“Tourists in their own land”

John Bosco Conama ©

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Spring 2001
Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work. It has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other university.

I agree that the Library may lend and copy this thesis upon request.

Signed

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background
It is useful to ask why it is necessary to analyse social policy. There are a number of answers to this question. Firstly, social policies affect the way that people live and they can be studied to find out what way is the best way to deal with social problems. Secondly, understanding social policy is an important part of professional preparation and could have a considerable contribution to the policy-making process. Thirdly, the study of social policy can help to change the way that people think about society and public policy (Spicker, 1995: pp 7).

There is appropriate definition of social policy given by Donnison in a National Economic and Social Council document:

"Those actions of government which deliberately or accidentally affect the distribution of resources, status, opportunities and life chances among social groups and categories of people within the country and thus help to shape the general character and equity of its social relations (Donnison, in NESC 1975)."

The Deaf community in Ireland is the specifically chosen “social group” for this thesis. The subtext of the definition - “thus help the general character and equity of its social relations” - is being explored in this thesis in relation to the status of Deaf people in Irish society.

Additionally, a 1981 document from the NESC outlines a number of social policy aims: these include the reduction of income and wealth inequalities, the
elimination of inequalities of opportunities based on social and economic differences and the enhancement of responsible citizenship (NESC 1981). However, Curry (1998) acknowledges that these social policy aims were and still are not successfully achieved or fully realised in an Irish context.

Although, previous studies of Irish social policy are frequently focussed on the general population, there are some specific studies based on certain perspectives such as feminist, anti-racist, pro-family and disability. Even within disability studies, there are occasional references to a Deaf perspective. Furthermore, generally there is little literature or discussion of social policies that affect Deaf people directly in Ireland.

It must be mentioned that general social policies do affect Deaf people in many ways but when it comes to specific policy responses to the perceived needs of Deaf people, practical responses are often influenced by ad hoc or ideologically driven decisions. There is plenty of evidence that ad hoc or ideologically driven decisions were often made to meet the perceived needs of Deaf people. For instance, educational policies for Deaf children were often decided at local level (Griffey 1994, Crean 1997, Burns 1998). Despite a number of specific social policy responses made in relation to Deaf people, such policies have not been closely analysed.

**The Irish Deaf Community;**

It is necessary to briefly describe the Deaf community. The Deaf (note the capital D) refers to persons who sees themselves as culturally Deaf and mainly use sign language. They base their identity on shared experiences, common linguistic characteristics and share a set of collective beliefs and values. Their perception of personal identity bears no or little connection to the hearing world. Members of a Deaf community may not all be necessarily deaf themselves. They can be hearing children of Deaf adults or interpreters. This group of people is commonly
known as the Deaf community (Higgins, 1980; Ladd, 1992; Padden and Humperies, 1982; Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996; Parasnis, 1998).

Other deaf persons such as hard of hearing people or people deafened in late age are more orientated to the hearing world and are more likely to base their identity and status within this world. They have already acquired a spoken language. The majority of people, who are deafened in later life or become hard of hearing as teenagers or adults, have already established their standing in the hearing world. Being deprived of hearing is seen as a danger to their status and identity because a spoken language is a main requisite for participation in the hearing world e.g. talking and listening. Therefore medical assistance is seen as necessary (Higgins, 1980; Ladd, 1992; Padden and Humperies, 1982; Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996; Parasnis, 1998).

This thesis focuses on the former group because as a group, they see themselves as a linguistic minority and so they require specific social policy responses.

The size of the Deaf community is not easy to establish and numbers vary from source to source. In his study of the Irish Deaf community, Matthews (1996) uses a general international ratio of 1:1,000. According to this formula, on the whole island of Ireland there are approximately 5,300 Deaf people.

Oliver (1998) states that as part of the social policy response to the needs of disabled people, the collection of quantitative data was often a first priority of policy makers. However, he claims this approach actually leads to the exclusion of disabled people from the policy-making process. He argues that policy makers rarely get beyond crude counting of heads. This experience is not unique to the disabled people and research shows that Deaf people in the past have not benefited from statistical surveys. This thesis will not be concerned primarily with quantitative data.
Irish Sign Language (ISL) is the preferred and primary language of the Deaf community (Matthews, 1996; McDonnell, 1996; Leeson, 1997; Burns, 1998). ISL has recently been investigated in several studies. It has been deliberately suppressed over the years, especially in the education sphere (Matthews, 1996; McDonnell, 1996; Crean, 1997). As a result, ISL has not been much researched to date.

Due to American pioneering linguistic research dating from the 1960s, indigenous sign languages are now deemed to be authentic natural languages. Thus, ISL is now recognised as an independent language that does not derive from spoken languages and has its own grammatical and syntactical structures (LeMaster, 1990; Matthews, 1996; McDonnell, 1996; Leeson, 1997; Burns, 1998). Not only Deaf people use ISL: hearing children of Deaf parents who sign in home and hearing professionals working alongside with Deaf people, also use ISL. Several studies show that ISL is an important element in Deaf culture (Matthews 1996, Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996; Parasnis et al 1998).

However, it has to be said the concept of a separate Deaf culture is controversial to many theorists because of its lack of visible presence to the hearing societies. The existence of Deaf culture has been doubted since there is no evidence of distinctive art forms such as attire, food, and architecture. However, recent studies show there is a Deaf culture (Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996; Parasnis et al 1998). For those who are placed within the community, it may have the advantage of being culturally innate. Outsiders can understand the existence of Deaf culture if they acquire anthropological observations by getting involved in social and home environments. Lack of linguistic cultural understanding by planners can make policies ethnocentric and insensitive.

It is now beyond dispute that the vast majority of Deaf people in Ireland experience economic deprivation and social disadvantage. Despite the fact that the state supports the education for the Deaf financially, the Deaf community is not actively involved in the policy-making process. The consequences for Deaf
children of the failures of the Irish education system are far worse than for mainstream student population (NRB 1991, Crean 1997).

There is evidence that Deaf people do not enjoy equal opportunities in schooling and university education. Therefore, they are left with inadequate qualifications to compete in the marketplace. This position leaves Deaf people with little choice except to extend an inevitable dependency on those who provide services. The services are often based on the vested interests of the professionals and are based on the assumption that Deaf people are incapable of running the services. With a sense of powerlessness and helplessness, they have to be content with the current situation and their contentment continues the status quo (Bateman, 1998).

**Scope of Research:**

Spicker warns that there is no clear boundary or limit to social policy:

> Although the field which social policy deals with is not difficult to recognise, it is hard to point any areas that are “off limits”, because all kinds of issue turn out to affect people’s social relationships and welfare (Spicker, 1996: 5).

The statement acknowledges that the study of social policy is inter-disciplinary.

This study focuses primarily on education policies and their relationship with matters such as employment and health. In the Deaf community, educational policy is widely recognised for its contribution in shaping and moulding the characteristics of the community, and the educational institutions are seen as lifeblood of the Deaf community. The clustering of Deaf children in schools helps to foster and develop a sense of cultural and linguistic belonging. As a consequence, the subject of educational policies is fiercely debated. Burns (1998) states:
Educational and language policies implemented at schools for Deaf children are therefore of considerable concern to a great majority of Deaf people (Burns 1998).

The main aim of this research is to highlight the extent of the Irish Deaf community’s participation in society. The extent of participation has to be determined by the current socio-economic status of the Deaf community in Ireland. To reflect the status, consequences of education and social service provisions are examined; to see of they have had any effect.

This research is, as far as the author knows, a first social policy thesis on the Deaf community in Ireland. Therefore, it is necessary to have a history content in this thesis. Given the uniqueness of this research, among the contents are:

- identify causes and origins of the socio-economic status of Deaf people
- a comparative analysis between Finland and Ireland in this context
- the use of the citizenship concept to appraise the socio-economic status
- two case studies of policy decisions to provide an insight of how the status are affected.

**Situating myself in the Research**

In order to explain the perspective of this research, it is necessary to state who I am and where I come from.

I was born Deaf and the cause was unknown. My family was a typical small farming landholder in the west of Ireland. There was no history of deafness in my family. Thus, my parents had to rely on medical profession to get ‘advice’ on how to raise a Deaf child. Accepting the medical advice, I was sent to the residential school for Deaf children in Dublin, where I first met other Deaf children and learned to interact with them.
My parents, who had to rely on ‘experts’ on how to raise the Deaf child, were strongly recommended not to use signs, but to use speech and lip-reading. The ‘advice’ was common at that time and given to all parents of Deaf children who did not have any knowledge, or expertise. Therefore, I was fully exposed to the effects of Oralism in my education. However, it did not prevent me in acquiring and becoming fluent in sign language through various ‘forbidden’ channels.

I left the school without completing the Leaving Certificate. However, a few years later, I managed to succeed in the Leaving Certificate at adult education level. I became more active at community level, where I was involved in youth projects. I then went on to become the Honorary Secretary of Irish Deaf Society. There, at community level, I had observed how many Deaf people had a low socio-economic status. This motivated my involvement in campaigning to ensure their rights. I also noticed that ‘outsider’ who attached no significance to linguistic and cultural elements within the community, had conducted much research into the Deaf community. This sort of research brought little, or no benefit to the community.

At this stage, I realised that an innovative approach to research from within the community is needed, to understand the socio-economic status of the Deaf community.

**Approach to Research:**

Previous social research - apart from linguistic ones - often ignore the cultural / linguistic perspectives of the Deaf community (Baker-Shenk and Kyle, 1990 and McDonnell, 1996). Oliver (1992) states that the social relations of research production reflect the asymmetrical power structures and they often lack the understanding of alternative perspectives of the research population. Research based on positivist and interpretative paradigms are the prime examples of these asymmetrical power relations. This is evident in many studies on Deaf issues (NRB 1973, NRB 1991). The reasons for undertaking research are often to
increase understanding and awareness of how Deaf people fare in social and economic life. However, in reality, the understanding generated by the research has unfortunately made no improvements in the lives of Deaf people and has had little impact on social policy responses to the needs of Deaf people.

Oliver (1992) suggests that an *emancipatory* research paradigm challenges positivism and interpretative claims of objectivity and the researcher’s political neutrality. It is similar to the approach adopted by feminist, anti racist and anti-imperialist researchers aiming to empower various groups in society with perspectives derived from research studies (Stone and Priestly 1996). Oliver (1992) suggests that disability cannot be studied from a detached position because disability is socially constructed.

Hearing researchers in the past have demonstrated a significant lack of insight on their research subjects - Deaf people (Baker-Shenk and Kyle 1990). Jones and Pullen (1992) demonstrated how difficult it could be for hearing researchers to detect cultural significance in the general behaviour of Deaf people. Baker-Shenk and Kyle (1990) argue that the linguistic and cultural bias of hearing researchers can lead to perspectives that would be regarded as contrary to the Deaf community’s beliefs.

Emancipatory research can be regarded as a radical approach to an analysis of social policy. To adopt an emancipatory approach, the researcher has to be aware of the social relations of research production where the asymmetrical social relationship between the researcher and the research population are reflected. This thesis will endeavour to avoid this kind of relationship.

Barnes (1992) urges researchers in similar situations to opt for qualitative research using an emancipatory paradigm because researchers would be able to empathise with the research population and this approach would considerably “demythise” many misconceptions built over the years. Qualitative research has its origins in social anthropology in which it is vital for the researcher to have
mutual empathy with the research population. The qualitative approach, says Barnes (1992), suits small-scale research, and allows the researcher to develop in-depth understanding of the subjects of the research.

Nevertheless, there are some pitfalls in adopting this kind of approach. One problem is that the independence of the researcher may be compromised due to the increased subjectivity of the researcher (Zarb 1998). The author of this study will endeavour to retain personal independence by creating a framework of emancipatory research at the outset. It is not possible to be totally objective in research. In order to counter the risk of subjectivity; the author endeavours to achieve a balanced approach.

Stone and Priestly (1996) have developed a framework for their research on people with disabilities and, within the framework, these researchers pledge to do emancipatory research to empower the people with the disabilities while rejecting positivism. Their conceptual framework is adopted here but is adjusted to reflect the cultural and linguistic perspective of the researcher and the research population. The conceptual framework is based on the following set of principles:

The adoption of a linguistic and cultural model of the Deaf community which acknowledges the existence of Irish Sign Language and its related social culture, rather than a medicalised view of deafness.

- An acknowledgement that a claim of total objectivity in research is not achievable.
- A willingness to conduct the research in such a way as to be of some benefit to the Deaf community.
- The ability to offer a perspective on the experiences of discrimination and marginalisation by Deaf people in society.

However, it has to be pointed out that emancipatory research perspectives on Deaf-related matters are not unique and in fact, the practice is used
internationally and in Ireland. The practice can be reflected in linguistic research recognising the role of indigenous Irish Sign Language within the Deaf community (LeMaster, 1990; Matthews, 1996; McDonnell, 1996; Leeson, 1997; and Burns 1998). Increased awareness and better knowledge of Irish Sign Language and its functions have paved the way for emancipatory approach in social research.

**Methodology**

The primary method of research in this thesis is mainly documentary analysis.

As far as the author is aware, there is no previous serious analysis of policy development and its effects on the Deaf community. In this sense, this type of analysis in this area can be regarded as a benchmark. There is a great need to analyse the issues in this thesis further. But given that research in this field is at a very early stage, a study drawing on existing secondary material may be a valuable contribution.

The advantage of using secondary data is that it enables the researcher to select and limit the number of sources used and allow him to focus on analysis and interpretation of the conclusions and perspectives of the sources and authors. More importantly, secondary sources can be used to confirm, modify, or contradict other findings (Blaxter *et al*, 1996).

This study will of course use primary documents such as government, departmental and statistical reports. Many references to the reports are contained in secondary sources where commentators discuss various issues arising in these reports and assess the conclusions or recommendations contained therein. Tertiary sources involving international comparisons and perspectives are also referred in to this study. All sources are included in the bibliography at the end of the thesis.
Many surveys consisted of unstructured and open-ended questions and answers. Boulton and Hammersley write intensively about this area and their approach is mirrored here (Boulton and Hammersley, 1996;). Boulton and Hammersley warn that it could be difficult to plan a strategy of analysis when the researcher has to examine a number of documents since this kind of analysis does not follow a strict protocol (Boulton and Hammersley, 1996: 297). This warning is heeded and observed in this thesis.

A documentary analysis approach as outlined by Blaxter et al is chosen due to the clarity and simplicity of the method (Blaxter et al; 1997). It assists this researcher to approach the document methodologically and sequentially. Much of the research literature warns not to accept documents at face value but to be aware of documentary realities being constructed by other authors with an obvious bias or with a limited audience. For instance, Atkinson et al discusses this danger and suggests that this necessitates a method of intertextuality - a system of cross-referencing and checking (Atkinson et al; 1997). The method is frequently used in this study.

Spicker (1995) suggests that social policy researchers should pay more attention to methodology in research because he believes that too many researchers are far too concerned with the outcomes of their work. He thinks that careful consideration of methodology would stand the research work in good stead in the end. For this reason, it is important to state the methodology of the thesis.

**The structure of the thesis**

Chapter 2 concentrates on the historical influences of current educational policies and other policies closely linked to education such as employment and health. Many current educational policies such as oralism and sign language have their origins in the eighteenth century. The chapter focuses on developments from the Middle Ages until 1972 when the Department of Education published a document on the education for Deaf children.
Chapter 3 discusses the developments from 1972 to this day, examining issues in a chronological sequence. It is divided into two sections. The first section looks at the aftermath of the 1972 report, which was significant for Deaf education, and the second section discusses policies up to the present time.

Chapter 4 focuses on the current socio-economic status of Deaf people in general and will try to identify the main aspects of their status. It will try to explain the links between policies and the status profile. Evidence is extracted from a number of previous quantitative surveys on the Irish Deaf community.

Chapter 5 includes a brief comparative study between the Irish and Finnish Deaf communities. This chapter also includes international comparison to ascertain the status of Irish Deaf people vis-à-vis other Deaf communities today. The chapter contrasts and compares the Irish Deaf community in relation to their Finnish counterparts in terms of participation in the policy-making process.

The level of citizenship acquired by Irish Deaf people is also analysed in the context of citizenship theories. This issue is raised in Chapter 6. While the citizenship discussion focuses on individuals, it is necessary to study collective action so Chapter 8 outlines a theoretical framework for case studies of the collective action. The extent of Irish Deaf people’s participation and influence in the policy-making process is analysed in two case studies that makes up Chapter 8. The final chapter’s conclusion includes summaries of each chapter, an overall discussion and list of recommendations and suggestions for dealing with the shortcomings of social policy responses to the needs of Deaf people.
Chapter 2

Evolution of social policies for Deaf people

Introduction
This chapter describes the evolution of social policies affecting Deaf people. It focuses chiefly on education because it is very clear that this is where Deaf people experience the effects of public policies first. Specific educational policies for Deaf people have led to the development of related social policies such as employment and health. This chapter begins by considering changes over time from the classical times to the publication of a landmark Irish government education document in 1972.

From the Classical Era to the Middle Ages
Educational policy regarding Deaf children can be regarded as a phenomenon that emerged during the latter half of this millennium. Historically, such policy did not exist in Greek and Roman times, where Deaf children were often victims of infanticide (St. Joseph's Yearbook, 1957:15), or deprived of certain legal rights (Lane, 1984). For instance, the thinking of Aristotle dismissed the possibility of teaching the deaf, as he stated that the deaf were incapable of reason. This belief remained throughout the early history of the Christian Church, and the subsequent teachings of St. Augustine greatly influenced the early European belief that deaf children could not be taught (Lane, 1984).

Educational policy for Deaf people became more organised in the eighteenth century. Policy often centred on the methods of communication for deaf children rather than on academic objectives. Prior to the eighteenth century, there is no...
strong evidence available that there was organised educational policy for deaf children. However, this does not indicate that there were no attempts made to educate deaf children.

There are some indications that attempts were made to educate deaf people prior to the eighteenth century, but these attempts did not develop sufficiently to form policies, as we know them today. These attempts at educating deaf people were mainly private concerns or took the form of family sponsorships. There was no educational institution for deaf people for many centuries even though there is evidence that Deaf people existed in Greek and Roman times, and there are a number of references in ancient Judaic laws regarding the welfare of Deaf people (McDonnell, 1996). However, in the existing historical accounts, there is no solid evidence that there was a systematic approach to the education of Deaf children.

A number of sources suggest that a lack of evidence does not mean that Deaf people were not educated at all prior to medieval times. There is indistinct evidence that deaf people were educated locally. For instance, in seventh century Britain, Venerable Bede writes of a local saint teaching a deaf person to speak (Hodgson, 1954; Montgomery and Dimmock, 1998).

There are some interesting perspectives that draw on the scant available evidence to illustrate the kind of climate that affected Deaf people and why Deaf people were not systematically educated during medieval times. De Saint-Loup suggests that the general circumstances of the peasant classes could offer some equality for deaf people because these circumstances were often shaped locally (De Saint-Loup, 1990).

Lane, on the other hand, states that the interpretation of Aristotle, the Justinian Code and the subsequent thinking of St. Augustine influenced the negative outlook that people of the medieval age had on the status of Deaf people. As a result, Deaf people were often deprived of certain inheritance rights even though they were members of the nobility (Lane, 1984: 93).
Moores, however, argues that this account is based on a serious misunderstanding. He suggests that Aristotle and St. Augustine should not be held responsible for delaying the development of the education for Deaf people. He feels that their negative comments on the possibility of deaf education were taken out of context and misinterpreted (Moores, 1988).

It was during the sixteenth century that serious attempts were made to educate Deaf people. Most of these attempts can be traced to the perceived concerns of aristocratic families. The first institution is believed to have been established in Spain where Pedro Ponce De Leon, a monk based in Valladolid, agreed to educate deaf children of local nobility (Lane, 1984). The practice of educating Deaf children of wealthy families steadily increased, with later developments in the Spanish Netherlands and Germany. Prior to this, there had been private inquiries into the ability of Deaf people to learn academically. However, there is evidence that there were well-educated Deaf people prior to this era. The painter to Phillip II of Spain, known as El Mudo, was reputed to be a well-learned person (McDonnell, 1998).

The seventeenth century saw the publication of a number of treatises on how to educate the Deaf. All agreed that Deaf children could be educated but differed on which was the appropriate method of communication to use. The British writer, George Dalgamo, played a significant part in this new debate. He expanded on the views of the fifteenth century Italian physician, Girolamo Cardano, arguing that the best method of teaching deaf children was through sign language (Moores, 1988). Unfortunately, there was little or no interest in enhancing cooperation and sharing information between parties in the debate regarding developing a regularised education for the deaf. As each author claimed that he alone had invented the appropriate method for educating the deaf, a climate of egotism and plagiarism prevailed (Lane, 1984; Crean 1997).
The Enlightenment Influences

It was the Enlightenment period that saw the construction of the first serious educational policies for Deaf people. The main centres of origin for the policies that affected the developing education system were Paris (France), Leipzig (Germany), and Edinburgh (Scotland). These areas were also principal domains for Enlightenment debates (Merriman, 1996). Each area adopted a distinctive methodology. The three methods were (1) the manual; (2) the oral; and (3) the combined method. The methods were not originally devised in these places: earlier developments had influenced the evolution of each method.

Abbe De L'Epee first used manually coded language in Paris in 1755 where he learned the existing local sign language from local Deaf people. However, he failed to recognise the existence of a separate and distinct grammar in that local sign language. Based on a belief that Deaf children should be educated through French grammar, he imposed French grammar by making up signs as he needed to be able to express spoken French in manual form (Lane, 1984). As a consequence, a misconception developed that indigenous sign languages were derived from spoken languages.

De L'Epee favoured the manual method of educating, using methodical signs, writing, and the manual alphabet. He equated his method to the hearing children’s cognitive development and he demonstrated his pupils’ ability to write at a higher standard as a proof of success for his method (Lane, 1984). De L'Epee is also credited with being the first to provide free education to deaf children in the greater Paris area. De L'Epee was said to be motivated by a missionary zeal to save the souls of deaf children and wanted to prove that deaf children could be taught the Scriptures (Lane, 1984: 58-59).

A former Prussian soldier, Samuel Heinicke established his first school in Leipzig, Germany in 1778 where he used the oral method. The school was established at the invitation of the Prince of Saxony, who had heard about
Heinicke in several German cities. Heinicke laid the foundations of the oralist philosophy that dominated policy in the next decades (Lane, 1984; Moores, 1988). However, Heinicke was not the first to use the oral approach. Others were also attempting to use it. For example, Pereire in France won the favour of Louis XVI, and taught only a small number of wealthy deaf children. There is some indirect evidence that De Leon in the sixteenth century also used this method (Lane, 1984; Moores, 1988).

Heinicke was inspired by nationalistic aspirations for his home country, and teaching the deaf was a natural approach to gaining respectability among the Prussian ruling classes. Discouraging competition, he set an exorbitant fee for any party interested in having him divulge his methods for educating deaf children (Lane, 1984). Heinicke believed that speech and lip-reading should be the primary means of communication and rejected the manual approach, which advocated use of methodical signs.

Heinicke believed that “pure thought was only possible through speech, upon which everything was dependent” (Moores, 1988: 49). The future proponents of oralism shared Heinicke’s beliefs. The most illustrative feature of this belief was found among Christian missionaries for the Deaf, especially in the latter part of the nineteenth century, as they believed that acquiring the faith was only possible by hearing. They cited metaphorical biblical quotations to support their beliefs. For instance, St. Paul writes; “Faith cometh by hearing” and this was often used as a basis for their beliefs. This belief acted as a basis for those who were genuinely concerned with the welfare of Deaf children (Lane 1984; Moores, 1988).

In Edinburgh, Thomas Braidwood opened the first exclusive school for Deaf children in 1760, where wealthy families were able to pay large fees to enrol their deaf children in this school (Lane, 1984). Braidwood developed a combined method, the contents of which were kept secret for a long period. Braidwood feared that the revelation of his method would encourage competition that would
lead to his demise as ‘the’ educator of deaf children. It was revealed later that Braidwood adopted a combined method, which actually meant deaf children were educated by speech with signs (Kyle and Woll, 1985: 38). The term - ‘combined’ - reflected the method used by Braidwood and due to his obsessive secrecy, there was little available information to reveal the real thinking behind Braidwood’s approach.

Braidwood had the monopoly on educating deaf children throughout Britain. He opened a number of small schools across the country and maintained his policy of nepotism by placing his relatives in charge of these schools. This monopoly survived for the next half century. Both the degree of secrecy and the maintenance of a nepotistic monopoly exemplified the economic position of the Braidwoods (Lane, 1984).

These three methods of communication in the education of deaf children in these three places would become dominant issues in the coming decades. These methods often coloured the prevailing policies and each method had its own distinctive outlook. Awareness in Europe increased regarding these methods and inevitably led to a number of arguments about the merits of each approach. The most famous argument was between the German oralist, Heinicke and the French monk, Abbe de L'Epee. The argument had a bearing on the shaping of future education policies.

Heinicke and De L'Epee had clashed over the methods of educating deaf children. Heinicke believed that the oral approach was ideal and ridiculed the methodical approach. De L'Epee defended his methodical approach. Heinicke proposed that De L'Epee should observe his practical implementation of the oral methodology and suggested that he should stay in Leipzig for six months. De L'Epee answered; ‘what I can teach in two weeks, I will not spend six months to learn’ (Lane, 1984: 102).
De L’Epee disputed Heinicke’s assertion that in the case where there was no hearing, speech was the sole means for creating thought. De L’Epee demonstrated the ability of his pupils to read and write as proof of the case that the development of concepts was possible through the manual method (Lane, 1984; Moores, 1988).

The 19th century

The debate continued unabated throughout the nineteenth century, with several conferences organised throughout Europe. The most significant was held in Milan in 1880. The resolutions adopted there banished sign languages from deaf schools and promoted the oral method. Eighty per cent of the delegates attending this conference were French or Italian hearing oralist sympathisers: thus the conference was sycophantic and obsequious. Hence those, especially the Americans, who favoured the manual or combined methods had difficulty in debating which method was best for Deaf schools (Lane, 1984; Kyle and Woll, 1985; Moores, 1988). There was only one Deaf delegate attending the conference and he was unable to influence the proceedings (Lane, 1984; Kyle and Woll, 1985; Moores, 1988).

It had been stated that the congress was carefully organised in order to favour oralism. Those who favoured pure oralism were disgusted at the compromises reached at previous congresses and decided to stage-manage the congress to embrace pure oralism totally (Lane, 1984; Lane et al, 1996; Crean, 1997). For instance, there was a public demonstration of carefully selected Italian Deaf pupils giving an exhibition of their ability to use speech. A request to have unknown passages read to them by a stranger to ascertain their understanding was refused (Lane, 1984)

Subsequently, the French delegates and the government embraced resolutions easily and implemented the resolutions rapidly. This was a part of an assimilation process, motivated by a nationalistic fervour, taking place in late 19th century
France where minority languages such as Basque and Breton were ruthlessly suppressed (Lane et al, 1996:176-177).

Those who favoured the oral approach dominated the audience and the belief of these oralists was that the manual method would hinder the potential development of the deaf child’s aural skills (Elliot, 1882: 42-43). The Milan conference marked the century-long ascendency of the oral philosophy in Europe and North America and with its propaganda, the conference was deemed as having respectability and authority (Lane, 1984; Kyle and Woll, 1985).

The ascendancy had its well-known supporter - Alexander Graham Bell- who strongly advocated the oral philosophy. His prestige as the inventor of the telephone gave him status and attention that was hardly matched by his opponents. Inevitably, he was looked upon as an authority on deafness and he was often called upon as an expert to give views before government commissions (Lane, 1984). After the Milan Conference and the rise of the eugenics movement in the United States, Bell became an out-and-out eugenicist. He was an important member of the eugenicist Breeders’ Association, the forerunner of the American Genetics Association (Lane, 1992, Kuhl, 1994).

Bell called for the closing down of residential Deaf schools and discouraged the inter-marriage of Deaf people. He suggested the mainstreaming of Deaf children into the hearing schools and called for voluntary sterilisation of Deaf people. Bell was genuinely concerned that if these policies were not adopted these families;

... would then constitute a variety of the human race in which deafness would be the rule rather than the exception. (Bell, in Lane 1992: 214).

As a result of Bell’s and his Genetics Association’s influence, some subsequent laws on sterilisation for “undesirables” including Deaf people were enacted in some American states, but they proved unworkable (Lane, 1984). Oralists like Bell held extreme attitudes to Deaf people, but it would not be representative to state that all oralists shared the same views. The most common belief shared by
both oralists and others alike is that the Deaf people are afflicted. Hence a role was created for the medical profession in searching for a cure or improvement in the ‘suffering’ of Deaf people (Lane, 1992).

On the basis of information from several sources, the dominant view of Deaf people as ‘afflicted’ had left Deaf people with the impression that they were fortunate to be educated and that they were not destined for the greater things in life (Lane, 1992: 80-81). Concerned hearing people dominated the nineteenth century debates. There was no systematic analysis of, or consultation with Deaf people to discuss the merits of the methods used in their education. All this was taking place in a context where hundreds of Deaf teachers were unceremoniously removed from their posts as teachers of Deaf children in the aftermath of the Milan Conference (Fischer and Lane, 1990).

Although rarely reported in previous studies, there is evidence that Deaf people at this time had decided to challenge widespread and systematic discrimination against Deaf teachers and sign languages. Such Deaf action led to the establishment of representative organisations of Deaf people, which aimed to protect and uphold the status of sign languages. In the United States, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) was established in response to the changes that were occurring (Lane et al, 1996). The British Deaf and Dumb Association (a forerunner of the present British Deaf Association) was also formed in 1890 by a Deaf Irishman, Francis Maginn (Grant, 1990). These organisations vowed to protect indigenous sign languages but were not able to delimit the rapid spread of oralism.

These two issues - the debate between interested parties and the clustering of deaf children through the opening of several small schools throughout Europe and North America - laid the foundations for current educational policies for deaf children. Humanitarian concerns, economic interests and missionary zeal were the fundamental factors that led these men to establish schools for the deaf.
Central to their arguments was the issue of a method of communication. These men’s methods have influenced and shaped policy in Ireland.

**Early formal provisions of schools for the Deaf in Ireland**

It was through the Braidwood network in Britain that Charles Orpen, a surgeon from the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin, obtained training and advice regarding the opening of the first systematic educational institution for the Deaf in Ireland. The institution was first situated in Smithfield in Dublin in 1816 and then moved to Glasnevin. The institution was known as the Claremont School. He had cited as reasons for establishing the institution that he was concerned with the irreligious and humanitarian nature of deaf children in Dublin (McDonnell, 1979).

The institution acquired the combined method from Braidwood in Britain and focused on a curriculum based on religious and industrial training (Matthews, 1996). The institution even enjoyed an interdenominational character as the pupils were from both Protestant and Catholic faiths. Protestant clergy controlled the institution, which managed to exist for the next eighty years. This raised the fear of proselytism among a concerned Catholic clergy. Proselytism was the main issue of concern in the sectarian politics of nineteenth century Ireland (Coolohan, 1982). This issue was a chief motivation for the Catholic clergy’s attempt to open schools for Deaf Catholics.

However, the rise of the Catholic schools was not the sole cause of the gradual decline of the Claremont school. As a large number of Deaf children sent to Claremont originated from the province of Ulster, interest grew in building a similar institution in Belfast. This gained momentum in the 1830’s, even against the wishes of Charles Orpen, and eventually more than a hundred of Deaf children were enrolled there (McDonnell, 1979).

The Catholic clergyman, Father Thomas McNamara, a member of the French-based Congregation of Mission, established a Catholic committee to oversee the
establishment of Catholic schools in 1845. The committee was a forerunner of the Catholic Institute for the Deaf. Through a fund-raising campaign, the Catholic committee was able to establish a girl’s school in Cabra. This opened in 1846 and was run by the Dominican nuns. Through the French based order, McNamara was able to contact a certain Deaf school in Caen where a disciple of De L’Epee’s approach divulged the French manual system to the Dominican nuns. The French manual method was translated and localised to reflect English grammar. This was carried out with the assistance of the school’s chaplaincy (O’Dowd, 1955; McDonnell, 1979; Crean, 1997).

In 1849, the localised manual method also found its way to the next established Catholic school, a boy’s school in Glasnevin. (Not to be confused with the Claremont school). The school was subsequently transferred to Cabra and was taken over by the Christian Brothers in 1857. There are indications that the Irish Christian Brothers had obtained extensive information on sign language from America, a factor which some observers believe contributed to the resulting differences between girls’ and boys’ use of sign vocabulary (O’Dowd, 1955; Crean, 1996). The Catholic Institute for the Deaf adopted a single sex, denominational approach, which was increasingly adopted in subsequent Irish secondary schools. This was an approach that was strongly endorsed by Cardinal Cullen and his fellow bishops at the famous Thurles Synod (O’Buachalla, 1988).

With the establishment of the Cabra schools providing serious competition for Claremont, proselytism continued to be a major source of attrition in the schools. The Claremont school was accused of encouraging proselytistic activities on several occasions. Such tension made it necessary for Cardinal Cullen to issue a pastoral letter in April 1869 citing specific cases against Claremont (O’Dowd, 1955: 11).

This localised manual method became a dominant feature of Irish Sign Language (ISL), as the Cabra schools became known nationally. Such dominance gave
away to a belief that this method was in fact the origin of Irish Sign Language (ISL). This belief failed to take account of earlier influences such as the Orpen School and other isolated influences. McDonnell convincingly suggests that the origins of ISL were far beyond the establishment of the Cabra schools. (McDonnell, 1992).

For example, Matthews identified fourteen isolated private schools that were in existence throughout Ireland during the nineteenth century (Matthews, 1996). While each of these school’s influence on the shaping of ISL are only vaguely known, there is no clear evidence demonstrating that pupils from these schools had not interacted socially. On the other hand, there is also little evidence that the schools had contact with each other for the purposes of exchanging information on communication methods and curriculum content.

Financially, these schools - including the Cabra schools - entirely depended on grants paid by the Poor Law Guardians, private fees of wealthier parents of pupils and endowments made by the public. Not all of these financial sources were always forthcoming and soon many of these small schools found themselves closed down (O’Dowd, 1955; Matthews, 1996; Census Commissioners’ Report, 1891). This was despite the fact that the Poor Law Act of 1843 (and its amendments in 1873) empowered Local Guardians to support the education of local Deaf children (McDonnell, 1979; Burke, 1985).

There were several calls for regular state aid to support these institutions. Charlotte Stoker delivered her address on this subject in an influential periodical, calling for regular state aid for deaf schools (McDonnell, 1979: 34).

There was one instance where the powers behind the Cabra schools resisted the attempts of the Commissioners for Education to inspect the schools despite their promising sources of finance because of their fear that their control would be eroded by Commissioners (O’Dowd, 1955). Later in the nineteenth century,
hopes were raised that government funding would be made available when a bill was sponsored by one Member of Parliament for Leeds, calling for state support for schools educating handicapped children. However, the bill was not supported by the government of that time (O'Dowd, 1955).

The curriculum in these schools was dominated by religious instruction, followed by industrial training and some basic academic studies. Religious instruction was the primary concern among the authorities of these schools as there was a common interest across the denominational spectrum in “saving the souls of the ignorant deaf children” (O'Dowd, 1955). The perceived need for industrial training was reflective of its time as the dominant economic ideology was of a laissez-faire nature (McDonnell, 1979). The laissez-faire ideology advocated minimal or non-government interference in the economy as everyone has responsibility for their individual welfare. The ideology was championed by capitalists and liberals (Adams, 1993).

**The Royal Commission 1885**

The most important government inquiry into the education of deaf children was made in 1885 when the British government established a Royal Commission to investigate the conditions in this area, which was asked to make recommendations. However, there was Irish anger against the commission. It was seen as unrepresentative as it contained only one Irish Protestant. In addition, the court of inquiry was held in London and Irish representatives invited to speak before the commission had to travel to London (O'Dowd, 1955). There was no Deaf representation on the commission (Lane, 1984; Crean, 1997).

The commission undertook an extensive study of the education for Deaf children as they had visited schools in Britain, Ireland and in continental Europe. The commission interviewed many witnesses. They had visited schools in Ireland in 1887 and praised the layout of the Cabra schools.
At the end, the commission did not reach a unanimous view on the appropriate approaches for the education for Deaf children (Lane, 1984; Crean, 1996). The fourth and final report was published in 1889 and it was regarded as a victory by opposing sides. Although the majority on the commission called for an oralist approach as the communication method in these schools and the minority report favoured the manual method. They reached an agreement that a Deaf child should be:

..for the first year at least, instructed in the oral system: those who cannot profit should then be taught manually (Lane, 1984: 367).

The commission issued separate recommendations for Ireland as they suggested:

- the schools must be denominational,
- the imperial exchequer to meet three fourth costs of the schools while local rates meet the rest providing the schools inspected by the government (Crean, 1997).

However, subsequent legislation based on recommendations from the final report only applied to the rest of Britain: these laws were not extended to Ireland (O'Dowd, 1955; McDonnell, 1979).

The call for the oralist approach by the Royal Commission was traced to the influence of a Member of Parliament, Benjamin St. John Ackers, the father of a Deaf girl. Lane states that St. John Ackers was hardly an ideal candidate for the neutral chair of the commission as he had publicly declared in favour of oralism on many occasions, even during the course of the commission’s deliberations. He was also the chief British proponent of oralism at the notorious Milan conference in 1880 (Lane, 1984). The conference was attended by a partisan audience, which eventually agreed to banish sign languages from classrooms. (Lane, 1984).
The commission also heard oral submissions given by two American rivals - Alexander Graham Bell, championing the oralist approach, and Edward Gallaudet, arguing for the combined method. (Lane, 1984). The invitation to both Americans to present their views before the commission reflected the trouble the commission took to investigate the issue. In the end, the representation on the commission favoured the oral method (Lane 1984).

**Oralism spreads to Ireland**

The debate in Europe, the United Kingdom, and North America had not escaped comment in Ireland where some schools pondered the wisdom of switching to the oral method. Some small schools had already decided to make the change. The Claremont Institution and the Ulster Institution switched to the oral method, following the overwhelming European trend (McDonnell, 1979). In the meantime, France, the home of De L'Epee’s manual method, saw most of its institutions for the deaf switch over to the oral method in what seemed like one rapid move (Lane, 1984).

The Cabra schools, under the control of the Catholic Institute for the Deaf, were unwilling to accept the oral method, even though it was not rejected outright. They cited the experimental nature of this method and a lack of financial support to finance the notoriously expensive oral approach as reasons for their reticence. They were prepared to accept the oral method once they were guaranteed permanent financial support from the state (O’Dowd, 1955).

The Cabra schools first used the early intervention approach: the approach sought to maximise the benefits of education for Deaf children and it was based on a belief that the earlier the children were instructed, the better the chance they would have to be educated. They felt that early intervention was necessary to save considerable time and resources in educating Deaf children. However, they found the local Board of Poor Law Guardians (who had responsibility for each child’s welfare) less co-operative with this approach. Some Poor Law unions
were reluctant to send Deaf children to the Cabra schools for fear of increasing expenditure from local rates. The schools struggled to adopt a voluntary approach to locate Deaf children throughout Ireland (O'Dowd, 1955). The Census Report of 1891 showed that the vast majority of Deaf people were largely uneducated. This reflected the lack of co-operation among the local authorities concerned and the schools at that time (Census Commissioners’ Report, 1891).

The Cabra schools maintained their subsidiary policies to ensure their former Deaf pupils could earn their own living to avoid living “in the squalor of the workhouse, passing their days in demoralising idleness and being a permanent burden on the community at large” (O'Dowd, 1955: 260). These policies were based on industrial and domestic training. This allowed schools to extract more financial support from Poor Law unions, as the Poor Law Guardians were anxious to reduce the possibility of supporting Deaf adults when they had completed their education.

The annual reports of the Institute running the Cabra schools often reported their policies as successful. However, the annual reports mentioned difficulties in securing apprenticeships because of the practice of excluding Deaf tradesmen by trade guilds. The reports also mentioned that some former pupils ended up in workhouses after being found unable to provide for themselves (O'Dowd, 1955).

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, it witnessed the development of those educational policies that had affected Deaf children since the turn of the century. Policies were shaped by a variety of influences - from missionary zeal to save the souls of Deaf children to a desire to see Deaf adults able to lead lives on their own without becoming a burden on local ratepayers.

The British Deaf and Dumb Association held its third congress in Dublin in 1895 and found itself in an impossible situation in trying to stop the spread of oralism. It is a little known fact that the founder of the BDA, Francis Maginn, an Irish Protestant, was very concerned with the state of education for Deaf children. In
correspondence with Archbishop Walsh of Dublin, he discussed the possibility of sending a number of Deaf Catholics to Gallaudet College - a third level college in Washington D.C. (Gallaudet Archives, 1998). Unfortunately, there is little evidence to inform us of the outcome of this proposal.

The debate on communication methods had reached the shores of Ireland. The importation of this debate was a direct consequence of the need to have teachers trained abroad, coupled with the importation of the method of instruction known in Britain and continental Europe (McDonnell, 1979: 10). The oral method had established its presence in the Protestant dominated schools while the manual method remained a dominant force in Catholic schools. This safeguarded the employment of Deaf teachers in these classrooms for some time - there were at least eleven Deaf teachers (Census Commissioners' Report 1891). The effects of the Milan conference of 1880 did have a considerable impact in Irish classrooms, especially in the Claremont and Ulster schools. During this period, the Catholic schools keenly observed the debate (O'Dowd, 1955).

Finally, the State did not directly influence the policies, which were chiefly shaped by religious orders. This was not a result of religious orders keeping the State at bay. McDonnell (1979) points out that the Commissioners of National Education at that time had never considered the question of the educational needs of deaf children. As such, the commissioners were content to leave the matter to local discretion. Successive legislation - the Education Act 1870, the Intermediate Education Act 1878, and the Education Act 1892 reflected the attitude of then authorities towards the needs of Deaf children in Ireland and no legislative provision was made for them. In contrast, Scottish, and English legislation made provision for the educational needs of Deaf children, especially during the early 1890s.

The absence of state intervention resulted in polices being formulated locally to suit the objectives of individual schools. There was no evidence of serious co-ordination or discussion between schools regarding what was the best method of
instruction. The nature of sectarian politics prevented such co-ordination and discussion.

_Early Development in Educational Policies in the 20th Century;

The first decades of the 20th century did not match the exciting closing decades of the 19th. The early decades can be regarded as a period of sluggishness in terms of policy and debate about methods of instruction. The educational sphere experienced a status quo as these schools were concerned with finances and the number of children required to allow regular maintenance from the Poor Law Guardians. World War I and the Easter Rising of 1916 further exacerbated the situation (O'Dowd, 1955).

In the 1920s the newly established Department of Education revived hopes of state financial aid for the schools. The Cabra schools demanded the extension of compulsory education for all deaf children under the auspices of the _Irish Education Act 1892_ but this was not favoured by the then Minister in 1923 (O'Dowd, 1955). The _School Attendance Act 1926_ was not extended to schools for the Deaf. In contrast, an act was passed in Northern Ireland obliging all Deaf children from that region to be educated there. This issue even reached the floor of Dail Eireann where one TD accused parents of being selfish and wanting to rear Deaf children as ‘rabbits’ (O'Dowd, 1955: 162). At the end of the decade, St. Joseph’s agreed to avail of the grant from the Department by taking up the status of a National School, but St. Mary’s refused to follow suit as it saw the move as limiting their control of the school (O'Dowd, 1955).

However, the thirties were kinder to these schools as the Hospital Commission agreed to fund improvements. The fund, financed from the Irish Sweepstakes, modernised the schools in Cabra and considerably eased the financial burden of the committee running these schools. This decade also witnessed the experimental introduction of the oral method to St. Joseph’s, but it was soon abandoned (O'Dowd, 1955).
In the 1930s, these schools were concerned with a sporadic but steady increase in the transfer of Deaf children to Protestant schools or to Catholic oral schools in Britain (O'Dowd, 1955). It reflected the autonomy and the status of higher income-earning parents in Ireland and their unconstrained access to information about the oral schools in Britain. These concerns led to the review of the method of instruction and to a resolve to halt the trend of transfer. This review had widespread repercussions in the next decade - the 1940’s -when the oral method was formally introduced to classrooms in Catholic schools (O'Dowd, 1955; Crean, 1996; Matthews, 1996).

The individual schools - especially those residential schools- were given a free hand to implement policies as they saw fit. The chief proponent of the oral method, Sr. Nicholas Griffey, claims that at that time, policies were left to the discretion of individual schools (Griffey 1994).

Such situations, where discretionary decisions are the basis of policies have to be understood in a wider context. It was pointed out that the Department of Education had kept a minimal involvement in shaping educational policies. It is illustrated by Sean O'Connor, former Secretary of the Department of Education who states that the Department continued to implement its approach of remaining absent from active participation in shaping policy until then 1960’s. (Curry 1998: 105) As for the Catholic Church’s position in the education sphere, O’Buachulla states that:

*Thus throughout the formal education system the churches or their agencies occupy a prominent structural position, both proprietorial and managerial (O’Buachualla, 1988: 205)*

This minimal interference by the state and control by the Catholic Church has been described by Drudy and Lynch as follows:
In return for their current and capital investment in schools, the churches are
granted considerable autonomy in the management of their schools, and
complete autonomy in religious matters (Drudy and Lynch, 1993: 75)

Therefore, Breen et al, state because of this situation, religious orders such as
Christian Brothers and Sisters of Mercy were able to implement specific policies
(Breen et al, 1990:137). Thus, the Dominicans, as stated by Griffey (1994), were
free to implement their own policies.

This practice continued until the late 1960’s. In such a climate, discretionary
decisions by individuals in a school could have widespread repercussions on the
Irish educational policy for Deaf children as happened in the late 1940’s and
1950’s. The individual school in question was St. Mary’s School for the Deaf
Girls, which was run by the Dominican order.

The decision to change the main method of instruction to one of oralism was
largely motivated by a fear of losing Irish Catholic girls to British schools. This
fear was compounded by a sense of the perceived failure to offer better
educational options to hard of hearing pupils. After a tour of British deaf oral
schools by three nuns of the Dominican order in 1946, one of the nuns, a
prioress named Sr. Peter Flynn, decided to switch to the oral method. This
decision was made despite their acknowledgement that their school was far
superior to any of the British schools they had visited. However, in justifying the
decision, the nuns wrote a report to the Catholic Institute for the Deaf which had
sponsored the trip:

From what we have observed in the schools visited, we are obliged to
confess that, while our general education, our training in religion, our school
buildings and general conditions are superior to any school we have seen,
we have failed to make use of the degree of hearing of children who are
partially deaf, and who are capable of being educated by lip-reading and
speech…………….We know it vital, however, that it should become known at
once that children in St. Mary’s will in the future be trained in the oral
method, if they are capable. This is necessary if we are to stop the flow of
Irish children to deaf schools in England and Scotland, who go there in
search of the oral method (Sr. Peter Flynn, in Griffey, 1994: 157).
Griffey, one of the nuns who made the trip, professes total agreement with the decision and became a chief proponent of the oralist philosophy. She justifies the decision by stating:

*The deaf person trained in manual communication can function very well in such a community. This is not the case in my country, for instance, where a comparatively small population is spread across a wide geographical area. The deaf person in rural Ireland must be enabled to integrate into a hearing community; otherwise he will be socially isolated. Of necessity, he must be a good lipreader; he must be able to read and express himself in a correct language. His speech may be a defective, but, if the school equips him with the ability to express himself in acceptable written patterns, integration will be much easier* (Griffey, 1975).

Griffey's statement contains a number of points of irony. The oral method was observed and imported from heavily populated British cities and unwittingly, Griffey implied that the oral approach was not ideal for British cities. As Ireland was gradually moving towards urbanisation and as it was known that there was no segregation among Deaf children based on an urban/rural divide, it appears from her statement that the needs of urban Deaf children had to be sacrificed for the needs of rural Deaf children.

It appears that there was an attempt to extend the policy of oralism to St. Joseph's but the Christian Brothers dismissed it. The Brothers carried out private research, which included visiting a number of schools in the UK. They concluded that the policy of manualism was superior to the oralist policy that had been implemented in St. Mary's. However their resistance to a changeover to an oralist policy lasted less than a decade (Crean, 1997: 50; Private collection of Crean 1999).

There was no evidence that St. Mary’s decision to switch to the oral method was carefully considered or that it was being debated on a wide scale. The decision was apparently based on the discretion of the oligarchic group without recourse any analysis or any consideration of future implications. Oralism was introduced
to St. Mary’s school, entirely replacing, instead of being complementary to, the then system of manualism.

The concern expressed by Sr. Peter Flynn about the imminent flow of Irish children to Britain can be regarded as misguided. Given the population of Deaf children in Ireland, the proportionate number of higher income children could have been in region of less than 10. Therefore, it would be beyond the means of a majority of parents to send their Deaf children to British schools. It is clear however, that economic considerations were given a priority in the decision to introduce oralism.

**The Era of Oralist Influence in Ireland**;

The decision to change methods maintained momentum with the sending of a number of religious personnel from deaf schools in Dublin to attend a course run by the Department of Education for the Deaf in Manchester. (Griffey, 1994). The course was run by ardent proponents of the oral method, the Ewings, a couple who were largely responsible for consolidating oralism in several British deaf schools since the 1920’s (Crean, 1997; McLoughlin 1987).

The graduation of these personnel marked the beginning of an extensive implementation of the oral policy in Ireland. This policy had far-reaching implications as it affected the communication patterns between Deaf children and their parents, who were told not to use signing but instead to use lip-reading and speech. It is also known that the policy had reached the workplaces where it affected the communication patterns between Deaf workers and their colleagues. To illustrate the extent of the policy, McDonnell observes the difference between ordinary boarding schools and residential schools for Deaf children:

*In the case of residential schools for children with impaired hearing, the influence travels in the opposite direction in that the school attempts to guide and direct behaviour in the home towards ends believed by the school to be desirable. This constitutes a source of potential conflict since very young children are usually involved and the directives of the school may infringe on*
However, the implementation of the oral approach in the existing culture of a manual environment proved difficult for the proponents: even Griffey herself acknowledged this (Griffey, 1994). After establishing regular contacts with long established oral schools in France, Belgium and, in particular, Sint Micheielsgestel in the Netherlands, advice was given to the proponents on how to develop the oral policy. Significant developments had been made on the nineteenth century version of oralism as proponents of the method availed of technological advances to introduce a classification of hearing loss among children. As a result of the advice given, schools decided that it was necessary to divide the pupils into two groups: one was for those educated through the oral method and the other was for the ‘manual’ children. Anti-signing strategies were adopted to discourage oral respondents from signing. Griffey admits regret for this segregation:

....I was more interested in the individual child than in the method. I regretted the segregation of the oral children from those who used signs but I could not see any other way of making a success of the oral method (Griffey, 1994: 57).

The statement implies clearly that Griffey was willing to put the oral method before the child’s emotional, social and linguistic needs. There is evidence that the Department of Education had prior knowledge of this internal segregation and O’Cuilleanain, a divisional inspector, suggests that the Department approved this policy of segregation (O’Cuilleanain, 1968: 8).

In ensuring the continuance of the oral philosophy, the proponents, led by Griffey, established quite a number of measures with phenomenal ease within a decade of 1947. They established an audiological clinic at St. Mary’s, opening a controversial preparatory school for Deaf boys in Stillorgan and a post-graduate teacher’s diploma course in University College Dublin. They were influential in establishing a key early intervention scheme - the Visiting Teachers Service,
which aimed to provide a pre-school service to parents of Deaf children. They were heavily involved in the establishment of the National Organisation for Rehabilitation, a forerunner of the National Rehabilitation Board. They also availed of advanced technological aids for the benefit of deaf children (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997; O'Dowd 1955).

At that time these initiatives were seen as signs of progress. However they were carefully nurtured in line with the oral philosophy. While we know that the Dominican nuns had introduced oralism into their school in 1946, it had taken more than a decade to establish oralism in the Christian Brothers' school. A separate school for Deaf boys under the guidance of Daughters of Cross order was opened in 1957 in South Dublin. There is a widely held interpretation behind the scenes that Christian Brothers were forced to introduce oralism in the face of increased competition from a South Dublin school, Beechpark. It is known that the Archbishop McQuaid of Dublin had patronised Beechpark School.

This arose from a view that ecclesiastical backing could be a key factor in the Christian Brothers' succumbing to the pressure of the supporters of oralism in order to maintain the existence of their school (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997; Cooney 1999). It is known that the Catholic Church was a powerful force in shaping and influencing the general education system (Drudy and Lynch, 1993: 73-89). Thus, the interpretation should be regarded as reasonable.

The post-graduate teacher's course in UCD was a one-year long programme, but there was no reference in it to sign language nor did it feature as a specific subject (Griffey, 1994; Crean, 1997). Thus, teacher trainees were given no opportunity to study the status of sign language and its usefulness for Deaf children.

The phenomenal ease with which the oral philosophy was implemented in Ireland was possibly assisted by the social and political conditions of that time. In the 1950's, Ireland experienced economic stagnation, which led to mass emigration.
Thus, any perceived progress might have been welcomed during those times. Implementation of the oral policy was also helped by the lack of resistance among Deaf people of the time and was further assisted by the conspicuous lack of enthusiasm for alternative options.

Crucially, the Department of Education supported the oralist approach. Griffey recalls one inspector expressing surprise that St. Mary’s had not been recognised by the Department;

*I can assure you that whatever you ask for you will get it now* (Griffey, 1994: 58)

Griffey also mentions;

*Since there was no involvement on the part of the Department of Education we were free to make plans for the development of the oral atmosphere in the school* (Griffey, 1994: 46)

As a result of being recognised by the Department of Education, St. Mary’s was designated a special school and its principal and teachers were paid. Prior to this recognition, there was no in-depth investigation carried out by the Department regarding the oral approach. Ironically, there was a similar investigation into the education of the blind in 1948 (O’Cuilleanain, 1968: 6).

There was another controversy at this time: this was the systematic dismissal or demotion of Deaf teachers from the schools. Although inevitable, Griffey’s acknowledgement of their positive contribution to the education of Deaf children did not prevent the dismissals. This happened because of the regulations, which demanded officially recognised qualifications by the Department, which none of Deaf teachers apparently possessed (Griffey, 1994: 58).

The Christian Brothers in St. Joseph’s adopted a different attitude to the demand that Deaf teachers be removed from their classrooms. They argued a case to have highly experienced Deaf teachers recognised by the Department but for
some reason, the Department refused to accept their argument. Some time prior to this event, the superior of the school praised the contribution of four Deaf teachers in his school. However, the fate of these Deaf teachers is not known (Private Collection of Crean's, 1999). This happened despite the Department’s acknowledgement that special education which included the education for the Deaf, did need exceptional treatment in the context of national school regulations (O’Cuilleanian, 1968:6).

There is no evidence that during this period there were forums or public debates or meetings on the topic of education for Deaf children. This situation continued through to the late 1960s and in 1967, the Minister for Education, Donogh O’Malley, established a committee to examine the educational needs of Deaf children. The committee’s final report was published in 1972. This was the first official direct examination of the educational needs of Deaf children in Ireland since the Royal Commission of 1885. This critical document will be discussed in later chapters.

Information concerning the social and employment conditions of Deaf people in the 1950s and 1960s is quite scarce and this makes it impossible to make any definitive judgement about the socio-economic consequences of education policy. However, Griffey tells us that because of the implementation of the oral policy;

> A sense of achievement was palpable among pupils, parents and teachers. Deaf people were becoming more and more independent. They could choose the work they wanted to do (Griffey, 1994: 93).

And furthermore, Griffey goes on praising the policy;

> In my lifetime, I have seen extraordinary progress. Early ascertainment of deafness, prompt educational placement, de-institutionalisation and the socialisation of deaf people, recognition of their culture and language, full realisation by governments of their right to equality in society - are all major advances (Griffey, 1994: 138).
Nevertheless, this Irish experience did not reflect what happened in many other countries such as the USA, the UK and Finland. Given the severe consequences of the oralist policy, which befell Deaf communities, Deaf representatives decided to re-group to protect and uphold their indigenous sign languages and challenge the oralist philosophy and related policies. The National Association of the Deaf in the USA and the British Deaf Association were formed in late 1880's, in response to the Milan Congress. Finland followed suit by setting up a similar association in 1905 (Barcham 1998; Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996). Interestingly, international experience was not mirrored in Ireland during the 1950s or 1960s.

There is no analysis available as to why this was the case. However, it can be speculated that the large numbers of talented Deaf people who emigrated from stagnant Ireland during the 1950s, coupled with Deaf individuals’ slow realisation of the devastating consequences of the oralist policies on the Deaf community, may have been contributory factors.

This is not notwithstanding the establishment of the National Association for the Deaf by Nicholas Griffey in 1962 (Crean, 1997: 64). This association had a strong association with the Cabra schools and demonstrated their commitment to oralism. Their Board of Directors was exclusively comprised of non-deaf people and the association was modelled on the Royal National Institute of the Deaf (RNID). The association aimed to provide a range of services for deaf people (Griffey, 1994: Crean, 1997: 224). This association cannot be regarded as an Irish example that reflects international trends during the period we are exploring.

Signed Languages ‘Re-discovered’

Internationally, up to the 1960’s, the perception of the authenticity of indigenous sign language as a true language was not firmly held by those concerned with the education of the Deaf. However, in 1960, William Stokoe made a pioneering breakthrough in linguistic research in the United States. He identified the basic
linguistic elements of American Sign Language - the indigenous sign language of the American Deaf community- to prove the authenticity of ASL as an independent language (Kyle and Woll, 1985: 28). Dr. Tervoort of the Netherlands also made significant inroads in understanding the indigenous sign languages in 1958 (Kyle and Woll, 1985: 79).

Their findings stimulated further research into sign languages nationally and internationally (Ladd, 1991). Subsequent findings were further examined and debated in many conferences and forums. This movement had further implications for the educational policies for Deaf children. These findings had not gone unnoticed in Ireland. Griffey (1967) showed that she had intimate knowledge of the significant breakthrough by American and Dutch linguists in early 1960s regarding the status of indigenous sign language. However she dismisses the breakthrough as insignificant:

> However, I have discussed this matter with linguists and they have assured me that there is evidence of modified linguistic structure in the sign system we use (Griffey, 1967: 93).

This statement was made at a conference in Manchester University in 1966. It is not known that there were other Irish delegates attending the conference but it is certain that Irish delegates would not have taken notice of this statement given the stagnant nature of signed languages in Ireland.

The other methods of instruction -the manual and combined methods - faded away in the face of the strength demonstrated by the dominant method - the oral method - in Europe and North America. However, with an increasing awareness of minorities' rights as a part of the general social upheaval of the 1960s, Deaf people in the USA were able to assert their rights and as a result, debate on the issue of methods of instruction re-emerged once again (Crean, 1997). The combined method was restyled as “Total Communication” and gained ground in Ireland as an alternative to the oral method (Moores, 1988).
Despite the re-surfacing of debate in other countries, Ireland does not seem to have been affected by the new debate - unlike the 1880s experience. Griffey was aware of the re-surfacing of the debate as she visited to the States in 1963. She states;

...... I noticed a certain excitement and joy of achievement among deaf people generally. This was the beginning of an American movement, which was later to spread throughout the world. The sixties brought social upheaval and ferment. They were years of the minorities including the deaf (Griffey, 1994: 111).

There is no other era in deaf education that witnessed the same levels of rapid development as the period from 1946-1972 with the implementation of the oral philosophy. The proponents of the oral method had secured and influenced nearly every rein of educational policy for Deaf children with the assistance of the State. On the whole, the proponents of the oral philosophy controlled policy with no or little regard for alternative policies, despite increasing doubts about the usefulness of the oral method, which were expressed in United States. It is pertinent to evaluate the oral philosophy to ascertain if it was a success or not. The next chapter will assess this policy.
Chapter 3

Development of Official Policy In Ireland 1972 - 1999

Introduction

This chapter explores the development of policy from the early 1970s to the present day, focusing on a number of specific events and official reports, with the aim of outlining their influence on the policies affecting education for Deaf children.

It is well known that the Irish policy process is notoriously difficult to analyse and study because of its complexities. Catherine Earley states that:

“The process involved in the development of social policy in Ireland is complex, untidy, and fascinating to study. It starts from the creation of demands within society, or within the political system itself, and involves a complicated web of people, institutions and events” (Earley 1999: 152).

In other social policy areas, published reports are often an inspirational source of debate or further discussion. For example, O’Cinneide’s poverty study in 1972 caused an immeasurable stir that prompted public debate and demands for action to relieve poverty in Ireland (Curry, 1998: 44). The recent development of educational policy for Deaf children is no exception to Earley’s assertion about the Irish social policy process. However, the subject of this chapter did not receive the same level of publicity as O’Cinneide’s poverty study yet it had a considerable impact on those who are concerned with the education of Deaf children. Given its importance and impact, the process deserves critical analysis.
In order to simplify this analysis, the official position on the needs and rights of the Deaf community is explored and analysed. The report published by the Department of Education in 1972 is identified as a starting point because of its impact and influence on current thinking.

**Department of Education’s Report “The Education of the Children Who Are Handicapped by Impaired Hearing 1972”**

The year of the nineteenth sixty-seven is often regarded as a watershed for Irish education as the then Minister for Education, Donogh O’Malley introduced the “free” post-primary education scheme which resulted in a huge increase in student participation and public expenditure on education. This initiative was influenced by the then OECD report - “Investment in Education” (Breen et al 1990; Curry, 1998). That year was also of importance in relation to the education of the Deaf; apart from O’Malley’s initiative, 1967 saw the establishment of a committee by the Minister to “review the provision for the education of deaf and partially deaf children and to make recommendations” (Department of Education, 1972: vii).

The twelve strong committee chaired by the Department of Education’s assistant inspector, Thomas O’Cuilleanean, met thirty-one times and they published a report - “The Education of Children Who Are Handicapped by Impaired Hearing” - containing their findings (Department of Education, 1972). They called for a number of measures;

- Continued use of the “present” oralist policy of teaching and subordinate the status of sign language (6.13, 6.14);
- internal segregation (i.e. within the special schools for the deaf) to ensure Deaf children were educated in oral environment and to prevent any contact with Deaf children who were educated by ‘manual’ means (7.32, 7.34, 7.36);
- medically orientated re-classification of deaf children (2.13 - 2.18);
the establishment of a visiting teacher service (5.13 & 5.16).

Although the Department of Education published the report, there is no clear consensus on how the report was viewed internally. Some commentators view it as a significant policy document while others regard it as a guideline for those who engaged in the education of the Deaf. Matthews (1996) describes it as a guideline for those who want to work with Deaf children in schools. Crean (1997) regards the report as an official policy document. Interestingly, the report unfortunately received scant comment in Griffey’s memoirs despite her heavy involvement in the committee’s deliberations (Griffey, 1994:139).

The report is taken as a statement of the Department of Education’s stance on the education of the Deaf in Ireland. Many saw it as an official endorsement of the oralist philosophy. Crean states:

*It was inevitable that the approving voices from the combinations of prestigious (100 per cent non-deaf) doctors, oralist teachers, rehabilitation professionals, crusading oralists, hearing parents and other of like mind succeeded in producing such a report. The result was a 50,000-word manifesto of the utopian plans for training the deaf pupil for living with hearing people, in isolation from the deaf community (Crean, 1997: 60).*

Overall, the committee was somewhat limited in terms of representation: the strong impression given is one of homogeneity and oligarchy. For instance, in the report, six of the twelve-committee members were cited as separate members of the National Rehabilitation Board while one was recorded as the sole representative of the National Association for the Deaf (Department of Education, 1972). However, this membership list did not reveal that these same six members were also directors of the National Association for the Deaf (Link, 1972). The chairperson had apparently been a close acquaintance of Sr. Nicholas Griffey (Griffey, 1994: 81). This interpretation is supported by details about the persons who sent submissions to the report committee. More than half the number of people who sent submissions belonged to these institutions (Department of Education, 1972). There is no record of representation from the
Deaf community on the committee and there is no record of an acknowledgement of submissions received from the Deaf community.

Despite its terms of reference to “review the provision of the education of the deaf…” evidence shows that the measures suggested in the report had been implemented and had operated for quite for a few years beforehand. Thus the committee report advocated a status quo situation. It is relevant to ask why the committee called for measures that had already been implemented and operational. The composition of the committee gives us a very good indication of the committee’s attitudes. Apart from a very minor instance, there was no major dissent recorded in the committee report. There was no Deaf representative on the committee, as Crean points out:

If one discounts the doctors and department officials who could only act on the advice of the Dominican professionals we are left with the movers and shakers in the field of education of the deaf in Ireland at that time: Father Gallagher, Brother Wall, Sr. Nicholas Griffey and Sr. Carmel. The last three were trained in Manchester University then under the leadership of Ewing…(Crean, 1997:57-58).

There was no clear reference to the use of sign language in the report despite its wide use in the Deaf community. The omission of clear references to sign language and the lack of alternative perspectives only serve to increase scepticism about the objectivity of the committee (Conama, 1999).

In the education system generally, Lynch and Drudy state that a consensual and essentialist view of the Irish education was very strong at that time. The consensual view refers to policy decisions being made in the interests of achieving a consensus, even though there was no serious consultation with interested parties with different perspectives. The essentialist view refers to the individualisation of students within the education system where responsibility for failure or success is seen to be solely with the individual student. This view would support limited improvements to the system instead of overhauling the system (Lynch and Drudy, 1993).
The report called for the internal segregation of children attending the special schools to ensure that ‘orally successful’ deaf children were shielded from a signing environment. However, such segregation had already been in force for many years as is evident from comments in several publications such as the writings of Griffey’s and O’Cuilleanean’s (Griffey: various sources, O’Cuilleanean, 1968: 6). As for the call for the establishment of a visiting teacher for the deaf service, this service was already in operation. Griffey makes the following startling statement about this service in her memoirs:

_In 1967 I appealed to the Government for help. This time I went to Thomas O’Cuilleaneain, head inspector, responsible for special education. Ever helpful and constructive, he was, I knew, on my side. He was present at a meeting, chaired by the Secretary of the Department, which was held in the Department’s offices at Marlborough Street. Here I made my request, armed with statistics from my work in Louth, Meath and Kildare. They did the trick. I left the meeting with sanction for the appointment of a visiting teacher for these three counties (Griffey, 1994: 81). (Sic)_

It must be noted that the request was made in 1967 - five years before the publication of the report. It is just one of many instances where the 1972 report’s requested for specific measures that had already been implemented.

Despite a broad range of international investigations into educational approaches and methodology in the education of deaf children during the 1960s, the 1972 report’s references to these findings are minimal. The British’s _Report into the Use of Finger-Spelling and Signing in the Education of the Deaf (Lewis Report)_ of 1968 (Lewis Report, 1968) was a chief source of international evidence: however, this report is not referred to frequently. The Lewis Report investigated the usefulness of finger-spelling and signing in Deaf schools. Given the weight of the responsibility and the experience of committee members on the 1972 report, it is reasonable to expect that they would have sought extensive international evidence.
The report also failed to take account of global trends such as the Americans’ increased doubt about using the oral approach as reported in the Federal document known as the Babbidge Report of 1965 (Conama, 1999).

There was no reported major dissent to the publication of the 1972 report, and this is something that cannot be explained. The number of contradictory comments in the report did not stop its being adopted as a guideline for the education for the Deaf in Ireland.

Interestingly, the approach of the Lewis Report is in sharp contrast to this 1972 report in terms of methodology and outcomes. The Lewis report interviewed the main organisations working for Deaf people in Britain and acknowledges the diversity of views on the subject of its investigation, for example, the place of finger-spelling in schools. Hence, the committee issued a warning to readers to be cautious when interpreting the recommendations issued at the end of the report. Overall, the Lewis Report recommended more research and discussion on the issues it raised (McLoughlin, 1987: 30-32).

While the 1972 report had not consulted representative organisations, this did not prevent it advancing own strong recommendations (1972 Report). More startling was the publication of the Babbidge Report of 1965. The federal government of the United States commissioned the report, which investigated the state of the education of the deaf. A president of the University of Connecticut who had no prior knowledge of Deaf issues chaired the committee: he was therefore, independent of existing services and institutions. The Babbidge report concluded with the statement that educators of the deaf have nothing to be proud of (Luterman, 1991: 143). This federal report continued, citing in Luterman et al (1991):

..., results of several studies indicated that deaf people were notoriously underachieving. The vast majority of them were working in blue-collar jobs with minimal academic and oral English skills. Over ninety percent of deaf people married other deaf people, and the goal of oralism to "normalise" the deaf was a distinct failure (Luterman et al, 1991: 143).
It is hard to know if, apart from the Lewis report, the 1972 committee in their deliberations had consulted the Babbidge report. From Griffey’s own memoirs (1994), we know that she made several trips to the United States, visiting institutions catering for Deaf children during the 1960s and there is a good chance that she must have been aware of this report. According to Luterman (1991), the report provoked a fierce debate in the United States and experts began to suggest “new” solutions such as total communication and cued speech.

The lack of discussion on sign language and its usefulness in the 1972 report does not imply that the committee did not have any prior knowledge of this subject. The following evidence supports this viewpoint. Griffey (1967) showed that she had intimate knowledge of the significant breakthrough in American linguistics in the early 1960s regarding the status of indigenous sign languages. However, she dismissed the breakthrough as insignificant.

The 1972 report is a clear indicator that the Department of Education approved the oral philosophy and there was no evidence of any opposition to the report. Griffey outlines one of many reasons for the approval of the report and lack of obvious dissent. Griffey writes:

\[\text{In 1950 I found that 90% of the past pupils of our school in Dublin wanted Irish deaf children to learn to speak and lip-read. Many of them said they would like to lip-read because their hearing friends and workmates were not inclined to communicate, either in writing or by means of manual communication. The position has not changed much today (Griffey, 1975).}\]

There is no evidence of people’s views in 1950 to corroborate the views expressed in this statement. As for the statement that the “…position has not changed much today”, there is no evidence for this statement either.

However, the latter position might have been referred to in the social survey of Deaf people carried out in the early 1970’s. The National Rehabilitation Board and National Association for the Deaf commissioned the social survey - *Sociological Survey of the Young Adult Deaf People* (National Rehabilitation
Board, 1973). The timing of the survey coinciding with the work of the committee, suggests that it would be of some assistance to the committee members in understanding the situation of Deaf people in the early 1970's and the consequences of the education system in previous decades. However, this is apparently not the case (Conama, 1999). Although a number of the social research committee members were also members of the 1972 committee, the committee’s report did not draw on the social survey.

The social survey, which was carried out by hearing social workers, contains a number of inconsistencies. For instance, the researchers claimed that they had a good interview relationship with the Deaf respondents but according to their survey, the majority of respondents found the researchers difficult to communicate with (National Rehabilitation Board, 1973:4). This is a clear illustration of the lack of an empathetic relationship between the researchers and the research population. Therefore, this social survey has to be treated with caution (Conama 1999).

Nevertheless, the survey contains a number of interesting facts, which can point out the inadequacies in the education of Deaf children. The survey reveals that 23 per cent of respondents were unemployed and the vast majority of the employed respondents had low paid menial jobs. Further, the majority of the respondents did not have friendships in their workplaces, which extended beyond the workplace. The recommendations of the survey were somewhat vague and include reference to the creation of more auxiliary services for Deaf people throughout the country (Conama, 1999). Apparently, this social survey had no impact on the deliberations of the 1972 report.

As for Griffey’s assertion in 1975 that Deaf people supported her policies as outlined in the 1972 report, this social survey reveals the inadequacies within the education system for Deaf children, which resulted in many Deaf people being unemployed or underemployed. Therefore, her assertion should not be taken at a
face value. It is clear that the rationale behind the support for oralism in the 1972 report was centred on the integration of Deaf people into the hearing community, while little or no regard was given to the quality of life and empowerment of Deaf people in society.

**Official reports after the 1972 Report**

The report became a focal point for those who were dealing with the needs and rights of Deaf people. For instance, the report of a working party examining the employability and training needs of disabled people, established by Minister for Health, was published in 1975. Three paragraphs were devoted to the needs of the Deaf people while an entire chapter was given to the needs of blind people. This working party may have had felt that the 1972 report was sufficient to deal with the needs of Deaf people, and they expressed their support for the recommendations of the 1972 report (Department of Health, 1975: 37).

Yet, the publication published by the National Economic Social Council (NESC) in 1980 made no reference to the 1972 report. The NESC, an important discussion forum which advises the government, issued a report on “Major Issues in Planning Services for Mentally and Physically Handicapped Persons” (NESC, 1980). It contains a number of references to the education and the employment of Deaf people. The report contains antiquated terminology that would be regarded as offensive and insensitive today. The report emphasises medically orientated rehabilitation as the key to services for disabled persons. It points out that “there is evidence to suggest that economic benefits may be derived from investment in rehabilitation through increased productivity and reduction in the cost of care of handicapped persons” (NESC, 1980: 13).

Apart from this apparently antiquated view of disabled persons, the report contains a number of interesting facts. The report reveals that in 1978, there were 825 Deaf pupils taught by 144 teachers in four schools and that the cost of teaching a Deaf child was £1,039 per annum. Converting this into an annual
amount, this would be at least £857,000. These statistical revelations made the Deaf schools, apart from the schools catering for “multiple handicapped children” more expensive and labour intensive to operate than other special schools. Indeed, the costs were almost 50% more than for other areas of disability (NESC, 1980: 60-70).

The report also touched on the question of integration of disabled persons in mainstream education. It made an inconclusive remark about the integration of Deaf children in such environments, but suggested that once the necessary provisions were in place, integration could be possible for Deaf children (NESC, 1980: 81). There is a lack of reference to third level education in the report.

This NESC report also touches on areas other than education, venturing into the arena of social work. It reports that two social workers were specifically employed to deal with the needs of Deaf people in the eastern area. The report discusses the choice between generic and specialised social work services for disabled persons. It supports the idea that specialised social work services are needed for dealing with the needs of Deaf people (NESC, 1980: 156-157).

There is no evidence that the report did make any impact on the government. However, the continued emphasis on medically orientated rehabilitation was highlighted by the publication of the Green Paper - Towards a Full Life - by the Department of Health (Department of Health, 1984). The report endorses the since discredited international classification of disability (Department of Health, 1984: 17-18) and contains few references to the needs of Deaf people. The report is dominated by paternalistic and rehabilitation approaches with little regard for the empowerment and rights of disabled persons (Department of Health, 1984).

From the 1972 report to the NESC publication, the official publications reflect the nature and influence of the official perspectives on the needs of Deaf people. Sign language and its benefits for Deaf people were deliberately ignored. A lack
of consultation with Deaf people and a lack of representation on the various committees caused this ignorance. Granted, these developments should be seen as expected, given the social and political situation during that period. However, this gives us a clear insight on what the consequences will be if the value of sign language continues to be ignored and lack of representation and consultation continues as the norm.

Although there was some social progress - especially for women - as happened during the 1970s (Conroy, 1999) - the evidence shows that this progress did not extend to other affected groups, for example, travellers and people with disabilities. Their experience can be said to be similar to that of the Deaf community. Even so, the pace of general social progress in 1970s was not sufficient for these marginalised groups to overcome traditional powers such as conservatism and the power of Catholic Church that were still considerable in 1970s (Chubb 1992). A number of factors continued to reinforce the lack of progress and the apparent passivity of the Deaf community.

The Irish Deaf community did not enjoy established international connections, which could function to educate or influence their perspectives on national issues. International connections first began in the sports arena, which led to the development of further networking. The community, through the representation of the Irish Deaf Sports Association, sent its first-ever sports team to the World Games for the Deaf in Sweden in 1973 (St. Joseph’s Yearbook, 1973). Continued international networking with other Deaf communities led to the establishment of the Irish Deaf Society as a late-coming member of the World Federation of the Deaf in 1985 and of the European Commission Regional Secretariat in 1985.

Such international networking for information purposes and policy comparative analysis was not available to the Deaf community in Ireland during the 1970s and this non-availability hindered the ability to develop alternative perspectives.
Further, Crean argues that the apathy of the Deaf community is deep-rooted and was reinforced by the nature of the oralist philosophy in schools where Deaf children were discouraged from the use of sign language (Crean 1997: 105-107). Such discouragement is known to stifle the personal need to stimulate and subsequently leads to the creation of low esteem.

Susan Phoenix (1988) supports this in her psychological survey of Deaf people in Northern Ireland in 1982. She made some remarkable statements at the first congress of the Irish Deaf Society in 1988:

In 1982, I found intelligent young people sitting all over Northern Ireland…. Under-stimulated, mostly frustrated… unable to communicate with their parents and longing for some further education and training.

….. many (respondents) seemed puzzled that their ideas were sought…..(This) illustrates exactly how passive and neglected the deaf population in Northern Ireland have been for years” (Phoenix, 1988).

Although the survey concentrated on Northern Ireland, it gives a good indicator of what the level of apathy among the Deaf community was across the border at this time. These factors may help to explain the lack of resistance or dissent among Deaf people against the recommendations of official reports.

1980s

The 1980s can be regarded as a period of sluggishness as there was a dearth of official publications during this decade. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that the policies of the 1950s - supported by the 1972 report were continued. However, there was one notable exception. In 1988, the European Parliament approved the recognition of indigenous sign languages as primary languages of the Deaf communities in Europe and called on national countries to do likewise (IDS Journal, 1988).

The 1990s saw some changes in policy implementation: this was a result of the criticisms and arguments first aired in the 1980s by certain representative
organisations especially the Irish Deaf Society, which had been established in 1981. The nineties saw the publication of the NRB literacy assessment results (National Rehabilitation Board, 1991), which fuelled the debate about the quality of education for Deaf children. The period also saw the gradual involvement of the Deaf community in the policy process. This took place in the context of an increased public profile of people with disabilities in society.

The report on the primary education review was published in 1990 and it made reference to the 1972 report and subsequent happenings. However, it contains only a small number of paragraphs which were not sufficient to merit analysis here. Nevertheless, the report called for more resources to be given to special education, including the education of the Deaf (Department of Education, 1990).

**NRB Literacy Assessment 1991**

The National Rehabilitation Board commissioned research on the functional literacy of Deaf children in 1990: this was quite extensive, with 358 Deaf children tested. The research “*Reading Assessment of Deaf Children*” by Trevor James and Erland O’Neill was published in 1991 (National Rehabilitation Board, 1991). Unfortunately there is no available literature to allow us to gauge the contemporary (immediate) reaction to the findings.

The NRB assessment was a controlled and scientifically conducted research project. The authors used two reading ability tests to assess 358 children ranging from 6 to 16 years of age. However, there is no indication which written language was the expected target language. It is presumed that the English language was the target language in this assessment. The purpose of the assessment was to evaluate the progress of children at school. The authors noted that the findings were in line with similar international research. It did not state whether the assessors were fluent in Irish Sign Language (ISL) or how the children communicated and interacted with the assessors.
McDonnell (1980) states that outcomes of the studies on Deaf children could depend on the validity of instructions that are communicated to Deaf children. There were a number of previous studies, which erroneously believed that Deaf children were mentally retarded when they were tested with linguistic and cognitive tests (McDonnell, 1980: 46). It is unfortunate that the surveys considered so far omitted the nature of instructions given to informants. It would be interesting to know what communication approach the assessors adapted to instruct the children regarding test procedure. Nevertheless, the international research shows that the results for the Irish literacy assessment outcome are not unique to Irish Deaf children.

The NRB survey found that an average 16 year old Deaf child would have a reading level equivalent to that of an average 9 year old non-deaf child. The report accepts that the results are well below generally accepted standards of functional literacy. Deaf girls perform better than their male counterparts but only marginally. The survey also discovered that the gap between their chronological ages and reading level ages increased as age progressed. McDonnell writes:

.....as pupils get older the gap between their chronological ages and their reading ages tends to increase (McDonnell, 1980: 55).

Conrad’s celebrated study (1979) carried out an extensive and similar study in Britain with similar results. There are numerous American studies reaching similar results and they agreed that the adoption of pure oralism by schools was responsible for the devastating effects on the functionary literacy of Deaf children (Moores, 1978: 249-250).

These appalling results illustrate the shortcomings of the oralist system very clearly but on the basis of literature available, there seems to have been little action taken to alleviate or address these deficits. The authors state:

Children with hearing impairments typically experience great difficulty in acquiring good reading skills despite special education and training. Deaf
school leavers find that the social and vocational opportunities available to them are restricted by their limited attainments in reading and writing skills. Vocationally, deaf people have higher unemployment rates and obtain jobs in lower socio-economic classes than would be expected by their intelligence (National Rehabilitation Board, 1991)

The researchers had no doubt that this lack of functional literacy would have serious repercussions in the (later) working lives of Deaf people. However, the findings of the assessment were not followed by any policy changes and the next few years saw little activity arise as result of these findings apart from occasional congresses and seminars.

**Green Paper - Educating for A Changing World 1992:**

The Green Paper was published in 1992 and proposed devolution of power from the Department of Education to school boards. This would entail the boards’ production of individual school plans and the issuing of an annual report on their work (Curry, 1998: 107). The Green Paper contains a chapter on special educational needs but does not specifically refer to the educational needs of Deaf children.

The Green Paper’s definition of special education needs is very wide ranging, including special schools and the informal integration of disabled children in ordinary classrooms. However, the definition is medically orientated. The paper proposed a survey to determine the extent of special educational needs before planning and implementation. The paper also stated that the Visiting Teacher services were being re-organised (Green Paper, 1992: 60-65).

As for the needs of Deaf students, there was no explicit reference except for one minor detail - providing radio aids to students at universities. The paper proposes that a special education research facility within a university be established. Both references can be regarded as implicit signs of lack of knowledge among departmental officials (Green Paper, 1992: 60-65).
Commentators have identified that this NESC report coupled with the National Convention on Education played a major role in influencing the philosophical background to the White Paper, which was published in 1995. The NESC report argues that the category of school-going children with a social disadvantaged background can be extended to include children with disabilities. The report contains some interesting statistical facts, including the fact that there were 5 special schools catering for 581 Deaf children while 21 children were educated in special classes within ordinary schools. There were an estimated 1,500 children “with hearing impairment” educated in fully integrated schools with a pool of 27 visiting teachers.

Overall, the report supports well-provided educational integration for children with disabilities. However, it acknowledges the need for special schools for certain categories. Nevertheless, the report did not include a major discussion on this topic as there was a separate review going on at a same time.

Report of the Special Education Review Committee 1993:

This report was published in 1993 and it drew a lot of attention. From a Deaf perspective, there was a lot of interest in the report as it dealt with the question of the education for Deaf children. It has to be said that the report is comprehensive, covering education for all types of disabled children and it also includes an extensive quantitative study (Department of Education, 1993).

However given the short time frame (two years) in which to complete the report, it does not adequately cover all areas or discuss each area in-depth. Given the comprehensive range included, coupled with the short time frame for completion, the committee apparently held a strong consensual view of special education. They may have felt that the then system did not need an overhaul, but rather an incremental improvement.
There was no person with a disability sitting on the committee. As a result, they agreed to adopt the World Health Organisation's three-fold medically orientated classification of disability. However, they appear to have been unaware of the widespread dissatisfaction with this classification approach which was under review by the WHO at the same time. Disabled People International is known as a vehement opponent of this classification (Oliver, 1990: 6).

The report also made a reference to the 1972 report, using the re-classification of Deaf children based on level of hearing. There was no solid reference to Irish Sign Language. The committee seems to have been content to utilise a wholly hearing-based categorisation of Deaf children without exploring alternative perspectives regarding Deaf children. This perspective implies that the more hearing the child has the greater the opportunity the child has in the educational system. The assumption of an absolute relationship between level of hearing and intelligence development is a classic illustration of simple over-generalisation (Conama, 1998). Such over-generalisation can be traced to the much-discredited theories of Pintner and Myklebust (Moores, 1978).

There was a remarkable degree of inconsistency in the report. For instance, the committee praised the specially designed training course for teachers for the deaf in UCD while it largely ignored the possibility of utilising the indigenous sign language within the educational sphere (Crean, 1997). Then the report stated it could not make any decision on the suitability of various communication methods for Deaf children. At the same time, it claimed that the majority of teachers who were trained on the UCD course were confused by the lack of consensus on communication methods (Conama, 1998). This lack of consensus may be partly attributed to the nature of the said course in UCD.

The committee did not have ample time to study and discuss communication methods. As Griffin (1994) has said, the people on the committee “were only people and made of clay”. Even it drew a comment from Griffey as she said it
was disappointing to see that only six pages out of three hundred plus pages were devoted to the education of the Deaf (Griffey, 1994: 139). Finally, the Special Education Review Committee’s report did not outline a clear vision or seem able to resolve the issues regarding communication methods for Deaf children in the classroom.

**National Education Convention 1993:**
This convention was deemed a radical departure in the field of education where department officials, the churches, the teachers’ unions, and parents met and discussed the common issues. This led to the publication of the 1995 White Paper on Education - *Charting our Educational Future* (Curry, 1998: 107-8). Forty-two organisations were represented as the department removed its buffer between representations in order to let them discuss their views and hopes in a wider context. It gained extensive publicity (Walshe, 1999: 33-36).

Its report contained a separate article focussing on special education.

The report supported the call of the European Council of Education Ministers for accelerated integration of students with disabilities. However, it opted for gradual and careful planning of integration. There is no reference specifically to the education of Deaf children (Coolahan, 1993: 119-125).

**Charting Our Future - White Paper 1995:**
The White Paper was published in April 1995 proposing a regionalisation of administrative control of education throughout the country by establishing ten regional boards. The Paper also outlines a legislative framework for schools. However, there is no specific reference to the needs or rights in education of the Deaf child.

The first part of this White paper concentrated on primary education and a positive statement was made acknowledging the right to education for people with disabilities. However, they proposed that a task force to be set up to discuss
and implement the recommendations of the Special Education Review Committee. It was also recommended that the remit of this proposed task force be extended to the post-primary sector. It has to be remembered that SERC has not issued a single recommendation about the education of Deaf children. Therefore, the White Paper is largely irrelevant.

A further report published by the Department of Health in 1996 was another example of continued ignorance of the real needs of Deaf people. The report - “Towards an Independent Future” again used the controversial World Health Organisation’s three-fold classification to define disability and this demonstrates a negative perspective on disability.

The report also made an inconsistent acknowledgement of the importance of the United Nations’ Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The Standard Rules demand that consultation must take place at every level with people with disabilities or representative organisations of people with disabilities. Given that the committee’s body did not include any person with a disability, they did not observe this rule.

Malachy suggests that the report should be rejected as it supports the continuation of a status quo situation. The report opts for strengthening the situation where carers and service-providers take the central role and the recipients are requested to fit in to their categories (Malachy, 1997:3). The fact that the committee opted for this approach can be illustrated by several recommendations in the report, which called for the creation of more professional posts and training courses for those able-bodied people who wanted to work in these areas.

Against this philosophical background, it is not surprising to see that the report calls for a more paternalistic and philanthropic service for Deaf people. This attitude prevails where there is a passive resistance and a lack of confidence
among service-users (Abercrombe and Hill, 1976). This situation would be reinforced if the recommendations in the report are implemented.

There is a chapter devoted to the needs of Deaf people but there is over-emphasis on speech training and lip-reading and little consideration was given to Irish Sign Language. There is no explicit reference to the importance of an interpreting service. There is no single recommendation in the report that could be seen as empowering service-users or acknowledging the service-users’ personal independence rights: therefore, the report has to be treated with scepticism (Conama, 1998).

**Strategy for Equality 1996:**

At the same time as the publication of “Towards an Independent Future”, the Commission for the Status of People with Disabilities published its report - “A Strategy for Equality” in 1996 amid huge publicity. This bulky report contains 402 recommendations, which arose from a number of listening meetings and consultative sub-committees throughout the country. The Commission, chaired by Judge Fergus Flood, adopted an extensive consultative process, which culminated in the publication of the report.

The composition of the Commission was unique and representative of the disabled population. More than 60 per cent of the committee comprised people with disabilities and the remainder was made up of carers, parents, and service-providers. The consumer side is clearly represented here which was largely ignored in previous inquiries into similar areas. Quin and Redmond (1999) point out the stark difference between the report “Strategy for Equality” and the 1984 report “Towards a Full Life” which reflects major changes in thinking about the nature of service-provision for people with disabilities (Quin and Redmond, 1999: 157).

As for the interests of Deaf people, the recommendations affecting their lives are scattered across the wide-ranging list of recommendations. However the
recommendations themselves are substantial and radical. There are a number of recommendations calling for an extensive interpreting service for the benefit of Deaf clients providing a service in a variety of areas that range from hospitals to courts. The recommendations include highly radical suggestions including the suggestion that sign language should be officially recognised and that all teachers of the deaf should be fluent in sign language (Strategy for Equality, 1996).

In relation to education, there is recognition that Deaf children be educated within Deaf schools where peer presence and easy communication access are available. The report suggests that teacher-training courses should include sign language training development. The report went on to state that there should be flexibility to allow suitable Deaf people to become teachers of the Deaf (Strategy for Equality, 1996). This is a radical recommendation considering the removal of Deaf teachers in the 1950s by the Department of Education.

Although specific recommendations about the rights of Deaf people are scattered among the recommendations in the report, they are radical and forward-looking. This is partly a result of the consultation with some Deaf people and their representation on the various sub-committees.

Many commentators were confused by the claims by Deaf associations that the Deaf community should be regarded as a linguistic minority while apparently having no qualms about involving themselves in the disability movement. There is ongoing debate about this confusion. Admittedly, it can be strange to outsiders. However, one American observer points out that:

\[ In this case, though the two sides remain uneasy, bound as if in a bad marriage. The deaf community knows that whatever its qualms, it cannot afford to cut itself off from the larger, savvier, wealthier disability lobby” (Dolnick, 1993: 43). \]
The experience is not unique to the Irish situation and Deaf people know that some of their aspirations and hopes can be realised by association with the wider, more general campaign of disabled activists. In the past, disabled activists proved useful supporters of Deaf rights and this experience is reflected in the publication of the Commission’s report “Strategy for Equality”.

National Forum For Early Childhood Education Report 1998:
The Minister for Education and Science established the Forum to identify the direction future policies on early childhood education should take. It was attended by several interest groups together with the teaching unions and departmental officials.

The report made a departure in terms of officially labelling Deaf children; it places Deaf children in a different category, including them in a chapter dealing with cultural minorities instead of combining them in with other areas of disability. It acknowledges that this action may seem to be inappropriate to readers who are unfamiliar with this categorisation:

In this chapter the focus will be exclusively on the situation of profoundly deaf children. The use of sign language and the shared experience of deafness has led to a distinct cultural profile for members of the deaf community (Coolahan, 1998: 88)

The report also made a distinction between Deaf and hearing impaired children and pointed out that the latter was in the majority. The latter group, with additional support, can be integrated into mainstream education. It pointed out that the situation was completely different for Deaf children. The report also notes the concerns of the Irish Deaf Society on the effects of oralism on Deaf children and acknowledges the breakthrough in understanding the linguistic structure of Irish Sign Language (ISL). This report was the first official publication to note the concerns about the effects of oralism and recognise the presence of ISL (Coolahan, 1998: 89).
The report cites the successful bilingual system in Sweden where the functional literacy and the ability to achieve academic levels among Deaf children have notably improved since the implementation of a bilingual system. Their system is based on the early acquisition of written Swedish and use of the indigenous sign language, Swedish Sign Language. Therefore, the report recommends that the provision of pre-school facilities be urgently implemented as suggested by the Model School for the Deaf project. The provision would ensure the maximum benefit of acquisition for Deaf children and for their parents who could learn Irish Sign Language and communicate with each other (Coolahan, 1998: 90-91).

**Education Act 1998**

For many years prior to 1998, many commentators agreed that the absence of legislation in the whole sphere of education hindered progress in the field (Curry, 1999; Walshe, 1999; Kiely et al, 1999). It was the Rainbow coalition government, which published the first comprehensive draft education legislation, aiming to decentralise the traditional administrative system. However, the decentralisation proposal disappeared with the fall of the government in May 1997. The incoming government introduced its preferred legislation avoiding the decentralisation issue: this legislation was enacted in December 1998 (IDJ Spring, 1999).

It was into this enacted legislation that a clause acknowledging the status of Irish Sign Language was inserted after an intensive lobbying campaign was spearheaded by the Irish Deaf Society. The insertion of this clause in the Act can be seen as an achievement for the Irish Deaf Society which had lobbied vigorously for the recognition of Irish Sign Language within the Act. However, the Act refuses to acknowledge the uniqueness of ISL as the government inserted the “other sign languages” fearing that other perceived sign languages would be excluded (IDJ Autumn, 1999). Irish Deaf Society warned that it could be used a loophole by foreign Deaf students who want to study in this country; they could
use this legislation to request expensive support services such as hiring interpreters from their respective countries (IDJ Autumn, 1998).

**Reflections**

The development of the official policy reveals a number of interesting facts. Despite numerous official reports published over the years, there is no clear cut policy or statutory regulation/s on many issues affecting Deaf people and, above all, on the education of Deaf children. The absence of official policy or statutory regulations reinforces the assumptions that policy has been left in the hands of those who supported oralism.

The philosophy of the official reports is interesting and is a clear indicator of changes over the period we have explored. In the 1970s and the 1980s, the policy favoured oralism, increased educational integration, and continued to emphasise medical rehabilitation as the way forward. This type of policy had ignored international trends or studies that expressed doubt about the beneficial effects of oralism. This type of philosophy disregarded the usefulness of sign languages. The early 1990s reveal the extent of confusion surrounding the usefulness of sign language especially in the report of the Special Education Review Committee. From the middle of the 1990s, the subject of sign language began to be seen in a positive light as stated in the *Strategy for Equality*, the *National Forum for Early Childhood Education* and the *Education Act*.

This gradual change in philosophy reflects increased awareness and increased representation of different perspectives in the policy process. Increased awareness can be traced to the establishment of the Irish Deaf Society in 1981 as the main representative organisation of Deaf people and the increasingly available information from international studies enabling the interested parties to compare the Irish situation and that of other countries. This awareness also reflects international developments where the European Parliament called on
national governments to recognise indigenous sign languages: this specific event gave some basic impetus to those who wanted to change policy.

The 1988 European Parliament declaration and the NRB’s literacy assessment of 1991 can be seen as reversing earlier philosophy. The 1972 report was seen as an official endorsement of the oralist philosophy and immediate subsequent reports continued to support this. These reports had an impact on policy implementation and as result the 1972 report became a focal point of criticism in the subsequent literature. Later official reports, coupled with broader representation lessened the impact of the 1972 report. The enactment of the Education Act 1998 and the acknowledgements included in the report of the National Forum for Early Childhood Education have effectively banished the dominant philosophy of oralism.

These changes can be seen as reflecting the changed circumstances of the 1990s. The development of a partnership model in national social negotiations became more prevalent in the 1990s although the degree of its success is a matter of debate. The 1990s also saw the emergence of several writers such as Barnes (1992) and Oliver (1992, 1996) offering alternative perspectives on disability, which challenge the more traditional, medically driven perspective. Their writings urge the empowerment of people with disabilities and have been utilised to some extent by movements led by people with disabilities.

Their actions lead to increased public awareness on issues facing people with disabilities. A gradual acceptance of social diversity in the 1990s and the changing political landscape- such as the decline of the Catholic Church’s power- has enabled the Deaf community to have confidence, to be critical of the issues affecting them, and to take a proactive role in changing their circumstances.

This chapter has outlined the specific policies affecting Deaf people as documented in several government reports and legislation. The next chapter will
focus on the socio-economic status of the Deaf community and will document the impact of policy on the status of Deaf people.
Socio-economic Status Of
The Irish Deaf Community.

**Background**
The purpose of the chapter is to examine the present socio-economic status of Deaf people. The previous chapters outlined the evolution of policies affecting Deaf people and gave an overview of current policies. Socio-economic status may be a useful indicator of how successful or not these policies have been.

For this purpose of the chapter, socio-economic status refers to one’s position in the social system, based on or influenced by educational attainment, social background, and occupation. In particular, educational attainment in contemporary society has a very strong influence on social and economic opportunities and status. Clancy states:

.....education has been a keystone of attempts to extend the benefits of progress to whole populations, indeed to the whole of humanity. It has come to stand for the possibility of individual and collective improvement, individual and collective emancipation (Clancy, 1995: 467).

Those who have low educational attainment are likely to be found in lower segment of the social stratum, with lower paid jobs and lower status occupations.
Evidence used in this chapter is derived from a number of surveys containing data on the socio-economic status of Deaf people. These surveys are examined to establish the socio-economic patterns within the Deaf community. While a number of relevant studies are available, there is no existing overall review of these studies focusing on describing the socio-economic position of Deaf people in Ireland. The chapter also explores the research methods that have been utilised in researching the status of Deaf people and discusses briefly the usefulness of these approaches.

The selected Irish surveys are:

The Irish Deaf Community, Volume 1, Matthews, (1996).
Sociological Survey of the Young Adult Deaf People commissioned by National Association for the Deaf and National Rehabilitation Board. (1973)
Reading Assessment of Deaf Children James and O’Neill, National Rehabilitation Board. (1991)

These four surveys are selected because, taken together, they allow us to convey a general picture of the socio-economic status of Deaf people in Ireland. These surveys were all focussed on collecting data relevant to socio-economic status and three were published in the last decade.

Other surveys are also referred to in this chapter. They are more supplementary in nature and they are used to assess the findings of the selected major surveys. International surveys are also considered to determine whether the findings of Irish-based surveys are unique to this country. Table 1 (see below), summaries the features of the Irish surveys. In the next section, the substantive findings of the survey are outlined.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
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<td>The 1973 Survey</td>
<td>Two hearing social workers under the supervision of University College Dublin for the National Association for the Deaf.</td>
<td>N = 94 Deaf adults aiming at those who left school from 1953 to 1968 at a five year interval.</td>
<td>Personal interviews with a set questionnaire. Random semi-constructed questions were also asked. Interviewing took place in private residences of respondents</td>
<td>To identify the socio economic status of the Deaf community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRB Assessment (1991)</td>
<td>Trevor James and Erland O'Neill on behalf of the National Rehabilitation Board</td>
<td>N = 358 Deaf children</td>
<td>Children were given literacy assessment tests in a controlled scientific environment. Their literacy abilities were judged against national average rates.</td>
<td>To ascertain the level of functional literacy ability of Deaf children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Swan research (1993)</td>
<td>Ethna Swan (University College Dublin)</td>
<td>N = 237 Deaf adults, 372 parents of Deaf children, 78</td>
<td>Each category of respondents was given a different</td>
<td>To discover the future needs of Deaf children in education and</td>
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**Findings of the Surveys**

**Education:**

The **Swan research** questioned 237 Deaf past pupils in the 1993 survey. Seventy-three per cent of them claimed that they use Total Communication as their everyday method of communication, yet only 13% of them were taught through this method of communication. In stark contrast, 69% of them were taught orally and yet only 9% continued using the oral approach after school. This clearly shows that the oral approach has failed those who attended the schools (Swan, 1994: 335 - 358). McDonnell shows similar results from his study of pupils interviewed in a school with staunch oral policies (McDonnell, 1992: 9-10).

Twenty-four percent of Swan’s respondents had completed the Leaving Certificate, the necessary prerequisite for entering third level education or reasonably paid employment. Fifty-three per cent of them felt that the schools did not prepare them well for life after school. Half of the number that sought immediate employment succeeded. However, the survey report did not say how
they got their jobs or what those jobs were. For those who did not enter the labour force, only 2% entered universities after finishing school while 19% went to other third level education, 21% went straight to sheltered employment and the majority - 58% - went into vocational training (Swan, 1994: 335 - 358) (See Table 2).

This gives us an indication of the socio-economic status of Deaf people: they are in low-paid, manual employment. O'Reilly's research (1993) which found that the number of Deaf students in third level education is seriously under-represented supports these findings.

In relation to the method of instruction used in the schools, the vast majority - 94.2% according to the Swan research, want to see sign language used in classrooms and 82.2% were strongly opposed to the idea of integration of Deaf people into mainstream education. However, the design of the questions in her research in relation to integration and sign language are vague and could potentially cause further confusion and uncertainty in approaching assessment procedure.

For instance, if we consider the question regarding the use of signing in classrooms, Swan asked three potentially conflicting questions to respondents that did not give a clear view on the issue of the use of sign language in classroom environments. The respondents were asked in three separate questions if they believed signing, lip-reading and total communication should be used in classrooms. The positive outcomes for each question were 92%, 79% and 94% respectively.

Figure 1: Destinations of Percentage of those who did not enter labour force after schooling
However, there is no clear definition of these terms in the report. In relation to a question on lip-reading, the author stated that 79% were in favour of “oralism”. However, 92% wanted to see the use of signing in classrooms (Swan, 1994: 344-346). It has to be remembered that the central aim of oralism is to banish the use of sign language from classrooms. These results are therefore inconsistent.

The figures for the question on the use of signing in classrooms above can be corroborated by other surveys. For example, we can analyse the questionnaire on the educational experience of Deaf people that was carried out by the Irish Deaf Society (IDS) in 1986. Forty-six per cent of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the education they had received. The NRB assessment team reported that “Deaf school leavers find that the social and vocational opportunities available to them are restricted by their limited attainments in reading and writing skills” (NRB Assessment, 1991). This supports the IDS results.

In relation to policy change, the Swan research indicates that 72% of the respondents strongly backed the introduction of Total Communication in the
schools. Ninety-four percent agreed with the idea that teachers should be fluent in sign language before they are allowed to teach children. However, these surveys did not state whether they prefer Deaf teachers in these roles or not.

Nevertheless, Jones and Pullen’s Europe-wide study records that there “were repeated demands for deaf teachers of the deaf particularly as they also provide good role models for deaf children and because there would be better communication using sign language” (Jones and Pullen, 1990: 58). In 1988, Jones and Pullen carried out a qualitative survey of social policies affecting Deaf people in fifteen EC countries. They interviewed a number of Deaf respondents in each country, including Ireland. On this basis, it is reasonable to assume that Irish Deaf respondents wish to have Deaf teachers as well.

Interestingly, in the Swan research, the vast majority were strongly opposed to the policy of internal segregation in the schools between orally educated children and children who use a sign language. Overall, the emphasis on using sign language in the schools is very strong, providing a lesson for those who doubt the validity of using sign language in educational domains.

Moreover, more than half of the respondents would like to see a better career guidance service in a linguistic and cultural framework within the schools. The Swan research states:

*The respondents are very conscious of deaf identity and deaf culture, but they are also very anxious to be treated on an equal footing with hearing children as far as education, educational standards, examinations and access to third level education are concerned* (Swan, 1994: 362).

The Matthews survey reveals that only 11% of respondents possessed the Leaving Certificate qualification while 66% obtained Junior/ Group/ Intermediate Certificates. In the further education arena, 2.3% of the respondents managed to gain entry to the universities and 9.4% went to technical colleges, while almost
25% went to vocational training centres (e.g. FAS or NRB training centres). The pilot survey reveals that most of the respondents were educated orally, yet they use ISL frequently in their leisure time. As a result, 94% strongly support the idea that each teacher should be fluent in ISL before they can enter the classrooms to teach. Additionally, 86% steadfastly oppose the continuation of internal segregation in the school. These findings are very similar to Swan’s findings as Table 3 shows.

Figure 2: Percentage of Those Completed Leaving Certificate.

In the Matthews survey, a bilingual approach is seen as the most appropriate solution to these calls for teachers able to sign to Deaf children in classrooms. Matthews states:

For bilingualism to work well, it is essential that the deaf child be exposed to sign language at the earliest opportunity as it is the immediately accessible language, prompting the development of internal language and thought processes which may later be used to learn the majority language (Matthews, 1996: 111).

The 1973 study did not analyse education any further. The survey report states that most respondents wanted better career guidance services at schools, which may reflect the experience of frustration in schools. Incidentally, a number of prominent personnel on the monitoring committee of this survey were also on the 1972 Department of Education review committee.
This committee published a report, which dealt with the question of communication methods in Deaf schools (Department of Education 1972; National Rehabilitation Board, 1973). Yet, given their involvement, their non use of research in the area of education for the 1972 Report can be regarded as puzzling.

Both surveys (Swan and Matthews) revealed that the oral approach in the education for Deaf children had not won the respect of Deaf adults, with many Deaf adults having called for teachers for the Deaf to possess the necessary fluency in ISL before being allowed to teach. The experience of being on the ‘receiving end’ of the oral approach in their education had left them in no doubt that the approach was not satisfactory.

Kyle (1997) asks whether a parent would tolerate the situation if they knew that their child in ordinary school was struggling to understand her teachers. Such a situation would not be acceptable to the vast majority of parents, but this is literally the experience for children attending the Deaf schools in Ireland.

The educational process based on the oral approach evidently left a wide gap in the career development phase of Deaf adults, with most of them seemingly content to enter vocational training after leaving schools. A tiny fraction - 2% - managed to enter the universities. Less than one in five respondents possess the Leaving Certificate which illustrates the appalling outcome of this type of education process. Clearly, the educational attainment of Deaf school leavers is significantly lower than that of the population as a whole. The relevant NESC report (1994) gives statistics for the general population as follows:

85% of school leavers completed Leaving Certificate, approximately 60 per cent of those aged over 25 had completed the Leaving Certificate, 40% of school leavers continue their education at third level (NESC, 1994).
Employment:

The *Swan research* reports that 45% of the respondents were unemployed at the time of interview and 47.6% of the respondents got a job immediately after school. However, the survey did not state the length of waiting period in order to validate the findings. It is also unfortunate that the survey did not state how the jobs were obtained and how well paid the jobs were (Swan, 1994: 335 - 358).

Interestingly, the data shows that the occupations held by hearing parents of Deaf children reflect the distribution of occupations in the labour market as a whole (CSO, 1996). The data gives an indirect indication that the income and occupational mobility of Deaf people has been generally downwards. For instance, the top three classes of professional and managerial ranks which hearing parents attained were not matched by Deaf adults. The number of hearing parents occupying three top occupation classification levels is disproportionately higher than the number of Deaf adults in these same levels.

This downward mobility may be due to the rates of unemployment and underemployment of Deaf people, which are in a sharp contrast to the national average rates (Swan, 1994). Although class structure in Irish society is highly stratified and there is limited social class mobility (Breen, 1990), these highly stratified classes apparently do not stop the downward mobility of Deaf people from high socio-economic positions.

The *1973 survey* states that 23% of the respondents were unemployed and that most of those who had jobs were employed in low-paid menial jobs. It reports that 81% of them were employed within 6 months after leaving school. Again, there is no indication in this study of how they got work. A substantial majority of respondents (81%) state that they had friends at work but the friendships did not extend beyond the workplace for more than half of the respondents.

Figure 3: *Rate of Unemployment among Deaf Respondents.*
In the Matthews study, the first survey states that the rate of unemployment among Deaf respondents was running high at 32.3% (Matthews, 1996: 47). Many of the respondents attributed for their unemployment to a number of factors, ranging from lack of academic achievement to employers’ lack of confidence in the abilities of Deaf workers (Matthews, 1996: 48). The majority of those who responded who were employed, were in low-paid and manual jobs (Matthews, 1996: 50).

Flannelly (1996) agrees the problem of underemployment among those who had jobs is significant. According to Flannelly, Deaf employees “clung to these to maintain their employed status and also because of the fear of not being able to procure other employment” (Flannelly, 1997: 12). The experience of underemployment and thwarted ambition seems prevalent among our European counterparts (Jones and Pullen, 1990).

Across these surveys, the unemployment rate seemed persistently high among Deaf respondents - even when compared against the national unemployment rates. Coupled with weak educational attainment, many Deaf adults were content to hold low paid and manual jobs as mentioned by Flannelly (1997). Even for those who hold reasonable educational qualifications, the evidence suggests that many may experience underemployment due to a number of factors as described in Matthews’s survey.
**Literacy:**

As noted earlier, the NRB survey found that an average 16 years old Deaf child would have a reading level of the average 9 years old non-deaf child and that these report accepts that the results are well below generally accepted standards of functional literacy.

Conrad (1979) carried out a similar study in Britain and his findings were the same. There have been numerous American studies giving similar results and they have all suggested that the application of pure oralism in schools is responsible for the devastating effects on the functional literacy of Deaf children (Moores, 1978: 249-250).

The Matthews survey notes that 51% of respondents read newspapers regularly, but the focus of interest varies among respondents. Eighty per cent of them said that they read articles thoroughly. The choice of newspapers was mixed - tabloids and daily papers being equally preferred. Eighty-three per cent read magazines, but they opted for more pictorial or illustrative stories with straightforward language texts (e.g. weekly periodicals such as Hello, Woman’s Way). Sixty-three per cent of them read books but again opted for more sensational or sentimental stories. A substantial minority (15%) read academic/scientific books. In explaining these patterns, Matthews points out:

*On further investigation it was realised that deaf people prefer books or magazines that have many pictures in order to break up and support text. They do not enjoy reading several pages of pure text, for example, the most popular magazine being “Hello”. The visual content of pictures is closer to the focus of the morphological make-up of sign language than forms and imagery displayed by English words (Matthews, 1996: 215).*
While the 1973 sociological survey extensively investigated the social life of Deaf respondents, the survey did not investigate the extent of reading ability or consider reading as a leisure pursuit among Deaf people.

**The Swan research** stated that there were a number of assessment tests carried out in schools. As each test used a different methodology, it would be difficult to assess the overall picture. However, it states that the 1991 NRB assessment is a good indicator of the literacy situation in Ireland. The study points out that the NRB assessment results are similar to the results of tests carried out in Britain and the United States (Swan, 1994: 163). Swan also states that the level of functional literacy generally in the US has improved in the last 50 years and that this is also marginally reflected in the Deaf community. However, there remains a gap, with Deaf people continuing to lag considerably behind the general standard (Swan: 128).

NRB’s findings regarding appalling levels of functional literacy rates among Deaf children is supported by international evidence. The Swan research also supports the finding of NRB’s literacy assessment tests. Thus, we can say that the NRB research findings offer a clear indication of the failure of the Irish education system for Deaf children.

The Matthews survey lists a number of reading habits among Deaf respondents and these reflect the weak literacy levels among Deaf respondents. This has serious implications, as weak levels of literacy development hinder one’s ability to lead life independently in society, thus extending dependency on others.

**Social and Cultural Life:**

The **Swan research** reveals that 84% of the respondents are happier when participating and socialising within the Deaf community. However, 80% of them suggest that Deaf people should be able to participate in both hearing and Deaf communities (Swan, 1994: 350).
The 1973 study also fleetingly acknowledges the importance of Deaf people participating within the Deaf community. More than 50% of the respondents claimed to be a member of the local Deaf club and the club was the main social activity of their lives. Fifty per cent of them found it quite a struggle to communicate with their own doctor or local grocer (National Rehabilitation Board, 1973: 72). Thirty-five per cent of these respondents owned a house while 50% lived in flats or family homes (ibid: 149). Only 7% of the respondents owned a car while no females in this group ever owned a car (National Rehabilitation Board, 207).

The Matthews survey investigated the social situation of Deaf people more extensively than the other surveys. The research found that 97.2% go to a local Deaf club with a frequency that varies individually. Incidentally, just fewer than 10% of these respondents are members of other hearing social clubs. The majority of the respondents never socialise with hearing neighbours (Matthews, 1996: 205). Deaf people tend to prefer subtitled programmes and it came as no surprise that there is a clear preference for British-based TV companies because of their higher rate of transmission of subtitled programmes. Nine out ten tend to watch British-based channels before Irish-based channels (Matthews, 1996: 192-196).

![Figure 4: Social Life in the Deaf Community](image-url)
**Recommendations from the surveys:**

The **1973 study** stands in total contrast to the recommendations of other surveys. The 1973 survey’s recommendations were to make extra auxiliary services available to assist Deaf people, reflecting a continued paternalistic approach. Among the recommendations were:

*Early and accurate diagnosis of abilities and disabilities.*
*Appropriate treatment and guidance aimed at integrating them into a modern society.*
*These facilities should be made available as a continuing service* (National Rehabilitation Board, 1973 (b): 3)

The recommendations made no provision for the establishment of a consultation process inclusive of the Deaf (National Rehabilitation Board, 1973: 352). Given the socio-political climate that the survey was carried out in, this is expected. However, it is interesting to see how recommendations change over the years. The Matthews recommendations epitomise the increased participation and confidence of Deaf people to investigate their own conditions. For instance:

*To realise this, training must be made available or accessible to Deaf students and so initially, this may be provided through interpretation and as the whole area of signed media develops, then Deaf people may become trainers themselves* (Matthews, 1996: 229)

The **Swan research** did not make clear recommendations in response to the original intentions of the study - to find an appropriate role for the Catholic Institute for the Deaf (CID). The Swan report, in a response to the CID who commissioned the study, called for more flexibility and in-depth research on a number of educational issues instead. However, the report did not make any call for increased participation of Deaf people in education. The NRB literacy assessment merely called for more discussion on the appalling standard of functional literacy among Deaf children.
Of the surveys reviewed here, the Matthews survey made strong and radical recommendations in the light of its findings. This survey suggests increased participation of Deaf people in decision-making processes on issues that affect the Deaf community, and recommends acknowledgement of Irish Sign Language, which the survey believes is the only way forward to reduce the disadvantages in socio-economic status affecting Deaf people (Matthews, 1996: 228-231).

Since the most recent of these studies was undertaken, the employment and demographic situation have been changed dramatically. Unemployment in general has been reduced greatly and there is continuous net migration into this country (CSO, 1999). Both changes would suggest that improvements have been made in the socio-economic status of Deaf people. There are indications that the assumption would be unrealistic.

Recent indicators such as the occupational level of women are only slightly improved over the same period despite huge efforts to promote them. Travellers have not experienced improvements in their quality of life despite increased public awareness of their status. Evidence supports these interpretations, with the Combat Poverty Agency having made reference to these areas on a number of occasions (Combat Poverty Agency Factsheet). Allen (1999) refers to increased poverty in Ireland even during the economic boom as the pay gap between income groups has widened considerably (Nolan, 1999). Given these facts about the experiences of other marginal groups, it is reasonable to doubt that dramatic improvements were made in the socio-economic status of Deaf people in the same period.

**Review of Surveys’ Methodology:**

The Swan research used three separate set questionnaires to interview parents of Deaf children, teachers and past pupils of Deaf schools. They interviewed 237 Deaf adults, 372 parents of 483 Deaf children still in school at the time of
interviews, and 78 teachers for the deaf, totalling almost 700 respondents, which made it the most extensive survey ever carried out on Deaf-related matters in Ireland. The survey also posted questionnaires to various Deaf schools in the United States, Britain, and continental Europe and 61 replies were received.

However, the report’s primary concern was to discover the future needs of Deaf children in education and the role of the Catholic Institute for the Deaf (CID) in future development in this context (Swan, 1994: 2). Crean states that this report was to be complimented for the extensive work conducted. However, he points out that the author had no experience of teaching or working with Deaf people. He argues that this lack of insight or experience hinders the author’s ability to evaluate current policies and propose useful suggestions, neither of which is evident in the report (Crean, 1997: 125).

The NRB assessment was more a controlled and scientifically conducted research project. The authors used two reading ability tests to assess 358 children ranging in age from 6 to 16. There is no indication of which written language was the expected target language. It is presumed that the English language was the target language in this assessment. The purpose of the assessment was to evaluate the progress of children at school. The authors noted that the findings were in line with similar international research. It did not state whether the assessors were fluent in Irish Sign Language (ISL) or how the children communicated and interacted with the assessors.

McDonnell (1980) states that outcomes of the studies on Deaf children could depend on the validity of instructions that are communicated to Deaf children. There were a number of previous studies, which erroneously suggested that Deaf children were mentally retarded when they were tested with linguistic and cognitive tests (McDonnell, 1980: 46). It is unfortunate that the survey report considered so far omitted the nature of instructions given to informants. It would be interesting to know what communication approach the assessors used to instruct the children regarding the test procedures. Nevertheless, the
international research shows that the results for the Irish literacy assessment not unique from the international research.

The Matthews study includes two studies. The first part of the study was an attempt to ascertain the population of Deaf people in Ireland. This quantitative survey covering 351 adult respondents and 335 school-going children also attempted to record personal details of the respondents in order to describe the general situation of the Deaf community. The number of respondents itself is relatively large as the survey generally claimed that it covered 8.6% of the Deaf adult population in Ireland and 33% of Deaf schoolchildren (Matthews, 1996: 41-57).

The second part of the study was focused on the Dublin area and included a more extensive questionnaire to ascertain attitudes and beliefs in relation to a number of social and economic activities. Thirty-five respondents were interviewed (Matthews, 1996).

There appear to be a number of contradictions in Matthews’ work. For instance, 72.7% of the respondents felt good, very good or excellent, in terms of personal satisfaction with their jobs. Yet, 63.6% of the same respondents would like to change jobs. Kyle and Allsop (1997) point out that statistics tend to hide the great gulf in the quality of working life between Deaf and hearing people. They cite the example of Foster’s ethnographic research, where she was able to identify a number of issues Deaf people in the United States were facing in the workplace. (Foster, 1986).

Matthews used closed questions and multiple-choice answers: this is of limited value in understanding the views and expectations of Deaf people (Matthews, 1996: 260-295). In contrast, Foster used an unstructured interview approach, which allowed her to ask open-ended or semi-structured questions, she also compiled personal observations in order to gain more information about respondents (Foster, 1996: 118).
Foster (1996) found it necessary to go to great lengths to obtain information from Deaf respondents and her ethnographic approach would regard the response of “informants” as opportunities for them to teach and inform her about their experiences. Her main goal was to describe the experiences of people in their words and from their perspectives. For instance, one of her methods was contacting Deaf informants at their workplaces where she could observe the nature of his or her relationship with work colleagues and management (Foster, 1996: 117 - 135).

Baker-Shenk and Kyle (1990) state that their socio-economic status and their experience of oralism have left the Deaf community apathetic and sometimes suspicious of researchers. They argue that hearing researchers often control research on the Deaf community given that the educational system does not contain large number of Deaf researchers with academic training and this militates against the presence of a Deaf researcher.

Therefore, the vast majority of research carried out in the past was based on outsiders’ perceptions of the Deaf community. This may explain the great gulf between the reality of the lives of Deaf people and that reported in research reports. Thus, a qualitative approach may be the best approach to research when it comes to understanding social aspects of the Deaf community.

The 1973 study was carried out by two hearing social workers under the supervision of University College Dublin (National Rehabilitation Board, 1973: 6). The researchers targeted children who had left the schools in specific years, choosing a five-year interval starting from 1953 and continuing to 1968. There was a pool of 100 respondents of both genders for personal interviews. Not all of them were forthcoming as the report stated that six “were very uncooperative” with the researchers (National Rehabilitation Board, 1973: 6). This seems to reflect the attitudes of social workers towards Deaf respondents, as the informants were not obliged to co-operate with the researchers.
The research data was derived from information arising from personal interviews that took place in respondents’ private residences. Personal interviewing began with a set questionnaire. However, a number of random and semi-structured questions were asked. In the introduction, the interviewers stated that they had a good interview relationship with respondents. However, in page 4 of the survey, it was stated that 68% of the respondents claimed that they had difficulty in communicating with the interviewers. This can be seen as a clear admission illustrating the lack of an empathetic relationship between Deaf respondents and hearing interviewers in this survey.

Coincidentally, the Matthews survey is the only one here acknowledging the linguistic and cultural needs of Deaf respondents. Each personal interview in the second survey - the Dublin study - was filmed by video to allow the Deaf respondents to reply to questions in their own language - Irish Sign Language (Matthews, 1996: 134). This was because his survey team contained a number of Deaf people who were therefore able to empathise with the research population and identify with their needs. While other surveys did not explicitly state the method/s they employed for interviewing, it is assumed here that the Matthews survey is the only one of these surveys reviewed that used Deaf people as interviewers in data collection.

Conducting research on the lives of Deaf people can be complex. It is clear that applying ordinary methods of research without due care can lead to important details or information being lost or misunderstood in the process, which could be crucial to the analysis. Foster (1998) and Kyle (1997) demonstrate that applying ordinary research methods does not generate an adequate account of their lives, culture and language.

It appears that a qualitative approach is the best possible method of gathering information about Deaf people. However, sensitivity has to be given to social relations between researchers and the Deaf population. In this kind of
relationship, the cultural and linguistic needs of the Deaf population have to be recognised and respected.

The relevance of Oliver's suggestion for more emancipatory research by disabled people themselves (Oliver, 1992), can be reflected in this critique of four separate research studies. Three of these can be categorised as positivist because hearing people, who did not take account of cultural and linguistic aspects within the Deaf community, carried them out. Their recommendations can be regarded as weak attempts to encourage Deaf people to take a central position in forming their destinies. There is no evidence that serious action or concerns were aired about the quality of Deaf people’s lives: this applies especially to the NRB assessment of 1991.

**Conclusions**

Apart from the NRB assessment, the main surveys adopted a quantitative approach. The quantitative approach may be suitable for ascertaining the numbers/percentages in broad categories but would not enable the researcher to understand the attitudes and feelings of Deaf people on policies and other matters in a linguistic and cultural context. Research has to adopt an ethnographic and qualitative approach. To ensure the successful collection of data, a researcher, at least, must be mutually empathetic with the respondents and use resources such as video to enable respondents to answer in sign.

As for the findings of the surveys, it is quite clear that educational policies have failed Deaf people dismally and the vast majority expressed a wish to see radical changes in education to reflect more of their linguistic and cultural identity. It is quite serious that a very low number of Deaf people possess Leaving Certificate qualifications and only a handful of these entered the universities.

The lack of reasonable educational attainment among Deaf people clearly leaves them vulnerable to a long life of underemployment and unemployment. This could push the majority near the poverty line. There is a evidence that their
income and social positions decline dramatically in comparison to the positions of their (often hearing) parents. The situation is not helped by poor rates of functional literacy among Deaf people. It is important to note that the surveys give consistent results on these matters, although their recommendations differ.

The findings portray the low socio-economic position occupied by Deaf people and this situation has not changed over the years despite the increased level of expenditure and energy allocated to ‘improving’ education for Deaf people. The evidence indicates the failure of past educational policies for Deaf children and all of us concerned with such policies should draw lessons here. There are serious consequences for the ability and confidence of Deaf people to participate in decision-making process. Bateman (1996) succinctly states:

“With this sense of powerlessness, deaf people have felt helpless to change conditions or to develop services that are needed in their communities. Either they depend too much on their leaders to be their advocates to initiate the changes, or they leave the decisions to the larger hearing community (Bateman, 1997: 155).”
Chapter Five

Comparative Case Study
- Ireland and Finland.

Introduction
To reflect on the Irish situation, it is useful to bring in an international dimension. This chapter contains a comparative case study of the Irish and Finnish situation. First, the choice of Finland is explained here, as is its historical, social and political background. There is a brief description of the Finnish Deaf community and its history. The main indicators of the socio-economic status of Finnish Deaf people are also highlighted. To conclude, the lessons arising from the comparison are noted. To begin, it is important to explain why an international comparison is used here.

Why use an international comparison?
There are a lot of potential benefits in undertaking comparative cross-national studies. Cross-national comparative studies are not commonplace in relation to investigating Deaf issues but this kind of study recently has gained momentum. This area is not entirely new in the area of Deaf studies with sporadic reports published in previous years. For instance, the World Federation of the Deaf has published an international survey on the national education system for Deaf children in several countries in 1991 (WFD, 1991). The European Union of the Deaf’s investigation of the status of sign language in seventeen countries is another example (Sign On Europe, 1997).

Barcham (1998) points out that due to continued superficial international information exchange, it is possible to work in the field of special education in one country with no reference to what happens overseas. She believes international comparison would enhance the understanding of the development
of policies and practices in Deaf education in one’s own country (Barcham, 1998: 246). May points out that economic globalisation may internationalise welfare production and that there may be a long-term process of convergence underway (May, 1998: 21). This would strengthen the role of comparative analysis.

Considering the difficulties involved, comparative study is still an attractive option and it offers an international dimension that certainly enhances our understanding of where the Irish situation stands in relation to other countries. May describes four different approaches to comparative research: “import-mirror” view, “difference” view, “theory-development” view and “prediction” view. These approaches are not distinct as a comparative exercise might apply more than one approach (May, 1998: 185).

The first approach - import-mirror - refers to those studies that use the findings of practices in another country and compare these against their own country to see the basis of their own practices more clearly. This view might be useful for those who want to copy practices from another country.

The second approach - difference - refers to those who want to explain the cultural, social, political or economic differences between nations. This approach is crucial to understanding the similarity and diversity of policies between countries.

This second approach is related to the third theory-development approach. Academics develop the “difference” approach by using the comparisons to offer theoretical generalisations and explanations. Most prominent is Esping-Andersen (1990) who has developed a typology of welfare regimes.

Finally, the prediction approach refers to the potential outcomes of particular policies after examining cultural, social, political and economic contexts in many countries. The OECD is a prime example of an organisation doing this type of work (May, 1998: 185-189).

For this purpose of the study, the first view described by May is more appropriate although it is not intended to suggest that we copy practices from Finland.
**Methodology**

The methodology of this comparative study is simple. Barcham’s case study of the Finnish Deaf community and the author’s personal correspondence with officials of the Finnish Association of the Deaf provides the nucleus of the information contained here. A number of documents and reports also provided by the Finnish Association of the Deaf are sources of necessary information. International organisations’ publications such as Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are also utilised.

The comparative approach begins with general background about Finland and its history, economy and society. The description of the Finnish Deaf community and its history is then described. This provides a necessary context within which the socio-economic status of Finnish Deaf people can be compared to their Irish counterparts. A number of brief comparative references to important social services are also made.

**Finland and Ireland**

Finland was intentionally chosen because of its many similarities to Ireland. Both countries are geographically situated on the periphery of Europe, which affects their ability to influence mainland European politics. Both countries are members of the European Union and are militarily neutral and both countries have small populations. Finland has a slightly larger population than Ireland, as there are 5 million people in Finland while the Irish population is fast approaching 4 million (OECD, 1999). While Finnish society has linguistic diversity, with a number of minority languages especially in the border areas, bilingualism - English and Irish - is dominant in Ireland. Both once had a dominant agricultural economy but now depend heavily on exports to sustain their economy (Singleton, 1998).

Their economies are small open ones and have no significant influence on the world economy. They are susceptible to the effects of the global economy
Both countries have experienced high unemployment rates when in economic recession. However Finland’s high rate of unemployment is a recent phenomenon (OECD, 1999) while the Irish experienced a long period of high unemployment before the *Celtic Tiger’s* economy emerged.

**Table 6 - Basic data - Ireland and Finland - 1999**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Finland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area Size</td>
<td>32,579 sq. miles</td>
<td>130,524 sq. miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Language(s)</td>
<td>Irish, English</td>
<td>Finnish, Swedish, Lapp, FinSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per head in US$</td>
<td>22,921</td>
<td>24,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth of GDP (1998)</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: OECD, Eurostat and CSO)

Both countries have a colonial past and a significant neighbouring world power (i.e. Russia and Sweden to Finland, Britain to Ireland). The difference between their colonial experiences was that Finland had localised government, which permitted the Finnish population to practice local norms and customs and did not experience any sort of mass assimilation. Ireland, in contrast, experienced centralised power by London and also experienced attempts at religious and language assimilation. Interestingly, in the 19th century, both countries had experienced catastrophic famines that killed thousands of people though the Irish recorded far more casualties. The Irish perspective on this disaster tends to be more politicised than the Finnish view of the famine. The Finnish regards their own famine as an ecological disaster rather than a case of economic mismanagement as happened in the Irish case (NESC, 1992; Singleton, 1998).

**Welfare regimes**

Although there are similarities between both countries, there are significant cultural and social differences. These differences are reflected in different types of social policy responses to the needs of their populations. To understand these differences, it is useful to draw on the comparative research, which attempts to
classify countries’ welfare systems and social policies. Esping-Andersen’s work (1990) has been most prominent in this area.

Esping-Andersen developed a typology of three welfare regimes. He measures the social policy responses of each country on the basis of decommodification and social stratification. Decommodification refers to how independent an individual can be without depending on labour market income and social stratification refers to the extent to which social policy responses ameliorate social class structures (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 35-79).

The first regime - known as the social democratic welfare regime - is rated high in terms of decommodification and is regarded as a strong exponent of socialism in terms of ameliorating social stratification. The Scandinavian countries are prominent in this regard. Central European countries such as Germany and Austria dominate the second regime of conservative / corporatist welfare regime. In this regime, decommodification is measured as average while conservatism remains strong in terms of social stratification.

The final regime is known as a liberal welfare regime, which is ranked low in terms of decommodification and is a strong exponent of liberalism. The USA, Britain and Canada are categorised in this liberal regime. Broadly speaking, the typology would place these regimes as follows in descending order of their degree of egalitarianism: social democratic, corporatist and liberal.

Esping-Andersen places Ireland in this liberal model (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Although Esping-Andersen places Finland in the conservative model, he recognises that a number of social policy measures in Finland would put it into the social democratic model (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

However, Esping-Andersen’s work is not universally accepted, as other theorists in a number of critiques identified the shortcomings in the typology of welfare regimes. Lewis (1994) wrote a feminist critique, which centres on women’s
unpaid work. Some researchers argue that there are more types of welfare regimes such as Leibfried’s *Latin Rim* model (1993) and Castles & Mitchell’s work on four clusters of welfare regimes (1993). Ireland’s placing in these classifications is problematic due to its uniqueness in terms of history and social development (O’Donnell, 1999: 70-90).

Most social researchers agree that the typology of welfare regimes makes a considerable advance in understanding cross-national differences (O’Donnell, 1999: 70-90). It is now generally agreed that Finland belongs to the social democratic cluster while Ireland fits into the liberal model (Hill, 1996: 38-58). Therefore, it is clear that Finland and Ireland have different ‘welfare regimes’.

Finland has recognised social benefits as a right of citizens and they administer universal social services which citizens can avail of regardless of their income and status (Sainbury, 1994). Despite experiencing a deep economic recession in the 1990s and its subsequent remarkable recovery, the Finnish government vows to adhere to what they describe as “the Nordic welfare society” (OECD, 1999). As the Finns develop their rights-based welfare regime, their country has been recognised as one of most progressive, tolerant and wealthy countries (Singleton, 1998).

The Irish welfare philosophy has been historically dominated by a principle that welfare benefits are residual and based on need. Before Ireland experienced its ‘Celtic Tiger’ economic boom, it was seen as a European backwater, a conservative country (O’Donnell, 1999: 70-90). Anti-intellectualism, clerical control and continued economic protectionism of the economy coloured the world perception of Ireland (Chubb, 1992: 19-20).

Ireland and Finland have very significant structural similarities and certain historical experiences in common. However, they belong to different welfare regimes, reflecting differences in political ideology. In the next section, we
attempt to see if these regime differences are reflected in policies for the Deaf and outcomes for the Deaf community.

**Finnish Deaf community**

The Finnish Deaf community has been publicly prominent in the global discussion of Deaf issues. They are often seen as the most progressive and advanced Deaf community. Their continued prevalence is reflected by the re-election of the Finnish Deaf woman, Liisa Kauppinen, as the president of the World Federation of the Deaf in July 1999. The office of WFD was situated in Finland until the mid-1990s. The Finnish Deaf community was able to provide a number of experts to WFD to sit on special commissions on a number of critical issues. They have been involved in aiding their counterparts in the Third World (WFD News - various dates).

Statistically, there is no actual census of Deaf people in Finland. However, according to the Finnish Association of the Deaf’s document to UNESCO, there are 5,000 Deaf people and the ratio of 1:1,000 is used as a rule of thumb. The Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD) estimates 80 per cent of them possess fluency in FinSL (indigenous Finnish Sign Language). Overall, there are 14,000 among the national population who possess an average understanding of FinSL (FAD (a), 1999).

Most Deaf people are concentrated in the southern parts of Finland given the social and economic infrastructure there, which enables them to obtain a higher standard of living. However they are not concentrated in specific areas but geographically scattered throughout the southern cities (FAD (a), 1999).

In 1995, Finnish Sign Language, along with other minority languages such as Lapp and Swedish, were recognised by the state constitution and this has had significant implications for the citizenship rights of Finnish Deaf people (FAD, 1998). The national research institute has established a centre for sign language research and the state set up a commission known as the Finnish Sign
Language Board to implement and monitor measures aiming to promote and support FinSL (FAD (a), 1999). Both initiatives can be seen as a state response to constitutional recognition of FinSL.

**Comparative History**

To understand the current situation of the Finnish Deaf community, one has to look at the historical background to explain how they managed to achieve what they have. We can then compare their history against the Irish experience.

Though the state has acknowledged FinSL, like many countries Finland had a long history of sign language oppression. Finland implemented the oralist philosophy of Deaf education in the late 1890s and abolished their former system, which was based on the French method, using the 'methodical approach' of sign language. The experience is similar to Ireland but the context is somewhat different. The French method survived in the Irish Catholic schools until the 1940s but was eradicated in the Protestant-run schools in the 1890s.

Formal education for the Deaf came earlier to Irish children than their Finnish counterparts. The first known Irish school was opened in 1816 (Matthews, 1997) while a Deaf Finnish man returning from Sweden opened the first school in Porvoo in 1846 (FAD (a), 1999). There is no record of how Finnish Deaf children were educated prior to the establishment of this school. From there, both countries saw the opening of a number of Deaf schools to cater for the educational needs of Deaf children.

Like many countries in Europe, Finnish Deaf education experienced the fallout of the 1880 Milan conference. The momentum for embracing the oralist philosophy that believed in banishing sign language from schools and substituting speech training began in the Scandinavian countries during the 1870s. It came to prominence in Finland towards the end of the nineteenth century where there was resistance against the oralist philosophy. In common with other countries, Deaf people decided to form a representative organisation in 1905 - The Finnish
Association of the Deaf - to protect and uphold the status of FinSL (Barcham, 1998: 249).

However, in Ireland, there is no recorded resistance against the implementation of oralism especially in the 1890s and the 1940s. There is some speculation that in the 1880s Francis Maginn, the founder of the British Deaf Association, had attempted to establish a similar organisation for Ireland, but could not instil the spirit of resistance into many Irish Deaf people. As for the 1940s and 1950s, there is no clear explanation for the lack of resistance among Deaf people against oralism. It is possibly explained by the then severe economic stagnation that existed, clerical power and anti-intellectualism, all of which may have prevented the resurgence of resistance to oralism in Ireland.

Oralism in Finland dominated up to the mid-1970s and according to FAD, it left a damaging legacy while failing to achieve its main objective - the eradication of FinSL (FAD (a), 1999). This legacy can be clearly seen in older generations of Deaf people as they tend to be less confident in using FinSL in the public arena and fail to recognise FinSL as their own language (FAD (a), 1999). A number of harsh measures were employed to banish FinSL and older Deaf people remember that they were severely punished for using FinSL (FAD (a), 1999). Finland also experienced a form of eugenics campaign to reduce the number of Deaf people. In 1930, Finnish law did not allow Deaf people to marry without getting permission from the President of Finland, but this law was repealed in 1969.

The Irish experience can be seen as similar, but belated, and more thoroughly documented especially since the 1940s. The Finnish experience is mirrored by its Irish counterpart and the experience is not unique to these two countries. It is a well-known fact that oralism dominated the world of education for the Deaf for a very long period (Lane, 1993). As for marriage, there was no legislation preventing Irish Deaf people from intermarrying. However, one Deaf observer recalled that there was an in-built attitude against inter-marriage and influence
was brought to bear on Deaf people who were made to agree not to marry in order to prevent the reproduction of Deaf children (Contact, 1988).

The Finnish government set up a commission inquiring into the state of the education for the Deaf in 1973 (Barcham, 1998). The Finnish commission concluded with a report stating that the role of sign language had a part to play in the education of the Deaf but regarded it as an auxiliary and arbitrary language (Barcham, 1998: 250). This has a striking similarity to the Irish publication by the Department of Education in 1972. However, the Irish counterpart did not reach a conclusive decision on the status of Irish Sign Language (ISL) (Department of Education, 1972).

There seems to have been a spate of government sponsored commissions investigating the state of education for the Deaf in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For instance, in the United States, there was the Federal sponsored Babbidge Report of 1965 which criticised the oralist system, and the British’s Lewis report in 1968 which pondered the wisdom of using finger-spelling in schools. It would be interesting to identify what factors had sparked off such a number of national investigation commissions into the education of the Deaf but it is not within the scope of this research to explore this question. Judging by the continual control of oralism in the education of the Deaf in a number of countries, it appears that there was no cross-national information exchange.

Since the early 1980s, Finnish Deaf leaders decided to do something to protect the status of FinSL, which had been under constant attack, especially on the educational front. They had developed a largely successful strategy to protect and promote the use of the FinSL (FAD (a), 1999). In 1987, the government curriculum document was published and it placed an emphasis on the education of Deaf children within this context. It recognised bilingualism as the appropriate approach for educating Deaf children and stated that using FinSL and spoken Finnish simultaneously was to use a ‘pidgin’ language. In 1990, the government
curriculum document went further and recognised that FinSL is the first language of Deaf children (Barcham, 1998: 250).

To have the government acknowledging to the status of FinSL in the late 1980s was a pioneering development in itself and ahead of other countries including Ireland. During the 1980s, in Ireland there was no official investigation as to the status of Irish Sign Language nor was there any serious attempt made to establish an official investigation.

The Finnish strategy was rewarded in the following decade, with state recognition of FinSL and incorporation of FinSL as the minority language in the state constitution occurring in 1995 (FAD (a), 1999). The research centre and the state sponsored FinSL Board have since been established (FAD (a), 1999).

In contrast, Ireland was a late comer. A representative organisation - the Irish Deaf Society was formed in 1981 after much dissatisfaction with inappropriate services that were provided by paternalistic organisations. IDS was also established to mark the international year of disabled people as designated by the United Nations (IDJ, 1988). Since the establishment of IDS, there was no clear official policy in place and a piecemeal approach towards the state recognition of ISL was adopted. Judging by the lack of progress on this front, it is clear that this approach was/is not successful. The piecemeal approach can be exemplified by the once-off funding for the survey of the Irish Deaf community by the project team under the aegis of Institiuid Teangeolaiochta Eireann in 1992 (Matthews, 1997). Further examples of individual research such as doctoral theses were carried out into the workings of ISL (McDonnell, 1996).

Historically, both countries experienced the negative consequences of oralism and the Deaf communities have attempted to reduce the influence of this approach. There are similarities in historical processes between the Finnish and Irish Deaf communities. However, since the 1980s, the Irish are still struggling with the consequences of history while it seems that the Finnish took the initiative
in developing a set of policies to protect the status of FinSL. It is important at this point to examine specific policies towards the Deaf and the socio-economic status of Deaf people in both countries.

**Socio-economic status**

In this section, brief comparisons are given in relation to education, employment, literacy, social services and participation in policy. There is a brief overview of social policy in each area.

*Employment:*

Before the economic situation worsened in the 1990s, Finland - in general - enjoyed a low unemployment rate and the average national rate was 5 per cent. In the meantime, the Deaf community’s unemployment rate hardly reached eight per cent (FAD (a), 1999). This means that a Deaf person was only half more likely to be unemployed than her hearing compatriot was. This is remarkable when compared to the Irish situation for the same time period, where a Deaf person was three times more likely to be unemployed than his/her hearing compatriot (Swan, 1994).

However, in the transition from an industrial age to the information age coupled with the collapse of the main trading partner, Soviet Russia, the unemployment rate in Finland worsened rapidly from late 1980’s onwards. The peak occurred in the mid-1990s where the general rate reached 15 per cent (OECD, 1999). For the Deaf community, the rate climbed steeply, doubling during the corresponding period to a rate of 30 per cent (FAD (a), 1999). This means that a Finnish Deaf person would find herself twice more likely to be unemployed.

There has been a remarkable recovery in the Finnish economy since the mid-1990s, which has seen a gradual reduction in the general unemployment rate. In order to maximise the benefit of this recovery, the Finnish Association of the Deaf launched an employment project in 1997 which trained 12 Deaf career guidance
counsellors. The project was financed by the European Social Fund. The counsellors are expected to be employed in state employment centres to disseminate information and advise Deaf clients on the employment front (FAD (b), 1999). The project aimed to maintain the independence of Deaf persons and increase the flexibility of employment options for them. This project is the first of its kind in Europe and is underpinned by the important principle of empowering Deaf people directly. The unemployment rate for the Finnish Deaf community would be reduced over the long run.

Education:
There are 17 schools for the Deaf in Finland and all of them adopt the bilingual approach of educating Deaf children. The Nordic countries' early acceptance of bilingualism made a huge impression on the Finnish education system for the Deaf (FAD, 1997). However, only two Deaf schools employ Deaf teachers and there are very few hearing teachers who regard FinSL as their mother tongue, which is much to the dissatisfaction of the Finnish Deaf community. This has further implications, as the quality of education delivery varies from school to school. The ongoing debate in Finland centres on teacher competency and their unfamiliarity with the recent establishment of bilingualism (FAD, 1997; Barcham, 1998).

However the introduction of bilingualism was made easy by the liberal attitude of the Finnish State department of education. Their national sign language was acknowledged as a teaching language in the early 1970s but was further advanced, becoming a school subject by the 1980s. The gradual acceptance of FinSL as an indigenous language was due to the debate centred on the superiority of Signed Finnish over FinSL. Nevertheless, linguistic and social research revealed the true status of FinSL. The acceptance of FinSL is reflected in the legislation approved by the Finnish parliament and its incorporation into the Finnish State constitution (FAD, 1997; Barcham, 1998).
The introduction of bilingualism is vindicated by the increase in the number of Deaf people entering third level education. It is generally estimated that one third of young Finnish Deaf people have entered third level education while among the older generation, the number was but a trickle (FAD (a), 1999). Although bilingualism takes root in the Finnish education for the Deaf, this has not been the case in the Irish situation despite several efforts to have it established (MSDP Handbook, 1998).

The impact of bilingualism in Finland is reflected in the decision to have FinSL as a university subject. Several doctoral theses investigating the status of FinSL have been submitted to universities and serve as further examples. The establishment of a research centre further supports the infrastructure of bilingualism where a ten year long lexicographical study of FinSL has recently been completed and further measures to investigate the language are planned in the near future. The cultural and linguistic transmission of FinSL to future generations of Deaf children is secure as the government sponsors the national scheme of free instruction of FinSL to hearing parents of Deaf children. It is estimated that 95 per cent of Deaf children in Finland are born to hearing parents (FAD (a) 1999).

It is safe to state that such an infrastructure is non-existent in Ireland. ISL has not been established as a university subject. This lack of understanding can be reflected by a clause inserted in the Education Act 1998 where the state is expected to provide education to Deaf children through “Irish sign language or other sign languages” (Oireachtas, 1999). Compared to the Finnish situation, it seems it will be a number of years before Ireland attempts to match the Finnish infrastructure.

*Literacy:*

In 1988, a survey was carried out to ascertain the reading level of Deaf children in Finland. Similar to Ireland’s NRB survey of 1991, the Finnish survey found that
the reading skills of an average 15-year-old Deaf child corresponded to that of an 8-year-old hearing child (Hakkarainen, 1988). This was measured before any substantive implementation of bilingualism occurred and was carried out even where signed Finnish was regularly used (FAD, 1994).

However, subsequent surveys were carried out, particularly after widespread implementation of bilingualism and there are remarkable improvements on the 1988 survey. The authors of these surveys identified a number of reasons for these improvements, such as the early language acquisition of FinSL by Deaf children at home and the re-designated status of spoken Finnish as a foreign language in Deaf schools (FAD, 1994).

Comparatively, the Irish experience is similar to the 1988 survey but there has been no subsequent investigation into literacy levels of Irish Deaf children. Moreover, there was no urgent action taken to alleviate the literacy problems found in the NRB survey of 1991.

**Social services:**
It is worth mentioning that Finnish social policy responses have made considerable improvements in the services available to Deaf people.

In Finland, there are two full-time interpreting training centres and trained FinSL interpreters are produced on annual basis. Also, there are 20 interpreter referral centres throughout Finland. There are 24 salaried interpreters with many more freelance interpreters filling in the gaps (FAD, 1997). There are two current ambitious and initiative projects to have long distance interpreting services operated by video-conferencing facility (FAD, Internet Website: 27/2/2000).

By contrast, in Ireland there is only one agency handling interpreting assignments, and there is no known salaried interpreter, while a small pool of interpreters are employed to do assignments on a freelance basis. Two once-off
training courses for interpreters were held in this country and there is no permanent training course for interpreters (Irish Sign Link, 2000).

In Finland, there are five-minute long news bulletins daily transmitted through the medium of FinSL on television. There is a dedicated programme focussing on the Deaf community in Finland, and this is regularly transmitted on Saturdays. The Finnish Association of the Deaf produces 14 videotapes annually, of which a copy is sent to nearly every Deaf person throughout the country. The videos contain bulletins of important news, current affairs and discussion about cultural and social life of Finland. The presentation is given entirely in FinSL and the government finances this video project. Recently, the national broadcaster has appointed a Deaf editor to manage the daily “News in Sign Language” programmes (FAD, 1997).

In comparison, Ireland has a daily two-minute long news bulletin transmitted on television through ISL and it has a total of six hours a year aggregate with the TV programme - “Hands On” focussing on the Deaf community. There is neither a similar video scheme nor a Deaf editor in this country.

Policy participation:
The Deaf community in Finland is involved in the policy-making process. This participation is clearly guided by two principles: that FinSL is the language of the Deaf community, and; that the Deaf community is regarded as a cultural and linguistic minority.

State recognition of FinSL and its related establishment of the Finnish Sign Language Board are key elements in this policy-making process. The Board contains a number of Deaf persons working with civil servants to identify and implement the necessary measures to promote and uphold the status of FinSL in Finnish society (FAD (a), 1999). This is evidence of Deaf representatives and the state working together.
The report published by a working group including a number of Deaf representatives, investigating the rights of those who use sign language was published in 1997. The group was established under the aegis of the Finnish Ministry of Justice and it exemplifies the extent of participation in the consultative process by Deaf representatives. The report identifies the main obstacles preventing those who want to use FinSL comprehensively as widely as possible and offers a number of proposals to eliminate these obstacles (Finnish Working Group, 1997). The control of the employment project to train career guidance counsellors funded by the European Social Fund was entrusted to the Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD (a), 1999). This reflects the State’s and the EU’s confidence and belief in the ability of FAD to administer such a project on behalf of the state.

The progress of empowering Deaf people in real terms is striking, as it has to be remembered that Finland has recovered from a deep economic recession in the early 1990s and has made a recent and remarkable recovery. It illustrates that the civil rights of Deaf people are respected and their needs are met by different services regardless of Finland’s priorities for economic restructuring and recovery. This Irish context will be illustrated in the forthcoming chapter (Chapter 7).

**Conclusions**

It has to be stressed that the task of comparing the Finnish and Irish Deaf communities is not easy given the cultural and social differences. Notwithstanding, the “import-mirror” view of comparison has considerably enhanced our understanding of how progressive the Irish situation is. The “import-mirror” approach of comparative analysis is the appropriate one for this type of study since the author feels it is important to understand the Irish social policy responses in an international context.
Finland is chosen because of its similarity to Ireland in key respects. Using the Esping-Andersen model of welfare regimes, it becomes clear that types of social policy responses to the needs of the Deaf communities are microcosms of national social and economic characteristics. The Finnish response to the Deaf community bears a strong resemblance to the social democratic model in which stronger state intervention encourages the empowerment of Deaf people to take control of their destiny. In the Irish case, the picture shows a piecemeal and uncoordinated approach to the demands of the Deaf community and a liberal social policy attitude in Ireland of weaker commitment to egalitarian ideas and a lesser tendency for the state to intervene on behalf of minorities.

There exists some similarities in their historical experiences and both Deaf communities have witnessed a very long domination of oralism in the education of Deaf children. The domination of oralism has left a lasting mark on both communities. Since the 1980s, the experience of both communities began to diverge as the Finns embarked on a positive and progressive approach. The Irish experience is characterised by slow progress but there were some positive developments such as the establishment of a representative Deaf organisation - the Irish Deaf Society and once off, beneficial, interpreting training courses.

Admittedly, these positive developments are more of an ad hoc nature than long term solutions. It has to be pointed that these programmes - including the Irish Deaf Community Survey of 1993 - have all been EU funded, and there has been no state impetus for improving the status of Deaf citizens in Ireland via policy development or funding of programmes.

The Finnish Deaf community acted in a cohesive way and implemented a progressive strategy through the representative Finnish Association of the Deaf. The strategy involved three strands of policy - language policy, education policy and communication policy. The first policy was very successful, and their crowning achievement was state recognition of FinSL and the establishment of the Finnish Sign Language Board.
The second strand of policy is somewhat mixed, as resources such as training of Deaf teachers and the reluctance of hearing teachers to embrace bilingualism hinders full development. However, it must be stressed that the substantive implementation of bilingualism is vindicated by the improvements in literacy levels of Deaf children. The third strand of policy - communication policy is impossible to evaluate as there are currently innovative projects underway aimed at developing services.

In contrast, there is no clear strategy operated by Irish counterparts since the 1980s and this lack of progress can be explained by referring to the social and cultural conditions of the time. Paternalistic organisations were dominant in providing services and the attitudes arising from this dominance made it impossible to empower Deaf people. However, with changing social and political circumstances, Ireland may belatedly be able to implement a proactive approach to social policies.

We have seen positive and progressive measures introduced to improve the socio-economic status of Deaf people in Finland. Most of the initiatives were based on a linguistic and cultural perspective. The explicit acknowledgement of the Deaf community as a linguistic and cultural minority is identified as an important process. It is clear that lessons can be learnt from the Finnish situation, notably that real empowerment of the Deaf community and their extensive participation in policy making are crucial in alleviating the dismal socio-economic situation of the Irish Deaf community.
Chapter 6

Citizenship and the Deaf community:

Introduction
The previous chapters show that social policies aimed at Deaf communities - state sponsored or at local level - seem to have a common goal. This goal is to have Deaf people socially integrated as much as possible. It is important to evaluate how successful these policies - past or current - in integrating Deaf people into a wider society have been. To be successfully integrated into a society, one needs to have a full citizenship. Therefore, the extent to which Deaf people can be regarded as having full citizenship will be examined in this chapter. The writings of Marshall on citizenship, and subsequent critiques of Marshall, are used as a basis for ascertaining the extent of integration of Deaf people in Irish society.

Definition of citizenship:
Citizenship is often seen as a form of membership of society where individuals can participate and contribute. However, there are political ideologies influencing theories of citizenship.

There are two main political perspectives on citizenship. The political Right of civic republicanism - which can be traced from Aristotle - tends to regard citizenship as the idea of protecting individuals from intrusions by the state. In return, individuals are expected to give obligations and duties to the state. For example, to claim social benefits such as unemployment benefits, active citizens are expected to be willing to work and seek for it (D’Arcy in Kiely et al, 1999; Oliver, 1996; Healy and Reynolds, 1998: 12).

The political Left sees citizenship as the obligations of the state to individuals. Individual’s citizenship is guaranteed by a set of rights. Anti-poverty concerns
and policies often dominate the philosophy of the political left. This perspective gained momentum especially after the Second World War and the emergence of welfare states in the Western world. The first perspective focuses on wider society while the second concentrates on the individual (D'Arcy in Kiely et al, 1999; Oliver, 1996; Healy and Reynolds, 1998).

However, commentators point out that in reality, both strands are intertwined and interdependent. Lister argues that:

*To act as a citizen requires first a sense of agency, the belief that one can act: acting as a citizen, especially collectively, in turn fosters the sense of agency. Thus, agency is not simply about the capacity to choose and act but it is also about a conscious capacity which is important to the individual’s self-identity* (Lister, 1998:38).

Therefore, citizenship is seen as a dynamic process that involves rights and obligations. Citizens would not only be aware of their rights but their obligations as well. D'Arcy (1998) points out that the citizens have to participate in society to ensure their rights so citizenship is about reciprocity.

**Why use this approach?**

In 1990s, fast-changing economic and social circumstances give a stimulus to the revival of interest in citizenship theory (Oliver, 1996; Alcock, 1998). The conservative right in major Western countries began to claw back benefits and apply strict economic criteria to welfare services. Increasing public awareness of diversity and inequalities in societies have brought about a more critical discussion and analysis of concepts of citizenship (Taylor, 1996).

Many commentators and observers have used these critiques as devices to evaluate the position of minorities or marginalised groups within society. For instance, Lister used this approach to present a feminist perspective of women as citizens and McGreil opted for a similar approach in relation to Travellers.
(D'Arcy, 1999; 202). Oliver proposed a similar analysis for disabled people in the United Kingdom (Oliver, 1996; 43 - 62).

Citizenship rights are often used as a yardstick of how far democracy can serve members of a society. Politicians and the media regularly use this approach but it has been pointed out that this approach is used in a general way and no distinction is made with regard to marginalised groups or minorities. In that way, a general impression is given that everyone in the society shares the same experiences of its successes and failures (Oliver, 1996: 44). Likewise, politicians and the media often remind their audiences of their duties and obligations to the state for the benefit of the common good (Healy and Reynolds, 1998).

However, it has to be stressed that adopting this approach to assess the position of minorities in societies runs a risk of giving an impression that one favours current structural inequalities in society or supports a liberal view of citizenship (D'Arcy, 1999). Being aware of this difficulty alerts us to the need for information that the degree to which members of marginalised groups and minorities are integrated.

Full Integration into society does not imply that minorities, in order to succeed, have to be assimilated or conform to the dominant majority norms of the society. Linguistic and cultural differences can remain intact and respected while minorities can enjoy full citizenship rights.

At the point, we need to describe Marshall's theory of citizenship, which focuses on sets of rights for citizens. An alternative view of citizenship can be exemplified by views published in government documents. Marshall's classic version of citizenship has made a significant impact on social thinking in the late 20th century and his theory has been widely used as a framework for analysing social policy.
Marshall’s citizenship theory and subsequent critiques:

T.H. Marshall defines citizenship as “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community”. In his classic definition, citizenship is based on three rights - civil, political and social rights. The rights were developed in historical sequence and have underpinned the development of an understanding of the dominant form of citizenship in Europe (Healy and Reynolds, 1998: 12).

**Civil** rights refer to the idea of individuals having rights in relation to freedom in society: this incorporates a wide range of freedoms ranging from the idea of freedom of assembly, freedom of religious beliefs and thought, to freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention and torture. The Declaration of the Rights of Man arising from the French revolution in 1789 and Catholic Emancipation in 1829 are examples.

**Political** rights refer to individuals' right to participate in political processes where one consents to be governed. Universal suffrage and participation in a jury system are examples of these political rights. Marshall believes that the period from the first Reform Act in the 1840s to the enfranchisement of universal suffrage in the electorate in 1920s exemplifies a sequential development of political rights.

**Social** and economic rights entitle individuals to access welfare services such as health, education and housing. Employee protection and consumers’ rights are examples of this third form of rights. Marshall identifies these rights as representing the increased intervention of government in social welfare areas such as education and health - especially after the World War (Marshall, 1950).

Subsequent writings by other theorists further developed this definition. One social policy commentator points out the social rights of Marshall’s citizenship definition are essential to the whole notion of citizenship and they note that it often depends on the quality of information (Murdock 1994). Many commentators agree with this point: they argue that in order to maximise one’s potential to be a
well-informed citizen, one has to possess a qualitative amount of public knowledge and public culture. For example, Murdock states:

*Just as social and economic rights are crucial to guaranteeing the minimum material basis for the exercise of basic civil and political rights so information and cultural rights play a central role in securing the symbolic and discursive resources for full citizenship* (Murdock, 1994: 4-6).

Moreover, one commentator believes that citizenship theory can be applied to consider educational equality:

*I believe…..this represents a strong and irresistible pressure on British society to extend the right of citizenship. Over the past three hundred years these rights have been extended first to personal liberty then to political democracy and later to social welfare. Now they must be further extended to educational equality* (Crosland, 1998: 75).

The citizenship framework has been extended and debated further and although it may not be universally agreed upon, it does cover these basic rights which Deaf people are undoubtedly entitled to. Therefore, the idea of citizenship is useful in accessing the position of Deaf people in Irish society.

**Citizenship in Ireland - Theory and Evidence:**

In theory, the Irish Constitution provides all rights as expounded by Marshall and other theorists. Thus, it is useful to examine the constitution first before considering actual evidence on the attainment of citizenship.

**Irish Constitution:**

Civil rights are recognised and safeguarded by Article 40. This article guarantees that everyone will be treated equally before law and is allowed to express his or her opinions freely. The State is also obliged by this article to protect and defend personal rights of citizens (Bunreacht na hEireann, 1937).
Article 16 of the Constitution extends the right to vote for all citizens resident in this state. The social rights in this theory are referred to in Article 45, - *The Directive Principles of Social Policy*. These suggest that the State is obliged to provide social services and supports to the weaker sections of the community. However, it is not possible to be invoked Article 45 in the courts (Buneracht na hEireann, 1937) as this article is comprised of non-binding principles.

In general, citizens have been aware of these personal rights and have used the courts when they feel their rights have been endangered or not respected. However, these personal rights are often expressed in ambiguous and vague terms. Questions about the role of women and the role of the family have been clarified by interpretations of the constitution by the courts (Morgan, 1999: 17). Citizens have compelled government action or restrained it from doing things that might have harmed or enhanced personal rights - especially under Articles 40 to 44 (Collins and Cradden, 1997: 106-107).

D'Arcy states that Marshall equates social rights with social policy and that there is, therefore, an obligation on the state to facilitate the delivery of social rights to its citizens. The state is also expected to ensure economic security for the weaker sections of the society (D'Arcy, 1999:199).

However, Barbalet (1988) points to the problematic relationship between social rights and social policy. He argues that the *practice* of delivering social rights may reduce the scope of citizens to exercise and recognise their rights. This might be true when the social services tend to operate in ways that emphasise the dependant status of the claimants: this would reduce the effective social rights of claimants (D'Arcy, 1999: 199).

**Appraisal**

Marshall’s classic definition might be an appropriate starting point for the appraisal of Deaf people’s social integration. However, such an appraisal needs a different approach because the priorities for the Deaf community and its past
experiences are different from society in general. In Marshall’s definition, citizenship rights are based on a historical sequence in which civil rights came first, followed respectively by political and social rights (Marshall, 1950). This sequence can apply to society in general. To ignore the actual historical sequence need not invalidate the use of the definition as a general yardstick.

For the Deaf community, priorities and experiences are uniquely different from the society in general. There is substantial evidence to show that education equality and language policy are central issues within the Deaf community. It has to be acknowledged that Deaf people have benefited from the historical development of citizenship. However, there is evidence to show that the benefits are not fully attained.

Other theorists argue that the achievement of educational equality and access to quality information are keys to the development of full citizenship. However, this is not the reality for many Deaf people. Most Deaf people struggle for access to information, never mind receiving quality information. Therefore, social rights are to be considered before civil and political rights.

**Social rights:**

In his theory of citizenship, Marshall’s definition of social rights is:

*By the social element I mean the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right of the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being, according to the standard prevailing in the society (Marshall, 1950: 11).*

Oliver identifies these elements as indicating that citizens should not fear economic insecurity, should have the right not to be poor and the right to use social facilities like everyone else. Moreover, the usual standard of living should be extended to everyone in society (Oliver, 1996: 47). Crosland (1952) argues for educational equality and Murdock (1994) suggests access to quality information.
In previous chapters, evidence arising from selected surveys shows a dismal picture for Deaf people. Deaf people are three times more likely to be unemployed and even when they are employed, they are more likely to be underemployed (Matthews, 1996; Swan, 1994). Therefore, the majority of Deaf people earn below the average wage. In this position, they must fear economic insecurity and clearly do not enjoy an average standard of living. This evidence is indirectly substantiated by the Combat Poverty Agency’s survey, which reveals that more than 70 per cent of disabled people are living below or on the borderline of poverty (Combat Poverty Agency, 1998).

As for the educational equality, evidence from the surveys and from historical sources suggests that the concept of educational equality is not taken seriously in schools for the Deaf. A tiny percentage of Deaf people manage to enter universities and obtain degrees. This is sufficient to substantiate the fact that educational equality has not been taken seriously in the case of Deaf students. The overemphasis on oralism as a philosophy permeating the schools for the Deaf is further evidence that the concept of educational equality is not taken seriously here (Matthews, 1996; Crean, 1997; Swan, 1994).

Access to quality of information is seen as a crucial part of the social right element of citizenship. Again evidence and historical sources show that access to quality information has not yet become a priority among Deaf people since it was overshadowed by the struggle for actual access to information regardless of its quality. Literacy problems and stigmatisation of the use of sign language are identified as obstacles in accessing to information. The lack of qualified interpreters prevents the actual realisation of this social right element for Deaf people (Matthews, 1996; Swan, 1994; Crean, 1997; McDonnell, 1996; NRB, 1991).

Thus, it can be safely stated that Deaf people’s social rights have not been achieved to a reasonable degree. Needless to say, they do not enjoy same standard of living as the majority.
Civil rights

The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom - liberty of the person; freedom of speech, thought and faith: the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts: and the right to justice. The last is of a different order from the others, because it is the right to defend and assert all one’s rights on terms of equality with others and by due process of law (Shafer, 1998: 94).

Oliver (1996) points out that for Marshall, the interpretation of civil rights goes beyond the narrow interpretation of legal rights and includes not only property rights and the right of contract but also the right to freedom of thought and speech, religious practice and of assembly and association.

According to evidence from surveys mentioned in previous chapters, Deaf people enjoy only superficial civil rights. Their opportunity to express opinions on public issues is severely curtailed as serious literacy problems and lack of access to the media hinders the natural development of thought and expression of opinions. For Deaf viewers, the question of access to TV is more paramount than any other element of the media since radio is inherently inaccessible. In addition, television has become a chief source of information for society at large. RTE acknowledges this as it states that one of their research projects:

.... shows that people nowadays rely mainly on electronic media to keep abreast of news and current affairs. Since they form judgements on the basis of what they see and hear, broadcasting has become a major factor in the moulding of public opinion (RTE, 1991: 11).

Yet, according to recent information, Deaf people enjoy only less than 7½% of audio-visual broadcasting transmission that are subtitled or signed. With such a small amount of information and no other means of gaining essential information, they are restricted in forming serious opinions on civil issues (IDS submission, 2000). Deaf people are frustrated as a result of being unable to participate in
society due to major barriers in access to information (EUD, 1997: 16). Deaf people are therefore, unable to fulfil their citizenship obligations.

In the United States and Britain, Deaf writers claim that normalisation and conformity persist within society and that it becomes difficult for Deaf people to assert their own rights. They want to be seen as members of a linguistic minority, but economic and political circumstances frustrate their ability to express linguistic and cultural differences (Lane et al, 1996; Ladd et al, 1991). These misgivings had similar experiences in Ireland, as there were recent radio interviews - The Vincent Browne Show and Morning Ireland - with members of the Deaf community on these subjects revealed similar experiences (RTE, March 2000 & November 2000). As well, there was a TV debate by Deaf people expressing similar misgivings (Hands On TV discussion, January 2000).

Lack of peer role models in schools for long periods and the removal of Deaf teachers in the 1950s by the Department of Education are illustrations of this inability to express linguistic and cultural distinctiveness (Private collection of Crean, 1999). The concept of bilingualism is not fully embraced by these schools for the Deaf and they opt for an emulative type known as total communication (MSDP Handbook, 1998). This is another instance where the civil right to assert individual rights are denied to many Deaf people.

The attempted banishment of Irish Sign Language coupled with efforts to stigmatise the use of the language among Deaf people can be regarded as a violation of civil rights. Yet, these efforts were systematically and openly enforced in the Irish situation and, as a result, low esteem and lack of confidence prevailed among Deaf people (Lane, 1996; Swan, 1994; Crean, 1997; Matthews, 1996). Pinker states that stigma itself should be seen as a denial of citizenship because it encourages a culture of conformity and dependency (Pinker in Parker, 1975: 147).
**Political rights**

Political rights are defined as by Marshall as: "the right to participate in the exercise ", either as a representative or a voter (Marshall, 1963). Croft and Beresford (1996) identify this political right as more than tokenism of participation as it entails partnership, citizen power and delegated power.

It is common knowledge that antipathy and passivity in politics, even at community level, are widespread among Deaf people. Many believe it is due to the “spoon-fed” approach of education where skills in debating and discussion were not explicitly encouraged (Crean, 1997; Lane, 1994; Bateman in Paranis, 1996).

Actually, political rights are not denied to Deaf people as universal suffrage is granted to all citizens in Ireland, but the practice of exercising the right is a different matter. The party political system in Ireland encourages the homogeneity and common views which make it difficult for a member of a minority to empathise with large political parties. Effectively, Deaf people find themselves unable to identify with a large political party. This is suggested by the absence of a Deaf mainstream political activist.

As mentioned earlier, access to information, for example via the media, is severely limited and given the rate of literacy difficulties amongst the Deaf community, some forms of media increase the difficulties for Deaf people in trying to form definitive opinions on political issues or to make a political choice. Empowerment is possible through information but obviously this route is laden with difficulties for them (EUD, 1997: 16) Participation in local political processes is also difficult because of constant dependence on interpreters and other linguistic difficulties. Political literacy and awareness are prerequisites for involvement in politics. However, Deaf people would find it difficult to acquire these skills due to their literacy problems while linguistic differences hinder their ability to develop political literacy and awareness (Bateman, 1996).
Lack of experience in participating in the political process may be another reason for not fulfilling political rights. In Ireland, it is very common to see the composition of committees set up to investigate the issues facing Deaf people: they are entirely made up of non-Deaf people - for example - the committee that published the 1972 Department of Education report (Crean, 1997; Matthews, 1996). There are many instances where government departments chose to consult with non-Deaf people rather than Deaf representatives. The best example is the recent publication of *Towards an Independent Future* by the Department of Health where no serious consultation was undertaken with Deaf representative organisations (Conama, 1999).

Bateman (1996) states that it is a lack of understanding of the political process coupled with the perceived isolation of the Deaf community in wider society which makes it less competitive and weaker. This has left many Deaf people feeling a sense of powerlessness, dependency, and complacency. Crean (1997) mentions the Irish experience of apathy, which suggests that it is not reasonable that Bateman’s analysis can be applied to the Irish situation.

Coupling Bateman’s analysis, it is clear that a vicious cycle of ignorance and sense of powerlessness among Deaf people could continue unless real empowerment takes place. The great sociologist, Max Weber also supports this belief as he advocates the theory that paternalism thrives when there exists an asymmetrical balance of power between authorities and subordinates, and when the culture encouraging this is being institutionalised (Weber, 1976).

Evidence in previous chapters shows that there is no attempt to empower or involve Deaf representatives in meaningful consultations or discussion about issues facing Deaf people. However, it has to be pointed out that some Deaf people have been able to empower themselves by setting up a representative organisation, for example, the establishment of the Irish Deaf Society in 1981 (IDJ, 1987). The impact of this recent empowerment has been limited to a certain degree and this may be due to institutionalised paternalism.
Before we can move on to the duties and obligations of citizenship, it is worth remembering that the State is obliged by the constitution to support the rights of its citizens. It is unfortunate that it does not take an active monitoring role to ensure that Deaf people are endowed with full social, civil and political rights. It is absolutely clear that on the basis of Marshall’s theory of citizenship, Deaf people do not enjoy full citizenship.

This is not only about the simple denial of personal rights as it does have serious implications. The failure to realise citizenship rights can be seen as an extension of *relative poverty* to Deaf people. This document published by the Department of Social Welfare in 1998 interprets relative poverty as follows:

*Another dimension of poverty is embraced by the concept of social exclusion; it focuses mainly on relational issues, such as inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power. The use of the term social exclusion can be helpful because it takes account of the new and emerging forms of poverty and disadvantage brought about by rapid economic, social and technological changes* (National Anti-Poverty Strategy, 1998)

This aspect of relative poverty can be applied to the situation of many Deaf people whose personal rights have been undermined by a lack of appreciation of linguistic and cultural difference.

**Duties and obligations:**

Observers agree that this part of citizenship is complex and difficult to assess - given the range of duties and obligations expected from citizens. Class stratification and income differences across the social structures are the obvious difficulties. For instance, unemployed people claiming unemployment benefit are expected to seek and be ready for work while these rules are not often observed by rich people who decide not to work (Healy and Reynolds, 1998: 13).
However Healy and Reynolds (1998) urge that the emphasis on social rights as central to citizenship is often downgraded in favour of duty and obligation. It is illustrated by government documents that show the social thinking of the mid-1990s as documented in the Department of Social Welfare’s Green Paper and the Department of Education’s White Paper. The Department of Social Welfare’s Green Paper on community and the voluntary sector - *Supporting Voluntary Activity* - suggests that the citizens should concentrate on the duties and roles they play in society:

*This extends the concept of formal citizenship and democratic society from one of basic civil, political, social and economic rights to one of direct democratic participation and responsibility (Department of Social Welfare, 1997:25)*

The White Paper published by the Department of Education in 1995 - *Charting our Education Future* - states:

*This requires the development of a sense of individual responsibility to oneself and to the different dimensions of community - to the family, to local and work communities, to the State, and to the European Union (Department of Education, 1995: 6)*

However, there is an apparent shift in the White Paper on the voluntary sector published in September 2000:

*The rapidly changing economic and social inclusion situation in Ireland requires serious consideration on how to influence society to make it socially and economically inclusive, to make it a place where equality of treatment, opportunity and access, and respect for the autonomy of the individual are the norm, there is a need to create a more participatory democracy where active citizenship is fostered (Department of Social FC Affairs, White Paper, 2000)*
Nevertheless, basic duties and obligations can be identified for every society as citizens are expected to be loyal, obedient and pay taxes dutifully.

Despite compromised rights for Deaf people, Deaf people are also expected to be loyal, obedient and to pay taxes to the state. Many Deaf people have their inspirations and rights denied to them which they, in a sense, finance by paying taxes and levies. Deaf people paying taxes help to finance the education system which denies their linguistic and cultural identity.

Another clear example is that Deaf people are also expected to pay a full licence fee for possessing televisions whose broadcasting services, while beneficial, make little effort to facilitate access for Deaf people.

It is clear that the constitution does accord social, political and civil rights to Deaf people but to operate these rights, it appears that a language policy and educational equality are needed.

**Conclusion**

Recent changes in political, social and economic circumstances have led minorities to search for a theoretical framework to analyse their standing in society. Additionally, with increased awareness of diversity and minorities’ rights, the interest in citizenship theory has been revived and has been used as a conceptual framework to judge how integrated minorities are in society at large.

Marshall’s citizenship theory is an obvious choice because of its clear interpretation and the fact that it is quite easy to apply. However, it has to be pointed out that there are complexities involved due to conflicting political views of citizenship. Nevertheless, Marshall’s theory has made advances in enhancing our understanding of citizenry in Western Europe and has been further developed. A number of critiques point out the shortcomings of the theory but it is still acknowledged that this theory is a useful tool for evaluating the integration of
minorities. Feminist, black and disabled perspectives on citizenship impact have also emerged. Therefore, it is useful to apply this perspective to the Deaf community.

A number of factors, with literacy problems and lack of access to information being the important factors have ensured that personal rights endowed to Deaf people are seriously compromised. It is clear that social policies attempting to integrate Deaf people in society have failed. Although well intentioned, they have failed to take account of the cultural and linguistic uniqueness of Deaf people,

However, the compromise of citizenship rights is not unique to Deaf people, as other minorities have experienced similar but different compromises. Lister (1998) identifies gender inequality, which hinders the full endowment of rights to women. Oliver (1996) points out that the dominant medical perspective of disability reduces the scope of rights for disabled people. McGreil (1999) applies the same critiques for Travellers, as they are not widely acknowledged as a distinctive ethnic group.

There are a number of approaches to address the situation. There is a great need for a language policy, which takes a proactive role in promoting the status of Irish Sign Language in disseminating important public information. Educational equality needs to be taken seriously, by providing education to Deaf people. While the Constitution guarantees these rights, it is the responsibility of the state and citizens to make sure their rights are further protected by actual legislation.

However, in the present situation, an obvious difficulty is lack of experience in participating in the political process and the continued influence of paternalistic services. This has hindered the empowerment of Deaf people and the realisation of full their personal rights.

A complication arises in citizenship theory, as commentators have pointed out that citizenry is about more than personal rights. It is seen as reciprocal where
citizens are expected to pay taxes and fulfil their duties. In general, citizens take for granted that they can pay taxes, observe the rule of law and pledge loyalty to the state in return for guaranteed rights. This does not extend to Deaf people as their rights are compromised while they are expected to fulfil their duties to the state.

This chapter has focused on individual rights. It is now necessary to examine the link between individual rights and collective action. This brings us to the political system and the policy-making system to which we turn in the next chapter.
Chapter 7

The Policy Process

Introduction
The previous chapter showed the under-utilisation of citizenship individually experienced by Deaf people. This experience suggests the need for collective actions to fulfil citizenship rights. Collective actions have to be understood in the context of the political system whose philosophy and influence permeates the policy process at local and national level. Granted, the Deaf community does not possess electoral or economic strength to influence their participation in the policy process. However, their position within the political system should be understood as this may reveal the underlying reasons for under-utilisation of citizenship. This purpose of this chapter is to describe the current political system and to introduce a theoretical framework as a basis for case studies of the policy process in the next chapter.

This chapter begins with a short and general description of the Irish political system with special reference to the implications of the voting system, pressure groups and the partnership process. The theoretical framework is outlined in two approaches.

Description of Irish political system
Parliamentary democracy
Like other Western industrialised countries, Ireland is a democracy that is supported by a parliamentary tradition. Democracy is guided by the Constitution, of which, a non-executive elected President is a guardian. The powers outlined by the Constitution are entrusted to the two houses or chambers (an Oireachtas): one, known as Dail Eireann, is filled with directly elected representatives and the
The Constitution

The Constitution (Bunreacht na Eireann) was enacted in 1937 after a referendum. Amendments to the Constitution must be passed at referendums. For this reason, it was regarded as a liberal document far ahead of its times during the totalitarian period of the 1930s because of its acknowledgement of the protection of personal rights (Dooney and O’Toole, 1998: pp 101).

However, the Constitution reflects the influence of Catholic social teaching, which shaped the cultural and economic thinking of that time (Chubb, 1992: pp 45). The conservative views of De Valera, then the president of the state, with the support of the Catholic clergy, supported the principle of subsidiarity, which was chiefly based on a papal encyclical of 1931 (Curry, 1998). This encyclical argued that:

…….the state should not undertake functions which could be fulfilled by individuals on their own or by the local community, and that the state’s role should be to supplement not to supplant (Curry, 1998: pp 10).

Some key aspects of the Constitution are:

it contains specific clauses, which have direct implications for social policy - for example - the bar on dissolution of marriage (up to 1995) and the guarantee of property rights;
There are directive principles of social policy (Article 45), although these principles are not legally binding;
Civil rights such as the right to vote, freedom of thought, and the right to assemble are protected in the Constitution.
Personal rights of various kinds are potential and can be invoked in the courts.
An example of the latter as in the Magee case (1973) here, a couple invoked the constitutional right to privacy and overturned the constitutional ban on the importation and sale of contraceptives. The first Employment Equality Bill (1997) was found unconstitutional by the Supreme Court on grounds of infringing the guarantee of property rights.

Politics
Political competition is not based on a left/right dichotomy, which makes Irish politics different from European politics. The Irish political dichotomy is based on the civil war split in the early 1920s. Although civil war bitterness has faded away, it has been replaced by intense party political loyalty. Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are the dominant parties. The centre-left Labour Party is distantly third (Collins and Cradden 1998; Chubb 1992; Coakley and Gallagher 1999).

The Dail Eireann TDs are elected by proportional representation based on a single transferable vote (PR-STV). There are 166 TDs elected from 41 multi-seat constituencies. There are 60 senators but a limited electorate elects them and some of these senators are nominated by a Taoiseach (a chief of the government). The party that wins most seats in the Dail usually forms the government and appoints the Taoiseach and the cabinet members. However, recent Irish politics showed that it is difficult for dominant parties to form a single party government. The last single-party majority government gained power in 1977 and coalitions have been a regular feature of government since then (Collins and Cradden 1998; Chubb 1992; Coakley and Gallagher 1999).

PR-STV
Proportional representation by a single transferable vote (PR-STV) is used as a mechanism of electing TDs in multi-seat constituencies. It was first devised in Britain in the 19th century and was first introduced to the Irish election system in the early 1900s. The mechanism is based on a simple formula and it is widely used throughout Europe. The mechanism can be mathematically explained but it
is regarded as complex and complicated by ordinary voters (Sinnott, 1999: 99-126). Some commentators think it is the best possible mechanism to ensure all political parties or individuals are represented proportionately, but others argue that the mechanism creates political instability. In fact, Fianna Fail attempted to reform the mechanism twice but the reforms were rejected in referendums (Sinnott, 1999: 99-126).

Apart from the complexity of PR for voters, it also has implications for the policy process because it can influence voters' behaviour and their perception of politics. Candidates of the same parties often find themselves competing against each other in the same constituency: therefore an election can become personalised, rather than based on serious debate of the issues facing the electorate (Sinnott, 1999). As result of this electoral system, the term “clientism” has been coined to describe the Irish political system, where outsiders often see political issues in personal and particularistic terms. This term also applies to the work of TDs. They hold personal constituency clinics to deal with individual voters' concerns and requests - many of which are petty and could be easily dealt with within the administrative system without recourse to additional political help (Laver and Marsh, 1999: 152-176).

For the vast majority, participation in the political system is limited to voting in elections and referendums. However, for some people, participation can go beyond this point. Chubb (1992) points out that participation is “not for the few but for a special few”, because equality of opportunity does not exist in politics. Chubb also points out that participation depends on several factors such as a person's education, wealth, and status in the community. Participation is often channelled into activities related to interest or pressure groups.

Pressure groups
Pressure groups also play a very significant part in the political system. They lobby public representatives to give favours to their groups or raise their
concerns about imminent legislation that would adversely affect their groups. On occasion, these pressure groups are consulted for their views on public or legislative matters.

Murphy (1999) points out that there is no agreed model to describe or understand the involvement of interest or pressure groups in the policy-making process in Ireland. He states that either a corporatist or a pluralist model can describe the situation adequately. O'Haplin (1993) echoes this view. This is because the definition of pressure groups is unclear. However, many political commentators agree that there are two general types of pressure groups. They are sectional and cause-centred groups (Chubb 1992; Barrington 1979; Coakley and Gallagher 1999; Collins and Cradden 1997).

Sectional groups refer to trade unions, farmers’ organisations and professional bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland. Cause-centred groups include a wide range of groups from the Irish language rights group, Conradh na Gaeilge, to the anti-abortion group, Youth Defence. The former group is distinctive insofar as most of them are self-regulating, while the latter groups tend to focus on the promotion of a particular cause (Murphy, 1999).

The difficulty in categorising such groups is illustrated by the close links of some groups with political parties: for example trade unions’ links with the Labour party. Further examples include groups like the media and the Catholic Church, which, in a strict sense, are not pressure groups, but they have strong influence on the policy-making process (Chubb, 1992; Barrington, 1979; Coakley and Gallagher, 1999; Collins and Cradden, 1997).

The strength of interest groups varies across the policy spectrum. Chubb (1992) points out that not all groups have the same level of access to the process. Strength of influence is based on a simple principle: apply pressure where the impact will be the greatest (Chubb, 1992; 119). However, it has to be pointed out that the large number of interest or pressure groups is a recent phenomenon. A
number of representative groups complained to a government commission - the *Commission on Vocational Organisation* - in 1939 about how remote the policy-making process was and commented on the lack of consultation in the political process (Chubb, 1992: 125).

Seasoned observers point out that the nature of the political system makes it necessary for regional or local pressure groups to lobby at national level instead of at local or regional level. Collins and Cradden (1997) point out that pressure groups in Ireland seldom lobby at local level given the fact that the local government system is weak and that the policy decisions affecting local issues tend to be made by the central government or the central civil service. O'Haplin believes that the nature of reactive governance, instead of proactive governance combined with an inflexible bureaucratic civil service makes it logical for pressure groups to lobby at national level (O'Haplin, 1993). Collins and Cradden agree with this, saying that there is a gap between policy and reality. They state that:

*Indeed in many areas of public policy there is a considerable gap between what is formally declared to be policy and what actually happens. This is because the process of making policy is much more complex than is conventionally understood* (Collins and Cradden, 1997: pp 69).

The success of a pressure group often depends on its relationship to a larger framework within the political system. For example, the extreme group, *Youth Defence*, can have an impact with their publicity because there have indirect support in the political system. *Youth Defence*, being a small pressure group, can tap into the significantly large body of religious conservatism, and can expect a reaction or backlash from liberal groups. Therefore, Youth Defence gets the publicity it needs to air their views and this increases its ability to influence the policy process. Another example concerns environmentalists campaigning against genetically modified foods; they can exploit the fears of the public regarding the safety of the food chain.
Two examples of the policy-making process can illustrate its complexities. For a number of years, successive Ministers for Education promised equality in education and a radical overhaul of the system, but their ambitions were thwarted by the political opposition or because of non-co-operation by interest groups.

O’Buacualla (1988) states that: “.... any more radical version of equality of opportunity might not be acceptable in a society governed by a value system which was decidedly conservative”. The influence of the Catholic Church in the Irish education system is profound although it is gradually waning (Curry 1998). In combination, the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland own more than 90 per cent of schools in the country (Breen, 1990: 125).

Therefore, any policy change had to be discussed with the churches. Teachers’ unions recognised this influence and had sought ecclesiastical support for their demands for improvements in pay and conditions from the government (O’Buachulla 1988; Cooney, 1999).

The health system was often a source of political controversy, and governments had, in the past, been unable to implement measures as they wished, or were forced to compromise with pressure groups. One well known controversy was the Mother and Child Scheme of 1951, where Noel Browne, the then Minister for Health, attempted to introduce a scheme where mothers and their children age under 16 would avail of health services free of charge. The doctors’ representative groups had real objections to the scheme, which they believed would encroach on their autonomy. They appealed to the Catholic Church and heightened the church’s paranoia of the ‘socialist’ nature of the scheme. This contributed to the downfall of the government (Barrington, 1987: 195 - 221).

The replacement government was not in a position to challenge these powerful interest groups and introduced a compromise - a three-tier system where the poorest third could avail of services free of charge via means-tested assessment, while the richest third were expected to meet the costs of healthcare by
themselves. The middle third was cushioned by a newly introduced insurance system (Barrington, 1987: 195 - 221).

**Partnership process**

There is a recent shift in Ireland towards a wider consultative process, such as we have seen with the partnership process and with the publication of government documents such as Green and White papers. Nevertheless, interest groups are still highly influential in the policy-making process.

The recent development of the partnership process is exemplified in a series of social and economic programmes agreed upon by employers, trade unions, and governments since 1987. Participation first occurred at national level in 1987. However, local involvement has become more prevalent since 1991 (Rush, 1999: 155). The partnership process is supported through discussion forums such as the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). Traditional partners such as trade unionists, employers and government appointees dominate the representation of NESC, which publishes a strategic report preceding the negotiating stages of the actual partnership meetings. The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), was formed in 1993 to widen the partnership process to include voluntary and community organisations to assist NESC (Rush, 1999).

Nevertheless, the widening of the partnership process does not mean the transfer of power to those who participate in this process. Hardiman (1998) points out that NESC influence the macro-economic policy framework, which prioritises social and economic needs. Therefore, NESF is, in a real sense, subordinate to NESC. Recent attempts have been made to localise representation through a series of measures such as local partnerships, which can feed ideas and issues to the national level. However, Hardiman (1998) points out that nominees from local branches of unions, business or employer’s groups, which are already represented at a national level, often dominate these local partnership initiatives.
Moreover, at the national partnership level, the Community Platform, a loose network of several voluntary and community organisations, is not treated as an equal partner and is only involved when it comes to issues affecting them directly (Hardiman, 1998: 141). The strength of the Community Platform is weakened by its lack of “trade” to lever or gain more concessions from the main negotiators (Hardiman, 1998: 139). In reality, the partnership process complicates the policy-making process but the final decision on many issues remains with the government. Therefore, interest groups still lobby the government on certain issues, or are consulted by the government (Earley, 1999: 143).

The political system has been briefly described and we have provided an overview of the background against which minorities participate in the policy process. It is necessary at the point to introduce some reference to the theoretical literature before we turn to analyse two case studies and consider the extent of Deaf people’s participation.

**Theoretical framework**

It has been shown in previous chapters that the Deaf community does not have much influence on decisions or policies affecting them, especially in the area of educational provision. This exclusion is in part a result of the policy process, but it is not easy to identify the obstacles to the Deaf community participating in political decisions. A theoretical framework is proposed here to enhance our understanding of why such obstacles exist.

Firstly, the nature of the policy process depends on the type of power structures involved, where actors are enabled to or prevented from exerting influence. Next, we might consider how policies are changed in accordance with general criteria proposed by Hall et al (1975).

The power relations behind the policy process have been analysed in depth by a number of theorists. There is no clear consensus on the nature of power relations. However, the theories can be roughly categorised into two main camps
- pluralist and Marxist. It has to be said that neither theory has satisfactorily explained the nature of power relations behind the policy process, but they provide a good starting point in understanding existing power relations.

The most influential exponent of pluralism is Robert Dahl. His work involved an analysis of power distribution in a certain city in the US (Ham and Hill, 1993). He concludes that in western democracies, there is no dominant player in the power distribution. He states that many players compete for power, although the distribution of power can be uneven and the politically privileged and economically powerful are often able to exert more power than others. Pluralists propose that in Western industrialised democracies, power is so widely distributed among different groups that no group can dominate. Although all groups and interests do not have the same degree of influence, even the least powerful are able to make their voices heard at some stage in the policy process. Policies or decisions may be compromises, but they heavily favour the politically privileged and the economically powerful (Ham and Hill, 1993).

The Marxist theory of power relations is directly opposed to the pluralist theory. It is rooted in Marx’s class analysis. Marxists argue that in advanced Western democracies, the capitalist mode of production dominates, giving rise to two distinct classes - the bourgeoisie - the owners of the means of production - and the proletariat - those who have to sell wage labour. Marxists contend that the economically dominant class is also politically dominant. Therefore, the bourgeoisie controls the state and, in the long term, decisions or policies favour their interests (Ham and Hill, 1993).

However, both theories are regarded as inadequate in explaining the policy process at a local level, where frequently distinctive processes are evident in comparison to the national level. Marxists focus on class differences to support their arguments while pluralists contend that no group can dominate the policy process, as power is widely diffused. In the context of policies affecting the Deaf
community, neither viewpoint offers any adequate analysis of why the Deaf community has traditionally been excluded.

*Non decision-making process*

Nevertheless, there is a critique of Dahl’s analysis by Bachrach and Baratz. Dahl’s pluralist analysis was criticised for exclusively focussing on key decisions (Hill, 1993). Bachrach and Baratz argue that power is not about key decisions and actual behaviour. They suggest that there is a process, which confines decision-making to safe issues. They suggest that power has two levels: one level where conflicts and arguments are openly seen before key decisions are made; the other level - covert - what they term a “non decision-making process”, suppresses conflicts or issues before they are allowed to enter the policy process. Their empirical analysis of Afro-Americans being politically suppressed in the city of Baltimore in the US provides the basis for their thesis (Hill, 1993; Ham and Hill 1993).

There are actual practical ways in which the *non decision-making process* works. One way is the use of force to prevent demands from entering a political process: this can be illustrated by the example of Afro-Americans’ civil rights demands that were countered by militant white groups. Another way is the use of rules or procedures that may be invoked to deflect unwelcome challenges. An example is the referral of issues to committees or commissions for detailed study. A third form of non decision-making is the labelling of issues such as gay liberation as immoral or unpatriotic (Hill, 1993; Ham and Hill 1993).

This concept of the non decision-making process was supported by a study by Crenson (1971) who studied two neighbouring towns in Indiana in the United States that relied on steel production for their economic prosperity. The first town introduced restrictive practices to curb air and visual pollution much earlier than the second town. The study noted that many companies controlled the first town’s steel production while a giant corporation monopolised the second town’s
steel production. Although this corporation was not politically active, its presence was a sufficient reminder of its threat to the town’s prosperity, as it would withdraw from the town if restrictions were put in place (Crenson in Lukes, 1993: 56-57).

*Three dimensions*

The debate has been enhanced by Steven Lukes’ suggestion that power should be studied as a three dimensional entity. The first two dimensions are represented by Dahl’s and Bachrach and Baratz’s theories respectively. Their theories focus on overt and covert conflicts between actors over issues. Lukes suggests that power can be exercised to shape people’s preferences, so neither overt nor covert conflicts exist. So, when the third dimension of power operates, there is latent conflict (Lukes in Hill, 1993:50-59). This was tested by a number of academics and one of them concludes by pointing to the need:

*… examine not only overt conflict in organisations but also, following Clegg (1975), the system of domination (Walsh in Ham and Hill, 1993:72)*

This suggests that the prevailing set of values dominates the policy process, which provides an advantage to some individuals or some groups rather than to others. Following from the logic of Lukes’ three-dimensional model of power, Alford analysed the American medical industry. He offered a structural analysis suggesting that there are three groups in the policy process - *dominant*, *challenging* and *repressed*. The pre-eminence of the medical model of health and illness favours the medical profession and helps to maintain their powerful position. Other values and alternative models of health and illness do exist, but do not present a serious challenge to the dominant medical model of health and illness (Alford 1993:72).

Ham, following the logic of Alford’s work, analysed power relations within the National Health Service in Britain (Ham, 1992). He put the medical profession in the dominant position while managers, administrators are in the challenging
group, and patients and the community are in the repressed group. He points out that the dominant group controls knowledge, information, recruitment and training. These dominant groups claim professional autonomy over the content of their work. Ham also claims that these:

..provide the basis of the medical profession’s power. Its organisation through powerful pressure groups in continuation contact with government agencies, coupled with involvement at all stages in the system of administration, enhance this power (Ham in Hill, 1993: 183).

Analysis of power relations has moved from seeing power only in the context of overt, observable conflict and increasingly focuses on the hidden, multi-dimensional nature of power. Empirical studies of the specific sectors such as Alford and Ham’s work on the health industry, have enhanced the debate about the power relations and show how the concept of power can be used in a particular context.

**General Criteria for social policy changes**

Although basic power relations have been analysed in the theoretical literature discussed above, this literature does not analyse how specific policies are made. There are alternative approaches adopted by other theorists to explain how specific policies come into effect. Hall (1975) had proposed a general framework based on three elements - *legitimacy, feasibility, and support*.

*Legitimacy* refers to whether the government determines if state intervention or involvement in an issue is necessary.

*Feasibility*, although influenced by ideologies and not free of particular interests and prejudices, depends on the availability of alternative approaches and estimation of likely consequences (such as resources, collaboration, and administrative feasibility).

*Support* for issues or changes depends on levels of satisfaction and levels of discontent. Public satisfaction is estimated in the context of timing, as
governments would not make unpopular decisions near or during election times. The discontent of key or powerful groups, who control important resources, would be avoided (Hall et al, 1975: 473-509).

Hall (1975) states that the criteria of legitimacy, feasibility, and support are not permanently fixed and that policy changes also depend on the following secondary criteria:

Association and scope refer to the fact that very few issues remain unrelated to others. One issue is likely to be linked to another one and solutions to one issue tend to overlap with another issue. As noted earlier, political groups such as Youth Defence and the environmentalists are able to manipulate these relationships, and they use these relationships to gain allies or keep the relationships separate to avoid unwanted allies.

Timing of crises refers to policy decisions that may be of emergency or ad hoc in nature to deal with urgent or demanding issues such as war or ecological disaster. These decisions tend to stay longer after crises are eased or solved if they work effectively.

Trend expectation and prevention refers to situations where problems are ‘expected’ and policy decisions are needed to deal with them in advance. For example, a growing population of retired people would have long run, future implications for pension and health care systems.

Information refers to emerging awareness of policy-makers and the population of pressing issues. Surveys, opinion polls, discovery of ‘facts’ and changed perceptions are examples of these criteria. Issues are likely to draw a lot of attention if adequate information is circulated widely.

Origin: Hall (1975) points out that issues do not arise spontaneously as they are formulated by groups or individuals. This is also true for ‘problems’ and
‘solutions’. So, it is important to know who has ownership of which issues or who is seen to have ownership of the issues at hand. The case studies used by Hall (1975) reveal the difference in the pace of progress in issues between government sponsors on the one hand and outside pressure groups on the other.

**Ideology:** the criteria of legitimacy, feasibility, and support are interpreted in ways that reflect ideological convictions. Hall (1975) points out that those non-ideological issues may experience slow progress because they may not at one with the ideological convictions of political groups in power. It is also pointed out that when a political group is in power, an issue will gain advantage if it is matched or linked with the group’s political ideas. The converse is also true.

This framework emerged from six case studies social policy change in Britain. Among the case studies was the long fought campaign for clean air, which culminated in the enactment of the Clean Air Act of 1956 outlawing poisonous air pollution. A small but determined group of people, despite public apathy and official indifference, achieved the enactment of the law (Hall, 1975: 371-409). Another case study was the expansion of health centres across Britain, where centres became more prevalent in the late 1960s after the gradual erosion of resistance from the medical profession. This resistance was also prolonged by the lack of clear direction from government officials (Hall, 1975: 207-310).

The framework, derived from detailed analysis of policy changes, can, in principle be applied to understand any policy development or initiative. For example, any proposed policy change can be scored as ‘high’ or ‘low’ on the criteria of legitimacy, feasibility, and support. This type of analysis could be used to understand past changes in policy or to assess the likelihood a future policy change on a given issue.

**Conclusion**
Before we turn to examine the case studies, we have considered the nature of the political system and introduced a theoretical framework. The first theory focuses on the power relations behind the policy-making process and the second centres on how specific policies are made. Taken together, these two theories can provide a basis for understanding where the Deaf community stands in the case studies that follow. The two areas - access to broadcasting policy and language policy in education have been chosen for consideration. They are chosen because both policies are the subject of many debates and have generated a lot of interest within the Deaf community. These policies are regarded as critical for the status of the Deaf community in Irish society.
Chapter 8

Power and Policy: Two Case Studies

Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is to present two case studies in a context that is outlined in the previous chapter. A brief description of the political system and an outline of two separate theoretical models provide a framework for analysing the cases here. The case studies are - access to broadcasting policy and language policy in education. They are chosen because of their significance for the Deaf community. The issues are also regarded by many within the community as critical to their status in the wider society (IDS, 1997). Additionally, both policies also can be adequately analysed in chronological order, as there is sufficient secondary information available.

It is essential at the outset to state the sources of the information used here. The study is strictly based on a documentary research approach where all available publications are scanned. In one or two instances, the author received information in personal communications and they are clearly instanced. To understand the lobbyists’ stance, three periodicals published by three separate organisations are the main source of information. Elsewhere, specialised books and broadcasters’ publications are also used. The author has had considerable personal experience of being actively involved in these issues and some of the materials used were obtained from personal communication.

Access to Broadcasting Policy

Access to television and radio can be taken for granted by the vast majority of viewers and listeners, but an equal level of access is not open to everyone, especially Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. For obvious reasons, radio is mostly inaccessible for Deaf and hard of hearing audiences. As a result,
television is a potentially significant electronic medium. Reasons for viewing programmes on TV involve much more than individuals seeking out a form of entertainment: TV programmes can also be informative and educational. TV is a central information resource which politicians and public information campaigns increasingly avail of. For this reason, TV becomes an essential element for those who want to assert their citizenship. Therefore, access to TV programming is a public issue.

For Deaf and hard of hearing viewers, access to TV programmes is facilitated by “teletext” or closed captioning. These facilities are made possible by technological advances. This operation is recognised as labour-intensive, specialised work. In addition to closed captioning, a certain number of hours per year are devoted to programmes that are transmitted through the medium of sign language. However, the technological advances that have been made in recent years, have not been fully utilised by public broadcasters and, as a consequence, access is severely limited for Deaf viewers. Due to the common experience of frustration by limited access to TV programmes, the issue has become an important policy issue for the Deaf community.

**Legislative Base of Irish Broadcasting:**
It is useful to first look at the legislative basis of Irish broadcasting before the role of lobbyists on behalf of Deaf and hard of hearing viewers can be analysed.

The principal legislation - the *Broadcasting Authority Act 1960* - enabled the government of the time to establish a body to oversee Irish broadcasting services - the RTE Authority. In this Act, the functions of the authority were spelt out vaguely. This vagueness became a source of conflict between broadcasters and the government. As a result of changing social and political circumstances, the Act has been amended several times. The most significant amendments were made in 1976 where the functions of the authority were more clearly stated (Fisher, 1978; RTE, 1991).
In the amended Act of 1976, the authority is expected to be responsive to the interests and concerns of the whole community and ensure that their programming reflects the varied elements that make up the culture of the people in the whole island of Ireland. The authority is also expected to uphold the democratic values of the Constitution and also to have regard to the need for the formation of public awareness and understanding of the values and traditions of other countries. However, for day to day business, the authority draws up guidelines for its broadcasters regarding the functions of the authority (Fisher, 1978: 43).

Also, under this Act, a grievance procedure was established for viewers or listeners. The Broadcasting Complaints Commission was set up as the body to handle complaints. However, the commission’s ability to investigate complaints is strictly limited to dealing with certain categories of complaint (Fisher, 1978: 48).

Section 31 of the 1960 Act empowers the government to issue directives but it does not permit the government to interfere into the daily business of the broadcasting services. Moreover, the directives must be issued when the government wants to restrain the authority from broadcasting content that, in the opinion of the government, could endanger the security of the State.

There have been two significant legislative changes since the 1976 Act. The 1988 Radio and Television Act enabled the establishment of the Irish Radio and Television Commission (IRTC) and empowers this body to regulate and licence independent broadcasters. IRTC is also empowered by this legislation to enter into service agreements with broadcasters. For example the recently established TV company, TV3, has a service agreement with IRTC. The 1991 amendment to the 1960 Act enabled RTE to franchise independent filmmakers to produce materials for broadcasting and enabled RTE to establish Telefís na Gaeilge.

There are options within the current legislation for lobbyists who want to improve access to television for Deaf viewers on the grounds of facilitating citizenship
rights. It would be interesting to see if lobbyists have utilised these options. Before going on, it is appropriate to quantify the current levels of access to Irish TV companies available to Deaf and hard of hearing viewers.

Range of Current Access to TV:
As stated earlier, many Deaf viewers feel that they do not enjoy access to the same degree as their non-deaf counterparts (IDS, 1997). The following are the relevant developments on Irish TV:

News for the Deaf on RTE: there are currently three (previously six) Deaf signers on roster, who translate the news bulletin once each evening. This procedure was developed from an older format where a non-deaf newscaster read the news and the screen was split into two parts - one showing the newscaster - aiming at those who can lipread and the other showing the auto-cue where viewers can read the news script (Fisher, 1978). The change to include signing was made in 1992. The bulletins seldom last more than 2 minutes.

Hands On: this is a monthly half-hour long magazine programme - mostly the language of presentation is Irish Sign Language, as delivered by Deaf presenters. The issues involved are wide-ranging, and include the discussion of topics from controversial issues to fashion pieces. The format has developed from an earlier programme - “Sign of the Times”, and is produced by an independent company but financed by RTE.

TV programmes subtitled through teletext: this area is a slowly growing but steady activity. The first programme to be transmitted from RTE that was subtitled through teletext was launched in 1991. The average numbers of hours of transmission that can be subtitled through teletext, now reach 2,000 hours a year - approximately less than ten per cent of overall hours transmitted by Irish TV companies. A small but significant number of current affairs programmes are subtitled but no news bulletin has yet been subtitled (IDS submission to Select Committee, 2000).
On the basis of current calculations, less than 20 hours of Irish Sign Language is transmitted per year, and less than ten per cent of all TV programmes on Irish TV are subtitled through teletext. We can compare this to the British situation, where the combined hours being transmitted in British Sign Language (BSL) is approximately 270 hours a year and more than 50 per cent of TV programmes are subtitled through teletext. However, thanks to the recently amended British Broadcasting Act 1996, three commercial stations are now obliged to have 80% of transmitted programmes subtitled. Moreover, figures for combined hours for transmitting programmes through BSL in three stations are set to rise to more than 950 hours a year by the year 2004 (ITC, 1998). A survey carried out as a part of the submission by the Irish Deaf Society to the Dail select committee reveals that the majority of European countries have enacted set targets of subtitling and signing on TV in their respective legislation (IDS, 2000).

The range of access available to Deaf and hard of hearing viewers was, and still is, regarded as unsatisfactory given that a full licence fee is paid by Irish Deaf viewers. Although the idea of a licence fee is based on possession of television sets rather than the content of transmission, it does convey a strong sense of entitlement to service. Graham and Davies point out that viewers are able to connect the idea of payment of licence fee directly to the receipt of public broadcasting services (Graham and Davies, 1997). Often the rationale behind grievances about lack of access to TV programmes cited by Deaf people has been based on the issue of full payment of licence fees. If the Deaf community cite their payment of a full licence as a basis of policy argument, it can have the effect of obscuring the citizenship issue at stake and leads the authorities to adopt financial counter-arguments.

**Actions by Lobbyists:**
The evidence about lobbying can be found in previous editions of the three main magazines of the Irish Deaf community - *Irish Deaf Journal, Link and Contact.*
These are the respective magazines of three different organisations - the Irish Deaf Society, the National Association for Deaf People and the Dublin Deaf Association. It is clear that they had adopted a similar approach for highlighting their grievance and seeking redress in this area.

An examination of these magazines dating back to the early 1970s illustrates that there has been a lack of co-operation in their lobbying for an increase in the number of subtitled TV programmes. Each organisation appeared to act on a stand-alone basis (Irish Deaf Journal, 1987 onwards; Link, 1971 to 1998; Contact, 1978 to date). This is strange and unfortunate since there appears to be no difference in their views of what TV companies should offer for Deaf and Hard of Hearing viewers. Each organisation also claimed credit for whatever progress was gained from negotiations with RTE. For instance, the successful launch of a special monthly magazine programme for the Deaf - “Sign of the Times” - in Autumn 1988 was announced in all three magazines and each of their announcements carried an addendum claiming credit for its introduction.

Each organisation has frequently sent delegations to meet heads of RTE to air their grievances and demand redress to meet the needs of Deaf and hard of hearing viewers. Numerous letters were also sent to RTE complaining about the lack of access to information on TV programmes. In 1990, the Irish Deaf Society held a public protest outside the RTE complex and handed over a petition containing more than 2,000 signatures to RTE management. With the modest progress on access to TV for Deaf and hard of hearing viewers, the huge amount of energy, time and commitment invested in this kind of protest seems to have been ineffective. Although these organisations play a major role in lobbying for increased amount of subtitles, certain individuals have attempted to gain redress for the situation on a number of occasions.

Their efforts often failed to draw the relevant authorities’ attention to the issues. A number of Deaf individuals decided to refuse to pay the licence fee in the hope of being prosecuted, allowing them to raise their issue in the courts. However, their
cases were heard at the lowest rank of the judicial system - the District court - where the judges were content to rule and dismiss the cases in a matter of minutes. Little or no consideration was given to the rationale behind the refusal to pay the licence fees. The media was obviously not interested in this kind of case. Yet in the following years, the same approach was tried on several occasions by a number of Deaf individuals, all with no success.

The 1976 amendment to the Broadcasting Act’s description of the functions of the authority gives lobbyists some grounds for arguing for the subtitling of programmes on behalf of Deaf viewers. On the basis of analysing the periodicals of the three main organisations (Irish Deaf Journal, Link and Contact) referred to above, it is clearly apparent that lobbyists were not explicitly aware of these policy functions. The existence of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission was apparently unknown; thus lobbyists did not have the opportunity of appealing to this commission. The Section 31 provision prevents the government from interfering in the broadcasting services, which lobbyists would have cherished. The government severely limits its right to interfere in the broadcasting service apart from issues threatening the national interest and as such, it removes the potential support for the lobbyists.

Again, on the basis of analysis of these periodicals and personal communication with known lobbyists, it is apparent that lobbyists had not been aware of these acts. This diminished their chance of success in implementing the rights of Deaf viewers in the broadcasting arena. Moreover, recent legislation gave rights to IRTC and RTE to enter into service agreements with independent broadcasters. Lobbyists apparently failed to realise that these rights could be exploited to serve the citizenship rights of Deaf viewers.

There are significant legislative controls on the remit of broadcasting - for instance, ownership of airtime and restriction of sensitive materials (e.g. violence and pornography). Although, internationally, legislative controls vary across countries (Aldridge et al, 1997) Deaf organisations decided to use the legislative
approach to enact and protect their access to television. Britain, the United States of America and Australia are prominent examples of this development (EUD Update, Winter 1998).

The closest that Irish lobbyists have come to utilising this legislative approach was in 1990/1, when then the Minister for Communication, Seamus Brennan, was asked by lobbyists to consider a proposal of withholding licence fees when public broadcasters fail to keep promises to have programmes subtitled. Brennan declared his interest, but due to a cabinet re-shuffle, he was replaced. The subsequent Minister did not display interest in this (Contact, 1991). There is no available explanation why this kind of lobbying did not continue.

In Britain, there is a small but strong co-ordinated lobby organisation - Deaf Broadcasting Council - backed by several national Deaf organisations. Their lobby can be regarded as successful as the British Broadcasting Act 1990 finally acknowledged the importance of the access rights of Deaf and hard of hearing viewers. With the 1996 amendment, the Act obliges national TV companies to have all TV programmes subtitled on a phased basis. The target for a full completion is set for the year 2005 (DBC Newsletter, 1998). Targets for full completion are also set in Australia and the United States of America, where legislative bodies set the respective targets.

The contrast between British and Irish experiences in lobbying for broadcasting rights for Deaf viewers is clear. What makes it more puzzling for those who are familiar with the Irish Deaf community is the failure to exchange information between Irish Deaf lobbyists and their international Deaf counterparts, particularly the British. This is not to say that there is a low level of contact between Deaf people in these countries. This fact can be supported by the findings of Matthews and McDonnell pointing out that to some extent, some aspects of Irish Sign Language are influenced by British Sign Language. They reveal that there are active levels of interaction between Irish and British Deaf

However, lately, there is an apparent shift from arguing for such rights to lobbying in terms of equality. In 1995, the government published a Green Paper on broadcasting to determine the future of the broadcasting service in this country (Green Paper, 1995). Two submissions were made by the Irish Deaf Society in response to this paper. Both submissions drew on Paragraph 4.4 of the Green Paper - which states that minorities should receive particular attention and that broadcast programmes should be available to the whole population - pointing out that this particular right is not available in this country even in the era of rapid technological advances. Both submissions argued for equality to support the rights of Deaf viewers (IDS, 1995; 1996).

Response of Irish TV companies:
This section focuses on the response of RTE the main national broadcaster.

The failure to increase the amount of subtitled programmes and increased time of transmission through the medium of Irish Sign Language should not be mistaken for an obstinate attitude on the part of Radio Telefis Eireann towards the needs of Deaf viewers. At several meetings with several delegations, RTE expressed sympathetic sentiments and was content to validate the demands of the Deaf community as reported in the periodicals (Irish Deaf Journal; Link; Contact, various dates). However, their understanding was not matched by actual progress in this area.

RTE said that their inability to meet the demands made by the Deaf community were due to technological and cost factors. They pointed out that subtitling each programme was a labour intensive job and required specialised machinery. Therefore, they felt that they were not in a position to meet the demands immediately: instead they offered to implement subtitling gradually. However, gradual progress has not met with general approval within the Deaf community.
Countering the claim that it was in a position to provide services for Deaf people, RTE once stated that it was unfairly compared with British TV companies since British TV companies have huge resources to meet the demands of the British Deaf community (Journal, Winter 1991).

It is clear that RTE does accept the right of Deaf and hard of hearing viewers to have reasonable amount of access to television. Nevertheless, the core of the argument seems to be based on the ability of RTE to provide the kind of services requested, rather than on the issue of citizenship rights to full access to television. Therefore, their acceptance is based on economic factors.

In its publications, RTE regards its public broadcasting service as a social institution and vows to remain the principal public broadcaster. It acknowledges that it has obligations to contribute to the well being of a democratic country and recognises that one of these obligations is to reflect all interests of the whole population. It also promises to provide an impartial and objective service as far as possible (RTE, 1991). Yet, judging from the analysis of these aforementioned magazine programmes for Deaf viewers, these obligations were not satisfactorily met.

It has to be said that RTE was not sufficiently challenged on the grounds of responsibility for facilitating the citizenship rights of Deaf viewers. Based on the analysis of these Deaf community magazines, lobbyists often argued for increased access on technological advances grounds, which they perceived would be more acceptable in terms of costs. Other Irish TV companies such as TV3 and Telefis na Gaelige, were not challenged on these matters.

**Analysis**

It is clear that access to broadcasting policy can be easily analysed in the context of a three-dimensional power structure. Applying Alford’s approach (1975), it is clear that not all of Alford’s three groups can be identified here, as there is no challenging group. The dominant group, RTE, seems untroubled by this issue, as it is able to fob off the arguments and protests by the repressed group, the Deaf
community. The difficulties arise from the vague obligations in the Broadcasting Act 1976, and the narrow criteria set by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission for proceeding with complaints. These reflections have seriously limited the manoeuvre of any challenging group. Therefore, the power structure in this instance contains only the dominant and the repressed groups while the challenging one is non-existent. For the foreseeable future, this may remain the same unless the recently drafted Broadcasting Bill 1999 addresses this issue.

Applying Hall's general criteria to assess the changes in policy, there is not much policy change in this area so it would makes analysis relatively straightforward. The legitimacy criterion scores very low here as the government is bound by Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act 1976 and the narrowly defined criteria for making complaints. There were individuals attempting to legitimise the issue by refusing to pay up for licence fees in the hope of attracting media attention but to no avail. Feasibility has so far been decided by the dominant player, RTE, who have repeatedly stated that they do understand the grievances of the Deaf community, but point out the prohibitive cost as the stumbling factor in adequately dealing with the grievances raised.

The failure to have this issue associated with other major issues such as citizenship rights to information and freedom of speech have reduced the level of feasibility. The level of support (using Hall's terminology) is low: the Deaf community is a tiny minority unlikely to upset the equation. It is evident that RTE and the government are not compelled to address the issue.

Unfortunately, it was the fragmentation and disintegration of the lobby on the side of the Deaf community that results in the lack of a serious challenge to RTE. Interestingly, in Britain, the Deaf community was able to unite itself, and through lobbying they achieved some concessions through the legislative process. The opportunities to address grievances through the legislative process were
unfortunately missed in 1988 and 1991. A separate act was enacted along with an amendment to the 1976 Act to regulate independent broadcasting.

Apart from the legislative process, the nature of the political system does not offer a realistic chance for those who want to bring the issue into a wider context. Therefore, policy is likely to remain unchanged for the moment. However, things may be changing due to a fact that the recently drafted *Broadcasting Bill (1999)* proposes giving extra powers to an independent regulator to monitor and police the broadcasting arena. Included in the bill is a clause referring to the rights of Deaf and hard of hearing viewers:

*Part III, Section 15*

5 The Commission shall make rules requiring each broadcaster to take specified steps to promote the understanding and enjoyment by -

persons who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and
persons who are blind or partially sighted,

of programmes transmitted on any broadcasting service provided him or her.

6. Rules under subsection (5) may, in respect of any specified period beginning on or after the commencement of this subsection, require a broadcaster to ensure that a specified percentage of programmes transmitted on a broadcasting service transmitted by him or her in that period employed specified means by which the understanding and enjoyment by persons referred to in paragraph (a) and (b) of that subsection may be promoted (Dept of Justice, Law Reform and Equalit, 1999).

However the wording is regarded as “lukewarm” in terms of enforcement (IDJ, 1999) according to the Irish Deaf Journal that Opposition TDs and Senators were lobbied to strengthen the clause. The Labour TD, Brian O’Shea told the Dail that:
I wish to raise another aspect of the communication-rich and communication-poor question ...........The Irish Deaf Society does not accept that the provision in the Bill satisfactory. Essentially, it seeks more specific targets in the legislation because it fears there is too long a timescale for the introduction of specific steps. It seeks 100 per cent subtitling of output within five years and the devotion of 5 per cent of airtime to the medium of Irish Sign Language (IDJ, Winter 1999).

It remains to be seen, if the Bill is enacted, whether the rights of Deaf and hard of hearing viewers will be respected and enforced.

**Case Study: Language Policy in Education**

The second case study focuses on the development of oralism as the dominant language policy in education. The historical background to this policy is given in earlier chapters. A shorter analysis is given here to place educational policy within the broader policy process.

Oralism advocated the discontinuance of sign language in classrooms and placed emphasis on speech and lip-reading training. Those who supported this approach believed that it would enhance the integration of Deaf people into the wider society and felt that sign language had isolated and differentiated Deaf people from the wider society. Contrary to the popular belief, oralism was not first used here in the 1940s; it was in use in the Protestant schools and was the subject of experimental study in Catholic schools well before the 1940s. According to Griffey’s memoirs, the Dominican order that ran St. Mary’s school was enchanted by its illusive benefits (Griffey, 1994).

Oralism became more noticeable during the 1940s and 1950s because it affected the vast majority of Deaf people in Ireland. Due to the non-activity of the Department of Education in policy formulation, discretion was left to individual schools and St. Mary’s school first used oralism in 1946 after conducting a fact-finding tour of British schools for the Deaf. According to Griffey (1994), oralism
was not introduced as an incremental or supplanting exercise, but it replaced the then existing philosophy in which manualism was practised. Manualism was a philosophy dominated by the continued use of sign language in the schools where staff and children communicated through use of sign language.

The proclaimed benefits of oralism were not forthcoming however, rather than declaring oralism as a failure, a strategy had to be devised to ensure its survival and success Griffey (1994). Several measures were taken during the 1950s. Internally, Deaf teachers were dismissed or downgraded to lower positions, a policy of segregation was introduced to keep oral children and “oral failures” separate and anti-signing regimes were adopted. Externally, the support of the government’s education department, the persuasion of other schools to follow suit and the establishment of a post-graduate diploma course for oral teachers for the Deaf in UCD were the other measures adopted to cement oralism’s place in Irish Deaf schools (Griffey, 1994; Matthews, 1996; Crean 1997).

In 1948, the Christian Brothers conducted their own fact-finding tour to assess the oralist policy in British schools for the Deaf and decided against the introduction of oralism into their school. Their rejection reduced the likelihood of oralism being seen as a public success, because there was a high rate of inter-marriage among ex-pupils of the schools and use of sign language naturally became a dominant language used in their homes. In 1956, the establishment of Beechpark, a primary school for Deaf boys in Stillorgan presented a dilemma to the Christian Brothers that threatened the equilibrium of enrolling Deaf boys. Because of this, the Brothers switched over to oralism (Crean, 1997; Cooney, 1999).

Apart from the Christian Brothers’ stance there is no evidence of other resistance or challenges made against the implementation of oralism. There is no evidence that the Deaf community inevitably accepted oralism. In order to reach Deaf infants, an audiology service was established by the National Organisation for Rehabilitation (NOR) - an organisation that was founded and dominated by those
who worked in St. Mary’s school. This ensured a supply of Deaf children to the oral schools. To copper-fasten the support of parents of Deaf children, an association was set up in 1964 - the National Association for the Deaf - an organisation where there was no Deaf representation and the association was dominated by those who worked in the oral schools. By 1958, the implementation of oralism was complete and then the Dominicans’ involvement in key areas such as in NOR, UCD’s postgraduate course and NAD guaranteed its influence (Griffey, 1994; Crean 1997).

By the mid 1960s, the subject of education of the deaf was being investigated in a number of countries at the same time that sign languages became the subject of linguistic investigation. The United States’ federal committee, chaired by Professor Babbidge, issued a report in 1965 stating that oralism was the major contributor to the failings within the education for the Deaf (Luterman et al, 1991). The British report - the Lewis Report of 1968 - reached an inconclusive decision on its main subject of investigation - the usefulness of finger-spelling in Deaf schools (McLoughlin, 1987). In 1967, the Minister for Education formed a committee to review education for the Deaf and no Deaf representative was appointed.

The publication of the report by the review committee in 1972 - “The Education of Children Who Are Handicapped by Impaired Hearing” was a landmark report. Apart from the Department’s auxiliary supportive role to oral schools, the report was seen as an official endorsement of oralism in the Irish schools. It called for the continuation of oralism and the establishment of a teachers for the Deaf service (Department of Education, 1972). There was no evidence of major dissent or difference of opinions against the report, which suggests that oralism was presumably safeguarded. Subsequent government investigations whose remit included Deaf people, such as the employability and training of disabled people continued to endorse the 1972 report (Dept of Health, 1975). The major social survey of Deaf people carried out in 1973 by UCD on behalf of NAD and
NRB revealed a bleak picture of the extent of integration that Deaf people had to endure (NRB, 1973). There is no evidence that actions were drawn up to deal with issues arising from the report.

In 1981, a year that was also the United Nations' designated year of disabled people, Deaf people formed a group called Deaf Action Group, a forerunner of the Irish Deaf Society. The aim was to highlight the societal needs of Deaf people (IDJ, 1987). The decision to set up a group was due to the frustration experienced by Deaf people. One of their central aims was to challenge the oralist philosophy (IDJ, 1999). They held a seminar in 1985 focussed on alternative approaches such as Total Communication. In 1988, the European Parliament passed a resolution tabled by an Irish MEP, Eileen Lemass, calling on national states to recognise their indigenous sign languages. However, at ground level, nothing had shifted dramatically and the oralist philosophy still occupied a dominant position (Irish Deaf Journal, 1988).

However, during the 1990s, things gradually changed on the ground as part of the process that began in the 1980s. On the television front, a devoted TV programme for the Deaf - then *Sign of the Times*, now *Hands On* and the daily News for the Deaf were shown on TV and both were presented by Deaf sign language users. A good section of the viewing public was exposed to the use of sign language on TV: hence, public interest in Irish Sign Language dramatically increased.

In 1991, the NRB published a devastating report on the literacy rates among Deaf children and found that an average Deaf 16 year old has a reading age equivalent to that of a non-deaf eight year old (NRB, 1991). That means that the average Deaf teenager does not have functional literacy, which would negatively affects his education and severely limit his ability as a well-informed citizen. There is no evidence that remedial actions were carried out to deal with the shortcomings as identified in this report. Nor there was any record of a sense of
outrage amongst Deaf people. Despite those misgivings, the report is a very clear indicator of the oralist approach’s failings.

The uncertainty continued through to 1993 when the Special Education Review Committee published its report. The question of Irish sign language and the most appropriate approach for the education of Deaf children were ambiguously dealt with and no attempt was made to consult Deaf people (SERC, 1993). However, in the meantime the Irish Deaf Society launched an initiative in training ISL interpreters and tutors in partnership with Trinity College Dublin and the University of Bristol under the aegis of European Horizon funding programme (Journal, 1994). The first crop of qualified interpreters became available in 1994 and this provided new opportunities to the Deaf community. Immediately there were benefits gained by the community, as some opportunities like access to third level courses or mainstream training courses had opened up to them for the first time (Journal, 1994).

In 1996, three significant reports were published. Firstly, the Commission for the Status of People with Disabilities published Strategy for Equality which contained a number of relevant recommendations (Commission on Status of People with Disabilities, 1996). It recommended that Deaf children should be taught through sign language and that teachers should be fluent in sign language before they are recruited to teach Deaf children. Secondly, the Department of Health’s report - Towards An Independent Future - was in contrast to this Commission’s report, as it implicitly supported the status quo by calling for more speech therapists and gave no acknowledgement was given to Irish Sign Language (Department of Health, 1996). Finally, a report on the Irish Deaf community and its history, culture and ISL was published by Pat Matthews and ITE under the aegis of the European Horizon funding programme (Matthews, 1996). These three documents have considerably enhanced the understanding of the Deaf community’s stance on issues.
Towards the end of the 1990s, the position of oralism has been gradually weakened by a series of events. In 1997, the book - “Breaking the Silence” by Edward Crean outlined the history of the education for the Deaf in Ireland, and caused a controversy that attracted a good deal of public attention (Crean, 1997). The National Forum on Childhood Education recommended an initiative by the Model School for the Deaf Project to set up a pre-school provision for Deaf children to aid important language acquisition (National Forum, 1998). The campaign for Irish Sign Language by the Irish Deaf Society had been boosted by the clause, which recognised the Irish Sign Language in the Education Act 1998. However, the clause is ambiguous since it was added by the following sentence “…and other sign languages” (Education Act 1998). This sentence refers to other sign languages does not offer any clear distinction.

The recent announcement (June 2000) by the Minister for Education and Science of the establishment of a Centre for Deaf Studies in Trinity College has kept up the momentum for those who champion Irish Sign Language (Journal, Spring 2000; Summer, 2000).

**Analysis**

In terms of Alford’s analysis of power structure, there are three distinct eras. Firstly, a period of implementation occurred from the 1940s to the mid-1950s where an impressive list of measures were introduced and implemented; all of them were rooted in the oralist philosophy; a second period can be regarded as a reinforcement era that runs from the mid-1950’s to the 1980s and the last era belongs to the 1990s. In the first era, there were three groups present as the dominant position was challenged by two groups - oralists (the Dominicans) and those who wanted to continue the status quo - for instance the Christian Brothers. The Deaf community was the repressed group. In this instance, we can see the oralists triumphed.
The reinforcement era is marked by the demise of the challenging group, as the Christian Brothers ceased their resistance and joined the dominant group.

The Deaf community remained the repressed group: this is evident because there is no record that it had challenged or opposed the dominant group. The establishment of a post-graduate diploma course, the control of audiology, the monopoly of representation within the National Association of the Deaf, the 1972 review committee and the visiting teachers’ service marked measures of reinforcement by the oralists. This reinforcement assured oralists’ control of information, recruitment, and training. Evidence of easy access to the Department of Education by the oralists is a further proof of this reinforcement. The echoes of Lukes’ analysis of three-dimensional power (1974) can be reflected here, as there is no record of dissent and it is possible to speculate that one would find it impossible to change the situation under these circumstances.

However, the situation did not continue into the 1990s as the challenging group emerged in a significant manner. The Deaf community, through the representation of the Irish Deaf Society and the emerging alternative perspectives on deafness, made it possible for the Deaf community to move into the challenging position. The instances cited are the insertion of a reference to Irish Sign Language in the Education Act 1998, the creation of professional interpreting provision and the establishment of the Model School for the Deaf project.

The conflicting perspectives on deafness between dominant and challenging groups can be compared to Alford’s and Ham’s analysis of American and British health policies respectively. McDonnell (1998) outlines the differences between the perspectives. The dominant group - especially medical professionals, educational psychologists and most teachers - favours the view that Deaf children can be adapted and fitted into the hearing society: thus, their level of hearing and their ability at speech and lip-reading are paramount. The alternative
perspective favoured by the current challenging group is based on a linguistic and cultural model where Deaf children are seen in a context where language acquisition (especially, sign language) is paramount. It also calls for a reversal of the former view that society should adapt itself to the needs of Deaf children (McDonnell, J, 1998: 6).

The emerging alternative perspectives have contributed a number of changes in the language policy as reflected by the insertion of a reference to Irish Sign Language. In the coming decades, it will be interesting to see if there will be changes in the power structures.

Applying Hall’s general criteria in this case is complex because of the time frame. In relation to legitimacy, this refers to the whether or not the issue in question is accepted as an area where government has a role. Here we know that apart from contributing some finance, it did not have any historic role in shaping the philosophy behind the education of the Deaf. It was content with the situation up to the 1990s because oralists controlled the feasibility element such as information, training, and recruitment. Information on alternative perspectives was not readily available. The support element was not a crucial question since the power structure was divided between the dominant and repressed groups. Also the Deaf community is numerically small.

During the 1990s, it is clear that the dominant ideology was being challenged and this was helped by the availability of widely available information - especially from the European Union and international networking. In addition, the disability movement and the enactment of equality laws such as the Employment Equality Act and the Equality Status Act have widened to the scope of association. Therefore, the issue of language policy for the Deaf is not a stand-alone issue but has been linked with other equality issues. The replacement of the language policy has evidently weakened the dominant position of the oralists during the 1990s. This also affects the support and feasibility elements, where the government has had to intervene directly. Clear instances are the recent
announcement of a Centre for Deaf Studies and the financial grant support for the literacy scheme for Deaf people.

**Conclusion**

Two case studies were undertaken to analyse the role of the Deaf community in the policy-making system. Both case studies reveal the difficult and weak position that the Deaf community finds itself in: it does not have access to power nor the ability to change the situation on a large scale. Access and ability are clearly hindered by a number of factors and the principal factor is the attitude to the alternative perspectives held by the Deaf community. Access to information, training and recruitment are carefully controlled by those outside the Deaf community.

It is clear that one theoretical model would not be sufficient to understand the limited role and influence in the policy process by the Deaf community. The first theoretical framework helped to describe the general structure of power and the second focused on the dynamics of policy changes over time. The use of both theoretical frameworks contributed a better understanding of the lack of power of the Deaf community.

It is clear from both case studies that the Deaf community amongst all the participants in the policy areas has the least influence on the policy process. It is also clear that the position of the Deaf community is seriously weakened when issues are treated in isolation and have no possible associative link. For instance, the Deaf community seems hapless in relation to broadcasting policy, but made some significant inroads in language policy. Timing and association with other larger policy issues are crucial to the Deaf community’s influence on the policy process.

Bateman explains the lack of tactical sophistication and lack of awareness in the policy-making process on the Deaf community’s part. He argues that a mediocre
education system, a lack of democratic upbringing in school and home life and a sense of powerlessness among the Deaf hinders their ability to become effective leaders and to participate in the policy-making process (Bateman, 1996). It has to be said that lack of effective political activism on the part of Deaf people plays a role in the poor results of lobbying for changes in policies that affect them. Furthermore, the Deaf community is not present on the implementation and monitoring bodies that plan and deliver existing services. Therefore, it is safe to state that many people within the Deaf community may experience a sense of "civic disenfranchisement".
Chapter 9

Summary, Conclusions and Perspectives

Introduction
The purpose of this final chapter is to offer a summary of the thesis, to outline a perspective on deafness and then assess possible future developments.

Summary
The first chapter is an introduction to the thesis. It outlines the reasons why an emancipatory research approach is favoured. Throughout the thesis, the author’s personal experience and status within the Deaf community inform the analysis. The second chapter focused on the historical development that provided the background to the policies we know today. The development evolved from the classical times to the Middle Ages, when infanticide of Deaf children and legal / religious disfranchisement of Deaf people were the norms. There were a number of treatises on the possibility of educating Deaf people but no systematic efforts on a large scale were taken place till de l’Epee opened the public school in Paris in 1755.

Enlightenment influences had heightened interest in the possibility of educating Deaf people and a conflict of views emerged. The famous debate over appropriate methods of educating Deaf children was between Samuel Heineke and Abbe de l’Epee. The height of the controversy was at the conference in Milan in 1880 where a partisan audience approved jingoistic resolutions that proposed the banishment of sign languages from classrooms.

Oralism subsequently presided over the world of education for Deaf children. Its effects had reached Ireland by the 1890s, although oralism did not completely dominate the Irish scene. The British government set up a royal commission to
investigate the best possible methods of educating Deaf children in 1885 and the commission published a final report, which was claimed by supporters of both sides as a victory for their respective ideas.

Nevertheless, oralism took root firmly in Britain and its effects on Irish schools gradually became apparent during the 1930s and 1940s: Irish parents of Deaf children began to look beyond Catholic Deaf schools to Britain. This forced the schools to re-consider their options in order to keep Irish Deaf children at home. In response, the Dominicans, in the context of a non-interventionist state, introduced oralism to their school. Weathering poor early results, the Dominicans took out a reinforcement policy to ensure the success of oralist policy by taking control of key resources such as the training and recruitment of teachers and audiology services.

The reinforcement policy operated by the Dominicans remained until the 1980s. In the meantime, serious doubts about oralism began emerging elsewhere and official investigations were taking place to examine the appropriateness of oralism such as the Babbidge Report in the United States and the Lewis Report in Britain. Another significant development was the linguistic investigation of sign languages in the United States and the Netherlands. This had stimulated further investigations into the status of sign languages and the conclusions were favourable.

The third chapter begins with the publication of the report on the review of education for Deaf children by the Department of Education. Criticisms have been raised in relation to the report: it is clear that the Deaf community was not represented and recommendations were made for measures already in place before the review committee first met. The report is unfavourably compared to other similar reports published in the United States, Finland, and Britain.
However, this report became a focal point for subsequent government reports that referred to the conditions of Deaf people. The report had been endorsed in almost every official report up to 1993. This means that no other perspective was discussed for a long period of time. The 1980s were a period of little activity. The Irish Deaf Society was formed in 1981 and the European Parliament’s resolution on sign languages was passed in 1988.

The 1990s marked a contrast to the 1980s as it witnessed an increase in the profile for the Deaf community. In 1991, the NRB published a devastating report on the literacy levels of Deaf children but no drastic action was taken to respond to this report. Uncertainty continued up to the middle of the 1990s as the Special Education Review Committee published a report failing to reach a firm conclusion on the appropriateness of methods of teaching Deaf children. A series of official publications made scant reference to the education of Deaf children. Elsewhere, developments such as the interpreting training course and TV programmes for the Deaf had increased the profile of Deaf people in society.

In 1996, the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities published a landmark report that contains a number of radical recommendations to improve the conditions of Deaf people. The Education Act of 1988 contains a clause referring to the existence of Irish Sign Language and the National Forum on Childhood Education recommended an urgent proposal to set up pre-school provision for Deaf children.

In chapter four, the available studies on Deaf people are analysed: these show that Deaf people in general, are disadvantaged. The studies show that their status in terms of social and economic standards is much lower than the national average.

The studies show that less than two per cent of Deaf people attained university education while the vast majority went to vocational training courses. However,
those with third level education did not necessarily achieve better paid jobs as the surveys show that the vast majority were under-employed or unemployed. Their ability to progress in terms of paid employment and to lead independent lives was hindered by poor literacy levels. Chapter four also examined the appropriateness of the research methods used in the surveys. It was shown that conventional research methods do not adequately capture the social and cultural life of the Deaf community.

Chapter five was a comparative study between Finland and Ireland in relation to the Deaf communities. Ireland and Finland share key characteristics (population, size, level of development) but their politics and policies differ. To take account of these differences in politics, a widely used typology of welfare was applied.

Although possessing some shortcomings, Esping-Andersen’s typology proved useful here. In his typology, he classified Ireland as a liberal nation in which the distribution of welfare benefits is based on need with relatively low State intervention. Finland is classified as a social democratic nation where such benefits are given universally as a citizenship right. This welfare regime classification highlights the differences between Finland and Ireland in terms of welfare distribution generally and helps to explain the different outcomes experienced by the Finnish and Irish Deaf communities.

These differences are due to the inclusive form of policy formulation in Finland where Finnish Deaf leaders were able to participate. In contrast, their Irish counterparts continued to experience paternalistic and dependency-serving approaches. However, recent developments such as networking and IT communication have allowed greater information exchange and the Irish have begun to take steps to ensure their participation.

The socio-economic evidence and the comparative analysis with Finland showed that the Irish Deaf community does not enjoy the national average standard of
living. The concept of citizenship is therefore set out in chapter six as an appropriate concept with which to analyse the situation of the Deaf community as a linguistic minority in society.

Marshall’s definition of citizenship is used to assess the situation of Deaf individuals in society. It is clear that the political, social and civil rights of citizenship are not fully enjoyed by Deaf people nor are they bestowed on them by the state. Although it is clear that citizenship is based on reciprocity, Deaf people are expected to meet their obligations and duties to the state even though their rights are not respected. This analysis of the lack of rights of individual Deaf people necessitates the study of participation by Deaf people in collective decision-making.

Chapter 7 therefore, begins with a brief summary of the Irish political system. The role of the Constitution in forming social policies in Ireland is noted and the nature of electoral politics, especially the PR-STV is described. This mechanism has personalised the electoral system and weakened the capacity of the political system to address strategic policy issues. It is therefore more difficult for minorities to ensure that their rights and needs are recognised and respected. Access to the policy process is difficult due to the domination of powerful pressure groups at the expense of weaker groups. The partnership process has not alleviated the difficulty of access to the policy-making process by weaker pressure groups because major social partners already dominate representation in the partnership process.

To locate the Deaf community in terms of the power structure, the three-dimensional theory of power is outlined. Also, the general criteria proposed by Hall et al (1975) to understand the process of policy change are outlined. These two conceptual frameworks are then applied to two case studies in chapter eight.
The first case study concerns the broadcasting policy for Deaf and hard of hearing viewers. The legislation is described and both broadcasters and lobbyists’ policy stances are analysed. The analysis shows that the Deaf community is being hindered from gaining concessions from broadcasters. This is because of the fragmentation in their lobbying and their perceived weakness as a collective group.

As for the second case study, the conceptual framework helps us to understand power relations and policy changes through time. We have identified the main actors in dominated, challenging and repressed groups. The timeframe in this case study can be sub-divided as follows: the first period was from the late 1940s to the 1950s where oralism was implemented; the second period can be regarded as a reinforcement of oralism from the end of the 1950s to the 1980s; the 1990s was a different era because of gradual changes in the Deaf community and in perspectives about Deafness and policies affecting the Deaf.

**Perspectives**

**Introduction**

It is very clear that Deaf people do not enjoy full citizenship even though they are expected to and do fully reciprocate their duties as citizens. In that sense, they are denied some basic human rights. As a collective group, they did not have any major impact on the policies affecting them. It is safe to state that they experience civic disfranchisement. Sarah Burns describes Deaf people as “tourists in their own land” (Burns, 1998). It is scandalous that this situation is perpetuated despite the fact that those responsible for maintaining the status quo are aware of this situation.

The current lack of impact that the Deaf community has on the development of policy that impacts on them is due in a very fundamental sense to the perspectives on Deafness held by society, policy-makers and perhaps some of the Deaf community.
In this section we begin by contrasting two perspectives on deafness. Firstly, the two contrasting perspectives - medical and social - of deafness are examined briefly within a human rights context. Then the economic implications of these perspectives are discussed and societal attitudes to deafness are considered. Policy conclusions are offered based on this discussion and on the author’s personal experience as a member of the Deaf community.

Contrasting Perspectives:
A medical perspective of deafness would perpetuate the situation described in this thesis because the thinking behind the medical perspective focuses on the restoration of hearing as a basis for integrating individual Deaf people into society. The opposing social perspective focuses on the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of the Deaf community. This line of thinking would suggest that society readjust itself to accommodate the needs of the Deaf community.

The medical model of deafness, which emphasises medical intervention to compensate for hearing loss, can be regarded as incompatible with the principles of human rights as outlined by the United Nations. The medical model reduces the individual to a passive object, which deprives the individual of the right to object or consent. Medical intervention often occurs early in an individual’s life, so individuals are unable to challenge or question the intervention.

The medical model has psychological implications for one’s well being, as one’s sense of identity would be compromised or not clearly spelt out. There are several cases known to the author, of individuals who have been educated in a system that is highly influenced by the medical model, experiencing confusion about their identities. Some were taught to assimilate into the hearing world without any regard to their own difference.
In the case of a Deaf child, schools did not consider early language acquisition as important. The schools failed to recognise the potential to acquire a sign language during the critical period for language acquisition. This is because the schools under the influence of the medical model focused on the acquisition of speech, which is based on assimilationalist principles.

In relation to a Deaf child being assessed by a medical practitioner, some kind of surrogacy in terms of decision-making on the behalf of the child is necessitated. Evidence suggests that a medical practitioner is almost always the first point of contact for parents seeking information, and currently, almost all medical practitioners have insufficient awareness of alternative approaches to deafness.

The social model of deafness is more compatible with human rights principles because the social model recognises the right of an individual to exist as a Deaf person as s/he wishes. This would in turn encourage diversity, as sign languages would flourish in this kind of environment. This model also recognises the right to use alternative approaches to reach one’s full potential. However, due to the dominance of the medical model, the social model lags far behind and it struggles to make an impact.

**Economic and financial issues**

The perspectives on deafness also have economic implications in terms of public expenditure and in terms of the material interests of professionals and service providers. To develop this point, Table 7 below summaries the broad cost/benefit scenario for models of education provision for the Deaf that are associated with the underlying perspectives on deafness.

**Table 7 - Educational Provision under Contrasting Perspectives.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature Current Position</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Number of Children (estimated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oralism Gradual Decline but still has strong presence</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>300 Strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oralism - a traditional model of education provision - was dominant in Ireland for more than half of the century but nowadays its dominance has been gradually eroded. Oralism centres on the principle that every Deaf child with perceived ability to talk, must be taught through speech and lip-reading with no access to sign language. It aims to provide a Deaf child with the ability to use speech and lip-reading in order to enable him to integrate into the wider 'hearing' society. This practice can be regarded as a process of ‘normalisation’ or ‘assimilation’. Costs are high as the class size is much smaller and is equipped by highly technical equipment (i.e. audiology services). This approach necessitates a separate facility, employing a large pool of teachers and auxiliary professionals. The actual evidence about this approach shows that a majority of Deaf children had failed to reach their potential.

Mainstreaming focuses on the integration of children into the mainstream education system. It became dominant in Ireland in the 1990s, as it is Europe and North America. Costs are recouped though the rationalisation of education provisions for children with disabilities by closing down or reducing special schools. This results in lower costs than the oralist approach. Deaf children are no exception here but their linguistic and cultural needs are not recognised or not realised in mainstream education. Therefore, they have to struggle through the system without the access to sign language and the comfort of peer model presence. This model, emphasising the integration of the children in society but without any regard to their linguistic and cultural needs, can be regarded as a moderate form of the medical perspective.
The bilingual provision emphasises that sign language acquisition by Deaf children must be utilised before the children can be educated. The model requires two languages for a communication method in education in the Irish case, Irish Sign Language, and written English. The bilingual model has been successfully developed in the schools for Deaf children in Scandinavian countries. However, it has not made a presence here yet but there are signs that it may be used in the future. The class size would be bigger than an oralist classroom and would entail less auxiliary professionals since language acquisition and education through this are given priority. Here too the costs would be low relative to an oralist approach based on a medical perspective.

On the basis of the framework, it is clear that the models influenced by the medical perspective are more expensive to run than their social counterpart. It has a number of implications as it creates a number of vested interests. Alker points out:

*Society’s reliance on so called ‘experts’ - doctors, audiologists, and others with a vested interest in their paternalistic medical model - has shaped too many negative perspectives of the Deaf (Alker, 1999: 37)*

The existence of such vested interests ensures the continuation of the medical perspective of Deafness.

The analysis above refers to education but this kind of framework can be more generally applied. For example, in the area of health care, there is example of the cochlear implantation programme, whereby young Deaf children are given cochlear implants by means of invasive surgery. Each implantation costs as much as £25,000 per child. It necessitates a five year long post-operative rehabilitation programme involving a team of professionals. This entails the child undergoing tests and training in hospitals, which has a disruptive effect on the child’s education. There is no guarantee of hearing being fully restored to the
child. It is understood that in an average year, eight or nine cochlear implantation operations are carried out. This programme would cost millions of pounds to implement on a large scale. This approach, influenced by the medical model of deafness, cannot be run on a commercial basis, as the cost is beyond most parents. Therefore, it relies extensively on public funds.

As for services for adult Deaf people, the health boards directly fund most services and it seems that health boards favour the auxiliary organisations who tend to support a deployment of non-peer social workers. It is understood that social workers are bound by a voluntary code of ethics, which has as a guiding principle that they are there to empower the clients. However, on the basis of personal experience, the medical model of deafness and a controlling approach also influence social workers. In the case of social workers, it is clear that the medical model is very influential. The fact that most of social workers working with the Deaf community are not fluent sign language users and are recruited from outside the Deaf community should not be overlooked. The deployment of non-peer social workers to assist Deaf people reinforces the impression that the Deaf community is not able to do things independently.

There is no research in Ireland about the extent to which the Deaf community has benefited from the non-peer social workers. However, in the Deaf community social workers are commonly known for the extent and breadth of their interventions with Deaf clients. They taken on various roles, which they are not specifically qualified in, such as interpreting and marriage/family counselling, with their limited knowledge in sign language. Their interventions must be very problematic because they lack the most basic professional skill social workers must have - the ability to communicate with clients. Furthermore, it is very common for social workers to do routine tasks for Deaf clients - filling forms, obtaining information and so on. This reinforces the culture of dependency.

*Attitudes:*
Apart from human rights principles and economic arguments, there is the question of social attitudes. Generally, societal attitudes to deafness are largely based on ideologies developed through history. Ireland, being a part of Western Europe, is also influenced by western ideals of individualism and perfectionism. Historically, attitudes towards deafness were negative, even though there is some evidence that suggests that some attitudes expressed in the past were not as negative as originally thought. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explain how such attitudes developed over time, but it is quite clear that attitudes are systematically negative towards deafness.

The task of changing perspectives and policies is enormous. Institutional barriers were identified earlier and they are reinforced by the strong influence of the medical model. Asymmetrical power relations and societal attitudes are difficult to change within a short time span.

Those who resist change often dismiss the arguments for new policies as out of hand, and they point out the lack of support within the Deaf community for new initiatives. It is quite easy to dismiss such demands on the grounds that they lack support within the community, but it has to be pointed out that passive dependency has created a sense of fatalism and cynicism. Apathy and lack of interest are fed by this kind of culture. Service providers and policy-makers should be aware of this situation and adopt a more participatory and democratic approach to service planning and delivery.

We have seen that there can be differences in the recommendations issued by researchers who carry out studies on the Deaf community. Peer researchers tend to offer more radical recommendations than ‘outside’ researchers. This difference is due to accessibility and to the empathy with the research population which peer researchers have. However, it is unfortunate that in this country, research conducted by peer professionals is very rare: this is a serious impediment to policy-makers’ ability to understand the Deaf community. Policy-
makers should encourage more peer research, as it is likely that such research will identify recommendations currently not being considered.

Nevertheless, peer research should not be the only research used to guide the policy-makers. The obvious way to empower the Deaf community is to take the first steps in recognising it as a linguistic and cultural minority, and acknowledge the unique linguistic and cultural nature of the Deaf community. This recognition should not be simply taken as one step but as a series of fundamental changes to be implemented - for example implementing bilingualism in Deaf schools and units attached to mainstream schools throughout the country, and training more Irish Sign Language tutors and interpreters. This would help to change attitudes towards service provision. To facilitate the empowerment of the Deaf people, services should be planned and managed by peer colleagues. This empowerment will not take place quickly but will have an impact in the years ahead.

Public policy:
Following the medical model in service provision necessitates greater public expenditure and creates a core of professionals with an interest in ‘professional’ services. There is evidence in the literature (Department of Health, 1996; Oliver, 1996; Barnes, 1992), that paraprofessionals and professionals put their interests first, even through these interests may have long term detrimental effects on the Deaf people. This leads to the development of asymmetrical power relations where paraprofessionals have considerable power while consumers tend to take passive roles. Passive dependency is a direct consequence of the education system, which has left Deaf people ill-prepared to enter the labour market therefore, they are not in a position to challenge the professionals.

This situation extends the culture of passive dependency among consumers. Society rests on the inter-dependency between individuals to function successfully. True ‘independence’ therefore is not based on individualism.
Passive dependency arises where those who depend on professionals or services do not have any real influence on the planning or delivery of services. The existence of passive dependency within the Deaf community reinforces the strength of the medical model, which currently underpins service provision. This has an indirect effect on public policy affecting the Deaf community, because the system is not self-critical or easy to change.

The social model encourages self-advocacy, recognising that the culture of passive dependency is not the way forward. This approach would require service providers and professionals to be accountable.

**Prognosis**

The thirty years since 1970 have seen enormous but gradual changes that saw the status of oralism weakened. Irish Sign Language began to gain acceptance, especially during the mid and late 1990s. Those changes can be attributed to the growing ability of the Deaf community to take a firm stand and to influence the process of change. Change is also attributed to the increased use of information and the exchange of information at home and abroad. This process occurred between 1940 and 1970: it was particularly dramatic during the period between 1970 and 1999. In 1940, there was no evidence that oralism was anticipated, but by 1960, it was firmly established as the favoured policy in Irish Deaf schools. Judging by the pace of changes in the past, it is clear that changes will occur in the next thirty years that are not even remotely anticipated today.

It is clear that Irish society is in transition in a number of ways. In Ireland, as in other countries, sociologists conceptualise transition in terms of a shift from 'modern' to 'post-modern' society (Tovey and Share, 2000). Briefly, ‘modern’ society is characterised by mass industrial production, largely within the boundaries of national states, underpinned by a central interventionist state financing and delivering welfare and social services to very broad categories in the population. Culturally, the ‘modern’ society is structured around a nuclear
family within lifelong marriage and an adherence to technical / scientific norms. The 'modern society will see science and technology as the motor of social progress.

By contrast, a 'post modern' society is one characterised by uncertain economic performance in an increasingly global economy where 'developed' societies have moved away from mass manufacturing of standardised goods to services as their economic core. Here the system of governance is less centralised: local, hybrid, decentralised, 'partnership' forms of decision-making and service delivery have a role. The emphasis in public policy shifts to choice and to recognition of the multiple bases of citizens’ identities: class and nationality but also gender, sexual orientation, race, and disability. Post modern society is characterised by 'post materialistic' and 'post scientific' cultures, with a more critical stance towards the benefits of economic growth and a deep scepticism about scientific, medical and technical rationality.

Thus, ‘post modernity’ is reflected in an increased emphasis on personal choice, diversity of family types, freedom of sexual choice, and a greater awareness of the environment. An emphasis on reflecting the personal and social rights of the disabled and other minorities is ‘post modern’ as is the contemporary trends towards participatory and consultative styles of policy-making.

Allowing for the crudity of the modern/post modern distinction given here, it is appropriate to generalise that a 'social' perspective on deafness is more likely to emerge in a post-modern context. In Ireland, there are actual examples of the characteristics of the post modernity. The recent debate about MMR vaccination reflects the public’s doubts in the medical profession’s assurances of its safety. At the time of writing, the debacle of blood transfusion service is a subject of a judiciary tribunal and its revelations have scattered many people’s confidence in the medical profession. As for governance, partnership process has become prevalent, at least at the top level where social partners have entered national
agreements with the government. In addition, citizenship rights, choice and empowerment are now recognised as policy principles in official documents such as Strategy for Equality (1996) and the Employment Equality Act (1998).

With a growing awareness internally and externally of the social model’s usefulness and attractiveness, the model may adopt a strong challenging role. Abandoning the individualistic route, society may embrace the philosophy of ‘free choice’ and accept the existence of fragmented personal and social identities, and this may assist the emergence of social model. The recent enactment of equality laws may enhance the social model’s role and may be a contributory factor in the evolution of community-level democracy and empowerment. Having stated that the social model may adopt a strong challenging role, it is hard to envisage that the social model will replace the medical model as the dominant perspective on deafness.

The next ten years may also witness changing structures in the Deaf community. Although the role of Deaf clubs as the focal points of the community is declining, there are uncertainties about the role the Deaf community may play in the future. There is a growing acknowledgement of diversity within the community. Mainstream education and the cochlear implantation programmes are factors contributing to these changes. Both have contributed to the weakening and blurring of the sense of identity among future Deaf generations. In the past, Deaf generations were shaped by a strong sense of identity as they attended the same residential schools, acquired Irish Sign Language, and experienced similar life patterns. Nowadays, many Deaf children go to local schools in isolation, do not have opportunities to acquire sign language and do not have a chance to share common experiences and empathise with peers. Therefore, nature of the Deaf community as a ‘community’ is likely to evolve in this uncertain direction.

It is possible that services for the Deaf will reflect the increasing emphasis on choice and the consumer in official policy. There may be some influence from
more general changes, which affects the public service in Ireland - the *Freedom of Information Act 1997* and the *Strategic Management Initiative*. The first of these factors enables the public to gain information on decisions and the policy-making process. The second has lead to a new emphasis on a consumer approach to public services, with the implication that 'consumers' must have choice, quality, and accountability. There is a clear example, relevant to the Deaf community.

Recently, the Department of Education refused to state which method of instruction is most appropriate in the education of Deaf children. It stated that each child should be assessed in her/his own right and those parental wishes should be taken in account (*Dail Question*, October 2000). This reflects the fact that the Department is willing to support whatever method the parents of Deaf children want and this can be seen as a shift in the direction of the individual's right to choose.

The likelihood and direction of policy change is difficult to assess because it also depends on availability of resources and finance. Perhaps the more likely route will be the widening of the partnership process in which Deaf activists may find themselves participating more. It is possible that research by peer professionals will become more prevalent as a reliable source of information for directing future public policy given the current emphasis on empowerment and participation in the voluntary and community sector. Such changes would lead to more empowerment and more Deaf people actively and publicly involved in policy-making.

Changes in the Deaf community may be crucial here because these changes may strengthen or weaken the community as a united entity. At the moment, the community relies on the traditional sense of identity and strong adherence to Irish Sign Language, but as the form of the community changes rapidly, the
community may have to struggle to find a mechanism to express its needs and aspirations. This too has the potential to affect the future shape of public policy.

We must return, finally to the core question of whether the socio-economic status of Deaf people will improve in the circumstances mentioned above. It is difficult to answer this, but if democracy and empowerment at community-level grow, this may have some bearing on the socio-economic status of Deaf people, and there may be some improvements. It is obvious that well-educated Deaf people will see the positive effects first, but they, in turn, can function as excellent role models that can inspire others.
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NESC 1994
Appendix 1

Total communication is first originated in the United States following the linguistic advances in knowledge of sign languages in 1960s. Total communication is some sort of the advanced method of the combined method. It has been tried in Ireland, especially in the Cork schools. However the method is since discredited because of its complicated application to operate. It is pointed out that the method failed to realise the independent status of indigenous sign language, which cannot be taught with another language. Analogously, it is impossible to teach German and French at a same time.

Moores said that the total communication is an extension of the simultaneous method, which attracted a lot of educators in the United States of America in the late 1960s and 1970s. He distinguishes the simultaneous method as children receive education through speech-reading, amplification, signs and fingerspelling. A proficient teacher will sign in co-ordination with the spoken word (Moores 1978).

The Total Communication received much criticism as Lane states that:

“In theory, “total communication” means that the teacher uses every means of communication available to communicate with the deaf pupils: manual language, finger-spelling with the manual alphabet, writing, speech, pantomime, drawing -whatever In practice, “total communication” merely means that the teacher may accompany his spoken English with some signs from speaking, he occasionally “shouts” a sign - that is, signs a prominence noun or verb if he knows it, in the wrong order and without using the grammar complex of ASL, which requires agreement ion space, in number, in aspect, and so on. Because the teacher is speaking English while intermittently emitting these signs, he has the illusion of making sense like a pilot in a simulator whose senses tell him he is landing a plane while, viewed from outside, he is headed nowhere” (Lane 1984: pp 133 - 134).

With this dissatisfaction and search for the better method to teach Deaf children, it is due to advanced research into the indigenous sign languages in many countries especially in Sweden and Denmark. It leads to the development of bilingual method, which acknowledges the independent status of indigenous sign language and the importance of written language. Children would be taught with signs while she would write with spoken language.
However the method stresses that Deaf children should have access to sign language as early as possible in order to acquire sign language to avail the natural linguistic development. This means hearing parents have to learn how to communicate with the Deaf child by signing to utilise the bilingual approach maximally. The bilingual method has not fully implemented in Irish schools.

Matthews points out:

“For bilingualism to work well, it is essential that the deaf child be exposed to sign language at the earliest opportunity as it is the immediately accessible language, thus promoting the development of internal language and though processes which may later be used to learn the majority language” (Matthews: 1996 pp 111).

Ahlgren further supports this view:

“ The thought behind the bilingual model in Sweden is that a small child has a right to a first language naturally acquired. For a deaf child this means sign language because it is the language that the child can learn in early life at the same age as a hearing child learns speech” (Ahlgren in IDS: 1997).

It has to be stressed that the bilingual method does not exclude speech and lip-reading skills and they would be available to those who have abilities. Bilingualism emphasises the importance of sufficient acquisition of natural and written languages by the child before the child can be allowed to learn how to lip-read and speech. Ahlgren states:

"It is much easier to learn to speak and lip-read if you already know the language. Speech training and speech instruction are based on the fact that the children already know how to read and write. That is the general idea behind bilingualism” (Ahlgren in IDS: 1997).

It is quite clear that there is a huge difference between Total Communication and bilingual methods. Total Communication uses all approaches simultaneously while bilingual method assures the child to acquire the natural and written languages before she can be earmarked for speech training.
Appendix 2

The following text containing a number of questions were sent by e-mail to Kaisa Engman of the Finnish Association of the Deaf (kaisa.engman@kl-Deaf.fin). She answered this e-mail stating that she forward a number of publications.

Comparative Case Study - Ireland and Finland.


History:

According to Barcham, oralism dominated Finnish education for the Deaf from 1890s to 1970s. I need to know more detailed answers for this era.

Q 1: Was it supported by the government i.e. state policy or was it done at each school’s discretion?

Q 2: Were Deaf teachers systematically dismissed or demoted at the introduction of oralism? If so, on what basis was used for their dismissal?

Q 3: According to Barcham, there was a government curriculum document in 1973, first mentioning sign language but viewed it as an auxiliary method of communication. Was it a result of an inquiry or commission investigating the state of education for the deaf?

If so, was there any Deaf representative on the commission and was there any submissions to the commission made by Deaf groups or individuals?
Q 4: Barcham mentioned that in 1987 bilingualism was first used in a curriculum document. Was it as a part of the investigation into the education for the Deaf?

Was this investigation conducted in a detached manner or was it looked in an overall context of disability?

*Literacy:*
Q 1: Do you have any survey containing results of functional literacy rates among Finnish Deaf children? Can you tell me the rates in a historical process - i.e. from 1970s onwards?

*Employment:*
Q1: Is there any survey investigating the employment situation of Finnish Deaf people?

If so, what percentage of them is unemployed? Is it par with a national average rate?

Q 2: Have it researched the concept of underemployment among Finnish Deaf people? If so, what is the percentage for this?

Q 3: What is the percentage of Finnish Deaf people holding ABC1 jobs e.g. professional managerial and office work?

*Policy Participation:*
Q 1: Is Finnish Deaf Association being consulted at every level regarding government policies that may affect lives of Deaf people?

Are they taken seriously?
Suppose if an incident like that, a government decided to introduce a policy, which would bring in some serious consequences to the lives of Deaf people and ignored the protests of Deaf groups and Deaf individuals?

Publications received from Engman:


FINNISH SIGN LANGUAGE BOARD THE FIRST LANGUAGE PLANNING BODY FOR A SIGN LANGUAGE IN THE WORLD

Leena Savolainen, Research Institute for the Languages of Finland

Last year the Act and Decree on the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland was altered to include research and maintenance of the Finnish Sign Language. Research on FinSL has been conducted since 1988 by a sole Sign Language researcher. This researcher has been working on the Sign Language dictionary project in the Finnish Association of the Deaf since the position was founded.

The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland has five language planning boards. They represent Finnish, Swedish, the Saami Language, Finnish Sign Language and Romany, the language of the gypsies in Finland. The boards for Finnish Sign Language (FinSL) and Romany are the newest and were established in June of 1997. A Board of seven members has the responsibility of caring for the maintenance of the FinSL.

The board began its work on 1 June 1998. It is planned that during its first three-year term the Finnish Sign Language Board will lay groundwork and formulate methods of operating its activities. However, in addition, it is their intent to commence with problems connected with FinSL vocabulary and grammar. Results from principle discussions within the Board as well as recommendations on the usage of FinSL will be distributed both in FinSL and in Finnish.

What do such language planning boards do?
Their task is to make principle decisions and general recommendations on questions concerning language usage. The emphasis in language planning is on the standard variant of the language, which means that the boards do not handle matters concerning, e.g. dialects, slang or other clearly colloquial usage of language, instead these language variants are encouraged to continue their rich and full lives alongside the standard variant.

Why is such a board for Finnish Sign Language (FinSL) needed? What do we need standard FinSL for?
The FinSL Board strives for a linguistic democracy among its users. Linguistic democracy refers to a situation in which all the FinSL users would have a language variant by which they could express themselves in a way that would enable them to be understood by everyone else. The standard FinSL could be used, e.g. in teaching, in television news and in other public situations.

What does the FinSL Board do?
The FinSL Board develops the standard variant of FinSL by giving recommendations on language usage in general, or particularly, on specific signs or sentence structures. E.g., if there are numerous signs for one concept and all of these signs are used in different schools for the Deaf, the board may consider these signs and decide to recommend one or perhaps two of them to be used in the standard FinSL.

If you would like to receive further information on how the board operates its meetings, on what grounds it makes its recommendations, how the minutes of the meetings are produced and/or how it informs the users of FinSL of the recommendations made in the meetings, please contact: Researcher Leena Savolainen tel. +358-9-5803 461 fax. +358-9-5803 770 e-mail: leena.savolainen@ki-deaf.fi