

GTCNI Annual Lecture 2012

Should we
ignore our past?

Reflections on the Development of
Teacher Education in Ireland



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Reflections on Teacher Education in Ireland

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Undoubtedly a considerable honour, an invitation to reflect on our past in teacher education in order to give some historical context to contemporary issues, presents a very daunting and challenging task. The risks on a journey through aspects of our educational past, like journeys through almost any aspect of our history are obvious. I say this because, much as we might like to believe that we are leaving that past behind and much as we might try to ignore that past or at least not allow that past negatively influence our thinking about the future, it would be foolish to believe that we can be ever totally free of its shadow.

Occasionally, therefore, a journey such as I am inviting you take as part of this evening's discussion, may help highlight salient points that

will challenge us, or at least warn us of what we must be wary as we discuss possibilities for the future. I am taking this particular journey because my academic career was devoted to teacher education, and it included an interest in the history of our educational systems. Indeed, I have returned to teacher education through my current involvement in an action research project with colleagues at the UU and a number of East African universities, among other overseas commitments. Secondly, I am taking this journey because, in teacher education, we are in a debate the outcome of which will shape our future for the next several decades.

I begin my lecture by quoting some lines from one of our renowned eighteenth century poets, Oliver Goldsmith, lines perhaps familiar to many of you. They are from Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, and they describe a village schoolmaster of that period.

*A man severe he was, and stern to view;
I knew him well, and every truant knew;
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face;
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
Full well the busy whisper circling round
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned;
Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught;
The love he bore to learning was in fault;
The village all declared how much he knew;
'Twas certain he could write, and cypher too;
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
And even the story went that he could gauge.*

*In arguing too the parson owned his skill,
For even tho' vanquished, he could argue still;
While words of learned length, and thundering sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around,
And still they gazed and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew.¹*

Some of these images would well apply to teachers today.

There is no hint in Goldsmith's gentle and humorous characterization about this multi-skilled schoolmaster's professional education. Almost certainly, he had received none. He may have been a graduate, more likely a university drop-out, a former clerical student, a bankrupt businessman, or simply a self-educated person who, for want of anything better to do, had turned to teaching. He had provided his own initial teacher education (ITE) and his own continuing professional development (CPD), while the assessment of his worth was probably reflected in the numbers that attended his lessons. To judge from what he wrote, Goldsmith's schoolmaster seems to have attracted and retained a good attendance.

Quite apart from the fact that I like the idyllic picture of school life Goldsmith paints, I quote these lines at the outset of our journey for the rather tenuous reason that they were written at a time of a growing debate about the state of education in Ireland. For the period, the country was reasonably well provided for with schools, though of very varying standards. These schools were conducted under a variety of auspices, some with genuinely educational aims in mind, some purely mercenary, some motivated by the highest Christian ideals, others more determined to use their schools to save 'immortal souls' from the alleged dangers of attending those of rival Christian groups. The schools were staffed by teachers, not all the benign or learned figures Goldsmith portrays and, of course, large sections of the population, the 'lower classes' as contemporary language termed them, were hardly catered for at all.

But whether it was the persistence of a thirst for learning associated with a more ancient Ireland or more immediate and pragmatic demands, as the eighteenth century drew to a close, there was significant pressure for a more orderly and more general provision of education. Included in that pressure were firm ideas about the preparation of teachers for what many reformers hoped would be a network of schools open to all, catering equally for pupils from all denominations.

This latter issue was seen as particularly relevant given that the situation in the country was, like our present situation, one of a society emerging from a bitter conflict. The United Irishmen's uprisings had marked the closing years of the eighteenth century and had seen hundreds lose their lives, others dispossessed and several parts of the country in considerable unrest. In the aftermath of the uprisings had come the Act of Union and continuing demands for equality of citizenship for all, particularly demands for equality between members of the country's Christian denominations.

Alongside that debate, the provision of education was a particularly live issue. Even before the uprisings, several official reports on the future of education had been compiled.

¹ Oliver Goldsmith, 'The Deserted Village', reproduced in the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. 1, pp. 447-53, General Editor, Séamus Deane, Field Day Publications, 1991.

However, no surprise here, while most repeated each other to a considerable extent, once completed the reports lay on shelves not to be implemented. Interestingly, a plan that might have been implemented was contained in one of the last bills laid before the Irish Parliament just prior to its dissolution in 1800. Entitled 'A Bill for the improvement of the education of the lower orders in this kingdom',² it contained many of the plans that would be adopted by the government some thirty years later. But the Act of Union marked its death-knell. It would not be the only time, as events over the next two centuries would show, that wider political events would impact negatively on initiatives designed to reform aspects of education in Ireland.

Before turning to discuss actual developments, a word on teacher education at the time. The dominant model of teacher education was essentially what we call the 'apprenticeship' model in which intending teachers acquire their skills from 'master' teachers. A significant development in this approach was the establishment of 'model' schools in which teachers of quality were employed to exemplify the best teaching methods using the best available facilities and equipment of the time.

Model schools usually combined both elementary schools and initial teacher training institutions. Selected students or pupil teachers, as they were commonly termed, observed how classes were conducted, undertook practice teaching and received instruction from the headmaster or headmistress before and after normal school hours.

In Ireland, model schools existed from the late seventeen hundreds, but their inclusion within one particular scheme to support schools for the general population heralded a significant step in their later development. In 1811, the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland was established.³ Better known as the Kildare Place Society from its location in the city of Dublin, it was established by a group of philanthropically minded businessmen to support educational opportunities mainly for children from poor backgrounds. The Society's policy was to assist schools of all denominations and none. For a time, the man who was to lead Catholic Ireland in the following decades, Daniel O'Connell was a prominent member. The Society attracted a government grant which was used to support the construction of school buildings, for the publication of textbooks, for the payment of teachers, for an inspectorate, and for the training of teachers in model schools – quite a comprehensive and progressive range of provisions.

The Society's model schools were, as it stated, 'intended to exemplify the system of Education recommended by the Society, and also to serve as a seminary for training Schoolmasters'.⁴ Male and female model schools were established and both quickly gained a very positive reputation. However, as with other initiatives that would follow, their history and that of the Society generally was to be marked by the same religious and political controversies that would engulf our education systems on and off throughout the next 150 years, controversies that would instil a defensiveness and an exclusiveness in those systems, traces of which have lingered to quite recent times.

That exclusiveness was the product of a sense of obligation to shape and mould young minds and hearts in one particular Christian tradition or other, while that defensiveness resulted from fears of contamination by those of other traditions, fears heightened by allegations of

² 'A Bill for the improvement of the education of the lower orders in this kingdom', see Edward F. Burton, 'Richard Lovell Edgeworth's education bill of 1799', in *Irish Journal of Education*, 1979, viii, pp.24-33.

³ 'The Kildare Place Society', *Irish Educational Documents*, Vol. 1, p.83, edited by Áine Hyland and Kenneth Milne, C.I.C.E., 1987.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.84.

proselytising against some school providers and of a failure to respect the rights of children and parents whatever their religious denomination. Indeed, in early nineteenth century Ireland, inter-church rivalry was intense.

Expressing that rivalry, an inter-church pamphlet war kept printing houses busy while, more openly, the country witnessed many public disputations between clergymen from different denominations, all eagerly and vociferously attempting to prove the veracity of their own church's teachings and the errors of their opponents. Little wonder schools would also become locations for religious controversy.

Allegations of proselytising activities led to a major government enquiry and, soon afterwards, to the virtual demise of the Kildare Place Society and, then, to the establishment of one of the first major government initiatives in education in the English speaking world.

In 1831 the government appointed Board of Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, assumed responsibility for the work of the Society. Looking at the Board's plans today one would have to say that, like those of the Society it replaced, these were also extremely ambitious and quite comprehensive. Not only did the Board intend to support the development of elementary education, it intended to establish schools that would provide training in agricultural, maritime and industrial skills as well as a network of prison and workhouse schools and, more relevant to our interests, it planned a network of model schools as part of its teacher training programme - one in each county. The Board also planned to establish an inspectorate and to publish school text books. Indeed, when it did publish, its texts were to be eagerly sought by school systems as far away as Australia, North America and South Africa.

A unique feature of the model schools was that, unlike ordinary national schools with their local patrons, model schools would be under the Commissioners' direct management. In other words, they would be under an indirect form of government control. A second feature was their number, deemed necessary if ordinary schools catering for a rapidly growing population were to be adequately supplied with trained teachers. While thirty-two were planned, twenty-eight schools would actually be established, each consisting of a boys, a girls and an infants department. Third, they would be equipped with the latest facilities and teaching aids, as well as being housed in many cases in buildings of particularly high architectural standards. Fourth, and not the least of their characteristics, was that as well as exemplifying the best in terms of educational practice, model schools were to exemplify the anticipated benefits of 'mixed' education, i.e. the schools were to be interdenominational in their intakes, have a 'mixed' staff and be open to visitations from all local clergy. While this was a much-debated and controversial aim at the time, it had sufficient support across all denominations such that the Commissioners believed it to be achievable. Like today's champions of integrated schools, advocates of the model schools argued their potential to contribute to peace and harmony between the country's denominational communities.

However, after a generally positive start, and as their number increased in post-famine years, model schools began attracting considerable opposition from church leaders across most denominations. This opposition would underline the extent to which model schools, like education generally, were to reflect the tensions, religious and political, of the second half of nineteenth century Ireland, and it was to prove the key factor leading to their ultimate decline as institutions central to the initial training of teachers.

More about that later, but let's get a brief sense of life in model schools from the perspective of the trainee teachers.

Like today's applicants to teacher education, applicants for a place in a model school faced keen competition. In the Board's annual report for 1849, just as their expansion was getting underway, we read that the requirements for selection and the general duties of pupil teachers were as follows: 'Candidates must be not less than sixteen years nor upwards of twenty; must pass a prescribed entrance course; must be of sound constitution and labour under no physical infirmity; must exhibit a taste or desire for teaching, produce certificates of moral conduct from their respective clergymen; and must provide themselves with the clothes necessary for the year's training. They will act as assistants under the head master ... and in the morning and evening are actively engaged either in study or in receiving instruction from the master'.⁵

The seminary atmosphere was marked in the very strong emphasis on discipline and order that permeated the pupil teachers' daily programme. They rose at 5.30 and before breakfast at 8.15 had already been under instruction from the headmaster. Their duties in the school included being in charge of the playground before the school day commenced, inspecting pupils for cleanliness, and then marching them into school. After school they had to brush and clean the premises, have dinner at 3.30, study, take recreation, brush their shoes and clothes, take supper at 8.15, then lock the school gate, at 9.20 go to bed and at 9.30 extinguish lights in their dormitory.

During the school day pupil teachers, under direction from the headmaster or mistress, shared much of the teaching with monitors, the latter being senior pupils. Depending on their abilities this meant sharing the teaching of the basic 3Rs curriculum, but possibly also book-keeping, Euclid and mensuration, needlework (for girls), geography, music and physical science. Many model schools had farms attached where, as the Commissioners stated, the pupil teachers, '... also receive instruction in the theory and practice of farming and on Saturdays are required to go over to the farm and offices with the agriculturist to witness the mode of managing the several departments' and to learn how to develop school gardens.⁶ So, quite an intense and crowded programme.

Given our current emphasis on an integrated career long programme of professional development, it is interesting to note that the model school apprenticeship was not intended to provide a future teacher's only formal training. A period of six to twelve months at a model school was to be but the first phase of teacher education. Its completion was to be followed by a minimum of two years teaching in ordinary national schools and then by a period of several months at the Commissioners' Central Training Institution in Dublin, the country's first teacher education college.

However, if that was the plan, the reality did not always match it and while some teachers proceeded to the Central Training Institution, many only underwent model school training, a situation that didn't significantly change until later in century.

As an indication of their status it is also interesting to note that, for the time, model schools paid their headmasters quite handsomely. In 1849 £60 per annum was the salary for the headmaster with £50 for his assistants. In addition, in model schools, fees of up to one shilling and six pence (8p) per child each quarter were pooled and then divided according to a prior agreement between the headmaster, his assistants and the monitors employed at the school. Headmasters were also to be provided with accommodation on site and boarding provision

⁵ *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, 1851*

⁶ *Ibid.*

was to be available for three male pupil teachers at each school. Female pupil teachers and headmistresses were to be accommodated elsewhere locally.

Compare the pay rates to those pertaining in ordinary national schools at the time. In the latter the highest paid headmasters received £50, the highest graded male assistant teachers received £30 per annum, females £24 while the lowest graded males received £10 and females £9. No wonder a post in a model school was one eagerly sought after.

While the Board's overall plans were not always adhered to, nonetheless they were bold and, as I have said, ambitious and considerably in advance of what were in place for teacher education and for elementary education generally in many other countries.

As already anticipated, the most critical issues affecting model schools were not the standards of education provided, but the vexed questions of religious education and how to ensure against proselytising. It had been hoped that these issues would be satisfactorily addressed by having a denominationally mixed staff in model schools, and by ensuring that pupil teachers underwent instruction from their own clergy, and that they attended their respective church services on Sundays.

So, as plans to meet the target number of model schools began to be implemented, prospects for success remained very positive. Consider, for example, the following reports on two of the first model schools outside Dublin.

At the opening of the Newry schools in 1849, resolutions praising the schools were 'proposed and passed with support from all clergy including Dr. Blake, Roman Catholic Bishop of Dromore, Rev. Bagot, Vicar of Newry, and Rev. Moran, the Presbyterian Minister of the General Assembly'.⁷ Later Dr Blake wrote that he attended weekly to supervise religious instruction saying that he felt 'a lively interest in the welfare of that institution, and more especially in supporting its character of rational and truly Christian liberality, equally removed from bigotry and indifference'.⁸ The Presbyterian and Established Church ministers wrote in equally positive terms with the Rev Bagot stating that 'The children of the Established Church had the amplest opportunities for Religious Instruction since the Model School had been opened'.⁹

A year later, the Commissioners triumphantly commented on mixed education at the Clonmel model schools, in County Tipperary:¹⁰

Here we have proof that United Education, united both to creeds and classes, has been tried, watched, examined and cautiously tested on a new and peculiar field – the Catholic South; and the result of the eighteen months experiment is the entire public confidence of all social ranks, and all religious persuasions.... The Roman Catholic children ... receive Religious Instruction daily from two of the teachers, six Pupil Teachers and six paid Monitors who are of their own communion. On Friday the Instruction continues for an hour and in addition to the Sisters of Mercy who during

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Commissioners of National Education of Ireland, 1851.*

the entire year attend on that day to instruct the girls. Rev. Mr Baldwin PP and one, sometimes both of his curates, regularly visits and examines the Catholic children.

The same report went on to express the general hope of the Commissioners for the effects of its 'United Education':¹¹

If there is one remedy that more than any other would tend to allay hostilities between class and class, and sectarian prejudices and antipathies between creed and creed in Ireland it is the successful working of Institutions such as the Clonmel Model Schools.

The reality, however, was not as positive as these comments suggest because at the same time the whole scheme was becoming the focal point of a deep controversy. While the schools obviously enjoyed cross-denominational support in many places, they had not received unanimous support from any of the churches. Within each major denomination there was considerable hostility from the outset, hostility that waxed and waned with the changing leadership of those churches. The hostility was informed by, first, the assertion from each Church that true Christianity was to be found only in one set of beliefs, namely its own, and, secondly, the defensiveness I mentioned earlier because rights of religious freedom were either not being respected, or were actually being denied.

For some within the Catholic Church, in particular, old fears about proselytising combined with a new sense of self-confidence and organisational strength to challenge the very concept of 'mixed' education. The immediate grounds for hostility was further evidence of proselytising in some model schools and more so in some national schools attended by Catholic children where teachers of a different denomination were on the staff and where the schools were under auspices other than the local Catholic clergy.

One of the most vocal critics of the model schools was the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, Paul Cullen, who claimed they had been established:¹²

to inspire the future masters and mistresses of the country with indifference to every creed and to throw into the hands of government officials in a most unconstitutional manner equally dangerous to religion and society, the education of the rising Catholic generation of Ireland, by committing to their officials the formation of future masters.

Cullen used evidence of proselytising to build the case for the complete denominationalisation of all publicly-funded schools, including model schools. He also argued that the schools were anti-Irish. The latter was a criticism that did not figure as much as the former, but Cullen probably had in mind the emphasis on things British in school textbooks and verses like the following used in some textbooks:¹³

I thank the goodness and the grace
That on my birth has smiled
And made me in these Christian days
A happy English child.

To strengthen the Church's case against the model schools, the employment in Catholic run schools of any Catholic teacher trained in a model school was eventually prohibited.

While the Catholic Church's campaign against the model schools was the most vigorous, hostility from the other main churches was also considerable. The Established Church had

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² Peadar MacSuibhne, *Paul Cullen and His Contemporaries*, Vol. 111, p.311. 1961

¹³ Jane Taylor, 'A Child's Hymn of Praise', from *Hymns for Infant Minds*, 1810.

never officially supported the model school or indeed the national school system in general, although as we have seen, some of its clergy did. Instead, the Church entered into an arrangement with the Kildare Place Society whereby it acquired control of the latter's model schools to train teachers for its own schools. That model school and the training institution associated with it became, after disestablishment, the Church of Ireland Training College, a college still operating today.

The Presbyterian Church, initially extremely hostile, managed to win significant compromises from the Commissioners which allowed the majority of its clergy to cooperate with the national school system, and hence with the model school scheme from the early 1840s. I wonder is this why almost half of the model schools established were to be in northern towns with large Presbyterian communities like Ballymena, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Larne, Newtownards, as well as in Belfast, Derry, Lurgan, Newry and Omagh? Indeed in some of these towns, the original premises are still in use, and the title is retained in street names and of course we still have the two Belfast Model schools, both now post-primary.

Despite the National Commissioners' staunch defence of their model schools – their senior executive claimed that without them 'teachers for the 6,300 ordinary schools could not be trained ...',¹⁴ nor could 'examples of the advantages of united, i.e. mixed, education' be exhibited – their fate was being sealed by the increasing scale of the opposition. The Powis Commission of 1867-70, which conducted an in-depth study of Irish elementary education, concluded that model schools were not essential to teacher education and that teachers could be trained 'more cheaply and efficiently by means of monitors and pupil teachers in good ordinary schools'.¹⁵

Most significantly, what the outcome of the Powis Commission underlined was that no system of teacher education, or for that matter no system of general education, could be developed without the support of the country's most powerful stakeholders at the time, its churches. Their concerns, fears and suspicions had to be allayed before their active cooperation could be obtained and, at the time, the price for allaying those fears and for that cooperation was denominational schools and denominational teachers' colleges. This demand produced a pressure so strong that attempts to maintain the policy of 'mixed' education, whether in ordinary national schools or in the model schools foundered.

However, bearing the wider context in mind, it has to be said that the consolidation of its denominational character was not exclusive to education. This consolidation reflected the strengthening of communal divisions, particularly in the political domain as pro- and anti-Home Rule forces mobilised from Prime Minister Gladstone's embrace of the cause in the late 1870s.

I have spent some time on the model schools, not because I think they are models for our time, but because the controversies that surrounded them contributed to the institutional legacy that is part of what we are addressing today. The model schools also remind us that the strong school-based dimension to teacher education which we have been developing in the past two decades is not an innovation. Rather it is a return, obviously in much more developed formats, to a long hallowed, if interrupted, professional tradition.

¹⁴ Resident Commissioner, Reply to the Statement of the Roman Catholic Bishops to the Secretary of the Home Department, reproduced in the Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), (Powis Commission) C.6, xxviii, , p.455, 1870.

¹⁵ Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), xxviii, C.6, p. 455, 1870.

Before we leave our nineteenth century colleagues I thought I would tease you, particularly those of you who might have harboured ambitions to become principals of a model school. The National Commissioners conducted periodic examinations to test such ambitious teachers and from the 1879 paper on Methods of Teaching here are some of the questions you would have faced:¹⁶

1. What are the principal causes of unpunctuality in the morning attendance of pupils, and what are its effects upon the business of the school? Mention the remedies for this defect.
2. A school-room is 35 feet (approx. 10 metres) long and 20 feet (approx. 6 metres) broad; how many desks will be necessary? Show by a diagram how you would arrange the furniture.
3. What are the principal arithmetical rules which depend upon proportion? Give the reasons for your answer.

Curious what the Methods of Teaching covered!

Following the Powis report, the main focus for initial teacher education ITE centred on training colleges established in the decades that followed: Careysfort for women (1877) and St Patrick's for men (1883), both in Dublin along with De La Salle in Waterford (1892) and Mary Immaculate in Limerick (1898). These colleges prepared teachers for Catholic schools while the Kildare Place College catered for Church of Ireland students and the National Commissioners' institution in Marlborough Street, trained mainly students from the Presbyterian tradition, though it managed to maintain a cross-denominational enrolment throughout the rest of its existence. Until St Mary's College Belfast was established in 1900 there was no training college located in northern counties. But since St Mary's was exclusively a female Catholic college, Catholic males and all northern Protestant students continued to go south for teacher education.

With the colleges, teacher education moved to a very different mode. The model school apprenticeship was no longer strictly required and higher standards of general education were sought at entry. In curricular terms educational studies courses were gradually developed, eventually to comprise philosophy, history of education and elementary psychology, although the dominant focus was on the subjects of the elementary school curriculum. Teaching practice took place in what were referred to as 'demonstration' schools associated with the colleges and, as a result, time spent in schools was reduced, compared with the daily experience in the model schools. The colleges were also more exclusive, seminary type institutions and their pattern of teacher education was not to change significantly until the second half of the twentieth century.

If the pattern of teacher education did not change, institutions did, again mainly due to wider developments. Partition had very direct and immediate effects that essentially reinforced communal divisions within both parts of the country, and between both parts.

First St Mary's revolted, and for a time refused to acknowledge the authority of the new Ministry of Education. Secondly, the new southern authorities closed the Commissioners' Central Training Institution. Then, in the absence of any college in the North where Protestant students could be trained, the new Ministry of Education in Belfast sought to enter agreements with the Church of Ireland College in Dublin and with the Catholic male

¹⁶ *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of National Education of Ireland, pp.150-170, 1880.*

colleges whereby northern students could continue to enrol in their courses. In this regard, it is interesting to read a note in the Northern Ministry's papers when these discussions were taking place and when the Ministry was anxious to maintain such links:¹⁷

If there is any field of administration in which more than any other, joint and harmonious action between North and South might be expected to produce good results in the direction of bringing the Irish people together it is in the educational field...

If that view was genuinely held, policies adopted in both parts of the country had directly the opposite effect.

When the southern authorities insisted that students from the North would, like their southern counterparts, have to follow courses that emphasised the teaching of Irish with some to be delivered through the medium of Irish, the Ministry here declared that such courses would not be recognised. Consequently, a new college was planned, Stranmillis, and it opened in temporary premises to receive its first students in 1922, catering mainly for male and female students from Protestant backgrounds.

The problem of where to train male Catholic teachers was resolved for a few years when several enrolled at Stranmillis. As a government operated college, Stranmillis – formally non-denominational – was deemed unacceptable to the Catholic authorities. Church and Ministry failed to reach agreement on a local solution and, from 1925 Catholic, male students were obliged to enrol at St Mary's Strawberry Hill in London, or risk not being employed in Catholic schools – a situation that persisted until St Mary's opened a male department at Trench House in 1949, later to become St Joseph's College in 1961.

We may smile at one of the solutions proposed during these negotiations – the construction of a wall on the Stranmillis campus to separate a hostel that would be provided for Catholic male students, from that of their Protestant peers!¹⁸ Had it been built it would have been the first of Belfast's many peace walls!

The solution to the Catholic male problem effectively rendered intakes to Stranmillis denominational in a Protestant sense. This characteristic of the college was strengthened when, in the early 1930s, after considerable agitation, the main Protestant churches were granted representation on the college's board of management to balance, as those churches argued, the exclusively Catholic management of St Mary's and to oversee the education of teachers for what they regarded as Protestant schools.

Denominational exclusivity was the order of the day, North and South, an exclusivity that was of course mirrored in so many other aspects of public and social life.

Institutionally, teacher education then remained effectively untouched until the late sixties. There were, however, curricular changes. As ITE gradually moved to obtain degree status the so-called academic subjects became more dominant, with courses moving first to three, and some to four years duration and their remit extending to early secondary years to cater for the demand for more teachers created by the 1947 Act.

The establishment of the New University of Ulster (NUU) in 1968 marked a significant development for teacher education. There, for the first time since the model school era, the Catholic Church agreed that graduates of the university's education programmes could

¹⁷ Ministry of Education, Ed 32/1/2, 16 March 1922, PRONI.

¹⁸ Mary Harris, *The Catholic Church and the Foundation of the Northern Irish State*, p. 216, Cork University Press, 1993.

be employed in Catholic schools provided they had undertaken approved courses in RE. Consequently, some future primary school teachers began to experience what had not been available for more than a hundred years – being prepared for their careers in an approved interdenominational context. I acknowledge of course that being university graduates, most secondary teachers always had this experience, but for them a teaching qualification was not required until the 1970s, their degrees being regarded as sufficient preparation to gain them entry to the profession. Queen's University had long offered postgraduate education courses which many intending teachers had voluntarily taken.

The decision to approve the NUU course was a courageous move which owed much to the spirit of ecumenism that had begun to spread in some circles here. However, as we know, that spirit was severely challenged by the violence between our communities that exploded amongst us at the same time.

The outbreak of communal strife and the hardening of divisions were, for educationists in particular, wake-up calls impelling us to address the question: had education, in any way, directly or indirectly, contributed to our inter-communal strife. Whatever the answer to that question, the more important challenge was how education in general and, in that question, how teacher education should address that strife. The jury is probably still out on the overall effectiveness of our responses, but it is true to say that the challenge was not shirked. Curricular and other initiatives addressing communal division were developed within and between institutions and inter-institutional links were strengthened, between the Belfast colleges in particular. Students from Stranmillis and St Mary's began sharing some courses, a few began undertaking some of their TP in schools other than those of their own faith or cultural tradition, and many staff from the different institutions who might otherwise not have met very frequently, or at all, became close colleagues as they delivered courses, developed school-based initiatives and conducted research together.

But, when institutional interests were challenged, the traditional divides reasserted themselves. This occurred when, in 1980, the Chilver Committee, that had considered possible changes in the institutional structure of teacher education in light of falling rolls, published a report recommending the amalgamation of St Mary's and St Joseph's colleges and their relocation to the Stranmillis site.¹⁹ The recommendation was made on the basis of the best use of resources, but was received by the Catholic Church as effectively a proposal to amalgamate with Stranmillis and so endanger, or even lose the distinctive Catholic contribution to teacher education. Secondly, in the heightened political atmosphere of the time it was also seen as a proposal that would remove the only third level institution from West Belfast and with that the removal of its not insignificant local socio-economic benefits. The controversy stirred by the recommendation saw churches and politicians lined up along our traditional fault lines, and the outcome was not to act on the recommendation, apart from the amalgamation of St Joseph's into St Mary's in 1985.

The 1984 amalgamation of NUU and the Ulster Polytechnic which as far as ITE was concerned brought two education departments together into the University of Ulster strengthened the range and provision of courses for intending primary and post-primary teachers at that institution. To the local provision of ITE has been added the involvement of the Open University as well as the increasing tendency of students to opt for education courses across the water, many of whom, following graduation, seek posts at home.

¹⁹ Chilver Report, *The Future of Higher Education in Northern Ireland: An Interim Report of the Higher Education Review Group for Northern Ireland*, HMSO, 1980.

Today, no one can say that we are not provided with a rich variety of institutions offering teacher education programmes. Nor can it be said that the rivalries, fears and suspicions which I have described in this paper are the factors that inform relationships between providers. Indeed, in education most particularly, and, as I have already acknowledged, since long before the Good Friday Agreement was signed, a spirit of cooperation, of mutual support and of mutual understanding has been spreading across all of its sectors. In this respect we have learned to move away from the past and in doing so to provide ourselves with a much firmer basis upon which to face the challenges we currently face. However, as the recent Peace Monitoring Report from the Community Relations Commission indicates our society still has a distance to travel before that legacy will be firmly in the past.²⁰ Teacher education still has a significant contribution to make to promoting reconciliation and indeed social justice in general.

So to those challenges. While not the only one within teacher education, a key challenge is how to reform and restructure ourselves faced as we are with our institutionally rich source of supply and at the same time with, for the foreseeable future, declining school rolls. In these respects, we face a similar dilemma to that of the late seventies, but without the same excuses for not positively resolving it. However, I don't think we will find answers to the dilemma by first juggling with institutional arrangements as we did then. That is not to say that we leave these arrangements as they currently exist.

While I don't claim any clear answers to the issues involved, issues that have been well rehearsed in several consultations and reports in recent years, I will offer some closing thoughts on the matter and I will try to do so from within a wider perspective than that of teacher education itself. My approach is to look first at the wider context of higher education and then to consider policy implications for ITE.

So, I begin this final part of my paper by quoting two recent expressions of the overall aims for higher education (HE) in the twenty-first century:²¹

In the decades ahead, higher education will play a central role in making our country recognised for innovation, competitive enterprise and continuing academic excellence, and an attractive place to live and work with a high quality of life, cultural vibrancy and inclusive social structures. At its heart, however, it (i.e. higher education) will still be about people and ideas: higher education institutions will have a strong engagement with individual students, communities, society and enterprise, will give students a sense of their identity, local, regional and national, and will equip them with the skills to play a strong part on the world stage; they will be the source of new ideas through excellent research.

That quote is from the Hunt Report on HE in the South. Here in the North the vision is expressed in very similar terms in Graeme Davies' 2010 consultation paper:²²

The higher education sector has a key contribution to make to the achievement of the twin goals of social justice and economic prosperity by the supply of highly qualified graduates across a range of disciplines with the skills and attributes sought by employers; fostering a spirit of enterprise and innovation to create growth in the private sector; generating wealth within the economy and enriching the social and cultural landscape of Northern Ireland.

²⁰ *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report, Community Relations Council, 2012.*

²¹ *National Strategy for Higher Education, Department of Education and Skills, Dublin, 2010.*

²² *Consultation Document on the development of a Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland, Department of Employment and Learning, Belfast, 2010.*

It would be difficult not to agree with such statements or not to see them also applying to teacher education. Of course, the particular aims and objectives that apply to the latter would have to be added, just as they would in the case of any other professional programme.

Assuming, therefore, acceptance of such statements of aims we can then ask what the particular skills, mind-sets and values are that HE should aim to inculcate so that future professionals in whatever field can meet the challenges that have to be addressed.

Commentators from inside and outside HE emphasise what are described as 'core' skills such as quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, creativity, communication and team-working skills, the promotion of values and the effective use and application of information technology. In terms of how best these skills and mind-sets are to be inculcated, particularly in the early stages of HE, I think it is true to say that the emphasis amongst many commentators is switching from what can be regarded as over-specialised and at times inflexible undergraduate programmes, towards more general, deeper and broader foundations, with learning objectives that explicitly seek to nurture in students the creativity, enthusiasm and the core intellectual skills required for continual engagement with learning.

This then raises questions about the curricular contexts in which those skills can best be inculcated and here there is probably less of a consensus, but nonetheless a growing sense, as I have just mentioned, that specialisation should be delayed and that undergraduates, whatever their professional ambitions, share more of their learning experiences before entering professional training.

Given the practicalities of HE courses it is highly unlikely that sharing curricular experiences can be organised across all main disciplines. However, it should be possible to do so within the broad context of the humanities, likewise for the social studies and, thirdly, for natural and physical sciences. Undoubtedly some commonalities would be likely to emerge across all three areas of study in terms of the skills and mind sets to be fostered and could be catered for in multi-disciplinary ways.

While these remarks are but a very brief summary of key issues in current debates about HE, I want to return now to teacher education. As my historical survey has highlighted, we have moved from the hand-me-down 'master-apprentice' approach that the model schools exemplified, through the college/university based approach which eventually placed a greater value and emphasis on theoretical studies than on school based experiences, and in more recent times to the current school-higher education partnership model in which the theoretical/reflective study of teaching has been considerably reduced in favour of school-based experience. But have we got the balance right? Are we in danger now of moving too close to the master-apprentice model in ITE at the expense of the reflective model we claim we wish to promote? I think we are and I don't think it is sufficient to say that we pursue and deepen the reflective practitioner processes during the post-ITE phase. Of course we do that, but I believe those reflective processes also need to be more strongly inculcated during that initial phase.

So what if we were to adopt an all-graduate entry together with an extended PGCE route as the exclusive ITE route? By an extended PGCE route I mean a route of two years duration to be followed by the induction and early career phases as we now understand them – those two years to be developed around strong school-based experiences but, obviously, with greater scope for also developing the reflective dimension. An essential element of these experiences should be the provision of a formal school-based student teacher mentoring system working closely with the HE providers. In fact, as Douglas Osler has proposed in his 2005 report on teacher education, a greater exchange of personnel between schools and HE institutions in order to strengthen those links could be envisaged, together with the extended role for those institutions in CPD which he also recommends.²³

Within such an approach, all our future teachers would study and graduate alongside those intending to enter other professions, undergoing the same intellectual challenges, and learning in a wider social context before engaging in the first phase of their professional development. It would also provide a common curricular framework upon which to develop our CPD programmes. More widely, it would provide Northern Ireland with a distinctive and very coherent model of teacher education.

Doing so wouldn't of itself address the institutional issues, but as my excursion into the past has underlined, that is an issue for compromise and cooperation. As we have seen, until recent times, education was dominated by institutional controversies, with protecting territory rather than debating together what higher education and, in particular, what teacher education is about and how our different cultural traditions, including religious traditions, can contribute to the formation and experience of those whom we prepare to teach in our schools. That is the lesson I take from our past, a past which I don't think we can ignore, much as we might wish to leave large parts of it well behind us.

²³ Douglas Osler, *Policy Review of Teacher Education in Northern Ireland, Departments of Education and of Employment and Learning, 2005.*

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