ashes, is a very unusual occurrence.'¹²⁴ It was evident, however, that UCD, which was the larger institution, was likely to become the dominant force in a unified university. MacHale represented the views of the UCD authorities, who were clearly unwilling to accept merger on an equal basis with a smaller college in a federal structure. MacHale's generous interpretation of the approach of the UCD authorities was not shared in Trinity College. Basil Chubb, Professor of Political Science in TCD, commented that a

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *The Irish Times*, 'O'Malley Describes New University', 19 April 1967

¹²³ J.P. MacHale, 'The University Merger', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), pp.122-129

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

unitary university would be entirely unacceptable to the staff and graduates of Trinity College.¹²⁵ He supported the proposal for a single university with two colleges, on the basis that such a structure would allow the preservation of Trinity's existing academic community and provide the necessary co-operative arrangements to exploit the academic potential of the two colleges in Dublin.¹²⁶ While Chubb made his contribution to *Studies* as a personal opinion, his comments accurately reflected the opinions of the academic staff within Trinity College. Chubb's opposition to a unitary structure was fully endorsed by all the other contributors to *Studies* from Trinity College: the point was reiterated with particular force by Professor T.W. Moody, who had served as a member of the Commission on Higher Education. Moody considered that the proposals for a unitary university would mean 'the extinction of TCD' and warned that only a two-college structure stood any chance of acceptance by the college's staff: 'There being no death-wish in TCD, it will resist a unitary university to the utmost.'¹²⁷ The authorities and staff of TCD certainly had no intention of accepting a merger based on unification, which was regarded as a thinly veiled attempt to absorb Trinity into the larger institution. The authorities of Trinity College were concerned to maintain the college's independence and were wary of a merger in which TCD became the junior partner in a combination with a larger institution shaped by a different ethos.¹²⁸ The *Studies* symposium underlined that severe and probably irreconcilable differences existed between the UCD authorities and the staff of Trinity College on the nature of any merger from the outset of the debate.

The position of the governing body did not command universal support in UCD, although this did not necessarily pave the way for the implementation of the Minister's initiative. A contribution to *Studies* by Denis Donoghue, Professor of Modern English and American Literature in UCD, made the case for a single university with two colleges and asserted that the governing body's decision did not accurately represent the views of the academic staff.¹²⁹ Certainly many members of the Academic Staff Association in UCD expressed opposition to the idea of a unitary university at a meeting on 12 May 1967.¹³⁰ The Minister sought to mobilise support for his proposals within UCD on 12 July, when he addressed the academic staff of the college. O'Malley reiterated his proposal for a single university with two constituent colleges and outlined certain details

¹²⁵ B. Chubb, 'The University Merger', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), pp.130-137

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ T.W. Moody, 'Comment', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), pp.173-175

¹²⁸ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.181

¹²⁹ D. Donoghue, 'Comment', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), pp.160-164

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

of the proposed structure.¹³¹ He emphasized that the university would own most of the property of the two colleges and that the university governing body would exercise authority over the entire institution. He envisaged that the central authority would appoint staff and determine the distribution of faculties: the university would also control the admission of students. O'Malley indicated that both colleges should have equal representation on the university authority, which would also include a minority of government nominees.¹³² The Minister's address indicated that he favoured a strong central authority for a university institution based on a two-college structure. But certain proposals outlined by O'Malley on 12 July were deeply unwelcome to the authorities in both colleges. The governing body of UCD was firmly opposed to the idea of equal representation for the two colleges in a merged university: MacHale criticised such a provision as unworkable and unfair to UCD.¹³³ O'Malley's proposal for a strong university authority, which would control the admission of students, was also unwelcome to a strong element in TCD, which sought at most a loose alignment between the two colleges. Indeed T.W. Moody strongly argued that control of admissions must remain with each college authority if merger went ahead.¹³⁴ The Minister's address did not allay the fear of the authorities and staff in TCD that they faced the prospect of losing their independence in the new university. O'Malley's clarification of his original announcement therefore did little to advance the prospects for merger.

The sharp division between the UCD authorities and the academic officers and staff of TCD militated against the success of the Minister's plans, despite the positive public response given by representatives of both institutions to the principle of merger. The two colleges certainly initiated negotiations concerning a possible merger, but failed to reach a mutually acceptable settlement. Professor James Meenan, who was a member of UCD's negotiating team, commented in 1968 that the discussions between the colleges were conducted with goodwill and a sincere concern to reach an agreed settlement, but conceded that the negotiations appeared increasingly to be 'an attempt to square a circle'.¹³⁵ The disagreement over the unitary solution promoted by the authorities of UCD was a fundamental divergence between influential forces in each college, which could not be readily overcome. The basic division of opinion meant that no agreement on a joint

¹³¹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.180

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ J.P. MacHale, 'The University Merger', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), p.128

¹³⁴ T.W. Moody, 'Comment', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), pp.173-175

¹³⁵ J. Meenan, 'The University in Dublin', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.314-320

approach between the two colleges to a merger was possible and it gave strength to those in both institutions, who were already sceptical of the benefits of merger. This impasse ensured that merger was not a practical proposition unless the Minister was willing to impose a solution on the universities, which would certainly have united influential elements in both colleges against his initiative. Moreover even if the government was willing to take such a hazardous approach, O'Malley had not initially formulated a definitive proposal for the establishment of the new university and the department lacked detailed information about the staffing requirements and accommodation needs of various Faculties in the event of merger.¹³⁶

The early death of Donogh O'Malley in March 1968 deprived the initiative of its most eloquent and persistent advocate. But O'Connor, who supported the proposals for merger, commented that even during O'Malley's term, 'many of us feared that the battle could not be won.'¹³⁷ The outlook for the policy of university re-organisation was certainly problematic even before O'Malley's death. The mercurial Minister's confidence that he could overcome the traditional division between the two institutions proved misplaced, not least because the authorities of each college endorsed fundamentally incompatible forms of merger virtually from the outset of the debate. The initiative for the university merger, which was launched with great fanfare, proved to be much less significant than the policy decisions initiated by O'Malley on the expansion of higher technical education, which attracted much less public and media attention.

The dramatic but ultimately fruitless initiative for university merger also contrasted sharply with the low profile but influential deliberations undertaken in 1967 by a committee of senior officials on the future of higher education. O'Malley established a committee within the department to examine the recommendations of the Commission on Higher Education. The committee, which was headed by Ó Raifeartaigh, included MacGearailt, the Deputy Secretary, as well as the Assistant Secretaries and the Chief Inspectors.¹³⁸ The committee did not deal in detail with the initiative for the merger, as the government had already decided to propose a single University of Dublin by the time the officials began their deliberations.¹³⁹ While O'Malley himself shaped the state's policy on the proposed merger, the task of producing a detailed response to the

¹³⁶ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.203

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.204

¹³⁸ NA D/T 99/1/438, S.17744, *Departmental Committee's Observations on the Recommendations of the Commission on Higher Education*, 1967

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1

recommendations of the Commission on most other issues was delegated to the officials. The committee endorsed the reconstitution of UCC and UCG as independent universities, although they advised that any action to confer full university status on the colleges in Cork and Galway should be delayed until the negotiations on the merger had been completed.¹⁴⁰ But the officials expressed strong opposition to other key recommendations made by the Commission. They categorically rejected the proposal for New Colleges. The committee considered that the concept of a non-university institution with the power to award pass degrees was unacceptable and likely to undermine the status of all Irish degrees. Moreover they commented that ‘the idea is psychologically unsound’, as such colleges with a lower entry standard and inferior degrees would merely promote an inferiority complex among their students and staff.¹⁴¹ The committee therefore also rejected the recommendation that primary teacher training colleges should be attached to the New Colleges: the officials agreed that the length of training for national teachers should be extended to three years but stipulated that the training colleges should be linked to the universities.¹⁴² They dismissed without hesitation the Commission’s suggestion that vocational and comprehensive schoolteachers should receive degrees from the New Colleges, while the training of secondary school teachers would remain concentrated in the universities. The officials regarded the Commission’s approach to teacher training as divisive and contrary to the established policy of the government.¹⁴³ They also rejected the recommendation for a Technological Authority, which would supervise technical training and research.¹⁴⁴ Significantly the committee strongly disputed a central conclusion of the report, namely the contention that it was the responsibility of the universities to match student numbers with the available resources. The officials stated bluntly that the ultimate responsibility for the regulation of student numbers at university level rested with the state: ‘The issue is fundamentally a national one’.¹⁴⁵ They commented that ‘it would be a grave abuse of the universities’ autonomy’ if they attempted to restrict the level of student access to their institutions without prior consultation with the state.¹⁴⁶ The committee considered that the only proper solution to

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.35

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.11

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.30

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.30, O’Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.173

¹⁴⁴ NA D/T 99/1/438, S.17744, *Departmental Committee’s Observations on the Recommendations of the Commission on Higher Education*, p.30, 1967

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10

the challenge of increased student numbers was to be found in regular consultation between the universities and the state. O'Connor, who was a member of the internal committee, considered that 'the Commission was determined to protect the universities at all costs and to make them even more elite than they already were.'¹⁴⁷ The officials were critical of the underlying philosophy of the report, which gave the highest priority to preserving academic standards in the universities in an era of rapid expansion.

The committee's comments on the report were by no means entirely critical. The officials supported various recommendations made by the Commission, including the establishment of a Council of Irish Universities.¹⁴⁸ They also endorsed the creation of a permanent Commission on Higher Education but specified that the new Commission should report to the Minister for Education rather than the Taoiseach.¹⁴⁹ The committee of officials exerted considerable influence in blocking or modifying key proposals made by the Commission. Successive ministers generally accepted the conclusions of the committee and several important recommendations of the Commission were rejected or amended. The controversial proposal for New Colleges came to nothing. Likewise the related recommendations on teacher training were not implemented. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) was established on a non-statutory basis in August 1968 to deal with the financial and organisational problems of higher education.¹⁵⁰ The HEA reported to the Minister for Education and included members drawn from institutions of higher education, in accordance with the recommendation of the departmental committee, rather than the Commission. The reconstitution of UCC and UCG as independent universities was endorsed by successive Ministers, but deferred indefinitely following the failure of the initiative for the university merger.¹⁵¹ The influence of the Commission on the development of higher education was relatively limited, not least as a result of the critical commentary on their proposals delivered by the internal departmental committee.

The committee's influence, however, was not restricted to a negative critique of specific recommendations in the report. The officials disagreed with the Commission's view that no additional universities should be established. They considered that a new university would help to meet the expanding demand for higher education, if the

¹⁴⁷ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.173

¹⁴⁸ NA D/T 99/1/438, S.17744, *Departmental Committee's Observations on the Recommendations of the Commission on Higher Education*, p.2, 1967

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.30

¹⁵⁰ DDA AB8/B/XVIII/18, *Higher Education: Statement issued by the Minister for Education on behalf of the Government*, pp.1-4, 16 August 1968

¹⁵¹ Hyland and Milne, *Irish Educational Documents*, vol.2, pp.422-425

authorities of the new institution took an innovative approach and accepted some types of responsibility, which had traditionally been avoided by the older universities, including higher technological training.¹⁵² The committee proposed the establishment of a new university college in Limerick, linked initially to UCC. They envisaged that the new institution would include an Institute of Technology and an Institute of Education, as well as university Arts and Science Faculties.¹⁵³ The proposed institution was very different from the limited concept of the New College, which was to be deliberately restricted in its role and functions. The committee's proposal was not fully implemented, as the HEA recommended in March 1969 the creation of a national institute of higher education instead of a new university in Limerick.¹⁵⁴ But a key element of the committee's proposal, the establishment of a third-level institution offering qualifications in higher technological education, became the cornerstone of the HEA's recommendation, which envisaged that the new institution would mainly offer courses in technological training, although it would also include a significant element based on the humanities.¹⁵⁵ While the proposal for a university did not come to fruition in the short-term, the report by the officials was a significant constructive contribution to the government's deliberations and helped to influence the eventual decision in favour of a new national institute of higher education in Limerick. The private recommendations of the internal committee were more influential in shaping the state's policy on higher education in the late 1960s than the painstaking deliberations of the Commission on Higher Education.

Conclusion

Donogh O'Malley's highly successful and memorable term as Minister for Education ended abruptly with his sudden death on 10 March 1968. O'Malley's dynamic and ambitious approach to the achievement of policy objectives, combined with his skilful use of the media, identified him more firmly with the reform and expansion of the educational system than any other public figure. But O'Malley's political style should not conceal the considerable continuity between his policy approach and the reforming initiatives pursued by his immediate predecessors. O'Malley sought in many areas to implement or extend initiatives first promoted by Hillery or Colley: perhaps the best

¹⁵² NA D/T 99/1/438, S.17744, *Departmental Committee's Observations on the Recommendations of the Commission on Higher Education*, p.11, 1967

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.34

¹⁵⁴ NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, *Memorandum B, Recommendation of the Higher Education Authority on the Provision of Third-Level Educational Facilities at Limerick*, pp.6-7, 20 March 1969

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.8

example was the development of higher technical education, which was first proposed by Hillery in May 1963. The development of the RTCs was one of the most far-reaching and lasting educational advances delivered by the state in the entire period of economic expansion. This advance was due largely to the Minister's initiative in establishing the Steering Committee on Technical Education and to the influence which he exerted on the government's policy in the late 1960s. The government's decision to promote the upgrading of technical education, as a significant element in economic development, marked a fundamental break with the tentative and restrictive approach of the previous generation, which had gravely limited the potential of the vocational sector. The development of higher technical education on a national basis for the first time was easily the most radical reform undertaken by the state in the period of educational expansion. O'Malley also gave a higher priority to the development of university education than any of his predecessors, essentially sidelining the report of the Commission on Higher Education and seeking to develop an alternative policy. While the Minister's initiative for the merger of Trinity College and UCD ultimately proved unproductive, the deliberations of the committee of officials established by O'Malley proved influential in shaping the state's policy for the development of higher education. The Minister's dynamic reforming approach greatly extended the process of far-reaching change within the educational system. O'Malley's term essentially completed the transformation of the state's policy towards education, which had been initiated by Lemass and Hillery in 1959. Perhaps O'Malley's most significant legacy was not any single initiative, but his successful development of the state's policy of educational expansion to its fullest extent.

Chapter 7

The Limits of Reform: 1968-71

The approach pursued by the department under O'Malley's successors, Brian Lenihan and Pádraig Faulkner, was greatly influenced by policy decisions taken between 1959 and 1968. The state had developed a coherent overall policy for educational expansion by March 1968, when Lenihan succeeded O'Malley as Minister for Education. Important initiatives in primary and post-primary education were announced or implemented between 1968 and 1971, which were largely based on plans already initiated or formulated by the officials. The state was obliged to confront new challenges associated with the swift transformation of the educational system in the Republic: key problems which ministerial intervention had failed previously to resolve, notably the re-organisation of the rapidly expanding second-level sector, provoked conflict between the state and established educational interests. The expansion of higher education presented a complex challenge to the government, which initially persisted with the policy of university merger. The new Higher Education Authority (HEA), which exerted significant influence on the state's approach to the development of higher education, acted to modify the policies originally outlined by O'Malley. The department under successive Ministers was preoccupied with implementing and managing the rapid expansion of the educational system.

Reforming primary education: the new national curriculum

The most far-reaching change initiated by the Department of Education in primary education in this period was the development of a new curriculum for national schools. There had been no significant changes in the national school programme since the 1920s and the department had initiated a revision of the curriculum in 1967. The senior officials approved draft proposals for a new curriculum, which had been prepared by a committee of national school inspectors, by the autumn of 1968. The department issued a working document outlining the proposals for a revised curriculum to the INTO on 26 September 1968.¹ The working document envisaged a child-centred programme, which provided for the full development of each individual child.² The draft proposals emphasized the necessity for a flexible curriculum, which took account of the diverse mental and physical capacity of different pupils. The senior officials considered that the

¹ Annual Report of the CEC 1968-69, INTO, p.35 (Dublin, 1969)

² S. de Buitléar, 'Curaclam Nua le hAghaidh na Bunscoile', *Oideas*, no.3 (Autumn 1969), pp.4-12

existing programme was inflexible and outdated, treating a child as 'the passive recipient of knowledge'.³ The proposals for change were designed to promote a more flexible and integrated learning process, which envisaged a greater focus on the child as an individual and closer inter-action between subjects.⁴ The proposed curriculum involved the introduction of new teaching methods, including group teaching, individual teaching and project methods. The department also envisaged an extension of the curriculum to include several new subjects such as Social and Environmental Studies, Physical Education and Arts and Crafts.⁵ The official proposals for a new curriculum involved a radical reform of the existing national school programme.

The department moved rapidly to involve educational interest groups in the process of curriculum reform. Seán MacGearailt, who succeeded Ó Raifeartaigh as Secretary of the department in August 1968, convened a meeting of all the primary managerial bodies, as well as the INTO, to discuss the working document on 11 October.⁶ MacGearailt himself and Gearóid Ó Suilleabháin, Deputy Chief Inspector for primary schools, outlined the thinking behind the proposed curriculum in terms which fully illustrated the recent transformation in the department's approach to primary education: 'They stated that they wished a new spirit to permeate the working of the national school, with more flexibility in the Curriculum and Timetable'.⁷ The officials indicated that the new curriculum aimed to place children at the centre of the educational process, relegating programmes and timetables to second place. The department's approach to the revision of the curriculum met with general approval on the part of the managers and the INTO representatives. The union's delegates, Senator Brosnahan and A.J. Faulkner, were strongly supportive of the new initiative in principle, although they raised some practical reservations. They warned that improved school accommodation and adequate equipment were essential prerequisites for the implementation of the new curriculum: they were also concerned that teachers should receive full support from the department, managers and parents in implementing the proposals.⁸ But in general the INTO representatives indicated that teachers were likely to welcome a child-centred curriculum. The officials promised to consider the INTO's concerns and asked all the

³ NA DFA 2003/17/383, Talk by Tomás Ó Floinn, *Recent Developments in Education in Ireland*, p.17, June 1972

⁴ S. de Buitléar, 'Curaclam Nua le hAghaidh na Bunscoile', *Oideas*, no.3 (Autumn 1969), pp.4-12

⁵ *Ibid.*, Department of Education, *All Our Children*, pp.9-11 (Dublin, 1969)

⁶ Annual Report of the CEC 1968-69, INTO, p.35 (Dublin, 1969)

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.36

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.36

organisations concerned to submit their observations on the working document.⁹ The department took care on this occasion to inform the relevant educational interests fully of the proposed changes and to initiate a process of consultation on the reform of the primary school curriculum.

The working document was reviewed by the department in conjunction with the managerial bodies and the INTO. Lenihan addressed the INTO Congress in April 1969 to encourage widespread acceptance of the draft programme.¹⁰ The department's proposals received a broadly positive response from most educational interests. The Teachers' Study Group, which had previously called for a reform of the curriculum, welcomed the new proposals in January 1969.¹¹ Their response drew attention to certain deficiencies in the department's approach, notably the lack of co-ordination between the reform of the primary curriculum and the revision of post-primary courses, but enthusiastically endorsed the introduction of the new curriculum.¹² The INTO also warmly welcomed the proposals in January 1970, arguing that the new programme fulfilled many of the ideas first raised by the organisation in its own document, *A Plan for Education*, in 1947.¹³ The primary teachers' union gave a strong endorsement to the principles underlying the new curriculum 'on philosophical, psychological and educational grounds'.¹⁴ The CEC warned, however, that some suggestions made in the working document, especially relating to the teaching of Irish, were too ambitious and would require adaptation to local school conditions. They also emphasized that the provision of adequate accommodation and suitable teaching materials would be essential to achieve the satisfactory implementation of the new curriculum.¹⁵

Senior officials of the department swiftly reassured the union that the curriculum would be implemented gradually and at least initially on the basis of voluntary co-operation by teachers. Gearóid Ó Suilleabháin informed INTO members that there would be 'no coercion': existing national teachers who were unable or unwilling to undertake the new curriculum would not be compelled to do so.¹⁶ The officials readily

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.36

¹⁰ Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.49

¹¹ Teachers' Study Group, *Reports on the draft curriculum for primary schools*, ed. K. McDonagh, p.9 (Dublin, 1969)

¹² *Ibid.*, pp.46-47

¹³ Annual Report of the CEC 1969-70, INTO, pp.13-16 (Dublin, 1970)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.24

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.24-25

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.25

acknowledged that the new curriculum could not be implemented in the short-term in many schools. Tomás Ó Floinn, the Assistant Secretary with responsibility for primary education, publicly admitted in 1969 that the implementation of the new curriculum in the remaining one or two teacher schools was 'simply an impossibility'.¹⁷ He believed that the introduction of the new programme in a majority of national schools could be achieved only through the creation of larger school units. Ó Floinn recognised that in very small schools, where a teacher had to cope with several classes and a wide range of age groups, the only viable option was the provision of a minimum programme with minimal flexibility: 'In other words the very opposite of the position envisaged in the new curriculum'.¹⁸ The INTO also noted in their response to the working document that the curriculum was more suitable to larger school units and required classes with lower pupil-teacher ratios in large schools.¹⁹ The necessity to create the physical conditions for the implementation of the new curriculum reinforced the department's commitment to the amalgamation of small schools. The increasing success of the state's policy of amalgamation had paved the way for the introduction of a more flexible and innovative school programme. The necessity for extensive amalgamation and an improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio to facilitate the introduction of the new curriculum also shaped the gradual approach taken by the department to the implementation of the initiative.

The department's decision to introduce the new curriculum in a measured way was also dictated by other key challenges in addition to the physical constraints imposed by the prevalence of small schools. The introduction of new teaching methods and new subjects demanded more teachers and an extensive supply of modern teaching aids.²⁰ Additional facilities were also required for the introduction of new activities in the subject areas of Physical Education, Environmental Studies and Arts and Crafts.²¹ Moreover senior officials acknowledged that they faced the task of re-training the vast majority of serving national teachers, who had been trained in a very different tradition and were accustomed only to teaching the existing programme.²² The department had little choice but to initiate the new curriculum in a gradual fashion.

¹⁷ Speech by Tomás Ó Floinn, 1969, Annual Report of the CEC 1969-70, INTO, p.26 (Dublin, 1970)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Annual Report of the CEC 1969-70, INTO, p.24 (Dublin, 1970)

²⁰ NA DFA 2003/17/383, Talk by Tomás Ó Floinn, *Recent Developments in Education in Ireland*, p.17, June 1972

²¹ *Ibid.*, Annual Report of the CEC 1969-70, INTO, pp.24-26 (Dublin, 1970)

²² Annual Report of the CEC 1969-70, INTO, pp.26-27 (Dublin, 1970)

The introduction of the new programme began with the organisation of an extensive pilot project in primary schools. The department initially selected about 300 pilot schools in 1968 to implement different elements of the proposed curriculum on an experimental basis.²³ This project was soon extended and approximately 600 national schools throughout the country were operating as pilot schools for the implementation of the new programme by 1971.²⁴ The department also initiated a comprehensive re-training programme for serving national teachers. Special in-service training courses for principal teachers began in the summer of 1969 and continued for several years, involving over 4,000 principal teachers.²⁵ The department organised an extensive in-service training programme, which benefited most primary teachers between 1969 and 1972. The officials promoted organised visits by teachers to the pilot schools, which acted as demonstration centres for various aspects of the new curriculum, as an important part of the process of in-service training.²⁶ MacGearailt acted to facilitate this re-training programme in 1971, directing that a leave of absence of one half-day could be granted to teachers to visit a pilot school, subject to the consent of the manager and the local inspector.²⁷ The officials also provided a comprehensive outline of the new programme by producing handbooks on the curriculum changes for all national teachers: such a handbook had been sought by the INTO in January 1970.²⁸ Following consultation with the INTO and the managerial bodies on the draft curriculum, the department prepared two volumes of a *Teachers' Handbook* by 1971. The handbooks, which were issued to all national teachers, contained details of the new curriculum and suggested methods for implementing it.²⁹ The new curriculum became the official programme for all national schools in September 1971.

The senior officials and national school inspectors managed the planning and introduction of the new curriculum with considerable skill. They conducted successful pilot projects and finalised a new official programme within a relatively short period of

²³ S. de Buitléar, 'Curaclam Nua le hAghaidh na Bunscoile', *Oideas*, no.3 (Autumn 1969), pp.4-12, Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.49

²⁴ Annual Report of the CEC 1971-72, INTO, p.42 (Dublin, 1972)

²⁵ Annual Report of the CEC 1969-70, INTO, pp.26-27 (Dublin, 1970), Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.50

²⁶ S. de Buitléar, 'Curaclam Nua le hAghaidh na Bunscoile', *Oideas*, no.3 (Autumn 1969), pp.4-12

²⁷ Annual Report of the CEC 1971-72, INTO, p.42 (Dublin, 1972)

²⁸ Annual Report of the CEC 1969-70, INTO, p.25 (Dublin, 1970)

²⁹ Annual Report of the CEC 1971-72, INTO, p.41 (Dublin, 1972), Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.50

time and in the face of considerable difficulties.³⁰ Moreover the department succeeded in securing widespread support for the new curriculum from the educational interest groups, especially the INTO and prepared the way effectively for its introduction. The official introduction of the new curriculum in 1971 did not mean, however, that it could be fully adopted overnight by most national schools. The programme was implemented on an uneven basis due to the considerable educational and structural difficulties, which prevented the immediate adoption of the curriculum by all national schools. Pádraig Faulkner, who succeeded Lenihan as Minister for Education on 2 July 1969, publicly acknowledged that the new curriculum could only be implemented gradually. He informed the Dáil on 3 November 1971 that 'it is hoped to have it in operation in the schools generally in about five or six years'.³¹ The full implementation of the programme was delayed by the continued existence of a substantial number of very small schools in 1971, despite the rapid progress of the policy of amalgamation. The persistence of high pupil-teacher ratios in many schools, which militated strongly against the employment of innovative methods such as individual and group teaching, also obstructed the full introduction of the new curriculum.³² Moreover the programme of in-service training courses initiated by the department in 1969 was not maintained throughout the following decade due to increasing financial constraints, which brought a reduction in the funding for teacher training courses by 1975. The new curriculum was not fully implemented in many areas, due to the persistence of educational and structural problems, as well as the inadequate resources available for initiatives related to the introduction of the programme.³³ The full implementation of the new curriculum depended on a continued flow of increased resources for primary education, which was not guaranteed in the more uncertain economic climate of the 1970s.

Despite the gradual and often imperfect implementation of the initiative, the development and introduction of the new curriculum marked a far-reaching change in the state's policy approach to primary education. John Coolahan points out that the new programme itself involved a radical shift in the ideology underlying the curriculum and in the methodological approach to primary education adopted by the state.³⁴ Ó Floinn drew

³⁰ Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.53

³¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.256, col.943, 3 November 1971

³² Coolahan, 'National Schools 1960-1985', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.51

³³ *Ibid.*, pp.52-53

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.50

attention to the far-reaching character of the curriculum reform in a speech in 1972, when he emphasized that the new curriculum was designed to deliver child-centred learning rather than the subject-centred instruction provided by the traditional programme.³⁵ Certainly the child-centred approach underlying the new programme, combined with the wide range of subjects and greater flexibility given to teachers, contrasted sharply with the rigidity of the traditional fixed programme. The Assistant Secretary also made the more dubious claim that the new curriculum was in essence ‘a comprehensive type of primary education’, which was essential as a preparation for comprehensive post-primary education.³⁶ Ó Floinn was attempting to portray the developments of the previous decade as the product of coherent overall planning by the department. He therefore gave an impression that there was a high level of deliberate co-ordination between the reforms at primary and post-primary level, which was in fact often notable for its absence. There had been no real effort by the department to align the new primary curriculum with the earlier reform of the post-primary curriculum at junior cycle level.³⁷ Indeed the officials made no attempt to involve the post-primary school associations in the formulation of the new programme for national schools and there was little evidence even of much liaison between the different branches of the department itself.³⁸ There was no indication that the officials who initiated the reform of the primary school curriculum in the late 1960s were particularly concerned to prepare pupils for comprehensive post-primary education.

The development of the new curriculum was not, however, an isolated event. It took place in the context of fundamental policy changes in the state’s approach to primary education. The initiation of the new programme was inextricably linked with the department’s effective implementation of amalgamation and its efforts to improve the pupil-teacher ratio. The progress of these initiatives paved the way for the introduction of the new curriculum. Similarly the necessity to deliver other key changes to facilitate the implementation of the new programme reinforced the state’s commitment to a far-reaching reform of primary education. The introduction of the new primary school curriculum was a key element in the transformation of the state’s policy towards primary

³⁵ NA DFA 2003/17/383, Talk by Tomás Ó Floinn, *Recent Developments in Education in Ireland*, p.17, June 1972

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.18

³⁷ Teachers’ Study Group, *Reports on the draft curriculum for primary schools*, ed. K. McDonagh, pp.45-47 (Dublin, 1969)

³⁸ Coolahan, ‘National Schools 1960-1985’, in Mulcahy and O’Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.50

education. The initiative underlined that the department was willing and able to carry through far-reaching educational reforms, which marked a fundamental break with traditional practices.

Restructuring post-primary education

The department under O'Malley's successors also began to devise a new approach to the rationalisation of post-primary education, following the very limited progress achieved by the Development Branch in its efforts to promote an integrated post-primary system. Tomás Ó Floinn later commented that the department sought since January 1966 to bring about 'an organic amalgamation of resources' at post-primary level, rather than a straightforward amalgamation of schools.³⁹ But the Development Branch's efforts to provide a comprehensive curriculum at post-primary level through the pooling of resources between secondary and vocational schools proved largely unsuccessful. The process of general rationalisation envisaged by Colley's letter in January 1966 simply never materialised. The initiative for free post-primary education had an unanticipated effect on the process of rationalisation, as it ensured that many small secondary schools increased their enrolments.⁴⁰ This made secondary schools even less likely to regard amalgamation or institutionalised collaboration with any favour. The department's efforts to promote collaboration had also been effectively obstructed by the secondary managerial authorities and the ASTI. While thirty-five schools were closed or amalgamated as a result of the policy of rationalisation between 1966 and 1969, twenty-six of these schools were drawn from the vocational system.⁴¹ The impact of the state's policy on the much larger secondary system was very limited. The department therefore proposed new forms of institutional collaboration in the late 1960s.

The officials of the Development Branch fully recognised that the rationalisation of post-primary education on the basis of a voluntary pooling of resources between secondary and vocational schools was unattainable at least in the short-term. An internal working document prepared by the officials in 1967, *Notes on the Organisation of Secondary Education in a sample rural area*, commented that the difficulty of securing effective collaboration to provide a single wide-ranging curriculum between two different

³⁹ NA DFA 2003/17/383, Talk by Tomás Ó Floinn, *Recent Developments in Education in Ireland*, p.15, June 1972

⁴⁰ Barry, *Impact of an Interest Group*, in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.144

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.300

systems should not be underestimated: 'Experience indicates that only in rare cases is it fully achieved'.⁴² The Development Branch considered that its current rationalisation plans might not be achieved for up to fifteen years: the officials therefore proposed that a long-term plan for re-organisation should be combined with a short-term approach involving experiments in selected areas, which would introduce the principles of the long-term plan on a pilot basis.⁴³ This approach involved the establishment of pilot centres for special subjects, which concentrated on providing instruction in subjects requiring specialist facilities, including practical subjects, Home Economics and Science. The pilot centres were intended to make the best use of the high-cost facilities for such subjects and to provide the accommodation that would be required for future educational needs.⁴⁴ The Development Branch envisaged that such pilot centres would utilise teachers fully in their specialist fields. The internal document noted the conclusion reached by *Investment* that small post-primary schools were exceptionally wasteful of resources and so restricted in their facilities that inadequate subject choices were available to pupils.⁴⁵ The officials sought instead to plan for a school system, which fully employed a limited number of well-qualified teachers rather than one that professionally isolated a larger number of teachers in small schools.⁴⁶ They expressed the fear that the plans for post-primary centres based on minimum school sizes would create 'a system of secondary education by the lowest common denominator,' which would restrict educational opportunity and fail to use scarce resources efficiently.⁴⁷ The authors of the unpublished *Notes* argued that even the department's current proposals for the organisation of secondary education would not deliver a broad post-primary curriculum. The implications of the internal memorandum were that the department's approach to rationalisation was both insufficiently radical and unlikely to succeed in the short-term. The officials believed that a revised approach was required and presented several options to allow the creation of the pilot centres for special subjects. The proposed alternatives included the conversion of existing vocational schools into special subjects centres, the building of new centres that could later form part of a new school and the establishment

⁴² *Notes on the Organisation of Secondary Education in a Sample Rural Area*, p.2, Department of Education, 1967

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.3-4

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.13-14

⁴⁵ *Investment in Education, Part 1*, p.301

⁴⁶ *Notes on the Organisation of Secondary Education in a Sample Rural Area*, pp.5-6, Department of Education, 1967

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4

of centres to be shared by more than one school.⁴⁸ While the unpublished document attracted no public attention, the ideas outlined by the *Notes* proved very influential. The creative thinking of the officials provided the basis for reforming proposals advocated or implemented by the Department of Education in the following years.

The Development Branch's bleak assessment of the shortcomings of the rationalisation process laid the groundwork for various initiatives promoted by the department in the late 1960s. The analysis of the officials provided a compelling rationale for the adoption of a revised approach to post-primary rationalisation. The Development Branch's suggestion for the establishment of educational centres shared by more than one school found expression in the idea of common enrolment. The department proposed common enrolment in 1967 to facilitate the joint provision of comprehensive education by two or more small post-primary schools. The proposal envisaged that all the children in the schools concerned would be included on a common roll and treated as if the schools formed a single educational unit.⁴⁹ Common enrolment was intended to allow two or more schools to form a single educational centre, while maintaining independent managerial arrangements within a co-operative system: it was proposed that the principals would share responsibility for the running of the schools, while a committee of the relevant managerial interests took responsibility for educational policy.⁵⁰ Common enrolment was initially implemented only in Boyle, Co. Roscommon, in September 1968. The co-operative arrangements involved three local schools, including a vocational school and two secondary schools.⁵¹ Although there was no formal arrangement for joint ownership or management of the schools, the experiment in Boyle was successful due largely to effective collaboration between the individual principals and managers.⁵² But common enrolment was not widely accepted on a national basis as a result of the opposition of the ASTI and the Catholic managerial bodies. The Standing Committee of the ASTI did not initially object to the co-operative arrangements at Boyle, although it identified 'possible disadvantages for members if common enrolment became general'.⁵³ But the Association, which was concerned to protect the status of secondary teachers

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.14

⁴⁹ Barry, *Impact of an Interest Group*, in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.141

⁵⁰ *Roscommon Herald*, 'Federal system of Schools in Boyle: Vocational Committee Adopts Rules for Common Enrolment', 21 February 1969

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, P. Troddyn, *Editorial, Studies*, no.59, Winter 1970, pp.349-350

⁵³ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.2, 2 March 1968

within a private educational sector, soon firmly opposed common enrolment at rationalisation meetings.⁵⁴ Moreover the Executive Committee of the CCSS flatly rejected common enrolment on 21 March 1968, advising all its members 'to have nothing to do with "common entry" or "community school" proposals' from the department.⁵⁵ The Council of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools (CMCSS), which was established in June 1968 as a co-ordinating organisation for the Catholic managerial bodies, was also suspicious of the concept. A confidential report by the CMCSS on the re-organisation of post-primary education recognised that common enrolment worked smoothly in Boyle but commented that 'there is serious reason to anticipate trouble, were it applied generally'.⁵⁶ The Catholic managerial bodies feared that the spread of common enrolment could lead to the absorption of secondary schools into the vocational system or even their extinction.⁵⁷ Despite its success at Boyle, common enrolment did not provide a viable basis for an integrated system of post-primary education.

The failure of common enrolment and the limited progress towards collaboration at the rationalisation meetings made the establishment of a new type of school an increasingly attractive option. The department began to consider more formal arrangements for the integration of secondary and vocational education, which came to fruition in 1970 with the proposal for community schools. William Hyland had first proposed the idea of a community school in 1964 in the course of the *Investment in Education* study. He suggested the establishment of a single 'comprehensive or community school' providing both practical and academic education, which could replace a number of existing vocational or secondary schools.⁵⁸ The reference to community schools was not fully clarified or even included in the final report, following an objection from Hyland's colleague Pádraig Ó Nualláin, senior inspector with the Department of Education, who commented; 'Surely the plain people of Ireland are sufficiently confused as it is, without introducing more undefined terms?'⁵⁹ The establishment of comprehensive schools meant that the senior officials in 1964 had little interest in the idea of a 'community school', which was designed to serve essentially the

⁵⁴ *Official Programme for the 47th Annual Convention*, ASTI, CEC Report 1968-69, p.77 (Dublin, 1969)

⁵⁵ Minutes, Standing Committee, CCSS, 21 March 1968

⁵⁶ CMCSS, *Report of CMCSS on Amalgamation and/or Co-operation between Secondary and Vocational Schools*, pp.1-3, 1968, *Comments on Report by CMCSS*, pp.1-2, 1968

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Draft of Investment in Education report*, 1964

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

same function. But the Development Branch, with Hyland as its chief statistician, returned to the concept of the community school in the late 1960s as a possible solution to its difficulties with the rationalisation of post-primary education. The proposal in unpublished *Notes* for the establishment of new centres to be shared by more than one school, which would serve as pilot centres for the provision of special subjects, was not fully implemented.⁶⁰ But the analysis of the officials pointed the way towards the development of a new educational model, which would deliver comprehensive education.

The Development Branch certainly favoured the idea of the community school by 1968 when the senior official in charge of the Branch, Seán O'Connor, raised the concept publicly in an article, which was published in the autumn edition of *Studies*.⁶¹ O'Connor outlined the significant policy initiatives taken by reforming Ministers between 1963 and 1968. He identified the 'two fundamental purposes' of the reforms undertaken by the state as the achievement of equality of educational opportunity for all and the restructuring of the educational system to provide for the needs and aptitudes of the individual pupil.⁶² O'Connor's commentary on the objectives of successive Ministers at least since 1963 was essentially accurate although he could have also added that the government regarded the expansion of the educational system as an essential element in economic development. But the Assistant Secretary did not confine himself to a summary of the government's initiatives or policy objectives. He also offered a highly controversial view of the future, emphasizing that he alone took responsibility for his comments, which were not made on behalf of the Minister or the department.⁶³

O'Connor argued that the traditional distribution of schools in the Irish educational system, which had developed 'as a hodge podge of very small units', was no longer sustainable.⁶⁴ He warned that within a few years the Irish educational sector would not be able to meet the demands of a changing society, which would depend increasingly on the technical skills of its people. Moreover the state could not afford to waste its modest resources on expanding a network of small and inadequate post-primary schools: the viability of school units had to be judged by economic as well as educational criteria. O'Connor urged that post-primary schools should be amalgamated to create viable

⁶⁰ *Notes on the Organisation of Secondary Education in a Sample Rural Area*, p.14, Department of Education, 1967

⁶¹ S. O'Connor, 'Post-Primary Education: Now and in the Future', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.233-249

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.240

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.246-247

educational units: 'Single community schools are the rational requirement in most centres outside the large urban areas'.⁶⁵ He commented that the Development Branch had made 'no significant gains in our drive for community schools'.⁶⁶ O'Connor's comment was the first explicit statement by a senior official that the establishment of another new type of school was envisaged by the Department of Education. He did not outline the concept of the community school in detail, but indicated that it could involve the joint management of new or existing schools by the secondary and vocational authorities, as well as the closer identification of schools with their local communities.⁶⁷

O'Connor pointed out that co-education was required to achieve viable educational centres in many areas and identified the opposition of the Catholic church authorities to co-education as a major obstacle to the re-organisation of post-primary education. He accused the Bishops and religious orders of taking an entirely unreasonable approach which was detrimental to the education of individual pupils by obstructing co-education: 'It seems clear that education is being adversely affected by institutional considerations not related to education.'⁶⁸ The Assistant Secretary considered co-education to be an essential feature of the future community schools in many areas. While this analysis was certainly controversial enough, it was O'Connor's assessment of the relations between church and state in education that proved explosive. He correctly noted that clerical and religious vocations were declining and emphasized the need to give greater responsibility to lay secondary teachers.⁶⁹ O'Connor advocated the development of a partnership between the state, lay teachers and the Catholic church, in place of the traditional dominance of post-primary education by Catholic clerical and religious authorities. 'No one wants to push the religious out of education; that would be disastrous, in my opinion. But I want them in it as partners, not always as masters'.⁷⁰ Finally he argued for a constructive dialogue between the state and the churches to achieve the necessary changes in the educational system.⁷¹

O'Connor's article in *Studies* was an unprecedented public intervention by a senior official of the Department of Education. The outgoing Secretary, Dr. Ó Raifeartaigh, was strongly opposed to O'Connor's action and advised Lenihan to block

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.247

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.247

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.240

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.247

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 248-249

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.249

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.249

the publication of the article. Tony Ó Dálaigh recalled that Ó Raifeartaigh was ‘appalled’ that a civil servant was writing such a controversial piece.⁷² The Minister initially withdrew his permission for the piece due to Ó Raifeartaigh’s intervention but later allowed the Assistant Secretary to proceed with the article, following representations from O’Connor himself and Fr. Peter Troddyn, the editor of *Studies*.⁷³ Ó Raifeartaigh then sought McQuaid’s intervention to suppress the article.⁷⁴ McQuaid requested the Irish Jesuit Provincial, Fr. Cecil McGarry, to prevent the publication of the article on the basis that it would cause ‘great damage, here and abroad by its presentation of what is supposed to be the position and influence of Religious in Irish Education’.⁷⁵ But the Provincial refused to suppress O’Connor’s article, expressing confidence that the discussion in *Studies* would do more good than harm in the long-term.⁷⁶ The efforts made by Ó Raifeartaigh and McQuaid to suppress the Assistant Secretary’s contribution foreshadowed the intense controversy provoked by its publication. The content of O’Connor’s article was sensational and indeed explosive in the context of the educational system in the late 1960s, which was still heavily influenced by the Hierarchy and the religious orders. O’Connor’s open criticism of the Catholic church authorities and his call for the dilution of the power traditionally held by the Bishops and religious orders in the educational system drew an avalanche of outraged responses from the secondary school authorities and teachers. Fr. Troddyn led the way with a critical editorial on O’Connor’s contribution, disagreeing especially with the amalgamation of small post-primary schools.⁷⁷ The editor’s commentary was relatively mild, however, compared to the content of several contributions published in *Studies* in response to the article.

The Executive of the Teaching Brothers’ Association denounced not only O’Connor’s contribution but also the approach to rationalisation taken by the department. The TBA criticised the department’s plans for the re-organisation of post-primary education on the basis of larger school units as ‘unjust and educationally unsound’.⁷⁸ Moreover they asserted that O’Connor’s approach to school management amounted to ‘nationalisation by stealth’, in which the state left undisturbed the property of the

⁷² Interview with Tony Ó Dálaigh, 3 May 2002

⁷³ The Irish Jesuit Archives, CM/LEES/357 (23), Fr. P. Troddyn to S. O’Connor, 8 August 1968

⁷⁴ CM/LEES/357 (28-29), Note by Fr. Troddyn, *Distribution of Mr. Seán O’Connor’s article ‘Post-Primary Education: Now and in the Future’*, 14 August 1968

⁷⁵ The Irish Jesuit Archives, Admin/3/86(1), McQuaid to Fr. C. McGarry, 13 August 1968

⁷⁶ Admin/3/86(1), Fr. McGarry to McQuaid, 17 August 1968

⁷⁷ Fr. Troddyn, ‘Post-Primary Education’, *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.226-232

⁷⁸ The Executive of the TBA, ‘Teaching Brothers’, *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.274-283

religious orders but took over the management of the schools which they had established.⁷⁹ The TBA bluntly warned that they intended to preserve their rights in the face of encroachment by the department. 'We know our rights. We intend to stand by them.'⁸⁰ O'Connor's article was also fiercely criticised by contributors representing the secondary teachers and University College Dublin. Denis Buckley of the ASTI disputed the accuracy of O'Connor's comments about the limited role of lay secondary teachers and claimed that the article involved 'a sinister denigrating' of the role of Catholic religious orders in education.⁸¹ He believed that politicians and civil servants were seeking to dominate the educational system and exclude the religious communities, as the state had done in France during the Third Republic.⁸² Denis Donoghue, a senior member of the academic staff in UCD, made a vitriolic attack on O'Connor and the Department of Education. He argued that the Assistant Secretary did not understand the aims of education while the department as a whole was incompetent and autocratic: 'It is not pleasant to see so much power entrusted to mediocre men'.⁸³ Many of the contributors to *Studies* saw O'Connor's vision of the future as a nightmare scenario, which did not merely represent his personal viewpoint but the unacknowledged programme of the department. The explosion of outrage provoked by O'Connor's article was not simply a negative reaction to the content of his contribution. The force of the hostile response reflected the considerable resentment among most established educational interests at the department's pro-active approach to educational reform since the early 1960s. The debate in *Studies* underlined that influential elements in the educational system, notably the male teaching orders and the ASTI, were profoundly suspicious of the department and hostile to its approach for the reform of post-primary education.

The reaction to O'Connor's intervention was by no means entirely unfavourable. The secretary of the Church of Ireland Board of Education, Kenneth Milne, welcomed the article for initiating a valuable debate on the future of education.⁸⁴ Milne pointed out that Protestant schools had accepted the principle of co-education, while the Protestant SEC fully agreed with the department on the necessity for rationalisation and was actively seeking the amalgamation of many Protestant schools.⁸⁵ Milne's contribution

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.282-283

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.281

⁸¹ D. Buckley, 'Secondary Teacher', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.296-304

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ D. Donoghue, 'University Professor', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.284-288

⁸⁴ K. Milne, 'A Church of Ireland View', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.261-269

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

underlined the significant divergence between the broadly favourable approach of the Protestant educational authorities towards rationalisation and the more suspicious attitude of the Catholic managerial bodies. O'Connor's vision of the future was also warmly welcomed by Charles McCarthy of the VTA, who congratulated O'Connor for breaking through the veil of anonymity which usually concealed the views of senior officials. McCarthy firmly supported the creation of 'a new sense of partnership' between the state and the church authorities in education.⁸⁶ The VTA was broadly supportive of the state's policy of rationalisation and O'Connor enjoyed constructive relations with the association's leadership, as he was known to be sympathetic to vocational education.⁸⁷

While O'Connor's vision of the future was expressed as a personal viewpoint, there was little doubt that it reflected the position of the department on several key issues. It is true that other senior officials did not support O'Connor's open criticism of the power of the church authorities. But his contribution reflected the department's dissatisfaction with the limited success of its efforts to restructure post-primary education and illustrated the frustration of the officials with the Catholic Church's opposition to co-education. The storm of controversy ignited by O'Connor's contribution focused especially on his comments about church-state relations and the role of religious orders in school management, but his general reference to the need for community schools provided the most significant indicator of the state's future policy. O'Connor's article underlined that the department was considering favourably a new form of advanced co-operation in post-primary education, based on the concept of the community school.

The department's concern to achieve new forms of institutional collaboration at post-primary level was influenced by its plans for the revision of the Leaving Certificate examination. The revision of the Leaving Certificate courses was initiated by the department in January 1967, when a committee was established to conduct a re-appraisal of the structure of the Leaving Certificate course and examination.⁸⁸ The committee, which was chaired by O'Connor, was composed of representatives of the second-level managerial bodies and teaching associations, as well as the universities. The committee's report was issued to the various educational bodies in October 1967 and O'Malley publicly accepted its key recommendations even before the post-primary educational

⁸⁶ C. McCarthy, 'Vocational Teachers', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.270-273

⁸⁷ *Sunday Press*, 'The role of vocational schools', 16 January 1966, J. Logan, 'The Making of a Modern Union: the Vocational Teachers' Association 1954-1973', in Logan (ed.), *Teachers' Union: the TUI and its forerunners 1899-1994*, p.178 (Dublin, 1999)

⁸⁸ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.189

associations had the opportunity to respond to the report.⁸⁹ The committee proposed a radical reform of the structure of the Leaving Certificate. They envisaged an extension of the traditional curriculum to incorporate a range of practical and technical subjects in the Leaving Certificate for the first time, with the intention of giving pupils a wide choice of subject options. The committee recommended the introduction of subject grouping, which would require pupils to concentrate their efforts on a particular field of related subjects: they outlined a system of five broad subject groups, based on languages, science, commerce, social studies and technical subjects.⁹⁰ It was also proposed to introduce grading of results for all public examinations in place of the traditional classification of Honours, Pass or Fail.⁹¹ The report envisaged the eventual introduction of a three-year Leaving Certificate course, but concluded that in the short-term the two-year course should be retained, with the establishment of an additional course of one year leading to an Advanced Certificate.⁹² The committee also recommended the introduction of oral tests in all modern languages and practical tests in science, technical and other appropriate subjects.⁹³ The proposals for the wide-ranging reform of the Leaving Certificate reflected the department's concern to expand the scope of the senior cycle programme, especially through the introduction of technical and commercial subjects, and to encourage a limited degree of specialisation at this level.⁹⁴ The senior officials aimed to transform the restricted curriculum pursued by most secondary schools, which was heavily influenced by the matriculation requirements of the universities and gave little attention to science or technical subjects.⁹⁵ Following O'Malley's death Brian Lenihan vigorously pursued the committee's recommendations for reform and brought the proposals before the government in April 1968. The Cabinet approved the proposals for the reform of the Leaving Certificate and the introduction of graded results on 23 April.⁹⁶ The Minister proposed to introduce subject grouping on a voluntary basis in 1969

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.190

⁹⁰ *Structure of the Leaving Certificate Course and Examination, Summary of the conclusion reached on the various items of the agenda by the Committee set up to examine the matter*, pp.2-5, Department of Education, 1967

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.8

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.3

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.7

⁹⁴ S. O'Connor, 'Post-Primary Education: Now and in the Future', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), p.235

⁹⁵ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.189

⁹⁶ NA 99/5/2, G.C. 12/103, Cabinet Minutes, p.3, 23 April 1968

and to initiate the additional course for the Advanced Certificate from 1971.⁹⁷ The department envisaged that grouping would become compulsory at Leaving Certificate level in 1972.⁹⁸ The proposals involved the most radical revision of the Leaving Certificate since its introduction in 1924.

But a key element of the proposed changes met with virtually unanimous opposition from the secondary school associations. The introduction of subject grouping was rejected in 1968 by all the secondary school managerial bodies and by the representatives of the NUI.⁹⁹ The ASTI, which had initially expressed willingness to consider the introduction of grouping, soon added its voice to the opposition on the basis that grouping was inextricably linked to the department's undesirable plans for the rationalisation of post-primary education. The Central Executive Committee of the ASTI resolved on 18 January 1969 to oppose 'the inflexible grouping of subjects at Leaving Cert. as educationally questionable and socially undesirable.'¹⁰⁰ The concept of grouping received vocal support only from the Executive Committee of the VTA, which endorsed the proposed revision of the Leaving Certificate on 16 April 1968.¹⁰¹ The VTA firmly supported grouping as the only means to provide a broad, integrated curriculum to all students on a national basis. When officials of the department indicated in June 1969 that grouping might well be dropped due to the opposition of the secondary school authorities, the VTA strongly urged the department to stand firmly behind its original proposal: as a compromise the Minister promised to introduce grouping on a voluntary basis.¹⁰² Lenihan retreated from the proposal for compulsory grouping in the face of the intense opposition of the secondary school authorities. Circular M.43/69, which was issued by MacGearailt in June 1969, confirmed that the most controversial element of the department's plan for the reform of the Leaving Certificate would not be implemented. The circular stated that following further consultation with educational interests, the Minister had decided to withdraw the proposal for compulsory grouping.¹⁰³ MacGearailt indicated that post-primary schools could still undertake subject grouping on a voluntary basis.¹⁰⁴ The widespread suspicion about the department's intentions on the part of the

⁹⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol.236, col.1787, 31 October 1968, Department of Education, *All Our Children*, pp.38-41 (Dublin, 1969)

⁹⁸ Circular 43/69, Department of Education, June 1969

⁹⁹ The Executive of the TBA, 'Teaching Brothers', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.274-283

¹⁰⁰ Minutes, CEC, ASTI, p.4, 18 January 1969

¹⁰¹ VTA, General Secretary's Report 1968-69, Annual Congress 1969, p.25 (Dublin, 1969)

¹⁰² VTA, General Secretary's Report 1969-70, Annual Congress 1970, p.21 (Dublin, 1970)

¹⁰³ Circular M43/69, Department of Education, June 1969

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

secondary school associations led not only to the withdrawal of grouping but to a significant scaling back of the proposed reform of the Leaving Certificate. The proposal for the Advanced Certificate was never implemented. Moreover the Secretary informed the school managers in May 1969 that the department did not intend to require the organisation of oral or practical tests for the new Leaving Certificate subjects in the short-term.¹⁰⁵ The department quietly dropped the most ambitious proposals for the reform of the structure of senior cycle courses.

This did not mean, however, that the reform of the Leaving Certificate itself was abandoned. Lenihan and the senior officials proceeded with the revision of the examination and the introduction of new subjects, giving priority to more easily achievable objectives than the imposition of grouping. Lenihan announced on 31 October 1968 that the traditional classification of results would be replaced with a new system of grading for all public examinations.¹⁰⁶ The grading of results for the Leaving and Intermediate Certificate was introduced in 1969: it was one of the few areas where the committee on the Leaving Certificate exerted a lasting influence on the public examinations system. More significantly, the department succeeded in implementing a wide-ranging revision of the Leaving Certificate curriculum. The examination programme was extended from 1969 to include a wide range of technical and practical subjects.¹⁰⁷ MacGearailt outlined to the schools in June 1969 the broad programme of subjects that could be taken by pupils for the new Leaving Certificate.¹⁰⁸ The new courses added to the curriculum at the instigation of the department included commercial subjects such as Accounting, Business Organisation, Economics and Economic History. New technical subjects were also incorporated in the revised programme, including Mechanics, Applied Physics, Building Materials Process and Technical Drawing.¹⁰⁹ The syllabuses for all Leaving Certificate subjects were redrafted and the department issued the revised syllabuses to the schools in the summer of 1969.¹¹⁰ The academic programme for the revised Leaving Certificate came into effect in 1969-70 and the first common

¹⁰⁵ Circular M39/69, Department of Education, May 1969

¹⁰⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol.236, col.1787, 31 October 1968

¹⁰⁷ NA DFA 2003/17/383, Talk by Tomás Ó Floinn, *Recent Developments in Education in Ireland*, p.13, June 1972

¹⁰⁸ Circular M43/69, Department of Education, June 1969

¹⁰⁹ Circular M39/69, Department of Education, May 1969, VTA, General Secretary's Report 1969-70, *Appendix V: Memorandum on New Leaving Certificate Report for Annual Congress 1970*, p.32 (Dublin, 1970)

¹¹⁰ Circular M39/69, Department of Education, May 1969, Circular M43/69, Department of Education, June 1969

examination for both secondary and vocational pupils was held in 1971.¹¹¹ While the revision of the senior cycle programme was less radical than the department had initially planned, it was nonetheless a far-reaching and ambitious educational reform. The revision of the Leaving Certificate greatly expanded the subject options potentially available for pupils, although it could not force secondary schools to provide practical subjects. The common examination also placed vocational schools formally on an equal footing with secondary schools at Leaving Certificate level.¹¹² The curriculum reform enabled vocational schools to provide senior cycle courses and prepare their pupils for the Leaving Certificate for the first time. While this did not guarantee parity of esteem for the vocational sector, it was certainly an important educational advance.

The wide-ranging revision of the Leaving Certificate programme reinforced the department's commitment to the rationalisation of post-primary education in the short-term. Close collaboration between secondary and vocational schools appeared a logical imperative to ensure that the wider array of subjects available at Leaving Certificate level were provided to all pupils. The Development Branch therefore devised a new proposal for the integration of the two systems of post-primary education, which was based on the concept of the community school. The department's revised approach envisaged that the integration of post-primary education would be achieved through the joint management and operation of post-primary schools by the secondary and vocational authorities. Pádraig Faulkner initially sought the agreement of the government on 28 October 1969 for the drafting of legislation, which would enable the VECs to collaborate with other authorities in the establishment and management of post-primary schools.¹¹³ The Minister also intended to provide for the reconstitution of the VEC in the city of Limerick, which had been dissolved by O'Malley in 1967.¹¹⁴ But the main concern of the senior officials was certainly to enable the VECs to participate in joint arrangements for the operation of post-primary schools with other educational interests. The existing legislation did not allow the VECs to co-operate with other educational authorities in the establishment and management of post-primary schools. The proposal drafted by the department therefore emphasized the need for the introduction of amending legislation to enable 'jointly operated post-primary schools to be established in areas where separate secondary and

¹¹¹ NA DFA 2003/17/383, Talk by Tomás Ó Floinn, *Recent Developments in Education in Ireland*, p.13, June 1972

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ NA D/T 2000/6/324, S.17238, F.3/20/12, *Memorandum to the Government, Amendment of the Vocational Education Acts 1930-62*, p.3, 28 October 1969

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

vocational schools would not be viable'.¹¹⁵ The department clearly intended that the powers of the VECs should be extended to facilitate the creation of a new type of school, although the idea of the community school was not explicitly mentioned.

The Cabinet authorised Faulkner to draft a Bill for the amendment of the existing legislation on 4 November 1969.¹¹⁶ The draft legislation, which was submitted by Faulkner to the government on 20 April 1970, provided for 'co-operation by vocational education committees with certain other schools regarding continuation and technical education'.¹¹⁷ This provision enabled the VECs to establish and maintain schools in collaboration with other educational authorities, subject to the consent of the Minister for Education.¹¹⁸ The draft legislation also allowed the Minister to reconstitute the membership of a VEC at any time not later than the end of the second election year after the dissolution of the committee.¹¹⁹ This complex formulation, which was adopted at the request of Kevin Boland, Minister for Local Government, allowed Faulkner to reconstitute the VEC for the city of Limerick.¹²⁰ The Cabinet approved the Vocational Education (Amendment) Bill on 26 May 1970.¹²¹ Faulkner moved rapidly to secure parliamentary approval for the Bill, which passed all stages in the Oireachtas by 31 July 1970.¹²² The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act, 1970, received little public attention but was an essential element of the department's strategy for the integration of post-primary education. The amending legislation gave the VECs the necessary powers to engage in joint management and ownership of post-primary schools with the secondary school authorities.¹²³ It removed formal obstacles to institutional collaboration and gave legal support to the government's policy of breaking down the traditional barriers between secondary and vocational education. Perhaps most significantly, the new Act provided the legislative basis for the creation of community schools.

The department developed definite proposals for community schools by the autumn of 1970, when Faulkner began negotiations with the Catholic Hierarchy on the establishment of a new type of post-primary school. The Minister sent a detailed proposal

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.1-6

¹¹⁶ NA D/T 2000/6/324, Ó Nualláin to Ó Dálaigh, 4 November 1969

¹¹⁷ NA D/T 2001/6/248, S.17238, F.3/20/12, *Memorandum for the Government, Vocational Education (Amendment) Bill 1970, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.1, 20 April 1970

¹¹⁸ NA D/T 2001/6/248, S.17238, *Vocational Education (Amendment) Bill, 1970*

¹¹⁹ F.3/20/12, *Memorandum for the Government, Vocational Education (Amendment) Bill 1970, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.1, 20 April 1970

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ NA 2001/5/1, G.C.13/56, Cabinet Minutes, 26 May 1970, pp.1-2

¹²² NA D/T 2001/6/248, S.17238, Ó Nualláin to M. Ó Flathartaigh, 31 July 1970

¹²³ *The Irish Times*, 'Far Reaching Post-Primary Re-organisation Outlined', 12 November 1970

entitled 'Community School' to the Hierarchy on 26 October 1970.¹²⁴ While the proposal took the form of a working document and was unsigned, it fully outlined the department's revised approach to the integration of post-primary education. This approach involved the creation of a new institutional arrangement involving joint management of schools by the secondary school authorities and the VECs. The proposed community schools would be governed by a board of management composed of representatives of the secondary school managers and the local VEC, with an independent chairman, who might be the Bishop of the diocese or another agreed nominee.¹²⁵ The document emphasized that the creation of community schools flowed directly from the government's policy for the reform and expansion of post-primary education. The key elements of the policy included 'the creation of a unified post-primary system of education' and the provision of free post-primary education for all children irrespective of ability and without the use of selection.¹²⁶ The policy also demanded the establishment of facilities for comprehensive education in all areas of the country and the elimination of duplication in providing facilities or teachers.¹²⁷ The officials of the Development Branch hoped that the proposed community schools would provide a viable institutional framework for the full establishment of comprehensive education on a national basis. The officials aimed to provide comprehensive education through a new type of school, which would have formal arrangements for joint management acceptable to the secondary and vocational school authorities. The proposal was designed to resolve the central problem confronting the Development Branch since its foundation, namely the development of an integrated system of post-primary education within a fragmented second-level sector, in which influential private interests jealously guarded their autonomy. The department sought to devise a new institutional model, which would be more widely acceptable to the secondary and vocational authorities than its previous initiatives for collaboration.

The proposal envisaged that community schools would be formed as a result of the amalgamation of secondary and vocational schools or through the establishment of single schools in city areas instead of separate secondary and vocational schools.¹²⁸ The department considered that the optimum size for post-primary school units was about

¹²⁴ *The Irish Times*, 'Unified System for Post-Primary Education Planned: Department's working document under study by the Hierarchy', 12 November 1970

¹²⁵ *The Irish Times*, 'Community schools result of unitary policy', 12 November 1970

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, Fr. Troddyn, Editorial, 'Community School', *Studies*, vol.59, no.4 (Winter 1970), pp.341-344

¹²⁷ Fr. Troddyn, Editorial, 'Community School', *Studies*, vol.59, no.4 (Winter 1970), pp.341-344

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

800 pupils and aimed to establish schools, which would accommodate between 400 and 800 pupils.¹²⁹ The document proposed that the state would provide the full capital costs for the establishment of the new schools although there would be an agreed local contribution, which was intended to be nominal. The state would also finance the current costs of the schools, by funding fully the costs incurred by the board of management, within the constraints of a budget agreed between the board and the department.¹³⁰ The new schools would provide a broad range of post-primary courses leading to the Intermediate Certificate, Group Certificate and Leaving Certificate. It was also envisaged that the community school would provide adult education facilities for the local area. The document emphasized that education was a life-long process, looking forward to a substantial development of adult education in the 1970s: 'On another level there is growing acceptance throughout the world that education is a life-long process and that second chance education must be provided at all levels'.¹³¹ The senior officials intended that community schools should meet a variety of requirements, especially with regard to adult education, in addition to their basic function of providing a comprehensive post-primary education. The proposal also commented that 'there is in all countries a growing community consciousness', leading to a demand for school facilities to be made available to voluntary organisations and the local community.¹³² The community school was intended to meet this demand by providing facilities for voluntary organisations subject to reasonable safeguards.¹³³ The officials hoped that the community school would develop a distinctive identity as a centre of community activity. The aspects of the department's plan concerning adult education and community-based activities were evidently influenced by developments in education internationally. *The Irish Times* suggested plausibly that the officials were drawing inspiration from the practice of comprehensive schools in Britain and the USA.¹³⁴ Certainly it was intended that the community schools would share significant features of the comprehensive model in Ireland and abroad, but the proposal was clearly shaped by the demands of the Irish educational sector. The department was proposing a new type of school, which would provide comprehensive education but would safeguard the position of established educational interests through its distinctive management structure.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *The Irish Times*, 'Far Reaching Post-Primary Re-organisation Outlined', 12 November 1970

The Minister issued the proposal only to the Catholic Hierarchy initially, although it was subsequently circulated to the secondary managerial authorities and the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA).¹³⁵ Faulkner's caution did not prevent the rapid leak of the document to a national newspaper. The department's proposal received extensive coverage in *The Irish Times* on 12 November 1970.¹³⁶ The proposal for community schools was accurately identified by John Horgan and Michael Heney as 'the logical culmination' of the policy for the restructuring of post-primary education launched by Hillery in 1963.¹³⁷ The journalists correctly perceived the significance of the initiative, describing the document as 'the most important single policy statement by the Department' since the decision to establish comprehensive schools.¹³⁸ The Minister insisted in the Dáil on 18 November that the proposal was merely a working document, which had been sent to the Hierarchy as a prelude to a process of general consultation.¹³⁹ But it was evident that the department had produced a new policy initiative, which had the potential to reshape the second-level sector. A senior representative of the Catholic managerial authorities recognised the profound implications of the proposal in his anonymous comment to *The Irish Times*: 'He said that while the Department might claim it was merely a working document, it did not read like that'.¹⁴⁰ The department was clearly seeking an advanced form of integration between the secondary and vocational systems in various areas. The premature publication of the document revealed that the establishment of community schools had become an integral part of the policy approach adopted by the state to secure an integrated system of post-primary education.

The Minister sought to secure the support of the Catholic Bishops for the proposal before consulting with other educational interests. Faulkner was following a tried and tested strategy, which had worked for several of his predecessors, but on this occasion the premature publication of the document on community schools upset his plans. Various interests which were not consulted at all initially, notably the IVEA and vocational teachers, were alarmed with the content of the proposal itself and affronted by Faulkner's tactics in promoting it.¹⁴¹ The Hierarchy itself reacted cautiously to the

¹³⁵ Hyland and Milne (eds.), *Irish Educational Documents*, vol. 2, p.267

¹³⁶ *The Irish Times*, "'Unified' System of Post-Primary Education Planned: Department's working document under study by the Hierarchy", 12 November 1970

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.249, col.1613-1616, 18 November 1970

¹⁴⁰ *The Irish Times*, "'Unified' System of Post-Primary Education Planned: Department's working document under study by the Hierarchy", 12 November 1970

¹⁴¹ IVEA, Congress Report 1971, pp.44-55 (IVEA, 1971)

initiative, seeking a discussion with the Minister to clarify the implications of the working paper. Faulkner, accompanied by MacGearailt, O'Connor and Patrick Moloney, met the Hierarchy's representatives and members of the CMCSS on 10 December 1970 to discuss the proposal for community schools.¹⁴² The Minister made the case for community schools on educational and financial grounds. A broad curriculum and a wide choice of subjects could not be delivered in many small secondary schools, which confined their pupils to academic subjects and sometimes to the Pass Leaving Certificate course. Moreover the Minister was faced the problem of 'providing the best educational facilities at the most economical rate'.¹⁴³ Faulkner told the Bishops and managers that a fiscally responsible solution had to be found to the acute educational needs of many small rural towns, such as Ardee. The department had identified twenty-five rural centres throughout the country, where post-primary educational needs had to be met as a matter of urgency.¹⁴⁴ The officials considered that the introduction of community schools would meet essential educational needs in an economical way.

The Bishops and the Catholic managerial representatives sought clarification on a series of issues relating to the proposal, including the likely size of the community schools, the prospect of amalgamation for existing schools and the nature of the management structure.¹⁴⁵ Faulkner and the senior officials defended the proposal for a minimum school unit containing 400 to 800 pupils, which had been recommended by the Advisory Councils on Post-Primary Education in Dublin and Cork. The department considered that such a school unit was necessary to provide a minimum level of educational facilities and a reasonable number of highly qualified specialist teachers.¹⁴⁶ The Minister clarified that amalgamation would occur mainly where all schools in an area required replacement and would be replaced by a single community school. He pledged that amalgamation would take place on a voluntary basis, but warned that if a school refused to amalgamate then the department would have to review the payment of building grants to that school. The department was no longer willing to finance the rebuilding or extension of three small schools in a rural town when a single community

¹⁴² DDA, AB8/B/XV/b/08, *McQuaid Papers*, Minutes of the Irish Hierarchy, *Agreed summary report of meeting with the Department of Education*, p.1, 10 December 1970

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2, *Appendix II, Growth Centres which the Department regards as having some urgency: Enrolment figures 1969-70*

¹⁴⁵ Minutes of the Irish Hierarchy, *Agreed summary report of meeting with the Department of Education*, pp.2-3, 10 December 1970

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

school offered a viable solution.¹⁴⁷ Faulkner also commented bluntly that while it would be theoretically possible for a school to opt out of a community school arrangement subsequently, 'in practice it would be almost impossible'.¹⁴⁸ The Minister was conciliatory, however, in dealing with the question of management. He assured the Hierarchy that the denominational character of the new schools would be guaranteed. He aimed to secure agreement with the Bishops and other educational interests on a satisfactory management structure.¹⁴⁹ The department was not seeking any representation on the board of management for community schools, although they were represented on the board of management for comprehensive schools. Instead the officials envisaged that if three traditional schools formed a community school, the board for the community schools could be composed of two members drawn from each of the existing schools.¹⁵⁰ The official delegation also gave an assurance that the local VEC would have no control over the management of the school or particularly the appointment of teachers.¹⁵¹ Faulkner and the senior officials were most concerned to secure the support of the Catholic Hierarchy and the CMCSS for the plan, to the extent that they were willing to risk offending the vocational education authorities.

The Minister also sought to play down the significance of the proposal, suggesting that the department envisaged the establishment of community schools only in specific areas initially. He indicated that the document was prepared in the context of the urgent educational needs in Ardee and the other rural centres, remarking that 'as of now he was interested only in the smaller areas.'¹⁵² MacGearailt too commented that the department was currently planning only for the provision of community schools in small centres where the situation was 'critical'.¹⁵³ This line of argument was disingenuous, as the department was proposing the community school as a model for the re-organisation of post-primary education throughout the country. The importance of community schools to the state's approach was underlined when Faulkner declined to give any assurance that the document was drawn up to deal with specific cases only.¹⁵⁴ The CMCSS representatives asked the Minister to clarify publicly that the proposal for community

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, McCarthy, *Decade of Upheaval*, p.215

¹⁴⁸ Minutes of the Irish Hierarchy, *Agreed summary report of meeting with the Department of Education*, p.3, 10 December 1970

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.4

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.2-3

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.3

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4

schools did not involve an overall policy affecting the entire country. Faulkner flatly refused to do so on the flimsy basis that further comment from him would only be misconstrued, following ‘so much uninformed comment already’ as a result of the article in *The Irish Times*.¹⁵⁵ It is much more likely that the journalists had correctly construed the proposal as a far-reaching policy initiative with profound implications for the future of Irish education. There is no doubt that Faulkner and the senior officials regarded community schools as a key element of the state’s policy for the expansion of the educational system on a national basis. They sought to minimise the importance of the initiative only because it had been published prematurely, before the Minister could reach any agreement with the Catholic Hierarchy.

The Hierarchy and the Catholic managers agreed to consider the proposal and continue negotiations with the Minister in due course. A statement issued by the CMCSS after the meeting on 10 December referred to their ‘exploratory discussion’ with the Minister and his officials on community schools.¹⁵⁶ The representatives of the VECs and the vocational teachers were, however, deeply discontented with Faulkner’s approach, not least because of the complete absence of consultation with them initially. The Minister sought the views of the IVEA on the document only in January 1971, over two months after its publication in *The Irish Times*.¹⁵⁷ The Standing Council of the IVEA, which met Faulkner on 19 February 1971, assured the Minister that they favoured his policy in principle, but raised severe reservations about key elements of the proposal. They expressed ‘qualified agreement’ with the general outline of the state’s policy for post-primary education, as enunciated by the document, but firmly opposed the proposed system of administration for the community schools.¹⁵⁸ The IVEA representatives told Faulkner that the creation of independent boards of management to control the schools, which would be financed directly by the department, was unacceptable to the VECs. They emphasized the necessity for intermediate management committees, including local elected representatives, between the department and the schools: the IVEA urged that such committees should be responsible for the appointment of teachers and should have general control over new school buildings.¹⁵⁹ They warned the Minister against the

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.4

¹⁵⁷ IVEA, Congress Report 1971, p.44 (IVEA, 1971)

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ IVEA, *Observations on the Working Paper entitled Community Schools put before representatives of the Association by the Minister for Education on 14th January 1971*, pp.1-4

imposition of a system of administration, which would be unaccountable to the public and dominated by the officials in close collaboration with the Catholic Bishops:

‘It would be a tragedy if the important decisions concerning post-primary education in future were to be taken behind closed doors by people with whom the public will feel no close identification and over whom they will have no control.’¹⁶⁰

The IVEA representatives feared that the proposal would mean the absorption of the vocational schools into the new system and the complete elimination of the VECs.

The concerns of the vocational education authorities were fully shared by the VTA. The Association’s Executive acknowledged that effective educational development in certain areas might well require the establishment of community schools, but strongly criticised the proposed management structure for the new schools.¹⁶¹ Charles McCarthy communicated the union’s view to Faulkner on 18 December 1970, objecting to the allocation of full managerial authority to the board of the school, especially as the department had suggested that the local Catholic Bishop might act as chairman of the board.¹⁶² The VTA was entirely opposed to such an arrangement, which would effectively turn vocational teachers into employees of the relevant Bishop. McCarthy urged instead that the local community itself should manage a new community school.¹⁶³ The VTA and the vocational educational authorities were broadly supportive of the concept of the community school, but were seriously alarmed by the system of administration for the new schools envisaged by the department.

The Minister, however, essentially ignored the concerns expressed by the IVEA and the vocational teachers. The Episcopal Commission for Post-Primary Education and the CMCSS agreed in March 1971 that any community school resulting from the amalgamation of existing schools should be a Catholic school and aimed to have the trustees for the school appointed by the local Bishop.¹⁶⁴ Moreover they considered that at least two-thirds of the board of management in any new community school should be nominated by the trustees, leaving one-third to be appointed by the local VEC: the Commission emphasized that they would attempt ‘to have the 4/2 ratio apply in all cases’, regardless of the number of Catholic secondary schools involved in the

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.4

¹⁶¹ VTA, General Secretary’s Report 1970-71, Annual Congress 1971, pp.38-39 (Dublin, 1971)

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, C. McCarthy to P. Faulkner, 18 December 1970

¹⁶³ McCarthy to Faulkner, 18 December 1970

¹⁶⁴ CMCSS, Minute of meeting of the Council with the Episcopal Commission, pp.1-2, 18 March 1971

establishment of the community school.¹⁶⁵ Faulkner sought to accommodate fully the concerns of the Bishops. He issued a press statement on 13 May 1971, which clarified the management structure for the community schools. The Minister proposed that the board of management for each school would consist of six members, including four nominees of the secondary school authorities concerned and two representatives of the local VEC.¹⁶⁶ He envisaged that two of the representatives nominated by the secondary school authorities would be parents of children in the school. Faulkner also stipulated that the school site and building would be vested in three trustees nominated by the relevant Catholic Bishop: one of these trustees would be appointed from a list of nominees supplied by the local VEC.¹⁶⁷ The proposed management structure clearly favoured the Catholic Church and placed the VECs at a disadvantage in the restructuring of post-primary education. The Minister's approach was designed to secure the support of the Catholic Hierarchy by giving majority representation to secondary managerial interests within the governing structures of the community schools.¹⁶⁸ But it was soon apparent that in his overriding concern to win the support of the Catholic Bishops and managerial authorities for community schools, Faulkner had ignited a firestorm of controversy.

The IVEA unanimously rejected the Minister's proposals at its annual Congress between 31 May and 3 June 1971.¹⁶⁹ The representative body for the VECs did not oppose the idea of the community school, which was praised by most VEC members at the congress. But a series of delegates from VECs around the country denounced the Minister's approach as undemocratic, dictatorial, sectarian and disastrous for the vocational system.¹⁷⁰ The IVEA emphatically rejected the Minister's current proposals for the establishment of community schools, 'with particular reference to the management structure'.¹⁷¹ The VTA also opposed Faulkner's approach at a special congress on 4 June 1971, urging the government to produce a White Paper before proceeding with such fundamental changes in the post-primary sector. They argued that the new schools should reflect the best of both educational traditions and provide for equal representation in their administrative structures for secondary school and

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ CMCSS, *Statement issued by the Government Information Bureau on behalf of the Minister for Education*, 13 May 1971

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, *Dáil Debates*, vol.253, col.1964-65, 19 May 1971

¹⁶⁸ Barry, *Impact of an Interest Group*, in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.146

¹⁶⁹ IVEA, *Congress Report 1971*, p.55 (IVEA, 1971)

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

vocational interests.¹⁷² The opposition to the Minister's latest initiative was by no means restricted to the representatives of vocational education. Faulkner's proposals were also criticised by representatives of the Church of Ireland and by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.¹⁷³ The Church of Ireland Board of Education warned the Minister in June 1971 that they were 'gravely disturbed' by various aspects of his proposals.¹⁷⁴ Several prominent opposition TDs, including Garret FitzGerald of Fine Gael and Barry Desmond of the Labour Party, attacked the proposed management arrangements as sectarian.¹⁷⁵ The many critics of the Minister's approach expressed the well-founded suspicion that Faulkner's proposals would create a single denominational system of public education in the state, which would be dominated by the Catholic Bishops.¹⁷⁶

The Minister soon modified his initial proposals in the face of severe pressure from various educational interests and opposition political parties. Faulkner announced on 30 July 1971 that the first community schools would be established in Tallaght and Blanchardstown: he also indicated that two of the secondary school representatives on the boards of management would be elected by the parents of pupils attending the new schools, after each school had been in operation for three years.¹⁷⁷ While these concessions applied initially only to the two schools in Co. Dublin, Faulkner's statement signalled the beginning of a more general reassessment.¹⁷⁸ The Minister clarified his revised proposals in February 1972, announcing that the boards of management would consist of two representatives nominated by the VECs and the secondary school authorities, as well as two elected representatives of the parents.¹⁷⁹ The parents would elect their own representatives in all community schools with the temporary exception of the schools in Blanchardstown and Tallaght, on the basis that there were initially too few parents to select representatives in these schools.¹⁸⁰ Faulkner also announced that the Minister rather than the Catholic Bishop would appoint the school trustees.¹⁸¹ But the

¹⁷² J. Logan, 'The Making of a Modern Union: the Vocational Teachers' Association 1954-1973', in Logan (ed.), *Teachers' Union: the TUI and its forerunners 1899-1994*, p.194 (Dublin, 1999)

¹⁷³ *The Church of Ireland of Ireland Gazette*, 'Archbishop's Statement on Community and Vocational Schools', 21 May 1971, Hyland and Milne (eds.), *Irish Educational Documents*, vol.2, p.268

¹⁷⁴ *Journal of the 34th General Synod of the Church of Ireland*, ed. J.L.B. Deane, p.104 (Dublin, 1972)

¹⁷⁵ *The Irish Times*, 'Faulkner says there is no reversal of policy on community schools', 20 May 1971

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, McCarthy, *Decade of Upheaval*, p.215

¹⁷⁷ *The Irish Times*, 'Changes in Faulkner's Schools Plan: Parents to have more influence in two areas', 31 July 1971

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol.258, col.2071-2073, 17 February 1972, J. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland*, p.392

¹⁸⁰ *Dáil Debates*, vol.258, col.2071-2073, 17 February 1972

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, col.2116

controversy over the management and ownership of the community schools was not fully resolved and it continued well beyond Faulkner's term as Minister for Education. Indeed the disagreements between the various educational interests over the control of the new schools persisted throughout the 1970s and were not fully overcome until the Deed of Trust for the community schools was generally agreed in 1979: even then several VECs approved the Deed only in 1981.¹⁸² The Deed provided for boards of management which included three nominees of the religious authorities, three VEC nominees, two elected representatives of the parents and two teachers selected by the permanent teaching staff of each community school: the principal of the school was also a non-voting member of the board.¹⁸³ The final Deed of Trust represented a compromise, which emerged from prolonged and frequently acrimonious negotiations between the department, the different managerial authorities and the teaching unions.

It was significant, however, that many of the critics of the Minister's proposals nevertheless expressed their support for the restructuring of post-primary education and the principle of establishing community schools. The IVEA generally supported the educational reforms sought by the department, although they feared the political and administrative implications of the changes for the vocational system.¹⁸⁴ Likewise the VTA had consistently favoured the rationalisation of post-primary education since January 1966 and was willing to support the establishment of community schools in certain areas, if the management structure protected the interests of its members.¹⁸⁵ The VECs and the VTA were by no means opposed to the state's policy, although they were deeply dissatisfied with the administrative arrangements adopted by the department to implement the policy. The Protestant educational authorities were also broadly supportive of the department's latest attempt to restructure post-primary education. The SEC advised the Protestant churches that the concept of a community school had 'much to recommend it', although the scheme originally proposed by the Minister was clearly unsatisfactory.¹⁸⁶ Moreover the Committee considered in March 1972 that the revised proposals announced by Faulkner met many of their concerns and recommended that Protestant school authorities should seriously consider collaboration with the department in developing

¹⁸² Hyland and Milne (eds.), *Irish Educational Documents*, vol.2, p.268, O'Flaherty, *Irish Education*, pp.72-73

¹⁸³ O'Flaherty, *Irish Education*, p.74

¹⁸⁴ IVEA, Congress Report 1971, pp.44-55 (IVEA, 1971)

¹⁸⁵ VTA, General Secretary's Report 1970-71, Annual Congress 1971, pp.38-39 (Dublin, 1971)

¹⁸⁶ *Report of the SEC 1972, Journal of the 34th General Synod of the Church of Ireland*, ed. J.L.B. Deane, pp.126-128 (Dublin, 1972)

new community schools.¹⁸⁷ Although the methods initially proposed by the Minister to implement the policy aroused intense controversy, the state's initiative for community schools soon secured widespread support from most educational interest groups.

The department proceeded rapidly with the establishment of community schools in various areas despite the unresolved issues concerning the management of the schools. The first community schools were established at Blanchardstown and Tallaght in 1972.¹⁸⁸ The department acted decisively to build community schools in areas where new educational facilities were required. Indeed twelve community schools were established even before the formal deed of trust was published.¹⁸⁹ Despite the prolonged controversy over the management arrangements, the department succeeded in devising a viable new approach for formal collaboration between the secondary and vocational authorities and the introduction of a comprehensive curriculum. The publication of the document on the community school in November 1970 was certainly premature, but it accurately represented the department's latest and most determined attempt to promote the integration of post-primary education.¹⁹⁰ The initiative proved the most influential and effective attempt by the officials to initiate the restructuring of post-primary education and to secure the implementation of a comprehensive curriculum. The establishment of community schools was an essential part of the state's policy for the expansion and re-organisation of post-primary education throughout the following decade.

Integrating the teaching profession

The creation of a unified teaching profession emerged as a key element of the state's policy for the restructuring of the educational system by the late 1960s. The department considered that the introduction of a common basic scale of salary for all teachers was vital to facilitate the integration of post-primary education and the elimination of traditional barriers between primary and post-primary teaching.¹⁹¹ The officials envisaged that secondary and vocational teachers would be taking classes in each other's schools, while national schoolteachers with appropriate qualifications could

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ NA D/T 2004/21/95, S.12891H, J.J. Cullen to Lynch, 15 September 1972

¹⁸⁹ Barry, *Impact of an Interest Group*, in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.146

¹⁹⁰ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.302

¹⁹¹ NA D/T 98/6/950, S.18153, C.O.92066/2, *Memorandum for the Government, Question of the Establishment of an Ad Hoc Tribunal on Teachers' Salaries*, Office of the Minister for Education, 1 September 1967

be employed in post-primary schools as a result of Circular M.44/66.¹⁹² The department was concerned not only to facilitate a more rational use of scarce resources but also to deal with a series of separate and competing salary claims by different groups of teachers. All three teaching unions were pursuing pay claims through separate arbitration schemes by 1967, with each group seeking to improve its own salary position relative to the other groups of teachers.¹⁹³ The officials were determined to get away from the traditional practice of leapfrogging by different teaching unions, favouring a common arbitration scheme for all teachers. They envisaged the introduction of a common basic scale, with additional remuneration for qualifications and the exercise of extra responsibilities.¹⁹⁴ Donogh O'Malley endorsed the principle of a common salary scale and secured the agreement of the government on 19 September 1967 for the establishment of an ad hoc Tribunal to recommend the appropriate salary level for the scale.¹⁹⁵ The Tribunal on Teachers' Salaries was asked to recommend a common basic scale of salary for all national, secondary and vocational teachers and to report on the appropriate allowances, which might be added to the common scale.¹⁹⁶ The Tribunal was designed to establish the basic conditions for the establishment of a unified teaching profession. The Minister appointed Professor Loudon Ryan of Trinity College as chairman of the Tribunal: its other members were Maurice Cosgrave, L.M. Fitzgerald, Ernest Benson and Cathal O'Shannon.¹⁹⁷ All three teaching unions agreed to co-operate with the Tribunal, although the ASTI successfully sought a commitment from O'Malley that they would be able to fall back on their separate Conciliation and Arbitration scheme if they were dissatisfied with the findings.¹⁹⁸ This stipulation by the ASTI proved an ominous portent of future conflict between the department and secondary teachers.

The Tribunal, which was formally established by O'Malley on 15 December 1967, concluded its deliberations within five months. The report of the Tribunal was presented to Lenihan on 23 April 1968.¹⁹⁹ The Tribunal recommended that a common basic scale of salary and a common system of allowances for all teachers should come into effect on 1 September 1968: the new arrangements would apply to all new entrants

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.5-6

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.4-5

¹⁹⁴ J. Coolahan, *The ASTI and post-primary education in Ireland*, p.274 (Dublin, 1984)

¹⁹⁵ NA 99/5/1. G.C.12/61, Cabinet Minutes, p.3, 19 September 1967

¹⁹⁶ *Tribunal on Teachers' Salaries, Report to the Minister for Education*, p.5, April 1968 (Dublin, 1968)

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.17, NA D/T 98/6/950, S.18153, Decision slip, *Cruinniú Rialtais*, 5 December 1967

¹⁹⁸ Minutes, CEC, ASTI, pp.1-3, 14 October 1967

¹⁹⁹ *Tribunal on Teachers' Salaries, Report*, p.17, April 1968

to the profession from that date.²⁰⁰ The proposed common scale was fixed at the approximately the same level as the existing scale for vocational teachers.²⁰¹ The report set out transitional arrangements for the inclusion of existing teachers within the new system. All vocational teachers were to be assimilated to the common scale at a level two increments above the point, which they had reached on their existing scale. Secondary teachers in receipt of incremental salary were to be given the option of assimilation to the new scale on the same basis as vocational teachers or remaining on the existing salary scale.²⁰² Significantly the Tribunal recommended that the special salary agreement between the ASTI and the secondary school managers in 1964, which involved an increase of 12.5% in basic salary for lay secondary teachers, should be set aside, due to its 'divisive effects within the teaching profession.'²⁰³ The report concluded that ad hoc payments by schools could jeopardise the emergence of a single teaching profession and recommended that the department should take responsibility for the payment of the full remuneration of secondary teachers.²⁰⁴ The new arrangements provided for the payment of allowances for qualifications, including all university degrees and the Higher Diploma in Education. The report also envisaged a range of new allowances related to specific duties: allowances would be paid to principals and vice-principals in secondary schools for the first time, while posts of special responsibility would be created in all schools.²⁰⁵ The allowances for special responsibility were intended to create reasonable prospects of promotion for lay teachers, especially in secondary schools. The Tribunal also proposed a single scheme of conciliation and arbitration, which would replace the separate schemes for national, vocational and secondary teachers.²⁰⁶ The Tribunal outlined a comprehensive blueprint for the creation of a unified teaching profession and certainly fulfilled admirably the objectives set by the Department of Education. But the report provoked a storm of controversy within the teaching profession, due largely to the very different impact of its recommendations for each group of teachers.

The Tribunal's report was broadly satisfactory for the primary teachers, as it conceded the traditional demand by the INTO for a common salary scale and delivered a moderate salary increase for primary teachers. While the INTO considered that the level

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.16

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.9

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp.16-17

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.15

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.15

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.10-14

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.14-15

of basic salary offered by the Tribunal was still too low, the union urged the Minister on 4 July 1968 to implement the report in the short-term.²⁰⁷ But the report offered much less favourable terms to both categories of post-primary teachers. The VTA favoured the principle of a common scale, but was deeply disappointed at the level of the salary proposed by the Tribunal. Moreover many vocational teachers were appalled by the provision for degree allowances in the vocational sector, which created a differential between university graduates and teachers of practical subjects in vocational schools.²⁰⁸ The VTA therefore initially rejected the findings of the Tribunal, seeking further salary negotiations with the Minister.²⁰⁹ But it was the secondary teachers who reacted most vehemently to the recommendations of the Tribunal. The report demanded the removal of the salary agreement concluded by the ASTI with the managers in 1964 and offered little immediate compensation for the loss of the special salary advantage. Certainly the offer of posts of responsibility did nothing to reconcile the ASTI to the proposals of the Tribunal.²¹⁰ This offer depended on the willingness of the clerical and religious managers to allocate posts of responsibility to their lay staff. The Catholic managers, however, were reluctant to delegate such authority to the lay teachers in the short-term and had no desire to facilitate official plans for a restructuring of the teaching service.²¹¹ The CMCSS refused to accept the department's proposal to take responsibility for the payment of all school salaries, in the absence of legal guarantees for the financial position of the managers.²¹² The ASTI was deeply dissatisfied with the level of the salary scale proposed by the Tribunal, which involved an actual pay reduction for many secondary teachers.²¹³ The CEC of the Association categorically rejected the findings of the Tribunal on 1 June 1968, resolving instead to submit a separate pay claim through the existing Conciliation scheme for secondary teachers. The CEC also threatened 'immediate action' by the ASTI if the Minister accepted the recommendations of the report.²¹⁴ The Tribunal's recommendations for sweeping change in the salary structure of

²⁰⁷ Annual Report of the CEC 1968-69, INTO, S. Brosnahan to B. Lenihan, pp.50-51 (INTO, 1969)

²⁰⁸ VTA, General Secretary's Report 1968-69, Annual Congress 1969, pp.5-10 (Dublin, 1969),

McCarthy, *Decade of Upheaval*, p.208

²⁰⁹ VTA, General Secretary's Report 1968-69, Annual Congress 1969, p.1 (Dublin, 1969)

²¹⁰ McCarthy, *Decade of Upheaval*, pp.208-209

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, Coolahan, *The ASTI*, p.280

²¹² CMCSS, *Press Statement*, p.2, 6 December 1968, CCSS, Minutes of Central Executive Committee, 21 November 1968, CHA, Minutes of extraordinary general meeting, 28 November 1968

²¹³ Minutes, CEC, ASTI, p.1, 1 June 1968, Coolahan, *The ASTI*, p.277

²¹⁴ Minutes, CEC, ASTI, pp.1-2, 1 June 1968

the teaching profession had set the scene for a trial of strength between the government and the secondary teachers.

There was no doubt that the government would endorse the report and Lenihan duly accepted the Tribunal's recommendations in September 1968.²¹⁵ The Minister sought to avert any industrial action by making moderate improvements in the common scale and allowances envisaged by the report. Lenihan issued salary proposals on 18 October 1968, which involved increases in the figures proposed by the Tribunal amounting to £125 at the top of the scale for married men and £100 at the maximum point for women and single men: the allowances for honours' degrees were also increased by £50.²¹⁶ The INTO quickly accepted the salary offer, having secured the introduction of a common scale and the Minister's commitment to a common scheme of arbitration.²¹⁷ The VTA accepted the Minister's proposals by postal ballot in late October on the basis that no better terms could be secured at present.²¹⁸ But Lenihan's proposals failed completely to pacify the secondary teachers. The Standing Committee of the ASTI on 26 October 1968 unanimously recommended the rejection of the Minister's offer.²¹⁹ A ballot of the ASTI membership resulted in an emphatic dismissal of the salary proposals, with a vote of 92% against the Minister's offer.²²⁰ The ASTI then moved rapidly towards large-scale industrial action. The union demanded the right to proceed with its salary claim through the traditional scheme of Conciliation and Arbitration for secondary teachers.²²¹ The Minister could not concede this demand without making nonsense of the government's policy and enraging the other teaching unions, who would be affected by the outcome of separate negotiations. The CEC of the ASTI resolved on 18 January 1969 to initiate a ballot providing for 'a withdrawal of services' by secondary teachers, if no acceptable offer was made by the state by 1 February.²²² Further negotiations in January proved fruitless, as a revised offer by the Minister proved unacceptable to the ASTI and the union's membership voted heavily in favour of a strike.²²³ The ASTI began its first full-scale strike since the foundation of the state on 1 February 1969.

²¹⁵ Coolahan, *The ASTI*, p.277

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, VTA, General Secretary's Report 1968-69, Annual Congress 1969, pp.7-8 (Dublin, 1969)

²¹⁷ Annual Report of the CEC 1968-69, INTO, p.54 (INTO, 1969)

²¹⁸ VTA, General Secretary's Report 1968-69, Annual Congress 1969, p.8 (Dublin, 1969)

²¹⁹ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.2, 26 October 1968

²²⁰ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.2, 16 November 1968

²²¹ Minutes, CEC, ASTI, pp.2-3, 18 January 1968

²²² *Ibid.*, p.3

²²³ Minutes, CEC, ASTI, pp.1-3, 25 January 1968

The association secured the full support of the secondary school managerial authorities for their action. The CHA gave an assurance of their 'fullest support' for the ASTI's salary claim as early as October 1968.²²⁴ Moreover the JMB decided to suspend all school activities for the duration of the strike. The managerial bodies issued a press statement on 31 January 1969, which announced the closure of the schools until further notice and emphasized their determination to retain 'the loyalty and co-operation of their staffs.'²²⁵ The catalyst for the ASTI action and the closure of the schools was a salary dispute, but the secondary teachers and their allies were clearly making a sustained protest against the state's policy approach towards secondary education. The union's Action Committee issued a wide-ranging denunciation of the Department of Education in January 1969, which was by no means restricted to the unsatisfactory salary offer. They accused the department of attempting to implement a reduction in the salary of secondary teachers and to downgrade the status of secondary teaching as a profession.²²⁶ But the Action Committee also denounced the department for attempting to attain absolute power over secondary education: 'The Department of Education is seeking to gain absolute control of secondary schools, thereby interfering with the private nature of our employment.'²²⁷ The ASTI argued that the state had no legal right to interfere in an agreement between secondary teachers and the school authorities, which involved the payment of part of teachers' salaries by the school managers. Moreover they emphasized the danger of giving 'absolute control in the framing of educational policy to Departmental administrators,' who were criticised for their lack of professional expertise in educational matters.²²⁸ While statements issued in the course of such a dispute are rarely notable for their restraint, the Action Committee's statement underlined the hostility of the secondary teachers' association to the department's overall approach.

The ASTI was deeply discontented with the government's policy for the restructuring of post-primary education, especially the department's efforts to break down traditional barriers between different groups of teachers. The association found common ground with the secondary school managerial bodies, especially the Catholic managers, in their shared reservations about the state's agenda in education. The

²²⁴ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.1, 16 November 1968, CMCSS, *Press Statement*, p.2, 6 December 1968

²²⁵ *Statement by Joint Managerial Body*, 31 January 1969, Annual Report of the CEC 1968-69, INTO, p.60 (INTO, 1969)

²²⁶ NA D/T 2000/6/427, S.18332, *Press Release: ASTI Action Committee*, January 1969

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

department's attempts to rationalise post-primary education had provoked a suspicious reaction on the part of many secondary managerial authorities, who regarded the actions of the officials as bureaucratic and insensitive.²²⁹ Sr. Eileen Randles recalled the resentment of the Catholic secondary school authorities at the department's assertive approach to the re-organisation of post-primary education, arguing that opposition to change was often provoked by 'the intemperate zeal of the Department of Education officials'.²³⁰ O'Connor's article in *Studies* certainly intensified the widespread distrust of the department's intentions among the Catholic managerial authorities.²³¹ The co-operation of the managerial bodies with the ASTI strike was based not simply on their support for a salary claim, but on their opposition to key elements of the policy of rationalisation promoted by the department. Charles McCarthy commented accurately: 'This was more than a strike of teachers; it was a revolt of the schools'.²³² The secondary teachers and managerial authorities had joined in a common protest against the policies of the state.

The ASTI strike continued for three weeks and did not conclude until the Catholic Hierarchy intervened to mediate the dispute. The Episcopal Commission for Post-Primary Education initiated separate discussions with the Minister and the ASTI on 12 and 13 February.²³³ Following the intervention of the Bishops, Lenihan issued revised salary proposals to the ASTI on 14 February, which significantly improved the terms of previous offers made by the department.²³⁴ The Minister offered increases in various degree allowances and a shortening of the incremental scale by one point: he made a commitment too that when increases in public service pay were made in future, all the allowances held by secondary teachers would attract the same percentage increase as the basic salary.²³⁵ The revised offer also involved the award of special functions allowances, ranging from £100 to £300, to a majority of secondary teachers instead of the posts of responsibility envisaged by the Tribunal on Teachers' Salaries. Significantly the new allowances, which had first been proposed by Lenihan in January 1969, were to be made

²²⁹ McCarthy, *Decade of Upheaval*, p.212

²³⁰ Randles, *Post-Primary Education*, p.323

²³¹ CMCSS, *Press Statement*, p.2, 6 December 1968; TBA, *Summary of points at (a) Meeting in Dáil Eireann on 7th November with Minister, Departmental Officials and JMB: (b) Meeting on 14th November between officials of departments of Education and Finance and JMB*, Education Committee of the TBA, November 1968

²³² McCarthy, *Decade of Upheaval*, p.212

²³³ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, pp.1-2, 17-18 February 1969

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, NA D/T 2000/6/427, S.18332, J. Lynch to Mother M. Carmel, 19 February 1969

²³⁵ Minutes, CEC, ASTI, pp.1-3, 19 February 1969

to all teachers placed on or above the tenth point of the common scale without any requirement for the performance of specific duties.²³⁶ This was effectively a separate salary increase for secondary teachers, which undermined the principle of the common basic scale. The CEC recommended the acceptance of the revised offer by 60 votes to 5 on 19 February 1969 and the ASTI members approved the agreement in a ballot, concluding their strike on 24 February.²³⁷ The settlement, which was formally signed in March 1969, may have ended the secondary teachers' strike but it also made further industrial unrest in the educational sector inevitable. The agreement was in some respects a significant setback for the department's declared aim of a unified teaching profession. Lenihan managed to end the strike, but only at the price of undermining the recommendations of the Tribunal and making a unilateral pay settlement with secondary teachers. The agreement was never likely to be a permanent settlement, not least because of the hostile reaction of the other teaching unions.

The representatives of primary and vocational teachers were outraged by the Minister's unilateral agreement with the ASTI. Charles McCarthy recalled that 'the VTA were on the warpath'.²³⁸ The vocational teachers were deeply dissatisfied not only with the concessions made to the ASTI but also with the limited progress of their own negotiations with the department for the creation of posts of responsibility in vocational schools. The VTA therefore conducted a two-day strike on 26 and 27 May, which was coupled with threats of further action.²³⁹ The INTO, which protested vehemently to the government over the undermining of the principle of the common basic scale, also initiated a campaign of action, beginning with a strike by primary teachers in Dublin on 28 May.²⁴⁰ All three teaching unions had taken strike action within the same year and the Minister was still in dispute with two of them. The government's approach to the revision of teacher salaries was in complete disarray and a unified teaching profession appeared to be a more distant prospect than ever. The Minister decided to summon Professor Ryan back in an attempt to pacify the INTO and the VTA. Ryan was asked to assess the agreement with the ASTI and to recommend means of resolving the dispute.²⁴¹ Ryan's second report, which was issued on 13 June 1969, unsurprisingly concluded that the Minister's agreement with the ASTI had breached the terms of the recommendations

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, Coolahan, *The ASTI*, pp.282-285

²³⁷ Minutes, CEC, ASTI, pp.1-3, 19 February 1969

²³⁸ McCarthy, *Decade of Upheaval*, p.213

²³⁹ VTA, General Secretary's Report 1969-70, Annual Congress 1969, pp.5-7 (Dublin, 1970)

²⁴⁰ Annual Report of the CEC 1970-71, INTO, pp.1-2 (INTO, 1971)

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, VTA, General Secretary's Report 1969-70, Annual Congress 1970, pp.7-8 (Dublin, 1970)

made by the Tribunal, especially the principle of the common basic scale.²⁴² The department accepted Ryan's analysis and aimed to replace the special allowances for secondary teachers with posts of responsibility in accordance with the original recommendations of the Tribunal.²⁴³ Faulkner, who inherited the dispute shortly after Ryan issued his second report, was determined to depart from the agreement with the ASTI on the basis that it undermined the common scale.²⁴⁴ This approach was at least consistent with the objective of a unified teaching profession but it involved the department in further complex and protracted negotiations with all three teaching unions from June 1969 until February 1971, against a background of continuing industrial unrest and regular threats of further action.

The department under Faulkner cautiously manoeuvred to implement the common basic scale by phasing out the special functions allowances for secondary teachers. The Minister outlined new salary proposals on 16 September 1969, which involved a gradual dismantling of the agreement with the ASTI.²⁴⁵ Faulkner reiterated that a common basic scale and a common system of allowances would be introduced on the basis of the recommendations of the Tribunal. He indicated that existing secondary teachers would be obliged to choose between a general salary increase available on the new common scale or the continued payment of the special allowances.²⁴⁶ The ASTI condemned Faulkner's approach, accusing the Minister of breaking the agreement concluded by his predecessor. Michael Sheedy, the ASTI President, issued a telegram to the Taoiseach on 6 February 1970, demanding that Lynch should intervene personally to resolve the dispute.²⁴⁷ Sheedy accused Faulkner of operating 'a wage freeze' against the secondary teachers and protested against the Minister's attempt to depart from the agreement with the ASTI.²⁴⁸ Lynch simply ignored the ASTI demand for his personal intervention, but Sheedy's telegram underlined that the union would not abandon the agreement concluded in March 1969 without a protracted struggle. The Minister also moved to establish a common scheme of conciliation and arbitration for the teaching profession, which was agreed by

²⁴² Annual Report of the CEC 1970-71, INTO, p.2 (INTO, 1971)

²⁴³ Coolahan, *The ASTI*, p.288

²⁴⁴ NA D/T 2001/6/399, S.18332A, *Parliamentary reply by Pádraig Faulkner, Minister for Education*, 5 February 1970

²⁴⁵ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.1, 24 September 1969, Coolahan, *The ASTI*, p.289

²⁴⁶ NA D/T 2000/6/251, *Proposals of the Minister for Education for the implementation of salary increases for teachers with effect from 1st June 1969*, pp.1-3, 16 September 1969

²⁴⁷ NA D/T 2001/6/399, S.18332A, *Telegram by Michael Sheedy, President, ASTI, to the Taoiseach*, 6 February 1970

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

the INTO and VTA in 1970.²⁴⁹ The ASTI, however, rejected the proposed scheme and consistently refused to participate in joint negotiations with the other teaching unions on their pay claim.²⁵⁰

The deadlock in the salary dispute persisted throughout 1970, as the Minister's proposals for the new salary structure failed to satisfy either the secondary or vocational teachers. The department initiated negotiations on the salary dispute under the auspices of Dermot McDermott, Chief Conciliation Officer of the Labour Court, in February 1970. McDermott conducted separate discussions with the ASTI and the other two teaching unions but the negotiations ended in stalemate by May.²⁵¹ The Minister then moved to implement his own proposals to phase out the special salary arrangements for secondary teachers. MacGearailt issued Circular M 57/70 in May 1970, which instructed the school managers that all new entrants to secondary teaching after 31 May should be placed on the common basic scale and should not be eligible to receive the benefits of the separate agreement between the Minister and the ASTI in March 1969.²⁵² The ASTI immediately directed its members not to correct the Certificate examinations in 1970, although the ban on examination work was later applied only to the Leaving Certificate.²⁵³ The Minister also came into dispute with the VTA, which was dissatisfied with the department's refusal to grant allowances for qualifications other than university degrees and with the slow implementation of posts of responsibility in vocational schools.²⁵⁴ The vocational teachers undertook a campaign of industrial action, which culminated in a nation-wide strike from 11 to 17 February 1970.²⁵⁵ The VTA also demanded an inquiry by the government 'into the manner in which the Department of Education conducts its industrial relations'.²⁵⁶ The government firmly dismissed the demand for an inquiry into the department's personnel section.²⁵⁷ MacGearailt sought, however, to improve the department's fraught relations with the VTA by giving Seán O'Connor responsibility for

²⁴⁹ Annual Report of the CEC 1970-71, INTO, pp.1-3 (INTO, 1971), VTA, General Secretary's Report 1969-70, Annual Congress 1970, p.18 (Dublin, 1970)

²⁵⁰ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, 13 September 1969, Annual Report of the CEC 1970-71, INTO, p.2 (INTO, 1971)

²⁵¹ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, 23 May 1970

²⁵² Circular M56/70, Department of Education, May 1970, *Official Programme*, 1970, ASTI, p.61

²⁵³ Minutes, CEC, ASTI, 13 June 1970, *Official Programme*, 1970, ASTI, p.63

²⁵⁴ VTA, General Secretary's Report 1969-70, Annual Congress 1970, pp.15-16 (Dublin, 1970)

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ NA D/T 2000/6/251, S.14941C, McCarthy to Faulkner, 25 July 1969, *Statement by the Vocational Teachers' Association*, pp.1-3, 25 July 1969

²⁵⁷ NA D/T 2000/6/251, S.14941C, Ó Dálaigh to McCarthy, 1 August 1969

conciliation and arbitration, as well as the Development Branch, in February 1970.²⁵⁸ This measure had some effect, as the department managed to avoid further industrial action by the VTA. But the Minister's dispute with the ASTI was intensified, as the government completed the dismantling of the special agreement with the secondary teachers.²⁵⁹ Faulkner issued revised salary proposals on 3 July 1970, reiterating that the special functions allowances for secondary teachers would not be paid to any new entrants to the profession. The Minister proposed to phase out the special functions allowances in general and to compensate secondary teachers through pay increases on the new common scale, as well as the creation of posts of responsibility.²⁶⁰ Faulkner's latest offer proved broadly acceptable to the VTA and the INTO, but was firmly rejected by the Standing Committee of the ASTI.²⁶¹ The secondary teachers association again prepared for strike action. The Taoiseach was warned on 2 November 1970 by an ASTI member, Michael MacMahon of Limerick, that 'another disastrous strike' was likely if Lynch did not compel Faulkner to uphold the department's agreement with the ASTI.²⁶² The Taoiseach, however, had no intention of intervening in the dispute, not least because such an intervention would have undermined the authority of the Minister.²⁶³ The stage seemed set for another confrontation between the state and the secondary teachers.

The real prospect of another ASTI strike was averted only by the intervention of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). The CEC resolved that their strike would commence on 16 February, if a ballot of the union's membership favoured strike action.²⁶⁴ Although the ballot produced a narrow majority in favour of a strike, Maurice Cosgrave, President of ICTU, made a last-minute appeal to the association on 15 February to defer their action: he invited all three teaching unions to engage in joint discussions under the auspices of ICTU.²⁶⁵ The Standing Committee agreed to defer the strike and to participate in joint negotiations with the other teaching unions.²⁶⁶ The intensive negotiations mediated by the officers of ICTU succeeded in finding common ground between the three teaching associations, securing their agreement for a joint

²⁵⁸ VTA, General Secretary's Report 1969-70, Annual Congress 1970, p.17 (Dublin, 1970)

²⁵⁹ Coolahan, *The ASTI*, pp.295-297

²⁶⁰ VTA, General Secretary's Report 1970-71, Annual Congress 1971, *Proposals of the Minister for Education on Teachers Salaries and Allowances*, 3 July 1970, pp.42-44 (Dublin, 1971)

²⁶¹ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, p.2, 20 July 1970

²⁶² NA D/T 2001/6/399, S.18332A, M. MacMahon to Lynch, 2 November 1970

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, H.S. Ó Dubhda to M. MacMahon, 5 November 1970

²⁶⁴ Minutes, CEC, ASTI, pp.1-4, 30 January 1971

²⁶⁵ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, pp.1-2, 15 February 1971

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

salary claim to the Department of Education.²⁶⁷ The agreed claim envisaged short-term compensation to secondary teachers in return for the acceptance by the ASTI of the common scale and system of allowances proposed by the Minister.²⁶⁸ MacGearailt and other senior officials met the representatives of the teaching unions on 22 February and broadly accepted their joint proposals, after consulting with Faulkner and Lynch.²⁶⁹ A lump sum of £60 was to be paid to all secondary teachers receiving the special allowances in 1970-71, while secondary teachers on or above the tenth point of the common scale in the current year would receive a once-off payment of £116.²⁷⁰ Additional increments were also to be awarded to many secondary teachers and a new allowance would be paid to all post-primary teachers over the age of fifty who did not hold a university degree.²⁷¹ The ASTI was deeply divided over the proposed settlement and the CEC agreed to put the salary offer to the members without any recommendation: the union's membership accepted the offer by a relatively narrow margin of 56.6% to 43.4%.²⁷² While the salary proposals did not fully satisfy the ASTI or the VTA, the settlement in February 1971 resolved the salary dispute triggered by the department's attempts to implement a common salary structure for all teachers.

All three teaching unions finally accepted the introduction of a common salary scale and system of allowances, although the new salary structure was introduced on a phased basis for secondary teachers. But the department achieved its key objective of a revised salary structure based on a common basic scale only at the price of a bitter and protracted conflict with the ASTI and to a lesser extent with the other teaching unions. It was significant that the prolonged salary dispute was finally resolved not by the state but by the intervention of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. It was evident that the state could no longer afford to treat lightly the grievances of the increasingly self-confident and assertive teaching unions. The department's efforts did much to achieve a more unified teaching profession based on the common basic scale. But the officials also came close to unifying post-primary teachers only against the department itself in the course of the dispute. The department's tactics in the negotiations with the teaching unions were

²⁶⁷ Minutes, Standing Committee, ASTI, pp.1-2, 20 February 1971, VTA, General Secretary's Report 1970-71, Annual Congress 1971, pp.11-12 (Dublin, 1971)

²⁶⁸ Ibid., pp.11-12, McCarthy, *Decade of Upheaval*, p.236

²⁶⁹ Annual Report of the CEC 1970-71, INTO, p.35 (INTO, 1971)

²⁷⁰ Ibid., *Proposals of the Minister for Education Relating to Teachers' Salaries and Allowances*, 22 February 1971, pp.35-37, Coolahan, *The ASTI*, p.301

²⁷¹ Annual Report of the CEC 1970-71, INTO, *Proposals of the Minister for Education Relating to Teachers' Salaries and Allowances*, 22 February 1971, pp.35-37 (INTO, 1971)

²⁷² Minutes, CEC, ASTI, pp.1-5, 24 February 1971, Minutes, Standing Committee, p.1, 3 April 1971

frequently ill judged and damaging to its objective of a unified teaching profession.²⁷³ McCarthy commented that 'some of the approaches of the Department seemed to bring mayhem more than peace'.²⁷⁴ But the department's controversial attempt to promote a unified teaching profession was a key part of the state's policy of rationalisation. The department was not simply seeking to save money, as some of its critics assumed, but to achieve a far-reaching restructuring of post-primary education with scarce financial resources.

Raising the school leaving age

The policy of rationalisation was pursued by successive Ministers and officials to ensure that comprehensive education was widely available when the school leaving age was raised to fifteen years. The extension of the statutory school leaving age to fifteen years by 1970 was a policy objective pursued by the government throughout the 1960s. The *Third Programme, Economic and Social Development*, which was published in March 1969, treated the raising of the school leaving age in 1970 as a certainty: the programme noted its likely effect on the number of pupils in post-primary education. 'The raising of the school leaving age to 15 years in 1970 will cause some further increase, though a large proportion of the 14 to 15 age group is already receiving whole-time education.'²⁷⁵ The commentary on education in the *Third Programme* underlined the impact of the free tuition and free transport schemes in promoting an increased demand for post-primary education.²⁷⁶ The implementation of the initiative for free post-primary education had already substantially increased the proportion of pupils remaining in post-primary education on a voluntary basis, before any move was made to raise the school leaving age.²⁷⁷ The initiative for free education had produced a surge in enrolments at post-primary level by 1970, so that the original rationale for raising the school leaving age was overtaken by events and the reform no longer had the same importance which was initially attached to it. But the effect of the new schemes also meant that an extension of the school leaving age was a more attainable objective in the short-term, which could be implemented more easily due to the impact of the initiative for free education. The

²⁷³ Coolahan, *The ASTI*, p.303

²⁷⁴ McCarthy, *Decade of Upheaval*, p.216

²⁷⁵ *Third Programme, Economic and Social Development 1969-72, laid by the Government before each House of the Oireachtas, March 1969*, p.193 (Dublin, 1969)

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ NA D/T 2001/6/79, S.12891G, P.29/21, *Memorandum for the Government, School Leaving Age, Department of Education*, p.1, 13 January 1970

senior officials of the Department of Education, who had pursued the extension of the school leaving age as a key objective throughout the previous decade, aimed to secure the government's approval for the reform in January 1970.

Faulkner submitted a proposal to the government on 13 January 1970, seeking the approval of the Cabinet for the extension of the school leaving age to fifteen with effect from 1 July 1970.²⁷⁸ The introduction of legislation was unnecessary, as the Minister for Education was empowered to make a statutory order extending the school leaving age under Section 24 of the School Attendance Act, 1926.²⁷⁹ The officials considered the possibility of seeking additional legislation to ensure that pupils completed the full school year in which they reached the age of fifteen: the School Attendance Act deemed children to have reached the prescribed age at the end of the quarter following their birthday. But the department secured legal advice from the Assistant Chief State Solicitor, which indicated that the courts might well find such an amending Act unconstitutional. The Supreme Court had struck down the School Attendance Bill, 1942 on the basis that the state could require pupils to receive only 'a certain minimum education' in accordance with Article 42 of the Constitution.²⁸⁰ The department feared that the Supreme Court might not include post-primary education within this definition and was even uncertain that the School Attendance Act 1926 would survive a legal challenge. The officials noted that a constitutional amendment might be required, as the Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution had recommended in December 1967 an amendment of Article 42 to meet the difficulties posed by the Supreme Court decision.²⁸¹ But the department took a cautious approach, dropping the idea of amending legislation in the short-term. Faulkner therefore proposed to raise the school leaving age by making a statutory order, which deemed children to have reached the age of fifteen at the end of the quarter during which they attained that age.²⁸²

The proposal drew attention to the government's policy of extending the school leaving age by 1970, referring to numerous statements by successive Ministers that the statutory minimum age would be raised by the end of the decade. The department also supported its case with a comparative analysis of other European states, identifying 'a world wide trend towards compulsory full-time attendance at school up to 16 years at

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.2

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.3

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p.4

least'.²⁸³ They correctly pointed out that compulsory education extended to at least fifteen (and sometimes sixteen) years in most western European countries, including Britain, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Austria, Sweden and Finland.²⁸⁴ Indeed in West Germany educational instruction was compulsory up to the age of eighteen, including nine years of full-time education and a further period of part-time instruction.²⁸⁵ The officials, however, placed more emphasis on the effects of the initiative for free second-level education than on their analysis of European trends. They estimated that extending the age of compulsory attendance at school would mean an increase in pupil enrolments of only 6,750 over and above the projected expansion based on existing trends.²⁸⁶ The impact of the schemes introduced by O'Malley had significantly increased the popular demand for post-primary education. The department admitted that the building programme for post-primary schools was 'already overloaded', as a result of the need for additional accommodation since 1967.²⁸⁷ But the officials considered that the provision of the relatively small proportion of additional places required would be accomplished without great difficulty.²⁸⁸ They also envisaged that the number of additional teachers required by post-primary schools as a result of the extension of the school leaving age would not be very great, on the basis of the existing pupil-teacher ratio of over 20:1 in secondary schools. The only real disadvantage anticipated by the department was a marginal increase in the current shortage of teachers in specialist categories, including mathematics, science and some practical subjects.²⁸⁹ The officials made a plausible case that the availability of free second-level education had paved the way for the raising of the school leaving age without much additional cost to the state.

The department's argument had considerable force. The extension of the statutory minimum age for compulsory education was certainly a much more modest reform in 1970 than it would have been if the decision had been implemented before 1967. But the cost of the proposed advance was still by no means negligible. The department estimated that the cost of the reform in terms of current expenditure was £785, 900. The estimated capital cost for the proposal, which would be generated by additional building programmes, equipment and provision for school buses, came to over £2.3 million within

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.1

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Appendix A

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Appendix A

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.1

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Appendix B

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2

a period of three to four years.²⁹⁰ The officials suggested that the capital costs would be significantly reduced by allowing for some increase in class sizes and employing lower cost building methods: it was envisaged that the measure would require an annual increase of no more than £250,000 in the existing allocation for post-primary school building over four to five years.²⁹¹ The department's efforts to play down the scope and financial implications of the proposal were not fully justified or indeed consistent with other aspects of the initiative. The extension of the school leaving age was an important educational reform, which required further extensive capital investment in post-primary education if the idea was to be transformed into reality. Moreover the officials also raised the possibility of special assistance for 'needy parents', which had been unsuccessfully proposed by O'Malley in November 1966 as part of the package of measures for the introduction of free post-primary education.²⁹² They considered that the extension of the school leaving age would increase the pressure for maintenance allowances to poor families, which would compensate them for loss of earnings and enable them to keep their children at school.²⁹³ Although no definite provision for such allowances was included in the proposal, the Department of Education was sympathetic to the idea, pointing out that special assistance to low-income families might be required as a direct result of the raising of the school leaving age. This was a revealing admission by the officials, which underlined that the proposal involved a significant educational advance, not simply a minor sequel to the initiative for free post-primary education.

The cost of the proposal certainly alarmed the Department of Finance, which vehemently opposed the initiative. Senior officials of that department expressed deep dissatisfaction with the escalating costs of the initiative for free education in their comments on the proposal to extend the school leaving age. They pointed out that the cost of the schemes for free tuition, free transport and higher education grants had far exceeded original estimates and would continue to increase steadily for some years. Indeed the Department of Finance even questioned whether the schemes were sustainable in financial terms: 'It is very doubtful whether these schemes can continue in their present form or whether they will have to be modified substantially.'²⁹⁴ They commented too that the financial outlook was so negative in the short-term that severe cutbacks

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Appendix B

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Appendix B

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p.4

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.4

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3

would be required: the rapid increase in expenditure on education had contributed greatly to 'this serious budgetary imbalance.'²⁹⁵ Having sounded this ominous warning note about the rising cost of education, the Department of Finance firmly dismissed the proposal to extend the school leaving age. They considered that in a situation where financial stringency was imperative and educational costs were still rising rapidly, the adoption by the state of a further substantial commitment in the area of education was 'completely out of the question'.²⁹⁶ They advised that the proposal should be 'deferred for the present'.²⁹⁷ This deceptively mild conclusion to the Department of Finance's critical commentary merely underlined their definite opposition to the extension of the school leaving age in the foreseeable future. The officials of the Department of Finance were seriously alarmed at the escalating cost of the state's policy in education, especially in the costly aftermath of O'Malley's initiative for free post-primary education. They were increasingly dissatisfied with the government's approach of giving precedence to education in the allocation of resources and demanded instead the application of financial stringency to education with greater rigour, as costs appeared to be escalating to an unacceptable level. It was a significant intervention by the Department of Finance, which was critical not merely of the proposal to extend the school leaving age but implicitly of the government's entire approach to the management of educational expansion. The proposal submitted by Faulkner received considerable support, however, from other Ministers. George Colley, now Minister for Industry and Commerce and Joseph Brennan, Minister for Labour, both endorsed the extension of the school leaving age.²⁹⁸ The Minister for Agriculture, Neil Blaney, also raised no objection to the proposal, although he stipulated that arrangements should be made between his department and the Department of Education to provide a course in elementary agriculture at post-primary level for pupils who wished to follow a farming career.²⁹⁹ The main obstacle to the extension of the school leaving age was the opposition of the Department of Finance.

The government's decision on the proposal was a compromise between the fundamentally incompatible positions set out by the Departments of Education and Finance. The Cabinet decided on 20 January 1970 to authorise the Minister for Education to take the necessary measures for the extension of the statutory school leaving age to

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.3

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.3

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2

fifteen years from 1 July 1972.³⁰⁰ The proposal to raise the school leaving age in the short-term was accepted, but the implementation of the decision was postponed for two years.³⁰¹ It was a compromise solution, which paved the way for the important educational reform sought by the Department of Education, but delayed its implementation until 1972 in deference to the objections of the Department of Finance. There was no fundamental change in the government's policy for educational expansion. The Cabinet endorsed an expensive reforming initiative, which was designed to sustain the expansion of the educational system and achieve full educational participation by children of all social categories at post-primary level. But the Department of Finance's intervention had some effect, although its officials were strongly opposing the implementation of a policy objective repeatedly endorsed by the government. The Department of Finance had challenged not only the proposal to extend the school leaving age but also the state's established approach of providing the necessary resources to sustain the transformation of the educational system. The delay in the extension of the school leaving age underlined that the government's educational policy was losing some of the focus and urgency, which had characterised the state's approach towards educational expansion in the later part of the 1960s.

The scope for far-reaching new initiatives by the Minister or reforming officials of the Department of Education was significantly curtailed by 1970. The Department of Finance sought to re-assert greater financial constraints on future educational initiatives, having lost the opportunity to control the substantial and escalating costs of the initiative for free post-primary education. The increasingly critical approach taken by officials of the Department of Finance towards new educational reforms by the early 1970s occurred in the context of an extraordinary advance in educational spending during the previous decade. The rapid transformation of the educational system was sustained by a striking increase in the level of state financing for education.³⁰² Current spending by the Exchequer on education trebled in less than a single decade: education's share of all public current expenditure increased from 9.37% in 1961-62 to 12.33% in 1969-70.³⁰³ Capital spending by the national government on education enjoyed an even more dramatic expansion, growing from 4.22% of overall public capital expenditure in 1961-

³⁰⁰ NA 2001/5/1, G.C. 13/34, Cabinet Minutes, p.3, 20 January 1970

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, NA D/T 2001/6/79, S.12891G, Ó Nualláin to Ó Dálaigh, 20 January 1970

³⁰² Coolahan, *Irish Education*, p.138

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, NESC, *Educational Expenditure in Ireland*, p.38 (NESC, Dublin, 1975); Table 4, p.373

62 to 9.02% by 1969-70 (Table 4).³⁰⁴ Likewise the state's expenditure on education increased dramatically as a proportion of GNP from 3.05% to 5.53% in the same period (Table 5).³⁰⁵ The substantial cost of the educational advances, which had been implemented or at least initiated in the 1960s, reinforced the Department of Finance's opposition to new financial commitments in education and limited the scope for further reforming initiatives.

Moreover the rapid and wide-ranging changes introduced by the state since 1959 provoked a suspicious and increasingly hostile reaction from many educational interest groups, especially the ASTI and the secondary school managerial authorities. The traditional stakeholders in the educational system, including the religious orders, were seriously alarmed at the unprecedented range and extent of state intervention in post-primary education from 1963 up to the end of the decade. The pro-active reforming approach pursued by successive Ministers and officials greatly reduced the influence of the private interests, which had previously dominated the educational system, especially at post-primary level. The pace and scope of the changes surprised even their most dedicated advocates and left many traditional stakeholders in the educational system with little time to adapt effectively to new realities. Charles McCarthy was surely correct in commenting that for many managers and teachers the changes appeared 'to put in question not only the environs of a job but a whole ethos, a way of life'.³⁰⁶ Even the representatives of vocational education, who generally supported the government's initiatives to reshape traditional educational structures and to transform the status of technical education, were distrustful of the department's approach by 1970. The VTA and the vocational educational authorities were concerned that the state was making too many concessions to traditional stakeholders, especially the Catholic Church, to win their support for the restructuring of post-primary education. The objections or reservations of many private interest groups concerning educational reforms had been successfully brushed aside by a succession of dynamic Ministers and reforming officials throughout the 1960s. The state was able to achieve many of its objectives by winning the acquiescence of a small number of powerful interests, notably the Catholic Hierarchy and at primary level the INTO, for its reforming initiatives. But by 1970 the industrial action by all the teaching unions and the open collaboration of the clerical and religious

³⁰⁴ NESC, *Educational Expenditure in Ireland*, p.38 (NESC, Dublin, 1975); Table 4, p.373

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*; Table 5, p.374, Figure 1, p.375

³⁰⁶ McCarthy, *Decade of Upheaval*, p.216

managers with the strike by the secondary teachers underlined that private educational interest groups would no longer accept the state's policies without serious and prolonged protest. The Minister's policy approach could no longer be carried through with minimal concern for the reservations of most private educational interests.

Pádraig Faulkner, who served as Minister for Education from July 1969 until February 1973, therefore took a much more cautious approach to the implementation of the state's educational policy than his immediate predecessors. Faulkner avoided major policy statements to the media or in public speeches outside the Dáil, in stark contrast to the assiduous public promotion of controversial policies undertaken by Colley and O'Malley. He focused primarily on the implementation of reforms initiated by his predecessors, launching few new policy initiatives of any significance. While the proposal for community schools was certainly a development of profound importance for post-primary education in the 1970s, officials of the department had devised the idea of the community school well before 1970 and indeed O'Connor publicly suggested it in September 1968. The department under Faulkner took a more measured and cautious approach to the implementation of educational reforms. Faulkner's caution certainly did not mark a reversion to the conservatism of the 1950s. The state's policy for the expansion and reshaping of the educational system was already firmly established by 1970 and Faulkner sought to achieve essentially the same objectives as his immediate predecessors. The pro-active reforming approach pursued by the state since 1959 had initiated a lasting transformation of the educational system. Faulkner and the senior officials were confronted with the task of implementing an extraordinary range of reforming policies, especially at post-primary level, which had been adopted by previous Ministers. The exceptional creativity of the policy development undertaken by reforming politicians and officials in the 1960s created a new and formidable challenge for the Department of Education by 1970. The department under Faulkner was obliged to oversee the successful implementation of the initiatives formulated or introduced by the state in the previous decade.

Higher education

The development of higher education also presented a complex challenge for the government not least as a result of O'Malley's initiative for university merger. The state's policy for the expansion of higher education in the late 1960s was shaped by the wide-ranging implications of O'Malley's proposals for university re-organisation.

Lenihan inherited the established policy of university re-organisation at a time when the prospects for a successful merger were already receding. He reiterated the government's commitment to the proposed merger and clarified various aspects of the state's policy for the restructuring of the university sector in a public statement on 6 July 1968.³⁰⁷ The Minister announced that the government would act to dissolve the National University of Ireland and to reconstitute UCC and UCG as separate Universities, in accordance with the recommendation made by the Commission on Higher Education. A permanent authority would be established to deal with the financial and organisational issues involved in the state's relationship with the institutions of higher education, while a Conference of Irish Universities would deal mainly with the academic problems common to all the university institutions.³⁰⁸

The Minister devoted the bulk of his statement, however, to a detailed summary of the department's proposals for a reconstituted University of Dublin, which would combine the two existing university institutions in Dublin. He indicated that the university would be a corporate body forming 'one indivisible whole', which would allow each college to retain its identity.³⁰⁹ The plan also envisaged that the governing body of the University of Dublin, which would provide for equal representation for each college, would have overall authority for the management of the institution: each college would have a council to administer its affairs subject to the authority of the governing body.³¹⁰ The new university would be multi-denominational and conducted on the basis of Christian principles.³¹¹ The key elements of Lenihan's announcement were consistent with the terms of the initiative outlined by O'Malley, but the ministerial announcement also recommended a re-distribution of specific Faculties between the colleges of the new university. The plan stipulated that the re-allocation of disciplines should avoid any unnecessary duplication and should be based initially on existing student numbers and accommodation in each institution.³¹² Lenihan envisaged that the Faculties of Medicine and Veterinary Science would be based entirely in Trinity College. The plan also called for the Law Faculty to be located in TCD, while the Faculties of Engineering, Social Science and Commerce would be based in UCD. Each college would retain its existing

³⁰⁷ NA D/T 2000/6/655, S.18347B, *Higher Education: Statement issued by the Minister for Education on behalf of the Government*, 6 July 1968

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.1

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.2

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.2-3

³¹² *Ibid.*, p.3

range of disciplines in Arts and Science.³¹³ Lenihan asserted that the plan provided for 'a fruitful intermingling' of the best qualities of the two institutions which would not otherwise be possible.³¹⁴ The Minister outlined a definite overall policy for the restructuring of higher education, which placed particular emphasis on the achievement of the university merger. Lenihan's statement underlined that the proposed merger remained a key element of the government's approach for the future development of university education. But the Minister's success in implementing the government's agenda for higher education proved relatively limited.

The establishment of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) as a permanent executive body to advise the Minister and allocate state funding to the institutions of higher education was the only element of the programme outlined by Lenihan, which was fully implemented in the short-term.³¹⁵ The Minister announced the establishment of the HEA on 16 August 1968.³¹⁶ The government delegated wide-ranging functions to the new Authority, which was established on an ad hoc basis initially. The HEA was required to maintain 'a continual review of the country's needs in higher education' and to advise the Minister on issues related to higher education, conducting studies on problems in the sector where appropriate.³¹⁷ The new Authority was also intended to explore ways of eliminating 'unnecessary duplication' at university level and to promote the development of higher education generally.³¹⁸ But the HEA was not simply an advisory body to the Minister of Education. Lenihan's statement underlined that the Authority would have important executive functions when it was established on a statutory basis. The HEA would examine budgets prepared by the institutions of higher education and make recommendations concerning the allocation of state funding for higher education: it would also have the power to require annual financial reports from each institution.³¹⁹

The composition of the new Authority provided some reassurance to the universities that the HEA was not intended to infringe upon their autonomy. The Authority consisted initially of fourteen members, who were drawn from the universities and other institutions of higher education, as well as semi-state bodies and private

³¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.4-6

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.8

³¹⁵ Hyland and Milne (eds.), *Irish Educational Documents*, vol.2, pp.424-425

³¹⁶ DDA, AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers, Higher Education: Statement Issued by the Minister for Education on behalf of the Government*, pp.1-3, 16 August 1968

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.1

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2

business. Ó Raifeartaigh was appointed as the first chairman of the HEA, retiring as Secretary of the department to take the new position on a full-time basis, while James Dukes became the secretary to the Authority.³²⁰ Lenihan affirmed that the HEA was an autonomous body in his speech to the first meeting of the new Authority on 12 September 1968, assuring its members that the new body was not ‘an executive arm’ of the government or the Department of Education.³²¹ The Minister invited the HEA to advise the government on the forthcoming legislation for the future structure of higher education, which would provide for the autonomous status of the Authority.³²² The HEA was certainly not simply an extension of the Department of Education. James Dukes recalled that ‘Many of them were university figures; it wasn’t about state control. What we wanted was to develop the universities.’³²³ The new Authority was designed to provide an overall framework for the development of higher education, which would assess educational needs and oversee the state’s contribution to the expansion of the sector. The HEA operated, however, in the context of the state’s educational policies. Ó Raifeartaigh commented in a letter to MacGearailt on 7 March 1970 that the achievement of rationalisation and co-ordination in higher education was the ‘raison d’être’ of the HEA.³²⁴ The Authority was intended to promote the co-ordination of future state assistance for higher education and to minimise avoidable duplication of resources. While the HEA did not set out to interfere with the autonomy of the universities on an operational basis, the new body was certainly designed to introduce effective planning and greater accountability in the distribution of state funding to institutions of higher education.

The legislation to establish the HEA on a statutory basis was formulated by the Department of Education in close consultation with the Authority itself, which was successful in maintaining and even enhancing the wide-ranging role assigned to it by the Minister in 1968. The Department of Education’s initial proposals, which were agreed with the HEA and the Department of Finance by March 1970, proved generally

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.2-3

³²¹ HEA, *First Report 1968-69, Appendix 2: Address by the Minister for Education, Mr. Brian Lenihan TD, on the occasion of the first meeting of the Higher Education Authority*, 12 September 1968, pp.54-57 (Dublin, 1969)

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ Interview with James Dukes, 28 April 2003

³²⁴ NA D/T 2001/6/405, S.18346, Ó Raifeartaigh to MacGearailt, 4 March 1970

acceptable to the government.³²⁵ The Cabinet decided, however, to add a clause requiring the HEA to take account of the national aims of restoring the Irish language and developing the national culture.³²⁶ The department submitted the final text of the Higher Education Authority Bill, 1970 to the government on 28 October 1970.³²⁷ The draft Bill gave the HEA the general functions of advancing the development of higher education, assisting in the co-ordination of state investment in the sector and promoting an appreciation of the value of higher education.³²⁸ The legislation confirmed that the Authority would act as an advisory body to the Minister, incorporating the specific advisory functions outlined by Lenihan in August 1968: the HEA was also to advise the Minister on the case for new institutions of higher education. The draft legislation firmly established the considerable executive powers of the Authority with regard to institutions of higher education. The Authority was given the responsibility of evaluating the financial requirements of each institution and would assess any request for state funding by an institution of higher education. The HEA was also given the power to recommend the level of capital and current state expenditure for higher education and allocate the available state funding to all the institutions concerned.³²⁹ This clause marked a victory for Ó Raifeartaigh, who had argued that the HEA should distribute the allocations for the university faculties of agriculture and veterinary medicine, discontinuing the traditional practice involving the provision of such allocations by the Department of Agriculture.³³⁰ J.C. Nagle, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, accepted the new system on the basis of an agreement with Seán MacGearailt that the HEA would consult with the Minister for Agriculture concerning financial or policy decisions affecting the relevant faculties.³³¹ The Cabinet approved the draft legislation without any further amendment on 3 November 1970.³³² The Bill was passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas and enacted on 27 July 1971, allowing the Minister to give statutory recognition to the Authority from

³²⁵ NA D/T 2001/6/405, S.18346, C.O. 1220, *Memorandum for the Government, Proposals for legislation for the establishment on a statutory basis of the Higher Education Authority, Office of the Minister for Education*, pp.1-3, 13 March 1970

³²⁶ NA 2001/5/1, G.C. 13/52, Cabinet Minutes, pp.1-2, 5 May 1970

³²⁷ NA D/T 2001/6/405, S.18346, C.O. 1220, *Memorandum for the Government, Proposals for legislation for the establishment on a statutory basis of the Higher Education Authority, Office of the Minister for Education*, p.2, 28 October 1970

³²⁸ NA D/T 2001/6/405, S.18346, *Higher Education Authority Bill 1970*, p.2

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.3

³³⁰ NA D/T 2001/6/405, S.18346, Ó Raifeartaigh to MacGearailt, 4 March 1970

³³¹ NA D/T 2001/6/405, S.18346, J.C. Nagle to MacGearailt, 4 May 1970

³³² NA 2001/5/1, G.C. 13/83, Cabinet Minutes, p.2, 3 November 1970

May 1972.³³³ The legislation established firmly the extensive powers delegated by the government to the HEA with regard to the universities and other established institutions of higher education. Significantly the RTCs and the Colleges of Technology were not designated under the Act as institutions which came under the remit of the HEA.³³⁴ Although the Authority had a general advisory role for the entire third-level sector, it lacked any executive function over an important and rapidly expanding segment of higher education.³³⁵ The result of the government's policy in the late 1960s was therefore the emergence in the following decade of a binary system of governance for third-level education. While the government delegated important executive functions to the HEA in dealing with the majority of the institutions of higher education, the state retained a high degree of control over the development of the RTCs and the technological colleges in Dublin.³³⁶ It was significant that the department was unwilling to surrender its ability to exert influence directly over the development of higher technical education. The establishment of the HEA was the most significant innovation in the governance of higher education initiated by the state in the 1960s, but it was an incomplete reform in many respects as higher technical education remained directly under the authority of the Department of Education.

The first assignment of the new Authority, well before it was established on a statutory basis, was to advise the Minister on the proposed legislation for the restructuring of university education.³³⁷ But the state's policy for university re-organisation already faced formidable and probably insurmountable difficulties by the time the HEA was established in August 1968. The proposals for merger announced by Lenihan on 6 July 1968 proved utterly unacceptable to the authorities and staff of University College Dublin. Professor James Meenan commented in September 1968 in *Studies* that the Minister's proposals were being decisively rejected by various Faculties: 'It could be said with great truth that University College has never been so united about any issue throughout its existence as it is about this'.³³⁸ The events of the following year proved that Meenan's analysis was essentially correct. The Academic Staff Association

³³³ NA D/T 2002/8/381, S.18346, Ó Nualláin to Ó Conaill, 27 July 1971, *Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1969-70*, pp.45-46 (Dublin, 1974)

³³⁴ P. Clancy, 'The Evolution of Policy in Third-Level Education', in D.G. Mulcahy and D. O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.112 (Dublin, 1989)

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.113

³³⁷ DDA, AB8/B/XVIII/18, *McQuaid Papers, Higher Education: Statement Issued by the Minister for Education on behalf of the Government*, p.2, 16 August 1968

³³⁸ J. Meenan, 'The University in Dublin', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.314-320

of UCD approved two resolutions on 4 November 1968, which endorsed co-operation between two separate universities in Dublin.³³⁹ The governing body of UCD also firmly rejected Lenihan's proposals and adopted the development of four separate universities in Ireland as its favoured solution.³⁴⁰ Professor J.J. Hogan, the President of UCD, submitted a lengthy document, entitled *The Case for University College Dublin*, to the Taoiseach, the Minister and the HEA on 1 April 1969.³⁴¹ The case presented by the college authorities amounted to a comprehensive and scathing attack on the Minister's plans for merger. The document asserted that the proposals involved 'the partial destruction and total discouragement' of UCD as a university institution.³⁴² The authorities of UCD protested vehemently against the proposals for the transfer of Medicine and Law to Trinity College. They considered that the Minister was giving preferential treatment to Trinity College in the short-term merely to pave the way for the ultimate undermining of its identity.³⁴³ The document made a strong case for the reconstitution of UCD as an independent university, which would co-operate closely with Trinity College.³⁴⁴

The Senate of the NUI supported the position of the UCD authorities. The Taoiseach agreed to receive a deputation from the Senate to discuss general university business on 6 February 1969: the deputation took the opportunity to urge Lynch and Lenihan not to proceed with an early dissolution of the NUI.³⁴⁵ The representatives of all three colleges within the NUI argued that the National University should not be dissolved until all of its colleges were satisfied with the future status proposed for them. The deputation criticised Lenihan's plan for university re-organisation in Dublin, urging that the HEA should be allowed to consider an alternative solution.³⁴⁶ Lynch told the deputation that the HEA was willing to receive representations from the universities and that he did not expect any academic members of the Authority to support an arrangement with which they personally disagreed.³⁴⁷ Hogan claimed in a letter to the Taoiseach on 1 April 1969 that Lynch had expressed willingness to consider a revision of the HEA's terms of reference, which would allow the Authority to consider the proposal for two

³³⁹ NA D/T 2000/6/655, S.18347B, Ó Dálaigh to Ó Dubhda, 5 February 1969

³⁴⁰ NA D/T 2000/6/655, S.18347B, *The Case for University College Dublin*, p.15

³⁴¹ NA D/T 2000/6/655, S.18347B, J.J. Hogan to Lynch, 1 April 1969

³⁴² *The Case for University College Dublin*, p.14

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.14-19

³⁴⁵ NA D/T 2000/6/655, S.18347B, Lynch to S. Wilmot, 16 January 1969

³⁴⁶ Hogan to Lynch, 1 April 1969

³⁴⁷ Lynch to Hogan, 17 April 1969

independent but co-operating universities in Dublin.³⁴⁸ But Lynch rejected Hogan's case for a formal extension of the HEA's terms of reference on 17 April, asserting that the Authority was already willing to consider the views of the UCD authorities and that no special directive from the Taoiseach's office was required.³⁴⁹ The Senate of the NUI then proceeded to make the case to the HEA that the National University should not be dissolved until satisfactory arrangements were made for all of its Constituent Colleges.³⁵⁰ The firm opposition of UCD and the Senate of the NUI to the Minister's proposals underlined that the prospects for merger were bleak by the spring of 1969.

It is unlikely that merger could have been implemented even with the enthusiastic support of Trinity College, which was certainly not forthcoming. While the government had not overcome the reservations of many staff in Trinity College about the potential for the loss of their college's identity in a merger with a larger institution, there was also increasingly little incentive for the college's authorities to embrace merger. O'Malley had envisaged that the merger would offer the prospect of the removal of the Hierarchy's ban on the attendance of Catholics at Trinity College.³⁵¹ But by 1969 the merger did not offer any great advantage to Trinity College, as it was already attracting a high proportion of Catholic students despite the ban. Ó Raifeartaigh pointed out to Lynch on 5 February 1969 that the majority of new students entering TCD in 1968-69 were Catholics and accurately predicted that the institution would have a large majority of Catholic students within a decade.³⁵² The ban had increasingly little impact on Trinity College even before the Hierarchy changed its policy in 1970. The authorities of the two universities therefore found common ground in their scepticism about the government's policy. The authorities of Trinity College and the National University of Ireland agreed to propose an alternative solution to the HEA in April 1970.³⁵³ The NUI/TCD agreement envisaged that there would be two independent universities in Dublin, which would collaborate closely together and co-ordinate their academic activity in certain areas.³⁵⁴ The successful negotiations between the NUI and TCD appeared to offer the prospect of effective institutional collaboration between the two universities without a merger.

³⁴⁸ Hogan to Lynch, 1 April 1969

³⁴⁹ Lynch to Hogan, 17 April 1969

³⁵⁰ Hogan to Lynch, 29 April 1969

³⁵¹ NA D/T 2000/6/655, S.18347B, T. Ó Raifeartaigh, *Briefing note, Meeting of Taoiseach with NUI Senate deputation on Thursday, 6 February 1969*, p.3

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p.2

³⁵³ HEA, *Report on university reorganisation, Appendix III: Proposals (the NUI/TCD Agreement) put forward by the National University of Ireland and Trinity College Dublin*, pp.83-87 (Dublin, 1972)

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The removal of the ban itself dealt a further blow to the prospects for the university re-organisation. The Hierarchy agreed at its general meeting on 22-24 June 1970 to recommend to the Holy See the repeal of the statute restricting the entry of Catholics to Trinity College.³⁵⁵ The Bishops announced in a public statement on 25 June that they were acting to remove the ban in response to constructive developments in the relations between the two universities.³⁵⁶ The decision by the Hierarchy rendered redundant a key political argument for merger, which had been promoted by successive Ministers as a solution to traditional political and religious divisions. While the government maintained its public commitment to university merger until 1972, senior officials of the department privately recognised that the initiative would not be implemented.³⁵⁷ The policy of university re-organisation was certainly defunct by 1970, although it was evident even earlier that the implementation of the government's plans was virtually impossible. The HEA sounded the final death-knell for the initiative in their report on university re-organisation, which was presented to the Minister on 9 December 1971. The Authority accepted that there should be two separate universities in Dublin, in accordance with the proposals made by the university authorities.³⁵⁸ The HEA considered that the proposed merger was no longer a compelling necessity, as the circumstances had changed dramatically since the policy was adopted. They drew attention particularly to the removal of the ecclesiastical ban, the reduction in the proportion of non-Irish students in Trinity College and the agreement between the university authorities for closer co-ordination of their activity.³⁵⁹ The Authority recommended the establishment of a statutory Conjoint Board linking the two universities to guarantee an effective joint approach by the institutions to common challenges in the Dublin region.³⁶⁰ The HEA's recommendation for a change in the government's policy certainly enhanced its reputation with the universities, which generally opposed the initiative.³⁶¹ But the HEA report simply recognised the reality that a merger was not a viable project by the early 1970s, due to the scepticism of the university authorities and the considerable changes in higher education. The government quietly abandoned not only the merger, but also the

³⁵⁵ DDA AB8/B/XV/b/07, *McQuaid Papers, Minutes of the General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy*, p.5, 22-24 June 1970

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Appendix III, TRINITY COLLEGE, Statute 287/1956, Statement 25/6/1970

³⁵⁷ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.204

³⁵⁸ HEA, *Report on university reorganisation*, p.59 (Dublin, 1972)

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.46-47

³⁶¹ Clancy, 'Third-Level Education', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, pp.106-107

more general business of university re-organisation, making no attempt to dissolve the NUI when it became clear that the merger would never be implemented. The ambitious plans for the restructuring of university education initiated by O'Malley and pursued by Lenihan therefore had little practical effect on the development of higher education.

While the restructuring of higher education sought by the government did not materialise, the HEA played a crucial part in determining the role and functions of a new institution of higher education in Limerick. The Limerick University Project Committee had undertaken a sustained public campaign for a new university institution in the city since 1959. O'Malley and Lenihan both expressed support for Limerick's claim to a third-level institution, but no proposal was brought to the government concerning the demand for a new university until November 1968.³⁶² Lenihan initially recommended the establishment of a university institution at Limerick to the government on 12 November 1968.³⁶³ The Cabinet was supportive of his proposal but delayed any final decision pending consultation by the Taoiseach with the Minister for Finance and by Lenihan with the HEA.³⁶⁴ Lenihan was following the recommendations of the committee of senior officials, which had examined the report of the Commission on Higher Education. The Minister accepted the committee's recommendation for the foundation of a new university in Limerick, which would provide Arts and Science Faculties, as well as an Institute of Technology.³⁶⁵ He informed the HEA at its meeting in November 1968 that the government had taken 'a decision in principle' to establish a third-level institution in Limerick.³⁶⁶ Lenihan's announcement to the Authority was vague and general concerning the courses to be provided by the new institution and the nature of the institution itself. He told the HEA only that degree courses in Arts and Science would be provided, which would be geared especially towards the teaching profession, in addition to an Institute of Technology.³⁶⁷ The Minister indicated that he would seek the advice of the Authority on 'the form and content of the new institution within the general university complex'.³⁶⁸ Lenihan's statement was ambiguous and potentially contradictory. He stated that the

³⁶² NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, Press Release, *Speech by Brian Lenihan TD, Minister for Education, opening this year's Festival of Shannonside, Limerick*, 18 May 1968, pp.1-2, *Statement by Limerick University Project Committee*, 7 September 1968

³⁶³ NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, Decision slip, *Cruinniú Rialtais*, 12 November 1968

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ NA D/T 99/1/438, S.17744, *Departmental Committee's Observations on the Recommendations of the Commission on Higher Education*, p.34

³⁶⁶ NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, *Speech by Lenihan to the HEA*, p.1, November 1968

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.3

government had already decided to allocate capital funding for a new university in Limerick, but then promised to seek the HEA's advice on the nature of the new institution.³⁶⁹ Lenihan correctly feared that the HEA would oppose a new university in Limerick. He informed the Cabinet on 19 November that he would inform the Authority of the government's intentions concerning a new university to 'avoid any danger of a clash with the Higher Education Authority.'³⁷⁰ The Minister was seeking to avoid any conflict with the Authority over his proposal, but also to satisfy the vocal demands of the Project Committee for a new university. Lenihan's ambiguous approach gave the HEA considerable scope to influence the formulation of the government's policy.

Following consultation by the Minister with the HEA, the government stopped well short of making a commitment to a new university in Limerick. The Cabinet decided on 6 December 1968 to provide the necessary capital funding for the establishment of a new third-level institution in Limerick, which would provide qualifications in Arts and Science as well as technological courses.³⁷¹ The HEA was asked to advise how such an institution might be fitted into the existing or future provision for higher education.³⁷² The representatives of the Project Committee expressed 'bitter disappointment' at the Minister's failure to announce a university for Limerick and were not at all pacified by the government's decision to refer the issue to the HEA.³⁷³ Lenihan, however, pledged in an interview with *The Limerick Leader* on 12 December that Limerick was about to secure 'a better Institution than any University.'³⁷⁴ He also informed a deputation from the Project Committee on 2 January 1969 that he had sought the recommendations of the HEA concerning the nature of the new institution and the full details of the proposed courses.³⁷⁵ The Minister had in effect delegated to the HEA the task of determining the character and functions of the new institution.

The HEA made influential policy recommendations, which proved profoundly significant not only for the Limerick region but for the upgrading of technological

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.2-3

³⁷⁰ NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, *Memorandum from the Minister for Education, University Education in Limerick, Additional information*, 19 November 1968

³⁷¹ NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, Decision slip, *Cruinniú Rialtais, Establishment of (1) institution of higher education at Limerick (2) Institute of Technology and (3) Institute of Education*, 6 December 1968

³⁷² *Statement issued by the Government Information Bureau on behalf of the Minister for Education*, 12 December 1968

³⁷³ *The Irish Independent*, 'Minister's statement on Limerick plans', 13 December 1968

³⁷⁴ *The Limerick Leader*, 'Something better than a University', 14 December 1968

³⁷⁵ NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, *The Irish Times*, 'Limerick Group in Education Talks - No detail of institution', 3 January 1969

education in Ireland. The Authority, which made its report to the Minister on 20 March 1969, agreed with the Commission on Higher Education that there was 'no national need' for another university institution.³⁷⁶ But the HEA identified the development of higher technological education as an urgent national requirement, noting that technological education in Ireland 'has not yet found its proper level'.³⁷⁷ They emphasized the necessity to upgrade and expand technological education if it was to contribute to national economic requirements: 'If, in accordance with its function, it is to keep in step with the growth of the nation's economy, its content must be further upgraded and the scope of its operation extended'.³⁷⁸ The Authority argued that technological education had to attract more young people, who had successfully completed the post-primary course. They considered that a new institution in Limerick would lead the way in meeting the national need for higher technological education. The HEA recommended the establishment of a new type of third-level institution in Limerick, which would combine the prestige of degree courses with extensive provision for non-degree technological qualifications.³⁷⁹ They envisaged that the new institution would mainly concentrate on technological studies, but would also include a significant element based on arts humanities courses. The HEA argued that technological education did not simply consist of practical training but encompassed the teaching of humanities subjects as an ancillary to technological studies. The Authority's recommendations were influenced by the report in 1966 of the Robbins Committee in Britain, which facilitated the development and expansion of the Polytechnics as an important sector in higher education.³⁸⁰ The influence of the Robbins Committee helped to explain the creative and innovative approach recommended by the HEA, in contrast to the much more conservative ideas recently expressed by the Commission on Higher Education.

The HEA outlined a series of principles, which were intended to govern the establishment of the new College of Higher Education in Limerick. The new college was intended both to meet the specific needs of the region and to serve as a national institution, which would meet the requirements of the country as a whole and attract

³⁷⁶ NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, *Memorandum B, Recommendation of the Higher Education Authority on the Provision of Third-Level Educational Facilities at Limerick*, p.3

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.6

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.5-8, Clancy, 'Third-Level Education', in Mulcahy and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, p.120

students from a wide area.³⁸¹ The new institution would offer degree, diploma and certificate courses, although the diploma and certificate courses would form the major part of its work initially. The HEA stipulated that the entry standards for degree courses should be the same as those required for entry to such courses in the universities. The Authority sought to ensure that degrees awarded by the new institution would enjoy a comparable status to degrees offered by the existing universities. The HEA indicated that the new college would have an independent governing body, while the allocation of the necessary resources for its establishment should come under the remit of the Authority itself.³⁸² While the new institution would not be a university in the traditional sense, it was certainly designed to incorporate various features of university education, not least degree courses in Arts and Science. The HEA outlined definite measures to ensure the effective implementation of its recommendations. They advised the Minister to establish a Planning Board, which would engage in detailed planning for the foundation of the new institution: the Board was also intended to draw up a draft constitution for the college. The HEA also recommended the early appointment by the Minister of a Director and some senior staff for the college.³⁸³ The Authority clearly did not intend their first report to gather dust on a ministerial shelf.

The HEA's first report to the government did not simply develop a viable blueprint for a new type of educational institution but also firmly endorsed the expansion of technical education within the third-level sector. The report acknowledged the underdevelopment of technical education, which had been illustrated by *Investment* and the OECD study on the training of technicians in Ireland.³⁸⁴ The HEA urged the government to promote more third-level courses in technical education and to support the development of technological studies at a more advanced level.³⁸⁵ The first report by the HEA to the Minister made a sustained and convincing case for the further upgrading and development of higher technical education.

Lenihan quickly accepted the HEA recommendations, although he arranged to discuss the report with the Limerick University Project Committee before it was

³⁸¹ NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, *Memorandum B, Recommendation of the Higher Education Authority on the Provision of Third-Level Educational Facilities at Limerick*, p.8

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.10

³⁸⁴ HEA, *First Report 1968-69*, pp.35-38 (Dublin, 1969)

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

published.³⁸⁶ The Minister altered only the proposed title of the institution, which became the National Institute of Higher Education rather than a 'College of Higher Education' as proposed by the HEA: he calculated correctly that the revised title would be more acceptable to the advocates for a university in Limerick.³⁸⁷ Lenihan and MacGearailt outlined the HEA recommendations to the Project Committee on 11 April 1969, promising that the new institution of higher education would be established in September 1971.³⁸⁸ The Committee strongly disagreed with the HEA's decision to reject the option of a new university, but did not condemn the recommendation for a National Institute of Higher Education. Lenihan assured the Committee's representatives that the new institution would not be prevented by its constitution from expanding to meet future educational and cultural demands. While MacGearailt firmly rejected a suggestion from the Committee that the new institution should be known as Limerick University, the Minister indicated that the matter might be discussed again in due course.³⁸⁹ Lenihan held out the vague but tantalising prospect that the Institute might well achieve university status in the near future. He also sought with some success to foster the impression that Limerick was receiving a third-level institution, which would be a university in everything but its name.³⁹⁰ The Project Committee vowed in May 1969 to continue their efforts to secure a university, but acknowledged that the new institution of higher education was 'a worthwhile acquisition' for the Limerick region.³⁹¹ The Committee reluctantly accepted the government's proposals. Indeed by October 1970 its representatives were complaining to Faulkner about the slow progress made by the state in establishing the Institute, rather than the HEA's rejection of Limerick's claim for a university.³⁹²

Although the department did not adhere to the time-scale originally promised by Lenihan, the new National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE) opened its doors to

³⁸⁶ NA D/T 2002/8/831, S.18346, C.O.1144, *Memorandum for the Government, First Report from Higher Education Authority*, pp.1-3, 31 March 1969

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.3

³⁸⁸ NA D/T 2002/8/831, S.18346, M. Lyddy to B. Lenihan, *Summary of main proposals for Higher Education in the Limerick Region emerging from the meeting on 11 April 1969 with the Minister for Education and the Secretary of his Department*, 18 April 1969

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ *The Limerick Leader*, 'Something better than a University', 14 December 1968

³⁹¹ NA D/T 99/1/311, S.16735B, *Statement issued by Limerick University Project Committee*, 16 May 1969

³⁹² NA D/T 2002/8/831, S.18346, J. Moloney to P. Faulkner, 8 October 1970, Moloney to Faulkner, 6 November 1970

students in 1972.³⁹³ The foundation of the NIHE in Limerick was an important contribution by the state to the expansion of higher technical education. The establishment of the new institution, which offered both non-degree qualifications and degree courses, was an important innovation in higher education. The HEA played a crucial role in the creation of a new type of third-level institution, which combined a strong technological orientation with the provision of more traditional Arts courses. The establishment of the new Institute was a key feature of the gradual upgrading of higher technical education in the Republic, which had become a central element of the state's educational policy by 1970.

Conclusion

The Minister and senior officials were increasingly preoccupied with the implementation of existing policies and the management of the problems of educational expansion as the new decade dawned. Several key policy developments, which had been previously planned by the officials, came to fruition by 1971, notably the introduction of the new curriculum for national schools. Similarly the department under Lenihan successfully extended the Leaving Certificate programme to incorporate technical subjects for the first time. Although the eventual revision of the senior cycle courses was much less radical than the officials had hoped, the introduction of a broad-based curriculum at Leaving Certificate level was a significant educational reform. The senior officials of the department also developed and launched the initiative for community schools, which had a lasting impact on the post-primary system in the following decade. The department made considerable progress towards the creation of a more unified teaching profession, although its tactics also provoked an unprecedented series of strikes by the teaching unions between 1969 and 1971. But the scope for ambitious new initiatives was increasingly curtailed and even the rapid implementation of established policies, such as the extension of the school leaving age, became more difficult by the end of the decade. The transformation of the educational system was achieved on the basis of substantial and escalating costs, which dismayed the Department of Finance and intensified its resistance to new initiatives in education. The success of the state's educational policy in the 1960s created its own problems, notably the greatly increased demands for funding of educational services and the widespread discontent among

³⁹³ NA D/T 2004/21/95, S.12891H, *Address by Jack Lynch at the opening of the National Institute of Higher Education, Limerick, 27 September 1972*

private educational interests at the government's methods of achieving educational reform. Lenihan's attempts to manage these intractable problems had very mixed success and could not prevent a full-scale conflict between the state and established educational interests at secondary level. The state's reforming policy was confronted with significant political and fiscal limits by the end of the decade. These difficulties led Faulkner to take a more measured approach than his immediate predecessors, seeking primarily to consolidate the progress already achieved and to implement the government's established policies. The reversion by the Minister to a more cautious approach after 1969 was also apparent in higher education, where the plan for university merger was quietly dropped and the HEA secured an influential role in shaping new developments in third-level education. But there is no doubt that the outlook for Faulkner and the senior officials of his department in 1971 was very different from the vista of stagnation and limited development which had confronted Lemass and Hillery in 1959.

Conclusion

The Irish state's policy towards education in the 1950s was dominated by a conservative consensus shared by politicians, officials and educational authorities. The Department of Education pursued a cautious and tentative approach towards the development of the educational system, while one of its Ministers, General Mulcahy, disclaimed all responsibility for policy formulation. The first indications that a younger generation of politicians were seeking to promote a more active approach by the state became apparent in the late 1950s. The department under Jack Lynch adopted a cautious reforming approach in some areas, which delivered incremental changes particularly in primary education. But Lynch was obliged to work within the constraints of the traditional political consensus, which gave a low priority to education.¹ While *Economic Development* underlined that political attitudes towards education were beginning to change, the state made little progress towards the development of a pro-active education policy until Seán Lemass' election as Taoiseach in 1959.

Lemass' policy statement on the extension of the school leaving age in October 1959 marked the emergence of a viable government policy for the expansion of the educational system. Lemass endorsed the raising of the statutory school leaving age to fifteen years, on the basis of a gradual expansion of the necessary facilities and teaching resources, as a key policy objective for the first time. While he did not prescribe a definite time-scale, the government later indicated its intention to raise the school leaving age by 1970. The new policy approach enunciated by Lemass and Hillery in 1959 was the first serious attempt by the Irish state to promote the expansion of post-primary education as a whole. The reforming initiatives introduced by Hillery in primary and post-primary education marked the cautious beginning of a sustained process of state intervention in education. While the changes introduced in his first term were often small-scale, the department under Hillery adopted an activist approach to the resolution of pressing educational problems. But arguably the most significant legacy of Hillery's first period as Minister for Education was not any particular initiative but the evolution of a viable policy by the state for a gradual expansion of the educational system.

The transformation of the educational system, which began in the early 1960s, was driven by the reforming policies adopted by the state. Hillery's policy announcement on 20 May 1963, which saw the initiation of the comprehensive schools scheme and the

¹ Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, p.70

plan for regional technical colleges, underlined the rapid transformation of the state's educational policy. Hillery's policy statement was the first of the major reforming initiatives, which transformed the Irish educational system during the era of expansion. Hillery and Lemass established for the first time a coherent and definite role for the state in directing the expansion of the educational system, paving the way for more radical reforms after the publication of *Investment* in 1965. But Hillery did not simply prepare the way for important policy changes delivered by others; his term of office made a vital contribution to the development of a pro-active reforming approach by the government for the expansion of the educational sector.

The new policy ideas adopted by politicians and officials were heavily influenced by the OECD, which encouraged the policy changes in various ways. The critical evaluation of technical education and the training of technicians in Ireland by OECD examiners in 1962 gave a strong impetus to the upgrading of vocational and higher technical education. But the OECD's most striking contribution to the policy changes was the proposal by its Directorate of Scientific Affairs for a pilot survey of long-term needs for educational resources in the Republic. This project, which was undertaken by the Irish survey team under the auspices of the OECD and the Department of Education, illuminated the severe deficiencies and inequalities in the educational system. The OECD exerted a profound influence on the transformation of Irish education, especially in the early stages of the process of expansion.

The *Investment in Education* report was a watershed of profound significance in the reform of the Irish educational system. The pilot study provided the statistical data to support and underpin state action, which could address the wide-ranging educational problems identified by the survey team. The report of the survey team also supplied the rationale and the specific policy content for many of the reforms of the period. The department acted decisively to initiate radical reforms in primary and post-primary education, which were inspired by the analysis of *Investment*. George Colley played a leading part in revising the government's policy to incorporate reforming initiatives based on the report. The pilot study paved the way for far-reaching policy changes, which the state had not previously contemplated. Moreover following the publication of *Investment*, long-term planning of educational needs became an indispensable element of the government's policy for educational expansion.

The consensus that education was a key factor in national economic development, which was fully accepted by leading politicians and officials in the early 1960s, provided

a compelling rationale for the policy changes initiated by the state. The success of the policy of economic development and the rapid economic expansion in this period provided an essential part of the context for educational progress, facilitating the allocation of increased resources to education. But the adoption by the government of the OECD's policy ideas, which emphasized the economic value of education as an investment in human resources, was equally significant in underpinning educational expansion. The *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* identified educational progress as a key national priority, which was essential to future economic development.² Economic progress and educational expansion became inextricably linked in the government's approach to national development in the 1960s. But the need to sustain economic expansion was not by any means the sole motivation for the government's decision to invest in education. Successive ministers endorsed the principle of equality of educational opportunity for all. Ó Buachalla argued that ministers and officials since the mid-1960s often used the concept of equality of educational opportunity as a general basis for policy without defining what it meant in operational terms.³ But the department in the 1960s clearly identified equality of educational opportunity with access to post-primary educational facilities for all children and the provision of comprehensive education.⁴ Colley clarified the official view of equality of educational opportunity in practice when he indicated in 1965 that the government aimed to provide a three-year post-primary course for all pupils. The achievement of wider educational opportunity became a key objective of the state's policy by 1965 and formed an essential part of the rationale for the introduction of free post-primary education.

Donogh O'Malley's dramatic initiative for the introduction of free post-primary education was an important landmark in the rapid expansion of second-level education, which identified him more firmly with the reform and expansion of the educational system than any other public figure. O'Malley's flamboyant political style certainly tended to overshadow the real achievements of his predecessors, especially Hillery.⁵ But the transformation of the educational system was not simply the product of free post-primary education: it was an evolving process, which began in the late 1950s and continued throughout the following decade. O'Malley's charismatic style sometimes

² *The Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part II*, p.193

³ Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, p.358

⁴ S. O'Connor, 'Post-Primary Education: Now and in the Future', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.233-249

⁵ Horgan, *Seán Lemass*, p.293

obscured the considerable continuity between his policy approach and the reforming initiatives pursued by his immediate predecessors. The Minister's dynamic approach greatly extended and deepened the ongoing process of educational reform and expansion. The transformation of the state's policy towards education, which had been initiated by Lemass and Hillery in 1959, reached its fullest extent under O'Malley. O'Malley's term of office saw the full development of a dynamic and ambitious policy for the expansion of the educational sector.

The department under successive ministers sought to develop strands of the educational system, which had traditionally been neglected by the state. The reforms initiated by Hillery and Colley were designed to upgrade vocational education through the establishment of common system of public examinations and a comprehensive curriculum at post-primary level. The foundation of the Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs) and the National Institute of Higher Education in Limerick underlined the commitment made by the government to the expansion of higher technical education by the early 1970s. The state also gave serious attention to the development of special education for the first time in the 1960s.⁶ The department under various ministers began to extend the limited educational facilities available for children suffering from various forms of disability, although the delivery of adequate programmes of special education in many areas remained a difficult challenge for the 1970s.

The transformation of the educational sector occurred with almost breathtaking speed. The department by the early 1970s was increasingly preoccupied with managing the rapid expansion of the educational system, which had been largely generated and sustained by the state's policies since 1959. The government approved the extension of the statutory school leaving age in 1970, but the decision to delay the implementation of the initiative until 1972 reflected increasing resistance by the Department of Finance to further expensive reforms in education. The success of the state's educational policy created a new series of challenges, notably the escalating costs of new educational services and the considerable discontent among many private educational interests at the department's methods of achieving educational reform. This widespread resentment at the department's approach, which was closely intertwined with opposition to the government's policy of rationalisation, led to a full-scale conflict between the state and established educational interests at secondary level in 1969. The ambitious reforming

⁶ Coolahan, *Irish Education*, pp.135-136

policy pursued by the state since the early 1960s reached its political and fiscal limits by the end of the decade. The increasing political difficulties and financial constraints encouraged Pádraig Faulkner to adopt a more cautious, low-key approach than his immediate predecessors. The creative policy developments and dramatic ministerial announcements, which had characterised the previous decade, gave way to the more prosaic business of implementing existing commitments and managing the ongoing transformation of the educational system.

Drivers of educational reform

The transformation of the Irish educational sector was shaped by persistent and far-reaching intervention on the part of the state. The constructive interaction between dynamic ministers, reforming officials and expert advisory groups gave a decisive impetus to the process of educational expansion. The relative influence exerted by key individuals or organisations is sometimes difficult to determine precisely and certainly varied widely between the different sectors of the educational system. There is little doubt that the senior officials of the Department of Education itself exerted a profound influence on the transformation of primary education. It is also evident that many of the reforms initiated by the officials were based on the critical analysis and comprehensive statistical data provided by *Investment*. The first incremental reforms in primary education were closely linked to the gradual reduction of the pupil-teacher ratio. Lynch initiated the abolition of the marriage ban in 1958 on the advice of the senior officials, who aimed to provide more trained teachers and to improve the pupil-teacher ratio. The department under Lynch took the first modest measures to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio, which were extended by his successors. Hillery sought to alleviate the extensive overcrowding in urban primary schools by authorising prefabricated classrooms, seeking to expand the supply of trained teachers and eventually limiting class sizes by departmental regulations. This attempt to limit class sizes remained a key preoccupation of the department under successive ministers throughout the 1960s, underlining the high priority given by the officials to the gradual improvement of the pupil-teacher ratio.

The re-organisation of primary education began in earnest with the amalgamation of small national schools, which was largely inspired by the conclusions of *Investment*. The policy of amalgamation delivered a radical redistribution of the traditional pattern of primary education within a decade of its introduction. The report of the survey team was invaluable in providing the basis for the new policy, but the commitment of the Minister

and key officials to amalgamation was crucial in securing its rapid implementation. Colley's steadfast defence of the new policy and his willingness to confront influential opponents of amalgamation publicly underlined the importance of effective ministerial leadership in promoting controversial educational reforms.

While amalgamation flowed directly from the analysis of the survey team, other reforms owed more to a general re-appraisal of outdated, traditional approaches by ministers and senior officials. The abolition of the Primary Certificate from 1968 was a major policy change, which helped to pave the way for radical changes in the curriculum. The prolonged campaign by the INTO for the abolition of the examination maintained a steady pressure on politicians and officials to change an antiquated system of assessment, but this lobbying alone was insufficient to change the state's approach. It was O'Malley who took the decision to abolish the examination, while the senior officials also favoured a fundamental re-appraisal of the state's traditional approach to the assessment of primary pupils by 1967. Seán MacGearailt, who viewed the abolition of the examination as a necessary part of a wider process of educational reform, secured the agreement of the managerial authorities to an alternative form of assessment.

The development and implementation of the new curriculum for national schools was perhaps the most far-reaching change initiated by the state in primary education in this period. The child-centred approach underlying the new programme, along with its attempt to create an integrated and flexible learning process, marked a radical departure from the rigidity of the previous curriculum. The introduction of the new curriculum in 1971 was carefully planned and implemented by senior officials and inspectors of the department, with little ministerial input in the development of the new programme. Lenihan and Faulkner certainly worked assiduously to promote the acceptance of the new curriculum but it was essentially a project designed and driven forward by the officials. The pro-active approach of the INTO accelerated and facilitated important educational reforms, especially the introduction of the new curriculum. But it is evident that primary education was an area in which effective ministerial leadership and the input of reforming officials combined successfully with the critical analysis of *Investment*.

The considerable changes in educational policy affecting the Irish language in this period were dictated largely by the distinctive approach of different ministers. Hillery initiated a quiet but far-reaching transformation of the Irish language policy in education, which was reflected in the reform of the system of recruitment for national teachers and in the reassessment of traditional methods of teaching the national language. The

established approach underpinning the language policy in primary education, namely teaching through the medium of Irish from the earliest possible level, was effectively dropped by the department under Hillery with little fanfare and no vocal opposition. Hillery himself played a decisive role in promoting this momentous policy change, which was greeted with serious misgivings by some, but by no means all, of the senior officials. Hillery's reforms diluted the traditional precedence given to Irish in primary education. The Minister also showed no enthusiasm for the more far-reaching recommendations of the Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, taking care to avoid any new commitments to the revival of Irish through the schools. Hillery showed greater scepticism concerning the policy of reviving the Irish language through the schools than his predecessors or his successor. Certainly Colley adopted a more conventional approach, introducing new methods of language teaching in an effort to reinvigorate the established policy. He shared with most senior officials a firm conviction that the schools should make an important contribution to restoring the national language. The initiatives taken by Colley promoted a process of experimentation in the teaching of oral Irish, which led to the introduction of new Irish language courses in all primary schools based on *Buntús Gaeilge*. The government's policy, which was outlined in its *White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish Language*, placed great emphasis on the development of oral Irish. Hillery and Colley both adhered to this policy, but each minister interpreted it in a very different fashion, just as they clearly disagreed over the contribution to be made by the educational system to the restoration of Irish. It is evident, however, that both men left a distinctive imprint on the Irish language policy in education, which changed very considerably from the traditional approach of the previous generation.

The expansion of second-level education was shaped particularly by the efforts of successive ministers and officials to establish a form of comprehensive post-primary education, which combined the vocational and academic streams in a single system. Hillery's policy statement on 20 May 1963 reflected a new commitment by the Irish state to the introduction of comprehensive education. The initiative marked a fundamental policy change from the practice of successive governments since the foundation of the Irish state. The direct intervention of the national government to establish a new form of post-primary school was unprecedented. The Minister's initiative was based in part on new thinking about second-level education within the department itself, which was illustrated by the *Forecast of Developments* drafted by the senior officials in January 1962 and by the report of the internal committee chaired by Dr. Duggan. The OECD also

played a significant role in promoting the policy changes announced by Hillery. The investigation of the training of technicians in Ireland undertaken by OECD examiners in 1962 exposed the considerable deficiencies in vocational and higher technical education.⁷ The 'confrontation' between the Minister and the OECD experts in January 1963 influenced Hillery's policy announcement in May. The OECD's strong recommendation for the development of post-primary and higher technical education shaped the Minister's proposal for the regional technical colleges. Hillery readily adopted the ideas of the senior officials and the OECD examiners, incorporating them into a wide-ranging new policy initiative. The rapid launch of the comprehensive schools plan was largely due to Lemass' skilful promotion of the initiative within the government. Hillery and the senior officials then pursued the new policy approach skilfully and tenaciously in tortuous negotiations with the Catholic Hierarchy, which reluctantly accepted the establishment of the first comprehensive schools in 1966. The implementation of the comprehensive schools' pilot project marked the beginning of a much broader attempt by the state to secure the establishment of a comprehensive system, on the basis of a pooling of resources between secondary and vocational schools.

Colley's appeal for collaboration between secondary school authorities and the VECs in January 1966 made the creation of an integrated post-primary system an essential part of the state's approach to educational reform. Colley's initiative was dictated by the reality that comprehensive schools alone would not deliver the reshaping of post-primary education sought by the Minister and senior officials, as the Catholic Hierarchy would not accept co-educational state schools as a general model for the future. But the process of general rationalisation envisaged by the Development Branch made minimal progress, due to the hostility of the secondary managerial authorities and the ASTI to state intervention in general and the policy of integration in particular. Colley's immediate successors, O'Malley and Lenihan, did not give the same priority to the restructuring of post-primary education and it fell mainly to the officials of the Development Branch to drive forward the policy of rationalisation. The failure of the process of voluntary rationalisation encouraged the officials to consider more formal arrangements for the integration of secondary and vocational education, which came to fruition with the initiative for community schools in 1970. The officials of the Development Branch played the central part in formulating the new initiative. Faulkner

⁷ OECD, *Training of Technicians in Ireland, OECD Reviews of National Policies for Science and Education*, pp.88-89 (OECD, Paris, 1964)

was deeply involved in the negotiations with various stakeholders in the educational system concerning the proposal for community schools, but the basic policy approach and indeed the specific concept itself predated his term of office. William Hyland initially raised the idea of the community school during the drafting process for *Investment*, although it did not feature in the report itself. This concept was taken up by the Development Branch, which numbered Hyland as one of its key figures, in the late 1960s as a means of achieving a comprehensive post-primary system, which would break down the barriers between academic and vocational education. O'Connor's controversial contribution to *Studies* in 1968 illustrated the Development Branch's concern to rationalise the traditional network of small secondary and vocational schools, which failed to offer a comprehensive curriculum. The initiative for community schools was the department's most determined and effective attempt to secure the integration of second-level education. The concept of the community school certainly shared important features of the comprehensive system in Britain and the USA. But the officials of the Development Branch were concerned to adapt the comprehensive model to meet the demands of the Irish educational system, having learned from the failure of their previous efforts to achieve collaboration at post-primary level. The community school was designed to deliver comprehensive education within the framework of an institutional model, which would be acceptable to established educational interests. The department's latest initiative was ultimately far more successful and influential than its previous attempts to reshape the post-primary sector. The rapid development of community schools throughout the following decade testified to the achievement of the officials in devising a workable new model for the expansion of second-level education and the implementation of a comprehensive curriculum.

The rapid expansion of second-level education in the late 1960s was, however, dictated especially by the introduction of free post-primary education. The implementation of the new schemes for free tuition and free transport delivered a dramatic upsurge in the level of participation in post-primary education. The limitations of the initiative should not be overlooked: it did relatively little to encourage low-income families to keep their children in full-time education beyond the school leaving age and tended to reinforce the existing pattern of second-level education, which was characterised by a traditional imbalance favouring secondary schools over the vocational sector. Despite its deficiencies, however, the reform initiated by O'Malley offered a viable means of expanding access to second-level education, which took account of the

realities of the Irish educational system. The Minister's policy announcement in September 1966 marked a new departure in the state's policy for educational expansion, although it was consistent with the government's long-term objectives. *Investment* helped to pave the way for the initiative by illuminating the severe social and geographical inequalities in participation at post-primary level. But free second-level education would not have occurred in such a rapid and ambitious fashion but for the crucial intervention of Donogh O'Malley. Although the senior officials were preparing plans for the phased introduction of free post-primary education, O'Malley exerted a decisive influence on the scope and timing of the initiative, so that the reform proved much more radical and far-reaching than the department or indeed the government had initially envisaged. The Minister's unauthorised policy announcement effectively compelled the government to accept the principle of free post-primary education in November 1966, although much difficult negotiation still lay ahead with the Department of Finance concerning specific aspects of the reform. It is also evident that the initiative was possible only because educational expansion was already enshrined as an essential national priority, largely at Lemass' instigation. While the Taoiseach was certainly cautious about the far-reaching nature of O'Malley's initiative, it was Lemass more than any other political figure who created the conditions necessary for the achievement of free post-primary education.

The dramatic impact of O'Malley's initiative for free second-level education was so great that it overshadowed the equally important advances in vocational and higher technical education, which occurred during the same period. The department under most ministers in this period made a sustained attempt to extend the scope and raise the status of vocational education. The new direction of the state's policy was underlined by the enactment of legislation in 1962, which provided for an enhanced level of financial support for the VECs. The establishment of a common Intermediate Certificate examination by 1966 and the revision of the Leaving Certificate to incorporate technical subjects from 1969 were important educational reforms, which opened up new opportunities for vocational school pupils. These reforms still did not place vocational schools on an equal level with secondary schools in attracting pupils, not least because they could not transform established public attitudes towards post-primary education. But the department acted effectively to facilitate the full development of the vocational sector, through increased financial support for the VECs and the adoption of significant curriculum reforms. The state's approach was undoubtedly influenced by the critical analysis of the academic bias in Irish education provided by the OECD examiners in

1962. The officials and inspectors of the department also played a leading part in the extension of traditionally academic public examinations to include practical and technical subjects. Perhaps most significantly, reforming ministers such as Hillery and Colley acted decisively to remove the traditional limitations imposed on vocational education by the state and the Catholic Hierarchy for the previous generation.

The most effective intervention made by the state in higher education in the 1960s involved the expansion of higher technical education, which extended educational opportunity and upgraded the status of technical education within the third-level sector. The foundation of the RTCs was one of the most significant educational advances delivered by the state in the entire period of economic expansion. This advance was due in no small measure to O'Malley's initiative in establishing the Steering Committee on Technical Education and to the influence exerted by the Minister on the state's policy for the expansion of higher technical education. The report of the Steering Committee presented a compelling rationale for the rapid development of the RTCs and provided a detailed educational brief for the new Colleges. Leading officials of the Department of Education employed the analysis of the Steering Committee to good effect in making a strong case that the state should finance the establishment of all the proposed colleges as a matter of urgency. O'Malley himself lobbied the Cabinet tenaciously and successfully to secure its agreement for the establishment of the new technical colleges in most regions of the country. The effective lobbying undertaken by O'Malley and senior officials of his department paved the way for the rapid development of higher technical education and the establishment of a new sector in third-level education by the early 1970s. Indeed O'Malley's influential role in the development of the RTCs was his most enduring contribution to higher education. The upgrading of technical education in this period marked a decisive break with the restrictive and tentative policy of the previous decade, which had neglected technical instruction at best and in some respects actively obstructed its development. The expansion of higher technical education, especially the creation of a new technological sector within third-level education, was the most radical reform undertaken by the state in the period of educational expansion.

The rapid and successful expansion of technical education at higher level contrasted sharply with the fate of O'Malley's cherished project for the university merger. The proposal for merger was very much a personal initiative promoted by O'Malley himself, which had not been contemplated by previous ministers or senior officials of the department. The Minister won the support of the government for his

proposal, especially by emphasizing the financial advantages to the state of a merger between the two universities in Dublin. But the initiative eventually came to nothing due to the profound scepticism of the university authorities in both Trinity College and University College Dublin. The main result of O'Malley's initiative on merger was the negative outcome of sidelining the Commission on Higher Education, whose lengthy deliberations were largely disregarded by the government. A committee of senior officials established by O'Malley in 1967 was more influential than the Commission in shaping the state's policy for higher education under his successors. The committee presented a critical commentary on the report of the Commission and dismissed several of its most significant recommendations, including the controversial proposal for New Colleges. The Higher Education Authority was established on the basis envisaged by the departmental committee, which advised that the new Authority should report to the Minister for Education: the Commission's recommendation that the new body should report to the Taoiseach was quietly sidelined. The committee's conclusions were generally accepted by successive ministers, with the result that the Commission exerted only a limited influence on the subsequent development of higher education.

The establishment of the HEA in 1968 and the passage of legislation giving statutory recognition to the new Authority in 1971 shaped the structure of third-level education for the following generation. The government provided for the delegation of significant executive functions to the HEA in dealing with the universities and other institutions of higher education, but gave the Authority no executive role with regard to the growing technological sector, which remained directly under the supervision of the Department of Education. While the HEA had a general advisory role for the entire sector, a binary structure of governance for third-level education was firmly established by the early 1970s. The officials of the department were intent on maintaining their ability to shape and control the development of higher technical education. The binary structure was a product of the conviction among politicians and officials that the state should remain directly responsible for the expansion of technical education.

The HEA played an important part in the expansion of higher education, not least in its recommendations for the establishment of the National Institute of Higher Education in Limerick. O'Malley and Lenihan were concerned to satisfy the political agitation for a new university in Limerick, which was effectively co-ordinated by the Limerick University Project Committee. The committee of senior officials also supported the establishment of a university college in Limerick, provided that the new institution

was willing to provide facilities for higher technological training. But the HEA exerted a decisive influence on the role and functions of the new institution of higher education in Limerick, which was not recognised as a university but enjoyed many of its characteristics, such as the provision of degree courses. The Authority provided the blueprint for the creation of a new type of third-level institution, which combined a strong technological orientation with a significant element based on more traditional Arts courses. The HEA, which was itself influenced by the example of the Polytechnics in Britain, made an invaluable contribution to the establishment of the NIHE in Limerick and the wider development of technical education at higher level.

Underlying patterns in the reshaping of Irish education

The far-reaching reforms of the 1960s could not have been achieved without a dramatic change in political attitudes towards the role of the state in the educational sector. The appointment of dynamic members of Fianna Fáil's younger generation to head the Department of Education certainly increased the political status of the department, which was widely regarded as a political backwater in the 1950s.⁸ De Valera began this practice in 1957 with the appointment of Jack Lynch as Minister for Education. But it was Lemass who made the Department of Education an important stage in the ministerial careers of younger Fianna Fáil politicians: Hillery received ministerial office for the first time as Minister for Education, while the department was Colley's first Cabinet portfolio. O'Malley had served as Minister for Health for little more than a year before he was transferred to Education. All three of the ministers appointed by Lemass undertook far-reaching reforming initiatives, which contributed significantly to the transformation of the educational system.

It is apparent, however, that politicians were not forcing unwelcome changes upon a reluctant corps of officials. The reforms would not have happened in such a rapid and far-reaching way without the active collaboration of the Department of Education. Most of the new initiatives could not have been implemented but for the essential contribution made by senior officials. The reforming approach adopted by the senior officials marked a radical change of direction. The department had pursued a low-key, tentative approach to the development of educational policy until the late 1950s, restricting its activity mainly to the implementation of existing state policies, such as the

⁸ S. Ó Buachalla, 'Investment In Education: Context, Content and Impact', *Administration*, vol.44, No.3 (Autumn 1996), 10-20

revival of the Irish language, and the administration of the segments of the educational system which were already within its remit. But the same department acted by 1971 to establish the central role of the state in the development and implementation of policy for almost every segment of the educational sector. This transformation may be partly explained by the elevation of a new generation of middle-ranking officials, who were discontented with the state's traditional approach, to senior positions within the department. Certainly the appointment of Seán O'Connor as head of the Development Branch in 1965 and of Tomás Ó Floinn as an Assistant Secretary in 1967 meant the promotion of officials who were deeply committed to educational reform.⁹ But a gradual changing of the guard does not fully explain the sweeping change in the department's approach. Dr. Ó Raifeartaigh, who served as Secretary until 1968 and his successor, Seán MacGearailt, were very experienced officials who had held senior positions within the department in the 1950s and remained in office throughout the following decade. But both Ó Raifeartaigh and MacGearailt embraced the new agenda of expansion, reform and rationalisation. MacGearailt was a constant presence throughout the 1960s in negotiations for the implementation of various reforms: he was singled out by Hillery as a key figure in delivering important changes at post-primary level.¹⁰ Ó Raifeartaigh's considerable diplomatic skill and his close connections with McQuaid proved invaluable to various ministers in negotiating the agreement of the Catholic Hierarchy to reforming initiatives. Ó Raifeartaigh was supportive of the reforms pursued by the government and worked effectively to minimise conflict with the Catholic Bishops in achieving the implementation of ministerial initiatives. The senior officials generally favoured more effective state intervention to expand the educational system by the early 1960s.

The far-reaching changes in the educational sector did not, however, all originate with the Department of Education, its political head or expert advisory groups. Lemass played a central part in initiating and directing the radical reform and expansion of Irish education during his term as Taoiseach. 'Expansion would not have happened except for Lemass', was Hillery's generous but essentially accurate comment on Lemass' role in promoting educational expansion.¹¹ The appointment of younger, more dynamic ministers to the Department of Education formed only a single aspect of Lemass' substantial influence on the politics of education during his term as Taoiseach. It was

⁹ O'Connor, *A Troubled Sky*, p.2, Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

¹⁰ Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

¹¹ Interview with Dr. Hillery, 25 February 2002

Lemass' interaction with successive reforming ministers, which provided much of the momentum for key policy changes. He not only provided essential support for initiatives proposed by various ministers, but also acted decisively to facilitate educational reform. Lemass both shared and helped to foster the growing conviction, which took hold among Irish political elites in the early 1960s, that education made an invaluable contribution to economic development. Lemass' vigorous advocacy of long-term educational planning and his decision to give priority to education in the allocation of scarce national resources created a favourable political context for the reforms of the period. Lemass made the development and expansion of the educational system, on the basis of coherent planning, a key policy priority for the Irish state. His successor, Jack Lynch, generally maintained Lemass' approach of giving priority to education in the late 1960s.

The Department of Finance also accepted the case for investment in education in this period. The officials of the department highlighted in *Economic Development* the potential contribution of vocational education to agricultural training.¹² John McInerney of the department's Economic Development Branch endorsed the OECD proposal for the pilot study of long-term educational needs at the Washington Conference. Whitaker also played a significant role in facilitating the rapid initiation of the OECD study, by securing the agreement of the relevant departments to the pilot study in 1962. The senior officials of the department were supportive of educational expansion as an economic imperative, devoting considerable attention to education in drafting the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*. The Department of Finance certainly gave a far higher priority to educational expansion in the 1960s than they had in the previous decade. But there were also definite limits to the department's willingness to support expensive educational initiatives. The Minister for Finance, Jim Ryan, was critical of the proposal for comprehensive schools in 1963 and Hillery sought Lemass' assistance to overcome the department's reservations. More significantly, Whitaker was appalled at O'Malley's policy announcement on free post-primary education and the Department of Finance sought unsuccessfully to modify the proposals or at least delay the introduction of the initiative. Moreover the department's tolerance for costly educational reforms was entirely eroded by 1970, when its officials made a strong case against the early extension of the school leaving age. The Department of Finance became much more critical of further initiatives in education by the early 1970s, especially due to the escalating costs of

¹² T.K. Whitaker, *Economic Development*, pp.112-113 (Dublin, 1958)

previous reforms. There is little doubt, however, that senior officials of the department made a significant contribution to the transformation of the state's educational policy in the early 1960s, although they may not have fully approved the results of the new policy by the end of the decade.

The opposition parties also formed part of the new political consensus, which regarded educational reform as a key element in the economic and social development of the nation. The radical left-wing deputies, Noel Browne and Jack McQuillan, were the most persistent and effective parliamentary critics of the state's minimalist policy in the 1950s: it was their motion on the school leaving age which set the scene for Lemass' intervention to clarify the government's educational policy. The Labour Party was the first of the main political parties to endorse a comprehensive programme of reform for the educational sector, when they launched their policy document *Challenge and Change in Education* in 1963.¹³ Labour also proved willing to support controversial reforming policies adopted by the government, notably the amalgamation of small national schools. Fine Gael was less pro-active than either the Labour Party or the government for much of the decade, reacting uneasily to some of the policy changes by the state and even opposing the policy of amalgamation. But Fine Gael also adopted a detailed programme for reform in its policy document on education in 1966, presenting its own scheme for free post-primary education.¹⁴ The Fine Gael policy had little influence on the department's plans, but it certainly reinforced the political imperative for the government to support O'Malley's initiative for the transformation of second-level education. The opposition parties or representatives usually exerted only a marginal influence on the state's policy, although their activity sometimes dictated the timing of ministerial initiatives and usually reinforced the political pressure on the government to pursue wide-ranging educational reforms. Moreover the increased political competition concerning educational reform both reflected greater public interest in education in the 1960s and established the importance of education as a central issue within the political arena.

The transformation of the educational system involved profound changes in the balance of power between the state and the private educational authorities. The churches and private managerial bodies were obliged to adapt to the reforming policies of successive ministers. While no minister and very few officials sought the secularisation of the educational system, the role of the state in the development of the sector was

¹³ The Labour Party, *Challenge and Change in Education* (The Labour Party, Dublin, 1963)

¹⁴ Fine Gael, *Policy for a Just Society 3, Education*, pp.32-33 (Fine Gael, Dublin, 1966)

greatly enhanced. The majority of private educational interests had little influence on the policy changes promoted by the Department of Education. The Catholic managerial bodies and the ASTI were particularly discontented at their inability to affect the department's policy of rationalisation and became increasingly opposed to the state's agenda in education. The Catholic Hierarchy, which was consulted on most of the reforms, lobbied effectively to maintain the church's substantial influence in the management and ownership of the secondary system. But the Hierarchy usually had no influence on the initial formulation of the state's policies in this period and tended to react to ministerial initiatives rather than seeking to develop alternative proposals of its own. Despite its suspicion of many of the specific initiatives proposed by the government, the Hierarchy proved willing to accept sustained and assertive state intervention in education.

It was also apparent, however, that not all private interests pursued an essentially reactive approach to the challenges of educational expansion. The Secondary Education Committee, representing the Protestant churches, took a pro-active approach to educational reform and collaborated with the department's attempts to re-organise post-primary education. The SEC was relatively successful in its negotiations with the department in the late 1960s, securing a separate scheme of assistance for Protestant pupils as part of O'Malley's initiative for free second-level education. Similarly the INTO secured the implementation of several long-standing objectives in this period, notably the withdrawal of the marriage ban and the abolition of the Primary Certificate examination. The INTO, which consistently advocated large-scale educational reform, exerted considerable influence on the government's policy in primary education.

It was, however, the pro-active reforming approach adopted by the state which marked the most decisive change from the political inertia and conservative policies of the previous generation. Leading politicians and senior officials considered that an innovative educational policy was essential not only to overcome long-standing problems in the educational system but also to create the necessary conditions for continued economic and social progress. The state's approach to education had changed beyond all recognition by the early 1970s and the profound impact of the policy changes would continue to shape the educational system for the following decade. The transformation of the state's educational policy between 1959 and 1971 provided the essential impetus for the radical reform and reshaping of the Irish educational sector.

Appendix 1: Educational expenditure by the state

Table 1: Net current expenditure by the Exchequer on primary, post-primary and higher education: 1950-60 (selected years)

Year	Primary Education (£)	Secondary Education (£)	Vocational Education (£)	Universities and Colleges (£)	Total (£)
1950-51	6,354,093	1,041,148	696,218	481,724	8,573,183
1954-55	8,154,013	1,678,186	1,012,746	567,492	11,412,437
1956-57	9,054,911	1,811,506	1,104,622	678,547	12,649,586
1957-58	9,110,250	2,304,607	1,128,047	661,180	13,204,084
1958-59	9,178,442	2,184,027	1,241,943	692,180	13,296,592
1959-60	10,258,765	2,483,216	1,364,101	948,560	15,054,642

Report of the Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts, 1960-61 to 1971-72

Table 2: Net current expenditure by the Exchequer on primary, post-primary and higher education: 1960-72

Year	Primary Education (£)	Secondary Education (£)	Vocational Education (£)	Universities and Colleges (£)	Total (£)
1960-61	10,498,584	2,698,875	1,497,545	984,017	15,679,021
1961-62	11,120,252	2,947,592	1,659,565	1,069,680	16,797,089
1962-63	12,247,928	3,461,272	2,078,228	1,684,380	19,471,808
1963-64	13,686,332	3,691,235	2,146,590	2,374,771	21,898,928
1964-65	16,517,853	5,241,770	2,437,245	3,223,462	27,420,330
1965-66	18,609,690	5,846,209	3,717,991	2,706,738	30,880,628
1966-67	19,335,682	6,746,161	3,605,138	3,364,138	33,051,119
1967-68	20,212,599	10,285,294	4,567,627	3,697,456	38,762,976
1968-69	20,635,273	13,835,555	5,738,856	6,324,251	46,563,935
1969-70	23,903,619	16,720,742	9,546,117	7,721,246	57,891,724
1970-71	27,741,246	19,789,742	10,695,099	8,206,892	66,432,979
1971-72	31,880,044	22,035,008	12,794,214	11,202,935	77,912,201

Report of the Committee of Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts, 1960-61 to 1971-72

The above tables illustrate the increasing level of current expenditure allocated to the principal branches of the educational system by the central government in this period: these tables do not include capital spending or expenditure by the VECs based on funding from the rates.

Table 3: The Expansion of the Primary School Building Programme 1956-57 to 1964-65

<u>Year (to 31st March)</u>	<u>Number of New Schools sanctioned</u>	<u>Grants allocated by state to programme (£)</u>
1956-57	53	1,042,602
1957-58	55	1,096,486
1958-59	81	1,249,998
1959-60	73	1,499,999
1960-61	74	1,600,000
1961-62	104	3,146,320
1962-63	87	2,135,823
1963-64	112	3,098,031
1964-65	154	4,086,352

Source: *Tuarascáil, Táblaí Staitistic, An Roinn Oideachais, 1964-65* (Dublin, 1966)

Table 4: Educational Expenditure as a proportion of overall government expenditure 1961-62 to 1971-72

<u>Year</u>	<u>Current Educational Expenditure (£million)</u>	<u>Current Share of all Public Current Expenditure (%)</u>	<u>Capital Educational Expenditure (£million)</u>	<u>Capital Share of all Public Capital Expenditure (%)</u>
1961-62	17.36	9.37	2.15	4.22
1962-63	19.45	9.91	3.06	5.20
1963-64	21.01	9.81	4.32	6.65
1964-65	26.18	10.42	5.62	7.03
1965-66	28.70	10.32	6.91	7.88
1966-67	33.58	11.06	5.66	6.85
1967-68	34.73	10.28	8.77	8.69
1968-69	40.46	10.39	11.59	8.87
1969-70	56.46	12.33	14.16	9.02
1970-71	63.60	11.58	12.93	8.23
1971-72	76.12	11.79	13.46	7.54

Source: National Economic and Social Council, *Educational Expenditure in Ireland*, p.38 (NESC, Dublin, 1975)

The figures for educational expenditure drawn from NESC are not directly comparable to the amounts recorded by the Public Accounts Committee, as they are calculated on a different basis, although both reflect the upward trend in public expenditure on education.

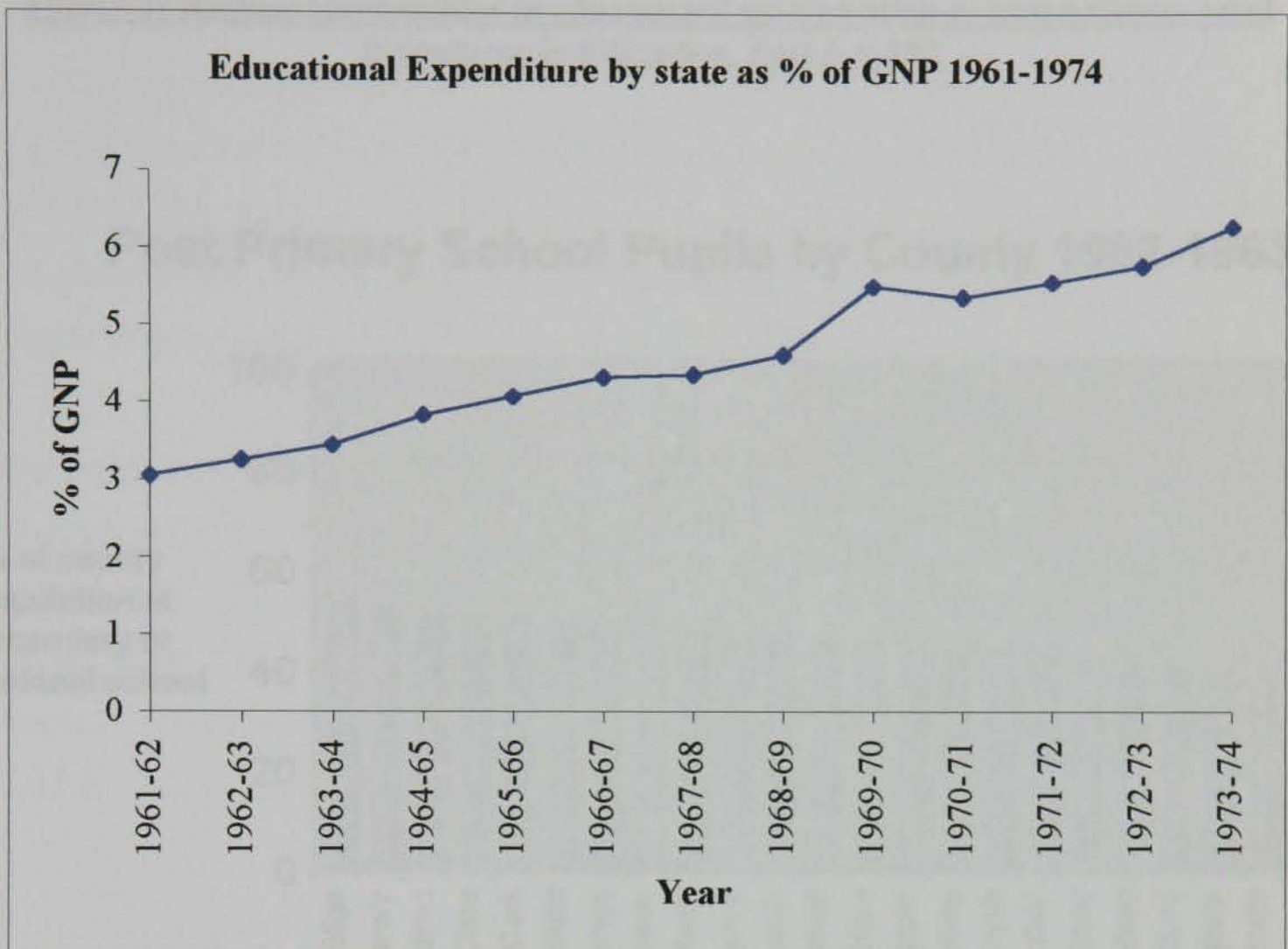
Table 5: Educational expenditure as a proportion of Gross National Product over a ten year period: 1961-62 to 1971-72

Year	Percentage of GNP
1961-62	3.05
1962-63	3.26
1963-64	3.45
1964-65	3.85
1965-66	4.09
1966-67	4.34
1967-68	4.38
1968-69	4.64
1969-70	5.53
1970-71	5.39
1971-72	5.58

Source: National Economic and Social Council, *Educational Expenditure in Ireland*, p.38 (NESC, Dublin, 1975)

Tables 4 and 5 display all educational expenditure by the Exchequer over a ten-year period. Figure 1 (below) illustrates the doubling of educational expenditure as a proportion of GNP over twelve years between 1961-62 and 1973-74.

Figure 1

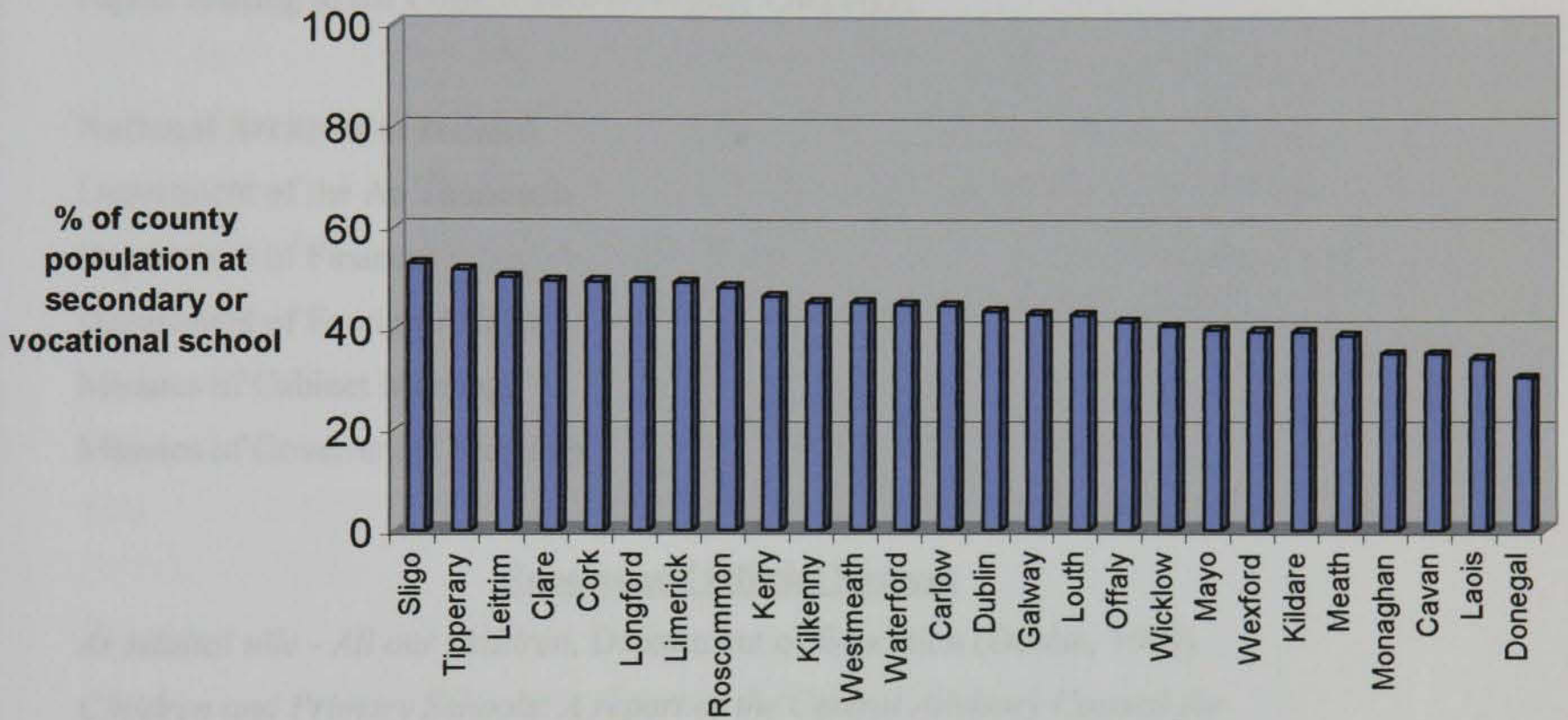


Source: National Economic and Social Council, *Educational Expenditure in Ireland*, p.38 (NESC, Dublin, 1975)

Appendix 2

Figure 2: Regional inequalities in educational participation at post-primary level
Investment in Education, Part 1, p.157

Post Primary School Pupils by County 1962-1963



BIBLIOGRAPHY

State archives and records

Department of Education

Circulars for Primary Schools 1957-70, Department of Education

Circulars for Secondary Schools 1957-70, Department of Education

M-Files 1957-70, Department of Education

Progress reports 1957-66, Department of Education

Papers relating to the Commission on Higher Education

National Archives of Ireland

Department of the An Taoiseach

Department of Finance

Department of Foreign Affairs

Minutes of Cabinet Meetings

Minutes of Government Meetings

Reports and Official Sources

Ár ndaltaí uile - All our children, Department of Education (Dublin, 1969)

Children and Primary Schools: A report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England), vol.1 (London, 1966)

The Council of Education, *(1) the Function of the Primary School (2) the Curriculum to be Pursued in the Primary School*, (Dublin, 1954)

The Council of Education, *The Curriculum of the Secondary School*, (Dublin, 1962)

Dáil Debates

Department of Education, *County Report for Co. Cavan, Projected Organisation for Post-Primary Education: General Principles*, 1966

Department of Education, *Notes on the Organisation of Secondary Education in a Sample Rural Area*, internal document, 1967

Report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs of the Constituent Colleges of the National University of Ireland (Dublin, 1959)

Report of the Commission on Higher Education 1960-67, vol.1 (Dublin, 1967)

Report of the Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language (Dublin, 1964)

Report of the Committee on the Constitution Pr. 9817 (Dublin, 1967)

HEA, *First Report 1968-69* (Dublin, 1969)

HEA, *Report to the Minister for Education on university reorganisation with special reference to the projected formation of a single University of Dublin and to the alternative solution put forward jointly by the National University of Ireland and Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin, 1972)

Investment in Education, Report of the survey team presented to the Minister for Education in October 1962 (Dublin, 1965)

NCEA, *First Annual Report 1972-73* (Dublin, 1973)

NESC, *Educational Expenditure in Ireland*, no.12 (Dublin, 1975)

NIEC, *Comments on Investment in Education* (Dublin, 1966)

OECD, *Country Reports: The Mediterranean Regional Project: An experiment in planning by six countries* (Paris, 1965)

OECD, *Reviews of national policies for science and education: Training of Technicians in Ireland* (Paris, 1964)

OECD, *Review of national policies for education: Ireland* (Paris, 1991)

Report of Oireachtas Committee on Public Accounts, Appropriation Accounts 1957-72 (Dublin, 1957-74)

Economic Development (Dublin, 1958)

Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part I (Dublin, 1963)

Second Programme for Economic Expansion, Part II (Dublin, 1964)

Third Programme, Economic and Social Development 1969-72 (Dublin, 1969)

Seanad Debates

Steering Committee on Technical Education, *Report to the Minister for Education on Regional Technical Colleges*, (Dublin, 1967)

Thom's Directory of Ireland

Tuarascáil, An Roinn Oideachais, 1957-58 to 1971-72

White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish language (Dublin, 1965)

Religious and Diocesan Archives

Dublin Diocesan Archives (DDA), Archbishop's House, Drumcondra, Dublin 9

- *Papers of Dr. John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin: correspondence and papers*

- Minutes of the Irish Hierarchy, 1957-71

The Irish Jesuit Archives, Leeson St., Dublin 2

Archives of the Irish Christian Brothers, St. Mary's Province, 274 North Circular Rd.
Dublin 1

- Minutes and Correspondence of the TBA
- Minutes and papers relating to the Christian Brothers' Education Committee

Archives of the Irish Christian Brothers, St. Helen's Province, York Rd, Dún Laoghaire

- Correspondence of the TBA
- Notes and correspondence of the Provincial, St. Helen's Province

Representative Church Body Library, Braemor Park, Churchtown, Dublin 14

- *Journal of the Proceedings of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland*, ed. J.L.B. Deane, 1957-72
- *Church of Ireland Gazette*

Archives of teaching unions and managerial associations

ASTI, ASTI House, Winetavern St., Dublin 8

- *Official Programme for Annual Convention*, 1957-71
- Minutes of Standing Committee and Central Executive Committee 1957-71

Central Secretariat of Secondary Schools, Emmet House, Dundrum, Dublin 14

- CCSS, Minutes of Standing Committee and Central Executive Committee
- CMCSS, Minutes and Correspondence, Annual Reports of CMCSS

INTO, 35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1

- Reports of the Central Executive Committee 1957-71
- *Official Programme for Annual Congress*, 1957-71

IVEA, Annual Reports 1957-71, National Library of Ireland

TUI, 73 Orwell Rd. Rathgar, Dublin 6

- Reports for the Annual Congress of the VTA 1960-71

Publications by political parties and research groups

Fine Gael, *Policy for a Just Society 3* (Dublin, 1966)

Labour, *Challenge and Change in Education* (Dublin, 1963)

Tuairim, *Educating Towards A United Europe* (Dublin Research Group, Tuairim and European Teachers' Association, 1961)

Tuairim, *Irish Education* (London Research Group, Tuairim, 1962)

Tuairim, University College Dublin and The Future: A Memorandum From A Research Group of Tuairim, Dublin Branch, on the Report of the Commission on Accommodation Needs of the Constituent Colleges of the National University of Ireland (Dublin Research Group, Tuairim, 1960)

University Archives and Libraries

Archives Department, UCD (UCDA)

Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh Papers, (P51)

Fianna Fáil Papers, Minutes of the Parliamentary Party, (P176)

General Richard Mulcahy Papers, (P7/C/152, P7/C/154)

Newspapers and Journals

Administration

The Clonmel Nationalist and Munster Advertiser

The Evening Press

Gairm

Hibernia

The Limerick Leader

Irish Educational Studies

The Irish Independent

The Sunday Press

The Irish Press

The Irish Times

Oideas

Roscommon Herald

The Secondary Teacher

Studies

Studies in Education

The Sunday Independent

Secondary Works

Akenson, Donald H., *The Irish education experiment* (London, 1970)

Akenson, Donald H., *A mirror to Kathleen's face* (Montreal and London, 1975)

Barrington, Thomas J., 'Whatever Happened to Irish Government', in F. Litton (ed.), *Unequal Achievement: The Irish Experience 1957-82*, pp.89-110 (Dublin, 1982)

Barry, David, 'The Involvement and Impact of a Professional Interest Group', in D.G. Mulcahy and Denis O'Sullivan, *Irish Educational Policy*, pp.133-162 (Dublin, 1989)

- Bonel-Elliott, Imelda, *La politique de l'enseignement du second degré en république d'Irlande 1963-93*, unpublished Ph.D thesis (Sorbonne, Paris, 1994)
- Bonel-Elliott, Imelda, 'The role of the Duggan report (1962) in the reform of the Irish education system', *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), pp.42-60
- Browne, Noel, *Against the Tide* (Dublin, 1986)
- Buckley, Denis, 'Secondary Teacher (2)', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.296-304
- Chubb, Basil, 'The University Merger', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), pp.130-137
- Clancy, Patrick, 'The Evolution of Policy in Third-Level Education', in D.G. Mulcahy and Denis O'Sullivan, *Irish Educational Policy*, pp.99-132 (Dublin, 1989)
- Clancy, Patrick, 'Investment in Education: the equality perspective: progress and possibilities', *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), pp.28-41
- Coolahan, John, *Irish education: its history and structure* (IPA, Dublin, 1981)
- Coolahan, John, *The ASTI and post-primary education in Ireland 1909-84* (ASTI, Dublin, 1984)
- Coolahan, John, 'Educational Policy for National Schools 1960-85', in D.G. Mulcahy and Denis O'Sullivan (eds.), *Irish Educational Policy*, pp.27-75 (Dublin, 1989)
- Coolahan, John, 'Dr. P.J. Hillery - Minister for Education', *Journal for ASTI Convention*, Easter 1990, pp.15-19
- Cooney, John, *The crozier and the Dáil: church and state 1922-1986* (Cork, 1986)
- Cooney, John, *John Charles McQuaid: Ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin, 1999)
- De Buitléar, Séamus, 'Curaclam Nua le hAghaidh na Bunscoile', *Oideas*, no.3 (Autumn 1969), pp.4-12
- Donoghue, Denis, 'Comment', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), pp.160-164
- Donoghue, Denis, 'University Professor', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.284-288
- Doyle, Eileen, *Leading the Way, Managing Voluntary Secondary Schools* (Emmet House, Dublin, 2000)
- Foster, Roy, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (Penguin, 1988)

- Garvin, Thomas, *Preventing the Future: why was Ireland so poor for so long* (Dublin, 2004)
- Horgan, John, 'Educational policy and public interest', *Secondary Teacher*, vol.9, no.1 (Spring 1980), pp.9-10
- Horgan, John, *Seán Lemass: The Enigmatic Patriot* (Dublin, 1997)
- Hyland, Áine, 'The Curriculum of Vocational Education 1930-66', in John Logan (ed.), *Teachers' Union: The TUI and its forerunners 1899-1994*, pp.131-156 (Dublin, 1999)
- Hyland, Áine and Milne, Kenneth (eds.), *Irish Educational Documents vol.2* (CICE, Dublin, 1992)
- Jones, Valerie, 'Coláiste Moibhí - The Last Preparatory College', *Irish Educational Studies*, vol.15 (1996), pp.101-111
- Kennedy, Michael and O'Halpin, Eunan, *Ireland and the Council of Europe: From Isolation towards Integration* (Council of Europe Publishing, 2000)
- Lee, Joseph, *Ireland 1912-85: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989)
- Lee Joseph and Ó Tuathaigh, Gearóid, *The Age of de Valera* (Dublin, 1982)
- Logan, John, 'All the Children: The Vocational School and Educational Reform', in John Logan (ed.), *Teachers' Union: The TUI and its forerunners 1899-1994*, pp.276-303 (Dublin, 1999)
- Logan, John, 'The Making of a Modern Union: The Vocational Teachers' Association 1954-1973', in John Logan (ed.), *Teachers' Union: The TUI and its forerunners 1899-1994*, pp.157-203 (Dublin, 1999)
- Lyons, F.S.L, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1973)
- Macnamara, John, *Bilingualism and primary education: A study of the Irish experience* (Edinburgh, 1966)
- MacHale, J.P., 'The University Merger', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), pp.122-129
- McCarthy, Charles, *The Decade of Upheaval: Irish trade unions in the nineteen sixties* (IPA, Dublin, 1974)
- McCarthy, Charles, *The Distasteful Challenge* (Dublin, 1968)
- McCarthy, Charles, 'Vocational Teachers', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.270-273

- McDonagh, Kathleen (ed.), *Reports on the draft curriculum for primary schools*
(Dublin, 1969)
- McElligott, T.J., *Education in Ireland* (Dublin, 1966)
- Meenan, James, 'The University In Dublin', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968),
pp.314-320
- Milne, Kenneth, 'A Church of Ireland view', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968),
pp.261-269
- Milne, Kenneth, 'The role of the Protestant school', *Studies in Education*, vol.11, no.1
(Spring 1995), pp.14-22
- Moody, T.W., 'Comment', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967), pp.173-175
- Murphy, John, A., *Ireland in the twentieth century* (Dublin, 1975).
- Ó Buachalla, Séamus, *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1988)
- Ó Buachalla, Séamus, 'Investment in education: context, content and impact',
Administration, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996), pp.10-20
- Ó Ceallaigh, Tadhg, *Coláiste Phádraig: St. Patrick's College, Centenary Booklet,
1875-1975* (St. Patrick's College, Dublin, 1975)
- O'Connell, T.J., *A History of the INTO 1868-1968* (INTO, Dublin, 1969)
- O'Connor, Seán, 'Post-primary education now and in the future', *Studies*, vol.57, no.3
(Autumn 1968), pp.233-249
- O'Connor, Seán, *A Troubled Sky: reflections on the Irish education scene 1957-68*
(Dublin, 1986)
- Ó Cuilleanáin, T.A., 'Special Education in Ireland', *Oideas*, no.1 (Autumn 1968),
pp.5-17
- O'Donoghue, Martin, 'Investment in Education: the economist's view: great change,
little change', *Administration*, vol.44, no.3 (Autumn 1996),
pp.21-27
- O'Flaherty, Louis, *Management and Control in Irish Education: the post-primary
experience* (Dublin, 1992)
- O'Malley, Donogh, 'University Education in Dublin: Statement of Minister for
Education - 18 April 1967', *Studies*, vol.56, no.2 (Summer 1967),
pp.113-121
- O'Meara, John, *Reform in Education* (Dublin, 1958)
- O'Raifeartaigh, Tarlach, 'Some Impressions of Education in the USA', *Studies*,
vol.50, no.1 (Spring 1961), pp.57-74

- Parkes, Susan, *Kildare Place – A history of the Church of Ireland Training College 1811-1969* (Dublin, 1983)
- Randles, Eileen, *Post-primary education in Ireland 1957-70* (Dublin, 1975)
- Troddyn, Peter, 'Editorial', *Studies* vol.57, no.3 (Autumn 1968), pp.226-232
- Troddyn, Peter, 'Editorial', *Studies*, vol.59, no.4 (Winter 1970), pp.337-376
- Tussing, Dale, *Irish educational expenditure – past, present and future* (Dublin, 1978)
- Whyte, J.H., *Church and state in modern Ireland 1923-1970* (Dublin, 1971)

Interviews or correspondence

Professor John Coolahan

Mr. Barry Desmond

Mr. James Dukes

Dr. Patrick Hillery

Professor Martin O'Donoghue

Mr. Thomas Leahy

Dr. Séamus Ó Buachalla

Mr. Tony Ó Dálaigh

Professor Áine Hyland
