

## Shaping Educational Debate: A Case Study and an Interpretation

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*Abstract:* The contribution of American economist, A. Dale Tussing, to the penetration of Irish policy paradigms governing the funding of education is presented as a case study of how a cultural stranger can, by a process of cultural mirroring and deconstruction, influence the cultural understanding of the educational process in an indigenous society. In relation to the funding of education, Tussing succeeded in making public existing assumptions, advanced a reconceptualisation of the benefits of schooling, suggested principles for guiding funding decisions, proposed values of equity and justice and added stratification and elitism to the terminology of concern in public educational discourse. Why it should fall to a cultural stranger to provide such an experience in cultural illumination for us is explored in relation to the influence of corporatist policy making on educational discourse. Suggestions for a more paradigmatically-open analysis of education are made in relation to the Green Paper on Education, *Education for a Changing World*.

### I INTRODUCTION

Little attention has been paid to the shaping of educational debate within the Irish policy-making community as a topic for serious scholarship. This lack of reflection has meant that the themes, interpretations, authorities and contexts which feature in educational debate are not regarded as suitable objects of study in their own right apart from the substantive educational issues in which they are embedded. Specifically, we ignore the

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sociology of educational discourse, particularly as a cultural product. At its broadest we have failed to confront the politics of education as an area of inquiry, apart from a limited behavioural analysis of power (Lukes, 1974). As I have argued elsewhere (O'Sullivan, 1991), once the questions of church-state relationships, regionalisation and accountability are explored we run out of conceptual breath in this regard. Accordingly, a whole range of questions remain unexplored because the concepts and themes and even the language that are necessary to make public and communicate such an analysis have never been part of Irish educational thinking.

## II POLICY PARADIGMS AND CULTURAL STRANGERS

A limiting implication of this lack of reflection and scholarship has been the paradigmatic insulation of educational policy debate. Drawing on Kuhn (1962), policy paradigms are frameworks that govern the policy process. They embody linguistic, normative, epistemological, empirical and methodological dimensions: they regulate what is to be defined as a meaningful problem, how it is to be thematised and described, what is to be considered worthy as data, who is to be recognised as a legitimate participant and with what status, and how the policy process is to be enacted, realised and evaluated.

Policy paradigms are powerful regulatory forces in the generation and enactment of policy. Their boundary maintenance function, by which terms, themes, problems, data and personnel are excluded from consideration, is a critical feature of their regulatory power. As Kuhn himself puts it, a paradigm can "even insulate the community from those socially important problems that ... cannot be stated in terms of the conceptual and instrumental tools the paradigm supplies. Such problems can be a distraction" (p. 37). Policy paradigms can assume an ideological status that makes them difficult to effectively question or challenge and their hegemonic force can be such that they are considered to coincide with the limits of normality and common sense (O'Sullivan, 1989). An extended elaboration of the concept of policy paradigm as it pertains to education is provided in O'Sullivan (1993, forthcoming).

In the absence of their sustained exposure and critique policy paradigms are guaranteed a degree of control over educational debate and action which operates at the structural and, accordingly, hidden level of influence. In this paper I consider the contribution of American economist, A. Dale Tussing, to the penetration of Irish policy paradigms guiding the funding of education. This is presented as a case study of how a cultural stranger can, by a process of cultural mirroring and deconstruction, influence the cultural understanding of the educational process in an indigenous society. The uncompromis-

ingly alien view of the cultural stranger can challenge us to “exoticise the domestic” by disrupting our “relation of intimacy with modes of life and thought which remain opaque ... because they are too familiar” (Bourdieu, 1988, p. xi) and thus help us to see our culture and our relationship to it more clearly and fully. Tussing’s interventions in relation to the funding of Irish education serve to highlight the possibilities for educational policy that can follow from the exposure and critique of the paradigms that regulate our educational thought. Most fundamentally, it poses the question as to why we are reliant on agents from outside the Irish policy community to chart, scrutinise and extend the structural contours of our cultural interpretation of education. It needs to be stressed that Tussing is not the only cultural stranger who merits consideration in this regard (see O’Sullivan, 1992 forthcoming) and that there are other kinds of external influences on Irish educational policy.

### III A CASE STUDY: A. DALE TUSSING AND EDUCATIONAL FUNDING

A. Dale Tussing, Professor of Economics at Syracuse University, New York, published *Irish Educational Expenditures — Past, Present and Future* in 1978. This was based on research carried out during a fifteen month period as Visiting Research Professor of Economics at The Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin over 1975/1976. Before this visit, and since, Tussing has made extensive visits to Ireland.

At one level Tussing’s analysis of educational expenditure in the Republic of Ireland was non-controversial and within the mainstream discourse on education which had been developing since the 1960s in the wake of the economic planning of the late 1950s. This form of representing education (referred to here as commercialised discourse) involved viewing the school system as one might a commercial undertaking. It introduced a new terminology of concern — surplus/deficit, scarce resources, viability, under-used facilities, high unit costs — to the analysis of Irish education. Tussing highlighted the extent and depth of the Irish system of schooling, more developed, he pointed out, than would have been expected given Irish income levels, industrial structure and degree of urbanisation. His research, however, led him to conclude that the factors which had made such educational provision possible — spartan schools, large classes, poorly paid teachers, Catholic Church investment, members of religious orders redirecting their salaries back into the schools or providing services without pay, and the low scientific and technical content of the curriculum — were fading or totally disappearing, leaving Ireland with a highly-developed and expensive school system. And this, he pointed out, was coinciding with a growth in enrolments that was unprecedented in recent decades. He predicted that second-level

total public expenditures, adjusted for inflation, would almost double in the period 1974 to 1986 and that during the same period third-level expenditures would more than double. Tussing was fearful that little would be done or said about these enrolment and budgetary pressures until a crisis situation had been reached. If this was allowed to happen he warned that parents, particularly those who were poor or disadvantaged, would experience the crisis in the form of overcrowded classes, temporary classrooms and a lack of sufficient school places. For this reason he urged "a major national debate on educational priorities" (p. 173).

#### IV PUBLIC/PRIVATE BENEFIT

As a contribution to this debate Tussing suggested a particular approach which, in its principles and policy implications, sought to expand the commercialised analysis of education. It was this departure from conventional thinking which gave the report its controversial and culturally disruptive dimension. He recommended that education be treated as a "quasi-public good" with both public and private characteristics. Where its principal beneficiaries are individual pupils, through cultural and social formation or enhanced life-long earnings, education can be said to be private. Education is a public good in that political, social and economic life requires a certain minimum educational standard which he deemed to be roughly equivalent to the years of compulsory schooling.

Where resources are scarce, Tussing proposed that they be reserved for those aspects of schooling which benefit society and, in particular, Irish society and its less-advantaged members. Translated into a fees and financing policy, this would result in students at third-level institutions paying, by means of a loan scheme, the full economic cost of their education. At senior cycle post-primary level, Tussing suggested a number of possible ways of making parents more financially accountable for the education of their children — the abolition of all or some of the schemes of state subvention to schools or the treatment of state financing of education at this level as personal income and thus liable to income tax. Directly or indirectly, these would have resulted in a repeal of the free education scheme introduced slightly more than a decade earlier.

#### V FREE EDUCATION

In terms of policy options, Tussing was attempting to put on the agenda a proposal that had not been seriously entertained in any public way since free education had been debated within the Department of Education. A senior civil servant of the time has recalled how he unsuccessfully attempted to

convince the Minister, Donagh O'Malley, of the desirability of setting a means test in relation to free senior-cycle post-primary schooling. In retrospect, the same civil servant was of the view that the free nature of the scheme captured the imagination of people (O'Connor, 1986, p. 153). There is a sense, in fact, in which free education became a cultural icon, suggestive of change and optimism, reflective of openness and opportunity and symbolising a new departure in Irish society which had recently celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the 1916 Rising. To suggest any dismantling of the scheme, as Tussing was doing, was quite literally iconoclastic. However compelling Tussing's arguments might have been, public political endorsement for such a dismantling of the free education scheme would have done untold damage in terms of popular support.

While it may be the case, as Tussing (1983) later recollected, that "Ministers and civil servants rejected the notion of a crisis at the time", there is reason to believe they concurred with the key aspects of Tussing's analysis and perhaps even with the thrust of his approach to the resolution of rising educational costs. At the very least, the view that for many parents free post-primary education was a windfall, and that such parents could and would contribute towards their children's education seems to have been taken seriously in estimating the likely political reaction to the economies applied to educational funding in the early 1980s. These initiatives, taken in 1982 by the Minister for Education, were intended to reduce the projected 1983 expenditure on education by 2 per cent. Some of the more significant financial savings were to be accounted for by an increase in teacher/pupil ratios at second level of approximately 5 per cent together with a reduction of ex-quota teachers, the introduction of school transport charges for post-primary school students where parents did not qualify for free medical care and a reduction in the capital budget (NESC, 1983).

As the crisis which Tussing had predicted began to put pressure on schools through these cutbacks of finance and personnel, schools began to rely increasingly on voluntary contributions from parents to make good the deficit. *De facto*, the free education scheme was seriously eroded, but indirectly as a consequence of government cutbacks and the damage-limitation reactions of schools rather than as a result of any public change in fees policy for second-level schooling.

Undoing the free-education initiative and introducing a fees policy for second-level schooling were excluded as themes in state discourse on education. Tussing may have strengthened the hand of state policy makers in introducing economies but not to the point of being able to communicate publicly in terms of the erosion of free education that was none the less forced on schools as a result of these economies.

## VI STATE DISCOURSE

In the context of third-level education, *Irish Educational Expenditures* made it possible for politically sensitive proposals to be highlighted without any indigenous body or person claiming responsibility for them. Even the very act of identifying an option in public debate implies some level of support, if only in the sense that it has been considered worthy of attention to the exclusion of other more dormant issues. The thematising of a number of possibilities or proposals relating to the financing of education and the degree and nature of financial support for individual students was to follow in a series of publications from within the central state apparatus.

In 1978, the same year that *Irish Educational Expenditures* was published, the government presented its Green Paper *Development For Full Employment*. This raised the possibility of an increase in the fees charged by third-level institutions. The 1979 White Paper, *Programme for National Development 1978-1981*, set out the government's decisions on the matters raised in the Green Paper. Of the four paragraphs dealing with education in the White Paper, three concerned the optimum use of resources and, in particular, the options relating to a fees policy for third-level institutions: "... the government feel that third-level institutions should be moving towards a situation where they would collect a greater proportion of their income in fees ..." (p. 86). These considerations are representative of the commercialisation of education: the conceptualisation of educational provision in terms of "resources" and the establishment of their "optimum use" as a prime systemic virtue are indicative of this. Above all, we find the almost total dominance of financial considerations in the treatment of education in the 1979 White Paper.

The *White Paper on Educational Development* followed in 1980 and, much to Tussing's (1981) annoyance, failed to pursue this question of the balance to be struck between student fees and subsidies from the exchequer in the funding of third-level institutions. In fact, Tussing's thematising of the private/public nature of the functions and benefits of schooling was to find its way into the 1980 White Paper in the recorded view of the Higher Education Authority "that benefits accruing to individual students should be taken into account when policy decisions are made in relation to student support" (p. 79).

This added a new theme to the discourse of commercialised schooling as represented by the 1978 Green Paper and the 1979 White Paper. It was to be given greater prominence, expanded in its representation and logic and made more propositional in its communication by the government advisory body, the National Economic and Social Council, in its *Economic and Social Policy*

*in 1983: Aims and Recommendations.* The Council "... suggested that the method of financing third-level education should be reconsidered due to the regressive distributional implications of providing courses to students at fees which are equivalent to less than one quarter of the total cost. While the council recognises that aspects of higher education can contribute to social and economic development, it believes that the costs of third level education should be financed more than they are at present by the recipients who gain substantial financial benefits as a result" (NESC, 1983, p. 30).

With the publication of the government's *Programme for Action in Education 1984-1987* in 1984 we find the resonance of Tussing's contribution to the discourse of commercialised schooling. The theme of private benefit had been incorporated into the analysis as had a recognition of the need to prioritise between the claims on public funding of the different levels of the educational system:

Given that there must be a severe restriction on the amount of funds available for overall public spending, it is important to consider the provisions for third-level education relative to those for primary and second-level education and, particularly, to the needs of those in the compulsory education period ... (and) the extent to which individuals who will derive economic benefit from third-level education should themselves pay for their own education either while partaking of it or later in life (p. 28).

In communicating these views, however, the programme is less propositional and more oblique in presentation than either the NESC or Tussing. Throughout the section on the financing of higher education anonymous attribution — e.g., "there is an argument", "some important questions of principle arise", "account must be taken of" — make it possible for politically sensitive ideas to be integrated into educational discourse without political risk. This use of cultural strangers allows the response to ideas to be gauged where no formal consultative procedure exists or where to utilise such a procedure would require a more explicit addition of a theme to policy-making discourse.

## VII EQUITY AND STRATIFICATION

Apart from succeeding in expanding the range of themes in the commercialised discourse on education, Tussing also managed to introduce considerations of principle and values, in particular the question of equity and the distribution of scarce resources in relation to the funding of education. In a number of subsequent contributions to Irish educational debate, Tussing broadened these to encompass a series of sociological themes,

most notably that of stratification of schools along class lines.

In a symposium on the 1980 *White Paper on Educational Development*, Tussing observed that "a major issue concerning the Irish system of education, one not discussed in the White Paper and rarely mentioned in public discussion, is the extent to which the structure of that system serves to separate and divide people rather than to bring them together". In this regard he pointed to class stratification at second-level education, drawing attention to the clientele and funding arrangements in fee-charging and free secondary schools, in comprehensive and community schools and in vocational schools. Tussing went on to argue that this view of Irish education exposes only the "grossest" manifestations of stratification in second-level schooling and ignores "the subtle differences within the various categories, e.g., as between Presentation and Christian Brothers schools on the one hand and Loreto and Dominican schools on the other, or as between the prestigious Dublin Protestant schools and some of the more plebian Protestant schools around the country".

Tussing returned to the principles which should guide state funding of education in an address to the Irish Vocational Education Association in 1983. He elaborated on what he considered to be the implications of such a divided educational system for grant aid to schools:

I have to question continued large scale state aid to fee-charging second-level schools ... This support of fee-charging second-level schools, through capitation grants and payment of incremental teacher salaries, constitutes a device by which the state contributes to the perpetuation of elitism and class stratification through the school system ... In my opinion, no further cuts in second-level finance in the free sector are appropriate before there are significant reductions in state support to the fee sector.

#### VIII A NATIVE SPONSOR

In drawing attention to the issues of social stratification in second-level schooling and equity in educational funding, and given the nature of his critique and proposals, Tussing's arguments were congruent with the interests of the vocational education sector. This strand of post-primary education attracts a disproportionate number of children from manual worker and small farmer backgrounds. It enjoys less status than the more academic secondary sector, and had traditionally led to, at most, skilled manual work, being unable until 1967 to prepare students for the Leaving Certificate Examinations which provided access to university and white collar/professional occupations.



Having such weighty analysis from such a scholarly source available to them enhanced the power of advocacy of representatives of the vocational educational system and of its umbrella body, the Irish Vocational Education Association. It was possible to argue that here was an independent academic who had looked dispassionately at the Irish educational system and came to the conclusion that the vocational schools, which accepted all comers, should be given favourable consideration in educational funding. Even more than that, Tussing was drawing attention to the function of schooling in confirming class structure and elitism in Irish society. Academics and politicians had in the past written and spoken in support of expansion, investment and more favourable treatment for the vocational system, and generally decried its lower status within the post-primary sector (see Randles, 1975). By introducing themes of equity and social justice Tussing contributed a sharp comparative and moral dimension to the analysis of post-primary schooling. While such themes had indeed been a feature of sociological analysis of Irish education (see O'Sullivan, 1989), Tussing enjoyed a particular success in having equity and social justice accepted as themes within the policy community. As an economist, with its value-free connotations, Tussing achieved a level of acceptance in discourse for what, had it come from a sociologist, would have risked dismissal as ideological. (See, for example, the exchange relating to *Understanding Contemporary Ireland* between Walsh and the authors Breen *et al.* in *Studies*, 1991, Vol. 80, pp. 400-411.) Certainly, public support for vocational schooling had never previously been accompanied by such an interpretation of the elitist function of schooling and the principles of educational funding. It would have been taken for granted in providing financial support for schools that the state should take no interest in the admissions policy or whether the school was fee paying or not. Changes in level of grants or the introduction of new types of grants, such as those for school building or equipment, were devoid of considerations of principle and seemed to owe their origin to economic or political pragmatism. The ideological debate on these issues in countries such as the United States and England involved sharply-divided points of view on what in Ireland did not seem to constitute a meaningful issue. Such themes were outside the Irish paradigms governing the funding of schooling.

As a cultural stranger Tussing had found a native sponsor in the vocational system, essential if he was to avoid cultural exclusion (see O'Sullivan, forthcoming). Such sponsorship served to vouch for his ideas, proclaim them as meaningful and defuse any accusation concerning their "alien" status. It also acted as a means by which they would be introduced to Irish educational discourse in the context of schools, teachers, administrators and the media. The minor changes that followed in the funding of schools,

such as the withdrawal of the capitation grant of £31 per pupil from the fee-charging secondary schools under the terms of the 1986 Budget (Breen, *et al.*, 1990), were less significant in the overall context of Irish thinking than the fact that the financing of education came to be recognised as a topic about which there could be disputes of principle and values.

### IX PARADIGMATIC CHANGE

In the contrasting responses of state educational planners and the vocational system to Tussing's analysis, the relationship between cultural strangers, indigenous sponsor and native paradigm is further illuminated. Tussing may have breached native paradigms in relation to the principles of social justice which he felt should govern the funding of the different post-primary sectors. But he stopped short of thematising a factor fundamental to and underpinning the differential status between the vocational and secondary sectors — the social stratification of the knowledge and skill they were entrusted to transmit. It was not part of Tussing's argument that the superior social evaluation of the academic and systematised knowledge of the secondary school should be made problematic. This restriction of the paradigmatic confrontation involved in Tussing's analysis is likely to have helped in making it possible for the representatives of the vocational system to support Tussing's idea without having them dismissed as outlandish or as a distraction, the response typically anticipated by those who seek to breach paradigms (Maguire, 1988).

By way of contrast, despite being an economist with its value-free connotations, and even though he operated within the commercialised view of schooling seeking better value for state funding, Tussing created problems for the state educational planners. For the state educational planners to publicly endorse Tussing's interpretation of the individual's responsibility for financing post-compulsory schooling, even though they may well have recognised its validity, would have been to violate a social and educational icon — the free education scheme.

It is clear that not all elements of a paradigm are of equal meaning and significance. Assumptions, practices and authorities vary in their penetrability, contestability, profanity, sacredness and symbolism. Here we gain an insight into the qualitative differences involved in paradigmatic exposure and change and the conditions which make them possible. It is also instructive with regard to the impediments which indigenous commentators can expect to face in attempting a cultural interrogation of Irish education.

## X INTERPRETATION

Tussing has demonstrated how policy paradigms can be penetrated. He has, in relation to the funding of education, succeeded in making public existing assumptions (the unnecessary of guiding principles), advanced a reconceptualisation of the benefits of schooling (private/public), suggested principles for guiding funding decisions, proposed values of equity and justice and added stratification and elitism to the terminology of concern in educational discourse. We need to explore why it should fall to a cultural stranger to create this experience of cultural illumination and critique for us.

Ever since the hegemony of the Council of Education's view of schooling as personal formation was dissipated in the early 1960s, state-led discourse on education had dominated the manner in which education was conceptualised within the broader policy-making community of teachers, parents and academic educationalists. The vocationalisation of the curriculum developed in tandem with the commercialisation of schooling mentioned in this paper and there is evidence that the marketisation of education is emerging (see NESCS, 1990). One of the less attributed achievements of the women's movement has been the popularising of the formerly academic proposition that language itself can embody, and through its utterance help to perpetuate, inequalities and power disparities and in general operate ideologically. Having learned to be aware of sexist language we would also need to treat with awareness if not suspicion the commercialisation, vocationalisation and marketisation of educational discourse. Terms such as surplus, deficit, performance indicators, clients are not neutral but rather evoke meanings, set parameters, orientate cognition and invite actions which embody paradigmatically insulated understandings of education and its relationship with society. A lack of awareness in this regard together with a limited access to a more emancipatory terminology strikes at the heart of a cultural analysis of education since what Hogan (1982) has called the "conceptual literacy of critique" is an essential element in the ongoing intellectual participation — creative dissent, deconstruction and renewal — which constitutes the lifeblood of the reworking of cultural forms (see also Hogan, 1988).

## XI CORPORATISM AND DISCOURSE

A pivotal factor in the curtailment of the nature of educational analysis has been the incorporation of the teaching unions into the policy-making mechanisms of the state. The taken-for-granted consultation between state officials and teachers' representatives is a far cry from the situation that

prevailed in 1963 when Dr Hillery's wide-ranging proposals for educational change were made without prior consultation with the teaching unions. When challenged by the ASTI, the VTA and the INTO in a common statement, the minister responded that "there could be no question of submitting such matters to outside bodies prior to their promulgation" (quoted in Barry, 1989). Corporatism, the granting of a rôle in policy making to the representatives of major social and economic interests with a view to diffusing conflict and orchestrating progress towards agreed goals, extracts its own price. Policy sociology has suggested a number of important questions for exploration in this regard. What items are negotiated off the agenda in return for a group's privileged participation? Do the leaders become a sub-set of the state apparatus resulting over time in the "emergence of new political elites based on new life-styles and social identities" (McPherson and Raab, 1988, p. 8)? And how does the function of these leaders evolve — legitimating state proposals and controlling members as much as representing them?

More fundamental, less visible and all the more powerful is the effect of corporatist policy making on the thematising of educational discourse. What is sayable as a contribution to the educational policy-making process is subjected to subtle yet powerful control. Certain views, possibilities, even questions for exploration let alone solutions, become excluded as peripheral, theoretical, unduly long-term or a distraction. Maguire (1988), for instance, anticipated such a response from the policy-making community to his criticisms of Irish economic development for its top-down planning, exclusion of ordinary people and its culture of domination: "I am aware that this viewpoint will be greeted with incredulity by some and with impatience by others: such naive abstractions, I will be told, are out of place when there is serious and urgent work to be done". Consider also how discordant Seán P. MacCarthy's minority report on church control in the Report of the Primary Education Review Body (1990) appears to be, whatever its validity, particularly when set alongside the assenting signatures of the six representatives of the INTO, the teaching union most immediately involved. This restraint also exerts its influence by means of self-censorship, since to utter the unsayable is to invite marginalisation, exclusion or communicative dismissal.

Criticism needs to be distinguished from critique — the exposure of elements of a paradigm, their identification and scrutiny. Teacher leaders are remembered by Gemma Hussey (1990, p. 24): "They are so much quieter and milder in my office over a cuppa than when they're devouring me in public". In the context of corporatist relationships such criticisms can be heavily ritualised and geared towards generating cohesion and solidarity as well as lessening any tension between leaders and rank and file members. In fact, much of this type of criticism can actually impede critique, not unlike the

manner in which the practice of the officers serving the ranks on Christmas Day functions to confirm rather than disturb authority relationships. Or as Palmer (1990) put it in relation to the appropriation of the arts "as empty fetishes to adorn the new order" within the enterprise culture of one of our newer universities, "their awkward, quizzical energies (have been) sidelined".

This paradigmatic restraint is carried over into formal arrangements for the exploration and development of the educational system. Committees of inquiry and councils are constituted as representative rather than expert bodies in that their membership reflects educational interests and sectors but not modes of critique. It is significant that the most culturally inquisitive and cosmopolitan reports on Irish education exist in relation to less mainstream areas such as adult education and the youth service. There the constituencies of interest are less clearly drawn, the sectors less bureaucratised and the relationship with the educational policy-making community more marginal. In the interim (1970) and final (1973) reports of the Murphy Committee on adult education and the report of the Costello Committee (1984) on the youth service we find evidence of thinking that is more culturally free-floating than one routinely encounters in official Irish educational discourse. Much the same observations, though open to a more varied interpretation, can be made in relation to the educational reports of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors. Its recent publication *The Catholic School in Contemporary Society* (CMRS, 1991), given the range and type of issues it is willing to open up, is a further manifestation of the relaxation, most notably among religious personnel, of the regulatory power of the paradigm relating to the place of the Catholic church in the control of schooling. *Why Irish?* (Tovey, Hannan and Abramson, 1989) is indicative of what can be achieved by working parties comprised of representatives of disciplines with a tradition of critique.

## XII ACADEMIC EDUCATIONALISTS

Academic educationalists, for their part, are similarly pressurised to communicate in terms of the dominant paradigms unless they, in turn, are to be dismissed as "theoretical" both by practising teachers and within the policy-making community. This has been most evident in relation to curriculum studies where the thrust of the many considerable developments of the past two decades has accordingly been reactive rather than reflective, concerned with technique rather than morality, pragmatic rather than principled and functional rather than critical (O'Sullivan, 1990).

Occasionally, academic educationalists introduce alternative paradigms — associated with critical analysis, gender, children's rights, religious formation — which generate a degree of confrontation within educational ideas. But

even here adherents work within the confines of the new assumptions, routinely misrecognising the transition as modernist and emancipatory. In fact, one orthodoxy of dogma, with its distinctive community of believers, sacred texts and authorities, frequently replaces another. It is unlikely that this is confined to academic educationalists; similar observations have been made in relation to political and economic analysis (Walsh, 1991) and to intellectual life (Kilroy, 1991) in Ireland. The usual suspects — church, colonisation and peasantry — can no doubt be rounded up to explain this tendency of the Irish mind to operate unreflectingly within received structures of thought. In educational analysis the orientation towards the British and North American tradition of social analysis rather than to the continental tradition of cultural exploration is likely to have allowed this intellectual dependency among the actors in the policy process to remain unremarked and unexplored.

### XIII CONCLUSION

The recent Green Paper on Education (1992), published since the foregoing was written, is a product of this paradigmatically-insulated culture of educational ideas. Despite its title *Education for a Changing World* it contains no analysis of social change or the contribution that education might make to it. Equity, though given primacy among the aims set for the Irish educational system, is not elaborated on. Yet these are contested issues with widely differing implications for educational policy (see O'Sullivan, 1989). Similar observations can be made in relation to such issues as enterprise culture, work and employment (Lynch, 1992), power, accountability and the rôle of the state (O'Sullivan, 1991), the interface of research and policy (Kellaghan, 1989) and the function of higher education (Clancy, 1989). In treating of these issues the Green Paper seems to be unaware of the paradigms within which it is operating or of the other possibilities for education that might exist. For this reason, whatever merit the Green Paper might have as a set of concrete proposals for educational policy, it fails as a discussion document.

A more participative, enlightening and educative strategy in terms of public knowledge, debate and choice concerning educational policy was possible. This would have involved outlining the different interpretations of education and of its key dimensions, pursuing them in terms of their respective policy implications, estimating the likely operational effects on education, society and the life chances of individuals and calculating the social and economic costs. In this manner the public would have been given a wider range of options for discussion, some of which have never featured in public educational debate here. As it stands *Education for a Changing World* is too

delimiting while failing to recognise its self-imposed intellectual parameters.

More generally, the import of the case study considered in this paper is that critique of dominant paradigms needs to be encouraged and facilitated among academic educationalists and that the teaching profession and the policy-making community must become more habituated and receptive to cultural reflection. Unless this happens we are likely to be condemned to relying on the occasional cultural stranger coming among us to confront us with the structuration of our educational consciousness and its shaping of what we misrecognise as open educational debate.

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